

Report on the
Summer Food for Children Projects

Fiscal Year 2011



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This document synthesizes the efforts, insights, talents and objectivity of three groups of researchers. The Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC) evaluations are led by Ann Collins of Abt Associates (Abt) and Ronette Briefel of Mathematica Policy Research (MPR). The administrative data review for the Phase 1 and Phase 2 demonstrations is directed by Anne Peterson for Insight Policy Research. Lynn Elinson oversees Westat's primary data collections and analyses for the Phase 2 demonstrations.

This report is based on the following contractor reports:

Phase 1:

Peterson, A., Geller, D., Moulton, B. E., Suchman, A., Haddix, D. (2011). *Evaluation of the Impact of Incentives Demonstrations on Participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): FY 2010 Arkansas and Mississippi*. Prepared by Insight Policy Research under Contract No. AG-3198-B-10-0011. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Project Officer, Dr. Chan Chanhatasilpa. Alexandria, VA: May 2011.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/CNP/FILES/eSFSPWaveI2010.pdf>

Phase 2:

Elinson, L., Bethel, J., Machado, J., Milfort, R., Karakus, M. (2011). *Evaluation of the Summer Food Service Program Enhancement Demonstrations: 2011 Status Report*. Prepared by Westat under GSA Contract No. GS-23F-8144H. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Project Officer, Dr. Chan Chanhatasilpa. Alexandria, VA: October 2011.

Phase 3:

Briefel, R., Collins, A., Bellotti, J., Klerman, J., Logan, C. W., Cabili, C., Rowe, G., Greece, J., Owens, C., Weiss, A. (2011). *2011 Status Report: Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children*. Prepared by Abt Associates (prime), Mathematica Policy Research (subcontracting) and Maximus (subcontracting) under Contract No. AG-3198-C-11-0002. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Project Officer, Dr. Hoke Wilson. Alexandria, VA: October 2011.

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Introduction

This report fulfills the directive in section 749(g) of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 111-80) for the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to submit an annual report to Congress detailing progress in using \$85 million to develop and test alternative methods of providing access to food for low-income children in urban and rural areas during the summer months when schools are not in regular session. Specifically, the annual report must include information on the status of each demonstration project carried out under this authority, and the results of the evaluations of the demonstration projects conducted for the previous fiscal year.

This is the second annual report to Congress. It provides an overview of USDA's progress in conducting and evaluating multi-year, multi-phased summer demonstration projects, and the status of each demonstration project in 2011.

Background

Children's development, health, and well-being depend on access to a safe and secure source of food. In 2010 about 3.9 million households included food-insecure children (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2011). The problem increases during the summer months when children do not have access to free or reduced price (FRP) meals provided by the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP).¹ The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was created to provide nutrition benefits during the summer to children living in low-income areas. Though the SFSP enriches the lives of millions of low-income children during the summer, both by making nutritious food available and by providing meals and snacks that enhance summer education and recreation programs, the Program has been unable to achieve the same level of program participation as school meal programs achieve during the school year. While approximately 19 million children receive free or reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program, only about 3 million children receive meals during the summer through the SFSP.

In October 2009, Congress appropriated \$85 million to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to develop and test alternative methods of providing access to food for low-income children in urban and rural areas during the summer months, when schools are not in regular session. Given the magnitude of the problem of low participation in the SFSP, and the many factors potentially influencing this, FNS developed a plan to fund a multi-phased demonstration approach to test different strategies for improving program participation—both enhancements to the current program (SFSP), as well as completely new ways of providing nutrition assistance to

¹ The NSLP and SBP provide subsidized meals to children in school. Children from low-income families obtain these meals free or at a reduced price (FRP). Children living in households with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible to receive meals for free; those with incomes between 130 and 185% of poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals.

hungry children in the summer. This second of several annual reports to Congress describes the development of the FNS plan and the progress made during 2011.

Multi-phased Demonstration Plan

In the Annual Report for 2010, FNS set forth a demonstration plan that involves several phases. FNS has kept to this plan. The phases of the demonstration projects, and expected timeframes for their operation, are as follows with each phase of the demonstration projects including an evaluation component:

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
<p>SFSP Activity and Length of Operation Incentives (Summers 2010 and 2011) to address the funding needs that limit enrichment activities that draw and sustain attendance at SFSP sites and the financial constraints that prevent some sponsors for staying open throughout the summer.</p>	<p>SFSP Home Delivery and Food Backpacks (Summers 2011 and 2012) to address the rural challenge of serving enough children to receive the minimally needed reimbursement to operate a viable program and the risk of hunger that comes when sites are not open 7 days a week.</p>	<p>Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC) using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) technology (Summers 2011 and 2012). These demonstrations provide the additional approach to summer feeding needed by children not adequately served by congregate feeding sites.</p>

Demonstration and Evaluations Status

Phase 1: SFSP Activity and Length of Operation Incentives (Summers 2010 and 2011)

Overview

A side-by-side comparison of each of the Phase I demonstrations is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Side-by-Side Phase I Demonstration Comparison

	EXTENDING LENGTH OF OPERATION (Arkansas)	ACTIVITY INCENTIVE (Mississippi)
Purpose	To determine whether a financial incentive to encourage programs to extend the number of days of operation can improve access to meals for low-income children for a greater portion of the summer.	To determine whether providing sponsors with additional funding to create recreational or educational activities at their sites can increase SFSP participation.
Incentive	An additional \$0.50 reimbursement for <u>each lunch served</u> at sites that are open for 40 days or more during the summer.	Grants up to \$5,000 per site per year were given to selected sponsors to plan and implement enrichment activities at SFSP meal sites. The funds paid for equipment and other expenses

