

Perceptions of School Nutrition Directors Regarding Equipment Purchasing and Facility Design Projects



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OBJECTIVES

- To identify issues impacting decisions in equipment purchasing and facility design projects, describe challenges to the success of these projects, and define skills needed to execute equipment purchasing and facility design projects.

METHOD

- Expert panel consisted of state agency personnel and school nutrition (SN) directors previously identified as content experts in facility design and/or equipment purchasing.
- Expert panel members were guided through a facilitated discussion to determine their views on equipment purchasing and facility design issues.
- Survey developed from expert panel discussions
 - 21 issues impacting equipment purchasing and facility design decisions
 - 10 challenges impacting the success of equipment purchasing and facility design projects
 - Issues and challenges rated on a four-point scale – 1 (*not important*) to 4 (*very important*)
 - 9 possible skills needed to execute equipment purchasing and facility design projects
 - Skills rated on a four-point scale – 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*)
 - Each item rated separately for equipment purchasing and facility design
 - Program and personal characteristics
- Survey mailed to a random sample of 1,050 SN directors stratified by USDA region.

RESULTS

- Three hundred fifty-one (33%) SN directors completed surveys.
- Almost all (95%) of SN directors were actively involved in the purchase of equipment for their programs and 81% had participated in renovations or new construction of SN facilities.
- Most SN directors reported that they had not received any formal training in facility design (79%) or equipment purchasing (72%).

ISSUES IMPACTING SN DIRECTORS' DECISIONS ON:

- Equipment Purchasing
 - Budget (3.79 ± 0.49)
 - Efficiency (3.78 ± 0.44)
 - Food safety and sanitation (3.75 ± 0.55)
- Facility Design
 - Efficiency (3.80 ± 0.43)
 - Budget (3.79 ± 0.54)
 - Food safety and sanitation (3.71 ± 0.55)

CHALLENGES IMPACTING SUCCESS

ASSOCIATED WITH:

- Equipment Purchasing Projects
 - Understanding local/state/federal codes (3.43 ± 0.69)
 - Lack of knowledge (3.40 ± 0.66)
 - Planning for flexibility (3.39 ± 0.60)
- Facility Design Projects
 - Understanding local/state/federal codes (3.47 ± 0.66)
 - Lack of knowledge (3.44 ± 0.68)
 - Planning for flexibility (3.42 ± 0.59)

SKILLS NEEDED TO EXECUTE:

- Equipment Purchasing Projects
 - Communicates effectively program needs (3.65 ± 0.49)
 - Explores available equipment to meet operational needs (3.56 ± 0.53)
 - Develops appropriate specifications (3.49 ± 0.57)
- Facility Design Projects
 - Communicates effectively program needs (3.69 ± 0.50)
 - Explores available equipment to meet operational needs (3.50 ± 0.54)
 - Translates operational needs based on menu (3.47 ± 0.63)

APPLICATION

- Most SN directors are actively involved in equipment purchasing and facility design projects.
- Equipment purchasing and facility design decisions are multi-faceted in nature, with numerous issues being considered for any one project.
- SN directors recognize the significance of these decisions and seek resources based on sound information to aid in formulating informed decisions.
- SN directors need resources to stay current on the constantly evolving environment of equipment and facility design industries.
- There is a need for state agencies and training professionals to provide assistance in interpreting state and federal regulations related to equipment purchasing and facility design projects.

