

**Appendix B6.**  
**Community-Based Stakeholder**  
**In-Depth Interview Guide**

**Introduction:** Thank you for agreeing to talk with us today. My name is [NAME OF INTERVIEWER] and I'm a researcher from [2M RESEARCH SERVICES OR ABT ASSOCIATES]. This is [NAME OF NOTE TAKER], also a researcher from [2M RESEARCH SERVICES OR ABT ASSOCIATES], and s/he will be taking notes during our conversation to ensure that we accurately capture all of the opinions and insights you provide us. 2M Research Services and Abt Associates were contracted by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service, referred to as FNS, to conduct an assessment of the challenges and successes your school and/or school district had in meeting the sodium standards. As a community stakeholder, your opinions and the information that you provide will be critical to this effort.

**[INSERT PARTICIPANT CONSENT SCRIPT]**

In order to ensure that we fully and accurately capture the points raised during today's discussion, we would like to digitally record this conversation. Please note that the interviews will remain private. There is a small risk of loss of privacy, but the research team has taken many steps to reduce this risk. Your identity and any information attributable to you will not be released to anyone outside of the research team. The recording will NOT be shared with FNS, your school or school district, or anyone outside the research team, unless you give us permission to do so. We will only use the recording to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Any identifying information, such as your name or anyone else's name that may be mentioned, will be omitted from the final transcript. No names will appear in the final report given to FNS. The recording of your interview will be deleted at the end of the study, after all data have been analyzed.

Do we have your permission to record this interview?

YES  Thank you. Do you have any questions before we begin?

NO  Okay. That is not a problem at all. We would like to ask for your patience, as we will need to take a little more time to note your responses by hand to ensure we accurately capture your insights. Do you have any questions before we begin?

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According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is XXXX-XXXX. It will take you, on average, 60 minutes to complete this interview.

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USDA's updated school meal nutrition standards established three sodium targets to be phased in over a 10-year period, with specific levels for students in three grade ranges. Schools were expected to comply with the sodium Target 1 levels by school year 2014–2015, the Target 2 levels by school year 2017–2018, and the final Target levels by school year 2022–2023.

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*Background*

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These first few questions are about you.

**[NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: REVIEW Q6B AND Q6C OF BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW. IF RESPONDENT ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOL DISTRICT INSTEAD OF AN INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL, ASK RESPONDENT TO THINK ABOUT THE SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT THAT HAS HAD THE MOST SUCCESS AND/OR HAS USED THE MOST INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES IN MEETING SODIUM TARGET 1.]**

**Q1.** To begin, are you affiliated more with a school district or an individual school? *[IF INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL, PROBE: WHAT SCHOOL ARE YOU AFFILIATED WITH?]*

**Q1A.** What grade levels does **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** have?

**Q2.** Please describe your association with **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** (such as parent, PTA member, member of the Chamber of Commerce, health department, other local business or organization, etc.: \_\_\_\_\_).

**Q2A.** How long have you been working or involved with **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]**?

**Q3.** Have you had any direct involvement with the **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** nutrition program? If yes, how have you been involved?

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*Communication*

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**Q4.** Are general changes to nutrition standards in school meals communicated to you?

**Q4A.** Can you describe the nutrition standard changes in school meals that have been communicated? *[PROBE: HAVE CHANGES IN THE LEVELS OF SODIUM IN SCHOOL MEALS BEEN COMMUNICATED?]*

**Q4B.** Who communicates these nutrition standard changes in school meals?

**Q4C.** When were these changes communicated to you? *[PROBE FOR SODIUM TARGETS.]*

**Q4D.** How are changes in nutrition standards communicated to you? How often is this communication done?

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*Approaches to Reduce Sodium*

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- Q5. Are you aware of any strategies your school or school district uses to address changes in nutrition standards in school meals? What about strategies to reduce sodium? Can you describe these strategies? *[PROBE: HOSTING TASTE TESTS, SCRATCH COOKING, WORKING WITH MANUFACTURERS, CHANGING RECIPES, INCORPORATING MORE FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, BUILDING SCHOOL GARDEN, ETC.]*
- Q5A. From your perspective, which efforts do you think were most effective in lowering the sodium levels at **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]**? Why do you think these efforts were the most successful? *[PROBE FOR: SPECIFICS ON PRACTICES MENTIONED IN Q5]*
- Q6. Did individuals from **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** ask the community for input on creative ways to implement nutrition changes in school meals? What about to reduce sodium in the school meals? If yes, how did **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** reach out to the community? Did the community provide input? What kinds of things were suggested by the community?

