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| U S Department of State |
| Coordinating and Completing Surveys Affecting Your Post’s Cost of Living Allowance |
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| Office of Allowances  4/1/2017 |

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Part I  
For the Management Officer Coordinating the Surveys

## Essential Forms

Available on State’s internal forms website: <http://eforms.a.state.gov/searchform.aspx> and external forms website: <https://eforms.state.gov/>

* Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ)(*DS1996*)
* Retail Price Schedule (RPS)[*DS2020, Parts 1-3]* 
  + *Part 1 = Outlet Report*
  + *Part 2 = Living Pattern Questionnaire Summary*
  + *Part 3 = Retail Prices*
* DS2021, Part 4 (Embassy or Consulate Store Survey) (if applicable)
* Instructions for Completing the DS2020 Retail Price Schedule, Parts 1-3 *(DS2020I)*
* Instructions for Completing the DS2021 Embassy or Consulate Store Survey, Retail Price Schedule, Part 4 *(DS2021I)*

## Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR)

Available on Office of Allowances’ internal website <http://aoprals.a.state.gov> and external website <https://aoprals.state.gov>

## Online Training

The Office of Allowances (A/OPR/ALS) working together with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) (<http://fsi.state.sbu/>) has put together two distance learning courses related to the Retail Price Survey. The first course is intended for the person entering information into eAllowances and the second is intended for the person collecting price data.

**PA462 – eAllowances: Retail Price Schedule**

**PA463 – Post Allowance: Retail Price Collecting**

## Instructions for posts with eAllowances

For posts with eAllowances <http://eallowances.a.state.sbu/DefaultPost.aspx> you will collect your prices from the outlets on the hard copy versions (DS2020, Part 3 and if applicable DS2021, Part 4) and then enter the prices into eAllowances.

**\*Note**: *A mobile COLA price collector app for BlackBerry is available. For more information see* [*COLA Price Collector App Overview*](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=156&menu_id=75)*.*

For a first-time submission of the Retail Price Schedule in eAllowances you will “add” the Retail Price Schedule under “Surveys”.

If you have already submitted a Retail Price Schedule via eAllowances you can “copy” that survey for your current survey. It will carry over all information except the new prices. Once you’ve copied the previous survey you can edit where necessary.

**VERY IMPORTANT: Make sure you do *not* mark the box for “New Living Pattern” *unless* you are conducting a new Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ) survey (only required every five years).** If you are conducting a new LPQ survey, you will fill in DS 2020 Part 1 (Outlet Report) and DS 2020 Part 2 (Living Pattern Questionnaire Summary).

## Instructions for posts without eAllowances

For posts without eAllowances: You will complete the DS 2020 Part 1 (Outlet Report) and DS 2020 Part 2 (Living Pattern Questionnaire Summary) and collect your prices from the outlets on the DS 2020, Part 3 and if applicable DS 2021, Part 4. The DS 2020, Part 3 can be found on the Allowances internal website <http://aoprals.a.state.gov> and external website <https://aoprals.state.gov/>

## More Information

### 1. What is a Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ)?

The LPQs provide an overview of employees’ and family members’ spending habits at post to compare with employees’ and family members’ spending habits in Washington, DC. For example, of their money available to spend on goods and services [“spendable income”], the average family residing in Washington, DC spends 10.4% on food away from home; 11.8% on food at home (4.3% on Meat and Dairy Products; 4.5% on Groceries; 3.0% on Fruits & Vegetables); and 19.5% on transportation (16.4% privately owned vehicle; 3.1% public)

### 2. What is the Retail Price Schedule (RPS)?

The RPS enables you to summarize your post’s costs for goods and services to compare with Washington, DC’s costs for those same goods and services. Ensure that any special arrangement and/or facilities (such as Embassy or Consulate Store) available to post employees are identified and priced (exclude prices for U.S. military facilities because the Office of Allowances has them).

### 3. When is the Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ) and Retail Price Schedule (RPS) due?

The LPQ Survey is required at least every five years or whenever there is a substantial change in overall employee living patterns at the post.

The RPS is required at least every two years or whenever there are substantial changes affecting living costs.

