

**NFSMI Research Agenda Conference:  
Linking Research to Practice**



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**National Food Service Management Institute  
The University of Mississippi**

**Building the Future Through Child Nutrition**

The National Food Service Management Institute was authorized by Congress in 1989 and established in 1990 at The University of Mississippi in Oxford and is operated in collaboration with The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. The Institute operates under a grant agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the National Food Service Management Institute is to improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

**MISSION**

The mission of the National Food Service Management Institute is to provide information and services that promote the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

**VISION**

The vision of the National Food Service Management Institute is to be the leader in providing education, research, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

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**NFSMI RESEARCH AGENDA CONFERENCE: LINKING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Over 15 years ago, the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) National Advisory Council recommended that the Applied Research Division (ARD) develop a three-year research agenda to focus on the operational issues of concern to child nutrition (CN) programs. Since this recommendation, the ARD has convened three research conferences to identify research needs of the CN program in 1995, 1999, and 2003. The first NFSMI research plan established in 1995 identified three primary areas of applied research needs: financial integrity of CN programs, nutritional integrity of CN programs, and the impact of CN programs on healthy eating behavior and educational performance. In 1999, the conference participants helped to fully define and to expand the research areas identified in the previous conference. The 2003 research conference identified obesity and healthy weight of children, the relationship between financial stability and customer satisfaction, labor and workforce challenges, and nutrition integrity and style of service as the top areas of needed research.

The latest NFSMI, ARD research conference updated the research plan utilizing a facilitated group meeting. The conference was held in August 2012 at the University of Mississippi. Thirty-one participants attended the conference. Participants included state agency directors, district school nutrition directors, university faculty, Child and Adult Care Food Program representatives, a representative from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a representative from the Institute of Medicine (IOM), peer reviewed journal editors, a School Nutrition Association representative, a representative from the Center for Science in the

Public Interest, a representative from the Southern Rural Development, United States Department of Agriculture representatives, and 10 NFSMI staff.

The conference attendees responded to a series of questions related to emerging issues and trends in CN programs, the role of research in addressing the trends, and the appropriate partnerships to facilitate addressing the needs of the CN program. During the facilitated discussion process, many critical issues surfaced. Participants most frequently identified these emerging issues and trends in CN programs: professional development and training for staff (in a variety of topic areas), lack of or limited numbers of qualified staff, and lack of financial support to do what is needed to maintain the programs. When participants were asked to identify the solutions to these emerging issues and trends, the majority of the responses were training; collaboration with other agencies, CN programs, and universities; and access to resources. As for identifying the most important areas of needed research, four responses prevailed: succession planning, program evaluation (related to the impact of training/development, use of technology, qualified staff, and cafeteria environment on program outcomes), operation cost evaluation, and time and motion study. Participants also identified potential partnerships during the discussion, including CN programs partnering with professional organizations, colleges/universities, non-profit groups, and private foundations.

## INTRODUCTION

The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) was established by Congress in 1989 to carry out activities to improve the operations and quality of child nutrition (CN) programs through research, education, and training. The Applied Research Division (ARD) of the NFSMI is responsible for conducting applied research that leads to high quality, nutritious, cost-effective CN program operations.

The idea of developing a three-year research agenda to focus on the operational issues of concern to CN programs was developed by the NFSMI's National Advisory Council. Since the original recommendation, the ARD has convened three research conferences to identify the research needs of CN programs. The first NFSMI research conference in 1995 established three primary areas of applied research needs: financial integrity of CN programs, nutritional integrity of CN programs, and the impact of CN programs on healthy eating behavior and educational performance (Conklin, 1996). In the second conference held in 1999, the conference participants helped to fully define and to expand the research areas identified in the 1995 conference (Carr, 2000). In the third conference held in 2003, the conference participants identified these top areas of need in CN program research: obesity and healthy weight of children; the relationship between financial stability and customer satisfaction, labor and workforce challenges; and nutrition integrity and style of service (Meyer et al., 2003).

Researchers and scholars from a variety of fields have presented the idea that there is an increased need to better link research to practice for improvement of targeted outcomes (Arbaugh et al., 2010). Bransford et al. (2000) stated that there are several ways research influences practice: directly (end-user and researchers collaborate to conduct the research or end-users implement research idea into practice); development of education materials;

pre-service and in-service education; public policy (at the local, state, and national levels); and the public's belief about learning based on popular media outlets or their own experiences. While this information has applications in the education arena and in the classroom, it is also relevant to CN research. The NFSMI strives to strengthen the link between research and practice regarding CN programs through the use of the following techniques:

- Research: collaborating with CN programs and universities/other researchers
- Education: creating education materials that can be used individually or in groups
- Training: working directly with managers, directors, state agencies

The effectiveness of involving CN stakeholders in the process of identifying research needs within the CN programs was established with previous Research Agenda Conferences. Therefore, NFSMI, ARD continued to use a facilitated group format for generating researchable content. The fourth NFSMI Research Agenda Conference convened August 2-3, 2012. The Research Agenda Conference addressed three of the six Strategic Beacons identified by NFSMI to guide the institution:

- Branding for a National Presence: Achieve a national identity as the Expert Center for child nutrition research, resources, and training,
- Authority in Child Nutrition Research: Identify, conduct, and disseminate high-quality research that is responsive to and collaborative with child nutrition stakeholders, and
- Collaborative Partnerships: Develop and maintain collaborative partnerships that support the mission and vision of the NFSMI.

