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*Empowering Indian Country through economic development and greater food access*

# Reimagining Hunger in Times of Crisis:

Insights, Case Studies, and Survey Results from Indian Country

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**HER/NOPREN COVID-19 Food & Nutrition Working Group**

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## FOOD INSECURITY RATE RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

### FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Food insecurity rates are statistically significantly higher for respondents with children under age 18 in their household ( $p=0.001$ ), with 56 percent experiencing food insecurity and 31 percent experiencing very low food security during COVID-19. Similarly, 59 percent of respondents with children under age 5 in their household experienced food insecurity and 33 percent experienced very low food security (Figure 4).

Households with children experiencing greater levels of food insecurity is a pattern consistent across online surveys of food insecurity conducted during COVID-19 and with the latest 2020 USDA Economic Research Service's (ERS) annual food security estimates. A recent review of other online surveys during COVID-19<sup>45</sup> provides evidence that regardless of the data source, studies consistently find that food hardship has increased during COVID-19 and is higher among households with children. Congruent with this pattern, USDA ERS's annual report, Household Food Security in the United States in 2020, shows that the rate of food insecurity in 2020 (most of which was characterized by COVID-19) for households with children (14.8 percent) was higher than for those without children (8.8 percent).<sup>46</sup>

The rate of food insecurity for respondents with children under age 18 in their household was 14.8 percent.

One contributing factor to food insecurity is when school children are not able to access school meals through the National School Lunch Program, Breakfast in the Classroom Program, and snacks from school. Food insecurity is also higher for children at home.

The food insecurity rate for respondents without children in their household was 8.8 percent, which is lower than the rate for respondents with children (14.8 percent).

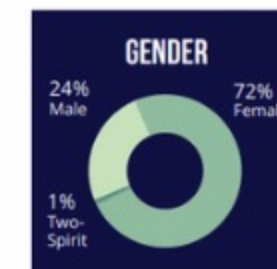
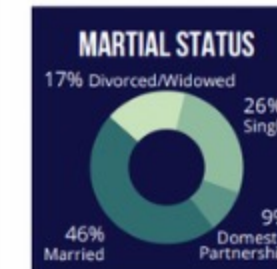
# REIMAGINING HUNGER RESPONSES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

### Insights from Case Examples and a Survey of Native Communities' Food Access During COVID-19



Photo by Zuni Youth Enrichment Project

#### Key Characteristics of NAAF Food Access Survey Respondents



Source: Native American Agriculture Fund Food Access Survey



**FOOD INSECURITY IS TOO  
HIGH IN INDIAN COUNTRY**

**49%**

**OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA  
NATIVES EXPERIENCED FOOD  
INSECURITY DURING COVID-19**



# Important Insights from the Survey:

**54%**

54 percent indicated that sometime or often during COVID-19 they couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.

**48%**

48 percent indicated that sometime or often during COVID-19 the food their household bought just didn't last, and they didn't have money to get more.

**37%**

37 percent indicated that, in at least one month during COVID-19, they or other adults in their household cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food. Ten percent reported this occurred almost every month during COVID-19.

**34%**

34 percent indicated that they ate less than they felt they should because there wasn't enough money for food.

