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To: Elementary Schools with 50% or More Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals, that Participate in the National School Lunch Program
From: Michelle Murdock, FFVP Coordinator
NJDA Division of Food and Nutrition
Date: April 15, 2024
Re: 2024-2025 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program



Please pass this along to Food Service Directors and any other appropriate school staff, such as wellness committee coordinators, school nurses, or teachers.

The USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP) will continue for the 2024-2025 school year. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture is now accepting applications from New Jersey **elementary schools with 50% or more students eligible for free or reduced-price meals** to participate in this program for the 2024-2025 school year. (*Free and reduced-price eligibility information will be taken from your school's October 2023 school lunch reimbursement voucher.*)

- **Instructions for Completing the FFVP Application are located at:**
https://www.agr.state.nj.us/AG_SNEARS2/resourcesAndTraining/resources
- **This year the application must be submitted and certified in SNEARS, the web-based reporting system used for the school lunch program, by June 30, 2024, if you are interested in being considered for this program. **Applications that are submitted and certified after June 30, 2024, will be disqualified.****

The FFVP provides funding for schools to serve free fresh fruits and vegetables to students during the school day, outside of regular mealtimes. **The goals of the FFVP are to:**

- Create healthier school environments by providing healthier food choices.
- Expand the variety of fruits and vegetables children experience.
- Increase children's fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Make a difference in children's diets to impact their present and future health.

This school year 222 schools are participating in the FFVP. The funding for 2024-2025 will range from \$50 - \$75 per student for the school year.

All schools currently participating in the FFVP will automatically be enrolled (provided sufficient state funding is awarded) in the program for 2024-2025. **These schools will STILL need to submit and certify a new FFVP application form.**

All eligible schools within a district can apply. Applications should be submitted by individual schools as they are listed on their Child Nutrition Program's Application Packet. It is **IMPORTANT** that you check with your Food Service Director to find out how your school is listed on the Child Nutrition Application. This is essential if your school is an Annex. Each school listed on the Child Nutrition Application must complete and submit a separate application based on their specific needs. Schools will be selected based on the following criteria:

A- SELECTION CRITERIA

To be selected for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, a school must:

- **Have 50 percent or more of its students eligible for free or reduced-price meals.**
*(USDA requires that priority must be given to schools with the **greatest** percentages of low- income students. Free and reduced-price eligibility information will be taken from your school's October 2023 school lunch reimbursement voucher.)*
- **Be an elementary school.**
 - *Early Childhood Schools are eligible if they participate in the National School Lunch Program*
 - *K-8 Schools are eligible.*
 - *Middle Schools and High Schools are not eligible.*
- **Operate the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in good standing.**
- **Be in compliance with all NJDA grants and program regulations and procedures.**
- **Submit and certify a complete application packet, specific for each school in SNEARS.**
(Applications should be submitted by individual schools as they are listed on their Child Nutrition Program's Application. The information provided should be tailored to the specific school applying for the program. Duplicate responses that are submitted for several schools will result in the elimination of each of these schools' applications.)
- **Schools meeting the above criteria will be selected by a committee from the NJ Department of Agriculture based on:**
 - Their percentage of free/reduced price eligible students based on October's 2023 school lunch voucher.
 - Their questionnaire responses indicating their ability to successfully implement the program and fully utilize the funding. All questions must be answered in SNEARS. All information requested must be complete and accurate. Missing information or unanswered questions will result in the elimination of the application.

B- EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

- Selected schools must provide **fresh** fruits and vegetables **free to all students at times other than at meal service periods.** *(Fruits and vegetables are not permitted to go home with students or be served for Afterschool Snack Programs.)*
- Participating schools must submit information monthly about participation, purchases, and costs, to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture through SNEARS, the web-based

reporting system used for the school lunch program. All cost documentation must be kept on file for review.

