

# Sample Template - "Letter of Intent to Compete"

## for a Direct Certification FY 2013 Substantial Improvement Award

Due to FNS by **Friday, July 12, 2013**

Email to FNS at [cnstatesystems@fns.usda.gov](mailto:cnstatesystems@fns.usda.gov) - ATTN: Viv Lees, Chief, State Systems Support Branch.

Please name your file **"[State Name] – FY 2012 Letter of Intent to Compete."**

If you choose to use the format suggested here, please fill in all the yellowed areas in sections I, II, and III (you may remove the coloring and the lines from your submission). For the remaining sections, IV, V, and VI, answer the questions appropriately and then delete all the extraneous guidance so that we are left with just the section titles and your statement for each. Have the appropriate administrative official sign and date this submission in Section VII, below.

### I. State Information:

Name of State agency: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of State Director: \_\_\_\_\_  
State agency mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### II. Contact Person Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title/Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Intent Statement:

Please consider **[insert State name]** for a direct certification 2013 Substantial Improvement Award.

### IV. Data Use Option:

Choose one of the following, *and delete the other option*:

- For **[insert State Name]**, use the data for the Report to Congress when determining our eligibility for a Substantial Improvement Award
- For **[insert State Name]**, please consider our reliable State data from both SY 2012-2013 and SY 2011-2012 that clearly shows an increase in the percentage of school-aged children in SNAP households who were directly certified for free school meals. We are providing ample justification, the methodology, and the sources of this data with this submission, see attached.

**IMPORTANT:** Supporting materials must accompany this "Letter of Intent to Compete" and are due by **Friday, July, 12, 2013**.

## V. Letter Method Phase-Out Status:

For SY 2012-2013, direct certification with SNAP was to have been conducted using data matching techniques only. The “letter method,” wherein the SNAP agency sends a letter to the household that includes the necessary certification documentation and instructs the household to provide the letter to the school if they want free meals or milk for their children, could no longer be utilized as a method of direct certification. Letters to households could be used only as an additional means to notify households of children’s eligibility based on receipt of SNAP benefits. **Please select the option** below that describes your State’s compliance with the letter method phase-out for SY 2012-2013.

- [Insert State Name] was in compliance with the above requirement to use data matching techniques and did not utilize the “letter method” as a means of direct certification for SY 2012-2103.
- If your State used the SNAP “letter method” in SY 2012-2013 as a means of direct certification, then you are ineligible for an award this year. **Please do not submit this “Letter of Intent to Compete.”**

## VI. (Optional) Supplemental Information Statement – (limited to 500 words or less).

We cannot know in advance how the direct certification performance data will fall out. Remember, FNS may award up to a total of 15 States across both categories. We may be fortunate and find that there is clustering, or a natural breaking, of the data that will make selection easy, or we may find that it will be more complicated. Take for instance the possible scenario that the data shows that 3 States have improved a significant amount and 10 other States are clustered fairly tightly in the middle range of improvement. We are unlikely to make 13 awards in this category and only 2 in the Outstanding Performance category. Likewise we are unlikely to award only 3 States in this category and up to 12 in the Outstanding Performance category. In this scenario, we would need some way to choose fewer than 10 from among the clustered mid-range States. This is where the optional data may be needed. All things being equal, FNS is more likely to reward a State whose direct certification rate has improved due to efforts taken by the State and not due to random fluctuations.

As such, the State has the option of submitting supplemental information telling why the State deserves this award. This should be limited to 500 words, and can be in narrative form. ***(When you have your narrative written, please delete the extraneous guidance in this section, including the paragraph above and the reflective points listed below. We would like this section to be just your statement. If you are not submitting the optional supplemental information statement, simply write “n/a” after the section title, and delete everything else.)***

If you intend to provide this optional statement, you may want to reflect on the following when deciding what to include:

- a. How the State was able to increase its direct certification rates from the previous school year through implementation of specific improvement measures. Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- implementing or enhancing probabilistic matching (identifying matches that are not exact and weighting the probability that they represent the same person based on common elements/characteristics in the data) ;
  - adding data elements, algorithms, or Soundex capability (capturing names that appear to sound alike, but may be spelled differently) to the matching process;
  - taking steps to ensure that SNAP data is directed to the proper entities;
  - changing the data-matching process to identify all children in a household (in the SNAP data and/or the student data) if any child in the household matches;
  - adding online lookup capability;
  - centralizing automated data-matching processes;
  - providing additional training at the LEA-level on direct certification procedures;
  - conducting additional administrative reviews focusing on error prone LEAs that have the lowest match rates;
  - instituting online application systems that look for a SNAP match automatically at the start of an application process, interrupt it immediately should a match be found and directly certify the child for free meals on the spot;
  - determining a way to ensure that private schools have some way to be part of the automated matching process;
  - increasing the frequency of matching with SNAP data;
  - enhancing State-level accountability systems to monitor for direct certification activities at the LEA level; and conducting frequent performance assessments to identify areas for improvement; or
  - other ideas from the State Self-Assessment Tool that was included in the CIP Development Guide (found under the CND Policy and Memoranda/Resources and Guidance/Direct Certification/Guidance section on the FNS PartnerWeb at
- b. What challenges/obstacles the State had to overcome to reach this goal;
- c. What efficiencies were obtained that school year, including reduction of burden at different levels; and/or
- d. Whatever else the State would like to include that would give FNS a clearer picture of the State's efforts for the given school year.

**VII. Signature of Authorized Administrative Official:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Typed Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Title