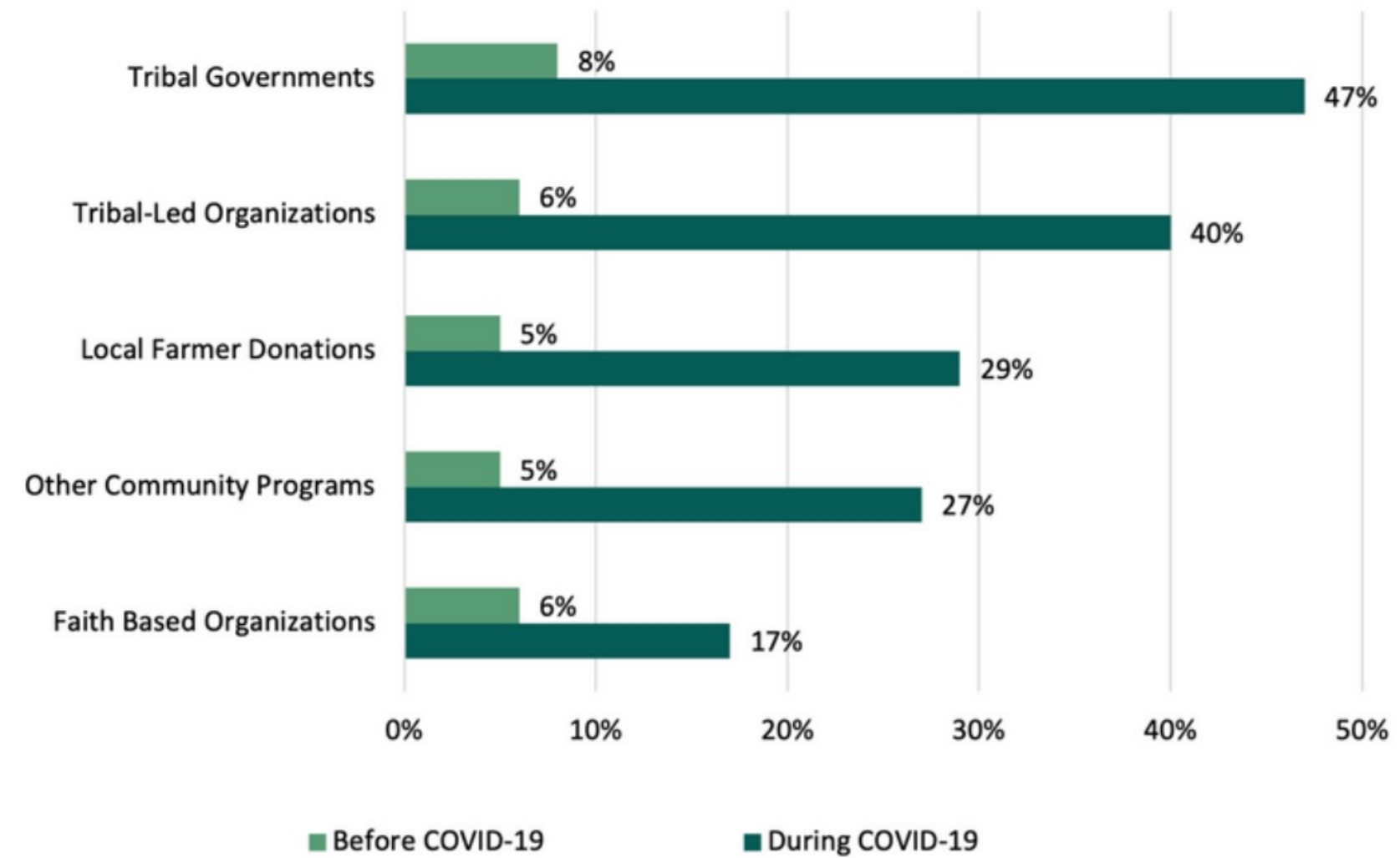


**FRAC**  
Food Research & Action Center



**NATIVE COMMUNITIES'  
FOOD ACCESS SHIFTED  
DURING COVID-19**

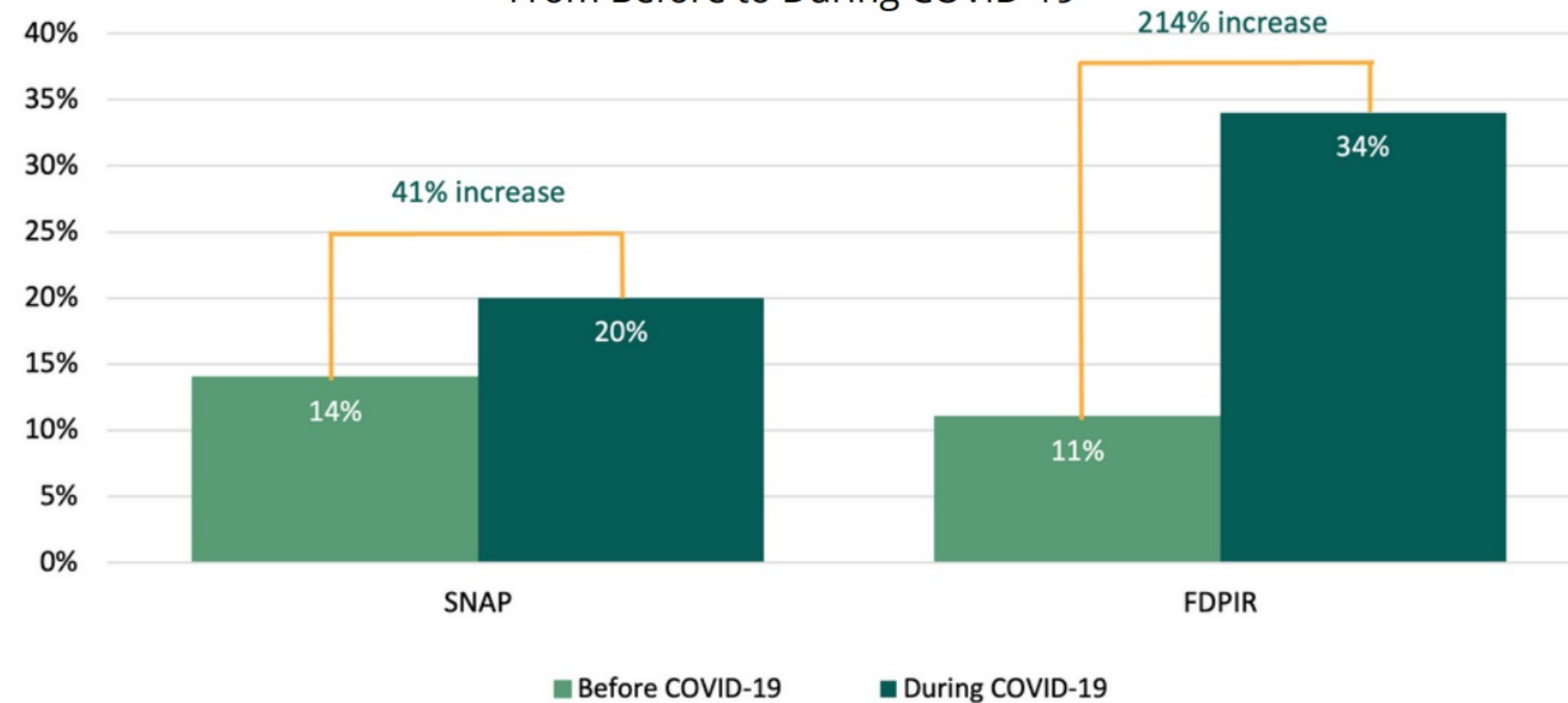
**Figure 12.** Proportion of Respondents That Received Food Assistance from Each Organization Before and During COVID-19



Source: Native American Agriculture Fund Food Access Survey

# Shift Towards Tribally Led Programs

**Figure 10.** Change in SNAP and FDPIR Participation From Before to During COVID-19



Source: Native American Agriculture Fund Food Access Survey

# Federal Food Assistance Program Usage



# Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

- ABOUT FDPIR:
- FDPIR is a federal nutrition assistance program that provides food packages to low income families living on Indian reservations, and areas in Oklahoma.
- Food packages contain frozen & canned meats, grains, pasta, canned fruit/veg, soup, and more.
- FDPIR is currently administered to 276 tribes via 112 ITOs and 3 State Agencies.



*In addition to fresh fruits & vegetables, several traditional foods are available to FDPIR participants, including bison, wild rice, salmon, blue cornmeal, catfish, and lamb/mutton.*



## Who uses FDPIR?

**42%** of FDPIR households have elders over the age of 60



**81%** of elders using the program rely on Social Security as well

Wages and Social Security are the main sources of income, with over **1/2** of all participants reporting earnings



but-- **1 in 10** FDPIR households has no source of income, and **9%** of zero income households have multiple members

About **1/3** of all FDPIR participant households have children under the age of 18



**74%** of FDPIR 2 parent households and **60%** of single parent households are in the labor force

**59%** of FDPIR households lack access to internet service



**1/3** of FDPIR households do not have a vehicle

# FDPIR ITO Response to COVID-19



## ***Social Distancing:***

Many sites are promoting are going to drive-up service only. Participants receive pre-packed food boxes instead of shopping in a storefront model or pickup inside in warehouse models.



