



OMB Control No: 0584-0471

Expiration Date: XX/XX/20XX

## **Appendix B1. FedEx Letter to Sampled SFAs**

### **Subject: Welcome to the USDA School Food Purchase Study IV**

Dear SFA Director:

We are following up to the email you received from the State Director about your school food authority's (SFA's) selection to participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service's (USDA,FNS) School Food Purchase Study IV. Welcome to the study!

Westat and its partner, Agralytica, are conducting the School Food Purchase Study on behalf of USDA. The study will provide updated national estimates of SFA food acquisitions (both purchased foods and USDA Foods) and food purchase practices, and describe changes in purchases and purchase practices in the context of the significant changes in the school nutrition environment since the last study more than a decade ago. Study results on SFA purchasing practices that promote efficiencies may be especially useful as you strive to continually improve your program, and food purchase data may be used to help inform future USDA Foods offerings.

Your participation in this study is critical to its success, as your SFA represents many other SFAs across the country. Over the course of School Year 2021-2022, approximately 600 SFAs will take part in this study. SFAs that complete all data requests will receive \$300 as a thank you for participation, which may be used towards the cost of a conference or other professional development opportunities. While you as an individual are not required to participate, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 requires that SFAs participate in USDA studies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is conducting this study to obtain updated national estimates of food acquisitions and a description and analysis of food purchase practices of school districts participating in the Federally supported school meal programs. The estimates will provide information on the type, volume and source of foods acquired, the relative importance of USDA Foods, and changes in food composition and cost over time. Participation in this study by individuals is voluntary and the information collected will be used to understand school meal program trends and practices associated with food buying efficiency. 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 0584-0471. The time required to provide this information collection is estimated to average 3 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather and maintain the data needed, and complete and review 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: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314 ATTN: PRA (0584-0471).

## Study Activities

Each SFA will be asked to complete a web-based survey and provide detailed food purchase, and total revenue and expenditure data, for one selected quarter of the school year. We need the food purchase data for your SFA for the <1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>> **quarter**, covering the months of <month1> through <month3> <2021/2022>. Here is what you can expect:

- You are invited to participate in a **Study Overview webinar on <date/time> EST**. The 1—hour webinar will review study activities and how study results are used, and prepare you to complete the study survey. We will also review study resources available to support you. Information on how to participate in the webinar will be sent via email very soon.
- Following the study webinar, we will send you an email with a link to the web-based **Survey of Food Purchase Practices**. The survey includes questions about SFA characteristics; names and contact information for the vendors from which you purchase foods; methods for procuring foods; and questions about the impact of COVID-19 on procurement practices. We will also provide you a PDF copy of the survey for reference, along with a list of materials that you will need to assemble to complete the survey. Assembling the materials and completing the survey should take about 1½ hours. We request you complete the survey within four weeks of receipt.
- At the beginning of the <1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>> quarter, we will host a **Food Purchase Data Webinar** to provide details on the requested food purchase data elements, how to compile and submit the data, and resources available to assist you.
- About two weeks before the <1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>> quarter has ended, we will send you an email requesting that you upload or email detailed **food purchase data records**, and provide **total revenue and expenditure information** after the quarter is over. This should take about 5 hours to collect and submit. After we compile and confirm the data you submit, we will send you a summary report to review, and ask that you note foods used in reimbursable meals, as nonprogram foods, and for both.

## Technical Assistance and Support

We understand that research requests place an additional burden on you and your staff, which can be difficult to balance with other responsibilities. We have made every effort to reduce that burden and are requesting food purchase data for one quarter, instead of the entire school year. We will also provide technical assistance

to you as needed, and are able to accept data in a variety of formats to ease your burden.

- The study **website**, [www.PurchaseStudy.com](http://www.PurchaseStudy.com), will serve as the hub for study information and activities.
- The study webinars be recorded and posted to the study website if you are unable to participate or if you want to share them with your colleagues who may be submitting completing data requests on your behalf. We will also post Frequently Asked Questions on the study website after each webinar.
- Staff in our **Technical Assistance Center (TAC)** will be available by phone (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or email ([PurchaseStudy@westat.com](mailto:PurchaseStudy@westat.com)) to provide one-on-one support. By phone, the TAC is available weekdays from 9am to 4pm EST and the message line is available 24/7, with responses provided the following business day.

With this letter we have enclosed materials further explaining the study, including a study brochure, Frequently Asked Questions, and letters of support for the study from the School Nutrition Association and the American Commodity Distribution Association. These are also available on the website.

### **Next Steps**

Please be on the lookout in the next few days for an email from us that includes study materials, including details on how to participate in the **Study Overview Webinar**.

We appreciate your support of this important USDA study!

Sincerely,

Westat

Enclosures

- Study brochure
- FAQs
- Letters of Support