



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

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Alexandria, VA  
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DATE: April 07, 2014

MEMO CODE: SP 33-2014

SUBJECT: Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP): Pilot for Canned, Frozen and Dried Fruits and Vegetables – Request for Application Guidance and Procedures for Selection of States and Schools

TO: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

This memorandum is a request for application and sets forth the guidance and procedures for interested State agencies to be considered for participation in the Fruit and Vegetable Pilot which will take place during the 2014-2015 School Year (SY). The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is permitting all States to apply to be considered for participation. State agencies must submit an application no later than **June 15, 2014**, to be considered for selection.

**I. Authority, Purpose and Funding for Pilot**

Section 4214 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79) directs USDA to conduct a pilot project in SY 2014-2015 that allows schools participating in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) to offer canned, frozen or dried fruits and vegetables, in not less than five States. The purpose of the pilot is to evaluate the impact of allowing schools to offer canned, frozen, or dried fruits and vegetables as part of the FFVP, especially any effects on participation or the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

The law further directs USDA to establish the criteria for the conditions under which canned, frozen, or dried fruits and vegetables may be offered, in accordance with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Using \$5 million of the FFVP appropriation, USDA must conduct an evaluation of the impacts, implementation, acceptance and other outcomes of the pilot. Schools selected for participation in the pilot will use their usual FFVP funding to purchase the fruits and vegetables allowed under the pilot.

**II. Conditions for Service of Produce in Selected Pilot Schools**

Separate or additional funding will not be provided to conduct the pilot. Schools selected for the pilot will use the FFVP funds allocated to them through the normal formula allocation. State agencies may cover their administrative costs associated with participation in the pilot through their State administrative expense allocation.

Most policies for the FFVP will apply to the pilot, and all of the fruits and vegetables served under the pilot will need to meet the Smart Snacks in School standards as they apply to fruits and vegetables. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Canned fruit products are limited to those packed in water, 100% juice, light or extra light syrup.
- Dried fruits without added nutritive sweeteners may be served.
- Dried fruits that require added nutritive sweeteners for processing and/or palatability may be served, according to Smart Snacks standards.
- Canned vegetables with no added ingredients except water or that contain a small amount of sugar for processing purposes to maintain the quality and structure of the vegetable may be served.
- Frozen fruit without added sugar may be served.
- Frozen fruit with added sugar must follow Smart Snacks standards for added sugar.
- Frozen vegetables with no added ingredients except water may be served.
- Heating frozen or canned vegetables is acceptable.
- Dried/dehydrated vegetables with no added ingredients may be served.
- Juice is not allowed.

Additional requirements may apply as Smart Snacks in School standards are further clarified during implementation. Fresh fruits and vegetables may continue to be served in pilot schools under the usual FFVP policies.

### **III. The Evaluation**

The Agricultural Act of 2014 requires that the pilot be implemented in SY 2014-15, which necessitated that FNS solicit applications from interested States and schools prior to finalizing the evaluation design.

States and schools selected for the pilot will have to abide by the conditions of the evaluation. The Agricultural Act of 2014 states that the study will evaluate:

- “(1) the impacts on fruit and vegetable consumption at the schools participating in the pilot project;
- (2) the impacts of the pilot project on school participation in the Program and operation of the Program;
- (3) the implementation strategies used by the schools participating in the pilot project;
- (4) the acceptance of the pilot project by key stakeholders; and
- (5) such other outcomes as are determined by the Secretary.”

Schools will be selected by FNS for the pilot and evaluation based on their characteristics and access issues. FNS is considering a pre-post design with data being collected at each pilot school prior to implementation of the pilot and after implementation of the pilot. However, the final evaluation design will be determined after review of public comments to the 60-day Notice published in the Federal Register March 27, 2014. If the pre-post method is chosen, selected schools would be required to operate the regular FFVP in the Fall of 2014 and start serving frozen, canned and/or dried fruits and vegetables on or after January 1, 2015. Note that fresh fruits and vegetables can be served throughout the school year.

The anticipated data collection activities for the study may include:

- State Administrative Data Queries,
- Surveys on pilot implementation with State Child Nutrition Directors, School Food Authority Directors, principals and teachers,
- On-site interview with school food service managers,
- Questionnaire on parent's perceptions of the child's eating habits and opinion of the pilot program,
- Diary assisted 24-hour recall of students,
- Student survey on foods frequently consumed, attitudes toward fruits and vegetables and opinion of the pilot, and
- A nationally-representative survey of State agencies asking whether or not they applied for the pilot and their reasons for applying or not applying.

Participating State agencies, school food authorities and schools must provide all necessary data required by the evaluation. Pilot schools will be required to provide student contact information due to data collection activities at the student level. The contractor conducting the study on behalf of FNS will have any necessary Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to data collection. States need to specify in their application if their State or district will need additional IRB approval prior to initiating the data collection activities.

#### **IV. Application Process and Selection of States and Schools**

Interested State agencies are asked to submit an application, including applications for participation in the pilot on behalf of individual elementary schools currently participating in the FFVP that have access issues that hinder their participation in FFVP. These issues might include:

- 1) Limited distribution and delivery of fresh fruits and vegetables;
- 2) Isolation of the school;
- 3) Space restrictions which hinder storage of fresh fruits and vegetables;
- 4) High cost of fresh fruits and vegetables; and/or
- 5) Limited ability to prepare fresh fruits and vegetables for use in the FFVP.