## ***Deliveries***

Some sites are calling participants who may now need home delivery service because they are high risk and isolating, or lack access to vehicles.



## ***Times of Service Change***

Some sites may be operating on different schedules to accommodate staff, stocking, and other issues. Contact your ITO for details.



## ***Additional food ordering***

Multiple ITO sites report placing additional food orders to ensure they can meet the growing needs in their communities.



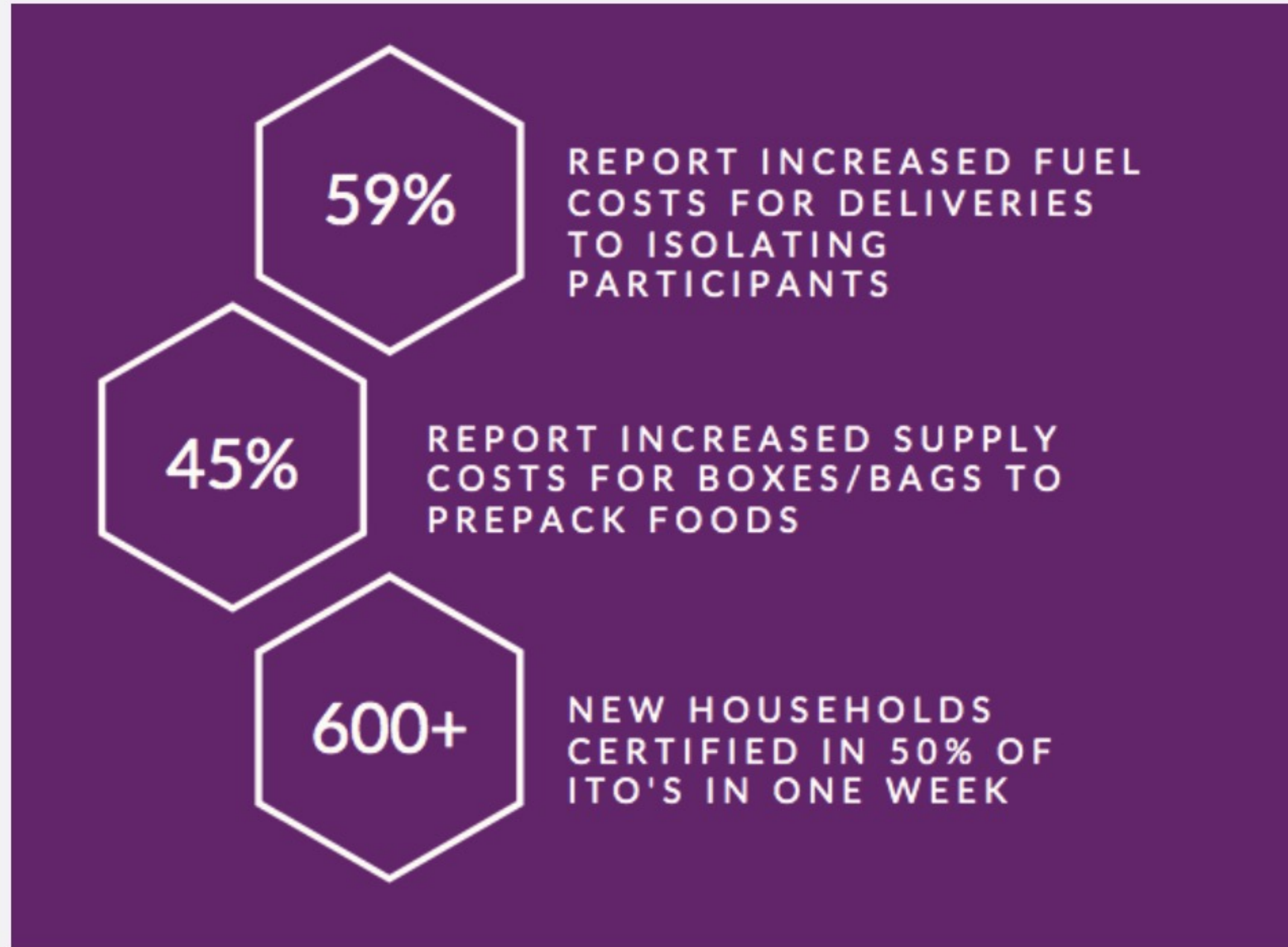
All of these measures, as well as any additional cleaning and sanitation measures, are costs for ITOs: additional staff time, supplies (boxes for prepacking food, cleaning/sanitation and PPE for employees), fuel for deliveries have all been reported as rising costs for ITO's across the country.



