



INSTITUTE OF
child nutrition
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**Sodium
Reduction
VILT Series**

Staff Training and Engagement for Sodium Reduction Success

Instructor's Manual

Sodium Reduction VILT Series: Staff Training and Engagement for Sodium Reduction Success

Instructor's Manual

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Key Areas:

1000 Nutrition

2000 Operations

USDA Professional Standards Codes:

1300 – General Nutrition

1100 – Meal Planning

2400 – Purchasing and Procurement

2100 – Food Production

INSTITUTE OF CHILD NUTRITION

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

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PURPOSE

Improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

VISION

Lead the nation in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

MISSION

Provide relevant research-based information and services that advance the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

Disclaimer

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Instructor's Note: The purpose of the background information section is to help you become familiar with the context of the training. It is not a part of the training details.

Introduction

In January 2012, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published the final rule, *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs* (77 FR 4088), that updated the meal patterns and nutrition standards for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to reflect the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. One provision of the updated nutrition standards required the gradual reduction in the sodium content of school meals offered in the NSLP and SBP by meeting progressively lower-sodium targets.

On February 7, 2022, USDA FNS announced *Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium* (87 FR 6984) to support the continued provision of nutritious school meals as schools respond to and recover from the pandemic. The final rule modified the proposed sodium standards by establishing Sodium Target 1 as the sodium limit for school lunch and breakfast in SY 2022–2023 and implementing a Sodium Interim Target 1A effective for school lunch beginning in SY 2023–2024. In 2024, USDA FNS announced the Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which maintains the current sodium limits—Target 1A for lunch and Target 1 for breakfast—until June 30, 2027 and the associated reductions in lunch and breakfast starting on July 1, 2027.

USDA FNS has conducted studies investigating the barriers and challenges School Food Authorities (SFAs) face when implementing sodium nutrition standards. In 2019, USDA FNS conducted the *Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals* study to examine the market availability of foods that meet the current and future sodium targets for school meal programs and to identify best practices in schools that are successfully meeting sodium targets. These training modules explore some strategies identified as useful in meeting sodium targets.

The Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) developed four virtual instructor-led trainings sessions to reach school nutrition directors, dietitians, and menu planners nationwide. The training will focus on sodium reduction through menu planning and analysis, procurement, staff training, and maintaining student satisfaction. The intended audience includes directors, dietitians, and menu planners operating heat-and-serve or hybrid (heat-and-serve/speed-scratch/scratch) models focused on reducing sodium in their menus.

Sodium Reduction VILT Series sessions will consist of instruction on the subject, subject matter expert or peer presentation, facilitator-led breakout discussion, and hands-on application. The lead facilitator will introduce the handouts in the chat and BOX folder, the training objectives, a high-level overview of the training content, SMART goals, and the presenters. Following instruction and subject matter expert or peer presentation, the participants will form breakout discussion groups led by a group facilitator. After the training, participants will formulate action plans, including SMART goals, incorporating the gained knowledge into their nutrition program.

Staff Training and Engagement for Sodium Reduction Success is one of the four virtual trainings. This training focuses on staff training and engagement for successful sodium reduction in school nutrition programs. The training covers conducting a training needs assessment for program staff, assessing labor skills of kitchen staff and determining trainings to improve basic culinary skills, identifying the knowledge and skills needed by school nutrition staff to successfully plan, prepare, serve, and promote new lower-sodium school recipes and menus, and identifying existing training and sodium reduction resources available to school nutrition professionals. By the end of the training, participants will have the tools and knowledge needed to develop action plans for incorporating sodium reduction strategies into their school nutrition programs.

Prompts are as follows:

SAY: What the instructor is to say to participants. This is the content that teaches the learning objectives.

ASK: This prompt is used when the instructor should ask the participants a question.

FEEDBACK: This prompt is used to ensure certain elements are covered in discussions.

DO: This prompt is used to explain what the instructor or participants are to do. It may be used to lead into activities, do demonstrations, or show videos.

SHOW SLIDE: This prompt is used for showing slides. Each slide must have its own unique title. Slides should not be content-heavy or contain content not covered in the Instructor's Manual.

PRE-/POST-ASSESSMENTS: This manual includes a Pre-/Post-Assessment that will be administered at the beginning and the end of the training.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE: The Instructor's Note prompt provides additional information or helpful hints. This information should not be shared with the participants unless prompted. Instructions should be included in the "DO" segment.

FUNCTIONAL AREA AND COMPETENCIES

Functional Area 3: Food Production and Operation Management

Competency 3.1: Develops a management system to ensure high standards for quality food production.

Knowledge Statement: Knows principles of food science and fundamentals of flavor enhancement related to quantity food production, holding, serving, and appealing food presentation.

Functional Area 7: Menu and Nutrition Management

Competency 7.1: Develops guidelines for planning menus that comply with nutrition objectives and support operational goals of the school nutrition program.

Knowledge Statement: Knows menu planning principles.

Functional Area 8: Procurement and Inventory Management

Competency 8.1: Develops procurement guidelines that comply with established regulations and support operational goals of the school nutrition program.

Knowledge Statement: Knows federal, state, and local procurement regulations, policies, and procedures governing all school nutrition program purchases.

Source: *Institute of Child Nutrition. (2009). Competencies, knowledge, and skills for district-level school nutrition professionals in the 21st century. University, MS: Author.*

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Nutrition 1000

Menu Planning – 1100

Employee will be able to effectively and efficiently plan and prepare standardized recipes, cycle menus, and meals, including the use of USDA Foods, to meet all Federal school nutrition program requirements, including the proper meal components.

1150 – Analyze menus for school meal pattern requirements.

General Nutrition – 1300

Employee will be able to understand the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, USDA's food guidance system concepts and general nutrition principles.

1320 – Understand general nutrition concepts that relate to school meals, such as whole grains, sodium, etc.

Operations 2000

Food Production – 2100

Employee will be able to effectively utilize food preparation principles, production records, kitchen equipment, and food crediting to prepare foods from standardized recipes, including those for special diets.

2150 – Understand CN Labeling, product formulation statements and/or appropriate crediting information for school meal pattern requirements.

Purchasing and Procurement – 2400

Employee will be able to effectively and efficiently implement purchasing procedures and practices in order to appropriately and best utilize supplies and USDA Foods to meet menu requirements and comply with all Federal, State, and local regulations.

2430 – Purchase food, supplies, and equipment through vendors, meeting school district specifications in compliance with Federal, State, and local procurement regulations and availability of USDA Foods.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this training, participants will be able to accomplish the following objectives:

- Discuss the importance of staff training and continuous learning.
- Explain the process for conducting a training needs assessment for program staff.
- Identify the knowledge and skills needed by school nutrition staff to successfully plan, prepare, serve, and promote new lower-sodium school recipes and menus.
- Identify the current skillset of individual program staff.
- Assess labor skills of kitchen staff and determine trainings needed to improve basic culinary skills of staff.
- Name and locate existing training resources and sodium reduction resources available to school nutrition professionals.
- Recall the benefits and strategies for engaging staff in the recipe and menu development process.
- Develop an action plan to develop and implement training to address knowledge and skill gaps.

GROUND RULES

ICN has developed Ground Rules to help the class run smoothly and allows all participants to benefit from the course instruction and information. (These Ground Rules can be found on the ICN website – [Ground Rules for Training Mini-Posters.](#))

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Instructions: The following tasks are necessary for presenting this lesson. Assign each task to a specific person and determine the date that each task must be completed. Keep track of the progress by checking off tasks as they are completed.

Task	Person Responsible	Completion Date	✓
Reserve equipment and gather supplies as needed for use on the day of class (6 weeks prior). Instructor’s Manual Roster of participants attending for instructor List of equipment and supplies needed Computer Microphone Webcam Pens, pencils, note paper Participant’s Workbook	Instructor		
Agenda, roster of presenters/participants, and handouts			
Pre-/Post-Assessments (available at www.theicn.org)			
Other handouts (documents from outside sources needed for VILT)			

TRAINING-AT-A-GLANCE

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC
20 minutes	Introduction
40 minutes	Lesson 1: Staff Training and Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Learning Theory • Importance of staff training • Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for School Nutrition Managers • Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Assistants/Technicians • Professional Standards Database • Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for School Nutrition Managers • Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Assistants/Technicians • USDA Professional Standards • Identify and discuss basic culinary skills • The “Shaking it Up!” Worksheet Series and Online Courses • ICN training resources • Manager’s Corner Series • CNSS • CIGN • Team Nutrition resources • State agency resources
20 minutes	Lesson 2: Strategies for Staff Training and Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of Staff Engagement • Strategies for Staff Engagement
40 minutes	Culminating Activity and Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put it all together • Wrap Up
4 hours	Total Time

LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE

Training Introduction

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions	
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training Overview• Pre-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-Assessment

INTRODUCTION

SHOW SLIDE: *Staff Training and Engagement for Sodium Reduction Success*

SAY: Welcome to the *Staff Training and Engagement for Sodium Reduction Success* training. The Institute of Child Nutrition would like to thank you for allowing us to offer this sodium reduction virtual training. We hope you will gain the knowledge and skills to implement sodium-reduction strategies into your school nutrition program.

