

2019 Farm to School Census Webinar Follow-up

Questions and Answers

The following questions and written answers are based on questions submissions from participants of a webinar covering the upcoming Farm to School Census intended for State Agencies administering National School Feeding Programs on June 6, 2019.

Q. What percent of the Census completion rate per State is considered successful?

The expected response rate for School Food Authorities (SFAs), defined as the proportion of the sample that completes a questionnaire, is 80 percent. This expectation is based on requirements from the Office of Budget and Management and the high response rate of the previous Census, which was 70 percent. Throughout the data collection period, Abt Associates will continue to send reminders to the SFAs who have yet to complete the Census.

Q. How is Abt Associates collecting SFA contact information?

In winter 2018-2019, an FNS contractor reached out to State agencies that administer the school meals programs to obtain full contact information for all SFAs that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). FNS has provided Abt Associates with that contact information. States will not be expected to provide contact information, as they have already done so.

Q. How does a State agency communicate contact information for the SFAs?

If a State agency has an update to provide regarding its contact information, contact Ashley Chaifetz at ashley.chaifetz@usda.gov.

Q. Could USDA partner with the Department of Education to ask the question about school gardens and share the information?-

The design for the 2019 Census has already been approved by the Office of Management and Budget and does not include that partnership.

Q. Will the Census Preparation Worksheet be available by a link from the USDA web page?-

FNS will make the Census Preparation Worksheet available via Partnerweb for State agencies to share with their SFAs.

Q. What will USDA be providing to help with outreach? Will there be any images intended for presentations and/or social media?

FNS is developing additional materials that States can use for reference when conducting outreach with SFAs and relevant Farm to School Partners. Already-available materials include the Farm to School Census webinar from June 6, 2019, related Questions and Answers from the webinar, the Census Preparation Worksheet, and “Things to Know about the Farm to School Census.” Additional materials will be made available closer to the data collection period.

Q. Will the email invitations be tailored to each school so that they can only use the link provided in the email to access the Farm to School Census?

SFAs will be recruited by email and will receive a unique link to participate in the Census. If an SFA has lost the email with the link, that individual can email farmtoschool@abtassoc.com to have it re-sent to them. SFAs should also add that email address to their address books to assure that the recruitment emails will not go to their spam (“junk”) folders.

Q. Is the Census Preparation Worksheet 508 compliant?

Yes, the Census Preparation Worksheet is 508 compliant.

Q. If one SFA says anything from adjoining States is local, and other says anything within 50 miles is local, will this be similar data?

Currently, FNS does not have information regarding the definition of local at the SFA-level. As a result, SFAs are asked to provide their own definition of local, which will allow FNS to better understand the predominant definitions—or if SFAs have a set definition at all. FNS understands that SFAs might use more than one definition of local in its procurement practices and expects for that SFA to choose the most-used definition from the available options.

Q. Will you be reaching out to all SFAs, i.e., traditional public schools, charters, federal schools, residential child care institutions, private and non-public schools? If so, can you refer to them all as local education agencies (LEAs) instead of school districts?

The 2019 Census will be conducted at the SFA-level and will include all public, private, and charter schools that participate in NSLP. Given that LEAs and SFAs are not always the same, FNS will **not** refer to SFAs as LEAs or school districts.

In prior Census efforts, FNS has used “school districts” when sharing summaries of Census data so that the information could be appreciated by a broader audience. FNS is aware that this may, in fact, cause some confusion.

Q. How will the Census consider multiple school districts managed by one SFA?

The SFA director is expected to answer the Census one time for all schools or districts within it, making it particularly important for that individual to organize the data ahead of time.