# COVID-19 Impacts on FDPIR

□NAFDPIR recently conducted ITO member surveys to better assess needs. Of ITO's reporting:

- Recent surveys of ITO's indicate:
  - **Avg. 11% increase in new participants**
  - Take rates increasing, 80% of sites reporting indicated this.
  - Inventory was unprepared for drastic increased participation at many locations. Most sites reporting had 1 month or less in inventory as of 3/26.
  - 66% of ITO's reporting said they were out of some inventory items.
  - 43% of ITO's reporting said they were out of certain fresh fruits & vegetables. This is increasing take rates of canned goods.





# **NATIVE PRODUCERS' RESILIENCY AND COVID-19 RESPONSES**



Osage Nation Meat Processing

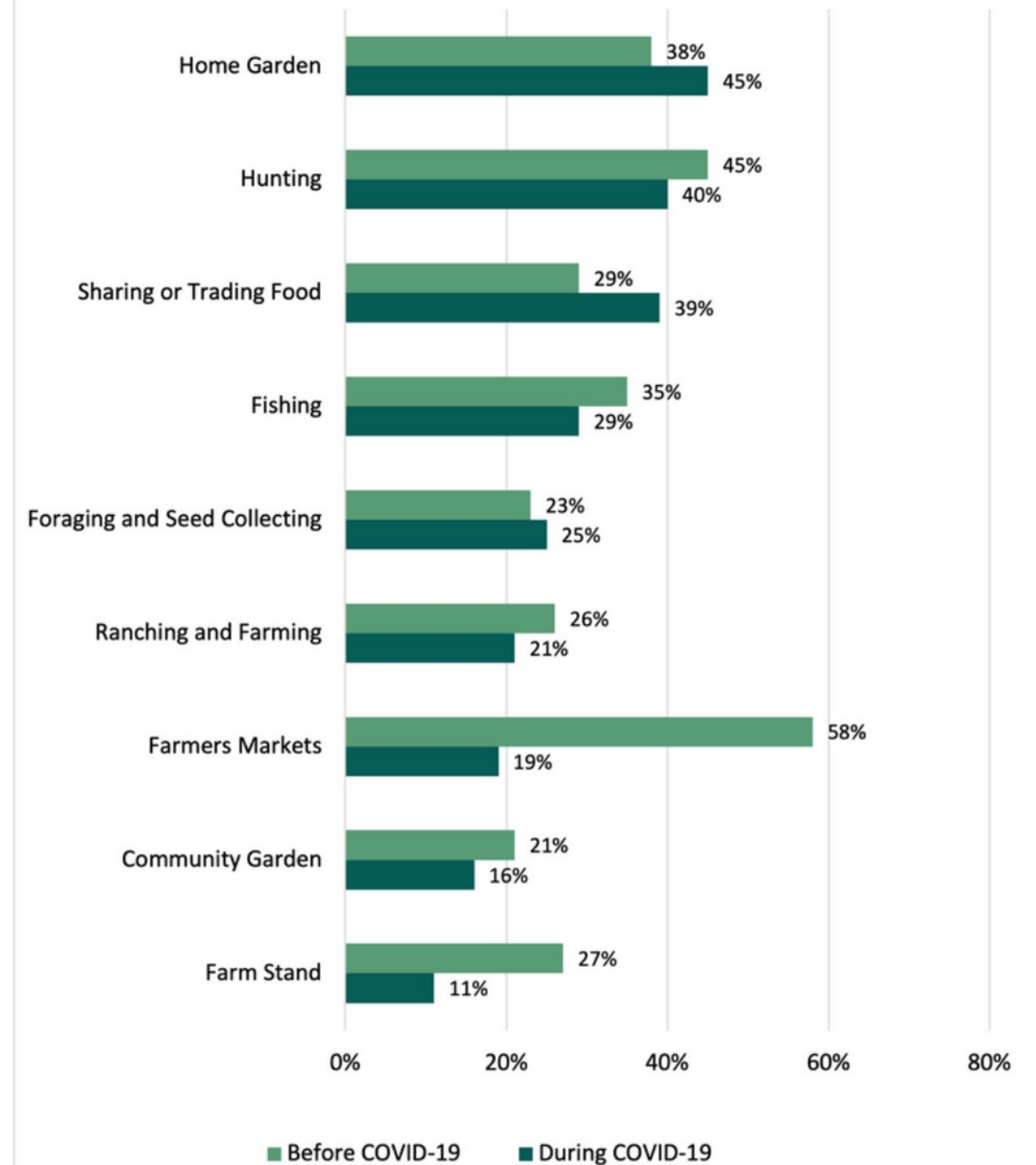


Muscogee Nation Meat Processing

# Tribally Led Food Systems Investment

- New opportunities/investments grew local food production:
  - Farmers to Families
  - FDPIR 638
  - CARES Act and other COVID response funding leveraged by Tribal Nations
    - Meat processing facilities
    - Farms/ranches
    - Community kitchens/entrepreneurial support
    - Food systems facilities/entities
  - NAAF COVID19 Rapid Response Funding

**Figure 13.** Proportion of Respondents That Utilized Each Local Food Procurement Method Before and During COVID-19



Source: Native American Agriculture Fund Food Access Survey



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# Co-Leads

- **Hannah Lane, PhD MPH (she/her)**
- Medical Instructor, Department of Population Health Sciences, Duke University SOM
- Interested in developing/testing implementation strategies to improve equitable implementation of K-12 nutrition and wellness policies



- **Yuka Asada, PhD RD (she/her)**
- Clinical Assistant Professor in Community Health Sciences, University of Illinois Chicago
- Interested in nutrition and health/wellness policy access and implementation in early childcare and K-12 settings



# Qualitative Data Subgroup 1.0

- Goal: streamline and ensure policy relevance of qualitative investigation of school meal program implementation during COVID-19
- Developed a [repository](#) of open-ended questions for food service directors or other stakeholders
  - Collaborated with organizational partners (School Nutrition Association, Lunch Assist) to create concept definitions and sample questions
  - Mapped concepts of interest to existing frameworks and FNS nutrition standards
- Repository use
  - Data collection instrument in ~5 state-specific studies, 2 national studies/projects, 1 social media project during 2020 – *several papers published or under review*
  - Adapted based on state policies, state and local stakeholder interest, organizational priorities, time period of data collection

