

APPENDIX E9:
STUDY INFORMATION SHEET ATTACHMENT TO LETTERS

Identifying Program Components and Practices that Influence SNAP Application Processing Timeliness Rates (SNAP Timeliness Study)

STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture is responsible for the administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at the Federal level. An important aspect of SNAP administration is ensuring that eligible households have timely access to their SNAP benefits through the timely processing of SNAP applications. Application processing timeliness (APT) is a critical measure of program access and performance. In order to measure timeliness, FNS monitors compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements through the SNAP Quality Control System (SNAP-QC). In part, FNS monitors this compliance through quarterly reports for each State, conducts onsite case reviews, and produces annual reports on each State's average APT rate. While many States have worked to improve the administration of SNAP, the national APT average has remained below 90 percent for the last several years with the majority of States struggling to meet statutory and regulatory requirements.

FNS has sponsored several recent studies^{1,2,3} among a limited number of States to understand the elements of State administrative practices and policies that are associated with application processing, in the interest of helping States better meet timeliness requirements. To better understand the root causes of timeliness issues and provide improved technical assistance, FNS is initiating this current *SNAP Timeliness Study* to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth review of program components and practices of all 50 States and the District of Columbia. The study will identify specific policies and practices associated with better APT outcomes.

The primary goal of this study is to determine best practices for facilitating high APT rates, and to identify State policy and procedural practices that facilitate and hinder APT rates. The study has three objectives: (1) describe each State's SNAP policy and operational procedures; (2) identify the policy and operational procedures that may impede or facilitate SNAP application processing timeliness; and (3) describe the associations between State policy and operational procedures and APT rates.

FNS has contracted with a research firm, WRMA, Inc., and their partner, IMPAQ International, to conduct this study. Trained members of the study team will work with the SNAP Regional Offices and State SNAP leadership to coordinate the participation of all States in this study. The study team will request States to provide summary administrative data and to complete a survey on annual SNAP caseload, program policies, and operational procedures. Prior to collecting these data from all States, the study team will work with nine States who volunteer to serve on an Advisory Board and to pre-test the study survey. Primary data collection will begin in January 2017 and continue through June 2017. The study team will work with State leadership to collect data at both the State and local level.

If you have questions about this study, please contact:

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¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Timeliness in the SNAP Application Process, Summer 2013. http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/timeliness_app_process.pdf.

² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, *The Evolution of SNAP Modernization Initiatives in Five States* by Lara Hulsey, Kevin Conway, Andrew Gothro, Rebecca Kleinman, Megan Reilly, Scott Cody, and Emily Sama-Miller. Project Officer, Rosemarie Downer. Alexandria, VA: March 2013. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/evolution-snap-modernization-initiatives-five-states>.

³ Baretto, Tina. *Business Process Reengineering: Final Outcomes Report*. Prepared by IMPAQ International, LLC for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, September 2015.