

Child Nutrition Program Operations Study (CN-OPS-II)

CN-OPS-II REPORT: SCHOOL YEAR 2017–18

Suggested Citation: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, *Child Nutrition Program Operations Study (CN-OPS-II): SY 2017-18*. Beyler, Nick, Jim Murdoch, and Charlotte Cabili. Project Officer: Holly Figueroa. Alexandria, VA: November 2022.

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CN-OPS-II Year 3 Report: SY 2017–18

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This study was conducted under Contract AG-3198-C-15-0008 with the Food and Nutrition Service.

This report is available on the Food and Nutrition Service website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research-analysis>

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Acknowledgments

Several people were integral to the successful completion of this project and deserve acknowledgement for their contributions. Holly Figueroa of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Office of Policy Support served as our Contracting Officer's Representative. Ms. Figueroa helped ensure that our work proceeded in a timely fashion, facilitated communication with internal stakeholders at FNS, and guided this project to completion. At FNS, Child Nutrition and Office of Policy Support staff provided timely feedback and guidance to help us understand relevant issues and refine our research. On the 2M Research team, Dr. Nick Beyler served as Project Director and Susan Ullrich was Project Manager. Our colleagues Eric Zeidman and Charlotte Cabili at Mathematica Policy Research made significant contributions to the research. 2M's research staff, including Arpita Chakravorty, Shu Li, Yuhua Huang, Paul Ruggiere, Mary Ann Latter, Moyo Kimathi, MacKenzie Regier, and Joshua Townley, helped with the research and assisted in preparation of the final document.

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ACRONYMS USED IN TOPIC-BASED BRIEFS

Acronym	Name
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CI	Confidence Interval
CN	Child Nutrition
CN-OPS-II	Child Nutrition Program Operations Study
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DC	Direct Certification
F/RP	Free or Reduced Price
FDPIR	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
FFVP	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FPL	Federal Poverty Level
FY	Fiscal Year
LEA	Local Education Agency
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NSLA	National School Lunch Act
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
POS	Point of Service
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
RCCIs	Residential Child Care Institutions
SA	State Agency
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SFA	School Food Authority
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SN-OPS	Special Nutrition Program Operations Study
SSO	Seamless Summer Option
SY	School Year
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
VCR	Verification Collection Report

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN TOPIC-BASED BRIEFS

Term	Definition
Buy American Provision	The Buy American Provision requires School Food Authorities (SFAs) to purchase, to the maximum extent practicable, domestic commodities or products for use in the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) Child Nutrition (CN) Programs. Under the Buy American Provision, foods that are unprocessed, agricultural commodities must be domestic, and processed foods must be processed domestically using food components that consist of more than 51 percent domestically grown items (by weight or volume). Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. territories are exempt from the Buy American provision.
Charter Schools	Independent public schools that operate within or as a school district.
Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program (CACFP At-Risk)	CACFP At-Risk allows schools or afterschool centers in low-income areas to serve a third meal for students (usually supper) who attend an afterschool program. Students through age 18 are eligible. Afterschool programs can operate CACFP At-Risk independently or through a sponsoring organization. To be eligible, programs must (1) be organized primarily to provide care for students after school or on weekends, holidays, or school vacations during the regular school year; (2) provide regularly scheduled education or enrichment activities; and (3) be in a school attendance zone where 50 percent or more of the students are approved for free or reduced price (F/RP) meals.
Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)	CEP is a non-pricing meal service option that allows schools and school districts in low-income areas to serve breakfasts and lunches at no cost to all students without collecting household applications. Individual schools, groups of schools, or entire school districts may elect CEP if the number of identified students (i.e., those who are automatically certified for free meals through direct certification or other locally sourced lists of categorically eligible students) is at least 40 percent of total student enrollment.
Direct Certification (DC)	Direct certification allows local education agencies (LEAs) to certify eligible children for free meals based on documentation obtained directly from appropriate State agencies, local agencies, or other authorized individuals, eliminating the need for an application.
Federal Sodium Targets	The Federal Sodium Targets set maximum sodium levels, in milligrams, for average weekly school meals offered in the NSLP and SBP. Targets vary by elementary, middle, and high school level. Target 1 was effective July 1, 2014. At the time of the study, Target 2 was scheduled to take effect in SY 2017–18; however, USDA published an interim final rule ¹ in November 2017 that retained Target 1 as the regulatory limit through SY 2018–19.

¹ <http://federalregister.gov/documents/2017/11/30/2017-25799/child-nutrition-programs-flexibilities-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium-requirements>

Term	Definition
Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)	FNS administers the nutrition assistance programs of USDA. The mission of FNS is to increase food security and reduce hunger by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a way that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)	FDPIR is a Federal program that provides USDA Foods to low-income households living on Indian reservations and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations or in Oklahoma. Children from households that receive benefits from FDPIR are deemed categorically eligible for free school meals.
Free or Reduced Price (F/RP) Meals	While all students, regardless of income, are eligible to participate in the NSLP and SBP, students in income-eligible households may receive F/RP meals. Students from households earning at or below 130 percent of the Federal poverty level (FPL) qualify for free meals, while students from households with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of FPL pay a reduced price for meals.
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)	FFVP is a federally assisted program providing free fresh fruits and vegetables to students in participating elementary schools during the school day. FFVP helps schools create healthier school environments by providing healthier food choices, expanding the variety of fruits and vegetables that students experience, and promoting nutrition education.
Geographic Preference	SFAs and schools are encouraged to purchase locally grown and raised products and may apply a “geographic preference” when procuring locally grown and raised unprocessed agricultural products. When applying geographic preference, origin is tied to the agricultural product, not the location of the recipient. SFAs and schools may define “local” in their own terms.
Local Education Agency (LEA)	LEAs are governing bodies responsible for activities related to but not directly under the school food service. In most cases, the LEA is the school district.
Meal Pattern Requirements	Meal pattern requirements are minimum amounts of foods to be offered in school meals each day and over the course of a week. NSLP requirements include five meal components (fruits, vegetables, grains, meats/meat alternates, and milk). SBP requirements include three meal components (fruits, grains, and milk).
National School Lunch Act (NSLA)	The NSLA (the Act), first passed in 1946, authorizes funding and sets policy for USDA’s core child nutrition programs: the NSLP, the SBP, the CACFP, and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)	The NSLP is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions (RCCIs). It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to students each school day. State education agencies typically administer the NSLP at the State level while SFAs operate the program at the local level.

Term	Definition
NSLP Afterschool Snack Service	This federally assisted snack service provides cash reimbursement to encourage schools to serve snacks to children after the regular school day. The snack service is administered by State agencies through agreements with SFAs. Participating sites must participate in the NSLP, serve snacks that meet Federal requirements, and operate an afterschool care program that provides organized, regularly scheduled activities in a structured and supervised environment, including an educational or enrichment activity.
Nutrition Standards for School Meals	The Federal Government implemented revised nutrition standards in SY 2012–13. The revised standards require school meals to increase the availability of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; reduce the levels of sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat in meals; and meet students' nutritional needs within their calorie requirements. Requirements vary by student age.
Special Provisions	<p>Special provisions allow SFAs and schools to operate NSLP and SBP at a community level. Rather than making meal benefits available to students based solely on individual eligibility determinations, SFAs and schools can establish that a sufficient percentage of students are within income guidelines for F/RP meals to warrant serving all student meals at no cost to the student. Special provisions increase access to free meals for students and decrease the administrative and household burden of completing and processing meal applications.</p> <p>Under Provision 2, schools establish claiming percentages and serve meals at no cost to all students for a 4-year period. SFAs must distribute F/RP applications, and individual eligibility determinations and meal counts by type must be made during the first year (base year) to determine the percentages of F/RP and paid meals. Reimbursement for the subsequent 3 years is calculated by applying first-year percentages to monthly meal counts. Any costs of providing meals at no charge to all students that are not covered by this reimbursement must come from non-Federal funds.</p> <p>Provision 3 is similar to Provision 2, except that the Federal reimbursement is the same dollar amount that the school received in the base year, adjusted for enrollment, operating days, and inflation. Similar to Provision 2, Provision 3 can be further extended in 4-year increments if the socioeconomic status of the student population is stable.</p>
School Breakfast Program (SBP)	The SBP provides cash assistance to States to operate nonprofit breakfast programs in public or nonprofit private schools and RCCIs. FNS administers the SBP at the Federal level. State education agencies typically administer the SBP at the State level while SFAs operate the program at the local level.
School Food Authority (SFA)	An SFA is the governing body responsible for the administration of one or more schools. It has the authority to enter into a legal agreement with a State to operate the school meal programs. An SFA can cover a single school district or multiple school districts.

Term	Definition
SFA Verification Collection Report (VCR) (Form FNS-742)	The SFA VCR (Form FNS-742) is an annual report that State agencies submit to USDA based on self-reported information provided by SFAs. All SFAs with schools that operate the NSLP and/or the SBP must submit Form FNS-742 to their State agency. The report includes results of SFA verification activities of F/RP applications in the school meals programs. The report also includes, among other data, the number of schools that operate the school meals programs, the number of students eligible for F/RP meals, the number of school meals applications that were verified for household income eligibility and changes in household eligibility based on verified applications, and data on the number of schools using special provisions.
State Agency (SA)	The State agency is the agency in the State designated by the Governor or other appropriate executive or legislative authority of the State and approved by USDA to administer Child Nutrition Programs.
Seamless Summer Option (SSO)	SFAs that participate in NSLP or SBP are eligible to apply for this summer meal service option. The same meal service rules and claiming procedures used during the school year are applied to summer meal service. This option is a streamlined approach to feeding hungry children during the summer. Once approved through their local State agency, SFAs serve meals free of charge to children age 18 and younger from low-income areas.
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	The SFSP ensures that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session. Each summer, millions of free meals are served to children in low-income areas at approved SFSP sites. State agencies receive Federal grants based on per-meal reimbursements and administer funds to local sponsors for the provision of free meals. The SFSP aims to reduce the nutrition gap that may occur during the summer months and to curb poor school performance stemming from reduced access to healthy meals among children and teens age 18 years and younger when school is out.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	SNAP provides nutrition assistance to eligible, low-income individuals and households through a monthly benefit on a debit-type card, which can be used to purchase approved food items at authorized retail stores. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net.
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	The TANF program is designed to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency. States receive block grants to design and operate programs that accomplish one of the purposes of the TANF program. The four purposes of the TANF program are to (1) provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes; (2) reduce the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.
USDA Foods in Schools	USDA Foods in Schools support domestic nutrition programs and American agricultural producers through purchases of 100 percent American-grown and -produced foods for use by schools and institutions participating in the NSLP, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program.

Term	Definition
Verification	SFAs are required to verify income for a small percentage of households approved for F/RP meals each school year. Verification is only required when eligibility is determined through the household application process rather than through direct certification. Each LEA must annually verify eligibility of students from a sample of household applications approved for F/RP price benefits for that school year, which is typically 3 percent of applications approved on the basis of income.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study Rationale

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers Child Nutrition (CN) programs designed to provide nutritionally balanced meals and snacks to children, thereby improving the quality of their diets. The school-based CN programs operate in every State and represent an annual investment of more than \$16 billion in Federal funds. To manage these programs effectively, FNS collects and analyzes information from State-level management reports. However, FNS also has many one-time information needs that cannot be answered with current program data, in addition to the need to address and resolve current policy issues associated with CN program operations.

The multiyear study of Child Nutrition Program Operations (CN-OPS-II) provides FNS with a mechanism to collect program data in a timely and efficient manner. CN-OPS-II is authorized by Sec. 28(a)(1) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA),² which directs USDA to perform annual national performance assessments of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP).

CN-OPS-II collects a broad range of data on policy, administrative, and operational issues within the CN programs. The study provides

- general descriptive data on CN program characteristics to help FNS respond to questions about CN programs in schools;
- data related to program administration for developing and revising program regulations, managing resources, and reporting requirements; and
- data related to program operations to help FNS develop and provide training and technical assistance for State agencies (SAs) and School Food Authorities (SFAs)³ responsible for administering the CN programs at the State and local levels.

To address all study objectives, CN-OPS-II includes annual web-based surveys of SAs and SFAs. All SAs and a nationally representative sample of approximately 2,000 SFAs are asked to respond to the CN-OPS-II survey each year. The survey design is modular and includes core topics administered every year and special topics administered in 1 or more years. Data from CN-OPS-II allow for cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses. Cross-sectional analyses provide a snapshot of program operations at a point in time; these analyses can be conducted with data from each survey year and from all survey modules administered to SAs and SFAs. Because all SAs are surveyed each year, longitudinal analyses can examine changes at the State level. The SFA sample differs in each study year; therefore, it does not support cohort-type analyses, but it does support repeated cross-sectional analyses.

² Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, 79 P.L. 396, 60 Stat. 230 (1946).

³ SFAs, local education agencies (LEAs), and school districts are distinct governing bodies. SFAs are the governing bodies responsible for school food service operations, but some of the responsibilities are fulfilled by LEAs or districts. In most cases, the LEA and SFA are the same entity (i.e., the school district). This report, and the research briefs within it, generally refers to SFAs, but readers should note that recent NSLP statutes and regulations refer to LEAs for some functions addressed in the briefs (e.g., applications, certification and verification).

Earlier study reports presented findings from CN-OPS-II Years 1 and 2, which collected data during SYs 2015–16⁴ and 2016–17,⁵ respectively. This report focuses on CN-OPS-II Year 3, which collected data on SY 2017–18 between April and August 2018.

Child Nutrition Programs Examined in this Study Series

The **NSLP** and the **SBP** operate through schools and serve lunches and breakfasts to an average of 30 million and 15 million students, respectively, each school day.⁶ The overarching goals of NSLP and SBP are to ensure that students do not go hungry and have access to nutritious meals and snacks that optimize their academic performance and development while they are at school. All students, regardless of income, are eligible to participate in NSLP and SBP.

Both the NSLP and SBP are usually administered at the State level by a CN director situated within an SA that may be a department of education, health, or agriculture; and at the local level by SFAs, which are typically individual school districts or groups of smaller districts.

All public and private nonprofit schools and residential childcare institutions are eligible to participate in NSLP and SBP. All students in participating schools or institutions are eligible to obtain school meals and afterschool snacks provided through these programs. Free meals are available to students from families with household incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal poverty level (FPL), and reduced price meals are available to students from families with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of FPL. Students from families with incomes above 185 percent of FPL pay full price for meals.

Eligibility for free or reduced price (F/RP) meals can be established in multiple ways. Students can be determined eligible through an application. Alternatively, students may be directly certified and approved for free meals because their families participate in the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid (in some States), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Students are also categorically eligible for free meals if they are listed by SAs and LEAs as homeless, migrant, runaway, or participating in Head Start. The school meals programs also include multiple streamlined counting and claiming provisions (Provisions 2 and 3) that employ alternative approaches to determining eligibility for F/RP meals and conducting daily meal counts. Provision 2 in 1980 and Provision 3 in 1995 were implemented to reduce burden on parents, make it easier for students to receive F/RP meals, and reduce the paperwork required of SAs and LEAs to administer the school meals programs. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a school meals service option for high-poverty schools and SFAs, allows eligible schools and LEAs to provide breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students, without the need for families to submit a household application. CEP was gradually phased in over several school years and was made available nationwide during SY 2014–15. Schools operating under Provisions 2 and 3 and under CEP serve all meals at no cost to participating students.

Other CN programs include the **NSLP Afterschool Snack Service**, which provides snacks that meet Federal nutrition requirements for children in eligible afterschool programs.

⁴ Murdoch, J., Campbell, A., Cabili, C., Zeidman, E., Harrison, R., Ottenbacher, A., . . . Beyler, N. (2018, November). *Child nutrition program operations study (CN-OPS-II): Year one report: SY 2015–2016*. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/child-nutrition-program-operations-study-ii-school-year-2015-2016>

⁵ The year two (SY 2016-17) report is forthcoming at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research-analysis>.

⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2019, February 22). *Child nutrition tables*. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>

The **CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program** offers reimbursable snacks and suppers independently or through a sponsoring organization.

The **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** aims to reduce the nutrition gap that may occur during the summer months, and to curb poor school performance stemming from reduced access to healthy meals among children and teens age 18 and younger when school is out.⁷

The **Seamless Summer Option (SSO)** is eligible to any SFAs participating in NSLP or SBP as a streamlined approach to feeding hungry children in low-income areas. Once approved, SFAs serve meals free of charge to children age 18 and younger at sites and camps. Meals served are reimbursed at the NSLP or SBP “free” rates.

CN-OPS-II SY 2017–18 Data Collection

The research team collected the data needed to address the research questions for CN-OPS-II Year 3 (SY 2017–18) using the State CN Director Survey and the SFA Director Survey, which are included as Appendices B and C, respectively, in the supplemental volume of appendices. To ensure generalizability of the results, all SA Directors that participated in the NSLP and/or the SBP (except Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands)⁸ were invited to participate in this study. This data collection also included a nationally representative sample of SFA Directors. The research team sent an invitation to complete the State CN Director Survey to 53 SAs with CN operations. All 53 SFAs responded to the request and submitted their survey through the online Confront survey platform.

A nationally representative sample of 2,176 SFA units was invited to complete the SFA Director Survey, thereby creating the final Year 3 sample.⁹ Appendix A provides a detailed description of the Year 3 sample design, data collection, analysis of response rates, sample weight construction, and other statistical considerations. The Year 3 data collection is a part of the 4-year design that ensures SFAs (except for very large SFAs that must be sampled with certainty each year to ensure national representativeness) are only asked to respond to the survey once during the 4-year period.

The SFA Director Survey resulted in 1,653 valid responses – a response rate of 76.1 percent. Characteristics of the responding SFAs are provided in Exhibit 1. The responding SFAs were weighted to represent the characteristics of the full population of public SFAs in terms of SFA size, urbanicity, the percentage of students approved for F/RP meals, and FNS Region. In addition, the research team conducted a nonresponse analysis to ensure that nonresponse did not vary with the SFA subgroups presented above and to ensure the statistical precision of analyses by SFA subgroups. Appendix A in the supplemental volume of appendices, Data Collection and Analysis Methods, provides additional details about the SFA sample, data collection, and nonresponse analysis.

Year 3 data collection began in April 2018 and was concluded in August 2018.

⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). *How to participate in summer meals*. Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/SFSP-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

⁸ Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands were not asked to participate in the survey due to hurricanes in those regions at the time of data collection.

⁹ Of the 2,187 initial sampled units, 7 were given an initial exemption due to hurricane damage and requests for exemptions from the SA, and due to lack of contact information. Additionally, four units were found to be either closed or no longer participating in USDA school meals programs. Therefore, 2,176 (2,187 minus 11) units from the primary sample were invited to participate in the Year 3 SFA survey.

Exhibit 1 | Sample Sizes by SFA Characteristics

SFA Characteristic	Number of SFAs Weighted (Unweighted)	Percentage of SFAs Weighted (Unweighted)
All SFAs	14,776 (1,653)	100.0% (100.0%)
SFA Size		
Small (1–999 students)	7,525 (488)	50.9% (29.5%)
Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	5,294 (795)	35.8% (48.1%)
Large (5,000–24,999 students)	1,669 (312)	11.3% (18.9%)
Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	288 (58)	2.0% (3.5%)
Urbanicity		
City	1,846 (216)	12.5% (13.1%)
Suburban	3,347 (474)	22.7% (28.7%)
Town	2,311 (347)	15.6% (21.0%)
Rural	7,005 (579)	47.4% (35.0%)
Unknown*	267 (37)	1.8% (2.2%)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	5,886 (477)	39.8% (28.9%)
Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	6,081 (745)	41.2% (45.1%)
High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	2,809 (431)	19.0% (26.1%)
FNS Region		
Mid-Atlantic	1,478 (168)	10.0% (10.2%)
Midwest	3,765 (439)	25.5% (26.6%)
Mountain Plains	2,290 (198)	15.5% (12.0%)
Northeast	1,652 (176)	11.2% (10.7%)
Southeast	1,266 (190)	8.6% (11.5%)
Southwest	2,234 (239)	15.1% (14.5%)
Western	2,091 (243)	14.2% (14.7%)

* Not all SFAs were matched to the U.S. Department of Education Common Core of Data Local Education Agency Universe Survey File. Therefore, the urbanicity of some SFAs is unknown.

Topics Covered in CN-OPS-II SY 2017–18

CN-OPS-II is designed so that FNS can package its information needs into “modular” surveys that can be repeated annually. CN-OPS-II surveys are also intended to collect data on issues that are currently, or are likely to become, the focus of the FNS policymaking processes. Some issues require longitudinal data captured by questions included in the surveys for each study year. Other issues can be addressed by cross-sectional data that appear in surveys only once during the study.

The CN-OPS-II Year 3 (SY 2017–18) SFA and State CN Director Surveys included survey topics administered in past studies of CN program operations, plus additional topics designed to measure responses to recent changes in program regulations and guidance. Exhibit 2 lists the survey modules included in the SY 2015–16, SY 2016–17 and 2017–18 SFA Director Surveys. The SY 2017–18 SFA Director Survey included six modules from the SY 2015–16 and SY 2016–17 SFA Director Surveys: eligibility determination and verification, meal counting, meal prices, revenues and expenditures, school participation, and student participation. The Buy American/Local food purchasing module was new to the SFA Director Survey for SY 2017–18. The remaining three modules in the SY 2017–18 SFA Director Survey were included in the SY 2015–16 SFA Director Survey but not in the SY 2016–17 SFA Director Survey: financial management, food and beverage marketing, and meal pattern requirements.

Exhibit 2 | SFA Director Survey Modules for CN-OPS-II SY 2015–16 , SY 2016–17, and SY 2017–18

Module	SY 2015–16	SY 2016–17	SY 2017–18
Eligibility determination and verification	X	X	X
Financial management	X		X
Food and beverage marketing	X		X
Food service equipment	X		
Food service operations	X		
F/RP meal application		X	
Meal counting	X	X	X
Meal pattern requirements		X	X
Meal prices	X	X	X
Revenues and expenditures	X	X	X
School participation	X	X	X
SFA director background	X	X	
SFA procurement practices		X	
Smart Snacks in School standards		X	
Smarter Lunchrooms	X		
Student participation	X	X	X
Training and professional standards	X		
Buy American/Local food purchasing			X

As shown in Exhibit 3, the SY 2017–18 State CN Director Survey included four modules. The food service administration module was included in the SY 2015–16 survey and 2016–17 survey. The module on subsidies, resources, and funding was added in the SY 2016–17 survey

and the 2017–18 survey. Two modules (Buy American/Local food purchasing) were included for the first time in CN-OPS-II in the SY 2017–18 survey.

Exhibit 3 | State CN Director Survey Modules for CN-OPS-II SY 2015–16, SY 2016–17, and SY 2017–18

Module	SY 2015–16	SY 2016–17	SY 2017–18
F/RP meal application		X	
Food service administration	X	X	X
Professional standards	X		
SFA procurement practices		X	
State CN director background	X	X	
Subsidies, resources, and funding		X	X
USDA grants		X	
Buy American/Local Food Purchasing			X
Farm to School			X

Key Findings from CN-OPS-II SY 2017–18

The report is organized around five research briefs that present the major themes and findings of the study.¹⁰ Key findings of each topic-based brief are presented below.

PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL MEALS

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) provide nutritious meals to students during the school day and are administered at the Federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Additional FNS programs provide food to students in out-of-school-time settings, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-Risk Afterschool Meals component and the summer feeding programs, which include the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option (SSO). School Food Authority (SFA), school, and student participation in these programs helps ensure that students have access to nutritious food during the school day, evenings, and summers.

This brief presents an overview of participation in the NSLP, SBP, CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component, and the summer feeding programs among public SFAs and schools.

KEY FINDINGS

- Most schools participated in both the NSLP and the SBP in SY 2017–18.
- Student participation rates in the NSLP and the SBP were highest in elementary schools and lowest in high schools.
- School participation in the NSLP Afterschool Snack Service was highest in elementary schools.
- Sixteen percent of schools offered the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component in SY 2017–18.

¹⁰ Analytic tables on which the briefs are based can be found in Appendices D through K.

- Thirty-six percent of schools participated in at least one of the summer feeding programs during the summer of 2017.

SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE FINANCES AND UNPAID MEALS

School food authorities (SFAs) participating in the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) school meal programs must operate school food service¹¹ on a nonprofit basis. SFAs receive revenues from multiple sources including Federal reimbursement, student payments for reduced price and paid meals, revenues from the sale of competitive foods (foods sold in competition to the reimbursable meal), and State and local subsidies. SFA expenditures include food and labor costs, indirect costs, and other costs related to school meal program operations. SFAs aim to operate at a break-even level where the school food service revenues cover the costs of operating the program. SFAs must limit the net cash resources of their nonprofit food service to an amount that does not exceed three months' average expenditures.¹²

This brief provides a national snapshot of SFA financial management, including revenues and expenditures, receipt of State-provided subsidies, SFA meal prices, and unpaid meal charges. The data provided on SFA finances reflect school year (SY) 2016–17, the last full year of financial data available at the time of data collection.

KEY FINDINGS

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal reimbursements accounted for nearly two-thirds of SFAs' annual revenues, while labor and food costs accounted for the vast majority of expenditures.
- More than 70 percent of SFAs at least broke even financially in SY 2016–17.
- The ratio of SFA revenues to expenditures has steadily increased since SY 2013–14.
- On average, SFAs charged \$1.53 for a paid breakfast and \$2.63 for a paid lunch in SY 2017–18.
- The median amount of money owed to SFAs from unpaid meal charges in SY 2016–17 was approximately \$1,500.
- The percentage of SFAs that incurred unpaid meal charges after recovery attempts has decreased since SY 2010–11.
- For 80 percent of SFAs with lost revenues from unpaid meal charges after recovery attempts, the net revenue lost amounted to less than one percent of total SFA expenditures.

SCHOOL MEALS: APPLICATIONS, ELIGIBILITY, CERTIFICATION, AND VERIFICATION

Students may be determined eligible for free or reduced price (F/RP) meals through an application or through direct certification. Schools may also participate in special provisions where all meals are offered at no cost to students and reimbursement levels are based on

¹¹ SFAs monitor Child Nutrition (CN) Program revenues and expenditures through their nonprofit food service account. The CN Programs managed by the SFA can include the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and the Special Milk Program for Children.

¹² National School Lunch Program, 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), section 210.9.
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/part-210%E2%80%94national-school-lunch-program>

periodic application collections or formulas using direct certification data, rather than annual application collections.¹³ Local Education Agencies (LEAs) use a variety of methods to collect student eligibility information, including paper and electronic applications. Each year, LEAs must select a sample of applications for verification to ensure benefits are correctly assigned to students. As part of the verification process, LEAs contact selected households that must then provide income documentation to confirm their students' F/RP eligibility. This brief presents findings from State agencies and LEAs on the eligibility determination and verification process for school year (SY) 2017–18.

KEY FINDINGS

- The percentage of School Food Authorities (SFAs)¹⁴ collecting annual household applications has decreased by 11 percent since the previous school year.
- Among SFAs that take applications, almost half of the applications received were electronic.
- Most SFAs reported that direct certification matches were conducted before the first day of school and at least monthly thereafter.
- Nearly one-third of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18 initiated the verification process before October 1st.

SFA EXPERIENCES MEETING MEAL PATTERNS AND NUTRITION STANDARDS

In order to receive Federal reimbursement for meals served as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP), school food authorities (SFAs) must meet U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal patterns and nutrition standards. USDA phased in updated school meal patterns and nutrition standards beginning in school year (SY) 2012–13. These standards, based on recommendations from the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine), were designed to improve the diet and health of schoolchildren, mitigate the growing rates of childhood obesity, and reflect the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (Exhibit 1).¹⁵ This brief presents SFA experiences implementing school nutrition standards, including strategies to increase student acceptance of fruits and vegetables; experiences meeting whole grain-rich, low-fat milk, and sodium requirements; requests for exemptions from these requirements;¹⁶ and use of USDA Foods to meet school meal patterns and nutrition standards.

¹³ Food and Nutrition Service, National School Lunch Program: Provisions 1, 2, and 3. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/provisions-1-2-and-3>

¹⁴ SFA refers to the governing body responsible for activities related to school food service. In most cases, the SFA and LEA are the same entity (i.e., the school district), although LEAs are technically responsible for conducting verification activities.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. *2015 – 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. 8th Edition. December 2015. Available at <https://health.gov/our-work/food-and-nutrition/2015-2020-dietary-guidelines>

¹⁶ FNS published a final rule to codify menu-planning flexibilities related to the whole grain-rich, sodium, and flavored milk requirements, effective in SY 2019–20. The rule would broaden the milk options and allow flavored low-fat milk; require that half of the weekly grains in the school lunch and breakfast menu be whole grain-rich (ending the need for the exemption process); and allow gradual sodium reduction by retaining the Sodium Target 1 through SY 2023–24. These data were collected prior to the publication of that rule. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/12/12/2018-26762/child-nutrition-programs-flexibilities-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium-requirements>

KEY FINDINGS

- SFAs implemented several successful strategies to meet meal requirements, including ordering USDA Foods.
- Less than one-third of SFAs requested an exemption from the whole grain-rich requirement, and 8 percent of SFAs requested an exemption from the unflavored, low-fat milk requirement.

SFA IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BUY AMERICAN PROVISION AND LOCAL FOOD PURCHASES

The Buy American Provision of the National School Lunch Act (42 USC 1760(n)) requires School Food Authorities (SFAs) to purchase, to the maximum extent practicable, domestic commodities or products for use in the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) school meal programs. Under the Buy American Provision, unprocessed agricultural commodities must be produced domestically, and processed foods must be processed domestically using food components that consist of more than 51 percent domestically grown items (by weight or volume).

Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. territories are exempt from the Buy American provision. SFAs in Hawaii and Puerto Rico, are required to purchase food products produced in their respective regions in sufficient quantities. SFAs in the 48 contiguous United States may be exempt from the Buy American Provision in certain circumstances.¹⁷

SFAs are also encouraged to purchase locally grown and raised agricultural products and may apply a “geographic preference” during the procurement process.

This brief discusses the methods SFAs used to establish and ensure compliance with the Buy American Provision, challenges experienced, applying exceptions, and activities around local food purchasing and geographic preference.

KEY FINDINGS

- SFAs included the Buy American Provision requirement in a variety of documents.
- Many SFAs experienced challenges related to limited availability and/or costs of specific domestic commodities or products.
- Approximately one-quarter of SFAs used an exception to the Buy American Provision in school year (SY) 2017–18.
- Fruits and vegetables were the products most often purchased under exceptions to the Buy American Provision.
- More than half of SFAs purchased foods from local sources in SY 2017–18.
- The most common challenge SFAs reported experiencing with local food purchasing was limited or seasonal food availability.
- Two in five SFAs applied the geographic preference to local food purchases in SY 2017–18.

¹⁷ Memo code SP 38-2017. United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Compliance with and Enforcement of the Buy American Provision in the National School Lunch Program*, 2017. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/compliance-enforcement-buy-american>

Concluding Remarks

The CN-OPS-II study series provides a robust data collection tool for FNS to examine program and operational outcomes, challenges, and practices in its CN Programs. Moreover, this data collection is performed annually, which allows FNS to collect SFA and SA operational data on issues as they become relevant for inquiry. The data presented annually in this study series can be combined with other data collections to reveal trends over time, providing FNS with information on which to base policy decisions, support, and guidance.

Research Brief #1

Participation in School Meals



Research Brief Participation in School Meals

Child Nutrition Program Operations Study II (CN-OPS-II) SY 2017–18

Introduction

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) provide nutritious meals to students during the school day and are administered at the Federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Additional FNS programs provide food to students in out-of-school-time settings, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-Risk Afterschool Meals component and the summer feeding programs, which include the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option (SSO). School Food Authority (SFA), school, and student participation in these programs helps ensure that students have access to nutritious food during the school day, evenings, and summers.

This brief presents an overview of participation in the NSLP, SBP, CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component, and the summer feeding programs among public SFAs and schools.

Key findings include the following:

- Most schools participated in both the NSLP and the SBP in SY 2017–18.
- Student participation rates in the NSLP and the SBP were highest in elementary schools and lowest in high schools.
- School participation in the NSLP Afterschool Snack Service was highest in elementary schools.
- Sixteen percent of schools offered the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component in SY 2017–18.
- Thirty-six percent of schools participated in at least one of the summer feeding programs during the summer of 2017.

Findings

Most schools participated in both the NSLP and the SBP in SY 2017–18.

In SY 2017–18, 90 percent of public schools participated in both the NSLP and the SBP, with little variation by school type (elementary, middle, high, other).¹⁸ The percentage of public schools that participated in both the NSLP and the SBP remained consistent from SY 2016–17 (91 percent).

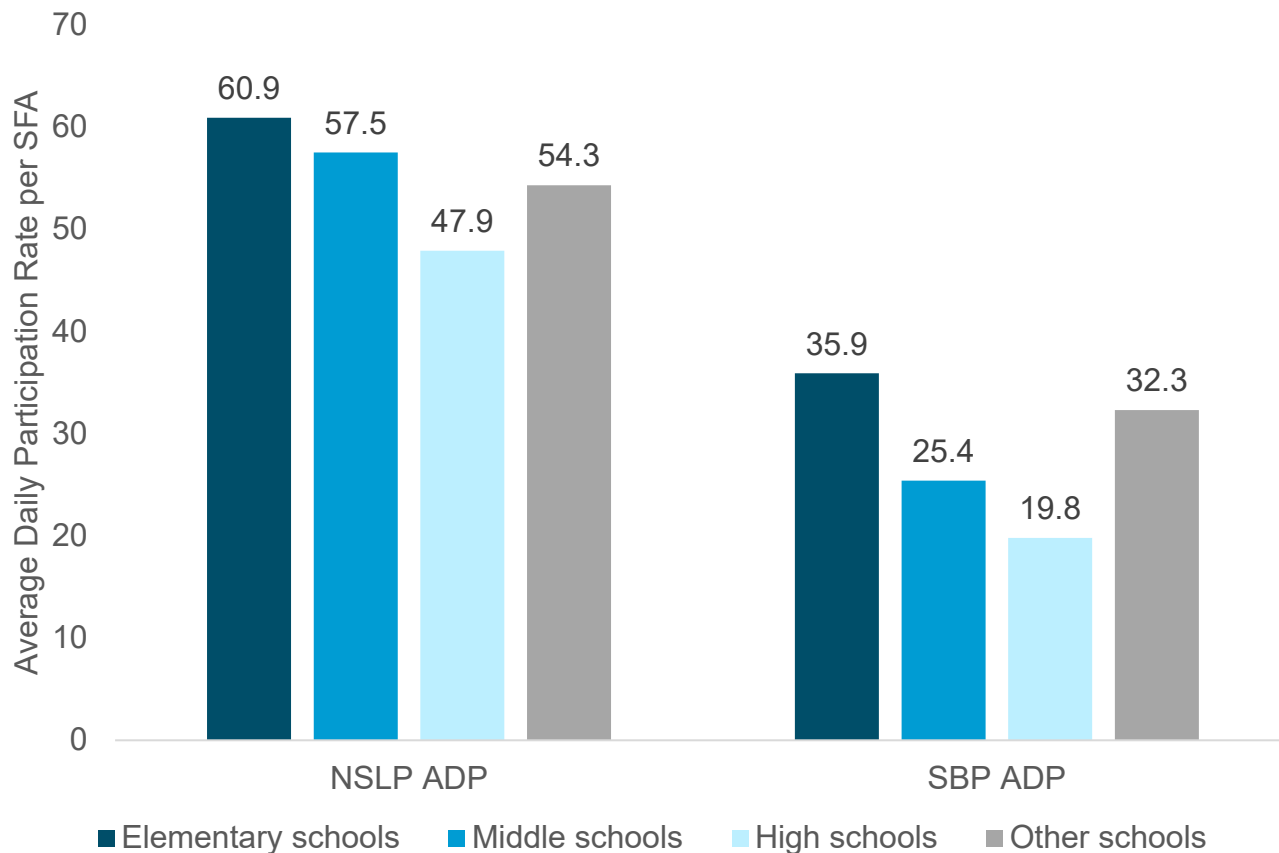
Student participation rates in the NSLP and the SBP were highest in elementary schools and lowest in high schools.

¹⁸ Other schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12.

On a typical school day in SY 2017–18, 62 percent of enrolled students participated in the NSLP, and 34 percent of enrolled students participated in the SBP. Students certified to receive free and reduced price meals participated at higher rates than the general student body for both lunch (73 percent) and breakfast (43 percent).

Student participation rates (i.e., Average Daily Participation [ADP]) in the NSLP and the SBP were highest in elementary schools (61 percent and 36 percent, respectively) and lowest in high schools (48 percent and 20 percent, respectively) (Exhibit 1). These findings were consistent with those from SY 2016–17.

Exhibit 1. Average Daily Student Participation Rates for the NSLP and the SBP by School Type, SY 2017–18



School participation in the NSLP Afterschool Snack Service was highest in elementary schools.

Overall, 23 percent of schools participated in the NSLP Afterschool Snack Service in SY 2017–18. Most participating schools were elementary schools (62 percent), followed by middle schools (15 percent), other schools (14 percent), and high schools (10 percent).

Sixteen percent of schools offered the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component in SY 2017–18.

Most schools participating in the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component were elementary schools (57 percent). Fifteen percent of participating schools were high schools, 15 percent of participating schools were other schools, and 14 percent of participating schools were middle schools.

Thirty-six percent of schools participated in at least one of the summer feeding programs during summer 2017.

Twenty-eight percent of schools ($n = 25,183$) participated in the SFSP,¹⁹ and 8 percent of schools ($n = 6,981$) participated in the SSO during the summer of 2016.

Conclusions

Almost all public SFAs participated in the NSLP and the SBP in SY 2017–18, as in the previous school year. Student participation rates for both breakfast and lunch were higher in elementary schools and lower in high schools. Elementary schools participated in the NSLP Afterschool Snack Service more than other school types. School meals were supplemented by the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component in 1 in 6 schools. The summer feeding programs were also popular, as 36 percent of schools participated in at least one of the summer feeding programs during summer 2017.

Child Nutrition (CN) Programs that Provide Nutritious Meals and Snacks when School is Not in Session

The NSLP Afterschool Snack Service provides cash reimbursements to encourage schools to serve snacks to children after the regular school day. Participating sites must participate in the NSLP, serve snacks that meet federal requirements, and provide structured activities.

The CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component provides children attending afterschool enrichment or education programs a snack or an additional meal (usually supper). To participate, a site must be located in a qualifying area. The program serves children age 18 and younger.

The SFSP provides free meals to children during the summer months when school is not in session.

The SSO allows SFAs to provide meals during summer months using the same service rules and claiming procedures that they use for the NSLP/SBP during the school year.

¹⁹ It is notable that an additional 12,064 non-school sites participated in SFSP, representing 45 percent of all SFSP sites. Examples of non-school sites where the SFSP may be offered are camps, churches, and community centers.

Research Brief #2

School Food Service Finances and Unpaid Meals

Research Brief

School Food Service Finances and Unpaid Meals

Child Nutrition Program Operations Study II (CN-OPS-II) SY 2017–18

Introduction

School food authorities (SFAs) participating in the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) school meal programs must operate school food service²⁰ on a nonprofit basis. SFAs receive revenues from multiple sources including Federal reimbursement, student payments for reduced price and paid meals, revenues from the sale of competitive foods (foods sold in competition to the reimbursable meal), and State and local subsidies. SFA expenditures include food and labor costs, indirect costs, and other costs related to school meal program operations. SFAs aim to operate at a break-even level where the school food service revenues cover the costs of operating the program. SFAs must limit the net cash resources of their nonprofit food service to an amount that does not exceed three months' average expenditures.²¹

This brief provides a national snapshot of SFA financial management, including revenues and expenditures, receipt of State-provided subsidies, SFA meal prices, and unpaid meal charges. The data provided on SFA finances reflect school year (SY) 2016–17, the last full year of financial data available at the time of data collection.

Key findings include the following:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal reimbursements accounted for nearly two-thirds of SFAs' annual revenues, while labor and food costs accounted for the vast majority of expenditures.
- More than 70 percent of SFAs at least broke even financially in SY 2016–17.
- The ratio of SFA revenues to expenditures has steadily increased since SY 2013–14.
- On average, SFAs charged \$1.53 for a paid breakfast and \$2.63 for a paid lunch in SY 2017–18.
- The median amount of money owed to SFAs from unpaid meal charges in SY 2016–17 was approximately \$1,500.
- The percentage of SFAs that incurred unpaid meal charges after recovery attempts has decreased since SY 2010–11.
- For 80 percent of SFAs with lost revenues from unpaid meal charges after recovery attempts, the net revenue lost amounted to less than one percent of total SFA expenditures.

²⁰ SFAs monitor Child Nutrition (CN) Program revenues and expenditures through their nonprofit food service account. The CN Programs managed by the SFA can include the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and the Special Milk Program for Children.

²¹ National School Lunch Program, 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), section 210.9. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/part-210%E2%80%9494national-school-lunch-program>

Findings

USDA meal reimbursements accounted for nearly two-thirds of SFAs' annual revenues, while labor and food costs accounted for the vast majority of expenditures.

On average, SFAs reported that Federal reimbursements accounted for 63 percent of their annual revenues in SY 2016–17. Meal sales accounted for another 25 percent, while State subsidies and other sources accounted for approximately six percent each.

Some States provide financial support to SFAs in the form of subsidies to support the school meal programs. Thirty-one States provided subsidies for school meals in SY 2016–17. Sixteen States reported providing subsidies to SFAs for both breakfast and lunch, nine States provided subsidies for breakfast only, and six States provided subsidies for lunch only. The majority of subsidies were provided in the form of per-meal reimbursements.

Labor and food costs accounted for 80 percent of SFAs' annual reported expenditures (40 percent each), on average, with indirect costs, supplies, and other costs accounting for approximately 6 to 7 percent each.

More than 70 percent of SFAs at least broke even financially in SY 2016–17.

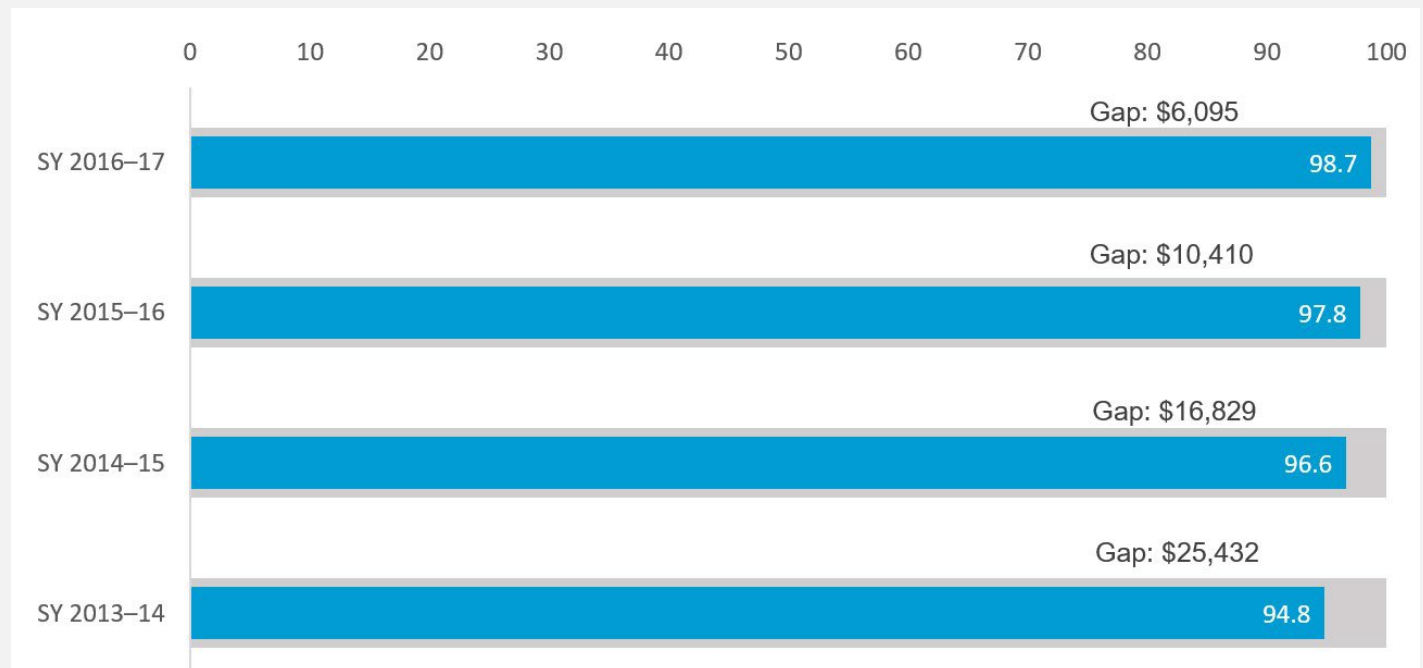
Consistent with the previous school year, 46 percent of SFAs reported breaking even²² in SY 2016–17. Twenty-five percent of SFAs reported greater revenues than expenditures, while 28 percent reported greater expenditures than revenues. SFAs with fewer students more often reported operating at a financial deficit, while larger SFAs more often reported operating at a financial surplus. About one in five SFAs reported ever having net cash reserves greater than three months' average expenditures.

The ratio of SFA revenues to expenditures has steadily increased since SY 2013–14.

On average, across all SFAs, the ratio of SFA revenues to expenditures has increased over time since SY 2013–14 (Exhibit 1). The median overall difference between SFA expenditures and revenues was \$6,095 in SY 2016–17, or 99 percent of SFA costs were covered by revenues. This difference is approximately one-quarter of the difference obtained in SY 2013–14 (\$25,432 or 95 percent of SFA costs covered by revenues).

²² Breaking even is defined as a ratio of revenue to expenditures between 0.95 and 1.05.

Exhibit 1. Ratio of Median Revenues to Expenditures from SY 2013–14 to SY 2016–17



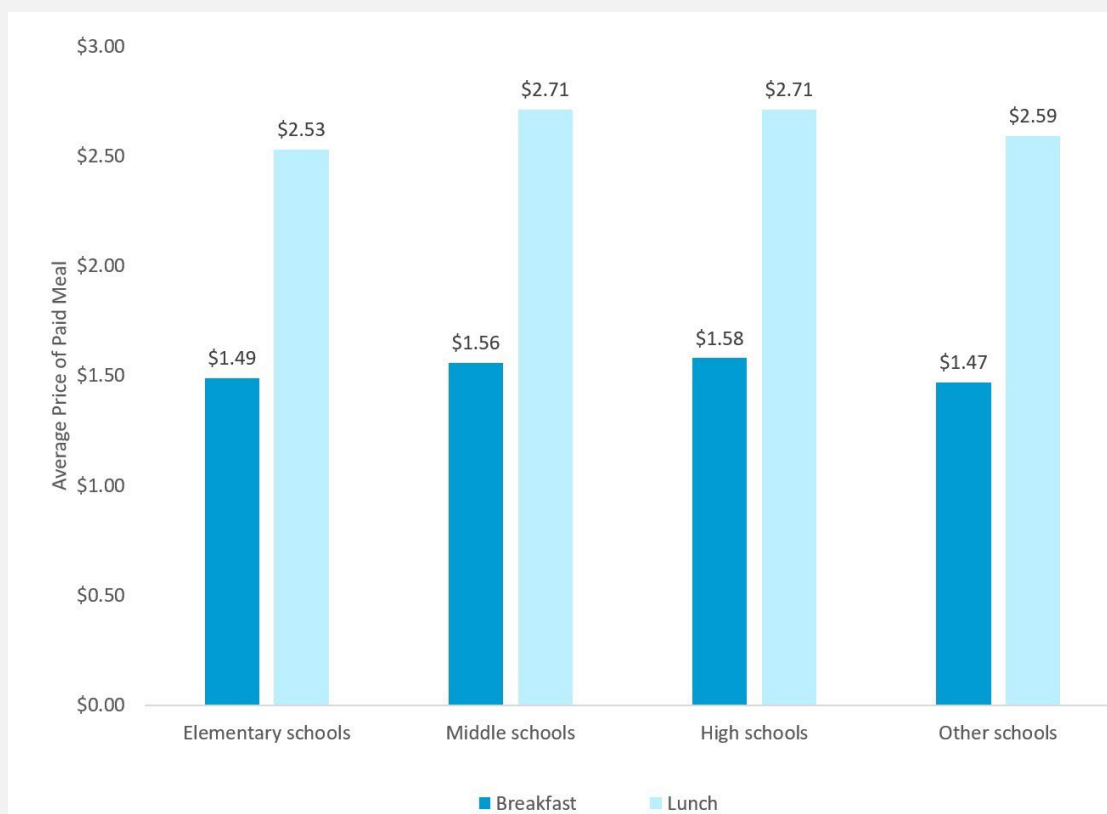
On average, SFAs charged \$1.53 for a paid breakfast and \$2.63 for a paid lunch in SY 2017–18.

Meal sales are another key source of SFA revenue. In SY 2017–18, SFA prices for paid breakfasts were highest in high schools (\$1.58), and SFA prices for paid lunches were highest in middle and high schools (\$2.71 for both school types) (Exhibit 2).

The average price of a paid lunch increased from \$2.49 in SY 2015–16 to \$2.57 in SY 2016–17, and to \$2.63 in SY 2017–18. The Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) provision of the National School Lunch Act requires that SFAs increase paid lunch prices to prevent free and reduced price (F/RP) subsidies from being used to cover the cost of paid lunches. SFAs charging less than equity (the difference between the free and paid lunch reimbursement rates) must incrementally increase paid lunch prices each year or cover the costs through non-Federal sources. In order to comply with the PLE provision in SY 2017-18, half of SFAs increased paid lunch prices in all schools, 33 percent of SFAs took no action (their lunch pricing already complied with PLE), ten percent of SFAs added non-Federal funds to the food service account, four percent of SFAs requested a waiver from the PLE provision, and four percent of SFAs increased paid lunch prices in some schools.²³

²³ PLE regulations were implemented as part of the reauthorization for the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, (Sec. 12(p)).

Exhibit 2. Prices Charged for Paid Breakfast and Lunch, SY 2017–18



The median amount of money owed to SFAs from unpaid meal charges in SY 2016–17 was approximately \$1,500.

Some students who are required to pay for meals do not have money at lunch time. If the student is served a meal and does not pay, the district incurs an unpaid meal charge. In SY 2016–17, the median amount that SFAs were owed due to unpaid meal charges was \$1,499.²⁴ This amount was highest in SFAs with more than 25,000 students (\$25,557) and smallest in SFAs with fewer than 1,000 students (\$591). In terms of urbanicity, unpaid meal charges were lowest in rural SFAs (\$997) and highest in urban/city SFAs (\$5,010). Similar patterns were found in SY 2014–15, when larger SFAs and urban/city SFAs also incurred more unpaid meal charges.

The percentage of SFAs that incurred unpaid meal charges after recovery attempts has decreased since SY 2010–11.

Among SFAs that charged for meals, tracked unpaid meal charges, and reported more than \$0 owed, 58 percent of SFAs incurred unpaid meal charges in SY 2010–11,²⁵ 53 percent incurred unpaid meal charges in SY 2014–15,²⁶ and 47 percent incurred unpaid meal charges in SY 2016–17 after recovery attempts (Exhibit

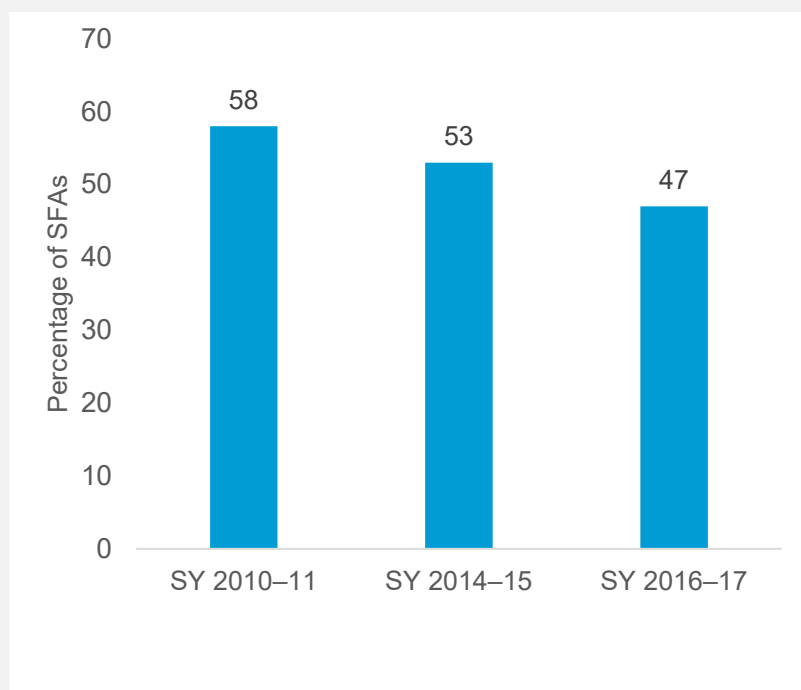
²⁴ The median amount that SFAs were owed due to unpaid meal charges was \$1,086 in SY 2014–15, which is not statistically different from the estimate of \$1,499 for SY 2016–17. Murdoch, J., Angela Campbell, Charlotte Cabili, Eric Zeidman,& Nick Beyler. (2019). *Child Nutrition Program Operations Study (CN-OPS-II): Year 1 Report, SY 2015–16*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/child-nutrition-program-operations-study-ii-school-year-2015-2016>.

²⁵ May, L., Kim Standing, Adam Chu, Joe Gasper, & Jarnee Riley. (2014). *Special Nutrition Program Operations Study: State and school food authority policies and practices for school meals programs school year 2011–12*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SNOPSYear1.pdf>

²⁶ Murdoch, J., Angela Campbell, Charlotte Cabili, Eric Zeidman,& Nick Beyler. (2019). *Child Nutrition Program Operations Study (CN-OPS-II): Year 1 Report, SY 2015–16*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/child-nutrition-program-operations-study-ii-school-year-2015-2016>.

3). After recovery attempts, 71 percent of these SFAs recovered some or all money owed as a result of unpaid meal charges in SY 2016–17.^{27,28}

Exhibit 3. Percentage of SFAs that Reported Unpaid Meal Charges (SYs 2010–11, 2014–15, and 2016–17)



Note: There is not a significant decrease in the percentage of SFAs that incurred unpaid meal charges from SY 2010–11 to SY 2014–15, but there is a significant decrease from SY 2010–11 to SY 2016–17.

In order to recover unpaid meal charges in SY 2016–17, SFAs reported relying on various methods, including sending bills to parents (97 percent), providing repayment plans to parents (72 percent), providing students with alternate meals until debt is paid (48 percent), trying to retroactively approve eligible students for F/RP meals (37 percent), and using administrative actions (17 percent).

For 80 percent of SFAs with lost revenues from unpaid meal charges after recovery attempts, the net revenue lost amounted to less than one percent of total SFA expenditures.

On average, for all SFAs that lost some revenue as a result of unpaid meals, the net revenue lost was approximately 1.1 percent of their total expenditures in SY 2016–17. For most SFAs (80 percent), unpaid meal charges were less than one percent of total SFA expenditures. For 19 percent of SFAs, unpaid meal charges were between 1 and 10 percent of total SFA expenditures, and for 0.9 percent of SFAs, unpaid meal charges were more than ten percent of total SFA expenditures in SY 2016–17 (Exhibit 4).²⁹ Exhibits 3 and

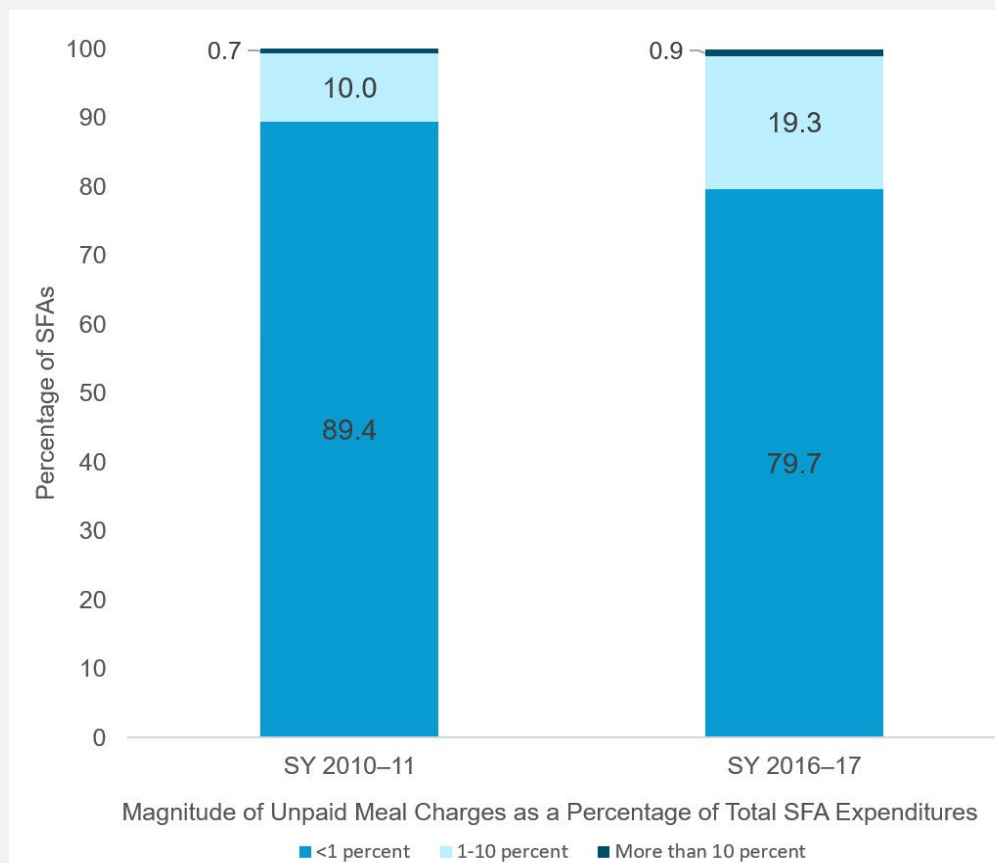
4 show that percentage of SFAs that incur unpaid meal charges has decreased while the percentage of SFAs that are owed more than one percent of total SFA expenditures has increased. Because these exhibits omit SFAs that were owed \$0 after recovery, these findings suggest that the ratio of unpaid meal charges to total SFA expenditures has increased *only* for SFAs that were not successful recovering all unpaid meal charges.

²⁷ Twenty-six percent of these SFAs recovered 100 percent of unpaid meal charges, 24 percent recovered between 50 and 99.9 percent of unpaid meal charges, and 21 percent recovered less than 50 percent of unpaid meal charges.

²⁸ The percentage of SFAs that recovered some or all of money owed as a result of unpaid meal charges (71 percent) was not significantly different from the percentage obtained in SY 2015–16 (76 percent). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, *Child Nutrition Program Operations Study (CN-OPS-II): SY 2016–17*. Beyler, Nick, Jim Murdoch, and Charlotte Cabili. Project Officer: Holly Figueroa. Alexandria, VA: August 2020

²⁹ The SY 2010–11 percentage of SFAs with unpaid meal charges that were less than one percent of total SFA expenditures and the percentage of SFAs with unpaid meal charges that were between 1 and 10 percent of total SFA expenditures were significantly different from those percentages reported for SY 2016–17.

