AZ HEALTH ZONE

FY19 Special Project Report

Feasibility Research to Expand School Health Nutrition Evaluation with the **Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard** (FRESHNESS)

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Prepared for the AZ Health Zone by the State Evaluation Team:

Theresa LeGros
Kathryn Orzech
Laurel Jacobs
Julie Kennedy

**A | COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES
Nutritional Sciences**

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Snapshot of FRESHNESS Findings

The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement (SLM) scorecard is an acceptable FY20 evaluation. It aligns well with Local Implementing Agency (LIA) work plans. LIAs do need guidance regarding the strategy under which they should report SLM activities.

There is LIA demand for using the SLM scorecard. Many LIA staff are personally involved in managing, implementing, and evaluating the SLM, and all of those with experience completing a scorecard found it to be useful. LIA interviewees expressed their demand for using the SLM scorecard based upon the scorecard's feasibility and their perception of the scorecard as an effective way to measure outcomes and support planning efforts.

LIAs view the SLM scorecard as a practical tool. All survey respondents who used the scorecard reported that it was "very easy" to complete, though some interviewees and scorecard pilot participants expressed concern over particular scorecard items, which should be addressed in future trainings. In terms of an FY20 evaluation protocol, LIAs generally preferred to: (1) complete the hardcopy scorecard first; (2) have the LIA lead the scorecard completion, with the option to involve others; and (3) be flexible in terms of pre-post timing.

LIAs require specialized evaluation training to implement the FY20 SLM assessment. Almost all LIAs were amenable to an in-person training during the annual Policies & Procedures Meeting. Training should focus on how to complete and submit the SLM scorecard, including areas of LIA misunderstanding, uncertainty, questions, and concerns reported here. The State Evaluation Team (SET) will rely on the State Implementation Team (SIT) to lead trainings related to approaching schools and using SLM scorecard findings to plan and implement changes.

There is no need for the SET to adapt the FY20 SLM evaluation protocol to account for YPAR. No LIAs reported definitive plans to initiate a YPAR project related to the SLM in FY20.

FY20 SLM Scorecard Evaluation Plan

After analyzing all FRESHNESS data, the SET has developed the following FY20 SLM evaluation timeline and protocol:

Oct 2019. The SET conducts an in-person SLM Evaluation Training that incorporates lessons learned from FRESHNESS during the AZ Health Zone's annual Policies & Procedures Meeting.

Oct 2019-Sept 20, 2020. LIAs complete pre and post SLM scorecards with partner schools.

