

Community Eligibility Option Evaluation

A study by Abt Associates for USDA-FNS

CE Option State CN Letter-Year 1 States

OMB Clearance # 0584-XXXX

Expiration Date: XX/XX/20XX

[DATE]

[CN DIRECTOR NAME AND ADDRESS]

Dear [CN DIRECTOR]:

As you know, Abt is conducting an evaluation of the Community Eligibility (CE) Option for the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Thank you for the cooperation you have already provided by participating in exploratory interviews, pre-testing of our study instruments and procedures, and providing information about your Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Your input has been extremely valuable.

As you may remember, the CE Option evaluation, which was mandated by Congress in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, has the following objectives:

- a) To examine the characteristics of eligible schools that participate in the CE Option and those that choose not to participate
- b) To examine the incentives and barriers to participation and implementation of the CE Option
- c) To estimate CE Option impacts on LEAs, schools and children, including impacts on program administration, nutritional quality and foodservice costs and revenues

To accomplish the first two objectives, we will be conducting telephone interviews with State CN directors in the 7 States participating in the CE Option in SY 2012/13 during the summer of 2012 and again in the summer of 2013. We will also ask Foodservice Directors at up to 1400 selected LEAs across these States to complete a Web survey focusing on experiences and opinions of the CE Option. The surveys will be completed with participating LEAs, those that are eligible but not participating, and those in the near-eligible category. When we are ready to start these surveys, we will ask you to send a letter of support to the LEAs by e-mail.

To accomplish the third objective, we will be conducting more in-depth data collection. In a subset of the participating and non-participating LEAs in each State, we will recruit a sample of LEAs to participate in one, two, or three of the following evaluation components, in addition to the Web survey mentioned above:

- A web-based survey on Participation, Enrollment, Attendance and Revenue (PEAR) for four school years 2009-10 through 2012-13. LEAs will be offered the options of completing the web survey or the paper version of the survey. If your State can provide some of the data that the survey requests, we will work with you to do this instead of asking the LEAs to submit the data. (See the attached document, *LEA School Meal Counts and Revenue Data Requested from State Agencies*).
- Participating in in-person interviews about administrative costs at the LEA and school levels, and facilitating a Certification Record Abstraction for 114 to 150 certification records per LEA, spread over up to 3 sampled schools.
- Completion of a one-week menu survey of NSLP and SBP meals offered, a review of meal counting and claiming procedures, and facilitating an observation of meals taken by students and cashier transactions in three sampled schools in the LEA (generally, one elementary, one middle and one high school).

We will be recruiting LEAs to participate in the more in-depth components of the study at the start of the 2012-13 school year. The data collection for LEAs and schools will begin in January 2013, and will be completed by the end of April 2013. We expect to complete the analysis and Final Report by October 1, 2013. It will be submitted to Congress by December 31, 2013.

We need your help in making this a successful study. You have already provided us with specific information on LEAs that were eligible or near eligible to participate in the CE Option for School Year 2011/12 (based on LEA and school Identified Student Percentages, as specified by FNS policy). Now we would like to collect similar information for LEAs in your State that are eligible or near eligible for the CE Option for School Year 2012/13. We will also need to collect the list of participating LEAs and schools after the decision period for adopting the Option has ended on June 30. This list will be used to select the samples of LEAs for the evaluation. See the attached document, *Data Elements for LEA and School Lists*, for the specific information we are requesting. Following our selection of the sample LEAs, we will get back to you with a list of the LEAs that have been selected. At that point, we will request that you contact sampled LEAs to notify them of their selection and to encourage their participation and also provide us with contact information for the LEAs.

A senior member of the Abt Associates project team will be contacting you in the coming weeks to provide you with more information about the evaluation and answer your questions. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this important study. In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding the project, feel free to call me, toll-free, at 855-759-5752 or via email at CommunityEligibility@abtassoc.com. You may also contact John Endahl, the FNS Project Officer at (703) 305-2127 or via email at john.endahl@fns.usda.gov. For questions about your rights as a study participant, you may contact Teresa Doksum, Administrator of the Abt Associates Institutional Review Board at (877) 520-6835 (a toll-free number).

Sincerely,

Patty Connor
Project Director
Abt Associates

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-XXXX. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 3 minutes including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia 22302.

Community Eligibility Option Evaluation: LEA School Meal Counts and Revenue Data Requested from State Agencies

Time period: School Years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013

Months: October, November, December (all years); school year total (August through June) for all years except 2012-2013.

Coverage of data: LEA-level data needed at least for sampled LEAs; we are interested in discussing the possibility of obtaining data for all LEAs and/or for individual schools in sampled LEAs.