- Schools interested in applying for the FFVP are strongly encouraged to read USDA's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Handbook for Schools, which is available online at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ffvp/fresh-fruits-and-vegetable-program-handbook-schools>
- **All newly selected schools MUST participate in an orientation, or your school will be eliminated.** (Specific dates & locations to be announced.)

C- USE OF FUNDS

- Funds are to be used primarily to purchase **fresh** fruits and vegetables to be made available at no charge to students. A small percentage of funds may be used for operating and administrative costs, such as labor for preparation and distribution of fruits and vegetables, equipment, and administrative costs to manage the program.

D- HOW TO APPLY

- **Submit and Certify the 2024-2025 FFVP Application Packet in SNEARS by June 30, 2024** for consideration to participate in the 2024-2025 FFVP. **Applications submitted and certified after June 30, 2024 will be disqualified.**
- If you have questions, contact Michelle Murdock at 609-439-1265 or Jackie Bricker at 609-984-0692.
- See **Instructions for Completing FFVP Applications in SNEARS.**

E- PROGRAM TIMELINE

- | | |
|---|---|
| • June 30, 2024 | FFVP Application Packet Due |
| • July 30, 2024 | Notification of Selected Schools |
| • August & September 2024
(Specific dates to be announced) | Mandatory orientation for schools new to FFVP |
| • September 2024 | FFVP Orientation and Voucher Webinars available Online. |

Application packets must be Submitted and Certified in SNEARS by June 30, 2024.

NEW FFVP Application Instructions



*Only the **Submitter** and **Alternate Submitter** listed on your Child Nutrition Program's Application Packet **can complete the FFVP Application in SNEARS**, the web-based reporting system used for the school lunch program.

***Principals, Teachers, School Nurses, etc.... can access a PDF fillable application worksheet at:** https://www-agr.state.nj.us/AG_SNEARS2/resourcesAndTraining/resources
Scroll down on your left and click on "Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program". The new FFVP application can be found and downloaded at this location. You can enter the application information but you **must send it to your Food Service Director or Board of Education office so they can enter your application onto SNEARS**, the web-based reporting system used for the school lunch program.

SNEARS FFVP Application

1. Initial step is to go to www.nj.gov., just as you would to complete FFVP vouchers.
 - Press the **Login** button on the top left of screen.
 - Enter the **Login ID** and **Password**.
 - Select the **Food and Nutrition Electronic Services link**.
2. Click on the **FFVP**, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, **link to access Application**.
3. On the next screen, click on **FFVP Application**.
4. Select your **School Food Authority, SFA**. Next, hit **Continue**.
5. On the next screen, click on **Site Application**. This will take you to the next screen where all your schools will be listed.
6. Click on the school that you want to submit a FFVP application for. Complete FFVP application questions.
7. At the end of the application, you will have 2 selections:
 - **Complete Later** (All data entered will be saved. The status of the application will indicate "Incomplete".)
 - **Save for Submission** (If you click on this, you can still go back into the application to make changes.)
8. After you have completed and saved all your FFVP applications, click on the box at the bottom, **Back to Application Summary**.

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9. The next step is to click on the **Agreement and Certification**. At the bottom of this screen **click on the box agreeing to the terms listed above**. Next, click on **Save** at the bottom of the screen.
10. After you have completed your Agreement and Certification, click on **Submit for Certification**.
11. A **message** will be **sent to the Certifier** to Certify the FFVP applications.

Certifying FFVP Application

1. Only the **Certifier** and **Alternate Certifier** listed on your Child Nutrition Program's Application Packet can certify the FFVP applications.
2. After selecting your **SFA**, hit **Continue**.
3. On the next screen you must **click on the box next to "We the Principal..."**.
4. Next, click on **Certify for State Approval**. Be sure on the next screen that it indicates that the Site Application and Agreement and Certification have been Certified.

Questions

*If you have any **questions** throughout the FFVP application process, call Michelle Murdock at (609) 439-1265 or Jackie Bricker at (609) 690-8928.