

Appendix A
Research Issues and Corresponding Research
Questions

APPENDIX A. RESEARCH ISSUES AND CORRESPONDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Table A-1. Base Year research issues and revised research questions for SFA survey

Issue	Question
Student participation	<p>What is the level of participation in the NSLP and SBP?</p> <p>Do the patterns of participation (e.g., the percentage distribution of free, reduced, and paid meals served) and the rate of student participation vary by type of SFA?</p> <p>How do student participation rates vary for elementary and secondary schools?</p>
Meal prices	<p>What was the average price charged for full-price, reduced-price and adult lunches in SY 2010-11?</p> <p>What was the average price charged for full-price, reduced-price and adult breakfasts in SY 2010-11?</p> <p>How have prices changed in the past 5 years?</p> <p>What are the patterns of price change in the NSLP and SBP? How often do SFAs change meal prices? What is the typical size of the price increase?</p> <p>What factors influence SFA decisions about meal pricing? What steps are taken to avoid increased prices? What steps are taken to maintain participation if prices are increased?</p>
Revenues	<p>What were the total dollar receipts of the school food service program from cash receipts from sale of reimbursable meals? Federal reimbursements for reimbursable meals? State/local reimbursements for reimbursable meals? A la carte sales? Other revenue sources?</p> <p>Are State/local revenues provided on a per meal basis? For breakfast only? For lunch only? Are State revenues used to support any other aspects of the school food service program?</p> <p>How do revenues generated by full-price and reduced-price meals (prices charged plus meal reimbursement) compare to the Federal subsidy for free meals?</p>
Alternative meals/recouping credits	<p>What are the district policies and practices relating to providing children who are without funds a meal?</p> <p>How much debt has the school food service account encountered as a result of unpaid school meals? How much of this debt has the SFA successfully recovered?</p> <p>What steps has the district taken to collect payments for unpaid meals? How do these methods compare with other school programs?</p> <p>Do meal pricing practices include policies related to recouping credits when students don't have money to pay for meals?</p>
Food service characteristics	<p>What proportion of SFAs utilizes food service management companies?</p> <p>What types of kitchen facilities (self-prep; central kitchen; satellite) do SFAs utilize?</p> <p>What types of meal service systems (cafeteria configuration; eating locations; open vs. closed campuses, meal kiosks) do SFAs utilize?</p> <p>How much time is allocated for eating school lunches? In elementary schools, is lunch provided before/after recess?</p> <p>Are SFA food service facilities used to prepare foods for purposes other than NSLP and SBP? Are the facilities used to prepare reimbursable meals for other programs such as Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Elderly Nutrition</p>

Issue	Question
	<p>Program, Head Start, other schools or school systems, disaster feeding, etc.)?</p> <p>Are the facilities used to prepare food for other non-reimbursable purposes (catering school related events –athletic events, PTA meetings, public catering, school staff meals, other day care, etc.)?</p> <p>What types of non-USDA meal alternatives (e.g., vending machines, a la carte, open-campus privileges, school stores, etc.) are available in SFAs?</p>

Table A-1. Base Year research issues and revised research questions for SFA survey (continued)

Issue	Question
	<p>What SFAs utilize the Offer versus Serve option at the elementary school level?</p> <p>What type of menu planning options is being used by SFAs? Do SFAs conduct a formal nutritional analysis of their planned menus?</p> <p>Do SFAs make free potable water available where school meals are served?</p>
Involvement in other programs	<p>Do SFAs participate in the Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Program?</p> <p>Do SFAs participate in the farm to school activities?</p> <p>What SFAs provide snacks in an after-school program?</p> <p>Does your school district have a pre-K program? Do the children that participate in this program have access to school meals?</p> <p>Are any of your schools recognized as HealthierUS schools? At what level have these schools been recognized? Are any schools in the process of being recognized? What areas give you the most problems in attaining this recognition?</p>
Technical assistance	<p>What proportion of SFAs received training or technical assistance in SY 2010-11? How much training did SFAs receive and in what topic areas? Which SFA personnel received training?</p> <p>Do SFAs receive training and technical assistance from sources other than the State Agency? If so, who else provides assistance to SFAs?</p> <p>How useful do SFAs think is the training and technical assistance provided?</p> <p>What additional training and technical assistance do SFAs perceive are needed?</p>
Meal counting and claiming	<p>What type of technology is being used at the point of service to differentiate free/reduced-price/paid students (pin cards, fingerprint, etc.)?</p> <p>What type of payments are accepted (cash, pre-pay, on-line, etc.)?</p> <p>What type of training/oversight is given to cashiers to assist in their determination of reimbursable meals?</p>
Procurement issues	<p>Are SFAs using geographic preference in their procurement of foods? If yes, is it for all foods or just fresh produce?</p> <p>What methods are used to track rebates, discounts, or fees for service?</p> <p>Do SFAs use food purchasing specifications that include specific per-serving nutrient requirements? Are these product specifications required for all foods or just some foods? What nutritional information is requested from potential vendors? Is this information provided?</p>
Communication issues	<p>How do State Agencies communicate with local SFAs (written correspondence, blanket emails, etc.)? Does this vary by type of</p>