### **Objective**

The objective of the NFSMI Research Agenda Conference was to identify areas or categories for research on operational issues pertaining to CN programs to be used for the development of future NFSMI annual Statement of Work plans.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The Research Agenda Conference consisted of a panel of child nutrition (CN) stakeholders. Attendees represented a variety of backgrounds involved in the CN field: seven school nutrition directors, two Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) professionals, five State Agency directors, two United States Department of Agriculture representatives, three editors of peer-reviewed journals, nine university faculty and researchers, and five allied organizations. A complete list of invited participants is located in Appendix A.

### **Procedures**

A facilitated group discussion design was used in the Research Agenda Conference to identify the emerging operational issues and trends for CN programs. A facilitated group discussion guide was developed by using literature reviews related to emerging issues and trends in food systems management, hospitality management, and school foodservice, as well as research-related information identified in previous NFSMI research. The discussion guide contained 15 main questions and subsequent probe questions, and was divided into three main sections in order to ensure discussions would be focused on one specific area at a time. The three main sections were directors, state agency, and research. Each section of questions contained 4-6 questions (see Appendix B).

A pilot discussion was conducted to ensure that the questions created for the facilitated discussion would measure what they were intended to measure. The pilot discussion was conducted with four individuals from different sectors of the CN field: foodservice directors/managers, CACFP personnel, and university personnel. Pilot discussions allowed researchers to identify needed modifications to the original facilitated discussion guide.

To ensure that the facilitated group discussions reflected a diverse representation of all sectors of the invited CN stakeholders, participants were grouped according to geographical regions and areas of expertise. There were four facilitated groups created, and each group had one facilitator and one recorder/transcriber. Individuals acting as recorders and transcribers were provided with training related to proper note-taking skills and responsibilities. There were three facilitated discussions held with each group of participants. The discussions lasted from 1-1.75 hours each, and were held simultaneously. Responses to the facilitated group discussion questions were recorded on flip-chart sheets and posted. At the end of each session, participants were allowed to review the comments made within the group and recorded any omitted information. Additionally, all participants were allowed to review the comments posted by other groups. During the collective review of facilitated group responses, no additional changes could be made. The information recorded on the flip-chart sheets were transcribed verbatim into 27 pages of typed double-spaced transcript.

The conference was evaluated using two methods – participant evaluation and researcher debriefing. The participant evaluation method utilized an evaluation form which allowed participants to provide feedback on their individual reactions to the Research Agenda Conference. This evaluation included opportunities to respond positively or negatively to the following key issues: a.) achievement of conference objectives; b.) opportunity for participants to be actively involved in the conference group discussions; c.) fulfillment of participant expectation levels of the conference. Participants rated their experience using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In addition, participants were also given the opportunity to provide additional comments.

The second method of evaluation was the researcher debriefing. A modified version of group debriefing described by Justice & Jamieson (1998) was used in the debriefing process. Researchers were asked to participate in an evaluation exercise designed to identify the processes in the planning and executing of the Research Agenda Conference that were effective, and to identify the processes that were not effective. This was a group activity. Flip chart sheets were used in this exercise, and the lead researcher led the group discussion. Researchers were asked to list the things they felt were successful during the planning and execution of the Research Agenda Conference. Secondly, researchers were asked to identify the things which they felt were not successful in the planning and execution of the Research Agenda Conference. In conjunction with identifying the negative outcomes, researchers were also asked to provide a corrective action for any negative feedback.

### **Agenda**

An agenda was designed to provide maximum opportunity for the stakeholders to interact with each other, to offer input into the discussion, and to allow time for researchers to build a rapport with the participants. During the facilitated group discussion time, the group was divided into four work groups. The agenda and work group assignments are in Appendix C.

### **Data Analysis**

#### ***Facilitated Group Discussion***

The purpose of the code process was to allow for the identification of themes to be reported as a result of the facilitated discussion outcomes (Krueger, 1998). The facilitated group discussion was reviewed by the researcher. Discussion data was assessed using multistage thematic coding. Facilitated discussion data was coded in two phases, initial coding and focused coding. The initial coding was used in an effort to identify the initial or first impression phrases

within the open-ended responses provided by the participants. The focused coding allowed the researcher to condense the comments and identify similarities and frequency of reporting in the initial coding. The focused coding allowed the researcher the opportunity to combine similar codes, eliminate codes with limited presence, and group smaller codes into larger code groups.

### ***Evaluation of the Conference***

Statistical procedures were performed using SPSS Version 20 for Windows on the participant evaluation. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize frequencies, means, and standard deviations for all variables in the Research Agenda Conference participant evaluation. The debriefing exercise was recorded as presented by the researcher. No additional manipulation of the data was needed.

### ***Informed Consent***

The researchers followed the informed consent procedures established by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee at the University of Southern Mississippi.

