

# Access, Participation, Eligibility and Certification (APEC) Study Series

*links to homepage*

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## APEC IV Data Collection

### What is APEC IV?

APEC IV is the fourth iteration of the Access, Participation, Eligibility and Certification Study. The goal of APEC IV is to provide up-to-date and nationally representative data on the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Specifically, APEC IV has the following three research objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Generate a national estimate of the annual amount of improper payments (overpayments and underpayments) for school year (SY) 2023-2024
- **Objective 2:** Examine the relationship of student (household), school, and school food authority (SFA) characteristics to error rates.
- **Objective 3:** Evaluate whether USDA's online application generates a more accurate and complete accounting of household size and income.

### Who will be asked to participate?

Participants in APEC IV will be randomly selected and will include **XX** State Child Nutrition (CN) Agencies, **XXX** SFAs, **XXX** schools (Community Eligibility Program (CEP) and non-CEP schools), and **XXX** households with a student within the selected schools.

### What will participants be asked to do?

State CN Agencies:

- Provide electronic meal claim and/or meal aggregation data for SY 2023-2024
- Help engage and recruit their selected SFAs

## A1. APEC IV Data Collection

### School Food Authorities (SFAs):

- Help engage and recruit schools to participate in the study
- Complete or provide the following:
  - Application abstraction
  - CEP records review (if applicable)
  - Student data for household sampling
  - Meal claim data
  - Administrative data
  - Web-based survey about how they administer the NSLP and SBP

### Schools:

- Provide meal count data
- Facilitate observations of breakfast and lunch meal services by trained data collectors
- Assist with in-person records abstraction (as needed)
- Participate in interviews on school meal operations

### Student Households:

- Complete a telephone survey about their experience with the NSLP and SBP
- Provide income documentation
- Complete an in-person interview about the process for applying for the NSLP and SBP (conducted with a small group of households).

## **What is the study timeline?**

### Spring 2021 – Summer 2022

- Develop data collection and recruitment materials
- Sample SFAs and Schools

### Fall 2022 – Spring 2023

- Recruit and SFAs and Schools
- Data Request #1 from SFA for Household Sampling
- Prepare for Household Data Collection

### August 2023 – July 2024

- Recruit households and conduct interviews
- Data Request #2 from SFA for Household Sampling
- Conduct On-site SFA and School Data Collection

### Fall 2025 – Spring 2026

- Produce Final APEC IV Study Report
- Report study findings

**Will the information collected be secure and private?**

All information gathered from States, SFAs, Schools and Households is for research purposes only and is kept private. All responses will be grouped with those of other participants and no individual State, SFA, school or household will be identified in public documents or data files. All participants will be informed of study privacy procedures.

Participation in the study is voluntary and will not affect meal reimbursements to participating SFAs and schools, nor will it affect the meal program benefits received by participating students and/or households.