

Appendix A. Research Issues and Research Questions

Table 1. SFA Director Survey Year 4 Research Questions

1. School Participation
How many elementary, middle, and high schools participate in SBP and/or NSLP?
What is the number of operating days and hours?
How has school participation changed over time?
How many schools participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Afterschool At-Risk Supper Program and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO)?
How many schools participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)?
What challenges do SFAs face with administering multiple programs (application processes, eligibility requirements, reporting requirements, accessibility for eligible students, maintaining program funding, etc.)?
2. Student Participation
How many students participate in SBP and/or NSLP?
How many students in elementary, middle, and high schools participate in SBP and/or NSLP? How many SBP and NSLP meals were served?
How many SBP and NSLP meals were served in elementary, middle, and high schools?
How has student participation and the number of meals served changed over time?
3. Meal Prices
What is the average price charged for full-price, reduced-price, and adult meals for the current school year?
How have meal prices changed over time?
How many SFAs are exempted from Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) for SY18-19? -because they have a positive balance? -because they have greater than a 3 month operating balance?
Did SFAs that did not have to comply with PLE in SY 18-19 drop their prices as a result in all schools, some schools, just high schools, etc.?
4. Eligibility Determination and Verification
Do SFAs use rolling verification as applications are certified, rather than all at once in October?
Do SFAs issue an electronic or web-based application for free and reduced price school meals?
Who is responsible for the development of these applications?
What percentage of free and reduced price meals applications are electronic or web-based?
To what extent do SFAs encourage households to submit electronic or web-based free and reduced price meals applications?
Has use of electronic or web-based applications for free and reduced price school meals resulted in any advantages or benefits for SFAs, such as reduced administrative burden or household reporting errors?
What technology is used for eligibility determination and verification?
What method of contact do schools use to contact households selected for verification (letter, phone, email, text, other)?

What is the relative number of children directly certified during the year compared to those directly certified at the start of the school year?

Does the district accept emailed copies of verification documentation?

5. Meal Pattern Requirements

Use of USDA Foods

How are SFAs using USDA Foods to meet the meal pattern requirements?

What role do SFAs play in selecting USDA Foods?

General Challenges Associated with Implementing the Meal Requirements

To what extent did SFAs face challenges in implementing the meal pattern requirements in SY 2018-19?

Whole Grain-Rich Requirements

What practices did SFAs use to meet the whole grain-rich requirement?

How many SFAs requested exemptions for the whole grain-rich requirement in SY 18-19? How many were approved?

Fruit and Vegetable requirements for lunch

What are SFAs doing to increase student acceptance of fruits and vegetables? What strategies have been successful?

Calorie Requirements

What proportion of SFAs face challenges in meeting the calorie standards for breakfast and lunch? Do the calorie minimums or maximums pose more of a challenge?

What proportion of SFAs made adjustments to meet students' needs/wants for additional foods? What types of adjustments have SFAs made?

Sodium Requirements

What are SFAs doing to ensure that they are meeting current sodium targets?

What actions are SFAs taking to meet future sodium targets?

Milk Requirements

What types of milk are SFAs providing through the school meal programs?

What proportion of SFAs offered flavored, low-fat (1%) milk through the school meal programs?

What proportion of milk served is flavored, low-fat (1%)?

Has there been an increase in flavored milk consumption since flavored 1% has been offered?

Special diets/accommodations

What processes and practices are SFAs and schools are using to provide dietary accommodations (e.g., gluten free, vegan, etc.) in school meals?

How much time/effort/cost is involved in providing these meals?

What proportion of meals requires an accommodation?

6. Buy American

What are SFAs doing regarding compliance with the Buy American provision?

How do SFAs ensure compliance with the Buy American provision?

Which Buy American exceptions are used?

What are common reasons for the use of Buy American exceptions?

What products do SFAs most commonly purchase under Buy American exceptions?

How often are products used?

What percentage of products are purchased under the Buy American exceptions?

What percentage of dollars are Buy American exceptions used for?

What are the most significant challenges in complying with the 'Buy American' provision?

7. Training and Professional Standards

What hiring standards are being used for SFA Directors? Is the SFA using the correct hiring standards for the LEA size?

What training and technical assistance topics are provided and in what format (e.g. online, in person, etc.)?

What sources of training and technical assistance are used?