Question Bank for Organizational Stakeholders in COVID-19 Nutrition Response

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ID	Concept	Definition	Overlapping Concepts	Subcategories	Example Questions	Relevance to Policy/Practice	USDA/FNS Professional Standards
C1	USDA Waivers & Flexibilities	Process of understanding waiver policy language, the impact of waiver flexibilities on child nutrition programs, and other instructions from federal and state authorities	Meal Procurement & Preparation Meal Distribution Staffing Financial Impact Future Needs Summer Meal Provision		What do you know about the USDA waivers, and how did you find out? How did you determine the operational changes that would take place as a result of the waiver flexibilities? What was the decision-making process like for what to do once you learned about the waivers? Who had a role in that decision? How did you communicate waiver flexibilities with your program or agency staff? What questions arose from the waivers? What unanswered questions do you still have regarding the USDA waivers? How much of what has been different about your food service during COVID-19 is related to the USDA waivers? Any additional thoughts on the process of using these waivers?	May inform efforts to improve communication and technical support between federal/state and local agencies.	3430, 4150, 3510, 3240
C2	Site Selection, Adoption, and Closing	Process and description of opening and closing sites, including characteristics of selected sites	USDA Waivers & Flexibilities Student Participation & Reach Staffing Meal Distribution Community Partners/Engagement	Initial Selection Decision to Close Sites Programs Operating Barriers	Thinking back to when schools first closed, tell me about the decision-making process for selecting distribution methods and sites. What factors did you consider? (Probes: staff, experience with summer, safety, "readiness" or preparedness, equity, ability to use school buses to transport meals, school district leadership involvement) In your program, what were the qualities of sites that were "ready" compared to those that were not? Tell me about how your program operated before all this happening. Which programs were you operating before, and which ones have you been operating during the pandemic?	May inform efforts or potential policies that can lead to an increase in the number and types of sites serving meals.	3510, 4150
C3	Student Participation & Reach	Process and description of student participation and reach, including characteristics of participating students	Site Selection & Adoption Meal Distribution Pandemic EBT Augmenting Programs	Comparison to typical operation Reasons for participation or non-participation Barriers Communication	What can you tell me about the families that are participating in your program now, compared to who was before? How about families that are not participating? What are some reasons why (Probes: distance, fear, lack of awareness, other options)? How have you communicated with families about participating?	Inform potential new strategies, programs, and/or policies for reaching children not currently being reached.	4120, 4130, 4150
C4	Staffing	How sponsors staff their sites, including use of volunteers, and how decisions were made	Meal Preparation Meal Distribution Financial Impact Future Needs Summer Meal Provision	Safety/COVID-19+ protocols Communication Volunteers	What was the decision-making process for staffing the sites? What mattered most (e.g., part time/full time, underlying conditions)? What staffing challenges did you face when you initially got started (e.g., PPE supplies, hours)? Have new challenges emerged? What does your staffing/volunteer situation like right now, compared to how it was before? Who is staffing your sites right now (child nutrition staff, volunteers, principals etc)	Identify new technical support and professional development needs and opportunities for staff	3410, 3420, 3440, 3330, 3360, 3210, 3220, 3240
C5	Communication	Channels and processes of communication across stakeholder levels throughout the pandemic response	Meal Distribution Community Egagement P-EBT Augmenting Programs Staffing		What lines of communication were used between FSDs and Site Supervisors? Were they successful? What lines of communication were used in your district to keep parents updated on site openings/closures and new distribution methods? Were they successful? Did those channels change over time?		4110, 4120, 4150, 3240
C6	Meal Procurement and Preparation	Methods and processes used to prepare meals, challenging factors, including comparisons to pre-COVID practices	Meal Distribution Financial Impact Staffing USDA Waivers Site Selection Student Participation	Food quality/nutritional value Food sources	What is different with your program than what you would usually do, in terms of food quality? (probes: nutrient value) What is different with your program than what you would usually do, in terms of preparation? (probes: order from distributor, local products, cost of food/supplies) What methods have your sites used to prepare meals? Who is involved in this process? What are some challenges you have had in terms of preparation (e.g., procurement delays, meeting nutrition guidelines, switch to grab and go, volume)? What are some innovative or creative preparation methods your sites have up with, or that you heard of others using?		1170, 1130, 2210, 2620, 2630, 3210, 3220, 3240
					What does your distribution process look (e.g., delivery methods, types of meals, days per week meals, number of meals at once)		


Question Bank Use and Descripti Concept Definitions Framework Alignment Unstructured Guide Example Studies Summary Explore

Please use and share the [Google doc](#) (and document usage)!

# Dissemination

## Maryland

### EVALUATION OF COVID-19 SCHOOL MEALS RESPONSE: SPRING 2020



School closures during COVID-19 have increased the risk for food insecurity among children across the United States, including in Maryland. To support access to meals for children during school closures, the emergency Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was initiated in lieu of traditional school meals programs, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Federal and State governments also issued several temporary waivers (described in the figure below) to enable flexibilities to existing policies to support the provision of these emergency meals.