EXTENDING LENGTH OF OPERATION (Arkansas)		ACTIVITY INCENTIVE (Mississippi)
		associated with offering new activities at the site. ²
Eligibility	All sponsors in the State that operated at least 1 meal service site were eligible to participate in the demonstration.	All sponsors in the State that operated at least 1 meal service site were eligible to participate in the demonstration.
Sponsor Requirements	Sponsors that were open for a minimum of 40 days in the summer of 2010 were automatically approved to receive demonstration funds. Sponsors did not have to apply to the demonstration. This number of days was selected because it is a large portion of the typical summer break from the school year.	Sponsors that were open for a minimum of 30 days during the summer of 2010 could apply to receive the demonstration funds.
Selection	There was no selection process; all sites open 40 days or more were automatically included. However, Arkansas encouraged sponsors that operated for fewer than 40 days to expand program operations to become eligible. Not all sites under a particular sponsor must operate for 40 or more days for the sponsor to be eligible to receive the incentive. However, the incentive was only provided to sites that operated for the required period of time or longer.	Sponsors submitted an application to participate, listing each site applying for the grant. Sponsors were required to describe the new activities; how they would be implemented; how they would increase participation; how they would communicate within the community (through outreach and advertisements); and an estimate of the number of new children that would be drawn to the site. Criteria used by Mississippi to select the sponsors included a history of successful program operation; anticipated number of children served; number of sites operated; proposed increase in participation; length of program operation; planned activities and plan for implementation of activities; partnerships; area eligibility; sustainability; and transferability.
Target Areas	Arkansas' rural Delta Region, whose 42 counties encompass more than half of the State, was the primary target area. This region poses many challenges in terms of serving the State's children and youth. Arkansas conducted outreach and promotional activities targeting counties in the Delta Region.	No specific areas were targeted. However, Mississippi undertook a number of measures to publicize the project and encourage sponsor applications throughout the State.
Data Requirements	Participating sponsors were required to submit data more frequently than were non-participating sponsors; for example, demonstration sponsors submitted data on lunches served on a weekly basis, as opposed to the usual monthly basis.	Participating sponsors were required to submit itemized lists of all expenditures and documentation supporting expenditure claims to receive reimbursement for supplies, and detailed job descriptions and labor rates for reimbursement for additional personnel costs. The sponsors were also asked for information on the activities offered at participating sites.

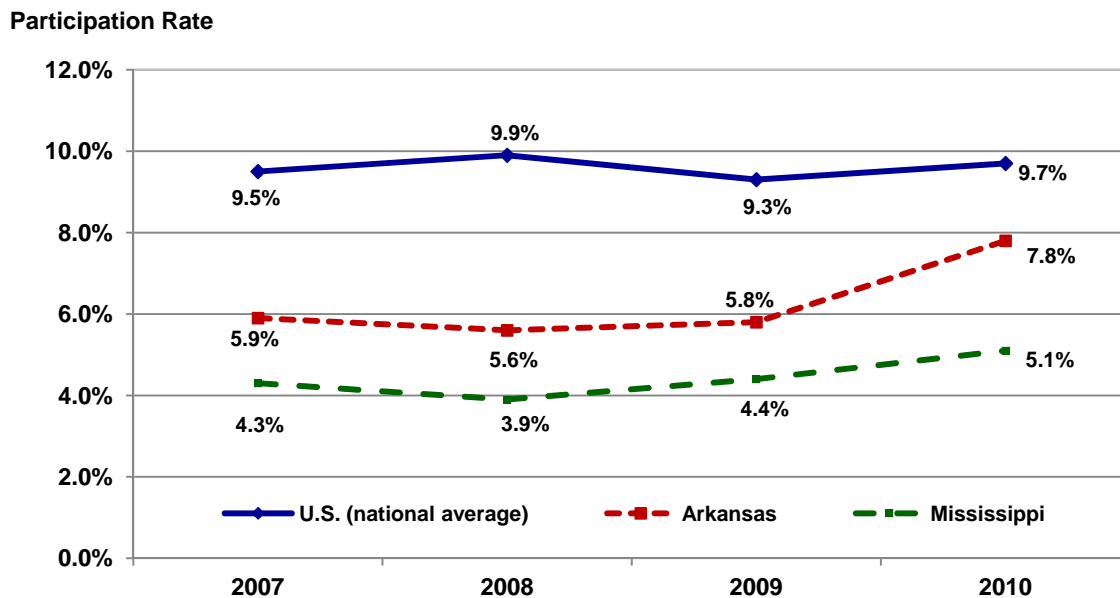
² Sponsors were eligible for activity incentive funds for each site they operate that has these enrichment or recreational activities. Each sponsor was required to list each site applying for the grant; these sites were required to be open for 30 or more days.

Awards

On May 10, 2010, FNS announced that Mississippi was selected for the Activity Incentive demonstration, and Arkansas was selected for the Extending Length of Operations Incentive demonstration. Mississippi received \$500,550 and Arkansas received \$687,943 to implement their awarded demonstration projects in summer 2010.

Arkansas and Mississippi consistently experience both higher-than-average food insecurity among children and very low SFSP participation levels (USDA, 2009; Nord, 2009). In Arkansas, only 7.8 percent of children eligible for free and reduced-price NSLP meals received summer nutrition assistance through NSLP or SFSP in 2010, compared to the national average of 9.7 percent. In Mississippi, only 5.1 percent of eligible children received summer nutrition assistance (National Data Bank (NDB), Figure 1).

