

Appendix A: Implementation Study Research Questions

Exhibit A.1: State-Level Research Questions

(Questions in italics added to expand on the specified research questions)

RQ1:	How difficult is it to implement the Community Eligibility Option? <i>Why did you choose to implement it/apply for funding? Why not? What were the barriers to implementation? What were the facilitators?</i>
RQ2:	How are the notification and public reporting requirements for State agencies implemented? Are these requirements difficult to meet? <i>How are the messages to the LEAs developed? How are the messages to the LEAs communicated?</i>
RQ3:	For LEAs identified as eligible for the Community Eligibility Option, is there any effort on the part of State Agencies to verify that the enrollment and identified student data from either the Verification Summary Report (FNS-724) or direct certification system is accurate? <i>If so, how is this done? What effect, if any, does the verification process have on the administration of the Community Eligibility Option? If there is a verification process, who is primarily responsible for the verification of data? If the verification process is not done, what are the primary reasons?</i>
RQ4:	Do State Agencies receive timely information (e.g., lists of eligible and near-eligible schools, notification of desire to participate) from LEAs with one or more eligible schools? <i>How do the State Agencies receive this information from LEAs? Is the format for the information developed by the LEA or dictated by the State Agency?</i>
RQ5:	What do State Agencies do to confirm that the enrollment and number of Identified Students in individual schools an LEA has identified as eligible are correct? <i>Are there any aspects of this process that have enhanced the State Agency's data-tracking mechanisms?</i>
RQ6:	Have State Agencies had to alter their financial payment system to accommodate the meal reimbursement payments for schools/LEAs participating in the Community Eligibility Option? <i>If so, how have the payment systems been altered? What have been the barriers to successful implementation of the financial payment system to accommodate the Community Eligibility Option? What have been the facilitators? To what extent has it been an issue to have only select LEAs or schools participate in the Community Eligibility Option?</i>
RQ7: ^a	How many of the LEAs that choose the Community Eligibility Option previously offered free NSLP lunches, free SBP breakfasts, or both for all students in participating schools?
RQ8: ^a	How many LEAs elect the Option district wide, for some schools, or by groups of schools?

^a In addition to the semi-structured State interviews, State administrative data, provided to the study team, will be used to answer these research questions.

Exhibit A.2: LEA-Level Research Questions

(Questions in italics added to expand on the specified research questions)

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- RQ1: How appealing is the Community Eligibility Option to high poverty LEAs? To high poverty schools?
How many LEAs and schools implement the Option? What is the take-up rate (percentage of eligible)?
What aspects of the Option make it appealing? What aspects make it unappealing?
What are the biggest perceived advantages of the Community Eligibility Option to other reimbursement approaches (traditional, Provisions 1,2,3)? The biggest perceived disadvantages? For participating LEAs, what is the decision-making process for electing the Community Eligibility Option?
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- RQ2: For those eligible schools/LEAs that do not elect the Community Eligibility Option, what are the barriers to participation?
What is the decision-making process for electing the Community Eligibility Option? Is the decision-making power with the individual school or the LEA? Who is tasked with making the final determination?
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- RQ3: For those eligible schools/LEAs that do not elect the Community Eligibility Option, what changes could be made to the special assistance Option (e.g. CE Option) to make it more appealing?
*What other incentives or programmatic aspects could be offered that would increase participation?
If these changes were made, would they elect it the next year? If these changes were not made, would they elect it next year?*
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- RQ4: How are the LEAs educating and informing the public about the Option?
How is this being communicated to individual schools informing the public about the Option? With whom does the responsibility of delivering the messages lie?
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- RQ5: What are the characteristics of eligible LEAs/schools that elect this Option and those that do not elect this option?
*If there are differences, why?
Characteristics include: Size of LEA/school, staffing structure, staffing resources available, current FRP eligibility processes (annual household applications, participation in Provision 1, 2, or 3), parent involvement, school stakeholder buy-in, other assistance programs such as Summer Food Programs or After School Programs.*
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- RQ6: What are the common misconceptions about the option in non-participating LEAs?
What are the root causes of these misconceptions?
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- RQ7: Are LEAs/schools operating under Provision 2 or 3 more likely to switch to the Community Eligibility Option or remain on Provision 2 or 3?
If they do switch, what was the main motivator? If they did not switch, what were the main reasons?
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- RQ8: If the multiplier^a was set at 1.3 instead of 1.6 would the Community Eligibility Option still be appealing to high poverty LEAs/schools?
If yes, at what point would it become unappealing? If not, could it be any lower than 1.6?
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- RQ9: How much administrative burden has been reduced with the election of the Community Eligibility Option? What is the associated cost savings to the LEA?
For whom has the burden been reduced? Is the “cost savings” actual cost, time, resources, etc.?
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- RQ10: Have LEAs been able to reallocate staff as a result of not having to take applications?
*If yes, what are the staff doing now that they weren’t previously? If no, why not?
How many LEAs have increased their meal offering due to the Community Eligibility Option? For example, how many now offer breakfast that did not offer breakfast previously?*
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- RQ11: How does the total meal reimbursements from the blended rates of the Community Eligibility Option compare with the total meal reimbursements received in prior years?
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- RQ12: How much do the identified student percentages differ from year to year?
Is there concern about meeting eligibility after the 4-year period? Is the 4-year term a sufficient incentive to participate?
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- RQ13: How often do LEAs use the first year identified student percentage (established in the year prior to electing the Option) instead of using more recently
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established percentages?

RQ14: Have any LEAs elected out of the Option? If so, what were the reasons?

How permanent or transient is the collection of eligible LEAs/schools that choose to participate over the 4 years? Once an LEA/school chooses to participate, what are the perceived benefits to the Community Eligibility Option that keep them participating? What are reasons LEAs/schools choose to suspend participation even if they are eligible? What are the reasons LEAs/schools who are eligible decide not to participate from the beginning?

RQ15: What portion of the identified student percentage is from direct certification and what portion is from other students not subject to verification?

To what extent do you think this would be consistent from year to year?

RQ16: *How did the LEA/school hear about the Community Eligibility Option? How was it communicated by the State Agency?*

Questions in *italics* are suggested additions.

^a The multiplier is the number used to determine the “number” of meals that will be reimbursed under the Community Eligibility Option, above the actual number of meals served. In this evaluation study of the Community Eligibility Option, the multiplier is set at 1.6. Therefore, if a school served 100 lunches, under the Community Eligibility Option, they would be reimbursed for 160 (100 x 1.6) lunches.