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BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. How many SFAs are there in your state?

There are 900 SFAs; 44 are RCCIs.

2. How do you define an SFA? Is it a school district or something else?

An SFA is officially defined as the place where the school has a contract for food service. It is usually a school district. Private schools and RCCIs are usually their own SFAs.

3. When did your state begin SMI reviews?


4. Why did you start then?
Wisconsin was able to get an early start on the SMI reviews because it had one school in the NSMP pilot (Viroqua School District). Therefore, the staff at the state agency had already had advanced training in the program. However, the reviews were a struggle at the beginning.

5. How many SMI reviews were completed in

6. How do you define a completed review?
The analysis is considered complete when a consultant has visited the school, all data have been collected and analyzed, a report has been delivered to the school, the school has a plan to correct any problems, and a closure letter has been sent.

7. When do you expect to complete the first round of SMI reviews?

8. Do you think your state will need to make any changes in the future to process or staffing in order to complete the SMI reviews in five years?
Funding is a very large constraint, so there is no guarantee that the agency will be allowed additional positions even though they are necessary. There is one reviewer currently working half-time who is planning to retire at the end of the year. The agency hopes that the state will then fill this position with a full-time person. They continue to strive for ways of completing SMI/CRE reviews in the most timely manner given the shortage of consultants.

9. Are SMI reviews done in conjunction with CRE reviews?
Yes, they are done in conjunction with the CRE.

10. If you do SMI reviews in conjunction with the CRE, did you have to add staff to do this? What kind of training was involved?
The agency hired Julie Cox in 1997 to do the in-house analysis on the SMI reviews. When the SMI first started, one consultant was doing
the SMI reviews and Cox was performing the analyses. Now the consultants divide up the SFAs and do both CRE and SMI reviews and provide other technical assistance as needed to the SFA being reviewed. Past training provided for SMIs included Nutrikids regular and advanced training, and SMI Nutrition Review and Technical Assistance Training by USDA/FNS for State Agency staff. For state agency new hires, the training now includes working with Julie Cox on Nutrikids to learn nutrient analysis and going with consultants on SMI reviews. Consultants may team up in the future, with one of them doing the SMI and the other doing the CRE in the same SFA. However, this will not necessarily be done for all reviews.

11. Do your reviewers have access to e-mail?

Yes.

12. Do your reviewers have access to the Internet?

Yes. Consultants have access to e-mail and the Internet only when they are in the state offices. Their laptops have docking stations that they can use when they are in the office. They are on the road a majority of the time, so they are usually only able to access e-mail and the Internet once a week.

13. Is there any other software (e.g., MS Excel) that reviewers use for completing reviews? If so, what? Is the same software used at the state level and at the SFA level?

Yes. All consultants have Nutrikids, Word, and Excel on their laptops. Some may use Access if they have been trained on it, but not many do. The state agency has an Oracle database, and staff use Infomaker to access it. Nutrikids does have a networking capability, but the consultants do not currently use it.

14. How many people are involved in doing SMI reviews and analysis?

Nine people (eight full-time consultants, one half-time consultant).

15. Where are they located? For whom do they work?

All personnel working on the SMI are based at the state agency office in Madison, and they travel to the SFAs in the rest of the state. The Director of DPI-FNS is their supervisor.
16. What are each of their roles in the SMI reviews?

The consultants are responsible for seeing all parts of the analysis through. This includes data collection, data clarification, nutrient analysis, writing the report, negotiating an improvement plan, approving an SFA’s plan to correct the problems, and sending out a closure letter. Julie Cox, a Madison-based consultant with no field responsibilities, does about half of the technical nutrient analyses as support for the field team. There is also a coordinator (Carol) who assists the reviewers with scheduling and compiles the CRE reviews.

17. Does the state agency have access to the nutrient analysis information?

Yes.

18. Do you feel that the SMI reviews are necessary to bring school meals into compliance with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Recommended Daily Allowances?

Yes and no. The review represents only one week every five years for each SFA. Therefore, it is only a snapshot of what the food service in the SFA is like. Because it is only a snapshot in time, it is not completely representative of the SFA. It is possible that the review was done during a particularly good week for the SFA or that they changed their behavior because they were being monitored—so they seemed better than they actually were. On the other hand, it is also possible that the review came during a particularly bad week and did not show the true picture of food service in that SFA.