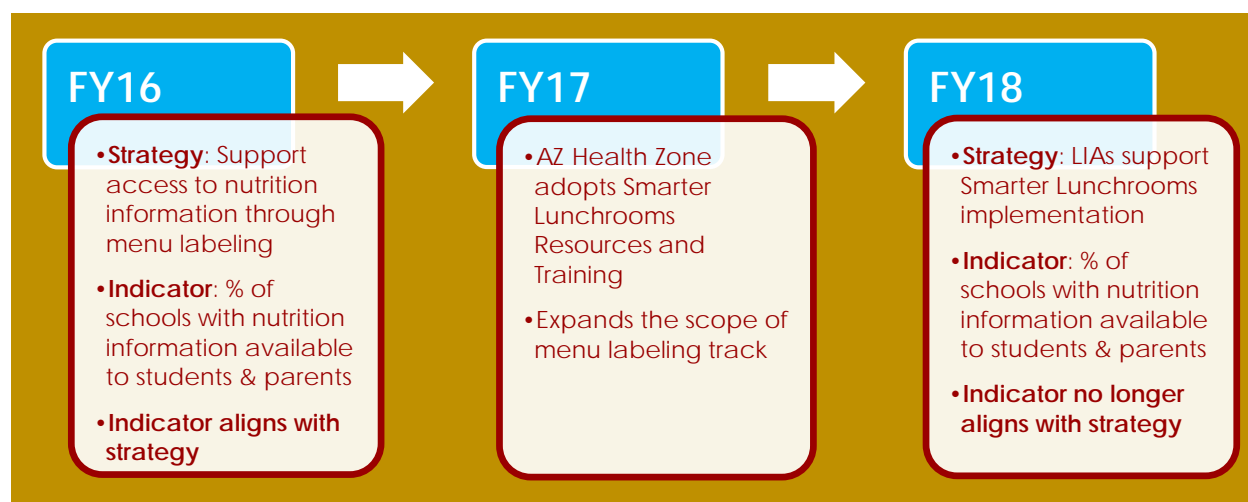| COMPONENT	EVALUATION REQUIREMENT OR RECOMMENDATION
When will LIAs complete the SLM Scorecard?	Required: In keeping with the SIT's guidance for SLM activities, LIAs must complete at least 1 scorecard in FY20 if the LIA has the SLM strategy. LIAs should confirm SLM plans with schools prior to submitting their FY20 SLM scorecard denominator. Optional: If the LIA does not have the SLM strategy, they may provide SLM support as a part of the LWP strategy. In this case, the LIA must report their assessment activity under the *Wellness Promotion & Marketing* action.
Who will complete the SLM scorecard?	Required: Trained LIA coaches *must* lead scorecard completion. To be a trained coach, the LIA staff has (1) completed the SLM evaluation training and (2) provided the SET with a copy of an SLM training certificate after completing an in-person or online SLM course (previous years' certificates or email confirmations are fine). Optional: Others (e.g., SHAC members) may complete the scorecard with the LIA lead, although the LIA lead must finalize the scores submitted to the SET.
How will LIAs complete the SLM scorecard?	Required: There must be at least 12 weeks (3 months) between PRE and POST, and both PRE and POST must be submitted by September 20, 2020. Optional: LIAs can submit PREs completed in FY19 with POSTs completed in FY20. Required: The SLM expects that LIAs take before and after photos of the lunchroom as a part of the SLM's Step 1: SPOT and Step 4: PROVE!
How will LIAs submit and track their SLM scorecards?	Required: Set up an SLM account at: https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org and select Yes on the Ambassador tab for the "Share Information" box. The Ambassador Name is AZ Health Zone (pending SLM approval). LIAs with existing accounts just need to update their Ambassador tab. This account serves as the data entry portal *and* the LIAs' internal tracking system. Required: After completing a hardcopy scorecard, submit the completed cover sheet information and scorecards through the SLM online account. There is no SEEDS cover sheet. LIAs should also keep their original hardcopy scorecard for future reference. Optional: Upload photos to https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org as you complete the online scorecard. The SET has also developed an SLM photo library in Box that LIAs can access by contacting Julie Kennedy (juliekennedy@email.arizona.edu) for permission. LIAs can also ask Julie to add their photos to this living library.

Dec 2020. The SET incorporates findings into the AZ Heath Zone's FY20 Annual Evaluation Report.

Project Details

Background

The AZ Health Zone's menu of SNAP-Ed strategies was introduced at the start of fiscal year 2016 (FY16), including *Nutrition Information in Schools*. During the FY16-FY20 grant cycle, Local Implementing Agencies (LIAs) that have adopted this strategy may work in either or both of two tracks: (1) Menu Labeling or (2) Classroom Curricula.

In FY17, the AZ Health Zone adopted the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement[1] (SLM) as the evidence-based intervention that defines Menu Labeling. This expanded the potential scope of LIAs' cafeteria-centered programming from menu labeling, only, to a variety of SLM improvements that were not measured in the Evaluation Framework:

FY16 → FY17 → FY18

FY16
- **Strategy**: Support access to nutrition information through menu labeling
- **Indicator**: % of schools with nutrition information available to students & parents
- **Indicator aligns with strategy**

FY17
- AZ Health Zone adopts Smarter Lunchrooms Resources and Training
- Expands the scope of menu labeling track

FY18
- **Strategy**: LIAs support Smarter Lunchrooms implementation
- **Indicator**: % of schools with nutrition information available to students & parents
- **Indicator no longer aligns with strategy**

To re-align the evaluation indicator with the enhanced definition of the Menu Labeling track, the State Evaluation Team (SET) proposed the FY19 Special Project: Feasibility Research to Expand School Health Nutrition Evaluation with the SLM Scorecard (FRESHNESS).

Goal and Objectives

FRESHNESS was a feasibility study with the overarching goal of determining how the SET could incorporate the SLM scorecard into the Menu Labeling evaluation track for the AZ Health Zone's *Nutrition Information in Schools* strategy. The SLM scorecard is intended to act as a "list of simple, no-cost or low-cost strategies that can increase participation, reduce food waste, and increase selection and consumption of healthy school food."[1] Our objectives were to assess the following feasibility constructs:[2]

🍓 Acceptability. How would the SLM scorecard fit with LIAs' existing and planned School Health programming?