The Office of Allowances will remind the post of this requirement. You can also check the Office of Allowances’ internal website at <http://aoprals.a.state.gov> to check the required date under “[Survey Status by Post](http://aoprals.a.state.sbu/rates/Survey.asp?menu_id=91)”. First select country then location within country.

If the LPQ survey is required, distribute the LPQs to USG employees of all agencies including active duty Military at post as early as possible in the process. Stress the importance of the LPQ in determining any post (“cost of living”) allowance adjustment for your post (see [DSSR 074.43](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) for additional guidance).

### 4. Who should be the price collector?

Select only U.S. citizens as price collectors (per [DSSR 074.45](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75), this should not be delegated to non-American employees) who will compile the information from the completed LPQs and collect the prices from the local retail outlets and (if applicable) the embassy or consulate store.

The price collector(s) must be familiar with DSSR 070 (particularly [074.46](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) “Basic Survey Techniques”; [074.47](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) “Selection of Outlets and Selection of Prices”; and [074.48](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) “Summary of Survey Preparation Guidelines”).

They should have access to the following forms and instructions to take to the outlets:

* Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ)(*DS1996*)
* Retail Price Schedule (RPS)[*DS2020, Parts 1-3]* 
  + *Part 1 = Outlet Report*
  + *Part 2 = Living Pattern Questionnaire Summary*
  + *Part 3 = Retail Prices*
* DS2021, Part 4 (Embassy or Consulate Store Survey) (if applicable)
* Instructions for Completing the DS2020 Retail Price Schedule, Parts 1-3 *(DS2020I)*
* Instructions for Completing the DS2021 Embassy or Consulate Store Survey, Retail Price Schedule, Part 4 *(DS2021I)*

**\*Note**: *A mobile COLA price collector app for BlackBerry is available. For more information see* [*COLA Price Collector App Overview*](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=156&menu_id=75)*.*

### 5. Preparation for Price Collection

Before your price collectors venture into the marketplace be sure that:

1. You get permission for them to collect prices from the retail outlet managers;
2. Encourage them to take the appropriate blank RPS pages with them; and
3. Encourage them to plan well in advance to avoid follow-up trips.

**\*Note**: *A mobile COLA price collector app for BlackBerry is available. For more information see* [*COLA Price Collector App Overview*](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=156&menu_id=75)*.*

### 6. Certifications

On page 1 of the RPS Outlet Report (DS2020 – Parts 1-2) you are certifying that

1. The retail outlets are based on the current employee living pattern (LPQ) information and
2. That price selection is according to [DSSR 074.45](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) which states: *“This survey must accurately reflect foreign living costs for the average American family. The index numbers computed from the survey are designed to reflect costs for the average Washington, DC family living in the foreign area. This family consists of three to four persons with a base salary of a GS-11, Step 5, without locality pay (approximately FS-5, Step 11)”* [note: now FS-5, Step 6 on overseas salary table].

### 7. Prior to Survey Submission

Review and certify the completeness and accuracy of all data in accordance with the guidelines in the DSSR ([074.49](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) “Review Before Submission”). You should be familiar with DSSR reporting requirements (070, 072.34, 911.4 and 920).

**Remember the following points:**

1. To be considered valid, the RPS must show signed concurrence from all civilian U.S. agencies and the senior officer of the Uniformed Services at your post (for non-concurrence see [DSSR 074.45](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75)) and
2. To reasonably reflect living conditions at post at least 67% of the employees of *all* agencies at post must return completed LPQs ([DSSR 074.44](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75)).

### 8. Submitting Your Surveys

**For posts with eAllowances:**

The RPS will be submitted electronically. In the eAllowances Retail Price Schedule survey, under the “Approval” tab Representatives/Certifiers, Agencies and Price Collectors should be filled in. Under “Manager Action” fill in your name and title and mark the box “Send to ALS” and press send.

