

Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals

VOLUME III: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS



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Submitted to:

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OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has been working with school nutrition professionals to overcome operational challenges in providing meals that meet the established sodium standards. This volume provides the primary data collection instruments that were used to obtain responses from food manufacturers, Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs), and School Food Authorities (SFAs) for the *Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals* research study, which was conducted to identify the challenges that both the food industry and schools must overcome, and the successful, innovative methods those entities have utilized to achieve compliance with the sodium targets originally established in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Pub. L. 111–296).

The data collected for this qualitative study were obtained in two phases:

- A series of key informant interviews and a focus group with representatives from the food industry to examine the market availability of foods that meet the current and future sodium standards (i.e., sodium targets) for school meals programs (Objective 1)
- A series of in-depth interviews and site visits with SFAs meeting sodium Target 2 to discuss challenges, barriers, and successful approaches used to meet the sodium standard (Objective 2)

The following table (Table 1) lists the data collection instruments used in the assessment of successful approaches for reducing sodium in school meals, by Objective.

Table 1. Data Collection Instruments Used in the Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals Study

Data Collection Instrument	Study Phase
Appendix A. School Foodservice Industry Focus Group Discussion Guide	Objective 1
Appendix B. School Food Service Management Company Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	Objective 1
Appendix C. SFA Director In-Depth Interview Guide	Objective 2
Appendix D. School Employee In-Depth Interview Guide	Objective 2
Appendix E. Food Supplier In-Depth Interview Guide	Objective 2
Appendix F. Stakeholder In-Depth Interview Guide	Objective 2

APPENDIX A. SCHOOL FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



School Foodservice Industry Focus Group Discussion Guide

Part I. Informed Consent

Part II. Overview of Focus Group Objectives

- To discuss the market availability of foods that meet the current and future sodium standards (sodium targets) for school meals programs
- Explain that we have provided a handout that describes the sodium targets for school meals
- Ask them to sign the non-disclosure if they haven't already done so during check-in and let them know the session will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. No specific comments will be attributed to an individual or manufacturer; rather this is just the first stage to gather information from a very important constituent group – those that work so hard to meet the needs of the K–12 segment

Part III. Discussion Guide Topics

(Introductions of discussion group)

Topic 1: Successes in Meeting Sodium Target 1

- Let's start by hearing about your successes (20 minutes)
 - FG1. Do you feel that the majority of foodservice manufacturers have been able to provide foods that help schools to meet the **Sodium Target 1**? Why or why not? If you are willing to share, what have you done to accomplish this goal and with what products have you had the most success in schools? *Probe for as many categories as possible.*
 - FG2. What research is your company doing to determine what products should be developed? *Probe for what guides their research, the time it takes, and their efforts.*
 - FG6. Tell us about your product development efforts to lower the sodium content, **in general**, and about the process of formulating new products to take to market. *Probe for new products specifically meeting Sodium Target 1, how they are developed, and how they are pre-tested.*
 - FG3. Do you feel that the new product formulations have been widely accepted for Target 1? And, why or why not? Probe for demand including taste, acceptability by students, acceptability by school nutrition professionals, cost, accessibility.
 - FG4. Is there a demand for Target 2 and 3 products? *Probe for taste, acceptability, cost concerns, and availability.*
 - FG5. Do you feel companies are positioned to meet the future **Targets 2 and 3**?
 - FG7. What have you observed as the most common foods being reformulated? Why?

Topic 2: Barriers in Meeting Sodium Target 1

- Now we'll turn our discussion to barriers (15 minutes)
 - FG8. What barriers has your company faced in providing products that help schools provide lower sodium foods that children accept?
- Let's start with short-term barriers that you experienced in the past two years, and then we'll talk about long term barriers.
 - FG9. Current and short term barriers?
 - FG10. What are the anticipated long-term barriers?

Topic 3: Communication of Sodium Targets/Standards

- FG11. What has been your experience about **communicating** with your customers the positive changes in sodium content your company has made? How are you communicating with important stakeholder groups, such as school nutrition professionals, students, and parents to market your products? (10 minutes)
 - FG12. Probe for written materials targeting foodservice directors; communications to students/parents, such as via website enhancements; and what efforts have you made with social media and other ways to reach out to your target audiences? What strategies may have been especially effective? How do you ensure nutrition information your company provides to schools regarding sodium is correct? Global Traded Item Number? How frequently do you update product information for sales staff?

Topic 4: Technical Assistance Needed for Implementation

- FG14. What support/guidance do you need from USDA/FNS? (15 minutes)
 - FG15. **Technical assistance?** What would be helpful for your company with regard to providing lower sodium foods for school meals? What resources are you aware of that are available from USDA? *Probe for Team Nutrition and the Institute of Child Nutrition; types of training needed*
 - FG16. **Training?** Is there a role for USDA/FNS to provide training? *Probe for types of training.*

Topic 5: Student Acceptance of Lower Sodium Offerings

- FG17. Let's wrap up by discussing if you think our overall **food tastes are changing** in the wider market and shifting to lower sodium foods. What have you seen or heard from schools and their customers – elementary/middle/high? (10 minutes)
- FG18. Do you see that school products are driving consumer purchases in commercial foodservice (restaurants) or retail (grocery stores)? Do you think industry develops lower sodium foods for schools versus the general public? Does having lower sodium product reformulations that meet nutrition standards for school meals help create demand for these products in the broader retail space? *Probe for examples.*
- FG13. What is the general consensus of the SFA/Foodservice directors in terms of interest in this issue? Positive, negative, neutral. *Probe for what SFAs have heard from state agencies about the implementation of Targets 2 and 3.*
- Open discussion – final questions – thank you, etc. (5 minutes)

APPENDIX B. SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT COMPANY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE



School Food Service Management Company Key Informant Interview Guide

Introduction [Interviewer Instructions]:

- Explain objective of the call: To discuss the market availability of foods that meet the current and future sodium standards (sodium targets) for school meals programs (this is part of a USDA study)
- This interview will take approximately 1 hour of your time. Are you still available to talk at this time (or do you need to reschedule)?
- Request permission to record the call for transcription purposes only.
- Explain that no specific comments will be attributed to an individual or FSMC; rather this is just the first stage to gather information from a very important constituent group – those that work so hard to meet the needs of the K–12 segment
- Explain that we have provided a handout of the sodium targets