🍓 Demand. To what extent could/would LIAs use the SLM scorecard to assess and inform their School Health programming?

🍓 Practicality. What elements would constitute the most feasible and useful evaluation protocol using the SLM scorecard? (e.g., Pre-post time scale? Use with menu labeling, only, or with LWP strategy?)

🍓 Implementation. What elements would be essential to a SLM scorecard evaluation training to ensure accuracy, feasibility, and ease of use?

🍓 Adaptation. To what extent are LIAs working in, or planning to work in, youth participatory action research (YPAR) or other community-engaged programming when implementing the SLM?

Methods

We used a three-phase, mixed methods design to carry out FRESHNESS in FY19. In keeping with the SET's *Guiding Principles*,[3] the key deliverable emerging from the project was an accurate, feasible, and useful SLM evaluation protocol into the AZ Health Zone Evaluation Framework.

FRESHNESS: Three-Phased Mixed Methods Design		
Phase I	LIA Feedback	Online survey for LIAs & LIA interviews
Phase II	Piloting the Scorecard	Observe LIA scorecard completion & debrief
Phase III	Deliverables	Develop evaluation protocol

Phase I: LIA Feedback. We collected LIA feedback regarding previous work in the menu labeling track, future plans, and experiences to date with the SLM and its associated scorecard.

🍓 An online Qualtrics survey distributed to all LIAs working in school health gauged the demand, acceptability, and practicality of a SLM scorecard evaluation. We received 17 survey responses from 13 LIAs.

🍓 We conducted key informant interviews with 9 LIA staff from 6 LIAs. Interviews were used to further explore SLM scorecard demand, acceptability, and practicality; to better anticipate training needs (implementation); and to appraise whether LIAs have plans to work in YPAR/community-engaged evaluation (adaptation).

Phase II: Piloting the Scorecard. We recruited 7 LIAs staff who participated in the Phase I surveys and/or interviews to complete the SLM scorecard with nine schools while an evaluator observed the process. Immediately following the scorecard completion, the evaluator debriefed with the LIA staff person. This enabled us to further explore the *FRESHNESS* constructs of practicality and implementation. To encourage LIA and school participation, the SET provided $50 SLM gift baskets to schools who agreed to assist LIAs in completing the scorecard.

For data entry, the SET explored the strengths and weaknesses of hardcopy data entry versus online data entry using the SLM website and found the SLM online systems to capture the information needed by the SET for future evaluations, as long as that data were made available to the SET. In collaboration with the State Implementation Team (SIT), the SET contacted the SLM regarding the potential development of a data sharing agreement using the SLM's online portal.

Phase III: Deliverables. The SET analyzed the data collected from the Phase I surveys using basic descriptive statistics in Excel. We analyzed the qualitative data collected during the interviews

and scorecard pilot visits using thematic analysis conducted via NVivo v11.0 software. Results were used to develop the evaluation protocol presented in the body of this report.

Findings

Acceptability. Results from the online survey revealed that <u>the SLM scorecard was well-aligned with LIA work plans</u>. Most respondents had used and/or planned to use the SLM as a part of their Local Wellness Policy (n=13, 76%) and/or Smarter Lunchrooms (n=12, 71%) workplan strategies (Figure 1); it was especially popular in FY19. Of note, the survey was administered five months *before* the AZ Health Zone's SLM coaches' training, which likely generated additional interest.

1. My LIA uses or will use the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement. [If yes, when?] (N=17)

YES, 13 (76%)	MAYBE, 3 (18%)
	[FY20, 1]
[Before FY18, 4; FY18, 6; FY 19, 12; FY20, 6]	NO, 1 (6%)
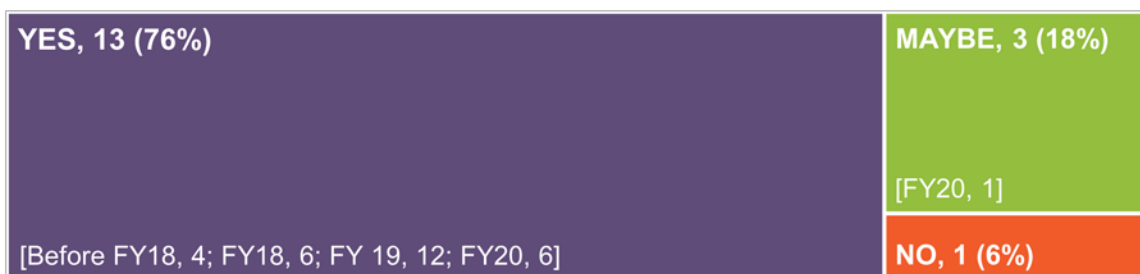
LIAs also reported plans to reach more schools with the SLM in the future. According to Figure 2, 46-76 schools are tentatively scheduled to receive future SLM support from LIAs.