Figure 1: July SFSP Lunches as a Percentage of School-Year NSLP Lunches, 2007-2010



Source: FNS National Data Bank

Note: The percentages for AR and MS were calculated by dividing the ADA in the SFSP and NSLP in July by the ADA in the NSLP from the immediately preceding school year. The U.S. percentages were calculated with solely SFSP data in the numerator, since the summer NSLP figures were not available. Supporting data for Figure 1 can be found in Appendix B, Tables B.4.a and B.4.b, [Evaluation of the Impact of Incentives Demonstrations on Participation in the Summer Food Service Programs \(SFSP\): FY 2010 Arkansas and Mississippi](#). (Peterson, Geller, Moulton, Suchman and Haddix, 2011)

Phase 1 Evaluation Results

In September 2011 FNS released the results of the evaluation of the first year of the Arkansas and Mississippi demonstrations. The evaluation addressed two overarching questions:

- In Arkansas, does the statewide availability of per-meal incentives to SFSP providers who increase the number of days they are open to serve meals to needy children have a meaningful impact on participation/coverage?
- In Mississippi, does the statewide availability of grants to SFSP providers who offer new site activities that are designed to draw and sustain attendees have a meaningful impact on participation/coverage?

FNS's National Data Bank (NDB) data was used to form two comparison groups. The first comparison group comprises a set of 'similar States,' which includes the other eight States that were eligible to apply for the 2010 Phase 1 demonstrations. The second comparison group includes all other States (i.e., the balance of the Nation).

Arkansas' Extended Length of Operations Project:

It should be noted that Arkansas did not demonstrate use of incentives in isolation. Instead, the State used Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Contingency funds to add a transportation component and to allow adults to eat summer meals with their children. The TANF funds were more than triple the demonstration funds. The transportation component may have induced site operators to remain open for more of the summer, independent of the FNS per-meal incentives. The Arkansas findings reflect the effects of transportation and adult meal subsidies as well as demonstration's per-meal incentives.

In Arkansas, during the first demonstration year (2010):

- Average Daily Attendance in July increased by 35.3 percent from 2009 to 2010, compared to just 9.6 percent in similar States.
- The participation rate (the ratio of children receiving meals through USDA's summer nutrition programs over the estimated number of children receiving free and reduced-price meals during the school year) increased by 22.1 percent from 2009 to 2010, compared to 2.3 percent in similar States.
- Total meals served increased by 40.6 percent from 2009 to 2010, compared to a 4.9 percent increase in similar States over the same time period.
- The number of sponsors almost tripled (from 110 in 2009 to 306 in 2010).
- Among all SFSP feeding sites within the State, the median number of days open increased from 24.5 days in 2009 to 28 days in 2010

Mississippi's Activity Incentive Project:

In Mississippi, during the first demonstration year (2010):

- Average Daily Attendance in July increased by 18.7 percent from 2009 to 2010, compared to 9.6 percent in similar States.
- The participation rate increased by 5.0 percent from 2009 to 2010, compared to the 2.3 percent increase in similar States.
- Total meals served across the summer increased at the same rate (4.7 percent) from 2009 to 2010 as they did in similar States (4.9 percent).
- The number of SFSP sponsors throughout the State increased by 5.1 percent between 2009 and 2010 (from 117 in 2009 to 123 in 2010).
- All of the 22 actively participating demonstration sites that used incentive funding implemented some type of new activity.

Summary of Phase I Results

While each State showed improvement over a number of outcomes, it is important to note that there are many factors external to the program changes demonstrated that could influence the estimates shown in this report, such as other sources of funding, delays in demonstration setup, State outreach efforts, local economic factors, and other issues. It is difficult to disaggregate the effects of the demonstrations from confounding factors that may have impacted demand for the SFSP.

Nonetheless, the changes observed are consistent with a generally positive impact of measures of SFSP service levels.

Phase 2: Food Backpacks and Meal Delivery (Summer 2011 and 2012)

Overview

The Food Backpack demonstration began in summer 2011 and will continue through summer 2012. Staged in Arizona, Kansas, and Ohio, this demonstration provides sponsors with funds to supplement the traditional SFSP by utilizing an additional method of providing meals during the summer on days that meals are not available at SFSP sites. The demonstration projects provide funding for approved sponsors in the selected State(s) to provide eligible children with backpacks of food to take home to cover the days that SFSP meals are not available, typically on the weekends. Approved sponsors must operate a congregate meal site under the SFSP for a majority of the week and use the backpacks to supplement the traditional meal service. Backpacks are not intended to replace a congregate meal program nor reduce the number of days a congregate meal program operates. The goal of the Food Backpack Demonstration Project is to evaluate if providing a supply of nutritionally-balanced foods on the days that children do not

receive meals through the congregate SFSP will help maintain the nutritional status children gain from participating in the NSLP during the school year.

The Meal Delivery demonstration also began in summer 2011 and will continue through summer 2012. These demonstrations are taking place in Delaware, Massachusetts and New York. They provide funding for approved sponsors in the selected State(s) to develop ways to deliver summer meals to eligible children in rural areas at a sustainable cost. This may include identification of and delivery to homes of children certified for free or reduced-price school meals, to drop-off sites where parents have been informed they or their eligible children can collect the meals for off-site consumption, or other methods of providing meals that are exempt from the congregate feeding requirement. This demonstration project is not intended to fund mobile feeding sites or transport children to a congregate meal site, as these efforts are already allowable costs in the SFSP. Rather, the intent of this demonstration is to evaluate if non-congregate meal service will increase SFSP participation and ensure a more consistent level of food security among rural, low-income children at a sustainable cost.

Phase 2 Evaluation Status

Data are still being gathered and analyzed for the Phase 2 evaluation. Results will be available in 2012. The evaluation is expected to:

1. Determine the impact of the meal delivery and backpack models on participation and meal service:
 - What was the level of participation and meal service in the meal delivery and backpack demonstrations (i.e., how many children were served)?
 - In the demonstration areas, what was the level of participation and meal service in the regular SFSP? Did participation and meal counts decline, stay the same or increase in the regular SFSP? If there was a change in the level of participation or meal counts in the regular SFSP, was the change caused by the presence of the demonstration or by other factors?
 - What is the change in total SFSP participation and meal counts (regular program plus demonstration increment) in the demonstration states? How much of the change is attributable to the demonstrations?
 - Do the meal delivery and backpack models have different impacts on program participation? If so, why?
2. To the degree possible, assess food security among recipients of delivered meals and backpacks:
 - What is the food security level of recipients' households?
 - How do these food security levels compare to national and local estimates of food security levels for the comparable population (e.g., for families with children with incomes less than 185% of poverty, with less than 130% of poverty, etc.)?