Topic 1: Successes in Meeting Sodium Target 1

- KII1. What have you done as a company to meet the **Sodium Target 1**?
- KII2. Have your efforts been successful, and do you see that school districts are meeting the target and how is it reported to your company? Probe about the relationship, progress being made, and specific examples of the successes.
- KII3. Why or why not? And, how is that measured?
- KII4. Do you think the students are accepting the products that meet this target? Please explain. *Probe for what items SFAs are requesting or reordering.*
- KII5. Is your company positioned to meet the **Sodium Targets 2 and 3**? Why or why not? *Probe for availability of foods, recipes, commodities, etc.*
- KII6. Are there foods that you'd like to purchase as lower sodium options?
- KII7. Are you working with food manufacturers' research and development staff to make recommendations to lower sodium in food for schools? How?
- KII8. What are the most common foods being reformulated/developed by the food industry in general, and why do think so? *Probe for how successful these are and if they are widely accepted.*

Topic 2: Barriers to Meeting Sodium Target 1

- KII9. What have been the challenges and opportunities to meeting the Target 1 sodium requirements? *Probe for taste, acceptability, cost, labor, product availability, school district acceptance, equipment.*

- KII10. What do you feel may be the challenges and opportunities to meeting the Target 2 and 3 sodium requirements – both short term and long term? *Probe for taste, acceptability, cost, labor, product availability, school district acceptance, equipment. Probe, are there higher costs associated with producing lower sodium foods?*

Topic 3: Communication of Sodium Targets/Standards

- KII11. As a FSMC, a large part of your management responsibility is to communicate and train your K–12 clients. Can you explain how you have communicated the reduction of sodium in school meals to your clients, and if you have provided any specific training materials for directors or front line staff? How do you provide training materials to schools?
- KII12. What feedback have you received from clients and front line staff who are receiving your communications about sodium reductions?

Topic 4: Technical Assistance Needed from Implementation

- KII13. What are you already doing or what is USDA providing that you’ve found helpful in meeting the sodium targets?
- KII14. What can USDA do to help your company with training and technical assistance in meeting the sodium targets?

Topic 5: Student Acceptance of Lower Sodium Offerings

- KII15. Do you think students’ and consumers’ food tastes are changing with regard to sodium? Why or why not? Are there differences by elementary, middle, or high school?
- KII16. In your experience, do school purchases drive the retail industry, or is it the opposite? *Probe for examples of what you have seen in recent years.*
- KII17. Are Food Service Management Companies trying to incorporate more fresh, frozen, and/or local items? *Probe for how successful these are and if they are widely accepted.*

Closing: [Interviewer] Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX C. SFA DIRECTOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

OMB Number: 0584-0619
Expiration Date: 02/29/2020



SFA Director In Depth Interview Guide

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 0584-0619. It will take you, on average, 65 minutes to complete this interview.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

This form will be completed by research staff for every participant and provided to the interviewer prior to the date of scheduled interview.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

MMID

SFA Site Name

SFA Director/Designee Name

Geographic Location

Phone Number

Email Address

SFA Designee Name2

Phone Number2

Email Address2

Sodium Start Time

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today for the study on “Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals” and providing your valuable insight. My name is **[NAME OF INTERVIEWER]** and I’m a researcher from 2M Research Services. I’m sending this memorandum in advance of our call in hopes you can read it and understand the purpose of the interview we have planned for later today.

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 school district have experienced while working to meet the sodium standards. The information from this part of our study will be used to help other SFAs and schools better meet the lower sodium targets. As you may recall, you’ve provided us with details about strategies you’ve used to reduce sodium in your school meals. We have identified your SFA as a leader in this area and want to learn more about your experiences while working to meet the sodium standards. There is a small risk of loss of privacy, but the research team has taken many steps to reduce this risk. I’m going to ask you a series of questions about your challenges, lessons learned, and factors associated with your success. Your identity and any information attributable to you will not be released to anyone outside of the research team. Neither you nor your SFA will be identified individually in any reports or published materials resulting from this study. With your permission, we would like to record this interview. 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 ☐ Great. 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 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?

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 0584-0619. It will take you, on average, 65 minutes to complete this interview.

TEXT FOR START OF TELEPHONE INTERVIEW [READ HIGHLIGHTED TEXT ONLY]

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today for the study on “Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals” and providing your valuable insight. My name is **[NAME OF INTERVIEWER]** and I’m a researcher from 2M Research Services. I sent you a document about an hour ago to explain what we will be discussing and obtain your permission to record our conversation. Did you get a chance to read it?

YES ☐ Great. Thank you. Do we have your permission to record the interview? Do you have any questions before we begin? → **INTERVIEWER SKIP TO PAGE 4**

NO ☐ --- then interviewer proceed by reading the highlights—

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 schools have experienced while working to meet the sodium standards. As you may recall, you’ve provided us with details about strategies your SFA has used to reduce sodium in your school meals. We have identified your SFA as a leader in this area and want to learn more about your experiences while working to meet the sodium standards. The information from this part of our study will be used to help other SFAs and schools better meet the lower sodium targets. There is a small risk of loss of privacy, but the research team has taken many steps to reduce this risk. I’m going to ask you a series of questions about your challenges, lessons learned, and factors associated with your success. Your identity and any information attributable to you will not be released to anyone outside of the research team. Neither you nor your SFA will be identified individually in any reports or published materials resulting from this study. With your permission, we would like to record this interview. 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 ☐ Great. 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 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?

Our interview will last an hour and cover the topics of the most effective strategies you’ve reported using to reduce sodium, as well as the factors associated with your success. I’ll be sure to stop when our time is up. Please answer the questions open and honestly so that your lessons learned can be shared with other SFAs and schools struggling with meeting reduced sodium targets.

[INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE REFER TO HANDOUT 1: SODIUM TARGET TABLE THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW AS NEEDED.]

Before we get started there are a few items that you will need to refer to during this interview. These items were included in the interview confirmation and preparation email that was sent on **[INSERT DATE SENT]**.

The items you should have on hand include:

- Key Strategies and Tools List (used by your SFA)

Do you have these items available for the interview?

[IF YES: GO TO I2]

[IF NO: PROVIDE RESPONDENT WITH COPIES OF THE HANDOUT 1: USDA SODIUM TARGETS TABLE AND HANDOUT 2: KEY STRATEGIES AND TOOLS LIST, THEN PROCEED TO I2]

[PROCEED TO INTERVIEW. GO TO Q1.]

Background

Ok, let's get started with a couple of questions about your position and SFA.

Q1. How long have you been the SFA Director at [SFA SITE NAME]?

Q2. You previously told us that your SFA has successfully met Target 1 for school meals offered at all schools in your SFA. Did your SFA meet the Target 1 sodium standards *before* implementation was required in school year 2014–2015?

☐ YES

☐ NO

[Q2A WILL NOT APPEAR IF CLARIFICATION FROM THE BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW WAS PROVIDED. RESEARCH STAFF WILL PREPOPULATE THIS QUESTION OR DELETE THIS QUESTION IF NOT NEEDED.]