2. About how many schools *have received* or *will receive* your SLM support? (N=14)
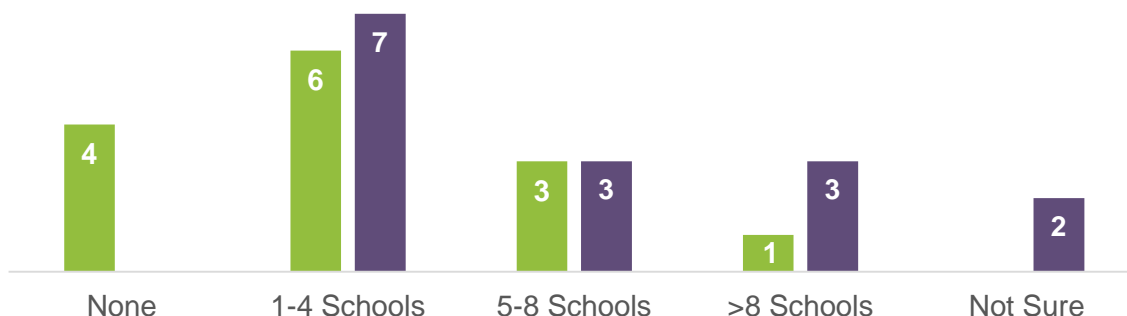

All interviewees confirmed that the SLM was a part of their current and future school health-related work, falling under either *Local Wellness Policy* or the Menu Labeling track of the *Nutrition Information* strategy. However, there was some <u>confusion over which strategy was more appropriate to report SLM activities</u>. In terms of the scorecard itself, most interviewees and pilot participants felt that it was an acceptable means by which to assess their SLM supports. During one scorecard pilot, an evaluator observed a large SLM banner posted in the cafeteria, a clear indication that the LIA was indeed providing SLM support.

Demand. Most survey respondents were familiar with the SLM and the associated scorecard, (Figure 3), and most (71%) had received some type of SLM training prior to the May 2019 training. Many LIA staff reported being personally involved in managing, implementing and evaluating the SLM (Figure 4). But, only 5 of 13 (38%) respondents had actually used the scorecard at the time of the survey. <u>All of those that had completed a scorecard found it to be at least somewhat useful</u>, and

most found it moderately useful. These respondents also reported taking photos to assess the SLM, and that these photos were useful.

3. How familiar you are with the SLM (N=15) and the SLM Scorecard (N=14)?

	Not familiar	A little familiar	Pretty familiar	Extremely familiar
SLM		5	5	5
SLM Scorecard	2	4	2	6
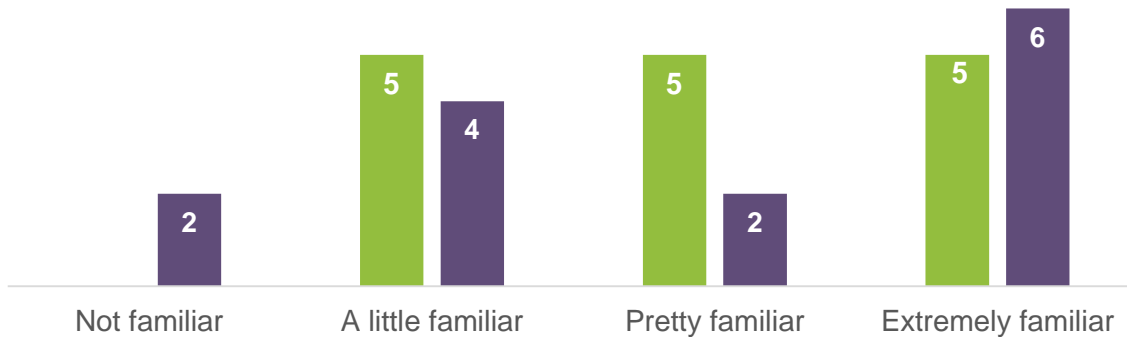
4. Rate your personal level of involvement with managing SLM activities (N=15), carrying out SLM activities (N=14), and completing the SLM scorecard (N=13)?