While all schools may experience some access issues from time to time, we are particularly interested in schools with barriers above and beyond normal situations that limit their ability to efficiently and effectively operate a program with only fresh produce. The pilot will be implemented only in those schools selected by FNS within the selected States.

States will be chosen based on the number of schools available in the State, the schools' characteristics, including such things as size, location (rural or urban) and the free and reduced price rate as well as the schools' access issues. State agencies and schools selected for the pilot will be required to participate in the pilot evaluation.

State agencies that are interested in participating in the pilot must submit the following items:

- A letter describing
  - The State's interest in participating in the pilot,
  - The State's commitment and ability to support the evaluation
  - The State's commitment and ability to oversee proper implementation of the pilot, and
  - Information on any State or local IRB approvals the evaluation will be subject to.
- An Excel spreadsheet that follows the format shown in Attachment A that provides basic information on each school approved for the 2014-2015 FFVP that would like to be considered for participation in the pilot.
- For each school interested in participating in the pilot and evaluation, information, as shown in Attachment B which describes that school's fresh fruit and vegetable access issues, that provides full contact information and is signed by a school official, such as an administrator/principal of the school or superintendent, and an official that operates/oversees the FFVP. In signing the document, a school acknowledges that they meet the conditions of the evaluation and agree to participate in the evaluation process, with the understanding that only schools selected will follow the implementation strategy outlined for the evaluation.

Subject to change, FNS is currently considering a design where schools would operate normal FFVP in the fall and initiate the pilot after January 1, 2015. Schools that cannot meet operational or data collection requirements will be removed from the pilot and must return to normal FFVP operations.

FNS will review the applications and select States and schools based on the evaluation criteria listed in Attachment C.

Regional Directors  
State Directors  
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States that apply must notify their regional office. All applications must be submitted to [CNDINTERNET@fns.usda.gov](mailto:CNDINTERNET@fns.usda.gov) with the subject line "FFVP Pilot" and be received by June 15, 2014. We anticipate selections will be made, and State agencies and schools notified, in August 2014.

State agencies with questions regarding the pilot and application should contact their FNS regional office.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cynthia Long  
Deputy Administrator  
Child Nutrition Programs

Attachments

State Agency:

State Agency Contact:

Phone Number:

Total Number of Schools Participating in FFVP in the State in SY 2013-2014: \_\_\_\_\_

Of the total FFVP schools, list schools that have one or more of the access issues and wish to be considered to participate in the pilot below.

LEA Name	School Name	Number of Students in School	Years Participating in FFVP	% Students Certified for free and reduced price meals	IRB Approval Needed (Y/N)

All applications must be submitted to [CNDINTERNET@fns.usda.gov](mailto:CNDINTERNET@fns.usda.gov) with the subject line “FFVP Pilot” and be received by June 15, 2014

**Prototype School Application for the 2014-2015 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program  
Frozen, Canned and Dried Fruit Pilot and Evaluation**

LEA Name:

School Name:

School Address:

Number of Students in School:

Years Participating in FFVP:

Percent of Students Certified for Free Meals:

Reduced Price meals:

IRB Approval Needed (Y/N):

Please provide a brief narrative describing the particular access issues for the applicant school. Access issues may include distribution and delivery problems, isolation of the school, storage concerns, costs and preparation.

Please provide a brief description of your capabilities to provide necessary data to the contractor conducting the evaluation in a timely fashion.

Please provide additional information not covered above that may also be pertinent.

By signing below, if selected for participation in the pilot, I agree to participate in an evaluation of the Fruit and Vegetable Pilot and provide all information requested by the evaluation team in a timely manner. I understand that my school will be required to implement the pilot according to the conditions of the evaluation. By signing below, I commit to providing data within the evaluation timeline and understand that if my school is unable to provide the necessary data my school will be removed from the pilot. My signature also affirms that my school has one or more issues that impede access to fresh produce for the FFVP.

Signature of Authorized School Official: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Signature of school official responsible for the FFVP: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

Email:

## **Selection Criteria**

Pilot States will be chosen based on the number of schools available in the State, the schools' characteristics, including such things as size, location (rural or urban) and free and reduced price rate as well as the schools' access issues. Schools will be selected through a two-step process. As described below, FNS will examine the schools' readiness and ability to participate in the evaluation. FNS will also consider of the needs of the evaluation. The evaluation design will seek schools that are geographically dispersed, provide sufficient student numbers to enable a thorough study, and represent a variety of access concerns.

Technical Evaluation Criteria and Weights:

### **State Agency and School Pilot Implementation (60 points)**

- Commits to implement the pilot on or after January 1, 2015 through the end of School Year 2014-2015.
- Thoroughly describes applicant school(s) and demonstrates that the school(s) meets specifications outlined in the request for application for access issues that impede the service of fresh fruits and vegetables.

### **State Agency and School Participation in the Research Evaluation (40 points)**

- Agrees to comply with FNS' evaluation requirements, and demonstrates capacity and commitment to fulfilling those requirements.
- Demonstrates the ability to provide the necessary data to the contractor conducting the evaluation in a timely manner.