How useful was the training and technical assistance?

Who is meeting professional standards requirements?

How are SFAs tracking annual continuing education and training requirements?

What types of training are being taken? (Include Institute for Child Nutrition [ICN] fundamentals course)

How do SFAs prefer to get training (in person, online, in house, offered through State agency, offered through professional or other organization)?

How do SFAs determine what training their staff needs?

What training topics and activities do SFAs need or want that they are not receiving??

Are SFAs using the FNS Professional Standards Training Tracking Tool 2.0?

How useful is the FNS Professional Standards Training Tracking Tool 2.0?

What barriers and challenges have SFAs experienced with documenting staff completion of continuing education and training activities, and using the FNS Professional Standards Training Tracking Tool 2.0?

8. Meal Counting

What technology is used to track breakfast and lunch served?

What method of counting is used in cafeteria and non-cafeteria points of service?

What training and oversight is provided to cashiers on meal counting?

What alternatives to the traditional cashier model are used?

9. Financial Management

What are SFA annual revenues and expenditures?

To what extent do SFA revenues exceed expenditures and vice versa?

How have annual revenues and expenditures changed over time?

Do SFAs have a local meal charge policy, or follow a State developed meal charge policy? What does the policy include?

What is the total amount of money owed to SFAs as a result of unpaid meal charges?

Do SFAs use alternative funding sources (such as community donations) to offset costs incurred from unpaid meal charges?

What steps do SFAs take to recover money from unpaid meal charges?

What was the success of recovery?

What is working/not working to recover money from unpaid meal charges?

What are the consequences for households that fail to pay back debt?

What are the implications for SFAs, when households fail to pay back debt?

Table 2. CN Director Survey Year 4 Research Questions

1. Food Service Administration
How many SFAs and schools operate under Provision 2, Provision 3, and the Community Eligibility Provision?
How many schools operate in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) only, NSLP only or both SBP and NSLP?
What is the increase in charter schools operating in NSLP and SBP?
What is the SA doing to reach out to non-participating charter schools?
How often are charter schools reviewed?
What are the top issues in that charter schools experience with food service administration?
Are charter schools more challenging for administrative reviews? Are they more challenging to provide training to? (scale more/less challenging?)
Do States get meal counts from SFAs by school?
Do States collect information from SFAs that could be used to build future sample frames? (e.g., provision status, food service management company [FSMC] use, etc.)
2. Subsidies, Resources, and Funding
How are State budget cuts impacting CN operations?
Are States using contracted staff (staff employed by contractors, not directly by the State) for certain functions?
Does the State provide financial resources for school meals to SFAs in the form of per-meal subsidies? What was the total amount given?
Do States have adequate staffing resources for monitoring?
Does the State provide support for any other aspects of the school food service operation?
Have States been able to fully use Federal funds provided to administer the NSLP and the SBP?
What challenges have impeded States' ability to fully use Federal funds? What actions impacted States' ability to fully use Federal funds?
How many States have a statewide meal charge policy? What do the statewide meal charge policies include?
Do States offer technical assistance to SFAs to help SFAs manage unpaid meal charges?
What forms of technical assistance related to unpaid meal charges do States provide?
Where do States find best practice resources to share with SFAs related to unpaid meal charges?
3. Buy American
What Buy American guidance and policies do States have in place for SFAs?
Do States require SFAs to document the use of Buy American exceptions?
What is the required documentation when States allow SFAs to use 'Buy American' exemptions?
How do states ensure compliance with the Buy American provision?

4. Procurement Procedures

What proportion of SFAs are using an FSMC?

Among SFAs that use FSMCs, what proportion use FSMCs that are national, regional, and local? Has this pattern changed over time?

How do States review FSMC contracts and cooperative purchasing agreements?

Do States require use of prototype contracts or agreements?

5. Professional Standards

What training and technical assistance topics are provided and in what format (e.g. online, in person, etc.)?

What sources of training and technical assistance are used? (State-generated, ICN], contractor, etc.)

How do State Agencies determine what training to provide? (e.g. do they look at common administrative review findings to choose focus topics?)

What difficulties do States experience with residential child care institutions, charter schools, and rural SFAs that impact their ability to comply with professional standards requirements?

What hiring standards are being used for State CN Directors? (previously under the State CN Director background section)