Note: Because you are submitting the RPS electronically (which does not show initials or signatures), you can scan page 1 of the hard copy RPS with agency representative clearance initialing as well as your certification signature and e-mail this page to the attention of the Team Leader/Supervisor in the Office of Allowances responsible for your post (available on the internal [website](http://aoprals.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=284&menu_id=102)). The post can scan the LPQs (instead of mailing them) and e-mail the scanned copies to the appropriate Team Leader/Supervisor or they can be emailed to AllowancesO@state.gov. If the post chooses to scan the LPQs, the post must keep the original LPQs on file for inspection or audit purposes for at least five years or until the next LPQ survey (if that occurs sooner).

**For posts without eAllowances:**

Forward the completed report along with LPQs (if applicable) to:

U.S. Department of State

Office of Allowances

2401 E Street NW

Rm. L-314, SA-1

Washington, DC 20522-0103

Part II  
For USG Employees & Family Members Completing Your Living Pattern Questionnaire

## Essential Forms

Available on State’s internal forms website: <http://eforms.a.state.gov/searchform.aspx> and external forms website: <https://eforms.state.gov/>

* Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ)(DS1996)

## How is a Post Allowance (COLA) established?

The Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ) information is compiled for all USG employees/family members at post and is used along with prices reported in your post’s Retail Price Schedule (RPS) to calculate a “cost of living” index (Washington, DC = 100) for your post. Addressing your assignment in a foreign area, the law allows that when the overall costs of goods and services due to your foreign assignment are significantly higher (at least 2.5% more or an index of 102.5) than costs of goods and services for a U.S. assignment, you will be provided a “cost of living” allowance to assist you in maintaining the purchasing power of a U.S. assignment.

## Completing your Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ)

### Step 1: Tell us about yourself (p 1)

* What agency do you work for?
* What is your Pay Schedule? Grade?
* What is the number of individuals residing with you as your immediate family – not including yourself?
* What is the length of time at your current location?

### Step 2: Identify primary and secondary *local* outlets

* Identify the primary and secondary *local* outlets (by full name) used by you and your family for each of the listed consumer goods and services (pp 2&3) as well as the currency you are required to use for purchases at these local outlets.
* List by percentage (totaling 100%) the relative use of local, special and other sources to obtain goods and services (pp 3&4).
* If you indicate subsequent purchases from Other Foreign Locations remember to fill in the requested information in box 9 on page 5.
* List by percentage (totaling 100%) the relative use of commodities and services (p 5).

### Step 3: Fill in the Details (p 5)

* Household Help and Comments – If you employ household help, indicate the number of hours per week that they work. Mark the appropriate box(es) justifying your need for household help – for example, severe conditions at post require special treatment when preparing foods or the medical officer requires that all water be boiled prior to consumption.
* Your post could qualify for a higher expenditure weight above the standard one if

1. the majority of people at post need to hire household help; and
2. the post shows that extreme conditions exist to warrant adjustment to a higher weight.

* In the comments section share any cost-of-living concerns. The Office of Allowances’ staff members do read these comments!

### Step 4: Submit your Completed Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ)

Return to page 1 of your Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ). Print and sign your name and enter the date. Submit your completed LPQ as requested. Your information is considered equally with all other employees at post.

Part III  
For the Price Collector  
Completing the Retail Price Schedule

## Essential Forms

Available on State’s internal forms website: <http://eforms.a.state.gov/searchform.aspx> and external forms website: <https://eforms.state.gov/>

* Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ)(*DS1996*)
* Retail Price Schedule (RPS)[*DS2020, Parts 1-3]* 
  + *Part 1 = Outlet Report*
  + *Part 2 = Living Pattern Questionnaire Summary*
  + *Part 3 = Retail Prices*
* *DS2021, Part 4 (Embassy or Consulate Store Survey)*
* Instructions for Completing the DS2020 Retail Price Schedule, Parts 1-3 *(DS2020I)*
* Instructions for Completing the DS2021 Embassy or Consulate Store Survey, Retail Price Schedule, Part 4 *(DS2021I)*

## Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR)

Available on Office of Allowances’ internal website <http://aoprals.a.state.gov> and external website <https://aoprals.state.gov>

## Online Training

The Office of Allowances (A/OPR/ALS) working together with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) (<http://fsi.state.sbu/>) has put together two distance learning courses related to the Retail Price Survey. The first course is intended for the person entering information into eAllowances and the second is intended for the person collecting price data.