Nevertheless, staff personnel in Wisconsin feel that the reviews give something in black and white to look at for each SFA. Analyses sometimes show surprises. For instance, one SFA was serving milk-shakes at every lunch and the reviewer thought the fat content would be very high. In reality, the SFA was doing quite well with fat. The reviews can reassure an SFA that it is doing well or allow it an opportunity to improve if it has problems.

Some state and regional staff personnel are a little apprehensive of data being sent to the FNS without knowing the purpose of this data collection. For example, will the data be used to fine schools eventually if they are not in compliance? How can data from different
states be grouped together and analyzed when different procedures are being followed.

19. Do you think it would be difficult for the reviewers in this state to provide information to the FNS directly?

Yes. If the software would make it an option to create the report, it would not be difficult for the reviewers to send results directly to FNS. However, if that does not happen, it would be better if Wisconsin could just send the Excel spreadsheet on which it compiles the analysis information.

**PROCESS IN THE STATE**

1. Who collects the raw information for nutrient analyses on food offered in any given SFA?

   The consultants.

2. With what organization is this person employed?

   The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Food and Nutrition Services.

3. In what format is the information collected? Does this format change over the course of the review? For example, if the initial information is collected on hard copy, is it ever converted to an electronic version?

   Everything (labels, menus, recipes) is collected on hard copy by the consultant visiting the SFA. Sometimes, the SFA has a review binder ready for the consultant. Other times, the SFA has envelopes of information that the consultant has to sort. Everything that the consultant collects is kept on hard copy at the state office for two years after the close of the review.

4. Who performs the nutrient analysis of this information?

   The consultants in the field performed about 80 analyses in the 1998–1999 school year. Julie Cox performed the other 100 analyses.

5. Are there any steps between the initial collection of information and the nutrient analysis? If so, what are they and who performs them?
The consultants may need to go back to the SFA for clarification if certain pieces of information are missing (labels, recipes, etc.). This can be done by phone or fax. The consultant who visited the SFA usually does it. Julie Cox may also do this.

6. Is the nutrient analysis ever revised after it is initially performed? If so, when and by whom? Where is the revision information recorded?

The only time analyses are revised is if an SFA has done its own analysis, or a prereview analysis is done and there is reason to believe there was a mistake in the information used in the analysis. Analyses may also be revised if they show a problem based on the menus used, but the SFA has since made a change in its menus that would correct the problem. In this case, the first analysis is recorded, but the second one is kept in the SFA’s file.

7. How often are nutrient analyses usually revised?

They are occasionally revised.

8. Are data elements ever added or deleted from the information during this process?

No. Clarification of the information may be obtained by the consultant if the agency has questions, but items are not usually added or deleted. If a consultant quits or retires, his or her name would be replaced with the name of the consultant who takes over. The average daily number of meals for the meal plan reviewed is not currently collected.

9. Is the information aggregated in some way other than at the state level? For example, at a district or regional level? If so, at what level?

The information is not aggregated at any level.

10. Where are SFA-level records kept and in what format?

Hard copies of the backup information (menus, labels, etc.) are kept in a file for each SFA at the state agency. An electronic copy of each nutrient analysis is kept in NutriKids on the computer of the consultant who performed it. In addition, hard copies of the analyses are kept in the SFA’s file (a separate file from the backup information).
The information from each analysis is also entered into an Excel spreadsheet that Julie Cox maintains.

11. When is the information sent to the state and by whom?

The reviewers are all based at the state agency, so all analyses are kept there. Hard copies are filed there, and the information is entered into the Excel spreadsheet.

12. How is the information sent to the state? Electronically? Hard copy? If electronically, please describe the protocols used. For example, is the information recorded on a diskette? Sent by e-mail? Other?

Everything is sent to the state on hard copy.

13. Where is the information kept and in what format? If applicable, please give a name and telephone number for the person who would have this information at the state level.

Nutrikids analyses are kept on individual consultants’ computers and on hard copy at the state agency. The Excel spreadsheet is maintained by Julie Cox.

14. Does the state do an independent nutrient analysis for SMI reviews, or does the state review existing analyses, or both? In which cases does the state do independent reviews? In which cases does the state review nutrient analyses performed elsewhere? (Keep in mind that it is possible for the state to do both if it reviews nutrient analyses done by an SFA using a NuMenus or Assisted NuMenus system but does the actual nutrient analyses for SFAs using food-based systems.)