- What other sources of food are available to the family during the summer? Do the recipients also participate in the traditional SFSP program or have they in the past?
 - Do the intended recipients' families participate in SNAP? TANF? WIC? Other feeding programs?
3. Determine targeting accuracy in the meal delivery and backpack demonstrations:
 - Did the food provided to households reach the intended participants?
 - How much of the food was consumed by the intended recipients, how much was used by others, how much was wasted?
 - Do findings differ between free and reduced-price recipients?
 4. Describe and document the process of project implementation, including:
 - the process for provision of demonstration benefits to participating households or children;
 - timing and methods of informing parents and caretakers of the availability, benefits, and procedures of the demonstration;
 - the design, delivery, timing, and effectiveness of training made available to participating SFSP sponsors, SFSP feeding sites, schools, parents, and others;
 - roles and responsibilities of those involved in the demonstration project implementation in the State, SFSP sponsoring organizations, and sites;
 - administrative controls and other actions to maintain program integrity and prevent loss, theft and improper issuance at Federal, State, local agency, and site levels; and,
 - challenges encountered and resolved at Federal, State, local agency, and site levels.
 5. Determine and document the total and component costs of implementing and operating the demonstrations, to support distinctions between and comparisons among:
 - the organization incurring costs (Federal, State, local, provider);
 - administrative start-up and ongoing costs of operation;
 - benefit costs;
 - total, average, and range of costs (administrative and benefit) in the aggregate and per unit (per SFSP site, school-aged child and household; per reduction in child hunger); and
 - intervention models (meal delivery, backpack).

Phase 3: Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (Summers 2011, 2012)

Overview

The Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC) demonstrations make use of the existing benefit delivery systems for SNAP and WIC to enhance the food purchasing power of households with eligible children during the summer.

- SNAP-Model SEBTC: Under the SNAP-Model, of which there are two variants, participants can redeem \$60 in benefits per child per month for SNAP-approved foods at

SNAP-authorized retailers. Participants can purchase a much wider range of foods than permitted in the WIC-model, including meats, fish and poultry, all types of bread (not just whole wheat), and seeds and plants that produce food for the household to eat.³ In the SNAP sites, demonstration project grantees could choose to use existing cards (referred to as the SNAP-hybrid model) or issue unique SEBTC cards (referred to as the SNAP model). In the SNAP-hybrid model, SEBTC benefits are loaded onto existing EBT cards for participants already receiving SNAP, and only participants who are not on SNAP are issued a new card. In the SNAP model, a separate SEBTC card is issued to all demonstration participants using the existing SNAP EBT systems, whether or not the participant has an active SNAP EBT card.

- WIC-Model SEBTC: In WIC sites, participants can purchase only foods prescribed in a special food package at WIC-authorized retailers using a WIC EBTC card. The SEBTC package was specified by FNS based on existing WIC foods and includes milk, juice, cheese, cereal, eggs, whole wheat bread, beans, peanut butter, and canned fish. It also includes a \$16 voucher for fresh fruits and vegetables. In 2011, both of the sites implementing the WIC approach worked with FNS to customize the package to meet the tastes of the local population (for example, substituting whole grain tortillas for whole wheat bread) and local food costs.

SEBTC supplements rather than replaces the SFSP program in the demonstration areas, but its critical advantage is that it does not require that children be physically present at sites where meals are served. By directly augmenting the food purchasing power of households with eligible children, we expect, a higher proportion of eligible children will have greater access to food, thus achieving the ultimate goal of reducing the prevalence of food insecurity among children.

Awards

Summer 2011 served as the proof-of-concept (POC) year during which five States provided benefits to approximately 2,500 children apiece (Figure 2). Two of them—Michigan and Texas—are implementing the WIC model; two—Missouri and Oregon—are implementing the SNAP-hybrid model; and Connecticut is implementing the SNAP model (with a separate card for SEBTC)

In 2012, SEBTC demonstrations will expand from five to a maximum of fifteen sites. At each site, including the five first year sites, approximately 5,000 children will receive SEBTC benefits, bringing the potential total number of children served to 75,000. The summer of 2012 will form the basis for the full evaluation of the SEBTC demonstrations.

³ For a full list of SNAP-approved foods, visit the FNS website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/faqs.htm#10>.

Figure 2: Map of SEBTC Demonstration Sites in 2011



Phase 3 Evaluation Results

The evaluation of the Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC) demonstrations has four broad objectives:

1. To assess the feasibility of implementing three different models: a separately operating program using the WIC system, a separately operating program using the SNAP system, and a hybrid system in which SEBTC benefits are included in benefits for SNAP participants;
2. To examine the feasibility of implementing SEBTC benefits, and to document costs, the approaches used, and the challenges and lessons learned during the demonstrations;
3. To describe receipt and use of SEBTC benefits; and
4. To examine the impact of SEBTC benefits on children and their families' food security, food expenditures, and children's nutritional status.

Each research objective was addressed in 2011. In this section we provide preliminary findings on the first, second and third research objectives. The fourth objective will be addressed in the Final 2011 Evaluation Report which will be available in 2012.