Exhibit 4. SFAs' Unpaid Meal Charges as a Percentage of Total SFA Expenditures, SY 2010–11 and SY 2016–17



Conclusions

Based on financial information from SY 2016–17, most SFAs were in good financial standing in terms of their management of school food service. SFA revenues mostly came from Federal reimbursements for school meals, while SFA expenditures were mostly for food and labor costs. More than 70 percent of SFAs at least broke even financially, and the difference between SFA revenues and expenditures has decreased over the past three school years. SFAs have increased prices of paid lunch over time, often as a response to the PLE provision. Unpaid meals cost SFAs approximately \$1,500 annually, and this amount was greater in larger SFAs and in urban/city SFAs. After recovering some or all unpaid meal charges, about 1.1 percent of SFA

expenditures were lost due to unpaid meal charges. SFAs are increasingly able to balance costs with expenditures, while also managing student participation and program requirements.

Research Brief #3

**School Meals: Applications, Eligibility,
Certification, and Verification**



Research Brief **School Meals: Applications, Eligibility, Certification, and Verification**

Child Nutrition Program Operations Study II (CN-OPS-II) SY 2017–18

Introduction

Students may be determined eligible for free or reduced price (F/RP) meals through an application or through direct certification. Schools may also participate in special provisions where all meals are offered at no cost to students and reimbursement levels are based on periodic application collections or formulas using direct certification data, rather than annual application collections.³⁰ Local Education Agencies (LEAs) use a variety of methods to collect student eligibility information, including paper and electronic applications. Each year, LEAs must select a sample of applications for verification to ensure benefits are correctly assigned to students. As part of the verification process, LEAs contact selected households that must then provide income documentation to confirm their students' F/RP eligibility. This brief presents findings from State agencies and LEAs on the eligibility determination and verification process for school year (SY) 2017–18.

Key findings include the following:

- The percentage of School Food Authorities (SFAs)³¹ collecting annual household applications has decreased by 11 percent since the previous school year.
- Among SFAs that take applications, almost half of the applications received were electronic.
- Most SFAs reported that direct certification matches were conducted before the first day of school and at least monthly thereafter.
- Nearly one-third of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18 initiated the verification process before October 1st.

Findings

The percentage of SFAs collecting annual household applications has decreased by 11 percent since the previous school year.

³⁰ Food and Nutrition Service, National School Lunch Program: Provisions 1, 2, and 3. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/provisions-1-2-and-3>

³¹ SFA refers to the governing body responsible for activities related to school food service. In most cases, the SFA and LEA are the same entity (i.e., the school district), although LEAs are technically responsible for conducting verification activities.

Seventy-three percent of SFAs collected household applications in SY 2017–18,³² which is a significant decrease from 84 percent in SY 2016–17. Almost all SFAs (95 percent) used applications in paper form in SY 2017–18. Thirty-five percent of SFAs used electronic applications in all or some of their schools in SY 2017–18,³³ which is not significantly different from the 33 percent of SFAs that reported using electronic applications in SY 2016–17.³⁴

Among SFAs that take electronic applications, almost half of the applications received were electronic.

Consistent with the SY 2016–17 findings,³⁵ large SFAs were significantly more likely to use electronic applications than smaller SFAs in SY 2017–18. Almost 98 percent of SFAs with more than 25,000 students and 74 percent of SFAs with 5,000–24,999 students used electronic applications, compared to 42 percent of SFAs with 1,000–4,999 students and 15 percent of SFAs with fewer than 1,000 students. Across all of the SFAs using them, almost half of the applications received were electronic (45 percent).

Most SFAs reported that direct certification matches were conducted before the first day of school and at least monthly thereafter.

Among SFAs that conduct direct certification, 73 percent did so before the first day of school. SFAs most frequently ran direct certification matches monthly (45 percent) or at least three times per year (31 percent).

Direct certification, implemented as part of the 2004 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, establishes student eligibility for free meals based on participation data obtained from other means-tested programs, eliminating the need for a household to submit an application. Specifically, students may be directly certified for free school meals based on their or a household member's participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, or Medicaid (in pilot demonstration States).

Nearly one-third of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18 initiated the verification process before October 1st.

LEAs may begin verifying applications once they start the process of approving F/RP school meal applications, which allows them to distribute the workload by creating a longer window to complete the verification process by November 15th.³⁶ Thirty-one percent of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18 started the verification process before October 1st.

Verification confirms the accuracy of household size and income information submitted through the F/RP application. Verification is only required when eligibility is determined through the application process and is not required for direct certification. LEAs must conduct verification annually, and the standard sample size for verification is the lesser of 3 percent or 3,000 of the approved applications on file as of October 1 during that school year.

Among SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications and that had with households with Spanish as the primary language, 90 percent translated verification notices in Spanish. Almost all SFAs that

³² SFAs participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program do not use F/RP school meal applications if they have elected to participate in special assistance alternatives, including Provision 2, Provision 3, or the Community Eligibility Provision.

³³ In the event that households cannot submit an electronic application, schools must have a paper application available. Relatedly, 2 percent of SFAs that collected household applications in SY 2017–18 reported using electronic applications only, which suggests that in most of the SFAs that used electronic applications, paper applications were also used.

³⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, *Child Nutrition Program Operations Study (CN-OPS-II): SY 2016-17*. Beyler, Nick, Jim Murdoch, and Charlotte Cabili. Project Officer: Holly Figueroa. Alexandria, VA: August 2020.

³⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, *Child Nutrition Program Operations Study (CN-OPS-II): SY 2016-17*. Beyler, Nick, Jim Murdoch, and Charlotte Cabili. Project Officer: Holly Figueroa. Alexandria, VA: August 2020.

³⁶ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP42-2017os.pdf>

used F/RP applications reported following up more than once with households that did not respond to verification requests (96 percent), and 52 percent of these SFAs reported having no maximum number of follow up attempts.

The most popular methods for verification follow-up by SFAs included mailed letters (95 percent), telephone calls (84 percent), emails (48 percent), and letters sent home with the student (28 percent). In response to verification requests, households provided supporting information, including income documentation (99 percent), benefit statements (70 percent), and/or notes explaining household circumstances (25 percent).

Conclusions

Fewer SFAs used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18 compared to the previous school year, likely due to increases in direct certification rates and to participation in FNS' special assistance alternatives, which require F/RP applications less frequently or not at all. Among SFAs that continue to use F/RP applications, the use of electronic F/RP applications increased with SFA size. This trend has remained stable over the past two school years. Almost half of all F/RP applications received by SFAs using them were electronic. Most SFAs that directly certified students for free meals started the process before the first day of school. About one-third of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications started the verification process prior to October 1st. Almost all SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications translated verification notices for Spanish-speaking households and reported following up more than once with households that did not respond to initial verification requests. In response to verification requests, income documentation was received most by SFAs from households (among households that responded to such requests).

Research Brief #4

**SFA Experiences Meeting Meal Patterns and
Nutrition Standards**



Research Brief **SFA Experiences Meeting Meal Patterns and Nutrition Standards**

Child Nutrition Program Operations Study II (CN-OPS-II) SY 2017–18

Introduction

In order to receive Federal reimbursement for meals served as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP), school food authorities (SFAs) must meet U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal patterns and nutrition standards. USDA phased in updated school meal patterns and nutrition standards beginning in school year (SY) 2012–13. These standards, based on recommendations from the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine), were designed to improve the diet and health of schoolchildren, mitigate the growing rates of childhood obesity, and reflect the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (Exhibit 1).³⁷ This brief presents SFA experiences implementing school nutrition standards, including strategies to increase student acceptance of fruits and vegetables; experiences meeting whole grain-rich, low-fat milk, and sodium requirements; requests for exemptions from these requirements;³⁸ and use of USDA Foods to meet school meal patterns and nutrition standards.

Key findings include the following:

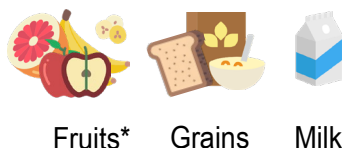
- SFAs implemented several successful strategies to meet meal requirements, including ordering USDA Foods.
- Less than one-third of SFAs requested an exemption from the whole grain-rich requirement, and 8 percent of SFAs requested an exemption from the unflavored, low-fat milk requirement.

³⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. *2015 – 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. 8th Edition. December 2015. Available at <https://health.gov/our-work/food-and-nutrition/2015-2020-dietary-guidelines>

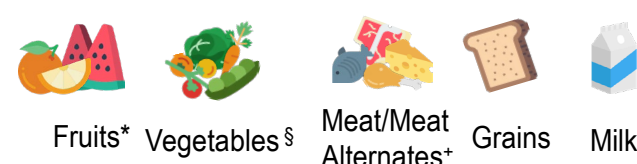
³⁸ FNS published a final rule to codify menu-planning flexibilities related to the whole grain-rich, sodium, and flavored milk requirements, effective in SY 2019–20. The rule would broaden the milk options and allow flavored low-fat milk; require that half of the weekly grains in the school lunch and breakfast menu be whole grain-rich (ending the need for the exemption process); and allow gradual sodium reduction by retaining the Sodium Target 1 through SY 2023–24. These data were collected prior to the publication of that rule. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/12/12/2018-26762/child-nutrition-programs-flexibilities-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium-requirements>

Exhibit 1. School Meal Requirements in SY 2017–18

Required components of BREAKFAST



Required components of LUNCH⁺



At both lunch and breakfast, school meal requirements state the following:



All grains must be whole grain-rich. Exemptions from whole grain-rich requirements were granted in SY 2017–18 based on demonstrated hardships in offering whole grain-rich products.



Meals must meet average weekly minimum and maximum calorie levels, must meet limits on sodium and saturated fat content, and must eliminate *trans* fat.



No more than 50 percent of fruit or vegetable offerings over the course of a week can be in the form of juice.



Fluid milk must be fat-free (flavored or unflavored) or low-fat unflavored.

*Fruits can include 100-percent juice, fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruit.

§Including minimum amounts for five vegetable subgroups, including dark green, red/orange, starchy, beans and peas, and other vegetables.

*Meat/meat alternates can be substituted for part of the grains, and vegetables can be substituted for the fruit requirements.

Findings

SFAs implemented several successful strategies to meet meal requirements, including ordering USDA Foods.

In order to facilitate student acceptance of foods that reflect the meal requirements, SFAs may adopt strategies to increase consumption of various food components. One in 5 SFAs (21 percent) reported that they did not use any strategies to increase student acceptance of fruits and vegetables in SY 2017–18. However, around two-thirds of SFAs reported offering a salad bar (70 percent), providing nutrition education activities (67 percent), marketing fruits and vegetables on campus (67 percent), and offering fruit and vegetable taste-testing (63 percent). SFAs that tried these and other strategies generally reported that these efforts were successful (between 80 and 92 percent of SFAs rated the reported strategies as successful). Most SFAs ordered USDA Foods, including fruits (97 percent) and vegetables (95 percent), to meet meal requirements. Canned and frozen fruits and vegetables were the most prevalent forms of USDA Foods used to meet meal requirements.

SFAs implemented several practices to meet the 100-percent whole grain-rich requirement, including ordering whole grain-rich foods (70 percent), adding whole grain-rich items to the menu (60 percent), ordering whole grain-rich USDA Foods (52 percent), and adding whole grain-rich USDA Foods to the menu

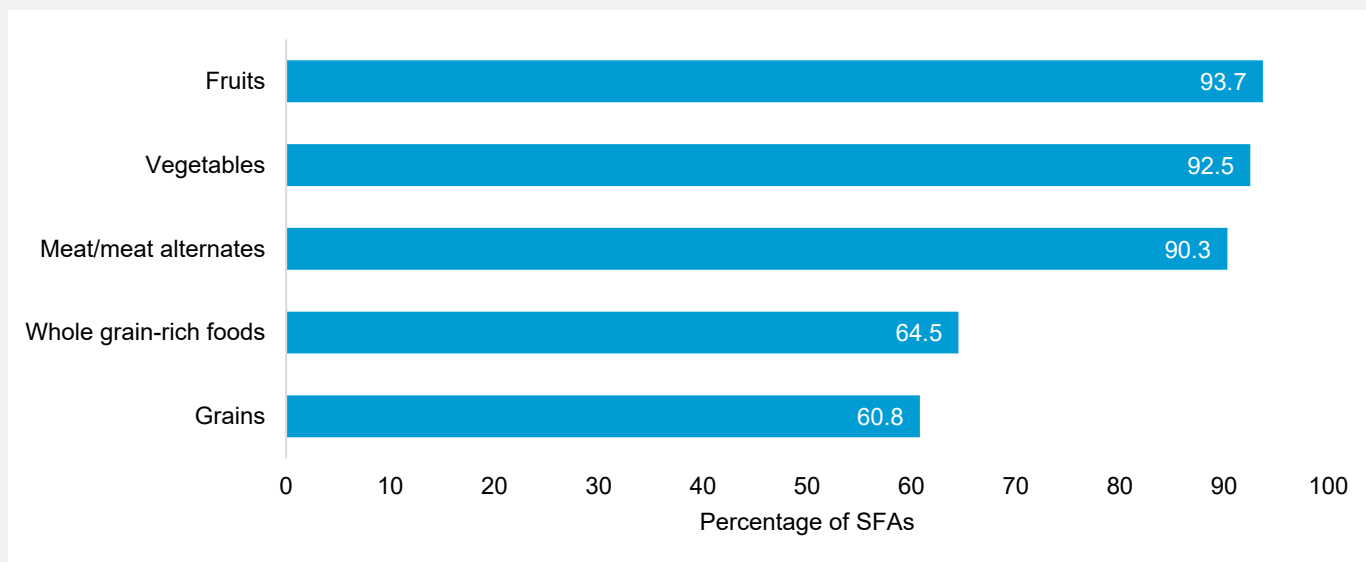
USDA Foods supports domestic nutrition programs and American agricultural producers through orders of 100-percent American-grown and -produced foods for use by schools and institutions participating in the NSLP, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program.

(49 percent). The most popular whole grain-rich USDA Foods that SFAs used to meet meal requirements were whole-grain pasta (78 percent) and brown rice (63 percent).

SFAs planned to meet sodium targets for SY 2017–18 by ordering lower sodium foods (66 percent), altering recipes (57 percent), and ordering low-sodium USDA Foods more often (40 percent).

Exhibit 2 displays the types of USDA Foods used to meet nutrition standards most often.

Exhibit 2. Types of USDA Foods Used to Meet Meal Requirements (Among SFAs that Used USDA Foods)



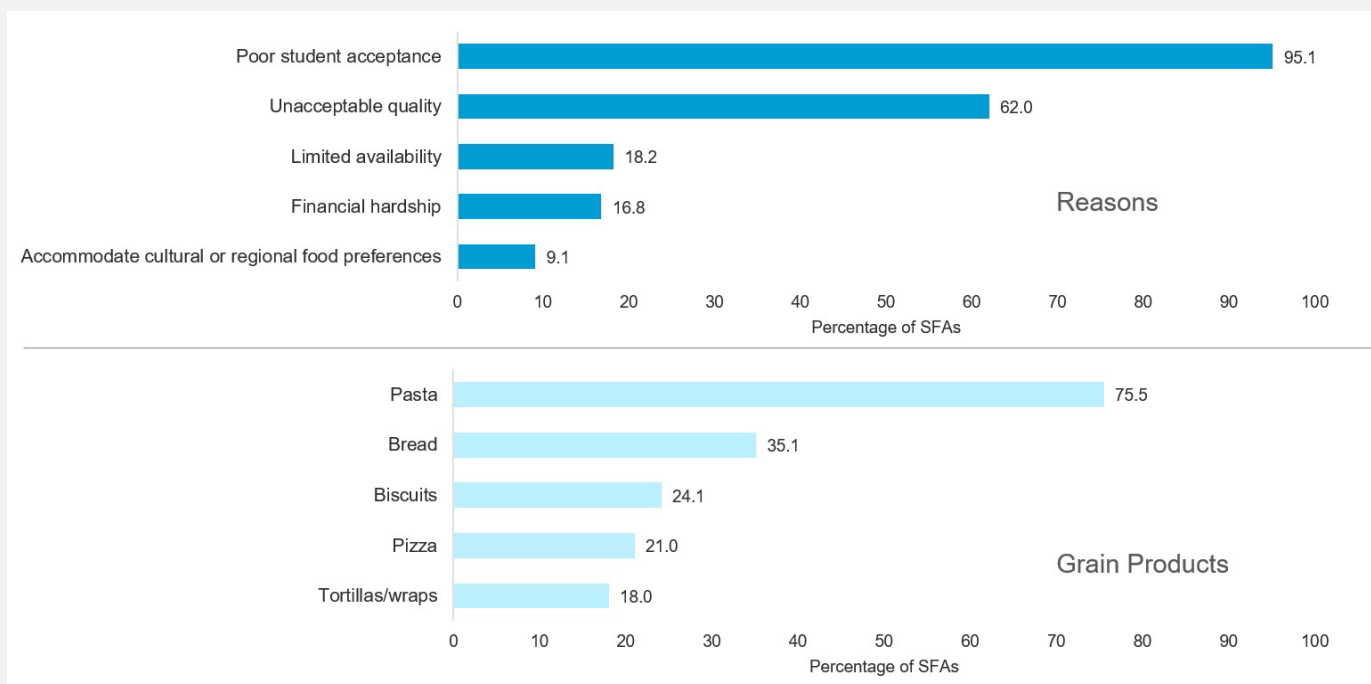
Less than one-third of SFAs requested an exemption from the whole grain-rich requirement, and 8 percent of SFAs requested an exemption from the unflavored, low-fat milk requirement.

Some SFAs experienced challenges meeting the whole grain-rich and/or unflavored, low-fat (1 percent) milk requirements. As a result, SFAs had the option to request an exemption from these requirements during SY 2017–18. The main challenges that SFAs experienced in meeting the whole grain-rich requirement included lack of student acceptance (71 percent), increased food waste (65 percent), and increased food costs (48 percent).

A little over one-quarter (28 percent) of SFAs reported ever requesting an exemption from the whole grain-rich requirement. These percentages were higher in the largest SFAs (50 percent) than in the smallest SFAs (18 percent). The predominant reason SFAs cited for their exemption requests aligned with the challenges they reported: namely, poor student acceptance (95 percent of SFAs). The products from which SFAs requested exemptions from the whole grain-rich requirement included pasta (76 percent), bread (35 percent), biscuits (24 percent), and pizza (21 percent) (Exhibit 3).

Only 8 percent of SFAs requested an exemption to serve flavored, low-fat milk in SY 2017–18. Almost all of the SFAs that requested this exemption (84 percent) received the requested exemption.

Exhibit 3. Reasons and Products for Which Exemptions Were Requested (Among SFAs that Reported Ever Requesting an Exemption from the Whole Grain-Rich Requirement)



Conclusions

SFAs implemented strategies to meet the meal patterns and nutrition standards while attempting to balance budgets and maintain student participation. Because student acceptance of new foods can be challenging, SFAs made deliberate efforts to increase student acceptance of fruits and vegetables during SY 2017–18 by increasing choice—offering salad bars was the most popular implementation strategy, and almost all SFAs rated this strategy as successful. Most SFAs ordered whole grain-rich foods and added them to menus in order to meet meal requirements. In addition, more than half of SFAs planned to order lower sodium foods and alter recipes to meet the sodium requirements. SFAs often used USDA Foods to meet meal requirements for fruits, vegetables, and whole grain-rich foods. Of all the meal requirements, SFAs experienced the most difficulties meeting the whole grain-rich requirement, as just over one-quarter of SFAs reported ever requesting an exemption from this requirement. Exemption requests from the unflavored, low-fat milk requirement were less prevalent than whole grain-rich exemption requests (8 percent of SFAs).

Research Brief #5

**SFA Implementation of the Buy American
Provision and Local Food Purchases**



Research Brief SFA Implementation of the Buy American Provision and Local Food Purchases

Child Nutrition Program Operations Study II (CN-OPS-II) SY 2017–18

Introduction

The Buy American Provision of the National School Lunch Act (42 USC 1760(n)) requires School Food Authorities (SFAs) to purchase, to the maximum extent practicable, domestic commodities or products for use in the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) school meal programs. Under the Buy American Provision, unprocessed agricultural commodities must be produced domestically, and processed foods must be processed domestically using food components that consist of more than 51 percent domestically grown items (by weight or volume).

Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. territories are exempt from the Buy American provision. SFAs in Hawaii and Puerto Rico, are required to purchase food products produced in their respective regions in sufficient quantities. SFAs in the 48 contiguous United States may be exempt from the Buy American Provision in certain circumstances (noted in sidebar).³⁹

SFAs are also encouraged to purchase locally grown and raised agricultural products and may apply a "geographic preference" during the procurement process.

This brief discusses the methods SFAs used to establish and ensure compliance with the Buy American Provision, challenges experienced, applying exceptions, and activities around local food purchasing and geographic preference.

Key findings include the following:

- SFAs included the Buy American Provision requirement in a variety of documents.
- Many SFAs experienced challenges related to limited availability and/or costs of specific domestic commodities or products.
- Approximately one-quarter of SFAs used an exception to the Buy American Provision in school year (SY) 2017–18.
- Fruits and vegetables were the products most often purchased under exceptions to the Buy American Provision.

Exceptions to the Buy American provision.

There are limited exceptions to the Buy American provision that allow for the purchase of foods not meeting the "domestic" standard, as described, in circumstances when use of domestic foods is truly not practicable. These exceptions, as determined by the SFA, are:

- the product is not produced or manufactured in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities of a satisfactory quality; or
- competitive bids reveal the costs of a U.S. product are significantly higher than the non-domestic product.

³⁹ Memo code SP 38-2017. United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Compliance with and Enforcement of the Buy American Provision in the National School Lunch Program*, 2017. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/compliance-enforcement-buy-american>

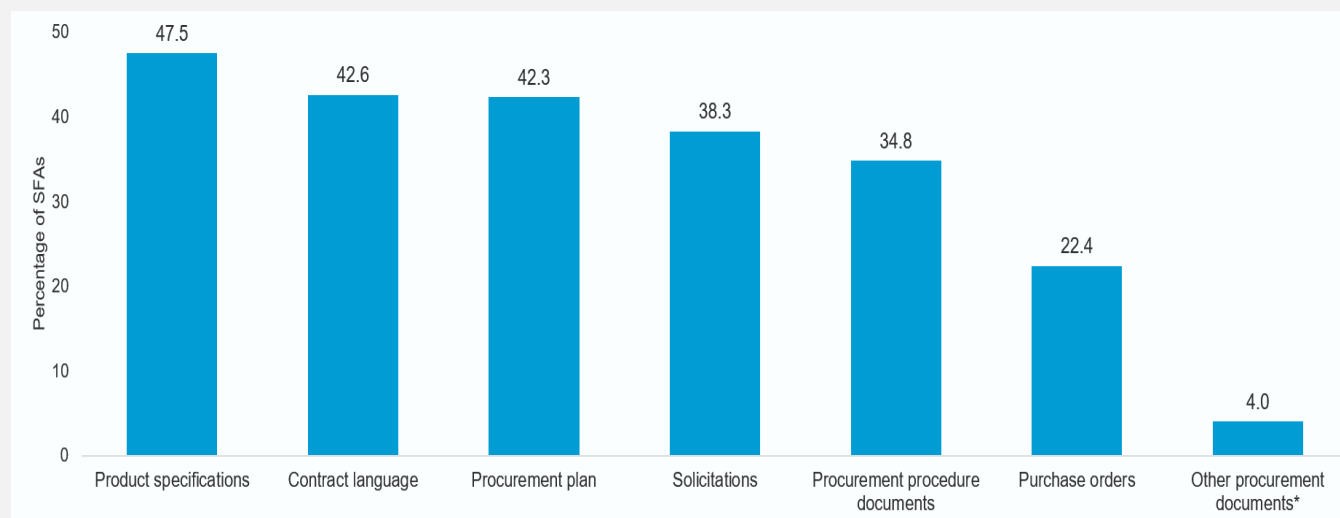
- More than half of SFAs purchased foods from local sources in SY 2017–18.
- The most common challenge SFAs reported experiencing with local food purchasing was limited or seasonal food availability.
- Two in five SFAs applied the geographic preference to local food purchases in SY 2017–18.

Findings

SFAs included the Buy American Provision requirement in a variety of documents.

SFAs reported including Buy American Provision requirements in product specifications (48 percent), contract language (43 percent), procurement plans (42 percent), solicitations (38 percent), procurement procedure documents (35 percent), and purchase orders (22 percent) (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. SFA Documents that Included the Buy American Provision Requirement



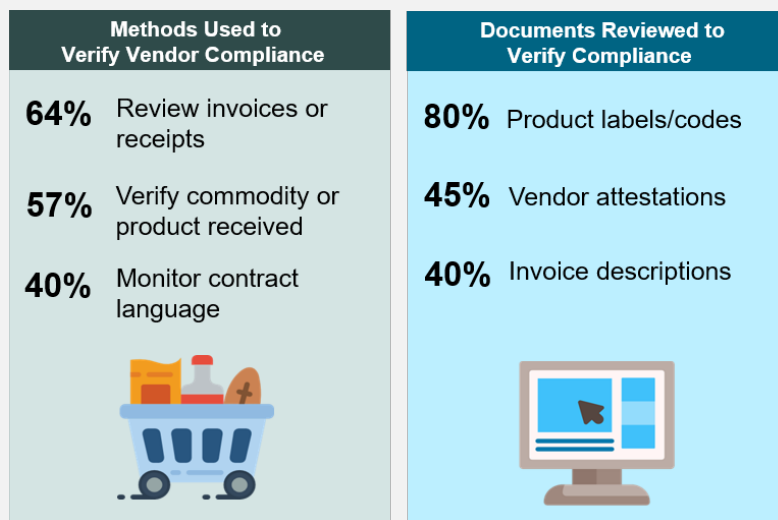
* “Other procurement documents” included documents originating from an entity other than the SFA (e.g., consortium, cooperative, school district, food service management company, State) that was managing food contracts and was responsible for monitoring compliance with the Buy American provision.

Only about one-third of SFAs (36 percent) reported requesting information from food suppliers about the content of end products. These findings suggest that SFAs rely more on labels and specifications on the products (rather than on the suppliers themselves) and use their contract and solicitation materials to ensure compliance with the Buy American Provision.

To ensure vendor compliance with the Buy American Provision, SFAs most often reported reviewing product invoices or receipts (64 percent) and verifying that the received commodity or product was domestic (57 percent). Additionally, some SFAs reported monitoring contract language (40 percent), monitoring solicitation language (31 percent), and/or conducting reviews of storage facilities (24 percent) (Exhibit 2).

To verify Buy American Provision requirements, SFAs most commonly reported reviewing documents, including product labels (80 percent), followed by written vendor attestations (45 percent), invoice descriptions (40 percent), verbal assurances from vendors (22 percent), and solicitation language (21 percent) (Exhibit 2).

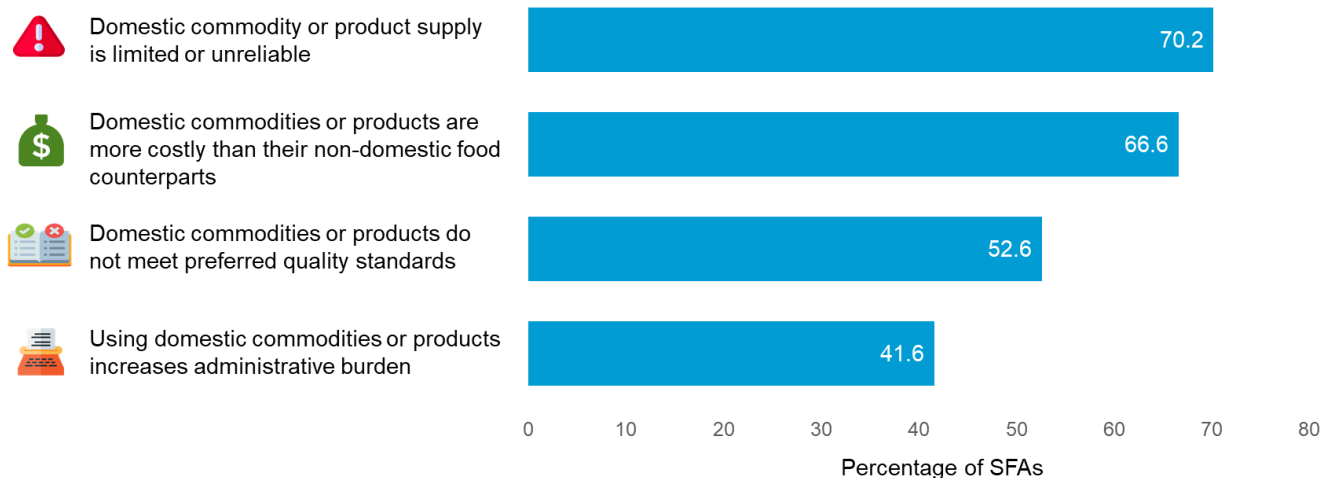
Exhibit 2. Methods and Documents Used to Verify Compliance with the Buy American Provision



Many SFAs experienced challenges related to limited availability and/or costs of specific domestic commodities or products.