Q2A. During the brief telephone interview you completed in April, you indicated that your participation rates had changed over time. You said: [RESPONSE FROM Q#A4 IN BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW]. Can you explain what you meant by that?

Strategies to Reduce Sodium

Q3. First, I would like to talk about the strategies your SFA uses to meet sodium standards that you mentioned in the web survey you completed in March. Let's begin with your top five and then we can discuss any other strategies that you use. Can you tell me about each of the strategies you have used, specifically how you implemented the strategy(ies), challenges encountered, and successes? Looking at the Handout 1, let's start with the first strategy listed.

[SUGGEST PARTICIPANT LOOK AT HANDOUT 2 PROVIDED IN THE ADVANCE EMAIL]

[READ THROUGH EACH STRATEGY ONE AT A TIME AND USE APPROPRIATE PROBES BEFORE CONTINUING TO NEXT STRATEGY]

RATING	STRATEGIES [PROVIDED TO INTERVIEWER FOR REFERENCE]:	PROBES:	TAILORED PROBES:	REQUIRED PROBES: [USE FOR EACH STRATEGY DISCUSSED]
1	[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON RESPONSES TO THE PRESCREENING WEB SURVEY]	<p>[FOR EACH STRATEGY, PROBE ONLY AS NEEDED]</p> <p>IMPLEMENTATION: Tell me about how you implemented this strategy? How would you describe the effect on cost?</p>	[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON SELECTED STRATEGY]	<p>[FOR EACH STRATEGY, PROBE ONLY AS NEEDED]</p> <p>SUCCESSSES: What has been key to making it successful? Is there anything that would make it more successful?</p> <p>Challenges: What types of challenges have you encountered when implementing this strategy? How did you overcome those challenges or do they still exist?</p>
2	[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON RESPONSES TO THE PRESCREENING WEB SURVEY]		[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON SELECTED STRATEGY]	
3	[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON RESPONSES TO THE PRESCREENING WEB SURVEY]		[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON SELECTED STRATEGY]	

RATING	STRATEGIES [PROVIDED TO INTERVIEWER FOR REFERENCE]:	PROBES:	TAILORED PROBES:	REQUIRED PROBES: [USE FOR EACH STRATEGY DISCUSSED]
4	[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON RESPONSES TO THE PRESCREENING WEB SURVEY]		[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON SELECTED STRATEGY]	
5	[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON RESPONSES TO THE PRESCREENING WEB SURVEY]		[PRE-POPULATED BASED ON SELECTED STRATEGY]	
--	SCRATCH COOKING		IF NOT USED, WHY NOT? DO YOU PLAN TO USE THIS STRATEGY IN THE FUTURE?	
--	Recipe modification		IF NOT USED, WHY NOT? DO YOU PLAN TO USE THIS STRATEGY IN THE FUTURE?	
--	COULD YOU PLEASE DESCRIBE ANY ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES YOUR SFA PRIMARILY USED TO MEET THE SODIUM STANDARDS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED TODAY?		REFER TO "IF NEEDED PROBES"	

Q3A. What was/were your primary reason(s) for implementing these strategies when you did?

We've talked about the strategies you've used and found to be effective in reducing the sodium levels in meals you serve. I'd like to now ask you to answer some questions about what factors have influenced the effectiveness of these strategies in your SFA.

Q4. To what extent were the strategies you selected influenced by or made more or less effective due to particular characteristics of your SFA/school district? For example:

- SFA size and/or purchasing power due to size
- Geographic location (regional taste preferences, the urban/rural/suburban area your SFA serves, accessibility/availability of lower sodium foods/products)
- District infrastructure, resources or buy-in

Q5. What are the differences between implementing the sodium standards for a particular school level (elementary, middle/junior, high school, other school) compared to other school levels in your SFA? (i.e. Is it easier to implement the sodium standards for a particular school level compared to other school levels within your SFA? Why or why not?)

PROBE: [IF HAVEN'T ALREADY DISCUSSED]—WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES IMPLEMENTING THE SODIUM STANDARDS FOR LUNCH WHEN COMPARED TO BREAKFAST MEALS?

In addition to the factors we just discussed, how you purchase your foods may also influence whether you have foods available with lower sodium content.

[INTERVIEWER: FOR THIS SECTION, WE WANT TO MAKE SURE WE OBTAIN RESPONSES FOR THE KEY FNS PROGRAMS (USDA, DOD) BUT THEY MAY HAVE PROVIDED THOSE IN THE TOP 5 (Q3). YOU'LL NEED TO PREPARE IN ADVANCE FOR HOW TO ASK THESE QUESTIONS BASED ON THEIR 5 TOP STRATEGIES]

FOR WHICHEVER PURCHASING OPTION THEY ALREADY DISCUSSED, ASK THE FOLLOWING:

Q6. We previously discussed that you've used the DOD and USDA Foods to purchase foods—How effective has **[EACH STRATEGY NAME]** been in reducing sodium in the foods your SFA provides?

FOR WHICHEVER PURCHASING OPTION THEY DID NOT ALREADY DISCUSS OR IF NEITHER ARE USED, ASK THE FOLLOWING (Q5A). IF BOTH USED, GO TO Q6.

Q6A. Has your SFA considered using **[TYPE OF STRATEGY NOT USED—DOD AND/OR USDA FOODS]**? What are the reasons for not using that program?

Q7. What other methods of food purchasing and receiving does your SFA use? Can you tell me more about that? ***[IF NOT MENTIONED, PROBE FOR: FARM TO SCHOOL, FOOD BUYING CO-OP OR GROUP PURCHASING]***

Q7A. How has each of these methods enabled you to meet Target 2 sodium standards?

Q8. What processes do you use to ensure the foods you procure are lower in sodium? Which types of foods must meet sodium specifications? Are specific components of meals driving up the average daily sodium amount for school lunches?

Acceptance

These next few questions ask about how students in your SFA have accepted lower sodium meals and what your SFA has done to address student acceptance.

Q9. Which lower sodium menu items, products, or types of products have gained the most student acceptance? *[PROBE FOR THE FOLLOWING IF PARTICIPANT DOES NOT MENTION: ENTRÉES SUCH AS PIZZA, MIXED DISHES, AND MEAT PRODUCTS; BAKED GOODS; CONDIMENTS; BREAKFAST ITEMS; SNACK FOODS]*

Q10. Which lower sodium menu items, products, or types of products have gained the least student acceptance? Can you tell me what you do when an item or product is not accepted?

[PROBE FOR THE FOLLOWING IF PARTICIPANT DOES NOT MENTION: ENTRÉES SUCH AS PIZZA, MIXED DISHES, AND MEAT PRODUCTS; BAKED GOODS; CONDIMENTS; BREAKFAST ITEMS; SNACK FOODS]

Q10A. How do you determine the acceptance of foods you offer?