## **RESULTS**

The task force of child nutrition (CN) stakeholders responded to questions related to issues and trends in CN programs, gaps in CN research, areas or categories for research for operational issues in CN programs, and optimal venues to disseminate information to CN professionals. The facilitated group discussion questions were addressed in three categories: from the perspective of CN directors, the perspective of state agency CN personnel, and the perspective of CN researchers. Each group was asked the same set of questions.

### **Directors**

Participants were asked to respond to the following questions: “What are the emerging operational issues and trends that need to be addressed in school nutrition (SN)?” “What are the emerging operational issues and trends that need to be addressed in the Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP)?” The top three themes that emerged from these questions were increased training needs, decreased stakeholders knowledge of the importance of the CN programs, and limited availability of qualified staff (Table 1). Additional themes are also reported in Table 1.

Participants were then asked to respond to the following questions: “What is needed to address these issues for SN directors?” “What is needed to address these issues for CACFP professionals?” These top three themes emerged: access to a variety of training methods; access to a variety of resources (i.e., fact sheets); and best practice guides (Table 1). Additional themes are also reported in Table 1.

The top three responses to the question, “What is the role of research in addressing these operational issues and trends?” were the following: identifying appropriate mechanisms to mentor new directors and to initiate succession planning; identifying the impact of training and

professional development on CN program outcomes; and sharing research outcomes through publications (Table 1). Additional themes are also reported in Table 1.

Participants were asked, “What partnerships can be established to address what we have discussed?” The top three responses were the CN program and professional organizations/associations, the CN program and colleges/universities, and the CN program and allied organizations and foundations (Table 1). Additional themes are also reported in Table 1.

Table 1

*Director and the Child Nutrition Program*

Questions	Top Three Themes	Additional Themes
Emerging issues and trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased training needs</li> <li>• Decreased stakeholders knowledge of the importance of CN program</li> <li>• Limited availability of qualified staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased need for marketing the CN program</li> <li>• Program funding</li> <li>• Programmatic issues (paperwork and organization structure)</li> </ul>
What is needed to address issues/trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to a variety of training methods</li> <li>• Access to a variety of resources (i.e., fact sheets)</li> <li>• Best practice guides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified staff</li> <li>• Marketing for SN program</li> <li>• Financial accountability</li> </ul>
Role of research in addressing issues/trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify appropriate mechanisms to mentor new directors and to initiate succession planning</li> <li>• Identify the impact of training and professional development on CN program outcomes</li> <li>• Share research outcomes through publications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop professional standards</li> <li>• Program evaluations</li> </ul>

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

*Director and the Child Nutrition Program*

Questions	Top Three Themes	Additional Themes
Partnerships to address issues/trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CN program and professional organizations/associations</li> <li>• CN program and colleges/universities</li> <li>• CN program and allied organizations/foundations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CN program and granting agencies</li> <li>• CN program and governmental agencies</li> <li>• CN program and businesses/vendors</li> <li>• CN program and community organizations</li> <li>• CN program and school administration</li> </ul>

**State Agency**

Participants were asked questions related to the role of state agencies in identifying and addressing operational issues and trends in CN programs. The first question asked was similar to the director group question, “What are the emerging operational issues and trends that need to be addressed at the state level?” The top three themes that emerged from this discussion question were training issues and needs, increase need for inter-agency collaboration, and lack of sufficient funding to manage programs (Table 2). Additional themes are also reported in Table 2.

Participants were asked, “What do state agencies need to help school districts and CACFP address operational issues?” The responses were varied, but three themes emerged: training and professional development, collaboration between agencies and other organizations and groups, and appropriate resources (Table 2). Additional themes are also reported in Table 2.

The top three responses to the question, “What do SN programs and CACFP need from state agencies for continuous program improvement?” were the following: various training

mediums, technical assistance, and accessibility of state agency personnel (Table 2). Additional themes are also reported in Table 2.

Researchers asked conference participants, “What is the role of research in addressing these issues?” The participants responded with various solutions. The top three themes that emerged from the participants’ responses were to provide best practice models, to evaluate professional standards, and to evaluate financial management of CN programs (Table 2).

Additional themes are also reported in Table 2.

The final question was, “What partnerships can be established to address what we have discussed?” The top three responses were for CN programs to establish partnerships with non-profit organizations, with private foundations and organizations, and with colleges and universities (Table 2). Additional themes are also reported in Table 2.

