



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

3101 Park  
Center Drive  
Alexandria, VA  
22302-1500

DATE: July 14, 2014

MEMO CODE: SP 56-2014

SUBJECT: Direct Certification Performance Awards - FY 2014 Guidance

TO: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) provides for performance awards to States that best ensure that children who are members of households receiving benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are directly certified for free school meals. In September, 2014, FNS will make awards to up to 15 State agencies, based on school year (SY) 2013-2014 direct certification data, to recognize those States that have made significant progress in direct certification with SNAP. The awards will total \$4 million—\$2 million in Outstanding Performance Awards and \$2 million in Substantial Improvement Awards. This memorandum transmits Questions and Answers to describe the award process for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 (see Attachment A).

#### **Consideration for Outstanding Performance Awards**

As in previous years, no application is required for States to be considered for an Outstanding Performance award. FNS will base selections for this award category on the State direct certification rates with SNAP for SY 2013-2014.

#### **Consideration for Substantial Improvement Awards**

Due to the increase in available data made possible through the changes in the data reporting process initiated for SY 2013-2014, State agencies **will not be required** to submit a “Letter of Intent to Compete” to be considered for an FY 2014 Substantial Improvement award. Please note that, unlike previous years, all eligible State agencies will be considered for Substantial Improvement awards based on data already available to FNS. However, State agencies have the **option** to submit additional information to describe substantial improvements that may not be reflected clearly in the available direct certification data. For the additional information to be considered in the State selection process, State agencies must submit an “Information for Consideration” response to FNS no later than **Friday, August 8, 2014**. A sample response template for submitting the optional additional information is attached for your reference—Attachment B “*FY 2014 Direct Certification Substantial Improvement Awards - Information for Consideration.*”

Also please see Attachment C - *FY 2014 Direct Certification Performance Awards – Reference Rate Chart*. This chart shows each State’s direct certification rate for the last two years and which States have received Direct Certification Performance Awards in those years. This information may be helpful to States in making the decision whether to submit additional “Information for Consideration” for the Substantial Improvement awards.

Please review the questions and answers in Attachment A for details on the Direct Certification Performance Award process for FY 2014. State agencies may direct any questions concerning this guidance to the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

**Original Signed**

Cynthia Long  
Deputy Administrator  
Child Nutrition Programs

Attachments:

- Attachment A: FY 2014 Direct Certification Performance Awards Guidance – Questions and Answers
- Attachment B: FY 2014 Direct Certification Substantial Improvement Awards-- Information for Consideration
- Attachment C: FY 2014 Direct Certification Performance Awards – Reference Rate Chart