[PROBE FOR:

- *OBSERVATIONS FROM CAFETERIA STAFF (STUDENT OR PARENT FEEDBACK)*
- *INCREASED FOOD WASTE*
- *STUDENT SELECTION OF OFFERED FOODS (WHAT IS BEING TAKEN, WHAT IS REFUSED)]*

Your responses to the next few questions will help us understand the type of support and guidance you may have received from FNS, district, your State agency, or the food industry/manufacturers/vendors.

Q11. What types of support, resources, and guidance have you received from USDA/FNS, or the State CN director? What did you find most helpful? How about support or guidance from your school district?

[PROBE FOR:

- *TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE*
- *TRAINING OR TRAINING MATERIALS, SUCH AS FOR STAFF TO LEARN UPDATED NUTRITION REGULATIONS*

- *WEB MATERIALS (PROVIDED BY TEAM NUTRITION, INSTITUTE OF CHILD NUTRITION, [FORMERLY THE NATIONAL FOODSERVICE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE])*
- *STATE CHILD NUTRITION AGENCY TRAININGS OR MATERIALS FROM OTHER STATE AGENCIES*
- *HEALTHIER U.S. SCHOOL CHALLENGE*
- *OTHER RESOURCES]*

Q12. What additional guidance or resources would be beneficial to assist SFAs in implementing sodium standards? *[PROBE FOR: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (FEDERAL, STATE AGENCY TRAINING, ONLINE RESOURCES)]*

Q13. How has the food industry provided support or resources for your SFA to meet the sodium standards? *[PROBE FOR: SOURCE (MANUFACTURERS, DISTRIBUTORS, AND PRODUCERS), CONDUCTING TASTE TESTS WITH STUDENTS AND/OR STAFF AT SCHOOLS, PROVIDING MENUS, PROVIDING RECIPES, TIP SHEETS, ETC.]*

Q13A. To what extent have you discussed reformulating menus or products with food manufacturers or people from the food industry, such as food distributors, in order to meet the sodium standards or future sodium standards? If so, how responsive have you found them to be?

Future Efforts to Reach Sodium Standards

These next questions ask about achieving the next sodium standards, Targets 2 and 3.

[MERGE TARGET INFORMATION BY SCHOOL TYPE BY MEAL]

read q14 if any meal types by school are highlighted

Q14. What do you think it will take to meet the sodium standards for both breakfast and lunch in all of your schools? *[PROBE FOR: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOL TYPE (ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH, HIGH, "OTHER") CLARIFY THE SCHOOL OR MEAL TYPES THAT ARE NOT MEETING THE SAME STANDARD AS THE BEST SCORES OTHERS]*

Q15. Do you plan to continue working toward future sodium standards? Why or why not? What are your next steps? What strategies will you use?

Q16. What do you think it will take to meet the *future* sodium standards for both breakfast and lunch in all of your schools? *[PROBE FOR: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOL TYPE (ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH, HIGH, "OTHER")]*

Communication

My last set of questions is about the types of communication strategies your SFA uses to support implementation of the sodium standards.

Q17. What role does communication play in helping gain student acceptance of changes in school meals? What strategies have you used?

[PROBE FOR:

- **PROBE FOR COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES MENTIONED IN HANDOUT, IF ANY**
- *MARKETING STRATEGIES SUCH AS ON-SITE SIGNAGE, STUDENT EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS, PARENT HANDOUTS*
- *INVOLVING STUDENTS (TASTE TESTS, STUDENT INPUT)*
- *INVOLVING PARENTS (PARENT HANDOUTS, PARENT OR PTA MEETINGS)*
- *SMARTER LUNCHROOM STRATEGIES*
- *NUTRITION EDUCATION ACTIVITIES*
- *OVERALL HEALTH BENEFITS OR SODIUM SPECIFIC COMMUNICATIONS*
- *ANY OTHER STRATEGIES]*

Q17A. Thinking about the strategies you just mentioned, which ones were most effective toward gaining student acceptance?

[PROBE FOR:

- *SUCCESSES*
- *CHALLENGES]*

Q18. How does your SFA communicate the health benefits of sodium reduction to staff and students? *[PROBE FOR: WHAT TYPES OF HEALTH BENEFITS ARE COMMUNICATED? HOW IS THIS DONE? HOW OFTEN? WHICH ARE EFFECTIVE? IF NOT COMMUNICATED, PROBE FOR: WHY NOT?]*

Q19. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experiences implementing the sodium standards?

End of Interview

We appreciate the time you have taken to answer our questions. Your input is very valuable. Do you have any questions or any additional information you would like to share before we end **[IF SITE VISIT: THIS PORTION OF]** this interview?

[IF TELEPHONE INTERVIEW:] If you have additional questions following this interview, you may contact us at 1-844-295-2605 (toll free) or approaches@2mresearch.com. Thank you again.

[IF SITE VISIT:] Next, if available, we would like to take a look at any posters, signs, or letters related to sodium or nutrition, agendas or notes from meetings with the school/school district or community

stakeholders, 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 personnel or students. Do we have your permission to photograph?

YES ☐ Thank you. Do you have any questions before we begin? **[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 related to sodium reduction. **[PROCEED TO SITE VISIT OBSERVATIONAL INSTRUMENT]**

Reason: _____

Thank you again for your time. If you have additional questions following this interview, you may contact us at 1-844-295-2605 (toll free) or approaches@2mresearch.com

APPENDIX D. SCHOOL EMPLOYEE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

OMB Number: 0584-0619
Expiration Date: 02/29/2020



School Employee In-Depth Interview Guide

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 05840619. It will take you, on average, 65 minutes to complete this interview.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

This form will be completed by research staff for every participant and provided to the interviewer prior to the date of scheduled interview.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

MMID [SFA SITE LIST EXCEL SPREADSHEET]

Contact Name [SFA BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW: Q4B]

Position Title [SFA BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW: Q4B]

School/School District Name [SFA BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW: Q4B]

School or School District (select one) ☐ SCHOOL ☐ SCHOOL DISTRICT

Phone Number [SFA BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW: Q4B]

Email Address [SFA BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW: Q4B]

SFA Site Name [SFA SITE LIST EXCEL SPREADSHEET]

SFA Director Name [SFA SITE LIST EXCEL SPREADSHEET]

Geographic Location [SFA SITE LIST EXCEL SPREADSHEET]

Urbanicity [SFA SITE LIST EXCEL SPREADSHEET]

INTERVIEW TAILORING GUIDANCE

When possible, placeholder (red text) fields in the interview guide will be replaced electronically with the appropriate text by the research staff before the interview. In some cases, the Interviewer may need to manually prepare the interview guide.