Table 2

*State Agency and the Child Nutrition Program*

Questions	Top Three Themes	Additional Themes
Emerging issues and trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training issues and needs</li> <li>• Increase need for inter-agency collaboration</li> <li>• Lack of sufficient funding to manage programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified staff</li> <li>• Appropriate resources</li> <li>• Marketing programs to promote CN program</li> <li>• College and university buy-in to train students</li> <li>• Perceptions of state agency</li> <li>• Alternative feeding programs</li> <li>• Staff turnover</li> <li>• Professional standards</li> <li>• Issues related to federal regulations interpretation and implementation</li> </ul>

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

*State Agency and the Child Nutrition Program*

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Questions	Top Three Themes	Additional Themes
What is needed to address issues/trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and professional development</li> <li>• Collaboration between agencies and other organizations and groups</li> <li>• Appropriate resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring programs</li> <li>• Qualified staff</li> <li>• National standards for CN programs</li> </ul>
School nutrition programs and CACFP needs from State Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various training mediums</li> <li>• Technical assistance</li> <li>• Accessibility of state agency personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with other entities</li> <li>• Best practice guides</li> </ul>
Role of research in addressing issues/trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practice models</li> <li>• Evaluation professional standards</li> <li>• Evaluation of financial management of CN program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify effective strategies for nutrition education in CN program</li> <li>• Evaluate program effectiveness</li> <li>• Evaluate the impact of new meal patterns on program operations</li> <li>• Evaluate best training methods</li> </ul>
Partnerships to address issues and trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CN program and non-profit institutions and agencies</li> <li>• CN program and private foundations and organizations</li> <li>• CN program and colleges and universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State to state</li> <li>• CN program and professional organizations</li> <li>• CACFP and Headstart</li> <li>• CN program and other governmental agencies</li> </ul>

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## **Research**

Participants were asked questions related to the role of research in CN programs. The first question asked was, “How can state or local CN programs use information/research to improve practices?” These top three themes emerged: research could be used to inform laypersons and policy makers in the area of marketing CN programs; research could be used to educate laypersons on the benefits of the CN program, and research could be used to inform decision making processes at the local, state and federal levels. Additional themes that emerged were to foster relationships between CN programs, universities, and colleges (Table 3).

Participants were also asked, “What kind of research should be conducted at the state level?” The majority of the responses lead to the top theme of operational cost for labor, utilities, and implementation of new meal patterns. Additional themes emerged in this discussion, including program evaluation and an evaluation of participation rates (Table 3). Other themes are reported in Table 3.

When participants were asked, “What kind of research should be conducted within the SN program and CACFP?” the greatest responses lead to two primary themes: a time and motion study and an evaluation of cafeteria environment on consumption (Table 3). Additional identified themes are also reported in Table 3.

The discussion on the kinds of research needed to assess the effectiveness of CN programs resulted in three major themes: identify the components of an effective program, identify the impact of technology on program outcomes, and identify the impact of knowledge and training on CN program business operations (Table 3). Additional themes identified are included in Table 3.

Participants were asked, “What is needed to encourage research in SN programs, state agencies, and CACFP?” The groups’ discussions identified partnerships with colleges/universities, other school districts, and professional organizations as the overshadowing need. Additionally, the groups identified professional development and availability of resources, financial and human, as important in encouraging research in CN programs and state agencies (Table 3). Other themes also resulted from this discussion, and are available in Table 3.

The final question for the research-based group was, “How should SN programs, CACFP, state agencies, and researchers share their research results with other CN professionals?” The respondents provide significant feedback. However, a few stood out as top responses/themes: Web site and social media, media brief sent using e-mail blasts, and professional publications and presentations (Table 3).

Table 3

*Research and the Child Nutrition Program*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Top Themes</b>	<b>Additional Themes</b>
Use information and research to improve practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market CN programs</li> <li>• Inform laypersons</li> <li>• Inform decision making processes at the local, state and federal levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster relationships with universities</li> <li>• Evaluate dietary intake</li> <li>• Financial management</li> </ul>
Research needed at state level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational cost (for labor, utilities, and implementation of new meal pattern)</li> <li>• Program evaluation</li> <li>• Evaluation of participation rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of administrative data (demographics, participation, free and reduced meals, costs)</li> <li>• After school program evaluation</li> <li>• Best practices</li> <li>• State agency operations</li> </ul>

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

*Research and the Child Nutrition Program*

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Questions	Top Themes	Additional Themes
Research needed within SN program and CACFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time and motion study</li> <li>• Evaluation of cafeteria environment on consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral economics</li> <li>• Use of student interns</li> <li>• Plate waste studies</li> </ul>
Research needed to assess the effectiveness of the CN program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the components of an effective program</li> <li>• Impact of technology on program outcomes</li> <li>• Impact of knowledge and training on CN program business operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight management</li> <li>• Community readiness</li> </ul>
Encourage research in SN program, state agencies, and CACFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified partnerships (with colleges and universities, other school districts, and professional organizations)</li> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Availability of resources (financial and human)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical assistance</li> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Research promotion</li> <li>• Toolkits</li> </ul>
SN program, CACFP, state agencies, and researchers share research results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web site and social media</li> <li>• Media brief sent using email blasts</li> <li>• Professional publications and presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual training</li> <li>• Professional organizations</li> </ul>

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## **Evaluation**

The participants assessed the conference using an evaluation form developed by NFSMI researchers (Appendix D). The form was created to capture attendee status, and the attendees' reaction to the conference as it related to specific areas, such as meeting the stated objectives, and the attendees' overall perception of the conference. Overall, participants strongly agreed or agreed that the conference objectives were met and that the discussions of research needed in the CN programs were valuable. A complete analysis of the participant evaluation is in Appendix D.