This training is part of the Shaking It Up! Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors series. It provides the foundational knowledge and skills needed to reduce the amount of sodium in school meals while ensuring that meals are flavorful and satisfying for students.

This introduction lesson will cover some general information before exploring staff training and engagement for sodium reduction success.

First, let's begin by getting to know each other.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Introductions***Activity: Introductions**

Materials: Mute or Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat Functions

Time: 5 minutes

Instructions: Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to introduce themselves.

DO: Introduce yourself and other special guests. Be sure to state your name, title/credentials, and your experience in school nutrition and other child nutrition programs.

SAY: Please unmute and introduce yourself including your name, title/credentials, and your experience in school nutrition and other child nutrition programs.

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat.

FEEDBACK: Thank the participants for responding.

SHOW SLIDE: *Logistics*

SAY: To help ensure this training is a success, there are a few key things to remember.

- ICN has some training ground rules as you can see on the screen. They are:
 1. Show up on Time
 2. Be Present
 3. Let Everyone Participate
 4. Listen with an Open Mind
 5. Think Before Speaking
 6. Attack the Problem Not the Person
- We will take a minimum of two breaks during this training. Please be sure to return on time, as starting and ending breaks on time will allow us to cover all the training information and activities within the time allotted. If you need to stretch or attend to a need at a different time, please feel free to do so. All that I ask is that you leave and return without disturbing the training.
- Feel free to ask any questions in the chat or use the raise hand function to get my attention. I will aim to answer all questions and share the information with the class before the end of this training. Although, I will try to answer questions throughout the training, some questions may require research or a longer answer than time allows. Any questions I cannot answer, I will forward to the ICN for further assistance.
- Throughout the training, I will be referring to worksheets from the Shaking It Up! Series, additional resources, and handouts. These can also be found in your Participant's Workbook for this training.

Now that we have reviewed some basic logistical information, let's focus on the training topic, sodium reduction.

SHOW SLIDE: *Background*

SAY: In January 2012, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published the final rule, *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (77 FR 4088)*, that updated the meal patterns and nutrition standards for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to reflect the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. One provision of the updated nutrition standards required the gradual reduction in sodium content of school meals offered in the NSLP and SBP by meeting progressively lower-sodium targets.

On February 7, 2022, USDA FNS announced *Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium (87 FR 6984)* to support the continued provision of nutritious school meals as schools respond to and recover from the pandemic. The final rule modified the proposed sodium standards by establishing Sodium Target 1 as the sodium limit for school lunch and breakfast in SY 2022–2023 and implementing a Sodium Interim Target 1A effective for school lunch beginning in SY 2023–2024. In 2024, USDA FNS announced the Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which maintains the current sodium limits—Target 1A for lunch and Target 1 for breakfast—until 6/30/27 and the associated reductions in lunch and breakfast starting on 7/1/27.

USDA FNS has conducted studies to investigate the barriers and challenges School Food Authorities (SFAs) face when implementing sodium nutrition standards. In 2019, USDA FNS conducted the *Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals* study to examine the market availability of foods that meet the current and future sodium targets for school meals programs and to identify best practices in schools that are successfully meeting sodium targets. These training modules explore some of the strategies identified as useful in meeting the sodium targets.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: [*Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 7 C.F.R § 210, 215, 220, 225, 226 \(2024\)*](#), [*Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs \(77 FR 4088\)*](#), [*Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium \(87 FR 6984\)*](#), and [*Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals*](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Sodium Reduction VILT Series*

SAY: In response to the study's findings, the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) developed four virtual instructor-led training sessions to reach school nutrition directors, dietitians, and menu planners nationwide. The trainings focus on sodium reduction through menu planning and analysis, procurement, staff training, and maintaining student satisfaction. The intended audience includes directors, dietitians, and menu planners operating heat-and-serve or hybrid (heat and serve/speed-scratch/scratch) models focused on reducing sodium in their menus.

Sodium Reduction VILT Series sessions consist of instruction on the subject, breakout discussion, and hands-on application. At the conclusion of the training, you will formulate action plans, including SMART goals, incorporating the gained knowledge into your nutrition program.

SHOW SLIDE: *Staff Training and Engagement for Sodium Reduction Success*

SAY: Staff Training and Engagement for Sodium Reduction Success is one of the four virtual trainings. This training focuses on staff training and engagement for successful sodium reduction in school nutrition programs. The training covers:

- Conducting a training needs assessment for program staff
- Assessing labor skills of kitchen staff
- Determining training needs to improve basic culinary skills,
- Identifying the knowledge and skills needed by school nutrition staff to successfully plan, prepare, serve, and promote new lower-sodium school recipes and menus
- Identifying existing training and sodium reduction resources available to school nutrition professionals.

By the end of the training, participants will have the tools and knowledge needed to develop action plans for incorporating sodium reduction strategies into their school nutrition programs.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Pre-Assessment***Activity: Pre-Assessment****Materials:** Link to Pre-Assessment**Time:** 5 minutes**Instructions:** Instruct participants to use the link in the chat or QR code on the screen to complete the Pre-Assessment.

SAY: Before we begin exploring the first topic, let's assess what you already know about sodium in school meals and sodium reduction strategies by completing a Pre-Assessment.

Instructor's Note: Paste the link to the Pre-Assessment into the chat box.

DO: Allow 5 minutes for participants to complete the Pre-Assessment.

Instructor's Note: It is recommended that you take at least a 5 to 10-minute break for every hour of online learning. Plan breaks accordingly and based on your learners' needs.

LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE

LESSON 1: STAFF TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT

Objective: Discuss the importance of staff training and continuous learning.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult Learning Theory Importance of staff training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on Adult Learning Theory and importance of staff training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper or notetaking method of choice Pen/pencil

Objective: Explain the process for conducting a training needs assessment for program staff.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for School Nutrition Managers Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Assistants/Technicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a step-by-step list for conducting a training needs assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Step-by-Step Training Needs Assessment handout Paper or notetaking method of choice Pen/pencil

Objective: Identify the knowledge and skills needed by school nutrition staff to successfully plan, prepare, serve, and promote new lower-sodium school recipes and menus.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Standards Database Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for School Nutrition Managers Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Assistants/Technicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on knowledge and skills needed by school nutrition staff and identify ways to train. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper or notetaking method of choice Pen/pencil

Objective: Identify the current skillset of individual program staff.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USDA Professional Standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the knowledge and skills of an individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee Skill Assessment Form handout Paper or notetaking method of choice Pen/pencil

Objective: Assess labor skills of kitchen staff and determine trainings that are needed to improve basic culinary skills of staff.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and discuss basic culinary skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a survey to assess labor skills to identify the gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culinary Skills Self-Assessment handout Paper or notetaking method of choice Pen/pencil

Objective: Name and locate existing training resources and sodium reduction resources available to school nutrition professionals.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The "Shaking it Up!" Worksheet Series and Online Courses• ICN training resources• Manager's Corner Series• CNSS• CICN• Team Nutrition resources• State agency resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a list of training resources to help with sodium reduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper or notetaking method of choice• Pen/pencil

LESSON 1: STAFF TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT

SHOW SLIDE: *Lesson 1: Staff Training and Engagement*

SAY: Our first lesson is all about staff training and engagement. In this lesson, we will cover Adult Learning Theory, why staff training is important, how to assess training needs, and resources for training your staff. Let's get started.

Objective: Discuss the importance of staff training and continuous learning.

SHOW SLIDE: *Understanding Adult Learning Theory*

SAY: In 1980, Malcolm Knowles introduced the groundbreaking Adult Learning Theory, also known as Andragogy. This innovative approach acknowledges the distinct ways adults learn and the teaching methods that work best for them. It's based on five assumptions about adult learners and four principles of andragogy. Let's delve into these principles and see how they apply to our training.

SHOW SLIDE: *Assumptions of Adult Learning*

SAY: Knowles identified five defining characteristics of adult learners: Self-Concept, Adult Learner Experience, Readiness to Learn, Orientation of Learning, and Motivation to Learn. These assumptions form the backbone of his Adult Learning Theory and offer insight into how best to engage and educate adult learners.

SHOW SLIDE: *Principles of Andragogy*

SAY: Knowles also laid out four principles of andragogy that guide educators in their teaching. These principles are: Involvement, Past Experiences, Relevant Topics, and Problem-Centric Learning. They describe how Adult Learning Theory can be applied into a training initiative and offer a roadmap for creating programs that resonate with adult learners.