Q1	Insert POSITION TITLE
Q1A	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q1B	Insert POSITION TITLE Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q3	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q5 introductory sentence	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q5	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q5A	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q5B	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q6	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q6A	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q7	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT Insert GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION (NORTHEAST, NORTHWEST, MIDWEST, SOUTHWEST, or SOUTHEAST)
Q7A	Insert URBANICITY (RURAL, URBAN, or SUBURBAN)
Q7B	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q8	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q8C	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q9	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q10	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT
Q11	Insert SCHOOL or SCHOOL DISTRICT

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today. My name is [NAME OF INTERVIEWER] and I'm a researcher from 2M Research Services.

[IF SITE VISIT: This is [NAME OF NOTE TAKER], also a researcher from 2M Research Services, 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 Food and Nutrition Service, referred to as FNS, to conduct an assessment of the challenges and successes your school and school district have experienced while working to meet the sodium standards.

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 3 grade ranges. Schools were expected to reduce sodium levels by school year 2014–2015, and achieve other targeted reductions in the future.

As a school employee, the opinions and information that you provide are critical to this effort.

Consent: I would like to take a minute to make sure that you have read over the materials we sent to you in advance, especially the consent form. Do you have any questions about the information on the study that was described?

Do you agree to participate in this research study as described? Please respond with “yes” or “no.”

YES ☐ Great, thank you. **[PROCEED TO SCRIPT TO OBTAIN PERMISSION TO RECORD IN THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCRIPT]**

NO ☐ Do you have questions or concerns about me, our research, or the interview that I can answer? **[IF PARTICIPANT STILL DECLINES, THANK PARTICIPANT FOR THEIR TIME AND END INTERVIEW]**

Permission to Record: 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 this interview 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 district, or anyone outside the research team. 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. 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 ☐ Great. 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 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?

[INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE REFER TO HANDOUT 1: SODIUM TARGET TABLE THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW AS NEEDED.]

Background

These first few questions focus on the characteristics of you and your school/school district.

Q1. How long have you been a [POSITION TITLE]? [if 2014-2015 Probe: did you start in the fall or spring of that school year?]

Q1A. Has that time always been with this [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT], or were you with another school or school district prior to this? *[PROBE FOR: OTHER SCHOOL LEVEL; WITHIN THE SAME DISTRICT, ETC.]*

Q1B. Other than being a [POSITION TITLE], have you been involved in your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] in other ways? If yes, how so? *[PROBE: INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL WELLNESS COMMITTEE, SCHOOL WELLNESS INITIATIVES, ETC.]*

Q2. Are general nutrition changes in school meals communicated to you? Can you describe the changes that you know about? *[PROBE: SODIUM REDUCTION TARGETS.]*

Q2A. Who communicates these nutrition changes in school meals?

Q2B. When were these changes communicated to you? *[PROBE FOR WHEN THEY HEARD ABOUT SODIUM TARGETS.]*

Q2C. How were changes in nutrition standards communicated to you? How often is this communication done?

Q3. Do you have any direct involvement with your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT]'s nutrition program? If yes, how have you been involved in supporting the changes in school meals?

Q4. What do you think about the updated standards for healthier school meals and in particular, sodium reduction?

Now we would like to discuss your [SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]'s success in achieving sodium standards.

Strategies to Reduce Sodium

Q5. Can you tell me if you are aware of any strategies your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] uses to address changes in nutrition standards in school meals? If so, what strategies are used? *[PROBE FOR: CONDUCTING TASTE TESTS, SCRATCH COOKING, WORKING WITH MANUFACTURERS, CHANGING RECIPES, INCORPORATING MORE FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES, SCHOOL VEGETABLE GARDEN, INCLUDING INFORMATION RELATED TO THE CHANGES IN CURRICULUM, ETC.]*

- Q6. What strategies did your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] use to specifically reduce sodium? Can you describe these strategies? *[PROBE FOR: CONDUCTING TASTE TESTS, SCRATCH COOKING, WORKING WITH MANUFACTURERS, CHANGING RECIPES, INCORPORATING MORE FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES, SCHOOL VEGETABLE GARDEN, INCLUDING INFORMATION RELATED TO THE CHANGES IN CURRICULUM, ETC.]*

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

- Q7. Of the strategies your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] has implemented to reduce sodium in school meals, can you tell me which you think was the most effective strategy? Why? [Probe for: Meal being featured (breakfast, lunch), FOOD acceptance/taste PREFERENCE, EASE of IMPLEMENTATION, LEVEL of support from staff, students, parents]

- Q7A. Please describe which strategy was most widely accepted? Why?

- Q7B. Do you think that the most effective strategy(ies) your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] has implemented was/were more or less effective due to:

- School type? [elementary, middle/junior high, high, other]
- Meal type? [breakfast, lunch]
- School/school district size?
- The [rural, urban, suburban] area your school serves?
- Regional taste? *[PREFERENCES/CUISINES]*

- Q8. What do you think has been the biggest barrier for your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] in their efforts to address changes in school meal nutrition standards? Can you describe any specific barriers to reducing sodium in school meals?

- School type [elementary, middle/junior high, high, “other”]
- Meal type [breakfast, lunch]
- School/school district size
- The [rural, urban, suburban] area your school serves
- Regional tastes *[PREFERENCES/CUISINES]*
- *RESISTANCE FROM STAFF, PARENTS, AND/OR STUDENTS.*

[IF NO BARRIERS ARE CITED, SKIP Q8A AND Q8B AND GO TO Q9]

- Q8A. **[ASK Q8A IF BARRIERS ARE CITED]** How did your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] overcome these barriers/challenges? Do any barriers/challenges still exist?

Q8B. [ASK Q8B IF BARRIERS ARE CITED] How has the community helped your school overcome these barriers?

Q9. Do you think that the school level (elementary, middle/junior high, or high school) plays a role in meeting and/or acceptance of the sodium standards for school meals? *[PROBE FOR: REASONS WHY?]*

Acceptance

Q10. Can you tell me if students at your **[SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT]** are aware of the nutrition changes in school meals? Why or why not? If yes, why do you think they are supportive of the changes? What about the changes in sodium levels? How do you know?

Q10A. Can you tell me what kind of feedback you hear from students about the changes in school meals? What do you hear about the foods students like the least? The most? What do you hear about changes in sodium specifically?

Q10B. From what you have observed, which items gain the most acceptance? Least acceptance? Why do you think so?

Q10C. How has this changed with the changes in school meals and nutrition standards?