**PA462 – eAllowances: Retail Price Schedule**

**PA463 – Post Allowance: Retail Price Collecting**

## For posts with eAllowances

You will collect the prices from the outlets on the hard copy versions (DS2020, Part 3 and if applicable DS2021, Part 4) and then enter these prices into eAllowances.

**\*Note**: *A mobile COLA price collector app for BlackBerry is available. For more information see* [*COLA Price Collector App Overview*](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=156&menu_id=75)*.*

For a first-time submission of the Retail Price Schedule in eAllowances you will “add” the Retail Price Schedule under “Surveys”.

If you have already submitted a Retail Price Schedule via eAllowances you can “copy” that survey for your current survey. It will carry over all information except the new prices.

**VERY IMPORTANT: Make sure you do *not* mark the box for “New Living Pattern” *unless* you are conducting a new Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ) survey (only required every five years).** Once you’ve copied the previous survey you can edit where necessary.

**\*Note:** *If you are conducting a new LPQ survey, you will fill in DS 2020 Part 1 (Outlet Report) and DS 2020 Part 2 (Living Pattern Questionnaire Summary).*

## For posts without eAllowances

You will complete the DS 2020 Part 1 (Outlet Report) and DS 2020 Part 2 (Living Pattern Questionnaire Summary) and collect your prices from the outlets on the DS2020, Part 3 and if applicable DS2021, Part 4.

## More Information

### 1. Review the Department of State Standardized Regulations

Gain familiarity with DSSR reporting requirements, particularly [DSSR 074.45](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) which states: *“This survey must accurately reflect foreign living costs for the average American family. The index numbers computed from the survey are designed to reflect costs for the average Washington, DC family living in the foreign area. This family consists of three to four persons with a base salary of a GS-11, Step 5, without locality pay (approximately FS-5, Step 11)”* [note: now FS-5, Step 6 on overseas salary table].

Other recommended sections for review are:

* [DSSR 074.46](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) “Basic Survey Techniques”
* [DSSR 074.47](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) “Selection of Outlets and Selection of Prices” and
* [DSSR 074.48](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75) “Summary of Survey Preparation Guidelines”.

### 2. If You’re Doing a New Living Pattern Questionnaire

If the Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ) survey is required make sure employees of all agencies have turned in completed LPQs. For the LPQ survey to be statistically valid and reasonably reflect living conditions at the post at least 67% of all eligible USG employees (one employee per household and employees at post for six months or longer are eligible) must submit completed LPQs ([DSSR 074.44](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=236&menu_id=75)).

From these LPQs you will obtain the primary and secondary local outlets that you will visit to obtain the prices for the Retail Price Schedule (RPS) (DS2020, Part 3, Retail Prices). DS2020, Part 3, Retail Prices and DS2021, Part 4, Embassy or Consulate Store Survey (if applicable) capture the costs of goods and services at post which will be compared with costs of goods and services in Washington, DC. See below for compiling the LPQ data.

### 3. How to Compile the Living Pattern Questionnaire (LPQ) data

If a Living Pattern Questionnaire survey has been conducted, create three spreadsheets to compile the data.

From the spreadsheets transfer the summary data to the DS2020, Part 1, Retail Price Schedule Outlet Report and DS2020, Part 2, Retail Price Schedule Living Pattern Questionnaire Summary.

If your post has eAllowances, data input instructions are included with each spreadsheet discussed below, however, if a new LPQ survey has been conducted it will be easier to record the summary data on hard copy DS2020, Parts 1 and 2 then transfer the data to the eAllowances Retail Price Schedule.

**First Spreadsheet:**

On the first spreadsheet compile the primary and secondary local outlets as reported on pages 2 and 3 of the individual LPQs. Transfer the summary data to DS2020, Part 1, Retail Price Schedule Outlet Report, pages 3 and 4 (see DS-2020I, page 2 for Outlet Report instructions).