SHOW SLIDE: *Principle 1: Involvement*

SAY: The first principle of Andragogy is Involvement. This principle suggests that adult learners need to be involved in the planning and evaluation process. As self-directed individuals, we want to control the what, when, and how of the learning process.

SHOW SLIDE: *Principle 2: Past Experiences*

SAY: The second principle of Andragogy is Past Experiences. According to Knowles, our previous experiences, successes, and mistakes provide the basis for our future learning activities. These experiences help us to add greater context to the new information we are learning.

SHOW SLIDE: *Principle 3: Relevant Topics*

SAY: The third principle of Andragogy is Relevant Topics. This principle suggests that adult learners are most interested in learning about topics that have immediate relevance to them.

SHOW SLIDE: *Principle 4: Problem-Centric Learning*

SAY: The fourth and final principle of Andragogy is Problem-Centric Learning. Adult learning is typically problem-solving in nature. Simply providing memorizing opportunities is not enough. Adult learners want to use reasoning to take in the information they are presented with.

SHOW SLIDE: *The Importance of Continuous Learning*

SAY: In a field as important and dynamic as child nutrition, continuous learning is key. It helps us stay updated with the latest research, meet the changing needs of children, and continually improve our programs. By understanding and applying Adult Learning Theory principles, we can create a culture of learning in our operations. A culture where we are all empowered to learn, grow, and provide the best possible nutrition programs for our children.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Training Discussion***Activity: Training Discussion**

Materials: Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 5 minutes

Instructions: Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat answer the following questions with Adult Learning Theory in mind.

SAY: We have discussed Adult Learning Theory and how to keep its principles in mind when thinking about how we train our staff. Let's think through how we will do this with a few discussion questions.

SHOW SLIDE: *Why is staff training important?*

SAY: To make sure we are all on the same page, we are going to begin with some simple questions.

ASK: Why is staff training important?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: Staff training is important because it can help ensure that employees have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their jobs effectively. When employees are properly trained, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated, and they are better equipped to handle challenges and achieve success in their work.

SHOW SLIDE: *What are some successes you have seen from staff training in the past?*

ASK: What are some successes you have seen from staff training in the past?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: Some successes that can come from staff training include increased productivity, improved quality of work, better communication and collaboration among team members, and increased job satisfaction and engagement among employees. These successes can lead to better outcomes for the organization and its stakeholders, such as increased customer satisfaction, higher revenue, and greater efficiency.

SHOW SLIDE: *What are some challenges you have faced when it comes to staff training?*

ASK: What are some challenges you have faced when it comes to staff training?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: Some common challenges when it comes to staff training include limited time and resources for training, difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of training, resistance to change or learning new skills, and difficulty in maintaining consistent standards across different locations or teams. It's important to be aware of these challenges and to develop strategies to overcome them, such as leveraging technology to deliver training more efficiently or offering incentives to motivate employees to participate in training.

SHOW SLIDE: *How do you ensure that staff training is effective and leads to positive outcomes?*

ASK: How do you ensure effective staff training leads to positive outcomes?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: To ensure that staff training is effective and leads to positive outcomes, it's important to conduct a thorough needs assessment to identify the specific skills and knowledge that employees need to develop. It's also important to deliver training in a way that is engaging and interactive, and to provide ongoing support and reinforcement to help employees apply what they have learned. Finally, it's important to measure the effectiveness of training through evaluation and feedback, and to make adjustments as needed to improve outcomes over time.

SHOW SLIDE: *Why is staff training about sodium reduction important?*

ASK: Why is staff training about sodium reduction important?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: Staff training about sodium reduction is crucial for several reasons. First, school nutrition staff play a critical role in reducing sodium intake among children, which is vital for their long-term health. Second, proper training can ensure that staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively plan, prepare, and promote lower-sodium school recipes and menus. Third, staff buy-in is essential for the success of sodium reduction efforts. When staff understand the importance of reducing sodium intake and the benefits of doing so, they are more likely to be committed to making the necessary changes. Therefore, effective staff training is critical for achieving successful sodium reduction in school nutrition programs.

Objective: Explain the process for conducting a training needs assessment for program staff.

SHOW SLIDE: *Staff Training and Engagement*

SAY: Now that we have covered the basics, let's dive in. This training aims to equip participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to identify training gaps among school nutrition staff and to develop a plan for providing effective trainings and resources to address these gaps. Over the course of this training, you will learn the process for conducting a training needs assessment for your staff, including how to assess the labor skills of kitchen staff and determine trainings that are needed to improve their basic culinary skills. You will also learn how to identify the knowledge and skills required by school nutrition staff to successfully plan, prepare, serve, and promote new lower-sodium school recipes and menus.

In addition, we will explore the available training and sodium reduction resources already available to school nutrition professionals. By the end of this training, you will be able to develop a comprehensive plan for addressing any identified training gaps. You will be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to implement effective trainings and resources that meet the needs of your school nutrition staff.

SHOW SLIDE: *Where to start?*

SAY: A training needs assessment is a process of identifying gaps in knowledge, skills, or abilities among staff, and determining what training or development is required to address those gaps. It is an important step in designing effective training programs. The process typically involves analyzing job requirements, interviewing employees and supervisors, and collecting data to determine what skills and knowledge are required for successful performance. The results of the assessment can be used to determine the focus of training programs, identify training resources needed, and measure the effectiveness of the training. A training needs assessment is an essential component of any training program and helps ensure that staff receive training that is relevant to their job and will help them improve their performance.

SHOW SLIDE: *Training Needs Assessment*

SAY: When it comes to conducting a training needs assessment in the school nutrition setting, there are several unique factors that should be taken into consideration. First and foremost, the primary goal of school nutrition programs is to provide nutritious meals to students in a safe and efficient manner. Therefore, any training program should be designed with this goal in mind and tailored to the specific needs and challenges of school nutrition professionals.

The five steps to conduct a training needs assessment are:

1. Determine desired outcomes.
2. Identify specific challenges and areas of improvement.
3. Determine desired behaviors, knowledge, and skills.
4. Set training timeline and priorities.
5. Select training format and delivery method(s).

SHOW SLIDE: *Questions and Steps*

SAY: Conducting a training needs assessment in the school nutrition setting involves interviewing employees and supervisors to gather essential information. Here are some example interview questions and steps on how to conduct these interviews:

- **Job Requirements Analysis:**
 - **Question:** Can you describe the key responsibilities and tasks involved in your role as a school nutrition professional?
 - **Steps:** Begin by conducting one-on-one interviews with school nutrition staff. Ask them to outline their daily tasks, responsibilities, and any challenges they encounter. This information helps identify gaps in their knowledge or skills related to their job requirements.
- **Skill and Knowledge Assessment:**
 - **Question:** What specific skills or knowledge areas do you believe are most important for successfully performing your job?
 - **Steps:** Continue the interviews by asking staff about the skills and knowledge they consider vital in their roles. Encourage them to identify areas where they might need further training or development to enhance their job performance.
- **Training Resource Identification:**
 - **Question:** Are there any specific training materials, resources, or tools you believe would be helpful in improving your skills or job performance?
 - **Steps:** Inquire about the types of training resources employees think would be beneficial. This input can help in selecting or developing training materials and resources that are relevant to their needs.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
 - **Question:** What are some of the challenges or concerns you face in your daily work related to school nutrition?
 - **Steps:** Listen to staff as they share their challenges and concerns. This information can reveal specific areas where additional training or support is needed to address issues effectively.
- **Feedback from Supervisors:**
 - **Question:** Have your supervisors provided any feedback or identified areas where you may need improvement in your job performance?
 - **Steps:** Conduct interviews with supervisors to gain insights into their perspectives on staff performance. Their feedback can help validate or identify additional training needs.
- **Goals and Objectives:**
 - **Question:** What are your career goals and objectives within the school nutrition field, and how can training support you in achieving them?
 - **Steps:** Discuss employees' long-term career aspirations and how training can play a role in their professional development within the school nutrition setting.
- **Measurement of Training Effectiveness:**
 - **Question:** How do you believe the impact of training should be measured to ensure it is effective?

- **Steps:** Gather input on how staff believe the effectiveness of training should be evaluated. Their perspectives can inform the development of assessment tools and metrics.

After conducting these interviews, compile and analyze the gathered information. Identify common themes, areas of improvement, and specific training needs. This data will guide the design and implementation of targeted training programs tailored to the unique needs and challenges of school nutrition professionals, ensuring that they receive relevant and effective training to enhance their performance in providing nutritious meals to students.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the handout can be found in the Participant's *Workbook-Training Assessment Questions and Steps* handout

SHOW SLIDE: *Solution*

SAY: Overall, a comprehensive training needs assessment in the school nutrition setting should take into account the unique and needs of school nutrition professionals and should be designed to help them build the skills and knowledge necessary to provide nutritious meals to students in a safe and efficient manner.