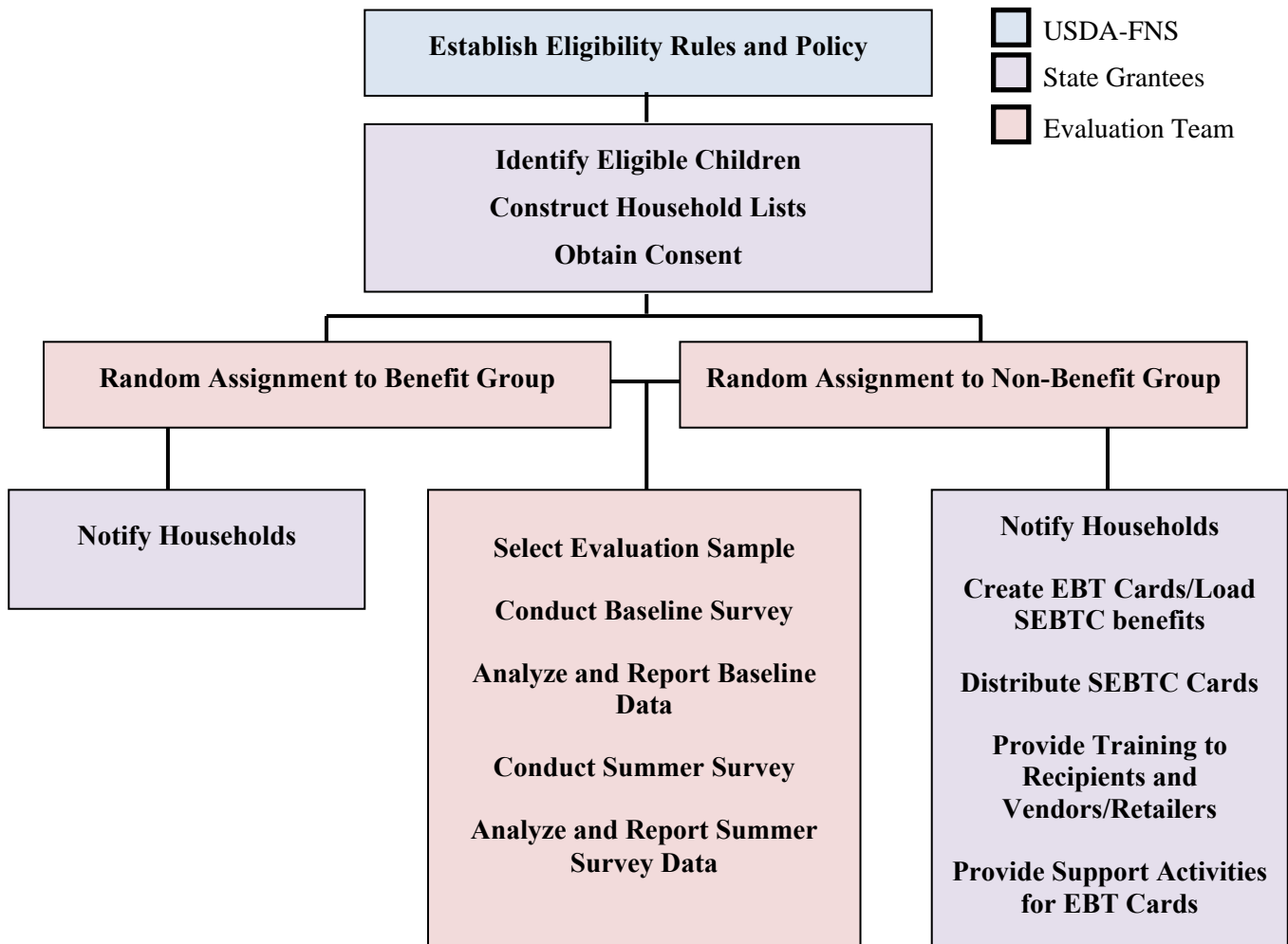
Research Design

The evaluation uses a randomized control trial design to provide the most credible and rigorous estimates of the impact of the demonstrations on food insecurity. To accomplish this, FNS, the grantees, and the evaluation team began work in December 2010 to complete a series of tasks related to implementing the demonstration and evaluation before the end of the 2010-2011 school year when SEBTC benefits became available to households. Figure 3 lays out the flow of activities during 2011. First, FNS established eligibility rules and policy, and then, participating

school food authorities (SFAs) identified eligible children, grouped them into households, and obtained consent for participation in the demonstration and evaluation. Households that had one or more children certified for FRP meals and consented to participate were randomly assigned to either receive the SEBTC benefit or to a non-benefit group that does not. Each demonstration site, notified families if they were selected to receive the benefit, loaded benefits and distributed EBT cards. At the same time, the evaluation team selected a random subsample of households for the evaluation study, including a treatment group drawn from those who would receive the benefit and a control group that would not.

The evaluation team next surveyed the selected households before the end of the school year (“baseline”) and again during the summer. These surveys gathered information on household food security and food expenditures, children’s food consumption and eating behaviors and other outcome measures. Rigorous estimates of the impacts of the SEBTC will be made by comparing the values of these measures from the summer survey between treatment households and control households. The strength of the randomized experimental design is that any differences in these measured outcomes should be attributable to the SEBTC benefit.

Figure 3: Flow of Activities in 2011



Baseline Population Characteristics

Household Size and Composition

Across all five sites, the mean number of people in the household was 4.4, ranging from 4.3 to 4.6. This number includes all reported adults and all children (regardless of their ages). Almost half of the households reported having more than one adult (46.5%), and almost half (49.7%) had one adult who was female. Household adult composition varied significantly across sites, with Missouri reporting almost two-thirds (63.3%) of its households with one female adult, compared to Oregon (37.6%).

The mean number of children in households was 2.5, and this included children of all ages—those attending school and certified for FRP school meals, younger children who had not yet started school, and any other children living in the household.⁴ The mean number of children varied across sites and ranged from 2.3 in Texas to 2.7 in Michigan.