**\*Note:***In this example, the secondary outlet would not be the second most reported in the primary outlet column. It is the most frequently reported in the secondary outlet column.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| CONSUMER GOODS  AND SERVICES: MEATS | PRIMARY LOCAL  OUTLET | SECONDARY LOCAL OUTLET |
| LPQ 1 | STORE A | STORE B |
| LPQ 2 | STORE C | STORE A |
| LPQ 3 | STORE B | STORE C |
| LPQ 4 | STORE A | STORE C |
| LPQ 5 | STORE A | STORE C |
| LPQ 6 | STORE B | STORE C |
| TALLIES | STORE A=3;B=2;C=1 | STORE A=1;B=1;C=4 |
| SUMMARY DATA | STORE A | STORE C |

**Input instructions for posts with eAllowances:**

If this is the first survey entered in eAllowances, under the “Outlets” tab enter the primary and secondary outlet names as recorded on the hard copy DS2020 Part 1.

Under “Outlet Assignments” enter the outlets for the most used and second most used outlets for each subcategory as determined by the LPQs.

If this is not the first survey entered in eAllowances and the previous survey was copied to create the current survey, the outlets will have carried over to the current survey from the previous survey ***unless there is a new LPQ survey***.

* If there is a new LPQ survey then enter the outlets into eAllowances from the hard copy DS2020 Part 1.
* If there is not a new LPQ survey the outlets should be as determined by the previous LPQs.

**Second spreadsheet:**

On the second spreadsheet compile the Relative Importance of Various Sources of Supply for subcategories as reported on pages 3 and 4 of the individual LPQs (local market, special facilities, supply brought to current location, subsequent purchases from the U.S. and subsequent purchases from other foreign locations).

**EXAMPLE OF A SUBCATEGORY**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Local | Emb.Com | Mil.Com | Brought | Subs.US | Subs.Other | Total=100% |
| LPQ 1 | 30 | 20 | 30 | 5 | 0 | 15 | 100 |
| LPQ 2 | 0 | 35 | 25 | 10 | 10 | 20 | 100 |
| LPQ 3 | 30 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 25 | 32 | 100 |
| LPQ 4 | 20 | 0 | 2 | 45 | 17 | 16 | 100 |
| COLUMN TOTAL | 80 | 60 | 65 | 60 | 52 | 83 | 400 |
| TOTAL/# OF LPQs | 80/4=  20 | 60/4=  15 | 65/4=  16.25=16 | 60/4=  15 | 52/4=  13 | 83/4=  20.75=21 | 400/4=  100 |
| SUMMARY DATA | 20 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 13 | 21 | 100 |

Repeat this procedure for each subcategory. Transfer the summary data to DS2020, Part 2, Living Pattern Questionnaire Summary, pages 6 and 7 “Relative Importance of Various Sources of Supply”. See DS2020I, page 2 for additional instructions/guidance.

***\*Note:*** *If the living patterns for civilians and Military members differ substantially, prepare a separate summary for each group and submit both summaries with the Retail Price Schedule.*

**For posts with eAllowances:**

If this is the first survey entered into eAllowances and it includes a new LPQ survey, under the “Living Pattern Summary” tab, you have the option of entering

1. the individual employee and Military member data; or
2. the summary data from the DS2020, Part 2, pages 6 and 7.

If the option is summary data it must be a single summary of either

1. the combined summary of both civilian and Military members; or
2. only the civilian summary if separate summaries were created for civilians and Military members.

If this is not the first survey entered in eAllowances and the previous survey was copied to create the current survey, the figures will have carried over to the current survey from the previous survey ***unless there is a new LPQ survey***.

* If there is a new LPQ survey then you have the option as described above of entering the individual LPQs or entering the summary data as captured on DS2020, Part 2, pages 6 and 7.
* If there is not a new LPQ survey the figures should be as determined by the previous LPQs.