Compliance challenges related to particular food products were common. While less than 10 percent of SFAs experienced challenges with all products, most SFAs experienced challenges with at least some food products (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3. Product-Specific Challenges Experienced by SFAs Complying with the Buy American Provision



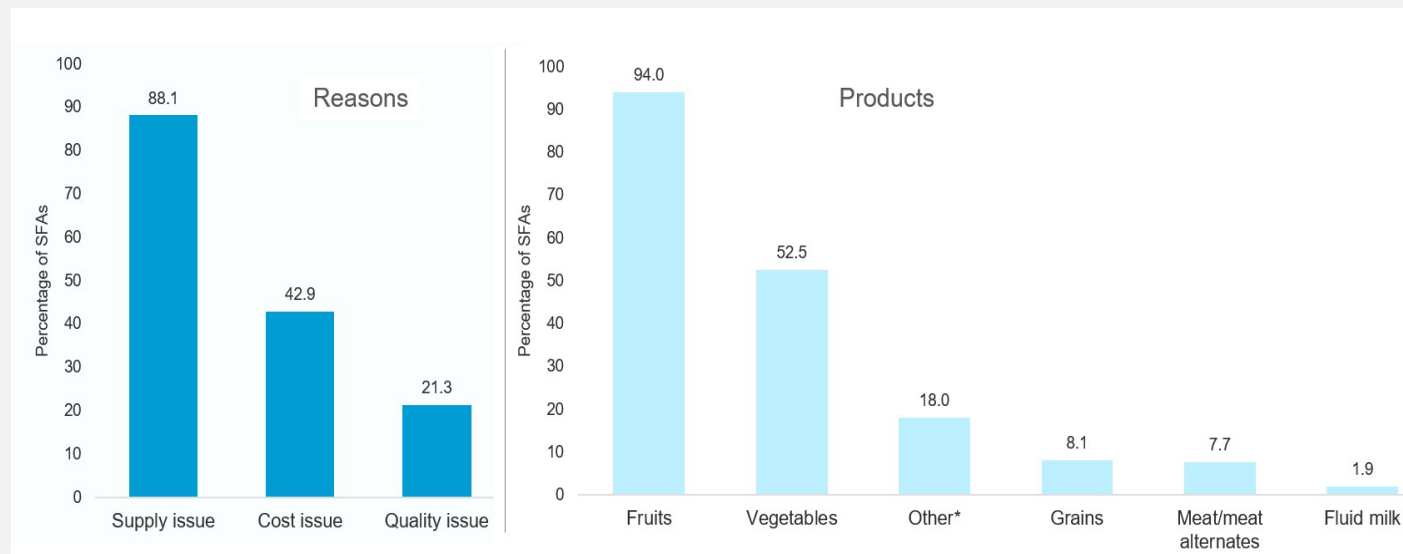
Approximately one-quarter of SFAs used an exception to the Buy American Provision in SY 2017–18.

Twenty-six percent of SFAs reported using an exception to the Buy American Provision during SY 2017–18. Among these SFAs, the reasons cited for using an exception aligned with the challenges SFAs expressed with purchasing, including limited supply of the commodity or product (88 percent), increased costs of domestic commodities or products (43 percent), and quality issues with available commodities or products (21 percent) (Exhibit 4).

Fruits and vegetables were the products most often purchased under exceptions to the Buy American Provision.

Nearly all of the SFAs that used exceptions during SY 2017–18 used them to purchase fruits (93 percent), while approximately half of these SFAs (53 percent) used exceptions to purchase vegetables (Exhibit 4). Among all SFAs that used exceptions in SY 2017–18, exceptions to the Buy American Provision accounted for only nine percent of their total food purchase expenditures.

Exhibit 4. Among SFAs that Reported Using an Exception to the Buy American Provision, Reasons for Using an Exception and Products Purchased



* "Other" responses included yeast, oils, and spices.

More than half of SFAs purchased foods from local sources in SY 2017–18.

Fifty-five percent of SFAs reported purchasing foods from local sources in SY 2017–18. Local food purchasing was less common among small SFAs than among larger ones. While only 44 percent of small SFAs reported purchasing local foods, approximately three out of four large (78 percent) and very large (72 percent) SFAs did so.

The most common challenge SFAs reported experiencing with local food purchasing was limited or seasonal food availability.

When asked about challenges they experienced related to local food purchasing, two-thirds of SFAs (68 percent) cited limited or seasonal food availability. SFAs reported less prevalent challenges, including lack of available local producers (37 percent), transportation and delivery barriers (36 percent), cost (36 percent), lack of time to develop relevant solicitations (27 percent), and difficulty contracting with local producers (25 percent).

2 in 5 SFAs applied the geographic preference to local food purchases in SY 2017–18.

Thirty-nine percent of SFAs reported applying the geographic preference option in SY 2017–18. Applying geographic preference was significantly less common in small SFAs. Less than one-third of small SFAs (29 percent) applied the geographic preference option to local food purchases in SY 2017–18, compared to 47 to 60 percent of medium, large, and very large SFAs.

Local Food Purchasing. SFAs are encouraged to purchase locally grown and raised agricultural products. One option for buying local foods includes using geographic preference.

Geographic Preference. SFAs and schools are also encouraged to use a "geographic preference" for the procurement of unprocessed, locally grown or raised agricultural products.

Conclusions

In order to comply with the Buy American Provision, SFAs relied on solicitation and contract language, as well as documents from vendors about purchased commodities and products. Most SFAs experienced challenges securing some food products under the Buy American Provision, including limited supply and high costs of domestic commodities or products. Among the 26 percent of SFAs that used exceptions to the Buy American Provision, fruits and vegetables were the products most often purchased under the exceptions. Smaller SFAs seemingly experienced more barriers to local food purchasing and geographic preference, as these activities were more prevalent in larger SFAs that may have greater access to vendors and resources.

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APPENDIX A. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODS

A.1 Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Child Nutrition Program Operations Study II (CN-OPS-II) collects data over a period of 4 years with a State Child Nutrition (CN) Director Survey and a School Food Authority (SFA) Director Survey. The surveys include some modules asked every year and some modules asked less frequently. The data for school year (SY) 2017–18 were collected using the Year 3 State CN Director Survey (Appendix B) and the Year 3 SFA Director Survey (Appendix C).

The State CN Director Survey was sent to 53 of the 55 State agencies (SAs) that participated in Year 1. Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands were not asked to participate in the Year 3 survey because of hurricanes in the region at the time of data collection. All 53 SAs responded to the request and submitted their surveys.

A nationally representative sample of 2,176 public SFA directors was administered the SFA Director Survey,⁴⁰ and 1,653 provided valid responses, yielding a response rate of 76.1 percent after removing ineligible and exempt cases. This Appendix provides a detailed description of the Year 3 sample design, data collection, response rates, sample weight construction, and other statistical considerations. The Year 3 sample design is part of a 4-year design that ensures SFAs (except for the largest sampled SFAs) are only asked to respond to the survey once during the 4-year period.

A.2 Sample Design and Sample Selection

Using SY 2014–15 Verification Collection Report (FNS-742) data provided by FNS, four nationally representative samples of SFAs were derived to minimize the probability that smaller (in terms of students served) SFAs would be selected for participation in multiple years of CN-OPS-II. For the SFA Director Survey, a stratified probability proportional-to-size (PPS) sample of SFAs was selected.⁴¹ Fifty-three SAs were invited to participate in the State CN Director Survey.⁴²

A.2.1 SFA TARGET UNIVERSE

The target universe for the Year 3 SFA survey included all SFAs operating in public school districts in the United States and outlying Territories that were required to submit FNS-742 to

⁴⁰ In each year, 2,187 SFAs were designated as the primary sample. In Year 3, seven SFAs were given an initial exemption due to hurricane damage and requests for exemptions from the SA, and due to lack of contact information. Additionally, four units were found to be either closed or no longer participating in USDA school meals programs.

⁴¹ Selection with probability proportional to size is a sampling procedure under which the probability of a unit being selected is proportional to the size of the unit (see Marriott, F. H. C. [1990]. *A dictionary of statistical terms* [5th ed.]. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.).

⁴² The CN Director Survey is treated as a census, to which all 55 directors are expected to respond each year. However, two SAs were not asked to participate in data collection in Year 3 due to natural disasters.

FNS in SY 2014–15.⁴³ In general, all SFAs that participated in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) were included in the respondent universe, with the following exceptions: SFAs that operated in residential child care institutions that did not have daytime students; SFAs with no students; SFAs in some outlying Territories that were not required to complete FNS-742; and private schools.

A.2.2 SFA SAMPLING FRAME

The SY 2014–15 FNS-742 database was used to construct the SFA sampling frame (i.e., the universe file) from which the respondent samples were drawn. There were more than 19,000 SFAs in the 2014–15 FNS-742 database. Approximately 15,000 SFAs that operated in public school districts, including charter schools, were included in the sampling frame. The unit of analysis for the study was the SFA. SFAs usually coincided with a single local education agency (LEA)⁴⁴ or school district, as defined in the Local Education Agency Universe Survey Directory.⁴⁵ In some cases, however, SFAs operated school food programs for multiple school districts and for individual schools (e.g., some public charter schools). In the 2014–15 FNS-742 database, approximately 96 percent of the eligible SFAs matched a district (LEA) in the LEA Universe Survey Directory. Those SFAs that did not match remained in the sample frame with an indicator denoting that they did not have associated National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data.

The CN-OPS-II SFA sample design satisfied the following requirements established by FNS:

- (1) Population estimates with precision not to exceed ± 5 percentage points for proportions or 5 percent for means at the 95 percent level of confidence
- (2) Subgroup estimates with precision not to exceed ± 10 percentage points for proportions or 10 percent for means at the 95 percent level of confidence, where subgroups are defined as comprising at least 25 percent of the population of SFAs
- (3) Support population and subgroup estimates of school-aged children attending schools participating in NSLP and SBP
- (4) Minimize the likelihood that SFAs will need to complete the survey in more than 1 of the 4 study years

The sample design was a stratified, multiyear design, as summarized in Table A.1. The research team stratified the sampling frame of 14,854 SFAs into 10 strata consisting of a combination of SFA size (number of students enrolled) and estimated percentage of students certified for free or reduced price (F/RP) meals (high = 60 percent or more of students certified for F/RP meals; low = 0–59 percent of students certified for F/RP meals). The research team implicitly stratified the 10 strata by sorting SFAs within each stratum by FNS Region and by

⁴³ Samples for the 4 years were created at the beginning of the study using SY 2014–15 data. The samples are further revised using the FNS-742 data for each SY, to include newly established SFAs and omit those that no longer exist.

⁴⁴ An LEA is a governmental administrative unit at the local level which exists primarily to operate schools or to contract for educational services. LEAs may or may not be coterminous with county, city, or town boundaries. Not all LEAs operate schools; some provide support to other agencies and do not necessarily have teachers or students permanently assigned to them. See: Glander, M. (2018). *Documentation to the NCES Common Core of Data Preliminary Directory Files: School Year 2017-18* (NCES 2018-112). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved May 17, 2019 from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

⁴⁵ The Local Education Agency Universe Survey Directory is part of the U.S. Department of Education Common Core of Data (CCD), which is maintained by NCES.

urbanicity status, defined by the SFA's location in one of four urbanicity classifications according to the NCES data prior to sampling, to ensure the sample selected was balanced on these additional factors.

Precision calculations confirmed that a responding sample of 1,750 SFAs allocated among the strata would meet the statistical requirements of the study. Therefore, assuming an 80 percent response rate, a sample of 2,187 SFAs, referred to as the primary sample, was needed each study year.⁴⁶ In addition, the research team included a reserve sample of 309 SFAs for each year in case it appeared during data collection that fewer than 1,750 survey responses would be received (i.e., the response rate was going to be below 80 percent). By releasing the reserve sample to obtain additional survey responses, the responding sample could total 1,750 responses even if the response rate were 70 percent.

⁴⁶ In each year, 2,187 SFAs were designated as the primary sample, as 80 percent of 2,187 equals 1,750.

Table A.1—SFA Stratification and Sample Allocation Plan Based on Target of 1,750 Completes Per Year

Stratum	SFA Size (Student Enrollment)	Percentage Students Certified for F/RP Meals	Total Population in Stratum		Sample (SFAs)			
Number	Range		SFAs	Student Enrollment	Sample to Support All 4 Study Years	Primary Sample Per Year	Reserve Sample Per Year	Expected Responses Per Year ^a
1	0–2,499	≥ 60 percent	3,186	2,062,994	1,567	343	49	274
2	0–2,499	< 60 percent	7,810	6,587,739	4,514	988	141	790
3	2,500–4,999	≥ 60 percent	421	1,457,686	421	92	13	74
4	2,500–4,999	< 60 percent	1,472	5,214,147	1,472	322	46	258
5	5,000–9,999	≥ 60 percent	260	1,818,285	260	57	8	46
6	5,000–9,999	< 60 percent	793	5,514,825	793	173	25	139
7	10,000–99,999	≥ 60 percent	256	5,940,334	256	56	8	45
8	10,000–99,999	< 60 percent	625	14,508,774	625	137	19	109
9	100,000–299,999	NA	24	3,534,678	24 ^b	12	0	10
10	≥ 300,000	NA	7	4,330,908	7 ^c	7	0	6
Total			14,854	50,970,370	9,939	2,187	309	1,750

NA = Not applicable. Stratum did not account for F/RP certification rates.

^a Based on an 80 percent response rate.

^b Half of the SFAs in stratum 9 were asked to complete the survey in two of the four years. The other half of the SFAs in stratum 9 were asked to complete the survey in the other two years.

^c All SFAs in stratum 10 were asked to complete the survey in all 4 years.

A.2.4 SFA SAMPLE SELECTION AND ALLOCATION

In the strata with smaller SFAs (strata 1 and 2), which contained more than 10,000 SFAs, subsets of SFAs were selected using PPS sampling procedures. Since the analytical objectives of CN-OPS-II included estimates of SFA-level and student enrollment-weighted SFA estimates, the research team designed the sampling procedures to compromise between two competing objectives. Specifically, the use of equal probability sampling of SFAs best supports SFA-level analyses, while the use of PPS selection of SFAs with a measure of size (MOS) based on SFA student enrollment best supports student enrollment-weighted SFA unit analyses. To balance these two objectives, for stratum 1 and stratum 2, the SFA samples were selected using PPS procedures, for which the MOS was the square root of the number of students enrolled in each SFA.⁴⁷ In strata 3–10 (larger SFAs), the research team selected all 3,858 SFAs to participate in the 4-year study for at least 1 of the study years.

The process for allocating the selected SFAs across study years varied by stratum. The SFAs in strata 1–8 were divided into four random subsamples to ensure that SFAs in these strata were only asked to respond to the survey once during the 4-year study period. The allocation was conducted by selecting a random stratified sample of one-fourth the size of the total sample for strata 1–8, eliminating that sample from the overall list, and repeating the process two more times to create four subsamples, which were then randomly assigned across Year 1 to Year 4. Each of the four subsamples was compared to the distribution of SFAs overall, to each urbanicity category and FNS Region, and within strata. The results of these comparisons demonstrated that the four yearly samples were basically identical in their profiles for these characteristics. For stratum 9, the research team randomly divided the 24 SFAs into 2 groups of 12, with each group asked to complete the survey in 2 of the 4 study years. The seven largest selected SFAs (stratum 10) were allocated to participate in all 4 years.

A.3 Data Collection

A.3.1 OVERVIEW

The Year 3 data collection began on April 12, 2018, and extended through summer. The data collection was completed on August 16, 2018. Of the 2,187 sampled units, 7 were given an initial exemption due to hurricane damage and requests for exemptions from the SA, and due to lack of contact information. Additionally, 4 units were found to be either closed or no longer participating in USDA school meals programs. Therefore, 2,176 (2,187 – 11) units from the primary sample were invited to participate in the Year 3 SFA survey. An invitation to complete the Child Nutrition Director Survey was sent to 53 State agencies (SAs) with Child Nutrition (CN) operations. All 53 SAs responded to the request and submitted their survey via the online Confront survey platform. Puerto Rico was not asked to participate in the survey due to recent hurricanes in that region. The School Food Authority Director Survey was administered to a nationally representative sample 2,176 School Food Authority (SFA) directors and, as explained below, 1,653 had valid responses.

⁴⁷ Valliant, R., Dever, J. A., & Kreuter, F. (2013). Domain estimates. In *Practical tools for designing and weighting survey samples*. New York: Springer-Verlag New York.

A.3.2 SFA RECRUITMENT

SFA recruitment to participate in CN-OPS-II Year 3 began with the research team contacting State CN Directors. Each State CN Director, after notification from their FNS Regional Office (RO), was sent the list of sampled SFAs for their State for Year 3 and was asked to provide or verify current SFA contact information. The research team used web searches and phone calls to obtain SFA contact information to supplement information provided by SAs. Throughout the SFA data collection process, contact information was updated as SFA directors, phone numbers, mailing addresses, and web addresses changed.

Each SFA was sent a letter inviting them to participate in the survey. The letter was followed by an email invitation that included a link to the web survey. Throughout the data collection period, five rounds of emails were sent, and three rounds of reminder telephone calls were placed to encourage survey submission to any SFAs that had not yet submitted their survey. The reminders targeted SFAs who had not started the survey, as well as SFAs currently in the process of completing the survey. SFAs that notified the research team that they could not complete the survey for various reasons received emails informing them about the importance of their participation in the study. On August 16, 2018, the research team closed the survey.

A.3.3 DETERMINING A VALID SFA RESPONSE

The research team employed a two-step methodology for determining a valid response that included identifying critical survey questions and a response threshold for these questions.⁴⁸ Table A.2 reports questions that FNS and the research team determined to be critical in each of the major sections of the survey. Table A.3 summarizes response rates to the critical questions listed in Table A.2. Table A.3 shows, for example, that 81.0 percent of respondents answered two or more critical questions in section 1, 80.7 percent answered three or more questions in section 1, and 79.9 percent answered all four questions. The research team and FNS examined the effect on the sample of valid responses for a range of response thresholds and determined a survey response was valid if 50 percent or more of the critical questions were answered in 6 or more of the 10 identified sections.

Table A.2—Critical Questions from the SFA Director Survey Used to Determine Response Validity

Section	Question Numbers	Summary
1	1.1, 1.3, 1.7, and 1.9	Total number of schools by type in SY 2017–18—elementary, middle, high, and other; SFAs with schools participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Seamless Summer Option, and Summer Food Service Program
2	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2–2.5	Total student enrollment by school type; total number of breakfasts and lunches served/claimed as paid, reduced-price, or free by school type during October 2016
3	3.1–3.4	Breakfast and lunch prices, actions taken by SFAs in response to the Paid Lunch Equity provision

⁴⁸ The American Association for Public Opinion Research. (2016). *Standard definitions: Final dispositions of case codes and outcome rates for surveys* (9th ed.). Oakbrook Terrace, IL: AAPOR. Retrieved from: http://www.aapor.org/AAPOR_Main/media/publications/Standard-Definitions20169theditionfinal.pdf.

Section	Question Numbers	Summary
4	4.2 and 4.8	Use of Verification for Cause
5	5.2, 5.8, 5.11 and 5.15	Meal pattern requirements
6	6.1 and 6.2	Point-of-sale methods for breakfast and lunch
7	7.1, 7.4	Revenues and expenditures, 3 months' average expenditure
8	8.1, 8.4, 8.6	Revenue and cost tracking, meal charge policy, unpaid meal charges
9	9.1 and 9.3	Food and beverage marketing policy and practice
10	10.1, 10.2, 10.4, 10.7 and 10.15	Where domestic commodities and products are required and verified, contractor compliance, Buy American exception, and geographic preference

Table A.3—Responses to Critical Questions

Number of Questions Answered	Number of Responses	Section Response Rate
Section 1 Critical Questions: 1.1, 1.3, 1.7, 1.9		
Answer two or more	1,757	81.0%
Answer three or more	1,751	80.7%
Answer all four	1,733	79.9%
Section 2 Critical Questions: 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5		
Answer three or more	1,698	78.3%
Answer four or more	1,652	76.2%
Answer five or more	1,591	73.3%
Answer all six	1,407	64.9%
Section 3 Critical Questions: 3.1-3.4		
Answered two or more	1,680	77.5%
Answered three or more	1,680	77.5%
Answered all four	1,655	76.3%
Section 4 Critical Questions: 4.2, 4.8		
Answered one	1,665	78.1%
Answered both	1,664	75.4%
Section 5 Critical Questions: 5.2, 5.8, 5.11, 5.15		
Answer two or more	1,654	76.3%
Answer three or more	1,651	76.1%
Answer all four	1,537	70.9%
Section 6 Critical Questions: 6.1, 6.12		
Answered one	1,653	76.2%
Answered both	1,617	74.6%
Section 7 Critical Questions: 7.1, 7.4		
Answer one	1,556	71.7%
Answer both	1,322	60.9%
Section 8 Critical Questions: 8.1, 8.4, 8.6		
Answer two or more	1,540	71.0%
Answer all three	1,487	68.6%
Section 9 Critical Questions: 9.1, 9.3		
Answer one	1,615	74.5%
Answer both	1,555	71.7%
Section 10 Critical Questions: 10.1, 10.2, 10.4, 10.7, 10.15		
Answer three or more	1,579	73.2%
Answer four or more	1,547	71.3%
Answer all five	1,480	68.2%

A.3.4 SFA SURVEY RESPONSE AND RESPONSE RATE CALCULATION

The SFA Director Survey had 1,653 valid responses based on the methodology for assessing a valid response. A summary of the full SFA sample relative to the valid responses by SFA characteristics is provided in Table A.4. For each SFA characteristic reported in Table A.4, the unweighted percentage of SFAs among the valid responses is within 3 percentage points of the unweighted percentage of SFAs in the full sample.

SFA Characteristic	Full Sample		Responding Sample	
	Unweighted Percentage	Unweighted Frequency	Unweighted Percentage	Unweighted Frequency
All SFAs	100.0%	2,176 ^a	100.0%	1,653
SFA Size (Schools)				
1 School	15.4%	333	13.3%	220
2–5 Schools	48.5%	1,050	48.9%	809
6–14 Schools	25.0%	541	25.1%	415
> 14 schools	11.2%	243	12.6%	209
Urbanicity				
Urban/City	10.9%	263	13.1%	216
Suburban	28.7%	622	28.7%	474
Town	20.2%	438	21.0%	347
Rural	36.5%	790	35.0%	579
Missing urbanicity	2.5%	54	2.2%	37
Percent of Students F/RP				
F/RP ≤ 30%	30.1%	652	28.9%	477
30% < F/RP ≤ 60%	44.7%	968	45.1%	745
F/RP > 60%	25.2%	547	26.1%	431
FNS Region				
Mid-Atlantic RO	10.9%	237	10.2%	168
Midwest RO	25.8%	559	26.6%	439
Mountain Plains RO	12.2%	264	11.9%	198
Northeast RO	12.0%	259	10.7%	176
Southeast RO	10.7%	231	11.6%	191
Southwest RO	14.0%	303	14.4%	238
Western RO	14.5%	314	14.7%	243
SFA Size (Students)				
1–999 Students	32.5%	705	29.5%	488
1,000–4,999 Students	47.2%	1,023	48.1%	795
5,000–24,999 Students	17.1%	371	18.9%	312
≥ 25,000 Students	3.1%	68	3.5%	58

^a From the primary sample of 2,187 SFAs, one sampled SFA from Puerto Rico was excluded due to recent hurricanes. A second sampled SFA was excluded because the SA could not provide contact information.

The unweighted unit response rate was calculated at 76.8 percent⁴⁹ using the following formula:⁵⁰

$$\% \text{ response rate} = \frac{R}{R + I + O_1 + O_2 + (ER * NL)} * 100$$

Where

R = the number of valid responses

I = the number of units that answered at least 50 percent of the critical questions in five sections but not six or more

O_1 = the number of units that completed some questions but are not counted in R or I

O_2 = the number of hard refusals and refusals due to extant circumstances

NL = the number of sampled SFAs that never logged on

ER = the eligibility rate calculated as follows:

$$ER = \frac{R + I + O}{R + I + O_1 + O_2 + E}$$

E = number of ineligible records identified during data collection

Note that for Year 3, the eligibility rate is 99.9 percent, given that two ineligible records were identified during data collection. Table A.5 reports sample counts for each element in the response rate formula.

Table A.4—Response Rate Calculation

Case Disposition	Full Sample
R = Valid Response	1,653
I = 50–70% critical questions answered	9
O_1 = < 50% critical questions answered	4
O_2 = Hard refusals and extant circumstances	64
NL = Invalid Response (Never Logged On)	444
E = Ineligible	2
Sample Size	2,176
Response Rate (%)	76.1

A.4 Sample and Replicate Weights

Sample weights that account for the complex sample design, nonresponse, and school year are required to calculate SY 2017–18 nationally representative estimates from the CN-OPS-II Year 3 SFA Director Survey data. Base weights accounted for the complex sample design and were defined as the inverse of the probability of an SFA being selected into the sample. However, because some SFAs in the sample did not respond, a nonresponse analysis was conducted to

⁴⁹ The weighted response rate is 74.6 percent. This reflects lower response rates by units with greater weights, which was addressed in the nonresponse analysis.

⁵⁰ This formula is similar to RR1 on page 61 of The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2016. *Standard definitions: Final dispositions of Case codes and Outcome rates for surveys* (9th ed.). Oakbrook Terrace, IL: AAPOR. http://www.aapor.org/AAPOR_Main/media/publications/Standard-Definitions20169theditionfinal.pdf. The main difference is that this revised formula allows the eligibility rate to be consistent with CN-OPS-II Year 1 calculations. Additionally, RR1 has placeholders for additional information related to household surveys that are not relevant here.

determine whether the patterns of nonresponse were systematically associated with any of the key study design variables (e.g., SFA size, urbanicity, percentage of students approved for F/RP meals, and FNS Region). Understanding whether nonresponse was associated with these key variables is important because systematic relationship to some SFA characteristics could bias national and subgroup estimates. The following section explains the nonresponse analysis and the construction of final weights to be used to calculate SY 2017–18 nationally representative estimates.

A.4.1 NONRESPONSE ANALYSIS

The analysis of nonresponse was conducted to determine whether nonresponse varied by key SFA characteristics: SFA size based on student enrollment, urbanicity, FNS Region, percentage of students certified for F/RP meals and SFA size based on number of schools.

To assess the impacts of nonresponse, a binary variable (0, 1) was created where 1 indicated a valid response and 0 indicated nonresponse. This variable was regressed against the characteristics listed above. The base weights were adjusted by factors created using SUDAAN WTADJX to compensate for nonresponse.⁵¹ A raking (or “calibration”) procedure was applied to the weights so that they reproduced the universe of SFAs from the SY 2017–18 FNS-742 data. The estimated coefficients of the logistical model indicate that there are only two statistically significant estimates among the categories. Table A.6 shows that the Mid-Atlantic region is significantly different from the Western region. Similarly, the Northeast region is significantly different from the Western region.⁵² The logistical model was also estimated using different reference categories for urbanicity. For example, rural is not significantly different from urban areas, and neither is town or suburban areas significantly different from urban, using urban as the reference category.⁵³ The remaining categories are not statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level, implying that the nonresponse is random, and the systematic variation in nonresponse is restricted to two regions among the various classifications.⁵⁴ There is little evidence that the classification of characteristics cause systematic variations in nonresponse among SFAs. This procedure addressed any systematic nonresponse while using the current SY 2017-18 FNS-742 data so that survey responses may be interpreted in terms of SY 2017–18.

Table A.5—Parameter Estimates of the Logistic Model of Nonresponse

Variable	Estimate [†]	t-Value	Lower CL ^{††}	Upper CL ^{†††}
Intercept	0.00	0.02		
SFA Size (Schools)^a				
1 School	0.08	0.87	-0.11	0.27

⁵¹ SUDAAN WTADJX procedures estimate a logistic model to determine the predicted response in each category. Then, an adjustment to the base weight is made from a model of the inverse of the predicted response. The idea is that for cases with low predicted response rates, a response is adjusted higher to compensate for the likely nonresponses. Once nonresponse adjustments are made, WTADJX performs a raking procedure to further adjust the weights to the universe margins of interest.

⁵² Significance of the classification is determined by comparing the fit of the model with and without the classification (Wald F-test).

⁵³ The logistical model was also estimated using rural, town as the reference groups. Changing the reference categories did not alter the significance of the variables.

⁵⁴ Statistical significance of a category within a classification is tested against an omitted category. For example, the coefficient for SFAs with one school is significantly different than that of SFAs with more than 14 schools (the omitted category). Correspondingly, the coefficient estimates for SFAs with 2–5 schools and 6–14 schools are not statistically significantly different from the estimated coefficient for SFAs with more than 14 schools.

Variable	Estimate [†]	t-Value	Lower CL ^{††}	Upper CL ^{†††}
2–5 Schools	-0.05	-0.69	-0.19	0.09
6–14 Schools	0.04	0.73	-0.07	0.15
Urbanicity^b				
Urban/City	-0.25	-1.54	-0.58	0.07
Suburban	-0.15	-0.91	-0.46	0.17
Town	-0.14	-0.90	-0.46	0.17
Rural	-0.09	-0.54	-0.40	0.23
Percentage of Students F/RP^d				
F/RP ≤ 30%	0.02	0.37	-0.11	0.16
30% < F/RP ≤ 60%	-0.01	-0.11	-0.13	0.11
FNS Region^c				
Mid-Atlantic RO	0.21	2.34	0.03	0.39
Midwest RO	-0.00	-0.07	-0.14	0.13
Mountain Plains RO	0.02	0.28	-0.14	0.18
Northeast RO	0.26	2.20	0.03	0.49
Southeast RO	-0.04	-0.62	-0.18	0.09
Southwest RO	0.03	0.45	-0.11	0.18
SFA Size (Students)^e				
1–999 Students	0.14	1.20	-0.09	0.36
1,000–4,999 Students	0.02	0.18	-0.18	0.22
5,000–24,999 Students	-0.08	-0.99	-0.23	0.08

[†] The estimate is computed relative to the left-out category.