Household Income

Eligibility rules specifically limit participation in the SEBTC program to those eligible for FRP lunch (that is, at or below 185% of the federal poverty line--FPL). It would therefore be expected that the survey sample would be relatively disadvantaged, and, in fact, mean household income in the last month prior to the survey was \$1,553, with 3% reporting no income. Nearly three-fourths of the survey population (73.5%) had monthly incomes below the, ranging from 64.6% of households in Connecticut to 81.7% in Michigan.⁵ The proportion of households with children below the poverty line in this study population is substantially greater than the 56% reported among children certified for FRP school meals in the 2005-06 school year (Ponza et al. 2007).

Other Household Characteristics

Most respondents had at least one employed adult in the household (69.8%), Texas reported the highest percentage of employed adults (79.7%) and Michigan reported the lowest (64.6%). About 28% of households reported a person with a physical or mental disability, and this varied significantly across sites: 14.9% of households in Texas and 35.9% of households in Michigan. Almost all households (98%) reported having access to a working refrigerator.

Household Program Participation

At baseline, approximately three-quarters of households (72.9%) reported participating in at least one of the major federal or emergency nutrition assistance program in the 30 days prior to the interview. Respondents most commonly reported using SNAP (63.9%), followed by WIC

⁴ Children were defined as 18 years or younger or still in school (if older than age 18) and living with an adult in a household. Households also included group homes if children living in the home were certified for FRP school meals.

⁵ In comparison, 20.1% of families with children reported being under the poverty level nationally based on the 2009 CPS (Census Bureau 2010, Table 4, p. 15).

(22.8%). Participation rates varied across sites, with the highest proportion of Oregon respondents reporting participation in SNAP (78.2%), and receiving food from food banks or food pantries (20.2%). Michigan respondents reported the highest participation in WIC (31.4%).

Baseline Population Food Security

Food security is defined as access by all members of the household at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life (Nord 2009).⁶ *Household* food security is determined by the food security status of the adults and the children living in the household. *Food secure* households are those in which both adults and children are food secure. *Food insecure* households are those in which the adults *or* children *or* both report limited access to food resulting in: a) reduced quality or variety of diet (low food security), or b) reduced food intake or disrupted eating patterns (very low food security). These levels of food insecurity are assessed for both the adults and the children living in the household. Reducing the most severe level of food insecurity among children is the main outcome of interest for the SEBTC demonstration, and establishing whether that result was achieved is the main goal of the SEBTC impact study.

At SEBTC baseline, more than half of the households participating in the SEBTC demonstration (58.2%)⁷ reported food insecurity among adults, children, or both. The majority of food insecure households experienced food insecurity among children, and 7.3% of all SEBTC households experienced very low food security among children (VLFS-C). VLFS-C ranged from 4.6% in Connecticut to 8.7% in Michigan and was significantly different across sites. Food insecurity among children ranged from 40.6% of households in Connecticut to 48.4% of households in Oregon.

⁶ The food security status of each interviewed household is determined by the number of food-insecure conditions and behaviors reported by the household, using the standard 18-item, 30-day survey module developed by USDA (Economic Research Service 2008).

⁷ This study uses a method of coding food security status called the adult/child cross-tabulation approach, which differs slightly from that in USDA reports using the CPS data. The adult/child cross-tabulation approach, which has been under development at USDA as a means of eliminating a misclassification that affects a small number of cases, has been recommended by USDA for the current study. The new approach does not affect the number of households classified as VLFS-C, but does slightly alter the total number of households classified as food insecure. In the present analysis, applying the scoring method normally used in the CPS would classify 62.0% of SEBTC households as food insecure, compared to the 58.2% based on the adult/child cross-tabulation approach.

Table 2: Food Security in SEBTC Households in POC Sites

Characteristic	Percent	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval
Food secure households ^a	41.8	1.05	39.6 - 43.9
Food insecure households (adults <i>or</i> children <i>or</i> both insecure) ^a	58.2	1.05	56.1 - 60.4
Food insecurity among adults only	15.3	0.75	13.7 - 16.8
Food insecurity among children	42.9	0.78	41.3 - 44.6
Low food security among children	35.6	0.94	33.7 - 37.6
Very low food security among children	7.3	0.51	6.3 - 8.4

Source: SEBTC, Spring Baseline Survey, 2011 (n=5,830)

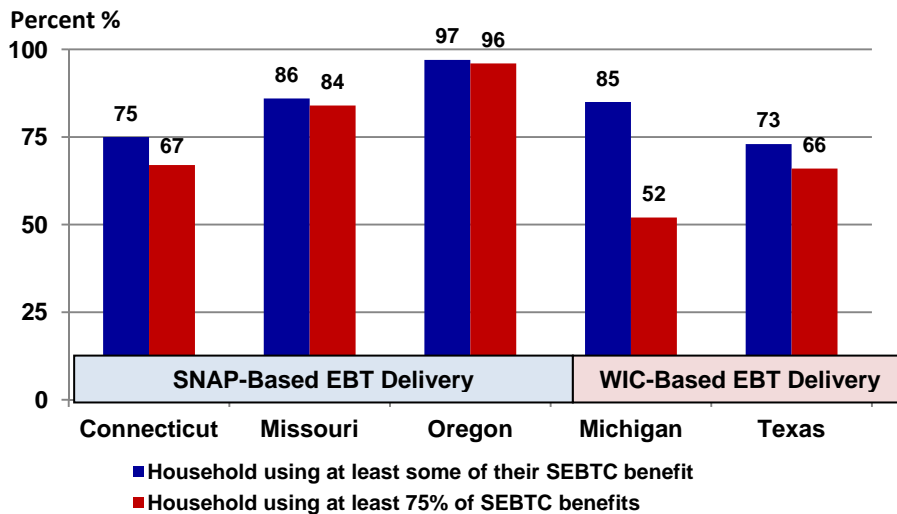
Note: Findings above are based on final baseline weights.

^a Food security was assessed using the USDA 18-item food security instrument and a cross-tabulation of adult and child food security status.

