Competency-Based Performance Appraisals for School Nutrition Managers and Assistants/Technicians
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. The Institute operates under a grant agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

PURPOSE
The purpose of NFSMI is to improve the operation of Child Nutrition Programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination. The Administrative Offices and Divisions of Information Services and Education and Training are located in Oxford. The Division of Applied Research is located at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

MISSION
The mission of the NFSMI is to provide information and services that promote the continuous improvement of Child Nutrition Programs.

VISION
The vision of the NFSMI is to be the leader in providing education, research, and resources to promote excellence in Child Nutrition Programs.

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COMPETENCY-BASED PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS
FOR SCHOOL NUTRITION MANAGERS AND ASSISTANTS/TECHNICANS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Food Service Management Institute, Applied Research Division (NFSMI, ARD) conducted structured telephone interviews with expert panels of school nutrition (SN) professionals to explore components needed in performance appraisal forms and guide for evaluating managers and assistants/technicians. The expert panel members indicated that an effective performance appraisal form should have the following qualities: criteria clearly defining expected performance; a rating scale appropriately reflecting criteria; clear instructions; a user-friendly format; space for comments; and a plan for improvement. For the guide to be useful and comprehensible to SN practitioners at all levels of responsibility, the expert panels specified that it should include general and specific guidance customized to SN professionals written in clear and specific language familiar to potential users.

Drafts were developed using expert panel results, a review of pertinent research literature, and samples of existing forms submitted by SN professionals. The appraisal forms were developed with specific criteria denoting performance expectations for each functional area. The performance criteria for each functional area were based on resources developed by NFSMI, ARD, namely the Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for Effective School Nutrition Managers and the Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for Effective School Nutrition Assistants/Technicians. Numerical rating was anchored on a five-point scale (1 = below standard, 2 = needs improvement, 3 = meets standard, 4 = area of strength, and 5 = exceeds standard). The accompanying guide discussed the importance of a standardized and periodic performance
appraisal, the appraisal process, challenges to effective performance evaluation, and techniques for improving results of a performance appraisal.

The expert panels evaluated the drafts using a directed review instrument in the spring of 2008. After revisions were made, the forms and guide were sent to a second review panel of SN professionals and state agency personnel for further evaluation. The researchers analyzed comments and recommendations received from the review panel and completed final revisions to the performance appraisal forms and guide.

Evaluating performance is essential for employee growth and program improvement. Using the appropriate performance appraisal process and forms will facilitate effective assessment that contributes to achieving organizational goals. These appraisal forms were designed to be used as independent documents, but are also useful as supplements to school district-mandated evaluations. The forms and resource are available in a downloadable format on the NFSMI Web site.