Q11. How did your **[SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT]** encourage student input or feedback when changes were being made to school meals? What other steps were taken by the school to support acceptance by students? *[PROBE FOR:*

- *MARKETING METHODS (ON-SITE SIGNAGE, STUDENT EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS, PARENT HANDOUTS, PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT, ETC.)*
- *STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING SCHOOL MEAL MENUS, GETTING STUDENT INPUT ABOUT LOWER SODIUM OFFERINGS IN SCHOOL MEALS*
- *TASTE TESTS*
- *PRESENTATIONS TO A PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION/PARENT ORGANIZATION, OR OTHER PARENT GROUP MEETING TO DISCUSS SCHOOL MEALS*
- *CONDUCTING A NUTRITION EDUCATION ACTIVITY RELATED TO SODIUM IN THE CLASSROOM OR FOOD SERVICE AREA*
- *SETTING UP A BOOTH AT A SCHOOL EVENT TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LOWER SODIUM STANDARDS (SUCH AS AT A FAMILY NIGHT OR PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE)*
- *ANYTHING ELSE]*

Q11A. Which of these do you think had the *most impact* on student acceptance of lower sodium foods? Why? **[ALLOW A RESPONSE OF DON'T KNOW AFTER PROBING FOR A RESPONSE.]**

Q12. How did your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] encourage staff input when changes were being made to school meals? Can you describe any other strategies that your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] took to gain acceptance of the changes to school meals from school staff? Can you describe what your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] has tried?

Q13. How does your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] work with the community members, such as parents or a wellness committee, to support healthier school meals? Can you tell me how community members help with efforts specific to reducing sodium? What role have they played?

Q14. What ideas or suggestions do you have for other schools to gain support for the changes that your [SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] is making to school meals they serve? How about to help increase acceptance for lower sodium in school meals? Can you describe any key strategies that you would recommend?

End of Interview

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 email us at approaches@2mresearch.com, or call toll free at 1-844-295-2605. Thank you again.

[IF SITE VISIT:] Next, if available, we would like to take a look at any posters or signs you may have displayed in the cafeteria, letters that may have been sent to parents, agendas or notes from meetings with community stakeholders, and any other related materials. Do you have any of these materials that you would be willing to share with us?

YES ☐

NO ☐ (CLARIFY IF THEY DO NOT HAVE ANY OR IF THEY ARE NOT WILLING TO SHARE)

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 children or school personnel. Do we have your permission to photograph?

YES ☐ Thank you. Do you have any questions before we begin? **[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 related to sodium reduction. **[PROCEED TO SITE VISIT OBSERVATIONAL INSTRUMENT]**
Reason: _____

Thank you again for your time. If you have additional questions following this interview, you may email us at approaches@2mresearch.com, or call toll free at 1-844-295-2605.

APPENDIX E. FOOD SUPPLIER IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

OMB Number: 0584-0619
Expiration Date: 02/29/2020



Food Supplier In-Depth Interview Guide

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 05840619. It will take you, on average, 65 minutes to complete this interview.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

This form will be completed by research staff for every participant and provided to the interviewer prior to the date of scheduled interview.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

MMID	[SFA SITE LIST EXCEL SPREADSHEET]
Contact Name	[SFA BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW: Q5C]
Food Company	[SFA BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW: Q5C]
Food Company Type	[DISTRIBUTOR MANUFACTURER PRODUCER]
Phone Number	[SFA BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW: Q5C]
Email Address	[SFA BRIEF SITE VISIT SELECTION INTERVIEW: Q5C]
SFA Site Name	[SFA SITE LIST EXCEL SPREADSHEET]
SFA Director Name	[SFA SITE LIST EXCEL SPREADSHEET]
Geographic Location	[SFA SITE LIST EXCEL SPREADSHEET]

INTERVIEW TAILORING GUIDANCE

When possible, placeholder (red text) fields in the interview guide will be replaced electronically with the appropriate text by the research staff before the interview. In some cases, the Interviewer may need to manually prepare the interview guide.

Q14 Insert Rural, urban or suburban from Q2

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today. My name is **[NAME OF INTERVIEWER]** and I'm a researcher from 2M Research Services.

[IF SITE VISIT: This is **[NAME OF NOTE TAKER]**, also a researcher from 2M Research Services, 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 Food and Nutrition Service, referred to as FNS, to conduct an assessment of the challenges and successes your business has experienced while working with school districts to help them meet federal sodium standards for school meals. As a food supplier, the opinions and information that you provide will be critical to this effort.

Consent: I would like to take a minute to make sure that you have read over the materials we sent to you in advance, especially the consent form. Do you have any questions about the information on the study that was described?

[ANSWER QUESTIONS, IF ANY, AND ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION]

Do you agree to participate in this research study as described? Please respond with "yes" or "no."

YES ☐ Great, thank you. **[PROCEED TO SCRIPT TO OBTAIN PERMISSION TO RECORD IN THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCRIPT]**

NO ☐ Do you have questions or concerns about me, our research, or the interview that I can answer? **[IF PARTICIPANT STILL DECLINES, THANK PARTICIPANT FOR THEIR TIME AND END INTERVIEW]**

Permission to Record: 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?

Before we begin, what is your position or role within [FOOD COMPANY]? Are you able to provide information to us at the school level, or more at the school district level?

Background

These first few questions focus on the characteristics of your business.

Q1. Is your business office (i.e., not company headquarters) located in a rural, urban, or suburban area?

Q2. Does your business mostly serve rural, urban, or suburban areas?

Q3. How many schools or school districts do you serve in your current job? An estimate is acceptable.

Q3A. How long have you been working with these schools or school districts?

Q4. In a typical month during the school year, about what percentage of your gross sales comes from schools or school districts?

Now, I would like to discuss your efforts in helping schools/school districts achieve their sodium-reduction goals.

Background: 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 3 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, although additional flexibility on the latter two targets has recently been announced. [NAME OF SFA DIRECTOR] has told us that they have successfully met [ONE/TWO] of the three USDA targets to lower sodium in school meals, and that they worked with your company to help them meet these targets.

Strategies to Reduce Sodium; Successes, Challenges

Q5. In what ways have the sodium regulations for school meals affected your business?

[PROBE IF RESPONDENT FOCUSES ON RECENTLY IMPLEMENTED CHANGES: Were there any impacts to your business related to helping SFAs meet Target 1 and/or Target 2?]

Q6. What particular types of lower sodium products are more difficult to **[FIND/CREATE]** than others?

Q7. How does your company decide which **[FOODS TO CARRY/FOODS TO MANUFACTURE]**?

Q8. Can you describe what was most challenging when working towards providing foods to schools or school districts striving to meet the sodium standards? Any specific barriers? How did your business overcome the challenges? Do any barriers still exist?

