

Appendix A - State Recruitment Letter

Control Number: 0584-0524, expiration date: 09/30/2019



Date

<<Name>>, <<Title>>
<<State Education Agency>>
<<Address>>
<<City, State, Zip>>

Dear <<Name>>,

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is working on a project to improve the quality of administrative data tied to the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program verification process. USDA has already completed much of the work on this project, however, to make further progress, USDA requires the assistance of one or more State agencies to test a simple technology-based solution to improved verification data quality.

Each year State agencies compile verification outcome data from school food authorities (SFAs) and submit that information to USDA on the FNS-742, the "Verification Collection Report." In school year (SY) 2016-2017, State agencies submitted 19,000 SFA-level records on the FNS-742. Unfortunately, more than 3,000 of those SFA records contained at least one basic logic error. We are confident that the great majority of these errors are simple reporting mistakes, not problems with the underlying administration of the verification process.

Nevertheless, the presence of so many errors on the FNS-742 lessens its value as an analytic resource for both USDA and the States. Most of these errors can be identified with simple edit checks when SFA staff submit their data through the States' web-based reporting systems, such as Michigan's MiND system. We would like to partner with your office to add new edit checks to MiND in order to greatly reduce, if not eliminate, simple logic mistakes at the point of SFA submission.

We understand that this project will require adding new program code to your [MiND] software. However, these are limited to simple math checks and descriptive error messages to help SFAs understand and correct their mistakes. USDA is prepared to assist in this project, working with your IT staff or contractor as necessary. We are also flexible regarding when we test the changes with SFAs; we are open to testing these changes in SY 2017-2018 or SY 2018-2019. We recognize that project timing will depend on your availability and the time needed for making and thoroughly testing system changes.

We are available to discuss the project with you at any time. We will follow up later this week with suggested dates and times for a preliminary phone call. If you have questions or concerns in the mean time, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation. We look forward to working with you on this important project.

Sincerely,

An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0524. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average one (1) hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.