**Third spreadsheet:**

On the third spreadsheet compile the Relative Use of Commodities and Services as reported on page 5 of the individual LPQs for Fruits, Meats/Seafood, Vegetables, Transportation, Dining, Special Arrangements for major furniture and household appliances, and Household Help. This Example is for Meats/Seafood

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Beef | Lamb | Pork | Poultry | Seafood | Total=100% |
| LPQ 1 | 2 | 25 | 8 | 25 | 40 | 100 |
| LPQ 2 | 0 | 30 | 0 | 70 | 0 | 100 |
| LPQ 3 | 83 | 0 | 15 | 0 | 2 | 100 |
| LPQ 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 98 | 100 |
| COLUMN  TOTAL | 85 | 55 | 23 | 97 | 140 | 400 |
| TOTAL/# OF LPQS | 85/4 =  21.25 = 21 | 55/4 =  13.75 = 14 | 23/4 = 5.75 =6 | 97/4 = 24.25 = 24 | 140/4 = 35 | 400/4 = 100 |
| SUMMARY DATA | 21 | 6 | 14 | 24 | 35 | 100 |

Transfer the summary data to DS2020, Part 2, page 8, Relative Use of Commodities and Services, except Household Help summary data which will be transferred to DS2020, Part 3, page 35. Example of Household Help tally:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | HOUSEKEEPER (may include cooking) HOURS PER WEEK | COOK (only)  HOURS PER WEEK |
| LPQ 1 | 40 | 10 |
| LPQ 2 | 18 | 7 |
| LPQ 3 | 0 | 0 |
| LPQ 4 | 34 | 15 |
| COLUMN TOTAL | 92 | 32 |
| TOTAL/# OF LPQS | 92/4 =23 | 32/4 = 8 |
| SUMMARY DATA | 23 | 8 |

See DS2020I, page 3 for additional instructions/guidance for Relative Use of Commodities and Services.

**For posts with eAllowances:**

If this is the first survey entered in eAllowances and new LPQs were not done, under the “Living Pattern Summary” tab at the “Relative Use” tab you will enter the summary data for Fruits, Meats/Seafood, Vegetables, Transportation and Dining from the hard copy DS2020, Part 2, page 8 or the data from each of the employee LPQs.

If you’ve conducted LPQs, this info can be entered individually from the LPQs as the sources of supply. If separate summaries were created for civilians and Military members, enter only the civilian summary.

If this is not the first survey entered in eAllowances and the previous survey was copied to create the current survey, the figures will have carried over to the current survey from the previous survey ***unless there is a new LPQ survey***.

### 4. Preparation for Price Collection

Before visiting the primary and secondary local outlets determined from the LPQs (either old or new), check with the Management Officer that he or she has requested approval to collect prices from the department store/outlet manager (s).

As you prepare to conduct the Retail Price Schedule survey you should print out and bring the following forms and instructions with you:

1. The post’s previous Retail Price Schedule (if this is not the first survey);
2. Blank pages of the current version of the Retail Price Schedule
   * DS2020, Part 3, Retail Prices
   * DS2021, Embassy or Consulate Store Survey, Part 4 (if applicable)
3. Item specifications contained in DS2020I (Instructions for Completing the DS2020 Retail Price Schedule, Parts 1-3) and DS2021I (Instructions for Completing the Embassy or Consulate Store Survey, Retail Price Schedule, Part 4); and
4. Completed Living Pattern Questionnaires (if a new survey was conducted).

**\*Note**: *A mobile COLA price collector app for BlackBerry is available. For more information see* [*COLA Price Collector App Overview*](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=156&menu_id=75)*.*

**Additional Tips:**

* Stick to the items listed on the forms.
* Enter prices for all items whether typically purchased by employees or not. Missing prices can negatively impact analysis results.
* All prices must be reported in the currency required for purchases.

### 5. Collecting prices from the local retail outlets.

Forms required: DS2020 Part 3 Retail Prices and DS2020I Instructions and Item Specifications for Retail Price Collecting (pages 2-12)

**Step 1: Getting started**

On the DS2020, Part 3 Retail Prices, fill in the outlets from DS2020, Part 1 Outlet Report if there is a new LPQ survey. If there is not a new LPQ survey then the outlets from the previous survey (which reflect those from the previous LPQs) should be used for the current survey. Fill in the tax rate and check the appropriate box indicating whether or not the tax is already included in the reported price.

**Step 2: Organizing your price collecting**

To help with your price collecting strategy, the following are the DS2020, Part 3 categories and subcategories of goods and services. The DS2020I Instructions Item Specifications should be followed and are shown in parentheses along with the survey page numbers.