[PROBE FOR:

TO ALL:

- *BUDGET RESTRAINTS (SCHOOL AND/OR FOOD SUPPLIER)*
- *TASTE ACCEPTANCE*
- *FUNCTIONALITY OF SODIUM IN SOME FOOD ITEMS*
- *DEVELOPING MARKETING MATERIALS, ETC.]*

TO FOOD PRODUCER:

- *FINDING FOODS FROM MANUFACTURERS THAT ARE LOWER IN SODIUM (IF INTERVIEWEE IS NOT A MANUFACTURER)*
- *MODIFICATION OF RECIPES (IF INTERVIEWEE IS FOOD PRODUCER)*
- *REFORMULATION (IF INTERVIEWEE IS FOOD PRODUCER)*

TO DISTRIBUTOR:

- *FINDING FOODS FROM MANUFACTURERS THAT are lower in sodium (If interviewee is not a manufacturer)*

Q9. What tools and strategies do you think were most effective to offer foods lower in sodium? Why?

Q10. Looking back, are there other strategies that were not used by your business that could have made it easier to provide lower sodium foods to schools in order to meet the sodium standards? Please explain.

Q11. Since the time that the sodium standards have been in place (school year 2014–2015), have your strategies for providing foods with lower sodium changed? If yes, how? If not, why not?

Q12. Do you think that any of the strategies you use are more or less effective due to:

- School type (elementary, middle/junior high, high, other)?
- Meal type (breakfast, lunch)?
- School/school district size?
- Purchasing power (leverage based on size)?
- The (rural, urban, suburban) area the school and [FOOD COMPANY] serve?
- Geographic region (northeast, northwest, midwest, southwest, southeast, etc.) of schools and [FOOD COMPANY]?
- Regional taste (preferences/cuisines)?

Q13. Thinking about the food supply chain, what is key, as a food supplier, to helping schools meet the sodium standards?

Relationship with Schools

Next, I would like to ask you some questions about the relationship between your business and schools including [SFA SITE NAME], in particular.

Q14. Could you please describe your interactions with [SFA SITE NAME]? *[PROBE: HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK WITH SCHOOLS/SCHOOL DISTRICTS? HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR COMPANY TALK WITH SCHOOLS/SCHOOL DISTRICTS?]*

Q14A. Could you please describe the process your business followed to provide foods to [SFA SITE NAME] that helped meet sodium standards?

Q14B. Did you or your company work with schools and/or school districts to create/provide the lower sodium foods and ingredients you offer? If yes, how so? *[PROBE FOR: WORKED DIRECTLY WITH SCHOOLS (COLLABORATIVE OR INDEPENDENT PROCESS?, FREQUENCY OF CONTACT?, ETC.), WORKED WITH PURCHASING CONSORTIUMS OF SCHOOLS (COLLABORATIVE OR INDEPENDENT PROCESS?, FREQUENCY OF CONTACT?, ETC.)]*

Q14C. How does your business provide support to schools/school districts working towards meeting the sodium targets? *[PROBE FOR: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, MARKETING MATERIALS, PROVIDE SAMPLES, CONDUCT TASTE TESTS, OTHER FOOD RELATED ACTIVITIES ETC.]*

Q15. How has the bidding process with SFAs, schools, and/or school districts changed due to the lower sodium standards? *[PROBE FOR: CHANGE IN EVALUATION CRITERIA OF BIDS, PREFERENCE TOWARDS PROCUREMENT TYPES, ABILITY TO PROVIDE LOWER SODIUM FOODS]*

Acceptance of Reduced Sodium Products

The next few questions focus on the characteristics of products or types of products relating to the sodium standards.

Q16. What type of research did you or your company conduct on how to offer foods lower in sodium? What sources do you or your company read? What did you find was most helpful? What gaps do you think still exist in the research on lowering sodium?

Q17. Of the lower sodium products or types of products your business provides, which of these have the *highest and lowest* demand?

- Q17A. For those items with *highest demand*, what reasons (if any) do you hear for why they are popular? *[PROBE FOR: TASTE, TEXTURE, ETC.]*
- Q17B. For those items with *lowest demand*, what reasons (if any) do you hear for why they are not popular? *[PROBE FOR: TASTE, TEXTURE, ETC.]*
- Q17C. Are different foods being ordered/created at the different school levels (elementary, middle, high school)? How do you know? *[PROBE FOR: REASONS WHY]*

Q18. Have schools/school districts asked for a lower sodium product or some other type of product that your business does not currently provide? *[PROBE FOR: WHICH ITEMS, ARE THEY AVAILABLE FROM MANUFACTURERS, DO YOU PLAN TO PROVIDE THIS ITEM IN THE FUTURE, ETC.]*

- Q18A. Have you met with any food producers or people from the food industry, such as food distributors, to discuss reformulating products to meet the standards? If so, how responsive have you found them to be?

Support

Your responses to the next few questions will help us understand the type of support and guidance you may have received from the school district you serve, their SFA, USDA, FNS, or other food industry manufacturers and vendors.

Q19. Did you receive support from the SFA, school district, USDA, FNS, or State child nutrition agencies when working toward meeting sodium Target 1?

[IF YES, GO TO Q19A. IF NO, GO TO Q19B.]

- Q19A. If so, could you describe the support and guidance that you received? What did you find most helpful? *[PROBE FOR: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, POLICY MEMOS, WEB MATERIALS, PRINT MATERIALS, OR TRAININGS]*

Q19B. What additional resources do you think would be helpful for you to be better able to provide lower sodium foods?

[PROBE FOR:

- *TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOW TO WORK WITH SCHOOLS/SCHOOL DISTRICTS, ETC.)*
- *ONLINE RESOURCES*
- *FREQUENCY OF ASSISTANCE*
- *SPECIFIC TOPICS, ETC.]*

Q19C. Would you like more guidance or resources to help you provide foods that meet the sodium reduction targets? If yes, please explain.

Q20. Now turning to support from the food industry, including manufacturers, and other distributors and producers: Can you describe any support from other members of the food industry that you have received to help your business meet the sodium standards?

Future Efforts and Movement Towards Sodium Targets 2 and 3

These next questions ask about achieving the next sodium standards (Targets 2 and 3).

Q21. How is your business actively working towards providing products that will help schools/school districts to reach the future sodium standards (Targets 2 and 3)?

Q22. In your opinion, do you think recipe modification, product reformulation, or both will play a significant role in meeting Target 2 and Target 3 sodium standards? Why or why not?

Q22A. If both, which strategy do you think will have more of an impact on lowering sodium in school meals? Why?

Q23. What advice would you give to schools or school districts in trying to meet the next sodium standards?

Q24. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experiences and your business's efforts to help schools meet the sodium standards?

End of interview

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 approaches@2mresearch.com, or call toll free at 1-844-295-2605. Thank you again.

[IF SITE VISIT:] Next, if available, we would like to take a look at any posters or signs provided to you, letters that may have been sent to you from other food suppliers or that you have provided to schools,

agendas or notes from meetings with the school/school district or community stakeholders, 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 personnel. Do we have your permission to photograph?