As directors, dietitians, and menu planners focused on reducing sodium in your menus, you may be facing challenges such as staff shortages, staff turnover, and varying levels of food service experience among your staff. Training is often seen as the solution to address these difficulties, but it is important to conduct a training needs assessment to determine who needs training, what topics to be covered, and how training will be delivered.

SHOW SLIDE: *Opportunities for Growth*

SAY: One of the primary opportunities for growth in school nutrition programs lies in ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations. These regulations dictate various aspects, including the permissible food types and meal preparation methods. Therefore, an effective training program should concentrate on enabling school nutrition professionals to comprehend these regulations and achieve compliance with them.

Another area of focus for school nutrition programs is the opportunity to make meals both nutritious and appealing to students. This can be particularly enriching given the diverse tastes and preferences of students. A training program can empower school nutrition experts with the knowledge and skills needed to create meals that are both nourishing and enticing. Additionally, it can educate them on effective approaches for reducing food waste and managing costs.

In addition to these growth opportunities, there are also specific technical skills that school nutrition professionals should acquire. For instance, they need proficiency in using specialized equipment for meal preparation and service, as well as the ability to effectively manage inventory and monitor food costs. An effective training program should encompass training in these technical skills, including any emerging technologies or tools that may be applicable in the school nutrition environment.

Lastly, it's crucial to recognize that the school nutrition environment entails interaction with diverse individuals, encompassing students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Therefore, a comprehensive training program should emphasize the development of effective communication and interpersonal skills. It should also provide strategies for fostering positive relationships with these varied stakeholders.

SHOW SLIDE: Activity: Step-by-Step Training Needs Assessment**Activity: Step-by-Step Training Needs Assessment**

Materials: *Step-by-Step Training Needs Assessment* handout in Participant's Workbook, pen/pencil, Breakout Rooms, Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 10 minutes

Instructions: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Instruct participants to use the *Step-by-Step Training Needs Assessment* handout to create a step-by-step guide for conducting a training needs assessment of their team. For each step, instruct participants to describe how they will conduct the assessment. Allow 5 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share

SAY: Let's look at how to conduct a training needs assessment. Using the *Step-by-Step Training Needs Assessment* handout in your Participant's Workbook, create a step-by-step guide for conducting a training needs assessment and describe how they will conduct the assessment. In your Breakout Room, you will share and plan your assessment.

DO: Remind participants that the handout can be found in the Participant's Workbook. Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms.

SHOW SLIDE: *Step 1: Determine desired outcomes.*

ASK: Step 1 is to determine the desired outcomes. A desired outcome in the context of a training needs assessment refers to the specific, measurable, and achievable goal or result that an organization or educational institution aims to achieve as a direct result of identifying and addressing training gaps among its staff or learners. This outcome serves as a clear target for the training program and provides a basis for evaluating its success. Desired outcomes typically align with broader organizational objectives and may include improved job performance, enhanced skills, increased knowledge, greater efficiency, or other specific improvements in individual or group capabilities. What details and actions do you think are included in this step?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: To begin, you need to identify opportunities for growth and improvement and establish what success in those areas would look like. For example, you may want to improve student satisfaction ratings or reduce food waste.

SHOW SLIDE: *Step 2: Identify specific challenges and areas of improvement.*

ASK: Step 2 is to identify specific challenges and areas of improvement. Identifying specific challenges and areas of improvement is a critical step in a training needs assessment. It involves a comprehensive analysis of the current state of knowledge, skills, and performance within an organization or group to pinpoint where training is needed. What details and actions do you think are included in this step?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: Once you have established your goals, you need to identify the specific areas that require improvement. You can do this through observation, surveys, data evaluation, or training assessments.

SHOW SLIDE: *Step 3: Determine desired behaviors, knowledge, and skills.*

ASK: Step 3 is to determine the desired behaviors, knowledge, and skills. What details and actions do you think are included in this step?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: With growth areas identified, you can match training topics to the skill gaps. This involves creating a list of knowledge, skills, and competencies that each trained employee requires to meet in the established objectives for their position.

SHOW SLIDE: *Step 4: Set training timeline and priorities.*

ASK: Step 4 is to set the training timeline and priorities. What details and actions do you think are included in this step?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: Next, establish the timeline for the training initiative as a whole and rank priorities for individual groups and sessions. Consider the urgency of the issues and any items that need to be addressed before other training can occur.

SHOW SLIDE: *Step 5: Select the training format and delivery method(s).*

ASK: Step 5 is to select the training format and delivery methods. What details and actions do you think are included in this step?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: Finally, select the training methods that best suit the needs and circumstances of your program. You may choose from online training, computer-based simulations, self-guided audio and video programs, or virtual or in-person instructor-led sessions.

SHOW SLIDE: *Remember the WHY*

SAY: As directors, dietitians, and menu planners focused on reducing sodium in your menus, you may be facing challenges such as staff shortages, staff turnover, and varying levels of food service experience among your staff. Training is often seen as the solution to address these difficulties, but it is important to conduct a training needs assessment to determine who needs training, what topics need to be covered, and how training will be delivered. By conducting a thorough training needs assessment, you can determine the training needs of your staff and develop a well-crafted training plan that will lead to higher employee engagement, improved performance, and increased productivity.

Objective: Identify the knowledge and skills needed by school nutrition staff to successfully plan, prepare, serve, and promote new lower-sodium school recipes and menus.

SHOW SLIDE: *USDA Professional Standards*

SAY: USDA has established mandatory professional standards for State and local personnel. This segment of our training endeavors to enlighten you about these standards and provide valuable resources. It is important to emphasize that local school nutrition program personnel should, when in doubt, refer to the final rule and seek guidance from their respective State agency. Similarly, State agencies are encouraged to seek clarification from their USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office should they have inquiries regarding these mandated professional standards.

These professional standards encompass both hiring criteria and annual training requisites for various roles within school nutrition programs, including directors of school food authorities (SFAs), State directors of school nutrition programs, and other team members. The overarching objective of these annual training requirements and hiring standards is to ensure the seamless operation and success of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

It is paramount to underscore that these required professional standards are applicable to all school nutrition employees, whether the SFA manages the program internally or engages a food service management company. The SFA's adherence to these standards at the local level is evaluated as part of the Administrative Review (AR). This segment will elucidate the distinct job categories, training standards (comprising annual training requirements, pertinent topics, and recordkeeping), and hiring criteria for new directors. Furthermore, you will find a compendium of invaluable training resources.

These required professional standards are delineated according to three principal job categories: directors, managers, and staff. Recognizing that local school nutrition program personnel may hold diverse job titles while performing analogous duties, the ensuing definitions are designed to encompass the majority of local school nutrition program employees and facilitate their categorization:

- Directors are tasked with the comprehensive planning, administration, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all district-wide facets of school nutrition programs. Typically, a SFA has only one director, irrespective of its size.
- Managers bear direct responsibility for the day-to-day operations at one or more schools.
- Staff members are responsible for meal preparation and service, point-of-service transactions, the review of free/reduced price applications, and other routine responsibilities. Staff members generally do not hold managerial roles.

Notably, school nutrition directors bear the dual responsibility of fulfilling their own annual training requirements and supervising the annual training prerequisites for managers and staff. Many SFAs have been diligently providing training at or exceeding the annual levels stipulated in the standards.

SHOW SLIDE: *Knowledge and Skills*

SAY: To facilitate your adherence to these standards, you can utilize USDA's list of recommended job-specific training topics. These topics align with four key domains: nutrition, operations, administration, and communications/marketing. In the training needs assessment discussion, we talked a lot about knowledge and skills. Now, let's work together to identify the knowledge and skills school nutrition staff need to successfully plan, prepare, serve, and promote new lower-sodium school recipes and menus.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Identifying Knowledge and Skills***Activity: Identifying Knowledge and Skills**

Materials: Breakout Rooms, Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 10 minutes

Instructions: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Instruct participants to identify knowledge and skills needed by school nutrition staff. Then, they will discuss their successes and challenges in providing the needed training. Allow 5 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share.

SAY: Consider your district's operations, staff, and job duties. What knowledge and skills does your staff need to successfully plan, prepare, serve, and promote new lower-sodium school recipes and menus? In your Breakout Room, you will identify the knowledge and skills needed by school nutrition staff. Then, discuss your successes and challenges in providing the needed training.

Instructor's Note: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Allow 5 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms.

ASK: Who would like to share?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, summarize their responses.

FEEDBACK: Thank the participants for sharing.