Meat & Dairy Products (DS2020 pp 2-5; DS2020I pp 2-3)

* Beef (Steak, Roast, Hamburger)
* Pork (Chops, Loin Roast, Bacon, Ham)
* Lamb (Chops, Leg of)
* Poultry (Chicken)
* Seafood (Fresh Fish, Canned Fish)
* Dairy Products (Eggs, Ice Cream, Cheese, Yogurt)

Groceries (DS2020 pp 5-10; DS2020I pp 3-4)

* Milk (Fresh and non-dairy)
* Bread, Flour [Sliced Bread (White or Wheat), Flour]
* Cereal (ready-to-eat boxed and instant oatmeal)
* Rice/Pasta (Regular Rice, Uncooked Pasta)
* Tea/Coffee (Tea Bags, Instant, Ground and Whole Bean Coffee, K-Cups/Coffee Pods)
* Soft Drinks/Bottled Water (Carbonated Soft Drink, Bottled Drinking Water)
* Candy/ Sweetener (Candy Chocolate Bar, Granulated Sugar, Honey)
* Baby Food
* Other Fats (Cooking Oil, Olive Oil, Peanut Butter, Butter)

Fruits & Vegetables (DS2020 pp 10-12; DS2020I pp 4-5)

* Fresh Fruits (Oranges, Apples, Bananas, Blueberries, Strawberries)
* Fresh Vegetables (Potatoes, Green Beans, Carrots, Onions, Tomatoes, Spinach)
* Canned Fruits (Peaches, Pineapples, Pears)
* Fruit Juices (Apple, Orange, Tomato)
* Canned Vegetables (Green Peas, Corn, Tomatoes)
* Frozen Vegetables (Mixed Vegetables, French Fries)

Tobacco & Alcohol (DS2020 pp 13-14; DS2020I p 5)

* Table Wine (Non-Vintage)
* Whiskey (Non-Premium)
* Beer
* Cigarettes

Clothing (DS2020 pp 14-16; DS2020I pp 5-6)

* Men’s (Slacks, Dress Shirt, Dress Shoes)
* Women’s (Blouse, Skirt, Dress Slacks, Dress, Dress Shoes)
* Children’s (Jeans, Athletic Shoes)

Personal Care (DS2020 pp 17-19; DS2020I pp 6-7)

* Toiletries (Toothpaste, Disposable Razors, Sanitary Napkins/Tampons, Shampoo, Mouthwash)
* Laundry and Dry Cleaning (Launder Man’s Shirt, Dry Clean Man’s Slacks/Woman’s Suit)
* Hair Services (Man’s Regular Haircut, Woman’s Shampoo, Haircut & Blow Dry, Woman’s Hair Color, Child’s Haircut)

Household Furnishings (DS2020 pp 19-22; DS2020I pp 7-8)

* Appliances (Portable Mid-Size Microwave, Two Slice Toaster, Drip Coffee Maker, Coffee Brewing System, Blender)
* Washing Machine
* Computer Accessories (Black Ink Cartridge, Package Paper)
* Household Consumables (Disposable Diapers, Liquid/Powder Laundry Detergent)
* Telephone Service (Monthly mobile phone fee, Monthly Internet Service)

Medical (DS2020 pp 22-25; DS2020I pp 8-9)

* Medicine (Pain Reliever Compound, Adult Multi-Vitamins, Children’s Vitamins, Allergy
* Medication, Cough Syrup)
* Doctor (General Practitioner, Pediatrician)
* Dentist (Simple One Surface Filling, Simple Extraction, Prophylaxis, Bitewing)
* Hospital Facilities (Private Room, Semi-Private Room)

Recreation (DS2020 pp 25-29; DS2020I pp 9-10)

* Audio/Visual Supplies (DVD Movie, DVD Player)
* Photographic Supplies (Digital Photo Print, SD Card)
* Cable/Satellite TV (Cable TV, Satellite TV)
* Reading Material (Paperback Book, Daily Newspaper)
* Recreational Equipment (Bicycle)
* Recreational Activities (Movie Theater, Performing Arts, Sports Events, Gym Membership)
* Pet Food (Dry Cat Food, Dry Dog Food)
* Veterinary Visit (Veterinary Visit)