Use of EBT Benefits during the First Issuance Cycle

Eligible households were able to receive and use the benefits. During the first cycle of benefit issuance almost three-quarters or more of the households issued SEBTC benefits used them (Figure 3). Usage ranged from 73% to 97%. Households redeeming at least 75% of their benefit ranged from 52% in Michigan to 96% in Oregon. The two WIC sites (Michigan and Texas) had lower redemption rates (in the first redemption cycle) than did the two sites with an integrated SEBTC/SNAP system (Missouri and Oregon).

Figure 4: Redemptions in First Issuance Cycle



For all five sites, records of SEBTC transactions during the first benefit issuance cycle, that is, the period starting when the first month's benefits were available and ending on the last day before the second month's benefits were available, were obtained and analyzed. Connecticut's first issuance period was half as long as the other sites in the first month of the benefit (14 days

versus 30 days), and therefore the results shown are not directly comparable to the other sites for this report.

In Table 5 we show the distribution of households by redemption rate (that is, percentage of benefits redeemed). Overall redemption rates were highest in Oregon and lowest in Texas and Connecticut. In general, there were two distinct groups of demonstration households: those that did not use any benefits, and those that used most or all. The percentage of households not redeeming any benefits ranged from 3.1% in Oregon to 26.8% in Texas. Conversely, the percentage of households redeeming all of their benefits ranged from 7.9% in Michigan to 82.0% in Oregon. In all five sites, more than half of the households redeemed at least 75% of their benefits. Michigan had the highest percentage of households (11.4%) with partial redemptions greater than \$0 and less than 50% (partial redemptions amounted to less than 5% in the other sites).

Table 3: Percentage of Households by Percentage of Benefits Redeemed in the First Issuance Cycle (Percentage of Demonstration Households)

Site	Percentage of Benefits Redeemed					
	None	>0 and ≤25%	>25 and ≤50%	>50 and ≤75%	>75 and <100%	100%
Connecticut ^a	24.9	1.6	2.6	4.3	33.6	33.0
Michigan	15.3	2.5	8.9	21.3	44.1	7.9
Missouri	14.2	0.5	0.4	1.2	21.8	61.9
Oregon	3.1	0.1	0.0	0.7	14.2	82.0
Texas	26.8	0.9	2.0	4.3	49.3	16.8

Source: SEBTC transaction data for the first issuance cycle, 2011.

The total amount of benefits issued in the first issuance cycle ranged from \$62,292 in Connecticut to \$152,340 in Missouri. Table 6 presents the average SEBTC benefits issued to and redeemed by demonstration group households. The average benefit issued per household ranged from \$48.98 in Connecticut to \$103.00 in Missouri. The benefit per child varied across sites because of the length of the first benefit period and the benefit package. In each site, the household benefit varied, depending on the number of eligible children.

As shown in Table 6, the average redemption per household was around \$90 in Missouri and Oregon (\$88.26 and \$89.93, respectively), around \$60 in Michigan and Texas (\$60.16 and \$59.16), and much less (\$34.94) in Connecticut (with the shorter first-issuance period).⁸ The differences across the sites in average redemption per household reflect both the differences in benefits and the redemption rates.

⁸ In the full month of July, the average benefit issued per household in Connecticut was \$110.13, and the average benefit redeemed was \$104.61. Due to the timing of the data and the report it was not possible to present July data for all grantees, but data for the full summer benefit period will be included in the Final 2011 Evaluation Report.

Table 4: Distribution of Participating Households by Redemption Amount

Site	Average \$ Issuance	Average	25 th Percentile	Median	75 th Percentile	Maximum
Connecticut	48.98	34.94	1.80	28.00	56.00	188.77
Michigan	87.80	59.96	26.54	43.65	86.61	357.95
Missouri	103.00	88.26	60.00	60.00	120.00	360.00
Oregon	93.09	89.93	46.00	92.00	137.65	412.12
Texas	84.87	59.16	0.00	50.41	99.61	305.93

Source: SEBTC transaction data for the first issuance cycle, 2011.

Note: Calculations are based on all households with positive amount net issued, including those with \$0 redeemed.

As shown in Table 7, redemption rates for SNAP households were higher than for non-SNAP households in Missouri and Oregon, but the two groups had similar redemption rates in Connecticut. A small percentage of SNAP households did not use any benefits in Missouri (2.7%) and Oregon (0.9%), while substantially greater percentages of non-SNAP households did not use any benefits (32.7% in Missouri and 13% in Oregon). At the other extreme, the gap between SNAP and non-SNAP households was even larger in the percentage using all benefits (78.1% versus 28.8% in Missouri, and 90.5% versus 43.8% in Oregon).

Non-SNAP households in these two sites were, however, still more likely than not to redeem 75% of benefits or more. In Connecticut, the percentages of households in all categories of redemption rates were similar, and non-SNAP households were more likely than SNAP households to redeem all of their benefits (34.6% versus 29.6%).

Table 5: Percentage of Demonstration Households by Percentage of Benefits Redeemed in the First Issuance Cycle (Percentage of Households), by SNAP Status

Site	Percent of Benefits Redeemed					100%
	None	>0 and ≤25%	>25 and ≤50%	>50 and ≤75%	>75 and <100%	
Connecticut						
SNAP households	23.6	2.9	2.4	4.6	36.9	29.6
Non-SNAP households	25.6	1.0	2.7	4.2	32.0	34.6
Missouri						
SNAP households	2.7	0.4	0.1	0.4	18.3	78.1
Non-SNAP households	32.7	0.8	1.0	2.9	28.8	28.8
Oregon						
SNAP households	0.9	0.1	0.0	0.3	8.2	90.5
Non-SNAP households	13.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	41.1	43.8

Source: SEBTC transaction data for the first issuance cycle, 2011.