The NFSMI researchers also evaluated conference planning and execution from the perspectives of what was and was not successful in the planning processes and execution of the Research Agenda Conference. The practices the researchers considered to be effective and successful were as follows: coordination between both NFSMI, ARD staff and NFSMI's education and training staff to conduct the conference; the careful consideration of who should be invited to participate; the intentional planning process which allowed for open discussion, questions, and revisiting issues as needed; the meeting design with one full day and one half day of activities to factor time for networking; the presentations by stakeholders completed prior to each facilitated discussion; the NFSMI, ARD staff as the facilitator and not outside consultants; and the use of a pilot group to pilot the facilitated discussion questions.

The researchers were asked to identify areas that they believed needed some improvement and to identify possible steps to correct the problem. The researchers listed eleven areas where improvement was needed: pilot, location, date and time of event, planning process, facilitated discussion, name plaques, ARD staff participation, recorder training, posting notes, handling pertinent documents, and length of planning. The areas of concern and the suggested improvements are in Table 4.

Table 4

*Areas of Improvement for the Research Agenda Conference*

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<b>What Didn't Work</b>	<b>Suggested Correction(s)</b>
<b>Pilot</b>	
Started to feel redundant	Define purpose of the pilot
Timing issues	Pilot test two to four weeks in advance
Communication between researchers on the process	
<b>Location</b>	
Transportation to airport	Identify other locations (i.e., the Gulf Coast)
Additional travel time	
Space limited for breakout sessions	
<b>Date and Time</b>	
Days of the week	Days of the week suggestions include
Time of the week	Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday
Start time	Conduct at the beginning of the summer
<b>Planning Process</b>	
Conclusion of the conference	Learn from the process used for the latest conference planning and execution
Expectation of the participants to receive post-conference information	Redistribute sessions between the two conference days
	Add presentations that are more research and policy based
<b>Facilitated Discussion</b>	
Started to feel redundant during research area discussion	Expand question schedule to include information from the pilot test
<b>Name Plaques</b>	
Lack of visible name plaques in front of participants	Create name tents
	Consider using pins or clip name badges
<b>ARD Staff Participation</b>	
Did not have participation of all ARD staff in conference day activities	Include all staff in the conference day activities

(Table 4 continues)

(Table 4 continued)

*Areas of Improvement for the Research Agenda Conference*

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<b>What Didn't Work</b>	<b>Suggested Correction(s)</b>
<p><b>Recorder Training</b>                      Program knowledge                      Minimum requirements for trainers</p>	<p>Extend training                      Add tape recorders                      Consider alternating sessions and not allowing all facilitated discussions to take place at the same time.</p>
<p><b>Posting Notes</b></p>	<p>Add time into the program for review</p>
<p><b>Handling of pertinent documents</b></p>	<p>Ensure ARD takes the lead on collecting, storing, and transporting all pertinent documents</p>
<p><b>Length in planning</b>                      Length of planning lasted longer than required</p>	<p>Decide on the purpose first                      Learn from latest conference                      Plan one year in advance                      Identify and confirm participants earlier</p>

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While some of the components in the “What Didn’t Work” category are listed as what worked during the planning and implementing of the conference, the researchers stated specifically what they believed should be corrected, and listed ways to correct the issues.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) Research Agenda Conference was convened to identify areas or categories for needed research in child nutrition (CN) programs. This Research Agenda Conference addressed three of the six Strategic Beacons identified by the NFSMI: a.) “Branding for a National Presence” was accomplished through the involvement of CN stakeholders from the seven United States Department of Agriculture regions and the involvement of national peer reviewed journal editors; b.) “Authority in Child Nutrition Research” was achieved by conducting a national conference specifically to address CN research needs; and c.) “Collaborative Partnerships” was accomplished by fostering and creating opportunities for teamwork among conference participants, and by encouraging conference participants to think more intently about the collaborations needed to improve CN programs.

The conference attendees responded to a series of questions related to emerging issues and trends in CN programs, the role of research in addressing the trends, and the appropriate partnerships to facilitate addressing the needs of CN programs. During the facilitated discussion process, many critical issues surfaced. Overall, the most frequently noted responses to the questions regarding emerging issues and trends in CN programs were related to professional development and training for staff (in a variety of topic areas), lack of or limited numbers of qualified staff, and lack of financial support to do what is needed to maintain the programs. When participants were asked what is needed to address the emerging issues and trends that were identified, the majority indicated the need for training; collaboration with other agencies, CN programs, and universities; and access to resources. As for the most important areas of research attendees believed needed to be addressed, four responses prevailed: succession planning; program evaluation (related to the impact of training/development, use of technology, qualified

staff, and cafeteria environment on program outcomes); operational cost evaluation; and time and motion study. The potential partnerships identified included CN programs partnering with professional organizations, colleges/universities, non-profit groups, and private foundations.

The results for the current Research Agenda Conference are similar to the findings of previous conferences. The 1996 conference participants identified 10 major researchable areas of concern in CN programs. Of the 10 categories, three were similar to the ones identified in the current conference: financial management, human resources, and collaboration (Carr, 2000). Among the top four ranked researchable areas for CN research identified in the third NFSMI Research Conference, financial stability and customer satisfaction as well as labor and workforce challenges were identified (Meyer et al, 2003). This is some indication of the cyclic nature of CN operations and the need for continuous monitoring of financial management and workforce challenges. Additionally, it helps confirm the need to continue bringing together CN stakeholders to identify what is trending in the CN field and ensure that research is being produced to address the issues CN programs currently face and will face in the future.

