



Exploring the Utilization of Key Performance Indicators by School Nutrition Directors

INTRODUCTION

Data-driven decision-making, utilizing key performance indicators (KPIs), is an effective way for school nutrition (SN) directors to decide where to focus their time and resources. Data-driven decision-making is the process of using operational data commonly collected by SN programs to make informed decisions about planning and implementing change. The KPIs are metrics that allow SN professionals to utilize a rigorous numbers-oriented approach to target specific areas of emphasis, and gauge results in an objective and measurable way.

Currently, there is a lack of research concerning SN professionals' usage or perceptions of KPIs as tools to support SN program management. The purpose of this research was to explore SN directors' usage and perceptions of KPIs.



METHOD

- An expert panel of 10 SN professionals was convened to discuss issues associated with utilizing KPIs in SN programs.
- Information from the expert panel was used to develop a draft survey that was validated by a review panel of 21 SN professionals.
- The survey was mailed to a random sample of 700 SN directors representing seven USDA regions.

Standard School Nutrition KPIs

1. Meals Per Labor Hour
2. Cost as a % of Revenue
3. Cost Per Meal
4. Revenue Per Meal
5. Inventory Turnover Rate
6. Days of Inventory On-Hand
7. Average Daily Participation
8. Percent Over-Production
9. Break Even Point
10. Staff Turnover Rate
11. Absentee Rate

RESULTS

- The survey had a response rate of 29%, and respondents represented all USDA regions.
- The largest percentage of respondents (65%) came from school districts with an enrollment of 2,000 – 29,999.
- Districts with an enrollment of less than 1,999 students accounted for 28% of replies, and districts with enrollment of 30,000 or greater accounted for 7%.

ACCESS, UNDERSTANDING AND USAGE OF KPIS

- SN directors have access to data for calculating:
 - Average daily participation (ADP) = 98.0%
 - Cost per meal (CPM) = 94.0%
 - Meals per labor hour (MPLH) = 93.6%
- KPIS that directors have an adequate understanding of:
 - ADP = 96.0%
 - MPLH = 88.0%
 - CPM = 85.0%
- KPIS used for decision-making:
 - ADP = 91.2%
 - CPM = 88.7%
 - MPLH = 82.0%
- KPIS not calculated:
 - Percent over-production = 58.6%
 - Staff turnover rate = 53.4%
 - Inventory turnover rate = 50.2%

AGREEMENT WITH KPI PERCEPTION STATEMENTS

- When calculated correctly, SN KPIS provide essential information about SN programs (96%)
- KPIS are useful for decision-making (95%)
- KPIS are valuable tools for evaluating a SN program (92%)
- Decisions based on incorrectly interpreted KPIS can have negative consequences for a SN program (89%)
- KPIS are undervalued by SN professionals (73%)
- KPIS are time consuming to calculate (72%)
- KPIS are easy to calculate (67%)
- Data for calculating KPIS is easy to obtain (59%)
- KPIS are difficult to interpret (34%)
- There is no uniform process for calculating KPIS (33%)
- SN directors receive adequate training on KPIS (13%)

CONCLUSIONS

- Average daily participation, meals per labor hour, and cost per meal are the KPIS SN directors have the greatest access to for calculating and greatest understanding for use in decision-making.
- Percent over-production, staff turnover rate, and inventory turnover rate are the KPIS least often used by SN directors.
- Most SN directors believe that KPIS are valuable tools for decision-making and program evaluation.
- School nutrition directors from the smallest school districts are least likely to perceive that KPIS are easy to calculate or useful for decision-making and program evaluation.

For more information, you can download the full technical report at <http://www.theicn.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20150925031645.pdf>

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