Note: SNAP status was determined by matching SEBTC and SNAP transaction records by case number. Thus, any SEBTC households with no SNAP transactions during the initial benefit cycle are labeled as non-SNAP households. SNAP status is not available for SEBTC-WIC model sites (Michigan and Texas).

In Table 8 data is provided on the redemption rate and participation rate (that is, percent of households with any redemption) by food category for the sites using the WIC SEBTC model. Overall, Michigan had substantially more households with some redemptions than Texas (84.7% versus 73.2%), but essentially the same percentage of benefits redeemed (68.3% versus 69.7%). In Michigan, the percentage of benefits redeemed ranged widely across food groups, from 39.9% of whole grain products (breads, tortillas, rice, and oatmeal) to 78.7% of juice. The range was smaller in Texas, from 60.5% of canned fish (tuna and salmon) to 74.2% of eggs. In both sites, the top four foods, in terms of percentages redeemed were among the following five categories: milk, cheese, eggs, juice, and fruits and vegetables. Percentages of households with *any* redemption in each food category were usually but not always higher than the percentage of benefits redeemed.

Table 6: Benefit Redemption and Participation Rates in the First Issuance Cycle, by Food Category (SEBTC-WIC Model Sites in the POC Year)

Food Type	Unit	Per Child	Percent Redeemed ^a	Percent of Households with Any Redemptions
Michigan Redemption and Participation Rates by Food Categories^{a,b}				
Milk Skim, 1/2%, 1%, 2%	Gallon	2	75.4	81.5
Cheese	Lbs	0.5	69.2	66.5
Eggs	Dozen	1	77.3	77.3
Juice 64oz Bottle/ Equivalent	Container	1	78.7	75.8
Cereal	Oz	36	66.8	74.7
Dry/Canned Beans & Peanut Butter	unit	1.5	53.1	64.5
Tuna/Salmon	Oz	15	60.6	58.2
Bread/Tortillas/Rice/ Oatmeal	lbs	2	39.9	61.7
Fruits/Vegetables	\$	14 ^b	74.9	82.6
Total			68.3	84.7
Texas Redemption and Participation Rates by Food Categories^a				
Milk Skim, 1/2%, 1%, 2%	Gallon	3	70.5	72.4
Cheese	Lbs	1	73.5	71.5
Eggs	Dozen	1	74.2	71.9
Juice 64oz Bottle/ Equivalent	Container	1	72.1	69.4
Cereal	oz	36	72.1	70.9
Dry/Canned Beans & Peanut Butter	unit	2	60.8	68.4
Tuna/Salmon	oz	18	60.5	65.9
Bread/Tortillas/Rice/ Oatmeal	lbs	3	68.8	68.9
Fruits/Vegetables	\$	16	71.0	72.4
Total			69.7	73.2

Source: SEBTC transaction data for Michigan and Texas in the first issuance cycle, 2011.

^a The percentage redeemed was computed using the total number of units redeemed as a percentage of the total number issued, computed for the whole sample, and not just those with any redemption.

^b Michigan renegotiated the SEBTC food package with FNS to insure that the package did not exceed the reimbursable amount per child (\$60) due to local food prices.

Summary of Phase 3 Results

All 5 States were able to successfully implement the SEBTC demonstration. Grantees encountered difficulties—including identifying eligible households, obtaining consent, delivering SEBTC benefits to selected households, improving participation rates of households selected to receive SEBTC, working in short timeframes with limited resources, and collaborating with new partners—but devised strategies to move past all of those issues.

Eligible households were able to receive and use the benefits. During the first cycle of benefit issuance almost three-quarters or more of the households receiving SEBTC benefits used them (Figure 3). Usage ranged from 73% to 97%, with the highest participation rates in two of the SNAP model sites, Missouri (86%) and Oregon (97%). Households redeeming at least 75% of their benefit ranged from 52% in Michigan to 96% in Oregon. The two WIC sites had lower redemption rates (in the first redemption cycle) than did the two sites with an integrated SEBTC/SNAP system.

Despite challenges, grantees were able to work across agencies that had different processes, data systems, and cultures to navigate. The SEBTC program requires that two systems that generally operate separately—schools meals eligibility and either SNAP or WIC—work together. Reconciling these different organizations and their data systems was sometimes complicated, but most States felt they were able to communicate effectively and achieve a common goal.

Food security at baseline was lower than anticipated. At the end of the school year, 42% of households eligible for SEBTC benefits were food secure and 58% were food insecure. About 7% of surveyed households reported very low food security among their children (a rate almost 5 percentage points higher than the national average for children receiving SNAP at some time during the year).

Future Evaluation Activities

The 2011 proof-of-concept (POC) phase of the evaluation of the SEBTC demonstration served to test the overall feasibility of an EBT delivery system—using both WIC and SNAP-based systems. The lessons learned from the 2011 POC year will serve to improve the evaluation process of the planned implementation expansion in 2012.

Data collection activities for the full demonstration year in summer 2012 will mirror those of the POC year on a wider scale, incorporating improvements and enhancements based on the POC experiences. The evaluation team will randomly assign households from up to 15 demonstration areas, and complete 27,000 household interviews at baseline and again in the summer. The team will also collect EBT data, cost data, and process data from all participating sites through a set of activities similar to those conducted in the first year. The study will produce a two-year impact

report based on these data as well as a comprehensive two-year report combining results from both the POC and full demonstration.

Key findings from the POC implementation focus on improving survey data collection procedures to maximize response rates, as well as helping grantees with the process of recruiting households for the study and providing SEBTC benefits for those selected to receive them. Ongoing technical assistance efforts with first year grantees as well as a meeting with continuing and new grantees selected for the full demonstration will provide an opportunity to share these lessons in preparation for the summer 2012 demonstration year, which will see an increase in the number of participating states, as well as sites within currently participating states.

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