The results of this conference should serve as a working document for all directors, Child and Adult Food Care Program personnel, state agency personnel, and researchers in the CN field. The Applied Research staff will strive to use these recommendations to inform the research agenda and strategic plans for the next several years.

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Appendix A

Research Agenda Conference Participation List

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NFSMI Research Agenda Conference: Linking Research to Practice

NAME	ORGANIZATION NAME	ADDRESS/PHONE
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NFSMI Research Agenda Conference: Linking Research to Practice

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NFSMI Research Agenda Conference: Linking Research to Practice

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NFSMI Research Agenda Conference: Linking Research to Practice

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NFSMI Research Agenda Conference: Linking Research to Practice

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Appendix B

Facilitated Discussion Guide

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## INTRODUCTION

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### Welcome to the University of Mississippi and NFSMI,

- Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and will be moderating our discussions today.
- Our recorder today is \_\_\_\_\_.

**The purpose of discussions today has been discussed in the previous presentation.**

**The scope of today's discussions is located on the table and in your packets.**

### **Over the next 1½ days, please know:**

- Your participation is voluntary.
- All comments are appreciated, and we value your experience and opinions.
- All comments will be transcribed, but will not be linked to you in the final report.
- This study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee at the University of Southern Mississippi.
- My role as the facilitator is to remain neutral throughout today's discussions.
- We will remain within the time constraints for this session.
- We encourage you to draw from your professional experiences and those who serve in similar roles across the country.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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### DIRECTORS

#### **Our first session focuses on child nutrition programs in schools and the CACFP....**

1. From your perspective, what are the emerging operational issues and trends that need to be addressed in school nutrition?
  - 1b. From your perspective, what are the emerging operational issues and trends that need to be addressed in the CACFP?
2. What is needed to address these issues for school nutrition directors?
  - 2b. What is needed to address these issues for CACFP professionals?
3. What is the role of research in addressing these operational issues and trends? (Probes: School and CACFP)
4. What partnerships can be established to address what we have discussed (Probes: Schools, CACFP, local, state, and universities)

“Thank you for contributing to the discussion on school nutrition and the CACFP. Please take a few moments to review the transcription of our discussion. If you find that there are issues, topics, or concerns that need to be mentioned but were not or if you see errors, please write those comments on the flip sheets labeled *Additional Comments*.

*We must complete this before we attend the next session. We have a 15 minute break immediately following this session. Please return to the auditorium by 10:15 am.”*

## **STATE AGENCY**

***Our second session focuses on child nutrition programs at the state level...***

1. From your perspective, what are the emerging operational issues and trends that need to be addressed at state level?
2. What do state agencies need to help school districts and CACFP to address operational issues? (Probes: Operational Issues within the state agency and outreach issues)
3. What do school nutrition programs and CACFP need from State Agencies for continuous program improvement?
4. From what we’ve discussed, what is the role of research in addressing these issues?
5. What partnerships can be established to address what we have discussed?

(Probes: Community – YMCA, local hospital, local foundations; Local; state agency, CN professional associations, insurance company, Dept. of Health; and universities)

“Thank you for contributing to the discussion on state agencies and CN programs. Please take a few moments to review the transcription of our discussion. If you find that there are issues, topics, or concerns that need to be mentioned but were not or if you see errors, please write those comments on the flip sheets labeled *Additional Comments*.

*We must complete this before we attend the next session. We have a 1 ½ hour lunch break immediately following this session. Please return to the auditorium by 1:30 pm.”*

## **RESEARCH/EDITOR**

***In the previous discussions, we have heard the reports and discussed current operational issues and trends that need to be addressed. Now, let's dig a little deeper into the role of research.***

1. How can state or local CN programs use information/research to improve practices?
2. What kind of research should be conducted at the state level?
3. What kind of research should be conducted within the school nutrition program and CACFP?
4. What research is needed to assess the effectiveness of CN programs? (Probes: CACFP/School nutrition Programs; Are there different research methodologies needed?)
5. What is needed to encourage research in SN programs, state agencies, and CACFP?
6. How should SN programs, CACFP, state agencies, and researchers share their research results with other CN professionals?