	Not involved	A little involved	Moderately involved	Extremely involved
managing	4	2	4	5
carrying out	4	2	3	5
completing	5	1	1	6
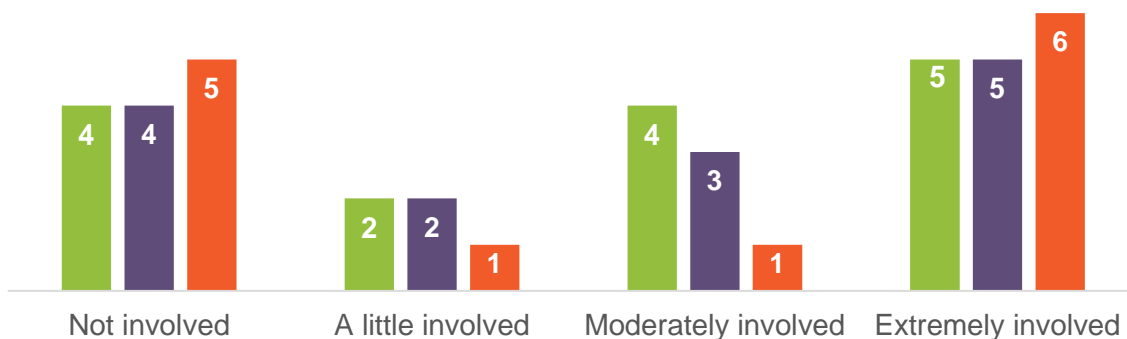
Interviewees expressed demand for using the SLM scorecard based upon the scorecard's feasibility and utility for their approved work. Most also discussed the scorecard as an effective way to measure outcomes and support planning efforts, and many sought further training.

Practicality. Survey respondents and interviewees generally felt the SLM scorecard was a feasible and useful evaluation measure. All survey respondents who had used the scorecard reported that it was "very easy" to use, and interviewees as well as scorecard pilot participants described the scorecard using phrases such as "straightforward" and "rather easy." All interviewees described the important role the scorecard played or could play in their ability to plan, implement, and evaluate the SLM; in one case, the interviewee used the scorecard to respond to districts with upcoming Arizona Department of Education administrative reviews, saying that the scorecard is "also recognized by the ADE as a resource tool."

Some interviewees and pilot participants did express concern over the usefulness of particular scorecard items. They felt that the following items could be either less clear or not applicable to certain school environments: creative names, community involvement, moving more white milk, reimbursable meals, and poster displays. Nevertheless, LIAs were generally positive about the scorecard's utility and suggested future training to address these concerns.

The SET also gained valuable insights regarding the feasibility of various elements of an FY20 SLM evaluation protocol:

Table 1. Summary of LIA Feedback: How/When should the Scorecard be Completed?

PROTOCOL ELEMENT	SUMMARY OF RESULTS	DETAILS
Hardcopy or online scorecard?	Hardcopy preferred	54% of survey respondents preferred hardcopy No one preferred online, only Felt hardcopies were very useful for notes & marking progress
Who completes the scorecard?	LIA should lead, with the option to involve others	77% of survey respondents preferred LIA staff involvement, followed by cafeteria staff (54%), students (34%), other school staff (23%), and SHACs (8%) Most interviewees and pilot participants favored LIA-led scorecards, sometimes with other adults involved. They were less enthusiastic about student-led completion, expressing concerns over data accuracy
When are pre and post scorecards completed?	At least 12 weeks (3 months) between pre and post	Survey preferences were mixed: 38% said just before/after the SLM changes, 31% said start/end of the school year, and 31% had no preference/wanted flexibility Interview responses were also mixed. Most felt that flexibility was critical to success with schools. None expressed interest in biennial or other prolonged periods between pre and post.

Implementation. To prepare LIAs to implement an FY20 evaluation, we asked them about their training needs and preferences. The majority (63%) of survey respondents were amenable to either in-person or online training, followed by 19% who preferred in-person training during the AZ Health Zone's annual Policies and Procedures Meeting. Only one respondent (6%) preferred an online webinar.

In terms of training content, the interviews and scorecard pilot revealed a need to focus on the elements outlined in Table 2 (next page).