YES ☐ Thank you. Do you have any questions before we begin? **[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 related to sodium reduction. **[PROCEED TO SITE VISIT OBSERVATIONAL INSTRUMENT]**

Reason: _____

Thank you again for your time. If you have additional questions following this interview, you may contact us at approaches@2mresearch.com, or call toll free at 1-844-295-2605.

APPENDIX F. STAKEHOLDER IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

OMB Number: 0584-0619
Expiration Date: 02/29/2020



Stakeholder In-Depth Interview Guide

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 0584-0619. It will take you, on average, 65 minutes to complete this interview.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

This form will be completed by research staff for every participant and provided to the interviewer prior to the date of scheduled interview.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

MMID

Contact Name

Organization

Affiliated School/School District

Phone Number

Email Address

SFA Site Name

SFA Director Name

Geographic Location

INTERVIEW TAILORING GUIDANCE

When possible, placeholder (red text) fields in the interview guide will be replaced electronically with the appropriate text by the research staff before the interview. In some cases, the Interviewer may need to manually prepare the interview guide.

Q1A	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q2	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q2A	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q3	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q4	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q5	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q5A	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q6	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q7	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q7A	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q8	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q8B	Insert GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION (NORTHEAST, NORTHWEST, MIDWEST, SOUTHWEST, SOUTHEAST) Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q9	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q9B	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name
Q10B	Insert AFFILIATED SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT name

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.

[IF SITE VISIT: This is **[NAME OF NOTE TAKER]**, also a researcher from 2M Research Services, 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 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 federal standards to reduce sodium in school meals.

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 3 grade ranges. Schools were expected to reduce sodium levels by school year 2014–2015, and achieve other targeted reductions in the future.

As a person in the community who is knowledgeable about **[INSERT SFA SITE NAME]**, your opinions and the information that you provide will be critical to this effort.

Consent: I would like to take a minute to make sure that you have read over the materials we sent to you in advance, especially the consent form. Do you have any questions about the information on the study that was described?

[ANSWER QUESTIONS, IF ANY, AND ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION]

Do you agree to participate in this research study as described? Please respond with "yes" or "no."

- YES ☐ Great, thank you. **[PROCEED TO SCRIPT TO OBTAIN PERMISSION TO RECORD IN THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCRIPT]**
- NO ☐ Do you have questions or concerns about me, our research, or the interview that I can answer? **[IF PARTICIPANT STILL DECLINES, THANK PARTICIPANT FOR THEIR TIME AND END INTERVIEW]**

Permission to Record: 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? [\[ANSWER QUESTIONS\]](#)

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? [\[ANSWER QUESTIONS\]](#)

Background

These first few questions ask about your affiliation with the [\[INSERT SFA SITE NAME\]](#) school district and how you have been involved in school/district initiatives.

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

[USE RESPONSE FROM Q1 TO TAILOR REMAINING QUESTIONS AS NEEDED. IF RESPONDENT IS AFFILIATED WITH AN INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL INSERT "SCHOOL." IF RESPONDENT IS AFFILIATED WITH A SCHOOL DISTRICT, INSERT "SCHOOL DISTRICT."]

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 [\[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT\]](#) district?

Q3. Please describe any involvement you have had with [\[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT\]](#)'s nutrition program.

Strategies to Reduce Sodium

- Q4. Can you describe any strategies **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** uses to address changes in nutrition standards in school meals? What about strategies to reduce sodium? *[PROBE: HOSTING TASTE TESTS, SCRATCH COOKING, WORKING WITH MANUFACTURERS, CHANGING RECIPES, INCORPORATING MORE FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, BUILDING SCHOOL GARDEN, ETC.]*
- Q4A. Who communicates nutrition standard changes in school meals?
- Q4B. When were changes communicated to you? *[PROBE FOR: SODIUM TARGETS]*
- Q4C. How were changes in nutrition standards communicated to you? How often is this communication done?
- Q5. 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?
- Q5A. How did **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** reach out to the community?
- Q5B. What input did the community provide? What kinds of things were suggested by the community?

Successes and Challenges

- Q6. From your perspective, which efforts do you think have been the 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 Q4]*
- Q7. What do you think has been the biggest barrier for **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]**'s efforts to address changes in school meal nutrition standards? What do you think have been the biggest 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.*
- *REGIONAL CUISINES AND CULTURES*
- *SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT SIZE*
- *SCHOOL TYPE (ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH, HIGH)]*

Acceptance

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

- Q8.** How aware are students at **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** of the nutrition changes in school meals? Can you tell me why you think they are or are not aware of these changes? What about the changes in sodium levels?
- Q8A.** Do you think they are supportive of the changes? How do you know? What reasons do they give for supporting or not supporting the changes? *[PROBE: IF PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED THAT THEY ARE A PARENT, ASK ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO CHANGES IN SCHOOL MEALS, SPECIFICALLY SODIUM.]*
- Q8B.** What ideas do you have to involve students in the changes that **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** is making to school meals? How can students help **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** increase acceptance for reduced sodium in school meals?
- Q9.** How aware are parents at **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** of the nutritional changes in school meals? Can you tell me why you think they are or are not aware of these changes? What about the changes in sodium levels?
- Q9A.** Do you think they are supportive of the changes? How do you know? What reasons do they give for supporting or not supporting the changes?
- Q9B.** What ideas do you have to involve parents in the changes **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** is making to school meals? How can parents help **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** increase acceptance for reduced sodium in school meals?
- Q10.** In your opinion, are other community members aware of nutritional changes in school meals? What about the changes in sodium levels? Can you tell me why you think they are or are not aware of these changes? How do you know?
- Q10A.** Do you think they are supportive of the changes? What reasons do you hear from them about supporting or not supporting the changes? *[PROBE: IF PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED, ASK ABOUT AFFILIATION WITH SCHOOL, FOR EXAMPLE, IF PARTICIPANT MENTIONS THEY ARE ON A COMMITTEE, ASK ABOUT THE COMMITTEE'S SUPPORT.]*
- Q10B.** What ideas do you have to involve the community in the changes that **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** is making to school meals? How can community members help **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]** increase acceptance for reduced sodium in school meals?
- Q11.** Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience and your **[SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT]**'s efforts to implement the sodium standards?

End of Interview

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 by email at approaches@2mresearch.com, or call us toll free at 1-844-295-2605. 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? **[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.

REASON: _____

[PROCEED TO SITE VISIT OBSERVATIONAL INSTRUMENT]

Thank you again for your time. If you have additional questions following this interview, you may email us at approaches@2mresearch.com, or call us toll free at 1-844-295-2605.