Issue	Question
	<p>information communicated (policy memos, announcements, commodity recalls, etc.)? How do SFAs communicate with households? Do they utilize a website? What information is provided households (menus, nutritional information, etc.)?</p>
Commodity distribution issues	<p>What delivery system is being used in each State to provide USDA Foods? What additional charges do State Agencies assess SFAs for the delivery of USDA Foods on a per case basis (administrative fees, storage fees, delivery fees, etc.)? Has the increase in processing of USDA Foods over the years resulted in a lessening of the warehouse fees States collect? Do States do statewide procurements on behalf of their SFAs? If so, how does this operate? How well do States think the DoD Fresh Program involving USDA Foods is running? What are States and SFAs doing to ensure traceability of USDA Foods in the event of a hold or recall?</p>
Food safety issues	<p>What practices are in place to assure food safety risks are minimized for farm-to-school and other local purchases?</p>

Table A-2. Base Year research issues and revised research questions for State Agency survey

Issue	Question
Direct verification	Are State agencies currently conducting direct verification using Medicaid data? Using Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) data? How is this being implemented? Is direct verification available to all SFAs in the State? Do States anticipate conducting direct verification in the future?
Provision 2/3 ¹	How many SFAs/schools are operating under Provision 2 or 3?
Food service management companies	How many SFAs/schools are using Food Service Management Companies? How many of these are National companies? Regional companies? Local companies? Do State agencies require the use of a State-developed prototype contract?
Procurement issues	Do States do statewide procurements on behalf of their SFAs? If so, how does this operate?
Nutritional standards	Do States have nutrition standards that exceed federal requirements for foods and beverages offered in school meals? Do States have nutrition standards for foods and beverages offered in competition with the school meals? What is the impact on participation? On nutritional profiles?
Training and technical assistance	What are the minimum educational requirements of State Child Nutrition Directors? What is the education and background of current State Child Nutrition Directors? What specific topic areas do State Agencies include in training and technical assistance programs? Is technical assistance provided routinely or only in response to SFA requests? What mechanisms do State Agencies employ in providing technical assistance (e.g., written materials, workshops or courses, discussions

¹ PROVISION 2

- This Provision reduces application burdens and simplifies meal counting and claiming procedures. It allows schools to establish claiming percentages and to serve all meals at no charge for a 4 year period.
- Schools must serve meals to all participating children at no charge for a period of 4 years. During the first year, or base year, the school makes eligibility determinations and takes meal counts by type. During the next 3 years, the school makes no new eligibility determinations and counts only the total number of reimbursable meals served each day. Reimbursement during these years is determined by applying the percentages of free, reduced price and paid meals served during the corresponding month of the base year to the total meal count for the claiming month. The base year is included as part of the 4 years.
- At the end of each 4 year period, the State agency may approve 4 year extensions if the income level of the school's population remains stable.
- Schools electing this alternative must pay the difference between Federal reimbursement and the cost of providing all meals at no charge. The money to pay for this difference must be from sources other than Federal funds.
- Provision 2 has been an option for schools since publication of regulations in 1980.

PROVISION 3

- This Provision reduces application burdens and meal counting and claiming procedures. It allows schools to simply receive the same level of Federal cash and commodity assistance each year, with some adjustments, for a 4 year period.
- Schools must serve meals to all participating children at no charge for a period of 4 years. These schools do not make additional eligibility determinations. Instead, they receive the level of Federal cash and commodity support paid to them for the last year in which they made eligibility determinations and meal counts by type, this is the base year. For each of the 4 years, the level of Federal cash and commodity support is adjusted to reflect changes in enrollment and inflation. The base year is not included as part of the 4 years.
- At the end of each 4 year period, the State agency may approve 4 year extensions if the income level of the school's population remains stable.
- Schools electing this alternative must pay the difference between Federal reimbursement and the cost of providing all meals at no charge. The money to pay for this difference must be from sources other than Federal funds.
- Provision 3 has been an option for schools since 1995 through an implementing memorandum.

Issue	Question
	during program reviews, etc.)? How frequently is training provided? Which SFA personnel do State Agencies reach in their training and technical assistance programs? Has the level of training provided by State Agencies changed over the last three years? If so, why?

Table A-2. Base Year research issues and revised research questions for State Agency survey (continued)

Issue	Question
USDA Foods	<p>What delivery system is being used in each State to provide USDA Foods?</p> <p>What additional charges do State Agencies assess SFAs for the delivery of USDA Foods on a per case basis (administrative fees, storage fees, delivery fees, etc.)?</p> <p>Has the increase in processing of USDA Foods over the years resulted in a lessening of the warehouse fees States collect?</p> <p>How well do States think the DoD Fresh Program involving USDA Foods is running?</p> <p>What are States doing to ensure traceability of USDA Foods in the event of a hold or recall?</p>
Communications with SFAs	<p>How do State Agencies communicate with local SFAs (written correspondence, blanket emails, etc.)? Does this vary by type of information communicated (policy memos, announcements, commodity recalls, etc.)?</p>
Alternative meals	<p>What are current State policies and practices regarding providing children who are without funds a school meal?</p>
Charter schools	<p>How many charter schools are participating in the NSLP/SBP by State? For purposes of school food operations, are charter schools treated as a separate SFA, as part of an existing SFA, or a combination of both? Does this vary by State?</p>
State subsidies to SFAs	<p>Does the State provide financial resources for school meals to SFAs in the form of per meal subsidies? Does the State provide support for any other aspects of the school food service operation?</p>
Budget issues	<p>Have State budget issues impacted the use of State administrative funds? Do States have adequate staffing resources? Are States operating under a hiring freeze? Are States using contracted staff for certain functions?</p>