^{††} Lower bound of the 95 percent confidence interval for the estimate.

^{†††} Upper bound of the 95 percent confidence interval for the estimate.

^a The omitted category is "> 14 schools."

^b The omitted category is "Missing Urbanicity."

^c The omitted category is "Western RO."

^d The omitted category is "> 60%."

^e The omitted category is "≥ 25,000 Students."

^f The omitted category is "No match to CCD."

Note: Of the classification variables, only the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions are statistically significant (*p*-values are 0.02 and 0.03, respectively).

Table A.7 reports the results of the weighting adjustments. The final results of the weight adjustments are evident. The second column shows the cell percentages for each classification variable as calculated from the SFA Verification Collection Report (VCR) (Form FNS-742) universe file. The third column shows the cell percentages using the original ("unadjusted") weights. Note the difference in the percentages between columns 2 and 3. This is a consequence of the nonresponses. The last column shows the cell percentages using the adjusted weights. The adjusted weights perfectly reproduce the universe percentages.

Finally, to estimate variances of estimates from the survey data, the research team created jackknife replicate weights.⁵⁵ Replicate weights facilitate the estimation of standard errors for

⁵⁵ In the jackknife, sample units are grouped into replicate groups with portions of the sample (replicates) formed by repeatedly omitting one half of the units in one of the replicate groups and calculating the desired statistic (replicate

summary statistics when using sample data with complex weighting schemes and when confidentiality considerations preclude identifying the stratum for all responding SFAs.⁵⁶

Table A.6—Comparison of Sample to Universe Using Base and Adjusted Weights

	2017 Universe Percentage	Design Weights-Adjusted Percentage	Final Weights-Adjusted Percentage
SFA Size (Students)			
Small (< 1,000)	50.9	48.9	50.9
Medium (>= 1,000 & < 5,000)	35.8	36.3	35.8
Large (>= 5,000 & < 25,000)	11.3	12.9	11.3
Very Large (≥ 25,000)	1.9	1.9	1.9
Urbanicity			
Urban/City	12.5	13.0	12.5
Suburban	22.7	23.1	22.7
Town	15.6	17.8	15.6
Rural	47.4	43.1	47.4
Missing Urbanicity	1.8	3.0	1.8
Percentage of Students F/RP			
≤ 30%	39.8	28.0	39.8
> 30% & ≤ 60%	41.2	43.6	41.2
> 60%	19.0	28.4	19.0
FNS Region			
Mid-Atlantic RO	10.0	8.6	10.0
Midwest RO	25.5	27.9	25.5
Mountain RO	15.5	15.3	15.5
Northeast RO	11.2	9.6	11.2
Southeast RO	8.6	9.0	8.6
Southwest RO	15.1	14.8	15.1
Western RO	14.2	14.9	14.2
SFA Size (Schools)			
> 0 & < 2	25.5	28.0	25.5
>= 2 & <= 5	50.2	48.0	50.2
>=6 & <= 14	17.1	16.9	17.1
> 14	7.2	7.1	7.2
Total N	14,776	11,004	14,776
Note: Sample weights account for the complex sample design, nonresponse, and school year in order to calculate SY 2017–18 nationally representative estimates.			
Percentages within each classification may not sum to 100 due to rounding.			

estimate). The variability among the replicate estimates is used to estimate the overall sampling variability. Jackknife replicate weights are suited to complex sample designs.

⁵⁶ Using the replicate weights included with these data ensures that all users obtain the same standard errors for their estimates (see <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/glossary.aspx#jackknife>).

A.5 Study Limitations

CN-OPS-II is a descriptive study. Causality cannot be established with CN-OPS-II data. This study presents findings from surveys of State CN and SFA directors. Some tabulations may suggest causal relationships and can be used to formulate new hypotheses. FNS conducts many targeted studies to assess causal impacts, and the findings from CN-OPS-II provide real-world context for those studies.

The sample of SFAs was designed to represent the universe of SFAs and their students within the design categories discussed in section A.2. Estimates for other quantities, such as the total number of schools, are accurate only to the extent that such quantities are highly correlated with the universe of SFAs and their students. When considering estimates for the total number of schools, even though the estimates for the national total number of schools may be accurate, estimates for some subgroups may be less accurate because the relationship between number of students and number of schools within subgroups may be less correlated. Therefore, estimates for the total number of schools for subgroups should be used cautiously.

The surveys were designed and tested to elicit accurate responses. Nevertheless, some response error is likely. Respondents may have unknowingly reported incorrect information, inadvertently checked the wrong response, or unintentionally skipped a question.

APPENDIX B. STATE CN DIRECTOR SURVEY

The SY 2017-18 State CN Director Survey is available on RegInfo.gov at <https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/DownloadDocument?objectID=81084001>.

APPENDIX C. SFA DIRECTOR SURVEY

The SY 2017-18 SFA Director Survey is available on RegInfo.gov at
<https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/DownloadDocument?objectID=81084102>

APPENDIX D. SCHOOL AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

List of Tables by Research Question

Research Question	Corresponding Table
School and SFA Participation in NSLP and SBP	
How many schools participate in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and/or the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)?	Table D.1
How many elementary, middle, and high schools participate in the SBP and/or the NSLP?	Table D.1
What is the increase in charter schools operating in the NSLP and the SBP?	Table D.2
Student Participation and Meals Served	
How many students participate in the SBP and/or the NSLP?	Table D.3
How many students in elementary, middle, and high schools participate in the SBP and/or the NSLP?	Table D.3
How many SBP and NSLP meals were served?	Tables D.4 and D.5
School and SFA Participation in Other Child Nutrition Programs	
How many schools participate in the NSLP Afterschool Snack Program?	Table D.6
How many schools participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Afterschool At-Risk Meal Program and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)?	Tables D.7–D.9

School and SFA Participation in NSLP and SBP

Table D.1—Public Schools Participating in NSLP and SBP, by Program and by School Type

School Type	Percentage of Schools Participating in Program(s) (CI)	Estimated Number of Schools Participating Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Both the NSLP and the SBP		
Overall	90.4 (79.9–100.0)	80,803 (16,983)
Elementary schools	90.3 (89.9–90.6)	41,739 (8,886)
Middle schools	91.7 (91.4–92.1)	13,926 (2,764)
High schools	91.7 (91.3–92.1)	14,891 (3,082)
Other schools	87.5 (86.4–88.7)	10,247 (2,251)
Only the NSLP		
Overall	8.7 (0–18.5)	7,786 (947)
Elementary schools	9.2 (8.9–9.5)	4,252 (525)
Middle schools	8.0 (7.7–8.3)	1,213 (135)
High schools	7.1 (6.9–7.4)	1,157 (141)
Other schools	9.9 (9.4–10.5)	1,164 (146)
Only the SBP		
Overall	0.2 (0.1–0.3)	204 (28)
Elementary schools	0.2 (0.1–0.3)	87 (12)
Middle schools	0.2 (0.0–0.3)	27 (4)
High schools	0.3 (0.1–0.5)	51 (6)
Other schools	0.3 (0.3–0.4)	39 (6)
Neither the NSLP nor the SBP		
Overall	0.6 (0–1.3)	576 (144)
Elementary schools	0.3 (0.3–0.4)	160 (16)
Middle schools	0.1 (0.1–0.1)	20 (3)
High schools	0.9 (0.8–0.9)	142 (19)
Other schools	2.2 (1.6–2.7)	255 (106)
Weighted <i>n</i>		89,370
Unweighted <i>n</i>		18,102

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

Notes: School participation in NSLP and SBP is estimated using data reported on the SFA Director Survey. These estimates may differ from administrative data because they come from a sample of SFA directors and are subject to sampling error. These estimates include public charter schools operating NSLP and/or SBP. “Other” schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12. Schools that participated in neither the NSLP nor the SBP were part of SFAs in which “Other” schools may have participated. Some totals may vary due to rounding. Missing responses range from 7–32 percent across school type.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 1.1 and 1.2.1(a–d)–1.2.4(a–d).

Table D.2—Charter Schools Operating Both the NSLP and the SBP from SY 2016–17 to SY 2017–18

Program	Number of Schools SY 2016–17	Number of Schools SY 2017–18	Percentage Change from SY 2016–17 to SY 2017–18	Number of States Reporting
Both the NSLP and the SBP	2,969	2,969	0.0	35
The NSLP Only	654	558	-14.7	35
The SBP Only	5	5	0.0	35
Total	3,628	3,532	-2.6	35

Notes: The number of States reporting counts of charter schools in the SA Director Survey SY 2016–17 and SA Director Survey 2017–18 varied. States included in the table are those that provided valid counts of charter schools in the NSLP and the SBP in both the SY 2016–17 and SY 2017–18 surveys. When comparing this table to the CNOPS Year 2 Report, note that the composition of States reporting counts of charter schools is different. Georgia, Minnesota, Nevada, and New Hampshire reported counts of charter schools in the SY 2016–17 survey but not in the SY 2017–18 survey; these States are not included in the table above. Iowa, Illinois, and Texas reported counts of charter schools in the SY 2017–18 survey but not in the SY 2016–17 survey; these States are not included in the table above.

Sources: SA Director Survey SY 2016–17, questions 1.8–1.11; and SA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 1.5–1.9.

Student Participation and Meals Served

Table D.3— NSLP/SBP Average Daily Participation per SFA as Measured by Meals Served to Students in October 2017, by Meal and School Type

School Type	Average Daily Meals Served per SFA: All Meals (CI)	Average Daily Participation Rate per SFA (CI)	Average Daily Meals Served per SFA: F/RP Meals (CI)	Average Daily Participation Rate Among Certified F/RP Students per SFA (CI)	SFA Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Breakfast					
Overall	1,188 (947–1,430)	34.0 (31.8–36.1)	1,009 (783–1,235)	43.2 (40.7–45.7)	12,823 (1,472)
Elementary schools	893 (646–1,139)	35.9 (34.3–37.6)	764 (527–1,001)	44.5 (43.0–46.0)	9,901 (1,257)
Middle schools	292 (229–354)	25.4 (23.0–27.8)	241 (192–289)	33.0 (31.2–34.7)	7,087 (1,023)
High schools	251 (202–300)	19.8 (18.5–21.1)	206 (161–251)	27.2 (25.8–28.5)	8,518 (1,142)
Other schools	251 (130–371)	32.3 (28.6–36.1)	226 (106–347)	39.3 (35.7–42.9)	4,939 (546)
Lunch					
Overall	2,117 (1,838–2,396)	62.2 (60.3–64.2)	1,504 (1,268–1,739)	73.4 (70.9–75.8)	13,772 (1,543)
Elementary schools	1,320 (1,089–1,550)	60.9 (59.0–62.8)	956 (765–1,148)	72.2 (70.7–73.7)	10,635 (1,320)
Middle schools	648 (550–745)	57.5 (55.0–60.0)	444 (372–517)	69.6 (67.7–71.4)	7,660 (1,078)
High schools	616 (543–689)	47.9 (45.8–50.0)	420 (358–482)	58.3 (56.6–60.0)	8,978 (1,185)
Other schools	437 (282–591)	54.3 (51.0–57.6)	348 (193–502)	64.0 (60.3–67.7)	5,518 (601)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

Notes: Average daily meals served (or average daily participation) is calculated for each SFA by summing the total reimbursable meals served in October 2017 (for breakfast and lunch, for each school type) and dividing by the number of operating days for October 2017, then averaging across SFAs. To obtain the average daily participation rate, this estimate is then divided by enrollment for each school type and again averaged across SFAs. “Other” schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12. Missing responses range from 7–13 percent across school types.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 2.3–2.5.

Table D.4— Percentage of NSLP Meals Claimed by Meal Price Category and School Type, in October 2016 and October 2017

Meal Price	October 2016					October 2017				
	Overall	Elementary schools	Middle schools	High schools	Other schools	Overall	Elementary schools	Middle schools	High schools	Other schools
Free	65.7	31.7	10.3	12.8	10.8	65.8	34.9	11.4	12.7	6.8
Reduced Price	6.5	3.1	1.2	1.5	0.7	6.1	3.1	1.3	1.4	0.4
Paid	27.8	13.5	5.5	6.6	2.2	28.2	14.1	5.8	6.5	1.8
Overall	100.0	48.3	17.1	21.0	13.7	100.0	52.0	18.4	20.6	9.0

Notes: This table shows the percentage of total meals claimed for each Meal Price/School Type combination. Percentages for School Type can be summed across rows separately for each Meal Price category. For each Meal Price/school type combination, the percentages of meals claimed for October 2016 and October 2017 are statistically significantly different from each other ($p < 0.01$), as expected given the large number of meals underlying each comparison (weighted $n = 572,530,646$ lunches served in October 2016 and $549,888,249$ lunches served in October 2017). “Other” schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12. Some totals may vary due to rounding. Data were missing for 6 percent of SFAs.

Sources: SFA Director Survey SY 2016–17, questions 2.3 and 2.5; SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 2.3 and 2.5c–2.5e.

Table D.5—Percentage of SBP Meals Claimed by Meal Price Category and School Type, in October 2016 and October 2017

Meal Price	October 2016					October 2017				
	Overall	Elementary schools	Middle schools	High schools	Other schools	Overall	Elementary schools	Middle schools	High schools	Other schools
Free	77.8	42.1	10.1	12.2	13.4	79.7	49.8	11.0	11.4	7.6
Reduced Price	5.6	3.0	0.9	1.1	0.5	5.1	2.9	0.9	1.0	0.3
Paid	16.7	9.8	2.5	2.8	1.5	15.2	9.0	2.6	2.8	0.8
Overall	100.0	54.9	13.5	16.2	15.4	100.0	61.7	14.5	15.1	8.7

Notes: This table shows percentage of total meals claimed for each Meal Price/School Type combination. Percentages for Meal Price/School Type combinations for each year sum to 100 percent. For each Meal Price/School Type combination, the percentages of meals claimed for October 2015 and October 2016 are statistically significantly different from each other ($p < 0.01$), as expected given the large number of meals underlying each comparison (weighted $n = 285,032,231$ breakfasts served in October 2016 and $n = 292,702,760$ breakfasts served in October 2017). “Other” schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12. Some totals may vary due to rounding. Data were missing for 8 percent of SFAs.

Sources: SFA Director Survey SY 2016–17, questions 2.3 and 2.4; SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 2.3 and 2.4c–2.4e.

School and SFA Participation in Other Child Nutrition Programs

Table D.6— Schools Participating in the NSLP Afterschool Snack Service

School Type	Percentage of Schools (CI)	Weighted (Unweighted) Number of Schools
Elementary schools	61.7 (55.7–67.7)	12,912 (2,843)
Middle schools	14.9 (13.5–16.3)	3,125 (692)
High schools	9.8 (6.8–12.8)	2,050 (509)
Other schools	13.6 (12.0–15.2)	2,848 (817)
Weighted <i>n</i>		20,935
Unweighted <i>n</i>		4,861

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

Notes: “Other” schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12. Twenty-three percent of schools participated in the NSLP Afterschool Snack Program. Data were missing for 23 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 1.2.1–1.2.4.

Table D.7— Percentage of SFAs and Schools Participating in the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals, by School Type

School Type	Percentage of SFAs ¹ (CI)	Weighted (Unweighted) Number of SFAs	Percentage of Schools (CI)	Weighted (Unweighted) Number of Schools
Elementary schools	73.9 (67.4–80.3)	1,523 (239)	56.7 (55.7–57.7)	8,027 (2,269)
Middle schools	38.2 (31.2–45.1)	787 (141)	13.7 (12.4–15.0)	1,935 (546)
High schools	45.3 (37.1–53.6)	935 (153)	14.9 (13.4–16.5)	2,112 (615)
Other schools	27.5 (19.8–35.2)	567 (79)	14.7 (13.9–15.5)	2,080 (826)
Weighted <i>n</i>		2,062		14,154
Unweighted <i>n</i>		311		4,256

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ Percentage column does not add to 100 because school types overlap within SFAs. SFA estimates were calculated based on the number of SFAs that reported how many schools participated in CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals.

Notes: Only schools that participated as sites were included in this table. Percentages are calculated as a proportion of schools of each type among SFAs and schools participating in CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals. “Other” schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12. Fourteen percent of SFAs and 16 percent of schools participated in the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals component. Data were missing for 6 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 1.3 and 1.6.

Table D.8— School and SFA Participation in the SFSP in Summer 2017

	Percentage (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Schools	28.2 (16.3–40.1)	25,183 (6,238)
SFAs	25.6 (23.3–28.0)	3,761 (530)

Notes: This table includes SFAs that participated as sponsors and schools that participated as either sites or sponsors. In addition, 12,064 non-school sites (45 percent of all sites) participated in the SFSP in summer 2017, as reported on the SFA Director Survey. Examples of non-school sites where the SFSP may be offered are camps, churches, and community centers. Data were missing for 2 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 1.9–1.11.

Table D.9— SFA and School Participation in the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) in Summer 2017

Site Type	Percentage (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Schools	7.8 (5.8-9.8)	6,981 (1,436)
SFAs	15.8 (13.6-18.1)	2,321 (332)

Notes: This table includes SFAs that participated as sponsors and schools that participated as sites. In addition, 6,398 non-school sites (37 percent of all sites) participated in the SSO in summer 2017. Examples of non-school sites where the SSO may be offered are camps, churches, and community centers. Data were missing for 4 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 1.7 and 1.8.

APPENDIX E. ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION AND VERIFICATION

List of Tables by Research Question

Research Question	Corresponding Table
Electronic and Web-Based Applications for Free and Reduced Price School Meals	
What technology is used for eligibility determination?	Tables E.1 and E.3
What percentage of F/RP applications are electronic or web-based?	Tables E.2 and E.3
Direct Certification and Verification	
What is the frequency of direct certification overall and by type of program (e.g., SNAP, TANF, FDPIR)?	Table E.6
Do schools translate verification notices into the language known to be spoken by the recipient household?	Table E.9
How many times do schools follow up with households that do not respond to verification requests?	Table E.11
Do SFAs follow up with households that did not respond to initial requests for verification documentation? If yes, how do they follow up?	Table E.11
Do SFAs use verification for cause?	Table E.13
What are the reasons that prompt districts to verify for cause?	Table E.14
Supplemental tables	Tables E.4, E.5, E.7, E.8, E.10, and E.12

Electronic and Web-Based Applications for Free and Reduced Price School Meals

Table E.1— F/RP School Meal Application Formats

	Percentage of SFAs
Format(s) Used¹	
Manually reviewed and entered paper application	95.3
Electronic or web-based application	35.0
Computer-read or scannable paper application	10.8
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,744
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,288
Use of Single or Multiple Formats¹	
Single format	64.8
Multiple formats	35.2
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,744
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,288
Format Used Most Often Among SFAs that Used Multiple Formats	
Manually reviewed and entered paper application	50.9
Electronic or web-based application	43.7
Computer-read or scannable paper application	5.4
Weighted <i>n</i>	3,754
Unweighted <i>n</i>	577

¹ Table estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.8–4.10.

Table E.2— Use of Electronic or Web-Based F/RP School Meal Applications, by SFA Characteristics

SFA Characteristic	Percentage of SFAs Using Electronic or Web-Based Applications ¹ Mean (CI)	Percentage of Applications Received by an SFA Electronically or Via Web ²		Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
		Mean (CI)	Median (CI)	
All SFAs	35.0 (32.9–37.2)	45.2 (42.7–47.6)	45.9 (34.9–56.8)	10,744 (1,288)
SFA Size				
a. Small (1–999 students)	14.6 ^{b,c,d} (11.3–17.8)	40.6 (27.8–53.4)	32.7 (17.7–47.7)	4,957 (341)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	42.3 ^{a,c,d} (39.1–45.5)	45.3 (41.4–49.1)	38.8 (31.9–45.7)	4,121 (629)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	74.4 ^{a,b} (67.9–80.9)	44.9 (40.5–49.2)	48.3 (37.6–59.1)	1,419 (268)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	97.6 ^{a,b} (94.2–100.0)	58.7 (47.3–70.2)	59.4 (42.2–76.7)	246 (50)
Urbanicity³				
e. Urban/City	64.5 ^{g,h} (51.9–77.1)	50.9 (41.8–60.0)	59.1 (45.1–73.1)	919 (140)
f. Suburban	50.4 ^{g,h} (45.6–55.1)	50.0 ^h (45.4–54.5)	51.6 ^h (37.7–65.5)	2,833 (409)
g. Town	37.0 ^{e,f,h} (30.2–43.8)	41.6 (36.4–46.9)	32.4 (24.6–40.3)	1,668 (264)
h. Rural	21.2 ^{e,f,g} (18.2–24.2)	37.7 ^f (31.2–44.1)	29.8 ^f (0.0–60.0)	5,219 (454)
Percentage of Students Certified for F/RP Meals				
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	37.0 (31.8–42.2)	48.2 ^k (43.8–52.6)	52.3 ^k (48.1–56.5)	3,552 (319)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	35.4 (32.2–38.6)	45.8 ^k (41.6–49.9)	46.3 ^k (39.7–52.8)	5,563 (690)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	29.4 (25.7–33.2)	34.4 ^{l,j} (28.0–40.9)	25.0 ^{l,j} (2.1–47.9)	1,628 (279)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ Data were missing for 1 percent of SFAs that did not note whether the SFA used electronic or web-based F/RP school meal applications.² Data were missing for 3 percent of SFAs that used electronic or web-based F/RP school meal applications but did not note the percentage of electronic or web-based applications received.³ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.**Notes:** Table estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.**Source:** SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.9 and 4.12.

Table E.3— Integration of F/RP School Meal Applications with Other Data Systems, Among SFAs that Used Electronic or Web-Based Applications

Type of Data System Integrated	Percentage of SFAs with Integrated Applications	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Point-of-sale	87.8	3,596 (563)
Meal claiming	77.6	3,326 (522)
Verification system	75.1	3,154 (490)
Direct certification	70.2	3,235 (494)
Student records	69.1	3,148 (488)
Other	1.7	386 (61)

Notes: Table estimates are among the 35 percent of SFAs that used electronic or web-based applications for F/RP school meals in SY 2017–18. Multiple responses were allowed. Data were missing for 5–16 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.9 and 4.11.

Direct Certification and Verification

Table E.4— SFA Roles and Responsibilities in Direct Certification, Among SFAs that Implemented Standard Meal Counting and Claiming in SY 2017–18

Roles and Responsibilities ¹	Percentage of SFAs
Receive/download list of matched students from the State	86.7
Extend eligibility to other children in households directly certified through SNAP, TANF, FDPIR, or Medicaid	83.0
Reconcile State-generated lists of matched students with local data or point-of-service systems	64.8
Conduct matches at the local level using State-generated program data	55.6
Upload/transfer enrollment data to the State or a State-sponsored system/database	53.4
Investigate State-generated lists of partially matched or unmatched children	42.7
None, matches are automatically certified in point-of-service system	3.0
Other	2.6
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,740
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,288

¹ Multiple responses were allowed.

Note: Table estimates are among the 74 percent of SFAs that implemented standard counting and claiming in SY 2017–18.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.1–4.3.

Table E.5— Timing and Frequency of Direct Certification Matching Process, Among SFAs that Implemented Standard Meal Counting and Claiming in SY 2017–18

	Percentage of SFAs
Timing of First Direct Certification Match	
Before the first day of school	72.6
On or around the first day of school	15.3
After the first day of school	5.4
Don't know	2.4
Other ¹	4.2
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,782
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,291
Frequency of Direct Certification Matching	
Less than once per month, but at least three times per year	30.6
Monthly	45.0
Weekly	10.9
Daily	5.1
Don't know	1.9
Other ²	6.5
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,769
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,290

¹ Other common responses were various dates in August that could not be assigned to a survey response.

² Examples of "Other" responses were bimonthly, biweekly, and frequencies that differed based on the time of year.

Note: Table estimates are among the 74 percent of SFAs that implemented standard meal counting and claiming in SY 2017–18.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, and 4.5.

Table E.6— Categorical Eligibility and Means-Tested Program Sources Used for Direct Certification, Among SFAs that Implemented Standard Meal Counting and Claiming in SY 2017–18

Source Used for Direct Certification ¹	Percentage of SFAs				Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Not Applicable ²	
SNAP	96.0	0.8	2.2	1.0	10,722 (1,284)
Foster child	86.9	4.4	3.9	4.9	10,449 (1,253)
Homeless, migrant, or runaway child	82.4	5.8	5.4	6.4	10,375 (1,244)
TANF	79.7	5.5	8.0	6.8	10,320 (1,237)
Medicaid ³	60.0	15.1	10.8	14.2	9,802 (1,176)
FDPIR	37.1	16.6	17.7	28.7	9,315 (1,124)
Head Start	21.8	24.1	16.7	37.4	8,908 (1,069)
Other*	5.2	29.2	15.2	50.3	2,092 (238)

¹ More than half of SFAs (59 percent) reported they had a system that allowed real-time access to student participation in SNAP, TANF, FDPIR, or other programs for the purpose of direct certification (data not shown). Data were missing for 1–18 percent of SFAs.

² SFAs were instructed to mark “not applicable” if the SFA did not have any students in one or more of the listed State-approved statuses or programs.

³ SFA participation is very high in states that conduct direct certification with Medicaid, and those states tend to be the ones with the highest number of SFAs.

* Examples of “Other” responses included sources reflecting participation across multiple programs and administrative approvals.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 74 percent of SFAs that implemented standard meal counting and claiming in SY 2017–18.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.1, 4.6, and 4.7.

Table E.7— Categorical Eligibility and Means-Tested Program Sources Used for Direct Verification, Among SFAs that Implemented Standard Meal Counting and Claiming in SY 2017–18

Source Used for Direct Verification ¹	Percentage of SFAs				Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Not Applicable ²	
SNAP	91.4	2.0	2.8	3.8	10,553 (1,270)
Foster child	80.2	6.1	4.7	9.1	10,241 (1,230)
Homeless, migrant, or runaway child	77.2	7.6	5.9	9.4	10,226 (1,229)
TANF	75.0	7.1	7.7	10.2	10,182 (1,227)
Medicaid	56.0	16.9	11.6	15.5	9,703 (1,170)
FDPIR	34.8	16.6	17.2	31.4	9,481 (1,143)
Head Start	21.0	23.1	16.3	39.7	9,034 (1,088)
Other*	6.7	23.2	13.5	56.6	2,247 (259)

¹ Data were missing for 3–17 percent of SFAs.

² SFAs were instructed to mark “not applicable” if the SFA did not have any students in one or more of the listed State-approved statuses or programs.

* Examples of “Other” sources were income documentation and State-provided lists that did not specify a status or program.

Note: Table estimates are among the 74 percent of SFAs that implemented standard meal counting and claiming in SY 2017–18.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 4.22.

Table E.8— Initiation of Verification Process Before October 1, 2017, Among SFAs that Used F/RP School Meal Applications in SY 2017–18

SFA Initiated Verification Before October 1, 2017	Percentage of SFAs
Yes	31.4
No	68.6
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,731
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,285

Note: These estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.1, 4.8, and 4.13.

Table E.9— Translation of Verification Notices, Among SFAs that Used F/RP School Meal Applications in SY 2017–18

Translation of Verification Notices	Percentage of SFAs
Among SFAs with Households that Speak Spanish as Their Primary Language...	
All the time	68.6
Some of the time	21.3
None of the time	10.1
Weighted <i>n</i>	6,229
Unweighted <i>n</i>	835
Among SFAs with Households that Speak Languages Other than English or Spanish as Their Primary Language...	
All the time, for all other primary languages spoken	27.4
Some of the time, for all or some other primary languages spoken	35.1
None of the time	37.5
Weighted <i>n</i>	3,442
Unweighted <i>n</i>	495

Note: Table estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2016–17, questions 4.8 and 4.14–4.16.

Table E.10—Information Provided by Households in Response to SFA Verification Requests, Among SFAs that Used F/RP School Meal Applications in SY 2017–18

Information Provided by Households	Percentage of SFAs
Official written evidence or documentation of income	98.9
Official written evidence or documentation of benefit statements, notices, or award letters from assistance agencies or other government agencies	69.5
Personalized note explaining household circumstances	24.7
Collateral contacts	9.3
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,660
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,278

Notes: Table estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.8 and 4.21.

Table E.11— Follow-Up Requests to Households for Verification Documentation, Among SFAs that Used F/RP School Meal Applications in SY 2017–18

Number and Methods of Follow-Up Attempts	Percentage of SFAs
Maximum Number of Contact Attempts¹	
1	2.5
2	15.5
3 to 20	28.7
No maximum	51.9
Other	1.4
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,695
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,282
Follow-Up with Households that Did Not Respond to Initial Verification Request	
Follow up more than once	96.1
Do not follow up more than once	3.9
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,697
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,283
Methods of Follow-Up Contact²	
Mailed letter	95.0
Telephone call	83.7
Email	47.7
Letter or packet sent home with student	28.0
In-person	16.6
Text	5.3
Other	2.5
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,696
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,284

¹ Contact attempts may include initial verification requests.

² Multiple responses were allowed.

Note: Table estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.8 and 4.17–4.19.

Table E.12— Methods Used to Track or Document Follow-Up Verification Requests to Households, Among SFAs that Used F/RP School Meal Applications in SY 2017–18

Method	Percentage of SFAs
Manual notation only ¹	42.0
Manual notation and copies of contact attempts ^{1,2}	16.5
Verification Tracker form ³	9.9
Copies of contact attempts only ²	8.4
Manual notation and software system or database records ^{1,4}	5.7
Software system or database records only ⁴	5.6
Spreadsheet ⁵	4.1
Other combination of methods	5.4
Don't know or not applicable	2.6
Weighted <i>n</i>	9,869
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,201

¹ Manual notation refers to electronic or handwritten records. Examples include notes on the application, written records of attempts, and paper logs.