*“Thank you for contributing to the discussion on the role of research in CN programs. Please take a few moments to review the transcription of our discussion. If you find that there are issues, topics, or concerns that need to be mentioned but were not, or if you see errors, please write those comments on the flip sheets labeled *Additional Comments*.”*

*We must complete this before we attend the next session. There is no break following this discussion. Please return immediately to the auditorium for wrap-up.”*

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Appendix C

Research Agenda Conference Program Agenda and  
Research Agenda Conference Group Assignment

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**National Food Service Management Institute**

**The University of Mississippi**

**Research Agenda Conference: Linking Research to Practice**

**August 2-3, 2012**

**August 2, 2012**

7:45 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.	Coffee and tea service at NFSMI-Foyer Registration	
8:00 a.m. – 8:05 a.m.	Welcome and Opening Remarks	<i>Dr. Katie Wilson</i>
8:05 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.	USDA Update	<i>Mydina Thabet</i>
8:15 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Research Agenda Conference Overview	<i>Mary Frances Nettles</i>
8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	<b>Session 1 (Presentation, Discussion, and Debriefing)</b> <i>Child Nutrition Programs in Schools and the CACFP</i>	<i>Cindy Brooks Yolanda Keys</i>
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Break	
10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	<b>Session 2 (Presentation, Discussion, and Debriefing)</b> <i>Child Nutrition Programs at the State Level</i>	<i>June Barrett</i>
12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	Lunch/Building Tours (Optional) <b>Multipurpose Room</b>	
1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	<b>Session 3 (Presentation, Discussion, and Debriefing)</b> <i>Research Issues and Trends in Child Nutrition</i>	<i>Jeannie Sneed Marilyn Briggs Bo Beaulieu</i>
4:00 p.m.	Wrap-Up	<i>Mary Frances Nettles</i>

**August 3, 2012**

7:45 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.	Coffee and tea service at NFSMI-Foyer	
8:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.	<b>Bridging the Gaps</b> <i>Debriefing Session</i>	<i>Kristi Lofton</i>
9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	<b>Next Steps</b>	<i>Keith Rushing</i>
10:15 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.	<b>Evaluation, Review, &amp; Dismissal</b>	<i>Marjuyua Rowser</i>

**Research Agenda Conference: Linking Research to Practice**  
**Group Assignment**

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**Group A**

C. ANDERSON-LEWIS	S. CURWOOD
R. BOUSHELE	J. EVANS
M. BRIGGS	C. LONGLEY
L. CUNNINGHAM-SABO	K. MILLETT
L. OUDEKERK	

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**Group B**

J. BARRETT	Y. KEYS
C. BOYD	J. SNEED
S. CAMP	R. TAYLOR
S. COPPESS	C. WILKS-MOSLEY
M. THABET	

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**Group C**

B. BEAULIEU	T. NAMIAN
L. BOUIE	M. HAMM
D. CRAFT	M. MASSEY-STOKES
D. DUNCAN-GOLDSMITH	S. PITT BARNES

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**Group D**

K. BISHOP	K. MCGRAIL
C. BROOKS	L. PHILLIPS
K. CULLEN	B. RICE
R. JACKSON	S. TRIST

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Appendix D

Research Agenda Conference Participant Evaluation

and

Evaluation Analysis

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National Food Service Management Institute  
The University of Mississippi

## Research Agenda Conference 2012

**Instructions:**

*Completely fill in the circle of your answer. Use a #2 pencil.  
Please select only one response for each statement. Do not fold or crease this sheet.*

**Attendee Status:**

<input type="radio"/> School Nutrition Director <input type="radio"/> Child Care Professional <input type="radio"/> State Agency Representative	<input type="radio"/> University Faculty/Researcher <input type="radio"/> Allied Organization <input type="radio"/> Journal Editorial Staff
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Reaction to this Research Agenda Conference	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please read the following statements related to the training session. Rate your level of agreement by using the scale 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree).					
1. The Research Agenda Conference (RAC) objectives were clearly presented.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The RAC discussions supported the objectives.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The RAC objective, "Identify critical issues related to child nutrition (CN) programs," was achieved.	5	4	3	2	1
4. The RAC objective, "Identify gaps in CN research," was achieved.	5	4	3	2	1
5. The RAC objective, "Identify areas or categories for research on operational issues pertaining to CN programs," was achieved.	5	4	3	2	1
6. The RAC objective, "Identify optimal venues to disseminate information to CN professionals," was achieved.	5	4	3	2	1
7. The RAC provided me with an opportunity to actively participate.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I would recommend this conference to other CN Professionals.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I see my involvement in the RAC as something that is valuable and worth my time.	5	4	3	2	1
10. Overall, the RAC met or exceeded my expectations.	5	4	3	2	1

**Please Share Any Additional Comments.**

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**National Food Service Management Institute - The University of Mississippi**

**EVALUATION ANALYSIS**

**RESEARCH AGENDA CONFERENCE: LINKING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE**

**National Food Service Management Institute, Applied Research Division**

**August 2-3, 2012**

**N= 31**

<b>Attendee Status</b>	<b>Response Frequency/Percent</b>
School Nutrition Director	7/22.6
Child Care Professional	1/3.2
State Agency Representative	6/19.4
University Faculty/Researcher	10/32.3
Allied Organization	4/12.9
Journal Editorial Staff	2/6.5
Total Response	30/96.8
Missing	1/3.2

**Reaction to this Research Agenda Conference**

Please read the following statements related to the training session. Rate your level of agreement by using the scale 5(Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree).