Objective: Identify the current skillset of individual program staff.

SHOW SLIDE: *Assessing Knowledge and Skills*

SAY: In the dynamic world of school nutrition, the effective performance of employees is pivotal to the success of nutrition programs that nourish our students' well-being. It is incumbent upon you to ensure that your team members possess the requisite skills and competencies to meet the high standards set by the USDA for school nutrition professionals.

To achieve this, it is crucial to periodically assess the skillsets of your employees. Employee assessments provide valuable insights into their strengths and areas that require improvement, enabling you to tailor professional development initiatives to enhance their capabilities. These assessments are not merely a formality but a strategic approach to elevate the quality of your nutrition programs and, ultimately, the health and education of your students.

SHOW SLIDE: Activity: Individual Skillset Assessment**Activity: Identifying Knowledge and Skills**

Materials: *Employee Skill Assessment Form* handout in Participant's Workbook, Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 10 minutes

Instructions: Share the *Employee Skill Assessment Form* handout in the chat box. Instruct participants to assess the knowledge and skills needed of one of their school nutrition staff. Allow 5 minutes in the breakout rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share.

SAY: Consider your district's staff and their job duties. Using the "Employee Skill Assessment Form" handout in your Participant's Workbook, you assess the knowledge and skills needed of one of their school nutrition staff. This comprehensive tool is designed to facilitate the structured evaluation of your team members' proficiency in four key domains of school nutrition, aligning with the USDA's professional standards: Nutrition, Operations, Administration, and Communications/Marketing. By utilizing this form, you will be able to provide constructive feedback to your employees and chart a course for their continued growth and development in the field of school nutrition.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the handout can be found in the Participant's Workbook.

ASK: Who would like to share?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, summarize their responses.

FEEDBACK: Thank the participants for sharing.

Objective: Assess labor skills of kitchen staff and determine trainings that are needed to improve basic culinary skills of staff.

SHOW SLIDE: *Culinary Knowledge and Skills Focus*

SAY: Assessing the labor skills of kitchen staff is essential to ensuring that school nutrition programs can effectively and efficiently prepare and serve nutritious meals to students. Culinary skills are particularly important in school nutrition settings, where staff must prepare meals that meet strict nutritional guidelines while also being tasty and appealing to students.

SHOW SLIDE: *Assessing Culinary Skills of Kitchen Staff*

SAY: The first step in assessing culinary skills is to identify the basic skills required for the job. For school nutrition programs, this may include skills such as chopping vegetables, preparing proteins, and cooking grains. Once these skills have been identified, they can be evaluated using a variety of methods, including observation, self-assessment, and feedback from supervisors and colleagues.

To assess culinary skills through observation, program leadership can watch staff members as they prepare meals and take note of areas where they may need improvement. This can include basic skills such as knife handling or more advanced skills such as sautéing or baking.

Self-assessment is another useful tool for identifying areas where staff may need additional training. This can be done through surveys or questionnaires that ask staff members to rate their own skills and identify areas where they feel they need additional training.

Feedback from supervisors and colleagues can also be invaluable in identifying areas where staff may need additional training. This can be done through regular check-ins and performance evaluations, as well as informal conversations between staff members.

SHOW SLIDE: *Developing a Training Plan*

SAY: Once the culinary skills of kitchen staff have been assessed, it is important to develop a training plan that addresses identified knowledge and skills gaps. This plan should be tailored to the specific needs of the program and staff and may include a combination of in-person and online trainings.

Online resources can be particularly useful for providing staff with access to training materials that they can use at their own pace. These resources may include videos, webinars, and interactive modules that cover a range of topics, from basic knife skills to advanced cooking techniques.

In-person trainings can also be effective, particularly for hands-on training and skill-building. This may include demonstrations, group activities, and one-on-one coaching from experienced culinary professionals.

Check out all the great ICN training opportunities! ICN offers free group training on a broad range of topics for child nutrition professionals working in school nutrition and child care settings. In addition to training sessions at the Institute's headquarters at The University of Mississippi, training may be requested free-of-charge for presentation at local sites throughout the country. Using a network of expert trainer consultants, ICN delivers face-to-face training seminars and virtual instructor-led trainings (VILTs) to child nutrition professionals across the country.

In addition, ICN conducts pre-conference sessions and other presentations at national, regional, and state conferences. On-site training may be requested at little or no cost. ICN's FREE, self-paced online course system, iLearn, supports the professional development of child nutrition program personnel at all levels of responsibility. ICN's recorded webinars are also available on iLearn.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: ICN Training [landing page](#) and [brochure](#), [iLearn](#)

SHOW SLIDE: Activity: Culinary Skills Self-Assessment

Activity: Culinary Skills Self-Assessment

Materials: *Culinary Skills Self-Assessment* handout in Participant's Workbook, pen/pencil, Breakout Rooms Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 10 minutes

Instructions: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Instruct participants to use the *Culinary Skills Self-Assessment* handout to identify culinary knowledge and skills needed by school nutrition staff. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share.

SAY: Think about your district's operations, staff, and job duties. What are the culinary knowledge and skills your staff needs to successfully plan, prepare, serve, and promote new lower-sodium school recipes and menus? Review the questions using the *Culinary Skills Self-Assessment* in your Participant's Workbook and think about how you would use this in your district. Maybe you can think of additional questions.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the handout can be found in the Participant's Workbook. Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms.

ASK: Did you think of other questions to add?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, summarize their responses.

ASK: How could you use this in your district with your staff?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, summarize their responses.

FEEDBACK: Thank the participants for sharing.

Objective: Name and locate existing training resources and sodium reduction resources available to school nutrition professionals.

SHOW SLIDE: *Training Resources and Sodium Reduction Resources*

SAY: Now that we know how to assess training needs, let's look at the resources already available to us.

SHOW SLIDE: *Institute of Child Nutrition*

SAY: ICN offers several trainings and resources, including this virtual training series, which focuses on sodium reduction.

The Shaking It Up! sodium resources provide tangible, practical guidance for school nutrition professionals to implement sodium reduction best practices and strategies in their school foodservice operations. The Shaking It Up! resource page provides a range of educational resources and training materials, including training worksheets and online courses. The worksheets and online courses provide a deep dive into a sodium reduction topic and related strategies, feature scenarios or school success stories to demonstrate sodium-reduction best practices, and include activities to test and reinforce key concepts. The worksheets and online courses can be used for individual learning and incorporated into school staff trainings on sodium reduction topics.

Manager's Corner is a series of resources designed to give managers/directors short lesson plans, which can be used to train staff on various topics. USDA Key Areas group lessons in the series: nutrition, operations, and Communications/Marketing.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: [ICN](#), [Shaking It Up!](#), and [Manager's Corner](#) into the chat box.

SHOW SLIDE: *Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN)*

SAY: Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) has the principal mission to increase the culinary skills of school nutrition programs by providing culinary training programs and resources to support Child Nutrition Operators to prepare and serve healthy, culinary-inspired school meals from scratch and elevate the cafeteria atmosphere. CICN's series of micro-trainings, Culinary Quick Bites, are an excellent option for basic culinary skills.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: [CICN](#) and [Culinary Quick Bites](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Child Nutrition Sharing Site (CNSS)*

SAY: The Child Nutrition Sharing Site (CNSS) is an online information center providing Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) with a means for sharing effective resources related to program operation. CNSS aids in the collection and sharing of state and local resources by providing a centralized place to store, organize, manage, and share knowledge and tools with your peers. This collaboration between the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) and United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (USDA/FNS) gives child nutrition professionals access to resources that support current Federal regulations, policies, and guidance.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the link can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Link for reference: [CNSS](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Team Nutrition*

SAY: Team Nutrition is an initiative of the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. Their mission is to promote lifelong healthy food choices and physical activity by improving the nutrition practices of the USDA child nutrition programs. Team Nutrition to provide resources to schools, child care settings, and summer meal sites that participate in these programs, which includes recipes.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: [Team Nutrition](#) and their [recipes](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Child Nutrition Recipe Box (CNRB)*

SAY: Child Nutrition Recipe Box (CNRB) provides Child Nutrition Program operators with recipes to prepare healthy and delicious meals that meet meal pattern requirements. These recipes are standardized to provide meal pattern crediting information for meal pattern components.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the link can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Link for reference: [CNRB](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Resource Sharing***Activity: Resource Sharing**

Materials: Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 5 minutes

Instructions: Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to identify resources to find staff training resources.

SAY: We have discussed some great resources to find lower-sodium resources.

ASK: What other resources do you use to find lower-sodium recipes?