Adaptation. Many SLM scorecard items explicitly call for student engagement, for example, creating cafeteria artwork or volunteering in the lunchroom. The SET's SLM survey asked LIAs about the extent to which they engage or plan to engage students in the SLM, including youth participatory action research (YPAR). With YPAR, the SLM scorecard evaluation would need to be adapted to enable student completion of the SLM scorecard.

Most LIAs (53%) had plans for student engagement that aligned with scorecard items, especially poster and sign creation. Many (40%) were unsure about their future plans, and only one (7%) had no plans. In contrast, no LIA reported YPAR activities, though one LIA reported using the overall YPAR *concept* in their approach to working with students. Similarly, no interviewee had definitive plans for a YPAR-based SLM, and they generally felt that YPAR would not be feasible with their target elementary students. Some interviewees felt that, per the YPAR method, the students would need to choose the SLM themselves as their target project rather than be told to work on the SLM.

Therefore, there is no need for the SET to consider adapting the FY20 SLM evaluation protocol to account for YPAR.

2. Essential Elements of an AZ Health Zone SLM Evaluation Training.

TRAINING ELEMENT	REQUIREMENT OR RECOMMENDATION	SUPPORTING DATA
Preparation	Required: • SLM online or in-person certification • Evaluation training • Review cover sheet Recommended: • Review LWP • Review lunch menu • Highlight and/or prefill scorecard items	55% of survey respondents sought more information from their previous training Scorecard observations revealed instances where LIAs were either not trained or had forgotten SLM guidelines for certain items Interviews and scorecard observations revealed that pre-filling items helped reduce the need for LIAs to ask schools
What to bring	Required: • Scorecard • Writing utensil • Camera Recommended: • SLM Handbook • SLM FAQs • Scorecard Summary • Clipboard • Printed cover sheet	Photos are an integral part of the SLM SPOT and PROVE steps. Scorecard observations revealed a need to remind LIAs of the existence and usefulness of the SLM Handbook, FAQs, and Scorecard Summary. Some LIAs felt clipboards at first visit could be intimidating, but that once the school knew them, clipboards were helpful to organize materials and to write standing.
When to start	Recommended: • Prefill items • Arrive 20 min early	Early arrival enabled LIAs to observe hot meals before students arrived, prefill many items, and adjust for new start times.
Number of lunch periods to observe	Required: 1 Recommended: > 2	LIAs observed different practices with younger vs older cohorts.
Completing the scorecard	Required: • LIA staff completes final scorecard • Ask stakeholders when unknown • Check the items that are in place Recommended: • Use a detailed marking system • Make notes and use N/A • Go with the lunch flow • Verify responses, have others help	Interviews and observations revealed improved confidence in data accuracy when LIA completed the scorecard items and worked with multiple stakeholders. They also revealed that LIAs were able to complete scorecards more efficiently and accurately when they used a marking system to delineate "no" from "need to ask" and "not yet addressed", and "N/A" when the item did not apply to the school.
Problematic Items	Recommended: • Engage school stakeholders in choosing action items • Do not focus on numerical score • Use awards only when appropriate	LIAs were concerned that some items were impractical or N/A for certain schools The SLM advises: choose items you want to improve, gold is achievable without a perfect score.
Cover Sheet	Required: All information	Need to know when schools use catering, are community eligible, etc.
Tracking system	Required: Keep SLM records	Some LIAs already do this, most do not.
Approaching schools	Covered by the SIT in other SLM trainings	Many LIAs asked for assistance with this during all data collection.
Use of findings	Covered by the SIT in other SLM trainings	Observations revealed a need to continue training some LIAs on next steps.

Next Steps

The SET will provide this report to the SIT at least two months' prior to the start of FY20. This will allow the SET to address any questions or concerns, finalize the evaluation plan outlined on page 3, and negotiate any training elements that have not been considered here.

References

1. Smarter Lunchrooms Movement: Nudging Kids to Eat Healthier. Available at: https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/

2. Bowen, D. J., Kreuter, M., Spring, B., Cofta-Woerpel, L., Linnan, L., Weiner, D., … Fernandez, M. (2009). How We Design Feasibility Studies. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *36*(5), 452–457. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2009.02.002

3. AZ Health Zone. Guiding Principles for the AZ Health Zone Evaluation Framework. In *FFY 2018 Policies and Procedures Manual.* Available at: https://www.eatwellbewell.org/uploads/media/documents/ffy18_azhz_pp-manual_final_1-16-18.pdf