² Examples of copies of contact attempts include sent letter photocopies, saved emails, and certified mail receipts and logs.

³ Respondents noted their use of the Verification Tracker (FNS Form 242). Examples include the Verification Tracker form, the completed Form 242, and verification forms “from the State” or “from USDA.”

⁴ Examples of software system or database records include auto-generated letters from a point-of-sale system and comments typed into a student information system notes field.

⁵ Spreadsheets are distinct from software system or database records. Responses indicate tracking in Microsoft Excel and/or spreadsheet.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18. Data were missing for 9 percent of SFAs. Categories were coded from responses to the open-ended question, “How does your SFA track/document follow-up contacts made or attempted with households for the purpose of verification?”

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.8 and 4.20.

Table E.13— Verification for Cause, Among SFAs that Conducted Verification for Cause, by SFA Characteristics

SFA-Verified F/RP Applications for Cause ¹	Percentage of SFAs (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs ²	20.8 (17.9–23.6)	10,632 (1,277)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	16.1 ^{c,d} (11.9–20.2)	4,900 (338)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	22.5 (17.6–27.5)	4,076 (623)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	29.0 ^a (22.4–35.7)	1,410 (266)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	38.3 ^a (23.8–52.8)	246 (50)
Urbanicity³		
e. Urban/City	27.2 (18.9–35.6)	919 (140)
f. Suburban	23.1 (18.5–27.6)	2,783 (404)
g. Town	18.3 (12.9–23.7)	1,659 (262)
h. Rural	19.0 (15.1–22.8)	5,167 (450)
Percentage of Students Certified for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	23.7 (17.8–29.5)	3,517 (315)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	20.0 (15.5–24.4)	5,495 (685)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	17.3 (12.9–21.6)	1,620 (277)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs responded “yes” to the survey question, “In 2017–18, did your SFA verify any applications for cause, that is on a case-by-case basis when the LEA was made aware of additional income or household members?”

² The percentage excludes SFAs that did not use F/RP applications. Therefore, it is higher than the percentage of all SFAs that reported verifying at least one application, regardless of F/RP application use, in the USDA, FNS SFA Verification Collection Report data for SY 2017–18.

³ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications in SY 2017–18. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.8 and 4.23.

Table E.14— Criteria Reported for Verification for Cause, Among SFAs that Conducted Verification for Cause

Criterion	Percentage of SFAs	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Multiple application submissions with different information	75.0	2,021 (274)
Applications with zero income listed in current and previous year(s)	65.8	2,017 (271)
Non-responders from previous school year(s)	35.0	1,944 (257)
School district employee application	34.8	1,893 (250)
Other*	49.8	340 (48)

*The most common “Other” responses were questions about household-reported income on the application or from community members.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 15 percent of SFAs that used F/RP school meal applications and verified applications for cause in SY 2017–18. Data were missing for 9–14 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.8 and 4.24.

APPENDIX F. SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

List of Tables by Research Question

Research Question	Corresponding Table
Revenues and Expenditures	
What are SFA annual revenues and expenditures?	Tables F.1– F.3
How have annual revenues and expenditures changed over time?	Table F.4
What happens if the 3-month operating balance is exceeded?	Table F.5
Financial Management	
What difficulties have SFAs experienced in monitoring costs paid out of the nonprofit school food service account?	Tables F.6 and F.7
What creates an inability at the SFA level to separate revenue for purposes of measuring compliance with the non-program revenue requirement?	Tables F.8 and F.9
Do SFAs have local meal charge policies?	Table F.10
What are the SFA and State meal charge policy components (for example, recovering debt, non-shaming tactics)?	Tables F.11 and F.12
What was the size of non-payment, and what was the success of recovery?	Tables F.13–F.16
What methods are used to collect money owed as a result of unpaid meal charges?	Tables F.17–F.20

Revenues and Expenditures

Table F.15— SFA Annual Revenues and Expenditures as a Percentage of Total Revenues and Expenditures by Category, SY 2016–17

	Average Percentage of Total SFA Revenues	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Revenues		
Federal reimbursement	63.4	11,137 (1,272)
Meal sales	25.2	11,013 (1,271)
State revenues	5.5	10,930 (1,243)
Other ¹	5.9	7,106 (864)
Total ²	100.0	11,643 (1,318)
Expenditures		
Labor	40.4	10,511 (1,238)
Food	39.9	10,986 (1,253)
Indirect cost	6.5	10,319 (1,198)
Supplies	6.4	7,888 (973)
Transportation	0.1	6,443 (782)
Other ³	6.6	6,057 (714)
Total ⁴	100.0	11,381 (1,297)

¹ “Other” responses for revenues included interest income, rebates, transfers from other accounts, payments for contracted meals (e.g., catering), and combinations of these.

² Total revenues are the sum of the reported Federal reimbursements, meal sales, State revenues, and other revenues. Twenty-one percent of SFAs did not report any source of revenue.

³ “Other” responses for expenditures included equipment service and repair, computer hardware and software, professional development, payments to the FSMC, and combinations of these.

⁴ Total expenditures are the sum of expenditures for labor, food, indirect costs, supplies, and transportation, and other expenditures. Twenty-three percent of SFAs did not report any type of expenditure.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 7.1 (calculated total).

Table F.16—SFA Annual Revenues and Expenditures, SY 2016–17, by SFA Characteristic

SFA Characteristic	Revenues		Expenditures	
	Median	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)	Median	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs	\$460,913	11,604 (1,317)	\$466,943	11,462 (1,301)
SFA Size				
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$187,308 ^{c,d}	5,809 (379)	\$194,165 ^{b,c,d}	5,701 (370)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$981,231 ^d	4,158 (625)	\$970,405 ^{a,d}	4,130 (619)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$3,795,997 ^{a,d}	1,371 (259)	\$3,642,828 ^{a,d}	1,364 (258)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$19,447,496 ^{a,b,c}	266 (54)	\$18,400,734 ^{a,b,c}	266 (54)
Urbanicity ¹				
e. Urban/City	\$460,626	1,446 (176)	\$628,178	1,357 (172)
f. Suburban	\$1,227,906	2,624 (372)	\$1,210,650	2,613 (369)
g. Town	\$829,589	1,880 (278)	\$814,216	1,842 (276)
h. Rural	\$269,389	5,491 (462)	\$291,656	5,446 (457)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals				
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$507,471	4,549 (376)	\$541,807	4,516 (372)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$466,462	4,808 (599)	\$467,790	4,747 (594)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$378,947	2,247 (342)	\$396,726	2,198 (335)

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Total revenue was missing for 21 percent of SFAs, and total expenditures was missing for 22 percent of SFAs, including those that did not respond to the survey questions and those that reported \$0.00 for revenues and/or expenditures. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 7.1.

Table F.3—Distribution of SFAs by the Ratio of Annual Revenues to Annual Expenditures by SFA Characteristics, SY 2016–17

SFA Characteristic	Ratio of Revenues to Expenditures								Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
	0%– 84.9%	85.0%– 89.9%	90.0%– 94.9%	95.0%– 99.9%	100.0%– 105.0%	105.1%– 109.9%	110.0%– 114.9%	≥ 115.0%	
All SFAs	14.3	5.4	8.7	19.9	26.5	10.6	5.4	9.2	11,304 (1,288)
SFA Size									
Small (1–999 students)	21.5	6.3	9.1	20.0	22.7	8.1	4.5	7.9	5,597 (366)
Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	8.4	5.6	8.6	19.8	29.6	11.3	5.9	11.0	4,091 (613)
Large (5,000–24,999 students)	4.8	2.1	7.8	19.6	30.0	16.1	8.7	10.9	1,348 (255)
Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	1.2	1.5	7.0	21.4	41.1	24.0	1.6	2.0	266 (54)
Urbanicity ¹									
Urban/City	11.3	11.6	9.2	17.6	26.6	8.4	9.1	6.2	1,347 (170)
Suburban	9.6	5.1	7.8	18.6	31.9	13.9	6.0	7.3	2,569 (364)
Town	12.7	6.7	7.8	22.8	22.8	8.3	4.5	14.5	1,834 (274)
Rural	17.6	3.8	9.5	20.2	25.2	10.4	4.5	8.8	5,405 (454)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals									
Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	12.3	5.3	8.7	18.9	29.0	9.4	5.8	10.7	4,420 (368)
Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	13.0	5.0	10.0	21.3	26.3	12.2	4.5	7.6	4,724 (590)
High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	20.9	6.8	5.9	18.9	21.8	9.4	6.6	9.6	2,160 (330)

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Data were missing for 24 percent of SFAs. Missing data occurred when an SFA did not report revenues and/or expenditures or entered \$0.00 for revenues and/or expenditures. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 7.1.

Table F.4—Ratio of Median Annual Revenues and Expenditures by School Year

School Year	Ratio of Median Revenues and Median Expenditures	Difference Between Median Revenues and Median Expenditures
2013–14 ¹	94.8%	-\$25,432
2014–15 ²	96.6%	-\$16,829
2015–16 ³	97.8%	-\$10,410
2016–17 ⁴	98.7%	-\$6,095

¹ Murdoch, J., et al. (2019). *Child nutrition program operations study (CN-OPS-II): Year one report: SY 2015–2016* (Table 5-2).

² Murdoch, J., et al. (2019). *Child nutrition program operations study (CN-OPS-II): Year one report: SY 2015–2016* (Table 5-1).

³ SFA Director Survey SY 2016–17, questions 10.1 and 10.11. Data were missing for 33 percent of SFAs.

⁴ SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 7.1 and 7.2. Data were missing for 24 percent of SFAs, which includes those that did not respond to the survey questions and those that reported \$0.00 for revenues and/or expenditures.

Table F.5—Actions Taken When Net Cash Resources Exceed 3-Month Average Expenditures

Action	Percentage of SFAs
SFA submits plan to spend excess net cash revenues	82.3
SFA improves food quality	45.0
SFA reduces lunch price	5.9
No action taken	3.3
No action taken – obtained prior SA approval	1.6
SA adjusts reimbursement rate	1.2
Other*	6.9
Weighted <i>n</i>	2,744
Unweighted <i>n</i>	399

*“Other” responses included purchasing new equipment or replacing equipment, eliminating reduced price charges, staff training, and combinations of these.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 20 percent SFAs that reported ever having net cash resources exceed 3-month average expenditures. Data were missing for 29 percent of SFAs. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 7.4 and 7.5.

Financial Management

Table F.6—Tracking Costs Paid from the Nonprofit School Food Service Account

	Percentage of SFAs
SFA (not schools in SFA) tracks costs paid from account	45.3
SFA and schools in SFA track costs paid from account	36.1
SFA does not track separately costs paid from account	12.7
Only schools in SFA track costs paid from account	3.8
Other*	2.1
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,295
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,504

*“Other” responses were that direct (but not indirect) costs are tracked from the food service account; the entity that tracked costs was named but their affiliation with the school or SFA could not be determined; and don’t know.

Notes: Data were missing for 10 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 8.4.

Table F.7—Challenges Monitoring Costs Paid from Nonprofit School Food Service Account

Challenge	Percentage of SFAs
No challenges	68.9
Other financial management needs take priority	9.8
Lack of staff training or guidance in these types of accounting policies and procedures	9.8
It takes too much time	9.3
No/Not all schools have nonprofit food service accounts	5.8
SFA not responsible for oversight or monitoring of nonprofit food service accounts	5.7
No process in place to monitor or collect school documentation	2.3
Other*	2.7
Weighted <i>n</i>	11,493
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,326

*“Other” challenges included difficulty tracking school meal program and non-program food costs separately for purchases for both purposes and general difficulty tracking non-program foods.

Notes: Table estimates are among SFAs that tracked costs paid from the nonprofit school food service account. This includes SFAs where only the SFA tracked costs, only schools in the SFA tracked costs, both the SFA and schools tracked costs, or some other arrangement. Data were missing for 12 percent of SFAs. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 8.4 and 8.5.

Table F.8—Tracking Revenue from School Meal Program Foods and Non-Program Foods

	Percentage of SFAs
SFA and schools in SFA track these revenues	43.1
SFA (not schools in SFA) tracks these revenues	34.8
SFA does not track these revenues separately	14.4
Only schools in SFA track these revenues	7.7
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,454
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,524

Notes: Data were missing for 9 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 8.1.

Table F.9—SFA Reasons for Inability to Separate Non-Program Food Sales and School Meal Program Revenues

Reason	Percentage of SFAs
No system in place to separate non-program food revenue from total program food revenue	35.7
No system in place to separate non-program food costs from total program food costs	29.1
Use fixed price FSMC	26.8
Problems with total non-program revenue data	8.8
Problems with total revenue from all food data	7.0
Other*	16.8
Weighted <i>n</i>	309
Unweighted <i>n</i>	38

*“Other” responses included using various metrics to estimate and separate program from non-program food sales revenue, including weekly food sales and a formula based on participation.

Notes: Table estimates are among SFAs reporting being unable to separate non-program food sale revenue and school meal program revenue. Multiple responses were allowed. Data were missing for 3 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 8.2 and 8.3.

Table F.10—Local and State-Level Meal Charge Policies

Policy	Percentage of SFAs
Local meal charge policy	69.8
Does not apply – all schools in SFA serve meals at no charge	20.6
State-level meal charge policy	9.1
Don't know	4.8
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,204
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,594

Notes: Data were missing for 4 percent of SFAs. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 8.6.

Table F.11—Statewide Meal Charge Policies and Components

	Number of States
State has Statewide Meal Charge Policy	
Yes	7
No	46
Statewide Meal Charge Policy Components¹	
Students unable to pay are allowed to charge regular, reimbursable meals	5
Households encouraged to apply for F/RP school meals when student is unable to pay	4
Households notified of low or negative balances	4
Outside funding sources provided to pay for meals or debt when students incur meal charges	3
Students unable to pay receive alternate meal	2
Students unable to pay are limited to the number of meals they can charge	1
Students unable to pay are denied a meal	1
Other	2

¹ Responses are among the seven States with meal charge policies. Multiple responses were allowed.

Note: All 53 States responded to questions about meal charge policies.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 2.10 and 2.11.

Table F.12—Meal Charge Policy Components Used

Component	Percentage of SFAs
Notify households of low or negative balances	90.0
Encourage households to apply for F/RP school meals	84.0
Students unable to pay allowed to charge regular, reimbursable meals	66.7
Students unable to pay limited on the number of meals they can charge	43.4
Students unable to pay receive alternate meal	39.6
Outside funding sources provided to pay for meal or debt	31.6
Students unable to pay denied meal	3.7
Other*	3.5
Weighted <i>n</i>	10,113
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,219

*“Other” responses included combined strategies (e.g., student served reimbursable meal up to a limit, then student receives an alternate meal) and varied meal charge policies for students based on grade level.

Notes: Table estimates are among SFAs that reported charging for meals and having a local or State-level meal charge policy. Data were missing for 0.7 percent of SFAs. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1, 8.6, and 8.7.

Table F.13—Unpaid Meal Charges After Recovery Attempts by SFA Characteristics, SY 2016–17

	Median Owed (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs	\$1,499 (862–2,137)	6,891 (870)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$ 632 ^{b,d} (346–918)	2,755 (200)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$1,993 ^{a,d} (1,592–2,394)	2,917 (439)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$4,755 (2,633–6,877)	1,004 (188)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$24,626 ^{a,b} (0–73,495)	215 (43)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	\$4,954 ^h (2,573–7,334)	515 (86)
f. Suburban	\$2,349 (1,952–2,746)	2,063 (303)
g. Town	\$1,664 (863–2,464)	1,085 (178)
h. Rural	\$999 ^e (668–1,331)	3,196 (296)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$1,984 (1,125–2,843)	2,265 (218)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$1,295 (845–1,746)	3,672 (485)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$1,464 (822–2,105)	954 (167)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 47 percent of SFAs that charged for meals, tracked unpaid meal charges, and reported money owed greater than \$0.00. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1, 8.8, and 8.9.

Table F.14—Ratio of Unpaid Meal Charges to Total Expenditures After Recovery Attempts, by SFA Characteristics, SY 2016–17

	Mean Ratio	Median Ratio (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs	1.1%	0.2% (0.2–0.3)	6,040 (753)
SFA Size			
a. Small (1–999 students)	1.4%	0.3% (0.2–0.4)	2,475 (176)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	0.8%	0.2% (0.1–0.3)	2,461 (367)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	1.2%	0.1% (0.1–0.2)	896 (169)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	0.4%	0.1% (0.0–0.3)	209 (41)
Urbanicity¹			
e. Urban/City	0.9%	0.2% (0.0–0.5)	473 (79)
f. Suburban	1.0%	0.2% (0.2–0.2)	1,726 (252)
g. Town	0.7%	0.2% (0.1–0.2)	950 (154)
h. Rural	1.3%	0.2% (0.2–0.3)	2,863 (262)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals			
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	1.0%	0.3% (0.2–0.4)	2,039 (193)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	1.1%	0.2% (0.1–0.3)	3,178 (419)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	1.1%	0.2% (0.1–0.3)	823 (141)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Note: This table is among the 42 percent of SFAs that charged for meals, tracked unpaid meal charges, reported money owed greater than \$0.00, and reported total expenditures. Expenditures for SY 2016–17 was missing for 22 percent of SFAs. Unpaid meal charges were missing for 6 percent of SFAs. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1, 7.1, 8.8, and 8.9.

Table F.15—Unpaid Meal Charges (After Recovery Attempts) by Annual Revenues as a Percentage of Annual Expenditures, SY 2016–17

Annual Revenues as a Percentage of Annual Expenditures	Percentage of SFAs	Mean Owed	Median Owed (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
≤84.9 percent	10.1	\$525,078	\$123,935 (33,529–214,342)	605 (61)
85.0–89.9 percent	4.7	\$866,991	\$191,085 (0–408,681)	284 (36)
90.0–94.9 percent	8.7	\$620,393	\$92,570 (0–185,200)	519 (61)
95.0–99.9 percent (break-even range, with lower revenues than expenditures)	20.6	\$663,103	\$197,520 (143,701–251,340)	1,233 (158)
100.0–105.0 percent (break-even range, with higher revenues than expenditures)	28.3	\$ 1,913,535	\$176,561 (117,102–236,020)	1,697 (212)
105.1–109.9 percent	12.4	\$2,724,477	\$158,633 (66,404–250,863)	745 (105)
110.0–114.9 percent	6.4	\$1,317,426	\$126,703 (0–275,760)	385 (49)
≥ 115.0 percent	8.7	\$ 1,892,532	\$202,172 (59,393–344,951)	521 (66)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

Notes: Among SFAs that charge for meals and track unpaid meal charges, 15 percent reported revenues and expenditures and \$0.00 owed for unpaid meal charges (and are not presented in this table); 6 percent reported revenues and expenditures and did not note the amount of money owed as a result of unpaid meal charges (and are not presented in this table); and 59 percent reported revenues and expenditures and the amount of money owed (and are presented in this table). Revenue and expenditure information for SY 2016–17 was not provided by 20 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1, 7.1, 8.8, and 8.9.

Table F.16—Money Recovered for Unpaid Meal Charges, SY 2016–17

Percentage Recovered	Percentage of SFAs
No response	6.6
None recovered	22.2
Some or all recovered	
> 0% and < 50%	21.3
≥ 50% and < 100%	23.6
100%	26.4
Weighted <i>n</i>	6,891
Unweighted <i>n</i>	870

Notes: Table estimates are among the 47 percent of SFAs that charge for meals, tracked unpaid meal charges, and reported money owed greater than \$0.00.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1, 8.8–8.10.

Table F.17—Changes in Unpaid Meal Charges Since Implementing Unpaid Meal Charge Policy

Was there a Decrease in Amount of Unpaid Meal Charges	Percentage of SFAs
Yes	33.6
No	50.3
Don't know	16.1
Weighted <i>n</i>	9,926
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,185

Notes: Table estimates are among SFAs that charge for meals and tracked unpaid meal charges. Data were missing for 2 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 8.13.

Table F.18—Methods Used to Recover Money for Unpaid Meal Charges

Method	Percentage of SFAs	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Send bill to parents	97.9	9,771 (1,163)
Provide parents with repayment plan	74.1	8,274 (987)
Provide student with alternate meals until debt is paid	48.8	7,718 (921)
Try to retroactively approve student for F/RP meals	36.7	7,186 (859)
Use administrative actions	18.1	7,038 (835)
Use debt collection agency	15.7	7,022 (843)
No effort made	3.4	4,351 (506)
Other*	14.8	2,903 (355)

*“Other” responses include payments by individual schools, payments from the district’s general fund, and donations.

Notes: Table estimates are among SFAs that charge for meals and tracked unpaid meal charges. Data were missing for between 3–57 percent of SFAs, depending on the response option.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 8.11.

Table F.19—Alternate Funding Sources Used to Offset Costs from Unpaid Meal Charges

Funding Source	Percentage of SFAs
District general fund	52.5
Local contributions or charitable funding from the community	34.4
Not applicable (SFA does not offset costs incurred from unpaid meal charges)	26.6
Revenue from meals or services not funded through the nonprofit school food service account	7.8
School fundraising	3.2
State or local funds provided to cover the price of student meals	3.2
State revenue matching funds in excess of State revenue matching fund requirement	0.9
Other*	1.5
Weighted <i>n</i>	9,586
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,142

*“Other” responses included those indicating that individual schools were responsible for unpaid meal charges annually.

Notes: Table estimates are among SFAs that charge for meals and track unpaid meal charges. Data were missing for five percent of SFAs. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 8.12.

Table F.20—Technical Assistance to SFAs for Managing Unpaid Meal Charges

	Number of States
State Offers Technical Assistance for Managing Unpaid Meal Charges	
Yes	49
No	4
Among States that Offer Technical Assistance for Managing Unpaid Meal Charges, Source of Technical Assistance Information¹	
FNS Policy guidance	46
Best practices resources developed by FNS	42
Best practices resources developed by other institutions	21
Best practices resources developed by the State	23
Best practices resources developed by other States	12
Other	2
Among States that Offer Technical Assistance for Managing Unpaid Meal Charges, Method Used to Provide Technical Assistance¹	
Phone or email communications	44
Online documents and resources	41
In-person presentations	36
Handbooks/guides	23
Webinar presentations	22
Other*	6

¹ Multiple responses were allowed.

*“Other” methods include administrative review meetings and contractors.

Note: All 53 States responded to questions about technical assistance.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 2.12, 2.13, and 2.14.

APPENDIX G. SCHOOL MEAL SUBSIDIES AND SUPPORT

List of Tables by Research Question

Research Question	Corresponding Table
School Meal Subsidies and Support	
Does the State provide financial resources for school meals to SFAs in the form of per-meal subsidies? What was the total amount given?	Tables G.1–G.4
Does the State provide support for any other aspects of the school nutrition operations?	Table G.5

School Meal Subsidies and Support

Table G.17—Subsidies Provided to SFAs for Breakfasts and Lunches

	Number of States			
	Breakfast Only	Lunch Only	Both Breakfast and Lunch	Neither Breakfast nor Lunch
State Provides Subsidies to SFAs				
Yes	9	6	16	22
Type of Subsidy¹				
Per-meal reimbursement	7	4	12	30
Annual lump sum	3	3	1	46
Supplement to cover specific costs	1	1	0	51
Amount based on a percentage of low-income students	2	0	0	51
Other*	2	0	1	50

¹ Multiple responses were allowed.

* "Other" subsidy types include per-student subsidies and subsidies based on student participation increases from previous school years.

Note: All 53 States responded to questions about State subsidies.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, and 2.6.

Table G.18—Methods Used to Determine Breakfast Subsidies for SFAs, by Type of Subsidy

Type of Subsidy/Method	Number of States
Per-Meal Reimbursement	19
30 cents per reduced price breakfast	
59 cents per free breakfast claimed, 89 cents per reduced price breakfast claimed, and \$2.38 per paid meal claimed	
30 cents per reduced price breakfast and 55 cents per paid meal	
30 cents per reduced price breakfast and sliding scale amount per paid breakfast, among schools that meet 40 percent SBP participation rate for F/RP students	
22.7 cents per F/RP breakfast	
15 cents for each breakfast served among schools that meet State requirements	
10.1 cents per free breakfast, 15.6 cents per reduced price breakfast, and 2.3 cents per paid breakfast	
10 cents per breakfast	
10 cents per breakfast served that meets local standards	
3 cents per breakfast served	
Appropriation is divided by the number of claimed breakfasts	
Amount equal to the lesser of the district's actual cost or 100 percent of the statewide average cost of a breakfast served, less Federal reimbursement, participant payments, and other State reimbursement	
Prorated amount based on committed funds	
Prorated amount based on committed funds, distributed based on free breakfasts claimed	
Provided to SFAs with the highest NSLP participation rates among F/RP students in the previous school year. Excludes SFAs with schools implementing non-pricing provisions.	
Among severe-need schools with high breakfast costs	
Annual Lump Sum	4
Allocated at State-legislated amount	
Distributed to schools that participate in the SBP and have at least a 20 percent participation rate among F/RP students	
Number of breakfasts served in the second preceding year ¹	
No method provided	
Supplement to Cover Specific Costs	1
Among severe-need schools that meet 60 percent SBP participation rate for F/RP students and offer breakfast at no cost	
Amount Based on a Percentage of Low-Income Students	2
No method provided	
Other	3
Up to \$10.00 per economically disadvantaged student in schools that participate in SBP	
22 cents per meal above the base year number of meals served	
No method provided	

¹ Response is verbatim.

Notes: Responses are among 25 States that provided breakfast subsidies to SFAs. States could select one or more subsidy types. For each type of subsidy, respondents were asked the open-ended question, "Please explain how your State determines subsidies for breakfast (for example, 2 cents per breakfast served)." The table provides cleaned responses to this open-ended question and aligns the responses with the selected subsidy type.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 2.1–2.3.

Table G.19—Methods Used by States to Determine Lunch Subsidies for SFAs, by Type of Subsidy

Type of Subsidy/Method	Number of States
Per-Meal Reimbursement	16
52.5 cents per reduced price lunch and 12.5 cents per paid and free lunch	
40 cents per reduced price lunch	
40 cents per reduced price lunch for grades prekindergarten–5	
22.7 cents per F/RP lunch	
10 cents per lunch served that meets local standards and 5 cents per lunch served that includes a local food	
10 cents per lunch and up to 14 cents per lunch in schools that participate in SBP	
6 cents per free and paid lunch and 98.1 cents per reduced price lunch	
6 cents per lunch	
5.5 cents per F/RP lunch and 4 cents per paid lunch	
4 cents per lunch served	
Less than 4 cents per lunch, based on State funding divided by the number of reimbursable lunches served per school year. Districts that meet nutrition standards receive an additional 10 cents per lunch.	
Appropriation is divided by the number of reimbursable lunches	
State funding is divided by the number of reimbursable lunches claimed per school year	
Prorated amount based on number of free lunches	
Prorated amount based on number of lunches served	
No method provided	
Annual Lump Sum	4
Divided by the total number of lunches served statewide in October to determine a per-lunch reimbursement rate	
Based on an amount per student and provided to public charter schools only	
Based on the total number of student lunches reported in October	
Based on the number of lunches claimed from the previous school year	
Supplement to Cover Specific Costs	1
Amount is the difference of the cost of the meal less Federal reimbursement	
Other	1
Each school district receives at least 6 percent of costs to operate the State-mandated portion of NSLP. Also provides up to \$10.00 per student plus 5 cents per free lunch and 2 cents per reduced price lunch.	

Notes: Responses are among 22 States that provided lunch subsidies to SFAs. States could select one or more subsidy type. For each type of subsidy, respondents were asked the open-ended question, “Please explain how your State determines subsidies for lunch (for example, 2 cents per lunch served).” The table provides cleaned responses to this open-ended question and aligns the responses with the selected subsidy type. No States selected the response, “Amount based on a percentage of low-income students.”

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 2.5–2.7.

Table G.20—State Breakfast and Lunch Subsidies Given to SFAs in SY 2016–17

Total Dollar Amount	Breakfast (<i>n</i> = 25 States)	Lunch (<i>n</i> = 22 States)
Minimum	\$116,571	\$376,351
Maximum	\$55,728,113	\$99,930,492
Median	\$2,158,796	\$5,506,500
Mean	\$5,184,247	\$14,086,915

Notes: All 53 States responded to the questions about State subsidy amounts. Values are derived from self-reported responses to the survey question, “What was the total dollar amount of subsidies given to all SFAs in your State for breakfast/lunch during SY 2016–2017?”

Sources: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 2.4 and 2.8; USDA FNS SFA Verification Collection Report data for SY 2016–17.

Table G.21—School Nutrition Service Operations for Which State Provides Financial or Personnel Support

Operation	Number of States
Equipment	12
Preparation of reimbursable meals	9
Contracted services	8
Preparing claims	7
Storage	7
Overhead/indirect costs	6
Preparation of non-reimbursable meals	4
Other*	8

*Examples of “Other” responses were software, salary increases and fringe benefits, Farm to School coordinator, State facilities and residential child care facilities, and food and supplies.

Notes: All 53 States responded to questions about State support for school nutrition service operations. Respondents were asked to select “yes” or “no” for each response. Twenty States reported providing support and noted the categories of support provided. Data were missing for 3–6 States across response categories.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 2.9.