DO: Allow participants time to share their answers. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: ICN, CICN, CNSS, CNRB, Team Nutrition, State agencies, industry, Allied Organizations

SHOW SLIDE: *Lesson 1 Summary*

SAY: To wrap up this lesson, we learned that:

- Staff training is important because it can help ensure that employees have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their jobs effectively.
- A training needs assessment identifies gaps in knowledge, skills, or abilities among staff, and determines what training or development is required to address those gaps.
- Training resources include ICN, CICN, CNSS, Team Nutrition, and State agencies.

DO: Encourage participants to take a 5-minute break before Lesson 2.

LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE

LESSON 2: STRATEGIES FOR STAFF TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT

Objective: Recall the benefits and strategies for engaging staff in the recipe and menu development process.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benefits of Staff Engagement• Strategies for Staff Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper or notetaking method of choice• Pen/pencil

LESSON 2: STRATEGIES FOR STAFF TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT

SHOW SLIDE: Lesson 2: *Strategies for Staff Training and Engagement*

SAY: Our second lesson is all about strategies for Staff Training and Engagement. In this lesson, we will discuss how to use training to get your staff engaged in successfully planning, preparing, serving, and promoting new lower-sodium school recipes and menus. Let's get started.

Objective: Recall the benefits and strategies for engaging staff in the recipe and menu development process.

SHOW SLIDE: *Benefits*

SAY: Before we dive into strategies to engage staff, let's discuss the benefits of staff engagement. Engaging staff in recipe and menu development has numerous benefits for school nutrition programs including:

- Improved staff morale and job satisfaction.
- Increased staff buy-in and commitment to program goals.
- Increased creativity and innovation in recipe and menu development.
- Enhanced staff knowledge of nutrition and food preparation techniques.
- Improved communication and teamwork among staff.
- More efficient and effective menu planning and recipe development processes.
- Increased customer satisfaction with the program.
- Better understanding of students' preferences and needs.
- More effective implementation of program goals and initiatives.

Now, we will take a closer look at each benefit.

SHOW SLIDE: *Improved staff morale and job satisfaction.*

SAY: Improved staff morale and job satisfaction: By involving staff in recipe and menu development, they feel more valued and have a sense of ownership in the program, leading to increased job satisfaction and improved morale.

SHOW SLIDE: *Increased staff buy-in and commitment to program goals.*

SAY: Increased staff buy-in and commitment to program goals: When staff have a role in developing recipes and menus, they are more likely to buy into the program's goals, resulting in increased commitment to achieving those goals.

SHOW SLIDE: *Increased creativity and innovation in recipe and menu development.*

SAY: Increased creativity and innovation in recipe and menu development: Staff engagement leads to increased creativity and innovation in recipe and menu development, resulting in more appealing and nutritious meals for students.

SHOW SLIDE: *Enhanced staff knowledge of nutrition and food preparation techniques.*

SAY: Enhanced staff knowledge of nutrition and food preparation techniques: Staff engagement in recipe and menu development enhances their knowledge of nutrition and food preparation techniques, leading to better meal planning and preparation.

SHOW SLIDE: *Improved communication and teamwork among staff.*

SAY: Improved communication and teamwork among staff: Staff engagement in recipe and menu development improves communication and teamwork among staff, resulting in more efficient and effective meal planning and preparation.

SHOW SLIDE: *More efficient and effective menu planning and recipe development processes.*

SAY: More efficient and effective menu planning and recipe development processes: Staff engagement in recipe and menu development can lead to more efficient and effective menu planning and recipe development processes, resulting in time and cost savings.

SHOW SLIDE: *Increased customer satisfaction with the program.*

SAY: Increased customer satisfaction with the program: Engaging staff in recipe and menu development can lead to meals that are more appealing and nutritious, resulting in increased customer satisfaction with the program.

SHOW SLIDE: *Better understanding of students' preferences and needs.*

SAY: Better understanding of students' preferences and needs: Staff engagement in recipe and menu development provides a better understanding of students' preferences and needs, resulting in meals that are more appealing and satisfying to students. **SHOW SLIDE: *More effective implementation of program goals and initiatives.***

SAY: More effective implementation of program goals and initiatives: Engaging staff in recipe and menu development can lead to more effective implementation of program goals and initiatives, resulting in greater success in achieving health and wellness goals. This will also aid in successfully following the regulations for SNPs.

SHOW SLIDE: *Strategies*

SAY: Now that we have highlighted the benefits, let's discuss strategies for engaging staff in the recipe and menu development process. Including the staff in the menu development process will encourage them to communicate with the students to gather information on their likes and dislikes, which will also lead to a stronger program. Some strategies for engaging staff in the recipe and menu development process include:

- Conduct regular staff meetings to discuss menu planning and recipe development, and encourage staff to share their ideas and feedback.
- Provide opportunities for staff to participate in taste-testing sessions and provide feedback on new recipes.
- Recognize and reward staff for their contributions to menu planning and recipe development.
- Offer training sessions on nutrition, food preparation, and menu planning to enhance staff knowledge and skills.
- Use social media platforms to showcase staff creations and give them recognition.
- Foster a collaborative work environment where staff feel comfortable sharing their ideas and suggestions.
- Conduct regular surveys and focus groups to gather feedback from staff and make improvements to the program accordingly.
- Involve staff in the decision-making process for menu planning and recipe development, and provide them with a sense of ownership over the program.

Let's explore these strategies further.

SHOW SLIDE: *Conduct regular staff meetings to discuss menu planning and recipe development, and encourage staff to share their ideas and feedback.*

SAY: Conduct routine staff meetings to engage in discussions about menu planning and recipe development while fostering an environment where staff are encouraged to share their ideas and feedback. This approach cultivates a sense of ownership and teamwork within the team, valuing the input of all staff members, even if not all suggestions are implemented.

SHOW SLIDE: *Provide opportunities for staff to participate in taste-testing sessions and provide feedback on new recipes.*

SAY: Provide opportunities for staff to participate in taste-testing sessions and provide feedback on new recipes: This strategy encourages staff to be creative and innovative in their recipe development, while also ensuring that the recipes are appealing and enjoyable for the students.

SHOW SLIDE: *Recognize and reward staff for their contributions to menu planning and recipe development.*

SAY: Recognize and reward staff for their contributions to menu planning and recipe development: This strategy helps to motivate and incentivize staff to participate in the recipe development process and feel appreciated for their contributions.

SHOW SLIDE: *Offer training sessions on nutrition, food preparation, and menu planning to enhance staff knowledge and skills.*

SAY: Offer training sessions on nutrition, food preparation, and menu planning to enhance staff knowledge and skills: This strategy helps to build staff capacity and ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to create healthy and delicious meals.

SHOW SLIDE: *Use social media platforms to showcase staff creations and give them recognition.*

SAY: Use social media platforms to showcase staff creations and give them recognition: This strategy helps to create a sense of pride and accomplishment among staff, while also promoting the program and its successes to the broader community.

SHOW SLIDE: *Foster a collaborative work environment where staff feel comfortable sharing their ideas and suggestions.*

SAY: Foster a collaborative work environment where staff feel comfortable sharing their ideas and suggestions: This strategy helps to create a positive and supportive workplace culture, where staff feel valued and heard.

SHOW SLIDE: *Conduct regular surveys and focus groups to gather feedback from staff and make improvements to the program accordingly.*

SAY: Conduct regular surveys and focus groups to gather feedback from staff and make improvements to the program accordingly: This strategy helps to ensure that staff are engaged and invested in the program, and their feedback is taken into account in decision-making processes.

SHOW SLIDE: *Involve staff in the decision-making process for menu planning and recipe development and provide them with a sense of ownership over the program.*

SAY: Involve staff in the decision-making process for menu planning and recipe development and provide them with a sense of ownership over the program. This strategy helps to create a sense of shared responsibility and accountability among staff, while also ensuring that the program reflects their needs and preferences.

SHOW SLIDE: *Call to Action*

SAY: Incorporating these strategies can foster a culture of collaboration and innovation in school nutrition programs, leading to improved staff engagement, increased program success, and ultimately, better outcomes for students' health and well-being through sodium reduction.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Sharing Success*

Activity: Sharing Success

Materials: Breakout Rooms, Mute or Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat Functions

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Instruct participants to brainstorm and share successes and challenges with strategies for engaging staff in the recipe and menu development process. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share.

SAY: We have discussed strategies for staff engagement. In your Breakout Room, you will share successes and challenges with strategies for engaging staff in training related to sodium reduction for 10 minutes.

Instructor's Note: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms.

ASK: Who would like to share their successes and challenges with strategies for engaging staff in the recipe and menu development process?

DO: Allow participants time to share their answers. Thank the participants for sharing.

SHOW SLIDE: *More Resources*

SAY: We have discussed resources and strategies for your staff training. Before we wrap up, here are some additional resources. Many of these choices are free or offered at a low cost. Some training costs may not be an allowable expense from the nonprofit school food service account. Check with your State agency if you have any questions about specific training you want to fund through your program.

