



**United States Department of Agriculture**

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

1320  
Braddock  
Place  
Alexandria,  
VA  
22314

DATE: October 7, 2020

SUBJECT: SNAP – The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, Section 4015  
Longitudinal Data for Research

TO: All Regional Offices  
State SNAP Agencies

The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (the 2018 Farm Bill) required the U. S. Department of Agriculture to approve the building of State longitudinal research databases containing eligibility, benefit, and demographic information about Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households and individual members to enable research on SNAP participation and operation of the Program.

The enclosed SNAP Longitudinal Data for Research (LDR) requirements document contains guidelines and parameters on the process for opting into participation, meeting security requirements set forth in the 2018 Farm Bill, sharing data securely, and applying for grant funding. After consulting with State and Federal agencies, FNS developed these requirements to reflect the various and unique needs of States while also providing maximum flexibility.

FNS encourages State participation in the LDR to ensure a robust dataset for a more accurate view of SNAP participation and duration. Since many States have existing Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with the Census Bureau to provide SNAP data for research projects, FNS is finalizing an inter-agency agreement with the Census Bureau for the SNAP LDR. FNS will work with the Census Bureau to develop a longitudinal linkage infrastructure and leverage their existing process of creating unique identifiers, which removes Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and enables the Census Bureau to create a cross-state view of participants. This agreement will reduce burden and cost on State partners who would otherwise have to develop a process for creating unique identifiers and maintain the data in a centralized location.

States may opt in by amending their current MOU with the Census Bureau to add the SNAP LDR. States without MOUs in place may participate by working with FNS and the Census Bureau to draft a MOU. Additionally, States may choose to build their own SNAP LDR. However, the State will be required to send SNAP data from their database to the Census Bureau in order for the data to receive a unique identifier and be available for research, per the 2018 Farm Bill.

The 2018 Farm Bill also provided \$20 million in grant funding available through Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 and \$5 million each FY thereafter, for States interested in participating in the SNAP LDR. In the second quarter of FY 2021, FNS expects to release a Request for Application (RFA) for States to apply for multi-year grant funding.



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In October and November 2020, FNS and the Census Bureau will conduct webinars to review the SNAP LDR requirements. The goal of the webinars is to encourage State participation, explain the requirements, and answer questions in order to provide necessary clarification and ample time for States to consider their grant requests.

FNS looks forward to working with States on this opportunity to expand our research capabilities and more effectively target our policies and decisions to meet the needs of SNAP participants and improve administration of the Program.

Please forward a copy of this letter and the attached documents to State offices.

Sincerely,

Jessica Shahin  
Associate Administrator  
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program