Public Transportation (DS2020 pp 30-31; DS2020I p 10)

* Taxi
* Bus
* Subway
* Airfare

Personally Owned Vehicle (DS2020 pp 31-33; DS2020I pp 10-12)

* Auto fuel (Regular Octane, High Octane, Diesel)
* Auto Maintenance (Oil Change, Motor Tune Up, Labor Charge Per Hour)
* Auto Parts (Radial Tire)
* Auto Insurance (All Inclusive/All Risk, Liability, Comprehensive, Collision)

Household Help (DS2020 pp 33-34; DS2020I p 12)

* Childcare (Outside the Home, In the Home of the Parent)
* Household Help (Housekeeper, Cook)

Food Away (DS2020 pp 35-36; DS2020I p 12)

* Breakfast
* Lunch
* Fast Food
* Dinner

**Step 3: Fill in the Details on DS2020, Part 3**

For example, under Meat and Dairy Products, you must indicate the quantity, unit and price for each type of beef product. In this example, beef steak in Tokyo costs 280 Yen, and is sold in common lots of 100 grams. Thus, quantity would be 100; unit would be grams; and price should read 280. Check to make sure that the price is for the quantity reported. It is understood that the price is in the local currency, therefore, “Yen” does not need to be indicated in the price column. If, however, the item is customarily purchased in other than the local currency, this must be stated in the description or comments column. Description should include, for example, local name of cut. Comments column is used for any clarifying information (e.g., only available frozen). Continue this process for all subcategory items. Follow DS2020I, Part 3 “Retail Price Collecting” Specifications for each item.

**Special Arrangements for Government Employees**

Most USG employees receive benefits other Americans in the private sector at the post do not. Thus, if special facilities/arrangements are available to post employees, then report the name of the facility/merchant and prices on the DS2020, Part 3 in the “Special Arrangements for Government Employees” area under the following subcategories: Laundry and Dry Cleaning; Hair Services, Doctor, Dentist, Recreational Activities, Auto Fuel, Auto Maintenance and Auto Parts. Military commissary and exchange prices should not be reported as the Office of Allowances has them.

### 6. Collecting prices from the Embassy or Consulate Store.

When a post has an embassy or consulate store or employee association store the price collector should complete DS2021, Part 4, in addition to DS2020 Parts 1 through 3. Instructions and item specifications are contained in DS2021I. Exclude prices for U.S. military facilities since the Office of Allowances already has them.

### 7. Final Steps

**For posts with eAllowances**

Under “Taxes” tab fill in ***only*** if taxes, tip or service charges are ***not*** included in the reported prices. If this is not the first survey entered in eAllowances and the previous survey was copied to create the current survey, the tax information will have carried over to the current survey from the previous survey ***unless there is a new LPQ survey***. If there is a new LPQ survey then enter the taxes, tip and service charges into eAllowances ***only*** if they are ***not*** included in the reported prices. If there is not a new LPQ survey, check that the data still apply for the current survey which copied over from the previous survey.

Under “Retail Price Schedule” tab fill in prices collected on DS2020, Part 3, Retail Prices.

Under “Embassy Commissary” tab fill in prices collected on DS2021, Part 4, Embassy or Consulate Store.

When all areas are completed let the Management Officer know that the eAllowances version is ready for his or her final review and approval and give the Management Officer the hard copy DS2020 Parts 1 & 2 (if a new LPQ survey was conducted); DS 2020 Part 3 (prices from local retail outlets); DS2021 Part 4 (prices from embassy or consulate store) (if applicable); and completed LPQs (if new LPQ survey was conducted).

**For posts without eAllowances**

Review the final report and return it (DS2020 Parts 1, 2 and 3); DS2021 Part 4 (if applicable); and completed LPQs (if applicable) to the Management Officer for his or her final review and approval. The package can then be mailed to:

U.S. Department of State

Office of Allowances

2401 E Street NW

Rm. L-314, SA-1

Washington, DC 20522-0103