- **USDA Professional Standards Training Database:** USDA's online Professional Standards Training Database has free to low-cost trainings available and is updated regularly. You can search the database by key areas, topics, type of training, and more.
- **USDA FNS Office of Food Safety:** USDA FNS Office of Food Safety offers food safety training, such as Produce Safety University, and other resources related to safe food handling.
- **USDA FNS Team Nutrition:** The USDA FNS Team Nutrition initiative offers a variety of technical assistance resources, including an extensive resource library with downloadable materials, as well as webinars and trainings to support school professionals' needs.
- **Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN):** The ICN offers free training, both online and in-person. You can also download and use their training resources to conduct local trainings. Specifically related to sodium reduction, check out the [Shaking It Up!](#) sodium resources provide tangible, practical guidance for school nutrition professionals to implement sodium reduction best practices and strategies in their school foodservice operations. The worksheets and online courses provide a deep dive into a sodium reduction topic and related strategies, feature scenarios or school success stories to demonstrate sodium reduction best practices, and include activities to test and reinforce key concepts. There are also three more Sodium Reduction VILTs. The other VILTs are Identifying Low-Sodium Food Products and Menu Planning Strategies to Meet Meal Pattern Requirements, Procurement of Lower-Sodium Foods, and Maintaining Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals.
- **State agencies:** Your State agency will make at least 18 hours of training available to SFAs each year as part of the standards. Check with your State agency about available training options.
- **Professional Organizations:** Professional organizations are another option for training. Attend local chapter activities and, when possible, participate in State or national meetings.
- **Local In-Service Training:** Rely on experts within your own SFA, State agency, or community. For example, invite district experts to provide 15-minute mini-lessons on various topics each month as part of staff meetings. Another idea is to organize a special training session with an outside speaker, such as a local Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist (RD/RDN) or your kitchen equipment representative.
- **Food service Suppliers:** Check out training sessions sponsored by companies and trade groups. See if events offered by manufacturers, distributors, and brokers or commodity promotion groups meet your training needs.

- Exhibits at Conferences: At the discretion of your State agency, you and your staff may count up to 2 hours of visiting and interacting with exhibitors toward annual training requirements as long as they are relevant to core training topics. *Questions & Answers Regarding Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Program Personnel* provides more detail on how to acquire training hours through exhibits. Consult your State agency for guidance.
- Other Resources: Universities and community colleges are other training options. College courses can count when the course meets job-specific needs. In addition, Cooperative Extension or non-profit groups in your State or community may offer related training programs.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: [*USDA Professional Standards Training Database*](#), [*USDA FNS Office of Food Safety*](#), [*USDA FNS Team Nutrition*](#), [*Institute of Child Nutrition \(ICN\)*](#), [*Shaking It Up!*](#), and [*Questions & Answers Regarding Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Program Personnel*](#)

ASK: What resources do you currently use to train your professional development and staff training needs?

DO: Allow participants time to share their answers. Thank the participants for sharing.

SHOW SLIDE: *Lesson 2 Summary*

SAY: To wrap up this lesson, we learned that:

- Benefits include:
 - Improved staff morale and job satisfaction.
 - Increased staff buy-in and commitment to program goals.
 - Increased creativity and innovation in recipe and menu development.
 - Enhanced staff knowledge of nutrition and food preparation techniques.
 - Improved communication and teamwork among staff.
 - More efficient and effective menu planning and recipe development processes.
 - Increased customer satisfaction with the program.
 - Better understanding of students' preferences and needs.
 - More effective implementation of program goals and initiatives.
- Strategies include:
 - Conduct regular staff meetings to discuss menu planning and recipe development and encourage staff to share their ideas and feedback.
 - Provide opportunities for staff to participate in taste-testing sessions and provide feedback on new recipes.
 - Recognize and reward staff for their contributions to menu planning and recipe development.
 - Offer training sessions on nutrition, food preparation, and menu planning to enhance staff knowledge and skills.
 - Use social media platforms to showcase staff creations and give them recognition.
 - Foster a collaborative work environment where staff feel comfortable sharing their ideas and suggestions.
 - Conduct regular surveys and focus groups to gather feedback from staff and make improvements to the program accordingly.
 - Involve staff in the decision-making process for menu planning and recipe development and provide them with a sense of ownership over the program.

DO: Encourage participants to take a 5-minute break before the Culminating Activity and Action Plan.

LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE CULMINATING ACTIVITY AND ACTION PLAN

Objective: Develop an action plan to develop and implement a training plan to address knowledge and skill gaps.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
35 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Put it all together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Culminating ActivityAction Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Action PlanPen/pencil
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Wrap Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Post-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Post-Assessment

CULMINATING ACTIVITY AND ACTION PLAN

SHOW SLIDE: *Culminating Activity and Action Plan*

SAY: Our final lesson today is unique. You will be using all the staff training and engagement sodium reduction knowledge and strategies that you learned to review your staff. You will have 30 minutes to work independently to complete the culminating activity and your action plan. For the activity, you will be assessing your own staff and their knowledge and skills.

Objective: Develop an action plan to gradually produce lower-sodium school menus.

SHOW SLIDE: Activity: Independent Work Time

Activity: Culminating Activity and Action Plan

Materials: *Action Plan* handout in Participant's Workbook, pen/pencil

Time: 20 minutes

Instructions: Instruct participants to analyze and assess their current level of staff training and engagement for sodium reduction success. Choose one or two strategies to focus on and plan how they will incorporate them into their program. Participants will write SMART goals targeted at incorporating more student engagement in their program. They will work independently for 20 minutes, and then share their answers with the group.

SAY: It's your turn to practice. You will analyze and assess your current level of staff training and engagement for sodium reduction success. Choose one or two strategies to focus on and plan how you will incorporate them into your program. Then, you will write SMART goals targeted at incorporating more student engagement in your program. A SMART goal is a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objective designed to guide and evaluate progress effectively. You will work independently for 20 minutes, and then share your strategies and action plans with the group.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the handout can be found in the Participant's Workbook.

DO: Start the timer on the slide and display on the screen. Allow the participants to work independently for 20 minutes. After the time is up, welcome the participants back to the group.

Instructor's Note: Feel free to turn off your camera and mute during the 20 minutes of independent work. Be ready to start back on time.

SHOW SLIDE: Activity: Sharing Strategies and Action Plans**Activity: Sharing Strategies and Action Plans**

Materials: Sodium Reduction Strategies for their menus, *Action Plan* handout and *SMART Goals* handout

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions: Break participants into breakout rooms of 3-4 people. Instruct participants to share their identified strategies to implement staff training and engagement for sodium reduction success. Allow participants to share in the breakout rooms for 10 minutes. Then, bring the group together to share highlights and main points.

SAY: Welcome back! I cannot wait to hear about all the great staff engagement strategies you have planned. I will be sending you into breakout rooms to share and discuss the identified strategies to incorporate staff engagement for sodium reduction success. Then, we will come back as a group to share highlights and main points.

DO: Break participants into breakout rooms of 3-4 people. Allow participants to share in the breakout rooms for 10 minutes. Then, bring the group together to share highlights and main points.

SAY: Who would like to share first?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat.

FEEDBACK: Thank the participants for sharing.

SAY: Wow, you all have identified some great strategies to reduce sodium in your menus through staff training and engagement. Best of luck in your sodium reduction journey.

WRAP UP



SHOW SLIDE: *Thank You!*

DO: Ask participants to complete the Post-Assessment. Ask participants to complete the evaluation. Thank participants. Ask if there are any questions. Answer participants' questions. Distribute the training certificates out at this time.

Instructor's Note: Paste the link to the post-assessment into the chat.