1. The Research Agenda Conference (RAC) objectives were clearly presented.
 

Strongly Agree	93.5% (n=29)
Agree	6.5% (n=2)
Neutral	0% (n=0)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)
  
2. The RAC discussions supported the objectives.
 

Strongly Agree	7.4% (n=24)
Agree	22.6% (n=7)
Neutral	0% (n=0)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)
  
3. The RAC objective, “Identify critical issues related to child nutrition (CN) programs,” was achieved.
 

Strongly Agree	80.6% (n=25)
Agree	19.4% (n=6)
Neutral	0% (n=0)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)

4. The RAC objective, “Identify gaps in CN research,” was achieved.
 

Strongly Agree	61.3% (n=19)
Agree	29.0% (n=9)
Neutral	6.5% (n=2)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)
  
5. The RAC objective, “Identify areas or categories for research on operation issues pertaining to CN programs,” was achieved.
 

Strongly Agree	71.0% (n=22)
Agree	25.8% (n=8)
Neutral	3.2% (n=1)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)
  
6. The RAC objective, “Identify optimal venues to disseminate information to CN professionals,” was achieved.
 

Strongly Agree	29.0% (n=9)
Agree	61.3% (n=19)
Neutral	9.7% (n=3)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)
  
7. The RAC provided me with an opportunity to actively participate.
 

Strongly Agree	96.8% (n=30)
Agree	3.2% (n=1)
Neutral	0% (n=0)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)
  
8. I would recommend this conference to other CN professionals.
 

Strongly Agree	93.5% (n=29)
Agree	6.5% (n=2)
Neutral	0% (n=0)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)
  
9. I see my involvement in the RAC as something that is valuable and worth my time.
 

Strongly Agree	93.5% (n=29)
Agree	6.5% (n=2)
Neutral	0% (n=0)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)

10. Overall, the RAC met or exceeded my expectations.

Strongly Agree	83.9% (n=26)
Agree	16.1% (n=5)
Neutral	0% (n=0)
Disagree	0% (n=0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (n=0)

**Please Share Any Additional Comments.**

- It would be better to have it on a Wednesday – Thursday and not during late summer.
- I was uncertain as to the contribution I could make to the workshop, but the NFSMI team and participants made me feel welcomed and appreciated. I enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the valuable work and plans of the institute.
- I did enjoy the group dynamics. We were able to build strategies based on information shared. We need more research on outcomes in CACFP but too many different organizations are involved so I am not clear on how to look at the information.
- This conference was an amazing experience! Y'all are so friendly and hospitable, and I really appreciate the opportunity to participate in such an important conference. I also value the opportunities to collaborate with NFSMI and others. Thank you!
- Very important and relevant meeting.
- Absolutely wonderful opportunity. Wide diversity of participants, yet reading through posted comments universal themes obvious on all group statements. Some rotation from original group assignments may have been an interesting option.
- Thank you for the opportunity to participate! I learned a lot and had great networking opportunities as a bonus!
- This is the best meeting I have attended in a long time. Very well organized and executed. Very important topics. Should have significant positive outcomes.
- Initially I was not sure my input would be valued, but once the session began it was clear the conference was designed and implemented to bring out the experience of each participant. Also, thank you for the nutrition networking opportunities.
- Conference well organized and provided me with valuable information to take back to begin implementation.
- The conference was very well organized. It was very good to meet some new people from related areas such as child care.
- Well organized, great presenters, and the overall outcomes were achieved.
- Great conference. You all did a wonderful job bringing together a diverse group of people to discuss the topics. Also, great conference format. I enjoyed the breakout sessions.
- Gave me great ideas for research! Good networking with other professionals.
- Excellent! I called and thanked my boss for letting me come.
- Thank you so much for including me in the wonderful experience.
- Thanks for inviting me to this conference.
- Thank you for the opportunity. It was motivating and inspirational. Most worthwhile conference I've been to in a long time.
- Excellent exercises utilized to meet desired objectives.

- Thank you for organizing this conference. It is really important! The small group work was great. I would suggest more varied questions. By the end, it felt duplicative. Our group went its own way anyway, so it wasn't a huge issue. I always advocate for more CACFP involvement. My group was heavily weighted to school nutrition directors/school nutrition staff.
- I thought it would have been helpful to have local level providers or center officials present to get their input. These individuals typically have a different perspective than state agency staff, FNS, and the public as a whole.
- It would be appreciated to provide an update on how the information gathered during the meeting is going to be used. Thank you for the opportunity to participate.
- My attendee status is not represented.
- Overall, very well done conference. I think "we" could expand this discussion on ways to disseminate information to CN professionals.
- Maybe providing more background in advance would be helpful. The area of research is not my expertise, so I could have benefited from some pre-conference preparation to respond better.
- Please add name of organization on badges. This would assist in networking and facilitating communications. Presenters were well prepared and knowledgeable.
- Some before ready material or current and past research activities would have been helpful.
- Please consider sending out questions to discuss during focus groups ahead of time. I would have been willing to do some reading and work to prepare more for the conference.
- The break out group discussions were valuable and informative. I have a concern regarding the discussion questions that at times seemed limiting. A second concern is the apparent lack of detail recorded on the flip charts and summarized on Friday AM. There were rich, valuable details in the discussions that may not have been recorded and saved. Thank you!
- Would be great to do this annually. Thank you for your time in planning and putting together an excellent chance to meet and discuss critical CN program issues.



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