

COST SAVING TIPS: Maximizing School Nutrition Budgets

Foodservice professionals are experts on getting the biggest bang for their nutritional buck. Stretching budgets to provide tasty, nutritious meals to the students who rely on them is never a simple task—and it gets more complicated as the costs of fuel and food rise.

Successful School Food Authorities (SFAs) **use every resource available, keep tight financial control, and make every bite of food count**. Click [here](#) to read "Meeting the Challenge of Rising Food Costs for Healthier School Meals," a fact sheet from USDA's Team Nutrition. Below are some more tips that help many SFAs control their costs. Whether they are new or familiar to you, they may offer some new ideas to boost the economy in your program.

Use Every Resource Available

- Commodities are a great way to stretch budgets, especially when SFAs use their entitlements to buy food that would be much more expensive commercially. Click the link below for fact sheets about federal commodities and school meals. [Commodity Food Facts](#)
- Food purchasing cooperatives (co-ops) also help SFAs, especially smaller ones, amplify their buying power. Contact your Education Service Center for information about co-ops serving your area.

Keep Tight Financial Control

- Use sound financial principles in administering your programs.
 - Identifying revenue and expenditure resources.
 - Identify your meal cost, meal per labor hour and food waste.
- Contact your Education Service Center for information about technical assistance and training on financial management in your area.
- "Financial Management: A Course for School Food Service Directors" is a course from the National Food Science Management Institute (NFSMI) to improve cost control in nutrition programs. Click the link below to learn more about the course and download materials. [Financial Management: A Course for School Food Service Directors](#)

Make Every Bite of Food Count

- Menu Planning is the key to success for all school meal programs. With well-planned menus, a program will meet state and federal guidelines, plan purchasing and scheduling efficiently, and teach its customers—the students—to value, crave, and pursue healthy eating habits for a lifetime, and possibly increase the participation in the programs and your revenue.
- TDA's Training Connections released a course on Menu Planning in May 2008. Each regional Education Service Center offers Menu Planning training provided by Child Nutrition Specialists through summer workshops. Click the link below to view the current schedule of training available through the Education Service Centers. [Education Service Center Training](#)
- Additionally, USDA maintains a Web page for Menu Planning training resources. Click the link below to access this site. [USDA Menu Planning Training](#)