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*Challenges*

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- Q7. What do you think has been the biggest barrier for **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]**'s efforts to address changes in school meal nutrition standards? We are most interested in challenges related to reducing sodium in school meals.
- [PROBE FOR:*
- *FINDING/ACCESSING DESIRED LOWER SODIUM PRODUCTS*
  - *MODIFYING MENUS/RECIPES*
  - *RESISTANCE FROM STAFF/PARENTS/STUDENTS, ETC.]*
- Q7A. **[ASK IF RESPONDENT OFFERS BARRIERS RELATED TO SODIUM]** How did **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** overcome these barriers/challenges? How has the community helped your school/school district overcome these barriers? Do any barriers/challenges still exist?
- Q8. Is your **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** located in a(n) rural, urban, or suburban area? Do you think that being in this area has an effect on **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]**'s ability to meet the lower sodium standards? Why or why not? *[PROBE FOR: AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF DESIRED FOOD PRODUCTS, POPULATION SIZE RELATED TO DEMAND, ETC.]*
- Q8A. Do you think that being located in the **[NORTHEAST, NORTHWEST, MIDWEST, SOUTHWEST, SOUTHEAST, ETC.]** region of the U.S. influences **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL**

**DISTRICT]'s ability to meet the lower sodium standards?****[PROBE FOR:**

- ACCESS TO DESIRED, LOWER SODIUM PRODUCTS/FOODS
- ACCESS TO NEWLY DEVELOPED OR REFORMULATED FOOD PRODUCTS/FOODS
- COST OF TRANSPORT FOR SPECIFIC PRODUCTS BECAUSE OF PHYSICAL LOCATION OR CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL
- ABILITY TO LOCALLY PURCHASE LOWER SODIUM FOOD PRODUCTS
- REGIONAL CUISINES AND CULTURES]

**Q8B.** Do you feel that the size of **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** plays a role in its ability to meet the lower sodium standards? **[PROBE FOR: AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF PRODUCTS, POPULATION SIZE RELATED TO DEMAND, ETC.]**

**Q8C.** Do you feel that the type of school (elementary, middle, or high school) plays a role in meeting the lower sodium standards? **[PROBE FOR: REASONS WHY]**

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*Acceptance*

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The next few questions focus on awareness and acceptance of changing nutrition standards in school meals.

**Q9.** In your opinion, are the community members aware of nutrition changes in school meals? If yes, do you think they are supportive of the changes? What about the changes in sodium levels? What reasons do you hear from them about supporting or not supporting the changes? How do you know? **[PROBE: IF PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED, ASK ABOUT AFFILIATION WITH SCHOOL, FOR EXAMPLE, IF RESPONDENT MENTIONS THEY ARE ON A COMMITTEE, ASK ABOUT THE COMMITTEE'S SUPPORT.]**

**Q9A.** What ideas do you have to involve the community in the changes that your school/school district is making to school meals? How can community members help your school/school district increase acceptance for reduced sodium in school meals?

**Q10.** In your opinion, are students at **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** aware of the nutrition changes in school meals? Why or why not? If yes, do you think they are supportive of the changes? What the about changes in sodium levels? What reasons do they give for supporting or not supporting? How do you know? **[PROBE: IF PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED THAT THEY ARE A PARENT, ASK ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO CHANGES IN SCHOOL MEALS, SPECIFICALLY SODIUM.]**

**Q10A.** What ideas do you have to involve students in the changes that your **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** is making to school meals? How can students help your

**school increase acceptance for reduced sodium in school meals?**

**Q11.** In your opinion, are parents at **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** aware of the nutrition changes in school meals? Why or why not? If yes, do you think they are supportive of the changes? What the about changes in sodium levels? What reasons do they give for supporting or not supporting? How do you know?

**Q11A.** What ideas do you have to involve parents in the changes that your **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** is making to school meals? How can parents help your school increase acceptance for reduced sodium in school meals?

We appreciate the time you've taken to answer our questions. Your input is very valuable. Do you have any questions for us before we end **[IF SITE VISIT: THIS PORTION OF]** the interview?

**[IF TELEPHONE INTERVIEW:]** If you have additional questions following this interview, you may contact us at **[CONTACT INFORMATION]**. Thank you again.

**[IF SITE VISIT:]** Next, if available, we would like to take a look at any posters or signs that you may have received or provided to schools, letters that may have been sent to you from the **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]**, agendas or notes from meetings with food suppliers or schools, and any other related materials. Do you have any of these materials that you would be willing to share with us?

YES  We will be documenting what we see using a checklist but, with your permission, we would also like to take photographs of these items. We will not photograph any individuals. Do we have your permission to photograph?

YES  Thank you. Do you have any questions before we begin? **[NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: PROCEED TO SITE VISIT OBSERVATIONAL INSTRUMENT]**

NO  Okay. No problem. We will not take photographs, but would like to take notes about the content of the signage and communication materials you have related to sodium reduction.

**[NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: PROCEED TO SITE VISIT OBSERVATIONAL INSTRUMENT]** Reason:

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Thank you again for your time. If you have additional questions following this interview, you may contact us at **[CONTACT INFORMATION]**.