Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for State Agency Child Nutrition Professionals

Purpose
The purpose of this project was to identify the functional areas, competencies, knowledge, and skills needed by child nutrition (CN) professionals working in state agencies.

Method

Phase I
An expert panel of ten state agency professionals participated in a modified Delphi process to identify the functional areas encompassing job responsibilities of state agency CN professionals.

Phase II
Researchers drafted a list of proposed knowledge and skill statements using information from the USDA, School Nutrition Association, and National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) Web sites; current job descriptions provided by state agencies; and additional statements from previous NFSMI research studies.

Phase III
Review panel consisted of 84 CN professionals representing the seven USDA regions.

Results

Six functional areas encompassing job responsibilities of state agency CN professionals were identified: Financial Management; Personnel Management; Program Management; Program and Regulatory Compliance; Technology and Data Management; and Training, Technical Assistance, and Outreach.

Twenty-four competencies, 66 knowledge statements, and 104 skill statements were confirmed by the Phase III review panel.

The review panel identified 34 statements as needed when state agency CN professionals are hired and 136 statements as being advanced and gained through professional experience and training. Of the 34 statements identified as needed when hired, the most statements came from the Personnel Management functional area, followed by Program Management then Training, Technical Assistance, and Outreach.

Application of Results

The functional areas, competencies, knowledge, and skills provide a clear picture of the complex role of state agency CN professionals.

State agency directors can use this information to prepare job descriptions and evaluation criteria for state agency CN staff.

The competencies, knowledge, and skills can provide the foundation to design training programs for new staff and on-going professional development for all CN professional staff.

The review panel considered the majority (80%) of the knowledge and skill statements Advanced which confirms that state agency CN professionals are expected to operate at a high level of practice.

The competencies, knowledge, and skills framework can provide the basis for mentoring and succession planning activities to prepare CN professionals for higher-level state agency responsibilities.

The resource is available at http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20140108022027.pdf