APPENDIX H. MEAL PRICES AND COUNTING

List of Tables by Research Question

Research Question	Corresponding Table
Meal Prices and Counting	
What is the average price charged for full price breakfasts for the current school year and full price lunches for the current and previous school year?	Tables H.1–H.9
What actions did your SFA take in response to the Paid Lunch Equity provision?	Table H.10
How have à la carte prices increased from the previous to the current school year?	Tables H.11 and H.12
Have they changed as a result of implementing Smart Snacks?	Table H.13
What alternatives to the traditional cashier model are used?	Table H.14

Meal Prices and Counting

Table H.22—Average Prices Charged by SFAs for Full Price Breakfast (Elementary Schools), by SFA Characteristic

	Average Price (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs that charged for a full price breakfast	\$1.49 (1.45–1.52)	6,888 (883)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$1.49 (1.41–1.56)	2,577 (181)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$1.49 (1.44–1.54)	2,982 (456)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$1.49 (1.45–1.54)	1,127 (208)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$1.41 (1.20–1.63)	202 (38)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	\$1.53 (1.41–1.65)	492 (82)
f. Suburban	\$1.51 (1.46–1.56)	1,889 (298)
g. Town	\$1.46 (1.41–1.51)	1,205 (198)
h. Rural	\$1.48 (1.42–1.53)	3,271 (298)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$1.60 ^{j,k} (1.55–1.65)	2,270 (220)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$1.45 ⁱ (1.39–1.50)	3,815 (519)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$1.36 ⁱ (1.27–1.45)	803 (144)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 48 percent of SFAs that report the average (non \$0) price charged for full price breakfasts in elementary schools, excluding schools operating under a non-pricing provision (e.g., Provision 2, CEP). Two percent of SFAs did not report the price charged for full price breakfast in elementary schools. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 3.2.

Table H.23—Average Prices Charged by SFAs for Full Price Breakfast (Middle Schools), by SFA Characteristic

	Average Price (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs that charged for a full price breakfast	\$1.56 (1.53–1.60)	5,249 (752)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$1.59 (1.50–1.68)	1,213 (88)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$1.56 (1.51–1.60)	2,691 (415)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$1.57 (1.52–1.63)	1,142 (211)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$1.47 (1.26–1.67)	202 (38)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	\$1.64 (1.53–1.74)	430 (78)
f. Suburban	\$1.59 (1.53–1.65)	1,758 (282)
g. Town	\$1.54 (1.48–1.59)	1,050 (182)
h. Rural	\$1.54 (1.49–1.60)	1,984 (203)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$1.67 ^{i,k} (1.62–1.71)	1,766 (190)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$1.53 ⁱ (1.49–1.58)	2,900 (441)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$1.41 ⁱ (1.32–1.51)	583 (121)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 38 percent of SFAs that report the average (non \$0) price charged for full price breakfasts in middle schools, excluding schools operating under a non-pricing provision (e.g., Provision 2, CEP). Four percent of SFAs did not report the price charged for full price breakfast in middle schools. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 3.2.

Table H.24—Average Prices Charged by SFAs for Full Price Breakfast (High Schools), by SFA Characteristic

	Average Price (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs that charged for a full price breakfast	\$1.58 (1.55–1.61)	6,418 (865)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$1.56 (1.47–1.65)	2,029 (149)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$1.58 (1.55–1.62)	3,039 (466)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$1.63 (1.57–1.68)	1,139 (210)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$1.49 (1.28–1.71)	212 (40)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	\$1.68 (1.58–1.79)	486 (84)
f. Suburban	\$1.66 ^h (1.61–1.71)	1,787 (286)
g. Town	\$1.57 (1.48–1.65)	1,241 (205)
h. Rural	\$1.52 ^f (1.46–1.58)	2,891 (286)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$1.75 ^{i,k} (1.69–1.80)	1,965 (204)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$1.54 ^{l,k} (1.50–1.58)	3,639 (514)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$1.36 ^{l,j} (1.25–1.48)	814 (147)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 45 percent of SFAs that report the average (non \$0) price charged for full price breakfasts in high schools, excluding schools operating under a non-pricing provision (e.g., Provision 2, CEP). Two percent of SFAs did not report the price charged for full price breakfast in high schools. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted p-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 3.2.

Table H.25—Average Prices Charged by SFAs for Full Price Breakfast (Other Schools), by SFA Characteristic

	Average Price (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs that charged for a full price breakfast	\$1.47 (1.42–1.52)	3,099 (348)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$1.45 (1.37–1.53)	1,697 (114)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$1.52 (1.44–1.59)	850 (124)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$1.50 (1.43–1.57)	434 (88)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$1.40 (1.18–1.63)	118 (22)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	\$1.62 (1.49–1.75)	257 (40)
f. Suburban	\$1.59 ^h (1.49–1.70)	668 (97)
g. Town	\$1.44 (1.33–1.55)	382 (61)
h. Rural	\$1.41 ^f (1.35–1.48)	1,778 (146)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$1.59 ^k (1.49–1.69)	780 (66)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$1.47 (1.42–1.52)	1,850 (211)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$1.31 ⁱ (1.16–1.45)	470 (71)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 23 percent of SFAs that report the average (non \$0) price charged for full price breakfasts in other schools, excluding schools operating under a non-pricing provision (e.g., Provision 2, CEP). “Other” schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12. Eleven percent of SFAs did not report the price charged for full price breakfast in “other” schools. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 3.2.

Table H.26—Average Prices Charged by SFAs for a Full Price Lunch (Elementary Schools), by SFA Characteristic

	Average Price (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs that charged for a full price lunch	\$2.53 (2.48–2.58)	8,566 (1,103)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$2.51 (2.39–2.63)	3,234 (225)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$2.55 (2.51–2.59)	3,763 (578)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$2.54 (2.47–2.61)	1,335 (252)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$2.37 (2.22–2.52)	233 (48)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	\$2.67 ^{g,h} (2.55–2.78)	635 (110)
f. Suburban	\$2.67 ^{g,h} (2.60–2.74)	2,492 (377)
g. Town	\$2.39 ^{e,f} (2.33–2.46)	1,458 (241)
h. Rural	\$2.45 ^{e,f} (2.39–2.52)	3,920 (362)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$2.70 ^{i,k} (2.62–2.79)	3,016 (282)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$2.47 ^{i,k} (2.41–2.52)	4,406 (597)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$2.29 ^{i,j} (2.20–2.38)	1,143 (224)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 60 percent of SFAs that report the average (non \$0) price charged for full price lunch in elementary schools, excluding schools operating under a non-pricing provision (e.g., Provision 2, CEP). One percent of SFAs did not report the price charged for full price lunch in elementary schools. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 3.3.

Table H.27—Average Prices Charged by SFAs for a Full Price Lunch (Middle Schools), by SFA Characteristic

	Average Price (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs that charged for a full price lunch	\$2.71 (2.66–2.75)	6,457 (929)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$2.69 (2.57–2.80)	1,613 (116)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$2.70 (2.65–2.76)	3,299 (516)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$2.73 (2.66–2.79)	1,312 (249)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$2.71 (2.55–2.87)	233 (48)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	\$2.83 ^{g,h} (2.72–2.93)	529 (100)
f. Suburban	\$2.82 ^{g,h} (2.76–2.88)	2,169 (345)
g. Town	\$2.58 ^{e,f} (2.52–2.64)	1,255 (220)
h. Rural	\$2.63 ^{e,f} (2.57–2.69)	2,469 (254)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$2.86 ^{i,k} (2.78–2.94)	2,238 (234)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$2.66 ^{i,k} (2.62–2.70)	3,338 (499)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$2.48 ^{i,j} (2.40–2.56)	881 (196)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 46 percent of SFAs that report the average (non \$0) price charged for full price lunch in middle schools, excluding schools operating under a non-pricing provision (e.g., Provision 2, CEP). Four percent of SFAs did not report the price charged for full price lunch in middle schools. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 3.3.

Table H.28—Average Prices Charged by SFAs for a Full Price Lunch (High Schools), by SFA Characteristic

	Average Price (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs that charged for a full price lunch	\$2.71 (2.66–2.76)	7,519 (1,030)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$2.61 (2.50–2.72)	2,397 (175)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$2.76 (2.71–2.80)	3,596 (561)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$2.77 (2.65–2.89)	1,284 (244)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$2.72 (2.52–2.93)	243 (50)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	\$2.94 ^{g,h} (2.82–3.05)	590 (106)
f. Suburban	\$2.88 ^{g,h} (2.81–2.95)	2,034 (333)
g. Town	\$2.62 ^{e,f} (2.55–2.69)	1,459 (243)
h. Rural	\$2.61 ^{e,f} (2.53–2.70)	3,416 (341)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$2.88 ^{j,k} (2.80–2.96)	2,328 (237)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$2.69 ^{i,k} (2.64–2.73)	4,093 (574)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$2.44 ^{i,j} (2.31–2.57)	1,098 (219)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 53 percent of SFAs that report the average (non \$0) price charged for full price lunch in high schools, excluding schools operating under a non-pricing provision (e.g., Provision 2, CEP). Two percent of SFAs did not report the price charged for full price lunch in high schools. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 3.3.

Table H.29—Average Prices Charged by SFAs for a Full Price Lunch (Other Schools), by SFA Characteristic

	Average Price (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs that charged for a full price lunch	\$2.59 (2.52–2.65)	3,822 (444)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	\$2.54 (2.42–2.66)	2,073 (145)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	\$2.65 (2.56–2.73)	1,075 (162)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	\$2.65 (2.55–2.75)	524 (107)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	\$2.59 (2.28–2.89)	150 (30)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	\$2.81 ^{g,h} (2.68–2.93)	358 (55)
f. Suburban	\$2.80 ^{g,h} (2.70–2.90)	896 (130)
g. Town	\$2.44 ^{e,f} (2.32–2.56)	505 (81)
h. Rural	\$2.46 ^{e,f} (2.36–2.56)	1,989 (166)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	\$2.73 (2.57–2.89)	1,058 (91)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	\$2.58 (2.51–2.65)	2,110 (246)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	\$2.40 (2.17–2.62)	654 (107)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 28 percent of SFAs that report the average (non \$0) price charged for full price lunch in other schools, excluding schools operating under a non-pricing provision (e.g., Provision 2, CEP). “Other” schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12. Twelve percent of SFAs did not report the price charged for full price lunch in “other” schools. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 3.3.

Table H.9—Average Price Charged for Breakfast and Lunch SY 2014–15 to SY 2017–18

	School Year			
	a.SY 2014–15	b.SY 2015–16	c.SY 2016–17	d.SY 2017–18
Full Price Breakfast				
Overall	\$1.38 ^{b,c,d}	\$1.43 ^{a,d}	\$1.48 ^{a,d}	\$1.53 ^{a,b,c}
Elementary schools	\$1.31	\$1.37	\$1.42	\$1.49
Middle schools	\$1.40	\$1.45	\$1.50	\$1.56
High schools	\$1.40	\$1.46	\$1.52	\$1.58
Other schools	\$1.38	\$1.41	\$1.52	\$1.47
Full Price Lunch				
Overall	NA	\$2.49 ^{c,d}	\$2.57 ^{b,d}	\$2.63 ^{b,c}
Elementary schools	NA	\$2.34	\$2.43	\$2.53
Middle schools	NA	\$2.53	\$2.61	\$2.71
High schools	NA	\$2.56	\$2.65	\$2.71
Other schools	NA	\$2.54	\$2.62	\$2.59

NA = not applicable. The *Child Nutrition Program Operations Study (CN-OPS-II): Year One Report* did not report lunch prices for SY 2014–15. The *School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study, Final Report Volume 1: School Meal Program Operations and School Nutrition Environments* reported an average charge for full price lunch of \$2.34 (elementary school), \$2.54 (middle school), and \$2.52 (high school); and an average charge for reduced price lunch of \$0.39 for elementary, middle, and high school for SY 2014–15. These estimates are weighted and among public, non-charter schools offering NSLP.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that reported the average (non \$0) price charged for full price lunch and breakfasts across school types, excluding schools operating under a non-pricing provision (e.g., Provision 2, CEP). “Other” schools are those that have a grade span that does not fall in the range for elementary, middle, or high schools, such as Pre-K–8 or 6–12.

School year estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted p -value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that school year and the school year denoted by the superscript letter. School year estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Sources: SFA Director Survey SY 2016–17, questions 3.1–3.3; SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1–3.3; and Murdoch, J., et al. (2018, November). *Child nutrition program operations study (CN-OPS-II): Year one report: SY 2015–2016* (Tables 5-2, 5-4, 5-5, and 5-7).

Table H.10—Actions Taken in SY 2017–18 in Response to Paid Lunch Equity Provision

Action	Percentage of SFAs
Increased paid lunch prices in all schools	49.9
No action taken—paid lunch pricing already complied with provision ¹	33.1
Added funds from non-Federal sources to nonprofit school food services account	9.8
Requested State exemption/waiver from Paid Lunch Equity requirement	4.2
Increased paid lunch prices in some schools	3.8
Other	2.9
Weighted n	10,953
Unweighted n	1,308

¹ FNS guidance regarding Paid Lunch Equity for SY 2017-18 can be found at:

<https://childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov/regulations-policies/usda-policy-memos/2017/sp-11-2017s.pdf>

Notes: Table estimates are among the 73 percent of SFAs that served full price lunches in SY 2017–18. Data were missing for 2 percent of SFAs. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 3.4.

Table H.11—Changes in á la Carte Prices from SY 2016–17 to SY 2017–18

Did SFA Increase á la Carte Prices Between SY 2016–17 and SY 2017–18?	Percentage of SFAs
Yes	26.6
No	44.0
Not applicable	25.0
Don't know	4.4
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,716
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,644

Note: Data were missing for 0.5 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 3.7.

Table H.12—Average Price Increases for á la Carte Items from SY 2016–17 to SY 2017–18

Á la Carte Item	Average Non-Zero Price Increase ¹	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Prepared entrées	\$0.64	2,302 (314)
Snacks	\$0.40	2,252 (327)
Beverages	\$0.39	2,384 (331)
Prepared non-entrée food	\$0.56	1,380 (188)
Baked goods	\$0.40	1,870 (260)
Frozen desserts	\$0.38	1,540 (225)
Reimbursable meal components	\$0.45	1,223 (178)
Bread/grain products	\$0.38	1,423 (210)
Milk	\$0.28	1,377 (181)
Candy	\$0.16	89 (13)
Weighted <i>n</i>		3,592
Unweighted <i>n</i>		489

¹ SFAs reporting zero price increase for a given item are excluded.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 27 percent of SFAs that reported increasing á la carte prices between SY 2016–17 and 2017–18. Data were missing for 17–93 percent of SFAs, depending on the response option. Data from 3,731 SFAs that reported increasing á la carte prices between SY 2016–17 and 2017–18 but reported a zero price for a given item are excluded from this table.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.7 and 3.9.

Table H.13—Reasons for Increasing à la Carte Item Prices from SY 2016–17 to SY 2017–18

Reason	Percentage of SFAs
Vendor raised prices	61.8
Annual price increase	36.5
Implementation of Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards	25.0
Other*	10.8
Weighted <i>n</i>	3,917
Unweighted <i>n</i>	525

* “Other” responses included price increases to ensure compliance with non-program food regulations and to ensure that reimbursable meals were competitively priced relative to à la carte foods.

Notes: Table estimates are among the 27 percent of SFAs that reported increasing à la carte prices between SY 2016–17 and 2017–18. Data were missing for 2 percent of SFAs. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.7 and 3.8.

Table H.14—Alternative Point of Service Methods Used by SFAs for Breakfast and Lunch Service

Point of Service Method	Breakfast ¹		Lunch ²	
	Percentage	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)	Percentage	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Pre-packaged meal (for example, grab ‘n go, bagged meals)	33.5	13,893 (1,561)	27.8	14,122 (1,595)
Meal delivery to the classroom	22.6	13,382 (1,499)	9.8	13,587 (1,511)
Kiosk or cart	17.2	13,184 (1,476)	7.8	13,392 (1,506)
Vending machine dispensed meal	1.2	12,635 (1,398)	1.0	13,227 (1,479)
Food truck	0.3	12,580 (1,394)	0.5	13,159 (1,470)
Other*	5.1	4,634 (471)	5.1	5,136 (535)

¹ Data were missing from 5–14 percent of SFAs.

² Data were missing from 4–11 percent of SFAs.

* “Other” responses for breakfast included second chance breakfast offering without noting the specific setting (e.g., classroom, kiosk, grab ‘n go).

Note: Fifty-three percent of SFAs did not have meal service options outside of the classroom for breakfast, and 65 percent of SFAs did not have meal service options outside of the classroom for lunch. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 6.1 and 6.2.

APPENDIX I. SCHOOL NUTRITION STANDARDS

List of Tables by Research Question

Research Question	Corresponding Table
Increased Student Acceptance of Fruits and Vegetables for Lunch	
How have SFAs succeeded at getting students to accept more fruits and vegetables?	Tables I.1 and I.2
School Nutrition Standards: Whole Grains, Milk, and Sodium	
What practices did SFAs use to meet the 100 percent whole grain-rich requirement?	Table I.3
What challenges do SFAs face in implementing the 100 percent whole grain-rich requirement?	Table I.4
Who is requesting exemptions for whole grains and milk?	Tables I.5–I.7
Are SFAs able to take advantage of the low-fat, flavored milk flexibility for SY 2017–18?	Table I.8–I.10
What practices are SFAs using to meet the sodium targets for SY 2017–18?	Table I.11
Use of USDA Foods	
What USDA Food products are SFAs buying?	Tables I.12 and I.13
Are SFAs using USDA Foods to meet standards with the new meal pattern waivers? How are SFAs using USDA Foods in order to meet the meal pattern requirements?	Tables I.14–I.18
Food and Beverage Marketing Policy	
Who is allowing or restricting food and beverage marketing in schools?	Tables I.19–I.20
School Nutrition Standards: Miscellaneous	
To what extent do SFAs use USDA certification of compliance worksheets for the performance-based reimbursement?	Table I.21

School Nutrition Standards: Fruits and Vegetables

Table I.1—Strategies Used to Increase Student Acceptance of Fruits and Vegetables

Implemented Strategy	Percentage of SFAs	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Offer salad bar	69.9	12,930 (1,469)
Nutrition education activities promoting fruit and vegetable consumption	66.8	12,622 (1,431)
Marketing fruits and vegetables on campus	66.7	12,645 (1,450)
Fruit and vegetable taste-testing	63.1	12,549 (1,429)
School participation in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program ¹	42.3	9,078 (1,133)
Growing fruits and/or vegetables in a school garden	38.7	11,695 (1,319)
Serving fruits and/or vegetables from school garden or school farm in cafeteria	27.8	11,372 (1,279)
Contests/events to promote fruit and vegetable consumption	25.0	11,424 (1,297)
Student visits to farms	23.5	11,126 (1,249)
Cooking demonstrations of fruits and vegetables in cafeteria, classroom, or other school setting	23.3	11,149 (1,259)
No strategies used	20.7	3,474 (341)
Other*	11.9	3,995 (418)

¹ Estimates are among SFAs with elementary schools.

* “Other” strategies SFAs reported included offering a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and salads to students; use of a community garden (versus school garden); and Farm to School programs.

Notes: Data were missing for 13–25 percent of SFAs across response categories. It is likely that non-implementing SFAs left the question blank when they should have provided a “no” response. Because missing data were excluded from calculations, percentages may be overestimated.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.6a–l.

Table I.2—Reported Success of Strategies Used to Increase Student Acceptance of Fruits and Vegetables

Among Implementing SFAs, Strategy was Reported Successful	Percentage of SFAs	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Offer salad bar	91.9	8,996 (1,074)
School participation in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program ¹	91.7	3,772 (459)
Fruit and vegetable taste-testing	86.9	7,849 (967)
Cooking demonstrations of fruits and vegetables in cafeteria, classroom, or other school setting	84.3	2,563 (336)
Nutrition education activities promoting fruit and vegetable consumption	83.4	8,296 (1,001)
Serving fruits and/or vegetables from school garden or school farm in cafeteria	82.2	3,113 (348)
Growing fruits and/or vegetables in a school garden	81.3	4,432 (539)
Contests/events to promote fruit and vegetable consumption	79.1	2,797 (376)
Marketing fruits and vegetables on campus	78.0	8,349 (1,047)
Student visits to farms	76.8	2,591 (291)
Other*	79.3	456 (57)

¹ Estimates are among SFAs with elementary schools.

* “Other” strategies SFAs reported included offering a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and salads to students; use of a community garden (versus school garden); and Farm to School programs.

Note: Table estimates are among the 12–70 percent of SFAs that reported implementing a given strategy and that rated whether the program was successful.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.7a–k.

School Nutrition Standards: Whole Grains, Milk, and Sodium

Table I.3—Practices Implemented to Meet the Whole Grain-Rich Requirement

Type of Practice	Percentage of SFAs
Purchase whole grain-rich foods (excluding USDA Foods)	69.8
Add whole grain-rich items to the menu (excluding USDA Foods)	60.1
Order whole grain-rich USDA Foods	52.0
Add whole grain-rich USDA Foods to the menu	49.4
Substitute whole grain-rich items for non-whole grain-rich items	48.0
Alter recipes	37.6
Discontinue or change some menu options	35.2
Increase portion sizes of some items	10.5
Other	3.3
None—SFA met the 100 percent whole grain-rich requirement prior to the updated standards	11.8
None (not further specified)	0.9
Don't know	4.1
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,655
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,639

Note: Multiple responses were allowed. Data were missing for 1 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 5.12.

Table I.4—Challenges Experienced in Meeting the Whole Grain-Rich Requirement

Challenge	Percentage of SFAs
Lack of student acceptance	70.8
Increased food waste	64.8
Increased food costs	48.0
Lack of available foods that meet standards	23.0
Lack of understanding about requirement	9.5
Difficulty procuring whole grains	8.3
Training staff	6.6
Other	3.5
No current challenges	19.8
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,590
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,635

Note: Multiple responses were allowed. Data were missing for 1 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 5.13.

Table I.5—Percentage of SFAs that Ever Requested an Exemption from the 100 Percent Whole Grain-Rich Requirement and Reasons for Request, by SFA Size

	Small SFAs (1–999 Students)	Medium SFAs (1,000–4,999 Students)	Large SFAs (5,000– 24,999 Students)	Very Large SFAs (≥ 25,000 Students)	All SFAs
Ever Requested Exemption					
Yes	18.0	37.4	37.8	50.0	27.9
No	71.9	57.6	60.1	50.0	65.0
Don't know	10.1	5.0	2.1	0.0	7.1
Weighted <i>n</i>	7,431	5,269	1665	288	14,652
Unweighted <i>n</i>	483	792	311	58	1,644
Among SFAs Ever Requesting Exemption, Reason for Request¹					
Poor student acceptance	93.0	96.1	96.4	93.8	95.1
Unacceptable quality	53.1	63.5	73.0	77.1	62.0
Limited availability	16.2	19.3	18.0	20.4	18.1
Financial hardship	14.1	17.4	20.2	20.5	16.8
Accommodate cultural or regional food preferences	6.3	8.2	13.8	26.7	9.1
Other	2.1	3.0	2.3	5.3	2.7
Weighted <i>n</i>	1,340	1,969	630	144	4,083
Unweighted <i>n</i>	94	295	113	27	529

¹ Multiple responses were allowed. Data were missing for 1 percent of SFAs that did not report whether they had ever requested an exemption, and 3 percent of responding SFAs did not note the reason for the requested exemption. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.8 and 5.9.

Table I.6—SY 2017-18 Requests for Temporary Exemption from the 100 Percent Whole Grain-Rich Requirement, Among SFAs that Ever Requested Exemptions

Requested a Temporary Exemption in SY 2017–18	Percentage of SFAs
Yes, for the same product(s) as in previous year(s)	47.5
Yes, SY 2017–18 was the first year requesting an exemption	36.7
Yes, for different product(s) than in previous year(s) ¹	3.7
No	12.0
Weighted <i>n</i>	4,078
Unweighted <i>n</i>	528

¹ Examples of different products requested than in previous years included hamburger and hot dog buns, biscuits, pizza crust, and pasta.

Note: Table estimates are among the 28 percent of SFAs reported ever requesting an exemption from the 100 percent whole grain-rich requirement for SY 2017–18.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.8 and 5.11.

Table I.7—Grain Products for Which SFAs Ever Requested Exemption From 100 Percent Whole Grain-Rich Requirement

Type of Grain Product	Percentage of SFAs
Pasta	75.5
Bread (includes breadsticks, bagels, rolls, English muffins, soft pretzels)	35.1
Biscuits	24.1
Pizza	21.0
Tortillas/wraps	18.0
Rice/quinoa	8.8
Cake, cookies, brownies, muffins, cinnamon rolls, toaster pastries	7.3
Crackers and snacks	5.9
Cereal (includes grits)	3.4
Pancakes, waffles, and French toast	2.4
Breaded products	0.3
Weighted <i>n</i>	3,998
Unweighted <i>n</i>	515

Notes: Table estimates are among the 28 percent of SFAs that ever requested an exemption from the 100 percent whole grain-rich requirement (weighted *n* = 4,083). Responses were coded from open-ended responses to the question “For what products, specifically, has your SFA requested an exemption to serve grains that did not meet the 100 percent whole grain-rich requirement?” Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.8 and 5.10.

Table I.8—Percentage of SFAs that Requested an Exemption to Serve Flavored, Low-Fat (1%) Milk in SY 2017–18

Requested Exemption to Serve Flavored, Low-Fat (1%) Milk in SY 2017–18	Percentage of SFAs
Yes	7.5
No	86.3
Don’t know	6.2
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,637
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,641

Note: Data were missing for 1 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 5.15.

Table I.9—Percentage of SFAs that Requested an Exemption to Serve Flavored, Low-Fat (1%) Milk in SY 2017–18, by SFA Characteristics

Requested Exemption to Serve Flavored, Low-Fat (1%) Milk in SY 2017–18	Percentage of SFAs (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs	7.5 (5.6–9.4)	14,637 (1,641)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	6.2 (3.0–9.4)	7,425 (482)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	9.5 (7.7–11.3)	5,264 (791)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	6.9 (3.9–10.0)	1,665 (311)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	7.9 (0.0–17.6)	282 (57)
Urbanicity ¹		
e. Urban/City	6.0 (0.1–11.9)	1,840 (215)
f. Suburban	9.2 (6.6–11.8)	3,329 (471)
g. Town	9.2 (5.4–13.0)	2,307 (346)
h. Rural	6.8 (4.0–9.5)	6,894 (572)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	8.3 (5.8–10.8)	5,849 (474)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	8.2 (5.7–10.7)	6,016 (739)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	4.3 (2.3–6.4)	2,772 (428)

CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Data were missing for 1 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 5.15.

Table I.10—Percentage of SFAs that Received an Exemption to Serve—and Served—Flavored, Low-Fat (1%) Milk in SY 2017–18

	Percentage of SFAs
Among SFAs Requesting an Exemption, Received an Exemption to Serve Flavored, Low-Fat (1%) Milk¹	
Yes	84.1
No	10.4
Don't know	5.5
Weighted <i>n</i>	1,086
Unweighted <i>n</i>	122
Among SFAs that Requested and Received an Exemption, Served Flavored, Low-Fat (1%) Milk	
Yes	79.9
No	20.1
Weighted <i>n</i>	909
Unweighted <i>n</i>	103

¹ Table estimates are among the 8 percent of SFAs that requested an exemption to serve flavored, low-fat (1%) milk in SY 2017–18.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.16 and 5.17.

Table I.11—Practices Planned by SFAs to Meet Sodium Targets During SY 2017–18

Planned Practices	Percentage of SFAs
Purchase lower sodium foods	65.6
Alter recipes (such as limiting salt use, using spices in place of salt)	56.6
Order low-sodium USDA Foods more often	39.9
Replace canned vegetables with fresh or frozen	38.1
Discontinue or change some menu options	36.8
Participate in USDA DoD Fresh Program	30.5
Increase scratch cooking	26.7
Participate in Farm to School programs	12.2
Decrease portion sizes	4.3
Other	2.3
Not applicable (current sodium levels already meet or exceed Target 1) ¹	20.0
None	1.1
Don't know	3.2
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,651
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,641

¹ It is possible that respondents misinterpreted “exceed Target 1” in this response option as exceeding specified sodium levels. The intent was instead to assess whether SFAs’ sodium levels were lower than the maximum levels allowed in the Target 1 requirements.

Notes: Data were missing for 1 percent of SFAs. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 5.14.

Use of USDA Foods

Table I.12—SFA Role in Selecting USDA Foods

Role	Percentage of SFAs
Selected from full list of State-ordered USDA Foods	52.4
Completed a survey	51.6
Participated on an advisory committee	7.5
No role—co-op or consortium ordered for SFA	6.5
Other*	9.9
No role—State ordered for SFA	3.3
SFA did not use USDA Foods	5.0
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,596
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,635

* “Other” responses include other entities that order USDA Foods: FSMC, vendor, caterer, and local school district.

Note: Multiple responses were allowed. The exact survey response options for the first three table entries were “I was able to select from the full list of State-ordered USDA Foods”; “I filled out a survey to indicate the USDA Foods my SFA was interested in for SY 2017–18”; and “I participated in an advisory committee to indicate the USDA Foods my SFA was interested in for SY 2017–18.” Data were missing for 1 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 5.2.

Table I.13—USDA Foods Ordered by SFAs

Type of USDA Foods	Percentage of SFAs
Fruits	96.5
Vegetables	95.1
Cheese	93.2
Beef	90.4
Poultry	89.3
Pork	70.9
Grains	62.6
Legumes	59.7
Eggs	48.4
Oil	35.5
Fish	32.4
Nuts and seeds	20.4
Yogurt	19.2
Weighted <i>n</i>	11,072
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,301

Notes: Table estimates are among the 76 percent of SFAs that reported they played a role ordering USDA Foods. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.2 and 5.3.