APPENDIX

LINKS:

RESOURCE TITLE	LINK
Shaking It Up: Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors	https://theicn.org/shaking-it-up/
ICN's Ground Rules for Training	https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/ground-rules-for-training-mini-posters/
Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (77 FR 4088)	https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2012/01/26/2012-1010/nutrition-standards-in-the-national-school-lunch-and-school-breakfast-programs
Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium (87 FR 6984)	https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/07/2022-02327/child-nutrition-programs-transitional-standards-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium
Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals	https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/successful-approaches-reduce-sodium-school-meals-study
ICN	https://theicn.org/
Manager's Corner	https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/managers-corner/
Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 7 C.F.R § 210, 215, 220, 225, 226 (2024)	https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for
Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN)	http://www.theicn.org/cicn
Culinary Quick Bites	https://theicn.org/cicn/culinary-quick-bites-knife-skills/
Child Nutrition Sharing Site (CNSS)	https://theicn.org/cnss/
Team Nutrition	https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/
Team Nutrition Recipes	https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition-recipes
USDA Professional Standards Training Database	https://professionalstandards.fns.usda.gov/
USDA FNS Office of Food Safety	https://www.fns.usda.gov/ofsf/food-safety
USDA FNS Team Nutrition	https://teamnutrition.usda.gov/
Institute of Child Nutrition	https://theicn.org/
Questions & Answers Regarding Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Program Personnel	https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/questions-answers-regarding-professional-standards-state-and-local-school-nutrition

Training Needs Assessment Questions and Steps Handout

- Job Requirements Analysis:
 - Question: Can you describe the key responsibilities and tasks involved in your role as a school nutrition professional?
 - Steps: Begin by conducting one-on-one interviews with school nutrition staff. Ask them to outline their daily tasks, responsibilities, and any challenges they encounter. This information helps identify gaps in their knowledge or skills related to their job requirements.
- Skill and Knowledge Assessment:
 - Question: What specific skills or knowledge areas do you believe are most important for successfully performing your job?
 - Steps: Continue the interviews by asking staff about the skills and knowledge they consider vital in their roles. Encourage them to identify areas where they might need further training or development to enhance their job performance.
- Training Resource Identification:
 - Question: Are there any specific training materials, resources, or tools you believe would be helpful in improving your skills or job performance?
 - Steps: Inquire about the types of training resources employees think would be beneficial. This input can help in selecting or developing training materials and resources that are relevant to their needs.
- Challenges and Concerns:
 - Question: What are some of the challenges or concerns you face in your daily work related to school nutrition?
 - Steps: Listen to staff as they share their challenges and concerns. This information can reveal specific areas where additional training or support is needed to address issues effectively.
- Feedback from Supervisors:
 - Question: Have your supervisors provided any feedback or identified areas where you may need improvement in your job performance?
 - Steps: Conduct interviews with supervisors to gain insights into their perspectives on staff performance. Their feedback can help validate or identify additional training needs.
- Goals and Objectives:
 - Question: What are your career goals and objectives within the school nutrition field, and how can training support you in achieving them?
 - Steps: Discuss employees' long-term career aspirations and how training can play a role in their professional development within the school nutrition setting.
- Measurement of Training Effectiveness:
 - Question: How do you believe the impact of training should be measured to ensure it is effective?
 - Steps: Gather input on how staff believe the effectiveness of training should be evaluated. Their perspectives can inform the development of assessment tools and metrics.



Step-by-Step Training Needs Assessment Handout

A training needs assessment identifies gaps in knowledge, skills, or abilities among staff, and determines what training or development is required to address those gaps.

Five steps to conduct a training needs assessment:

1. Determine desired outcomes.
2. Identify specific challenges and areas of improvement.
3. Determine desired behaviors, knowledge, and skills.
4. Set training timeline and priorities.
5. Select training format and delivery method(s).

Employee Skill Assessment Form

Employee Information:	
Employee Name:	Job Title:
Date of Assessment:	Assessed by (Manager Name):

Instructions: This assessment is designed to evaluate the employee's proficiency in key areas related to school nutrition, aligning with the four key domains: Nutrition, Operations, Administration, and Communications/Marketing. Please rate the employee's skills and performance in each domain on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Novice" and 5 being "Expert." Provide specific comments and examples to support your ratings.

Domain: Nutrition

- Understanding of dietary guidelines and nutritional requirements.
- Ability to plan and prepare balanced and nutritious meals.
- Knowledge of special dietary needs and accommodations.

1. Novice 2. Developing 3. Competent 4. Proficient 5. Expert

Comments/Examples:

Domain: Operations

- Efficiency in day-to-day meal preparation and service.
- Adherence to food safety and sanitation standards.
- Inventory management and resource utilization.

1. Novice 2. Developing 3. Competent 4. Proficient 5. Expert

Comments/Examples:

Domain: Administration

- Accurate record-keeping and documentation.
- Compliance with reporting requirements.
- Ability to manage budgets and resources effectively.

1. Novice 2. Developing 3. Competent 4. Proficient 5. Expert

Comments/Examples:



Employee Skill Assessment Form (Continued)

Domain: Communications/Marketing

- Interactions with students, parents, and school staff.
- Handling of complaints and special dietary requests.
- Promotion of nutrition programs and services.

1. Novice 2. Developing 3. Competent 4. Proficient 5. Expert

Comments/Examples:

Overall Assessment:

- Based on your evaluation, please provide an overall rating for the employee's performance in relation to school nutrition:

1. Novice 2. Developing 3. Competent 4. Proficient 5. Expert

Comments/Examples:

Areas for Improvement:

- Identify specific areas where the employee can improve their skills or knowledge related to school nutrition:

Development Plan:

- Based on this assessment, outline a plan for the employee's professional development in the coming months. Include any training or resources that may be beneficial:

Manager's Signature: _____

Employee's Signature (if required): _____

SMART Goals Handout

A SMART goal is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

“S” stands for specific. State exactly what you want to accomplish. Ask yourself these questions:

- What do I want to accomplish?
- When will this happen?
- Where will this happen?
- Why am I setting this goal?

“M” stands for measurable. How will you evaluate whether or not you have met your goal? Ask yourself these questions:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know it's accomplished?
- What is the goal line?

“A” stands for achievable. Is your goal something you can accomplish? Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I prepared to make the commitment necessary to reach my target?
- Am I willing to make major changes in my routine and work environment?
- Do I need approval before major changes can be made?
- Is there a more achievable goal that I would be willing to work toward?

“R” stands for relevant. How does this goal align with your job responsibilities? Think about these questions:

- Do I have the resources I need?
- Does it make sense for my program?
- Does it align with my job responsibilities and staff needs?

“T” stands for time-bound. What timeframe would create a sense of urgency? Ask yourself:

- What can I do today to reach my goal?
- What can I do a week from now?
- What can I do a month from now?

To learn more about effective goal setting, visit <https://theicn.docebosaas.com> to enroll in our Effective Goals Setting Using SMART Goals iLearn course.



Action Plan

Instructions: Using the knowledge and skills you learned, complete the following application action plan.

List the most useful knowledge and/or skills you gained during this training.

What are some steps you can take to apply what you have learned?

What barriers do you think you might face at your job when trying to apply what you have learned from this training?

ASSESSMENT

1. What is a training needs assessment?
 - a. A report on the success of a training program.
 - b. A process for determining the training needs of program staff.
 - c. A list of potential training resources.
 - d. A document outlining training objectives.

2. Why is staff buy-in important for successful sodium reduction in school nutrition programs?
 - a. It increases program success.
 - b. It enhances staff knowledge.
 - c. It fosters a collaborative work environment.
 - d. All of the above.

3. What are some benefits of engaging staff in recipe and menu development?
 - a. Improved staff morale and job satisfaction.
 - b. Increased creativity and innovation in recipe and menu development.
 - c. More efficient and effective menu planning and recipe development processes.
 - d. All of the above.

4. What is one strategy for engaging staff in recipe and menu development?
 - a. Provide opportunities for staff to participate in taste-testing sessions.
 - b. Conduct regular surveys and focus groups.
 - c. Offer training sessions on nutrition, food preparation, and menu planning.
 - d. All of the above.

5. What is the purpose of identifying existing training resources in the recommended training?
 - a. To save money on new training.
 - b. To provide a list of potential resources to staff.
 - c. To identify gaps in training resources.
 - d. All of the above.

6. What is the benefit of involving staff in the decision-making process for menu planning and recipe development?
 - a. It fosters a collaborative work environment.
 - b. It improves staff morale.
 - c. It increases customer satisfaction.
 - d. All of the above.

7. What is the benefit of conducting regular surveys and focus groups to gather feedback from staff?
 - a. It improves communication and teamwork among staff.
 - b. It fosters a collaborative work environment.
 - c. It provides valuable feedback for program improvements.
 - d. All of the above.

8. What is the purpose of a training needs assessment?
 - a. To identify the knowledge and skills needed by staff for successful program implementation.
 - b. To provide recognition and rewards to staff for their contributions to program goals.
 - c. To create a collaborative work environment for staff.
 - d. To provide opportunities for staff to participate in taste-testing sessions.

9. What is a strategy for engaging staff in the recipe and menu development process?
 - a. Providing only one opportunity per year for staff to participate in taste-testing sessions.
 - b. Limiting staff communication and collaboration to email only.
 - c. Offering training sessions on nutrition, food preparation, and menu planning.
 - d. Ignoring staff feedback and suggestions.

10. What is another strategy for engaging staff in the recipe and menu development process?
 - a. Conduct regular staff meetings to discuss menu planning and recipe development.
 - b. Foster a competitive work environment where staff feel motivated to outdo each other.
 - c. Withhold recognition and rewards to encourage staff to work harder.
 - d. Limiting staff communication and collaboration to email only.

RESOURCES



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