If an SFA is using NuMenus or Assisted NuMenus, then the consultant will check the analysis done by the SFA. The consultant does not rerun the analysis unless it is unclear what the SFA did to arrive at the given results. However, the SFAs using the NuMenus systems are still learning how to use Nutrikids and run analyses, so there are often mistakes. State staff personnel run classes in nutrient analysis during the summer for SFAs that need to perform their own analyses. Nutrient analyses for SFAs using food-based menu systems are done by one of the consultants in the field or by Julie Cox at the state agency.
15. At what point would it be best to have the nutrient analysis information sent to the FNS? From the state? From the reviewers themselves? Why?

Currently, it would be easiest for Wisconsin if the FNS would accept the Excel spreadsheet containing the nutrient analysis information for all SFAs reviewed in that year. However, if it is possible to add a function to the software that would allow reviewers to send the information directly to the FNS, that would be preferable.

16. Which of these steps, if any, would need to change in order to meet the FNS's goals for the selected data elements being sent in electronic format?

The only change would be to add the data items that are currently not in the Excel spreadsheet.

17. It is possible that, in the future, the FNS may be able to negotiate with the companies that have created the nutrient analysis software to add a function where you would be able to create the report for the FNS right from the software. If that were to happen, what changes would you need to make to your current procedure?

Probably none. However, there might be some problems with sending the reviews directly from the software if they were done by the SFA. The consultants need to review them first.

18. Which of the required data elements are currently missing from the software package you are using for your nutrient analyses?

The software only has qualitative and quantitative elements that must be calculated, standards for the quantitative elements, dates for the review week, and age and grade range. However, the dates for the review week are not always accurate. Nutrikids only allows a user to enter 26 menus for a given week. The first week of school is very popular for collecting menus, so Julie Cox often has more than 26 for that week. She then changes the dates for some of them and does the calculations but adds a note to indicate what the date actually was.

19. If the software companies do not agree to add this function, how will you incorporate the additional elements into an electronic report for the FNS?
The state will add them to the spreadsheet. However, the spreadsheet option *necessitates* rekeying all information, so it would be preferable to have the option on the software.

20. Do you think that there are any data elements that should be added to or deleted from the list to send to the FNS? If so, which items and why?

The state staff would like the USDA to add an element to capture the county the SFA is in as well as space for an additional grouping code. In Wisconsin, this grouping code field would be used to indicate the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) that the SFA is in. Other states may find this useful as well (Texas has ESAs, and New York has Boards of Cooperative Educational Services). This way, the state could do individual analyses by county or other grouping. It would also be useful to indicate whether the SFA is public or private, who did the review, who did the analysis, and the date the results were sent to the SFA. They also think that the date of on-site visit, date of analysis, date results were sent to the SFA, date that school responded, and date of the SMI closure would be useful.

21. Do you have any opinion on sending the information to the FNS electronically? Will this create any problems for your state?

It should not be a problem.

22. How often do you think the states should have to report this information to the FNS? The FNS is required to prepare an annual strategic plan. Therefore, it is leaning toward annual collection of this information. Would this cause problems for your state?

Annually would be preferable. It would also be preferable if the data were required in January of the following year or later. The analyses are often not finished when school is out in June. Usually the analysis takes an additional six months to complete. If there were an option in the software, then real-time reporting, as the analyses were completed, would be fine.

23. Can you think of any alternatives for any of the processes we have discussed so far?
Each of the options discussed would be acceptable to the state staff: sending the information directly from the software, sending it in the Excel spreadsheet, or sending it over the Web. However, the last two options would require rekeying the information. The Web site idea would be useful to the staff only if the FNS could send the information back to the state so that it would not have to be rekeyed.

24. The FNS would like us to solicit comments from the state about this process. Do you have anything that you would like us to pass on to them?

If the state has to provide the FNS with data in some format other than the Excel spreadsheet, the staff would like to know if there would be some way that the FNS could send the information back to them. Otherwise, the consultants would have to key the data in twice.

DATA ELEMENTS

The Wisconsin staff suggested adding:

- Public or private school
- Who performed the review
- Who performed the analysis
- Date that results were sent to the SFA
- County
- Other grouping (CESA)
- Number of schools in the SFA.

The staff also had a question about SFAs for which they are unable to complete nutrient analyses. They wanted to know if the FNS would want the nutrient analysis information left blank, or whether the FNS would not want any report on those SFAs. This does not happen very often, but it does happen occasionally.