Table I.14—Types of USDA Foods Used to Meet the NSLP Meal Pattern Requirements, Among SFAs that Used USDA Foods

Type of USDA Foods	Percentage of SFAs
Fruits	93.7
Vegetables	92.5
Meat/Meat Alternates	90.3
Grains	60.8
Whole Grain-Rich Foods	64.5
Do not use USDA Foods or USDA DoD Fresh to help meet requirements	4.0
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,721
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,556

Notes: Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 5.5.

Table I.15—Forms of USDA Foods Used to Meet the NSLP Meal Pattern Requirements, Fruits

Form of Fruits	Percentage of SFAs
Canned	92.1
Frozen	87.2
Fresh	64.7
Juice	54.1
Dried	49.0
Other	1.8
Weighted <i>n</i>	12,845
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,476

Notes: Estimates are among the 94 percent of SFAs that used fruit USDA Foods to help meet NSLP meal pattern requirements. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.5 and 5.5a.

Table I.16—Forms of USDA Foods Used to Meet the NSLP Meal Pattern Requirements, Vegetables

Form of Vegetables	Percentage of SFAs
Frozen	88.8
Canned	83.8
Fresh	59.4
Dried	12.2
Other	1.2
Weighted <i>n</i>	12,674
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,461

Notes: Estimates are among the 93 percent of SFAs that used vegetable USDA Foods to help meet NSLP meal pattern requirements. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.5 and 5.5b.

Table I.17—Forms of USDA Foods Used to Meet the NSLP Meal Pattern Requirements, Meat/Meat Alternates

Form of Meat/Meat Alternates	Percentage of SFAs
Frozen	97.6
Canned	23.2
Fresh	19.9
Dried	3.8
Other	2.6
Weighted <i>n</i>	12,332
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,426

Notes: Estimates are among the 90 percent of SFAs that used meat/meat alternate USDA Foods to help meet NSLP meal pattern requirements. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.5 and 5.5c.

Table I.18—Forms of USDA Foods Used to Meet the NSLP Meal Pattern Requirements, Whole Grain-Rich Foods

Form of Whole Grain-Rich Foods	Percentage of SFAs
Whole grain pasta	78.4
Brown rice	63.2
Whole wheat tortillas	61.8
Whole grain pancakes	52.6
Whole wheat flour	46.4
Oats	30.4
Other	4.2
Weighted <i>n</i>	8,646
Unweighted <i>n</i>	960

Notes: Estimates are among the 65 percent of SFAs that used whole grain-rich foods USDA Foods to help meet NSLP meal pattern requirements. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 5.5 and 5.5d.

Food and Beverage Marketing Policy

Table I.19—Entities Primarily Responsible for Setting SFA Food and Beverage Marketing Policy

Food and Beverage Marketing Policy	Percentage of SFAs
SFA Has a Food and Beverage Marketing Policy	
Yes	34.1
No ¹	65.9
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,427
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,615
Among SFAs with a Policy, Entity that Primarily Sets Policy	
District Board of Education	43.2
SFA	28.4
Non-SFA committee, advisory board, or group	7.9
Individual schools or school administrations	5.0
Other departments in school district(s)	2.7
Other*	12.8
Weighted <i>n</i>	4,868
Unweighted <i>n</i>	613

¹ Estimate includes SFAs that responded “No” to Question 9.1 and/or “Not applicable, our SFA does not have a food and beverage marketing policy” to Question 9.2.

* Examples of other responses included wellness committees, school health advisories, and non-entities such as wellness policies.

Note: Data were missing for 2 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 9.1 and 9.2.

Table I.20—SFA Restrictions on Food and Beverage Marketing

Level of Restriction	Percentage of SFAs
Marketing of all food and beverages prohibited in all schools in SFA	40.6
Marketing restricted to foods and beverages permitted by Smart Snacks in School or more stringent standards	43.3
Marketing restricted at other less stringent standards, or marketing unrestricted ¹	16.1
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,708
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,544

¹ It was not possible to distinguish SFAs that restricted marketing at less stringent standards from SFAs that did not restrict marketing.

Note: Data were missing for 7 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 9.1 and 9.3–9.5.

School Nutrition Standards: Miscellaneous

Table I.21—Use of USDA Certification of Compliance Worksheets for Performance-Based Reimbursement

	Percentage of SFAs
Used USDA Certification of Compliance Worksheets for breakfast or lunch	86.4
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,540
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,628

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 5.1.

APPENDIX J. BUY AMERICAN PROVISION

List of Tables by Research Question

Research Question	Corresponding Table
Buy American Compliance and Guidance	
What Buy American guidance and policies do States have in place for SFAs?	Tables J.1–J.3
What are SFAs doing regarding compliance with the Buy American provision?	Table J.4
How do SFAs ensure compliance with the Buy American provision?	Tables J.5–J.7
What are the most significant challenges in complying with the Buy American provision?	Tables J.8 and J.9
Exceptions to the Buy American Provision	
Do States require SFAs to document the use of Buy American exceptions?	Tables J.10 and J.11
What is the required documentation when States allow SFAs to use Buy American exceptions?	Table J.10
What are common reasons for the use of Buy American exceptions?	Table J.12
What products do SFAs most commonly purchase under Buy American exceptions?	Table J.13
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Local Food Purchasing and Local Preference	
Who is using local preference?	Tables J.17–J.19
To what extent are SFAs buying local foods?	Table J.19
What challenges are States experiencing in local food purchasing?	Table J.20
What challenges are SFAs experiencing in local food purchasing?	Table J.21
What types of training are offered for local food purchasing?	Table J.22
What types of training are received for local food purchasing?	Table J.23
Is there dedicated staff time for local food purchasing at the SFA?	Table J.24
What States provide schools with additional reimbursements for local foods?	Table J.25

Buy American Compliance and Guidance

Table J.30—Components of State Buy American Policies

State has Its Own Buy American Policy	Number of States
No	50
Yes	2
Components Described in State Buy American Policy	
Buy American provision requirement to procure domestic commodities or products	1
Definition of a domestic commodity or product	1
Criteria for SFAs to receive exceptions to the Buy American provision	1
Requirement for SFAs to document the Buy American provision in all procurement solicitations and/or contracts	0
Requirement for SFAs to document the Buy American provision in all procurement procedures and/or document prototypes	0
Encouragement for SFAs to procure domestic foods from local, regional, small, women-owned, and/or minority-owned business	0
Encouragement for SFAs to order USDA Foods	0
State procurement reviews to ensure SFA compliance with the Buy American provision	0
Other	0

Notes: Data were provided by 52 State CN directors. One State reported receiving a Buy American waiver and is not included in this table. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.1 and 3.2.

Table J.31—State Provides Guidance to SFAs on Buy American Policy Components

Policy Component for Which Guidance is Provided	Number of States
Requirement for SFAs to procure domestic commodities or products	50
Requirement for SFAs to document the Buy American provision in all procurement solicitations and/or contracts	50
Encouragement for SFAs to order USDA Foods	49
State procurement reviews to ensure SFA compliance with the Buy American provision	49
Requirement for SFAs to document the Buy American provision in all procurement procedures and/or document prototypes	49
Definition of a domestic commodity or product	48
Encouragement for SFAs to procure domestic foods from local, regional, small, women-owned, and/or minority-owned business	48
Criteria for SFAs to receive exceptions to the Buy American provision	45

Notes: Data were provided by 51 State CN directors. Data were missing from one State, and one State reported receiving a Buy American waiver and is not included in this table. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 3.3.

Table J.32—Methods Used by States to Share Guidance with SFAs on the State’s Buy American Policy

Method	Number of States
In-person presentations	46
Phone or email communications	45
Online documents and resources	43
Webinar presentations	32
Handbooks/guides	25
Other	3
State does not provide guidance to SFAs on Buy American policy	3

Notes: Data were provided by 52 State CN directors. One State reported receiving a Buy American waiver and is not included in this table. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 3.4.

Table J.4—SFA Inclusion of the Buy American Provision in Specific Documents

SFA Includes the Requirement for Domestic Commodities and Products in...	Percentage of SFAs
Product specifications	47.6
Contract language	42.6
Procurement plan	42.3
Solicitations	38.3
Procurement procedure documents	34.8
Purchase orders	22.4
Other procurement documents*	4.0
None of the above	12.7
Weighted <i>n</i>	14,563
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,630

* “Other” responses included an entity besides the SFA (e.g., consortium, cooperative, school district, food service management company [FSMC], State) managing food contracts and being responsible for monitoring compliance with the Buy American provision.

Notes: Four SFAs reported receiving a Buy American waiver and are not included in this table. Multiple responses were allowed. Data were missing for 1 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.1.

Table J.5—Methods Used to Ensure Vendor Compliance with the Buy American Provision

Method Used	Percentage of SFAs
Review product and delivery invoices or receipts	63.7
Verify the domestic commodity or product received	57.2
Monitor contract language	39.7
Monitor solicitation language	31.2
Conduct reviews of storage facilities	24.3
Other*	5.6
None of the above	11.2
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,823
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,553

* “Other” responses included other entities besides the SFA (e.g., consortium, cooperative, school district, FSMC, State) responsible for monitoring contractor compliance.

Notes: Four SFAs reported receiving a Buy American waiver and are not included in this table. Multiple responses were allowed. Data were missing for 6 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.2.

Table J.6—Documents Reviewed to Verify Compliance with the Buy American Provision

To Verify Compliance, SFA Reviews...	Percentage of SFAs
Product labels/codes	80.0
Vendor’s written attestation	44.7
Invoice descriptions	40.2
Vendor’s verbal assurances	22.4
Solicitation language	20.8
Other*	4.7
None of the above	8.1
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,965
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,568

* “Other” responses include an entity besides the SFA (e.g., consortium, cooperative, school district, FSMC, State) managing food contracts and being responsible for monitoring compliance with the Buy American provision.

Notes: Four SFAs reported receiving a Buy American waiver and are not included in this table. Multiple responses were allowed. Data were missing for 5 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.4.

Table J.7—Information Requested from Food Suppliers About U.S. Content in End Products

SFA Asks Food Suppliers for the Percentage of U.S. Content in End Products	Percentage of SFAs
Yes	35.5
No	64.5
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,877
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,558

Notes: Four SFAs reported receiving a Buy American waiver and are not included in this table. Data were missing for 6 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.3.

Table J.8—Product-Specific Challenges Complying with the Buy American Provision

Challenge	Percentage of SFAs			Number of SFAs Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
	Challenge Experienced with No Products	Challenge Experienced with Some Products	Challenge Experienced with All Products	
Domestic commodity or product supply is limited or unreliable	27.0	70.2	2.8	12,920 (1,476)
Domestic commodities or products are more costly than their non-domestic food counterparts	27.3	66.6	6.1	12,874 (1,471)
Domestic commodities or products do not meet preferred quality standards	45.2	52.6	2.2	12,769 (1,458)
Using domestic commodities or products increases administrative burden	50.3	41.6	8.1	12,650 (1,449)

Notes: Four SFAs reported receiving a Buy American waiver and are not included in this table. Data were missing for 12–14 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.5.

Table J.9—General Challenges Complying with the Buy American Provision

Challenge	Percentage of SFAs			Number of SFAs Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
	Disagree ¹	Neutral	Agree ²	
SFA does not clearly understand what language to include in solicitations and contracts	46.4	41.2	12.4	13,069 (1,483)
SFA does not have enough staff to monitor compliance	41.5	35.2	23.3	13,045 (1,484)
SFA staff are not adequately trained to monitor compliance	44.5	38.8	16.7	12,900 (1,471)
Food suppliers are not responsive to requests about the percentage of U.S. content in end products	38.0	47.5	14.5	12,900 (1,466)
Other*	13.6	70.6	15.8	2,108 (207)

¹ SFA disagreed with the statement provided, indicating the challenge was not experienced.

² SFA agreed with the statement provided, indicating the challenge was experienced.

* “Other” challenges included an entity besides the SFA (e.g., consortium, cooperative, school district, FSMC, State) managing food contracts and being responsible for monitoring compliance with the Buy American provision, and that many popular foods cannot be procured domestically.

Notes: Four SFAs reported receiving a Buy American waiver and are not included in this table. Data were missing for 11–12 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.5.

Exceptions to the Buy American Provision

Table J.10—Documenting Exceptions to the Buy American Provision

	Number of States
State provides SFAs with guidance for documenting exceptions ¹	45
State provides SFAs with a reporting template for documenting exceptions ²	16

¹ Data were provided by 52 State CN directors.

² Data were provided by 48 State CN directors.

Notes: One State reported receiving a Buy American waiver and is not included in this table. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 3.9.

Table J.11—Documenting Use of Exceptions to the Buy American Provision

	Number of States
State Requires SFAs to Document Use of Exceptions	
Yes	44
No	8
Information States Require SFAs to Document¹	
Domestic commodity or product is in inadequate supply	42
Domestic commodity or product is substantially higher in cost than the non-domestic commodity or product counterpart	42
Alternative domestic commodity or product options were researched and considered	38
Domestic commodity or product is low-quality	37
Domestic commodity or product availability or pricing was verified using a third-party verification	28
Other	2

¹Multiple responses were allowed.

Notes: Data were provided by 52 State CN directors. One State reported receiving a Buy American waiver and is not included in this table. Data were missing for 1–3 State CN directors per response option.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 3.7 and 3.8.

Table J.12—Use of Exceptions to the Buy American Provision

	Percentage of SFAs
SFA Used an Exception in SY 2017-2018	
Yes	25.7
No	74.3
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,559
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,537
Reasons for Using an Exception Among SFAs that Used an Exception¹	
Supply issue ²	88.1
Quality issue ³	21.3
Cost issue ⁴	42.9
Weighted <i>n</i>	3,406
Unweighted <i>n</i>	457

¹ Multiple responses were allowed.

² Supply issue refers to the domestic commodity or product not being produced or processed in sufficient quantities.

³ Quality issue refers to the domestic commodity or product not being of satisfactory quality.

⁴ Cost issue refers to the cost of the domestic commodity or product being significantly higher than the non-domestic commodity or product.

Notes: Four SFAs reported receiving a Buy American waiver and are not included in this table. Data were missing for 2–8 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 10.7 and 10.8.

Table J.13—Products Purchased Under Exceptions to the Buy American Provision, Among SFAs Using Exceptions in SY 2017-2018

Food Component Group	Percentage of SFAs	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Fruits ¹	94.0	3,429 (457)
Vegetables ¹	52.5	3,090 (413)
Grains	8.1	2,903 (389)
Meat/meat alternates	7.7	2,893 (387)
Fluid milk	1.9	2,862 (384)
Other*	18.0	805 (105)

¹ Fruits and vegetables may be fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or in juice form.

* “Other” products included yeast, oils, and spices.

Notes: Responses are among the 26 percent of all SFAs that used exceptions to the Buy American provision in SY 2017-2018. Four SFAs reported receiving a Buy American waiver and are not included in this table. Data were missing for 0.9 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey, SY 2017–18, questions 10.7 and 10.10.

Table J.14—Purchase Tracking Among SFAs that Used Exceptions to the Buy American Provision in SY 2017-2018

	Percentage of SFAs
SFA Tracks Individual Food Component Group Purchases that Are Exceptions	
Yes	18.5
No	81.5
Weighted <i>n</i>	3,625
Unweighted <i>n</i>	474
Metric Used for Tracking, Among SFAs that Track Excepted Purchases	
Dollars	71.1
Pounds	16.1
Other unit*	12.8
Weighted <i>n</i>	664
Unweighted <i>n</i>	86

* “Other” responses included tracking exceptions by case or serving, or using other metrics depending on the product.

Notes: Four SFAs reported receiving a Buy American waiver and are not included in this table. Data presented are among SFAs that used exceptions to the Buy American provision in SY 2017–18. Data were missing for 5–22 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey, SY 2017–18, questions 10.10, 10.12, and 10.13.

Table J.1533—Percentages of Non-Domestic Commodities or Products Purchased Among SFAs that Used Exceptions in SY 2017-2018

Food Component Group	< 25% of Purchases	25–50% of Purchases	51–75% of Purchases	> 75% of Purchases	Number of SFAs Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Fruits ¹	85.9	8.7	1.5	3.9	929 (112)
Vegetables ¹	84.0	11.5	0.8	3.7	541 (59)
Grains	67.2	24.1	0	8.7	230 (19)
Meat/meat alternates	59.9	29.6	0	10.5	190 (13)
Fluid milk	38.0	43.1	0	18.9	106 (8)
Other purchases	84.6	5.1	0	10.3	78 (12)

¹ Fruits and vegetables may be fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or in juice form.

Notes: Data presented are among SFAs that used exceptions to the Buy American provision for the food component groups listed above and that tracked individual food component group purchases in SY 2017–18. Data were missing for 0–11 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey, SY 2017–18, questions 10.10, 10.12, and 10.14.

Table J.16—Percentage of Total Food Purchase Expenditures that Were Exceptions to the Buy American Provision in SY 2017–2018, by SFA Characteristic

SFA Characteristic	Percentage of Total Food Purchase Expenditures (in Dollars) that Were Exceptions (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs	8.5 (6.3–10.6)	3,359 (442)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	9.5 (5.7–13.3)	1,234 (85)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	8.1 (5.7–10.5)	1,412 (220)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	7.5 (4.2–10.8)	568 (108)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	7.5 (0–16.4)	144 (29)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	7.9 (4.2–11.5)	431 (61)
f. Suburban	6.5 (3.7–9.4)	815 (132)
g. Town	12.7 (6.3–19.2)	655 (101)
h. Rural	8.0 (5.2–10.9)	1,390 (139)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	10.9 (6.4–15.3)	1,212 (123)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	5.9 (4.5–7.3)	1,564 (217)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	10.4 (5.5–15.3)	583 (102)

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Data presented are among SFAs that used exceptions to the Buy American provision in SY 2017–18. Data were missing for 12 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 10.7, 10.9, 10.10, and 10.11.

Local Food Purchasing and Local Preference

Table J.17—Geographic Preference Option Applied to Local Food Purchases

State has SFAs that Apply Geographic Preference	Number of States
Yes	38
No	6
Don't know	8

Notes: Data were provided by 52 State CN directors. “Local” may be defined as within the same city/county, within a mileage radius, within a day’s drive, within the State, or within the region. SFAs may purchase local foods from local farmers, ranchers, dairies, fishermen, food processors, and distributors. Geographic preference may vary across products (i.e., 50 miles for apples, 100 miles for potatoes, and within the county for dairy).

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 3.10.

Table J.18—Geographic Preference Option Applied to Local Food Purchases, by SFA Characteristic

SFA Characteristic	Percentage of SFAs (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs	38.5 (36.1–41.0)	13,762 (1,548)
SFA Size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	29.4 ^{b,c,d} (24.1–34.8)	6,932 (451)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	47.0 ^a (42.7–51.3)	4,933 (738)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	47.7 ^a (40.3–55.2)	1,609 (301)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	60.4 ^a (49.5–71.4)	288 (58)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	37.9 (28.7–47.1)	1,681 (204)
f. Suburban	46.6 ^h (40.3–52.9)	3,106 (442)
g. Town	42.2 ^h (37.2–47.1)	2,154 (328)
h. Rural	34.0 ^{f,g} (30.0–38.1)	6,580 (542)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	41.0 (36.4–45.7)	5,450 (448)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	37.3 (34.4–40.2)	5,721 (702)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	35.9 (29.1–42.7)	2,592 (398)

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Data were missing for 7 percent of SFAs. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.15.

Table J.19—SFAs that Purchased Foods from Local Sources in SY 2017–18, by SFA Characteristics

SFA Characteristic	Percentage of SFAs (CI)	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
All SFAs	55.1 (52.2–57.9)	14,136 (1,586)
SFA size		
a. Small (1–999 students)	43.6 ^{b,c,d} (37.9–49.3)	7,154 (466)
b. Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	63.1 ^{a,c} (60.1–66.1)	5,086 (761)
c. Large (5,000–24,999 students)	77.5 ^{a,b} (71.9–83.1)	1,609 (301)
d. Very large (≥ 25,000 students)	71.8 ^a (59.2–84.5)	288 (58)
Urbanicity¹		
e. Urban/City	52.0 (42.6–61.5)	1,709 (207)
f. Suburban	66.7 ^h (61.9–71.6)	3,202 (455)
g. Town	58.1 (51.8–64.5)	2,227 (334)
h. Rural	50.6 ^f (44.6–56.6)	6,742 (555)
Percentage of Students Approved for F/RP Meals		
i. Low (0–29 percent F/RP)	57.2 ^k (52.9–61.5)	5,639 (460)
j. Medium (30–59 percent F/RP)	56.9 ^k (51.4–62.4)	5,851 (718)
k. High (≥ 60 percent F/RP)	46.4 ^{ij} (41.5–51.4)	2,647 (408)

¹ SFAs with missing urbanicity codes were excluded from the analyses.

Notes: Data were missing for 7 percent of SFAs. Subgroup estimates with letter superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (Sidak adjusted *p*-value < 0.05) in pair-wise tests between that subgroup and the subgroup denoted by the superscript letter. Subgroup estimates without superscripts reflect nonsignificant differences.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.15.

Table J.20—Local Food Purchasing Challenges Experienced by SFAs (as Reported by States)

Challenge	Number of States
Transportation and/or delivery barriers	46
Limited food availability	43
High cost of local foods	43
Understanding local food purchasing and contracting	41
Not enough staff time to develop local food purchasing arrangements	39
Limited capacity for local food preparation	35
Inadequate facilities for storing local foods	33
Difficulty incorporating local foods into menu	9
Low student demand for local foods	5
Other	3

Notes: Data were provided by 52 State CN directors. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 3.14.

Table J.21—Local Food Purchasing Challenges Experienced by SFAs (as Reported by SFAs)

Challenge	Percentage of SFAs
Limited/seasonal food availability	67.6
Lack of available local producers	36.6
Barriers related to transportation and delivery	36.4
High cost of local foods	35.9
Not enough staff time to develop the purchasing solicitations	27.3
Difficulty contracting with local producers	25.4
Limited capacity for local food preparation	17.6
Inadequate facilities for storing local foods	17.0
Low student demand for local foods	12.6
Difficulty incorporating local foods into menu	4.5
Other*	3.7
No challenges experienced	15.7
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,423
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,513

* “Other” responses included food safety concerns, lack of certification of local vendors, and concerns about the quality of local products.

Notes: Multiple responses were allowed. Data were missing for 9 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.18.

Table J.22—States’ Provision of Local Food Purchasing Training

Training Provided	Number of States
Procuring local foods	47
Types of local food sources	41
How to find local foods	41
Local food purchasing policy	38
Other topics related to local food purchasing*	7

* “Other” responses mostly included food safety training.

Notes: Data were provided by 52 State CN directors.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 3.13.

Table J.23—Training on Local Food Purchasing Received by SFA Staff

Training Received	Percentage of SFAs	Weighted <i>n</i> (Unweighted <i>n</i>)
Procuring local foods	40.3	13,000 (1,477)
Types of local food sources	39.5	13,090 (1,483)
Assessing the availability of local foods	39.3	13,162 (1,486)
How to find local foods	37.4	12,941 (1,466)
Local food purchasing policy	33.8	12,786 (1,454)
Other topics related to local food purchasing*	10.4	4,533 (467)

* “Other” responses included Farm to School and food safety training.

Notes: Data were missing for 11–13 percent of SFAs.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.17.

Table J.24—SFA Staff Engaged in Local Food Purchasing Activities

SFA has Staff Engaged in Local Food Purchasing Activities	Percentage of SFAs
Yes	35.7
No	64.3
Weighted <i>n</i>	13,675
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,545

Notes: Activities may include local food purchasing policy development, local food purchasing guidance and resource development, local food purchasing training or technical assistance, or monitoring local food purchases.

Source: SFA Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 10.16.

Table J.25—States Providing Reimbursement to SFAs for Local Food Purchasing

State Provides Reimbursement for Local Food Purchasing	Number of States
Yes	7
No	43
Don't know	2

Notes: Data were provided by 52 State CN directors.

Source: State CN Director Survey, SY 2017–18, question 3.11.

APPENDIX K. FARM TO SCHOOL

List of Tables by Research Question

Research Question	Corresponding Table
Farm to School	
How many States are participating in Farm to School activities? What types of Farm to School activities do States engage in?	Table K.1
What training has been offered on Farm to School?	Table K.2
Do States use State administrative expense funds (SAE) to support Farm to School?	Table K.3
Is Farm to School reflected in the State budget, for example, as a budget line item? If yes, what is included for Farm to School in the State budget?	Table K.4
How many State staff are allocated to Farm to School? How many full-time staff work on Farm to School? How many part-time staff work on Farm to School?	Table K.5
What share of schools per State are provided with additional reimbursements for local foods?	Table K.6
What is the reimbursement rate or amount schools receive for local food purchases?	Table K.6

Farm to School

Table K.34—State-Level Farm to School Activities in SY 2017-2018, by FNS Region

Farm to School Activity	Number of States							
	FNS Region							
	Mid-Atlantic	Midwest	Mountain Plains	Northeast	Southeast	Southwest	Western	All States
Conduct marketing or promotion of Farm to School	6	6	6	5	8	6	5	42
Develop State-level task forces, councils, or working groups that research, assess, or implement Farm to School programs and/or provide Farm to School guidance to schools	6	6	7	5	4	5	6	39
Create websites, databases, or directories that share information and promote Farm to School efforts	5	4	5	4	7	7	6	38
Host gatherings or conferences devoted to Farm to School	6	7	6	3	5	4	5	36
Create websites, databases, or directories that list local agriculture producers	3	5	5	6	5	5	6	35
Financially support health, wellness, or other programming that promotes Farm to School activities	6	5	5	3	4	2	8	33
Implement policies that require or encourage SFAs and/or schools to purchase local foods	4	0	3	4	5	4	4	24
Other	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	4
Total number of States	7	7	8	7	8	7	9	53

Notes: All 53 States conducted at least one Farm to School activity in SY 2017–18. This table was updated to align with current FNS Regions as of FY 20, but data collection occurred prior to FNS' regional realignment.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 4.1.

Table K.35—Training Offered to SFAs or Schools on Farm to School Topics

	Number of States
Offered Farm to School Training to SFAs or Schools in SY 2017-2018	50
Farm to School Training Topic Offered¹	
Local food procurement	43
Farm to School planning	42
Engaging partners, including producers and parents, in Farm to School	38
Small and micro purchases	37
Identifying local producers	33
Benefits of local foods	31
Local food promotion and marketing strategies	30
Geographic preference	29
Integration of Farm to School into curriculum	28
Local food meal preparation and serving strategies	26
Integration of Farm to School into wellness policies and practices	24
Other*	7

¹ Multiple responses were allowed.

* “Other” responses included school gardens, farm food safety, and Farm to Summer.

Note: All 53 States responded to questions about Farm to School trainings offered.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.2 and 4.3.

Table K.36—State Funding Sources for Farm to School Activities

Funding Source	Number of States
State administrative expense (SAE) funds	26
Grants	10
State General Funds	5
Donations	2
State administrative funds (SAF)	1
State-level funding	1
State Administrative Fees	1
Reallocation funds	1
Reimbursements for local food purchases	1
Other agencies	1
Local funds	1
Not applicable (no Farm to School funding)	10

Notes: Data in this table are from the 49 States that responded to the question, “Where did the Farm to School funds come from? For example: State administrative expense (SAE) funds, State administrative funds (SAF), grants, reimbursements specifically for local food purchases, etc.?” Categories presented are based on open-ended responses. Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, question 4.8a.

Table K.37—State Agency Budget for Farm to School in SY 2017-2018

	Number of States
State Agency Budget Included Farm to School Funding	13
Dollars of Funding in State Agency Budget, by State ¹	Percentage of Total State Agency Budget, by State ¹
\$4,500,000	1%
\$350,000	2%
\$300,000	5%
\$127,800	2%
\$107,000	3%
\$100,000	1%
\$75,000	1%
\$75,000	5%
\$44,305	8%
\$44,000	2%
\$43,976	2%
\$42,000	2%
\$24,493	2%

¹ Values are self-reported and may reflect only State Agency funding, State Agency CN funding, a combination of both, or something else.

Notes: Table includes data from 13 SAs that reported both SA budget amount for Farm to School activities in SY 2017–18 and the associated percent of total SA budget that these activities represented. Data are not included here from two SAs that reported Farm to School funding but did not provide a dollar amount or percentage and seven SAs that reported the dollar amount but did not note the corresponding (non-zero) percentage of the SA budget that was for Farm to School activities.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.7 and 4.8.

Table K.38—State Staffing for Farm to School

	Number of States
State has Staff for Farm to School Activities	37
Number of New Farm to School Staff Positions Created in SY 2017–18¹	
0	29
1	7
No response	1
Number of Full-Time Staff Dedicated to Farm to School	
1	14
2	3
3	2
4	1
Number of Part-Time Staff Dedicated to Farm to School	
1	15
2	4
3	3
4	1

¹ Includes both part-time and full-time staff.

Note: All 53 States responded to questions about having staff for Farm to School activities.

Source: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.4–4.6.

Table K.39—Additional State Reimbursement to Schools for Local Food Purchases

Schools Received Additional Reimbursements		Number of States
		2
Percentage of Schools that Received Additional Reimbursements	Number of States	Additional Reimbursement Rate
88 percent ¹	1	5 cents per meal
1 percent ²	1	10 cents per meal

¹ State reported 226 schools received additional reimbursements.

² State reported 3,171 schools received additional reimbursements.

Note: All 53 states responded to questions about additional reimbursements for local food purchases.

Sources: State CN Director Survey SY 2017–18, questions 4.9 and 4.10; and 2017–18 FNS SFA Verification Collection Report–742, number of schools by State (variables “State ID” and “Total Schools”). The SFA Verification Collection Report–742 data were used to calculate the percentage of schools within a State that received additional reimbursements to purchase local foods.