Data elements requested (note that reduced-price will not be available for LEAs participating in the CE Option; all data for specified months and school year totals except as noted):

1. Number of NSLP lunches reimbursed – free, reduced price, paid, and total
2. Number of SBP breakfasts reimbursed – free, reduced price, paid, and total
3. Number of operating days
4. Student enrollment (as of October 31 of each school year preferred; other dates may be acceptable)
5. Average daily student attendance
6. School foodservice revenues (may be monthly or semi-annual):
 - a. Federal payment from National School Lunch Program (preferably excluding Afterschool Snack Program)
 - b. Federal payment from School Breakfast Program
 - c. Federal payment from Afterschool Snack Program (may be included in 5a)
 - d. Other federal payment aside from NSLP lunches and SBP breakfasts (Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, equipment grants, etc.)
 - e. Value of commodities received
 - f. State payments
 - g. Local funds (any funds transferred from other local account to school foodservice other than payment for catering)
 - h. Student payment for reimbursable meals
 - i. Non-reimbursable foods (competitive foods, a la carte, vending machines, adult meals, etc.)
 - j. Other revenue from local sources not listed above (such as catering, special events, returned check fees, interest etc.) Note: this does not include Federal or State payments

Data format: Data may be submitted in Excel, comma-delimited (CSV), Access, fixed-column-width text, or other format readable by Abt Associates. Files can be submitted on CD or DVD (prepaid FedEx envelopes for shipping will be provided), or via Abt Associates' secure web portal (log-in information to be provided to designated State personnel).

Date Requested: Confirmation of data to be provided and a test file by September 30, 2012. Data for School Years 2009-2010 through 2011-2012 by December 31, 2012. Data for School Year 2012-2013 by March 30, 2013.

Community Eligibility Option Evaluation: Data Elements for LEA and School Lists

Purpose:

- Selecting samples of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) for survey about implementation and acceptance of, and barriers to the Community Eligibility (CE) Option, and for data collection on impacts of the CE Option
- Selecting sample of schools within sampled LEAs for data collection on impacts of the CE Option
- Describing the populations of LEAs participating in the CE Option, eligible for the Option but not participating, and near eligible (subject to notification by the State)

Timing:

- School Year (SY) 2010-11 data will be obtained from Illinois, Kentucky, and Michigan to select the sample of LEAs participating in SY2011-12 and the comparison group for these LEAs for the impact study.
- SY2011-12 data will be obtained from all seven participating States to select the sample of LEAs participating in SY2012-13 and the comparison group for these LEAs for the impact study, and to identify LEAs for the surveys of LEAs participating in the CE Option, eligible for the Option but not participating, and near eligible for the Option.

Data elements requested for LEAs

Please include all eligible and near-eligible LEAs

1. LEA ID used in Verification Summary Report (VSR) (see note A below)
2. State-assigned LEA ID used in national Common Core Data (CCD; if different; see note A below)
3. LEA ID used in school list (if different; see note A below)
4. LEA name
5. Date of ISP data
6. Total enrollment in schools with NSLP and/or SBP (excluding students without access to NSLP or SBP, such as afternoon kindergarten)
7. Identified student percentage (ISP)
8. Type of eligibility for CE Option (eligible or near-eligible)
9. Indicator for whether LEA is participating in CE Option district-wide or with selected schools
10. Percentage of students eligible for free meals
11. Percentage of students eligible for reduced price meals
12. Grade range (lowest and highest grade)
13. Number of schools by grade range category (elementary, middle, high, ungraded)
14. Number of schools by type (regular, special education only, alternative, career/technical education etc.; see note B below)
15. Number of schools that offer breakfast through SBP
16. Number of schools offering free meals for all students (provision 2/3, CE Option, or other provision)
17. Foodservice director contact information: Name, Mailing address, Telephone number (voice and fax), Email address (current information at the time of the request; see note C below)

Community Eligibility Option Evaluation: Data Elements for LEA and School Lists (continued)

Notes:

- A. LEA identifiers are needed to permit linking the LEA lists with VSR data from FNS, CCD, and the school lists provided by the States. If the State Child Nutrition Agency uses LEA IDs that are based on the State Education Agency's LEA IDs as reported to the CCD, we may be able to use the State Child Nutrition Agency's IDs to match to the CCD. We will discuss with each State how it identifies LEAs and schools, and the identifiers needed for the evaluation.
- B. We will discuss the appropriate and available school types with each State.
- C. Foodservice director contact information should be the most current available information as of the time of the request and can be provided in a separate file with LEA ID number and name.

Data elements requested for schools

Please include all schools with NSLP or SBP in eligible and near-eligible LEAs

- 1. State-assigned LEA ID (should match LEA ID used for school linking in LEA list)
- 2. State-assigned School ID (to permit linking to CCD)
- 3. School name
- 4. Total enrollment (excluding students without access to NSLP or SBP, such as afternoon kindergarten)
- 5. Grade range (lowest and highest grades; see note A below)
- 6. Grade range category (elementary, middle, high, ungraded; see note A below)
- 7. Type of school (regular, special education only, alternative, career/technical education etc.)
- 8. ISP [preferably for each school but may be ISP for group of schools participating together in the CE Option]
- 9. Whether school is eligible or near-eligible school for CE Option (Eligible/Near-eligible)
- 10. Whether school is participating in the CE Option (Yes/No)
- 11. For participating schools, type of participation (Individual/Group)
- 12. Whether school has NSLP (Yes/No)
- 13. Whether school has SBP (Yes/No)

Notes:

- A. The grade range and category for a school should be based on the school's primary purpose. For example, if an elementary school (K-6) houses a special education program for grades 7-9, this school should be classified as an elementary school with K-6 as the grade range.

Community Eligibility Option Evaluation: Data Elements for LEA and School Lists (continued)

Glossary

CCD	Common Core of Data
CE	Community Eligibility
ID	Identifier
ISP	Identified Student Percentage
LEA	Local Education Agency
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SY	School Year
VSR	Verification Summary Report