ICN Research Summary

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The ICN Research Summary is a continuing series of summaries reporting recently completed research and research-based resources funded by the Institute of Child Nutrition.

RECENTLY COMPLETED RESEARCH

Evaluation of Regional Team Up for School Nutrition Success Workshops
The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the *Team Up for School Nutrition Success* (Team Up) workshop in providing support to school nutrition (SN) professionals. The areas of support evaluated included technical support to address SN program issues and challenges, networking opportunities among SN directors to expand knowledge base and resource base, and peer mentoring to assist SN directors in developing goals and action plans to guide the direction of their programs. Two prominent variables measured were participant's self-esteem and self-efficacy associated with developing and achieving goals and action plans. A two-phased research design was implemented to meet study objectives. In Phase One an expert panel with eight to ten SN professionals convened to support the development of a national survey. In Phase Two a hyperlink to an electronic survey in SurveyMonkey was e-mailed to a national sample of Team Up participants representing the six USDA regions.

The results of this study demonstrate that a positive relationship between peer mentoring and self-efficacy and self-esteem is associated with positive outcomes in goal setting and goal attainment among SN managers and directors. This study supports the use of the Skilled Helper model to deliver peer-to-peer mentoring to SN managers and directors, suggesting that the common beliefs about the impact of self-efficacy and self-esteem and other constructs on mentoring outcomes should be expected.

Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills Needed by School Nutrition Managers in the 21st Century
The purpose of this study was to identify the functional areas and draft knowledge and skill statements needed by SN managers working in site-based SN programs to effectively manage the

efficient preparation and service of meals. An expert panel of 20 SN professionals identified eight functional areas using a modified Delphi technique. A draft of updated knowledge and skill statements was identified using focus groups, SN program site visits, and research of related printed material, including *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Managers* (2004).

This project lays the groundwork for Phase Two of the project, the purpose of which is to finalize the competencies related to each functional area, and the knowledge and skill statements that detail the duties of an SN manager. Phase Two will involve an expert panel of SN professionals and a national review panel of SN professionals. The national review panel will be asked to confirm the results of the expert work group. When completed, the functional areas, competencies, and knowledge and skill statements identified in Phase One and Phase Two will be confirmed and will provide an understanding of the overall role of SN managers working in schools across the nation. Additionally, the results from the work completed on this project will be included in a resource guide entitled *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Managers for the 21st Century.*

The *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Managers for the 21st Century* resource will provide a basis for developing a sample job description template for preparing job descriptions for SN managers. Additionally, the information can serve as a framework to identify the criteria for evaluating an effective SN manager, advance knowledge and skills through professional development opportunities, and provide the basis for mentoring and other succession planning activities to prepare SN employees for manager responsibilities.

Essential KPIs for School Nutrition Success – Development of a Resource for School Nutrition Professionals
The purpose of this project was to develop a research-based resource to assist SN professionals in effectively utilizing standard SN key performance indicators (KPIs). This research utilized findings from both prior ICN research and a national survey. This project was conducted in two phases. In Phase I, an expert work group determined the format and content of a draft resource. In Phase II, a review panel convened to validate the resource for the intended audience. Afterwards, the resource was revised based upon input from the review panel and formatted with the assistance of a graphic designer.

Essential KPIs for School Nutrition Success is designed to provide SN professionals with a straight-forward, easy-to-use reference for utilizing the following 12 KPIs that focus on the most critical aspects of their unique SN program: Meal Equivalents (MEQ), Average Daily Participation (ADP), Revenues, Expenditures, Revenue Per Meal Equivalent, Cost Per Meal Equivalent, Cost as a Percentage of Revenue, Break-Even Point (BEP), Inventory Turnover Rate, Meals Per Labor Hour, Staff Turnover Rate, and Absenteeism Rate. Under each KPI, the following information is provided: Description, Why Calculate, How Often to Calculate, How to Calculate, Sample Calculations, Where to Capture Data, How to Use, Industry Standards, Factors that Influence, and References. Additionally, this resource contains a case study that provides examples for utilizing each KPI, and sections on *Benchmarking, Trend Analysis, Developing Action Plans*, and *Communicating with Key Stakeholders*. SN professionals should use this resource as a reference guide for identifying and utilizing KPIs in decision making and program evaluation

Innovative Marketing Strategies and Delivery Methods Used in Effective Summer Food Service Programs

The purpose of this study was to explore innovative strategies and delivery models within the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and to identify best practices and predictors of program success. The objectives of this research study were to collect data that identified the following: various avenues of sponsoring used by organizations to provide meals and nutrition education via the SFSP; perceptions of sponsors and food service staff operating the SFSP; and issues and barriers that impact SFSP participation and plausible solutions.

This project consisted of two Phases. In Phase One, qualitative research protocol, data collection instruments, and training procedures for replicating research procedures were developed and piloted. In Phase two, four research teams located at universities across the country were trained to identify and conduct case study site visits in diverse SFSP settings representing five USDA FNS regions. These teams used an embedded, replicable, multiple-case, case study design. Structured interviews were conducted among SFSP directors and staff in an array of sponsored program formats, including school districts, local government agencies, religious organizations, and non-profit organizations. All interviews were transcribed, and a content analysis was performed using constant comparative methodology.

Information collected from this study confirmed the identification of successful marketing strategies and best practices for SFSPs. The information from this study could be used to develop an updated SFSP best practice resource for school districts and sponsoring organizations. The data collected could also be used to explore planning, partnership efforts, marketing strategies, and innovative delivery methods to strengthen participation and retention for SFSPs.