



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1300 • Voice: (202) 720-4623 • Email: oc.news@usda.gov • Web: http://www.usda.gov

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Contact:
Regan Hopper (703) 305-2281

USDA AWARDS \$18 MILLION TO STATES FOR OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE IN NUTRITION AID

WASHINGTON, Sept. 26, 2008 - USDA's Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services today announced \$18 million in bonus awards to states in fiscal year (FY) 2007 for outstanding and timely customer service in the administration of what has been known as the Food Stamp Program, soon to be known by name change from Congress as "SNAP" - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

"I am truly inspired by the meaningful work our State partners do each day to help us improve the health and wellness of those we work so hard to serve," said USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Nancy Montanez Johner. "Increasing participation among eligible individuals in need of food stamp benefits is crucial to reduce food insecurity and combat hunger domestically."

Each year USDA awards a total of \$12 million in high performance bonuses to the eight States with the best and most improved program access index. The program access index is the ratio of participants to the number of people below 125 percent of poverty. The States with best program access index for FY 2007 are Missouri, Tennessee, Oregon, Hawaii, West Virginia and Kentucky. The States with the most improved program access index are Hawaii, Missouri, Vermont and New Hampshire.

USDA also awards a total of \$6 million among the six States with the timeliest processed applications. States receiving these awards are Massachusetts, West Virginia, Missouri, North Carolina, Montana and Louisiana.

USDA's 15 nutrition assistance programs reach one in five Americans each year and serve as our Nation's first-line of defense against hunger. The Food Stamp Program is USDA's largest domestic nutrition assistance program serving more than 28 million individuals each month.

The 14 states listed will receive the following high performance bonus awards:

BEST PROGRAM ACCESS INDEX

State	Bonus Amount
Missouri	\$2,506,980
Tennessee	\$3,194,735

Oregon	\$1,908,681
Hawaii	\$462,480
West Virginia	\$1,059,591
Kentucky	\$2,230,082

MOST IMPROVED PROGRAM ACCESS INDEX

State	Bonus Amount
Hawaii	*
Missouri	*
Vermont	\$306,995
New Hampshire	\$330,456
Total	\$12,000,000

BEST APPLICATION PROCESSING TIMELINESS RATE

State	Bonus Amount
Massachusetts	\$1,056,941
West Virginia	\$579,403
Missouri	\$1,302,504
North Carolina	\$1,660,377
Montana	\$238,990
Louisiana	\$1,161,785
Total	\$6,000,000

Hawaii and Missouri are recognized in both the best and most improved for the program access index category. States can receive only one bonus in a category.

In June 2008, the Food Stamp Program awarded \$30 million to states for excellence in administering benefits. Awardees included South Dakota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Missouri, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Washington, Florida, Arizona, Alabama Minnesota, Oregon and Kansas.

On October 1, 2008, the Food Stamp Program will change its name to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) -- a program that supports individuals and families by putting healthy foods within reach. For more information, visit www.fns.usda.gov/snap.

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