The University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM) worked with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Maryland School Systems (Local Education Agencies or LEAs), and Food Service leadership at three levels (State, LEA, and meal site) to evaluate meal provision during COVID-19-related school closures, in the Spring of 2020 (March 16th – June 27th). This evaluation uses the RE-AIM framework<sup>1</sup> (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance) to investigate the following:

1. Examine the **reach** (number of free or reduced priced breakfast and lunch meals served before versus after spring 2020 COVID-19-related school closures) and **effectiveness** (number of total breakfast and lunch meals served before versus after school closures), and the role of federal waiver utilization and communication/meal distribution strategies associated with reach and effectiveness;
2. Describe **adoption** (via communication with families) and **implementation costs** of school meal service;
3. Understand public LEA and distribution site-level **implementation** processes for meal provision, including supportive factors and barriers; and,
4. Understand strategies for **maintenance** of meal service (following Spring 2020 school closures).

Throughout the report, we describe evaluation results and key NEXT STEPS for research, policy, and implementation.

### FEDERAL & MARYLAND STATE COVID-19 RELIEF NUTRITION WAIVERS ISSUED BY MONTH


MARCH 2020	APRIL 2020	MAY 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows meal service time flexibility (National Waiver #1)</li> <li>Allows non-congregate meals (National Waiver #2)</li> <li>Allows meal and snack provision when no enrichment activity is offered (National Waiver #3)</li> <li>Provides meal pattern flexibility (National Waiver #4)</li> <li>Allows parents/guardians to pick up meals (National Waiver #5)</li> <li>Extends Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) deadlines (National Waiver #6)</li> <li>Waives certain onsite monitoring requirements (National Waiver #7-11)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extends the deadline for reporting requirements (National Waiver #12)</li> <li>Permits area eligibility for closed enrolled sites (National Waiver #14)</li> <li>Waives Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) first week visits (National Waiver #15)</li> <li>Allows for offer versus serve in SFSP (National Waiver #16)</li> <li>Waives meal service time restrictions for SFSP and SSO (National Waiver #17)</li> <li>Extends the triennial assessment deadline (National Waiver #18)</li> <li>Allows for renewal of procurement contracts (National Waiver #19)</li> <li>Waives annual review requirements for CACFP (National Waiver #20)</li> <li>Extends SFSP and SSO pandemic operations (National Waiver #21)</li> <li>Expands area eligibility (State Waiver #1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows parent pick-up for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) (State Waiver #2)</li> <li>Extends non-congregate feeding, meal service time flexibility, meal pattern flexibility, and parent/guardian pick up of meals (National Waiver #22-25)</li> </ul>

**Twenty-five waivers and subsequent waiver extensions were released by the USDA and the State of Maryland during the first 15 weeks of the pandemic (between March 16th and June 27th), as shown in this timeline.**

USDA Waiver Info: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/programs/fns-disaster-assistance/fns-responds-covid-19/child-nutrition-covid-19-waivers>

MSDE OSCNP Waiver Info: <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/>

<http://www.marylandschoolwellness.org/tools/Data-Reports/>




Our Work Find Meals for Kids News About

## Voices from the Front Line of School Nutrition in NC

**UPDATE: USDA EXTENDS FREE MEALS FOR KIDS THROUGH REMAINDER OF THE SCHOOL YEAR**

Learn how to find meals for kids near you, or check your school or district's website, social media, and direct communications for the latest information on how where to find meals and how this might affect meal service for your children.

Thank you to USDA for making this decision that benefits all children and school nutrition staff in NC. And thank you to the school nutrition team at the NC Department of Public Instruction and the many other NC organizations that were early and fierce advocates for this extension.



**"We don't ask a child in the United States what your mama and daddy makes to get on the school bus. Or to get a textbook. Or to hand them a device. Why in the world do we draw the line in the cafeteria?"**

*—School Nutrition Administrator in North Carolina*

Below are excerpts from candid conversations that district-level School Nutrition Administrators in North Carolina had with university researchers about the challenges they face as schools reopen for the fall, and the experience of serving school meals during the COVID-19 emergency. More than 23 School Nutrition Administrators were interviewed, each from a different school district in North Carolina. We are sharing excerpts from this ongoing project that pertain to the urgent subject of school reopenings and decisions on how school meals are served.

March 16, 2020	Spring and Summer 2020	September 1, 2020
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<https://www.carolinahungerinitiative.org/Voices/>

# Coming Soon! Qualitative Data Subgroup 2.0

- Goals:
  - Synthesize “state of the qualitative science” on school meal program implementation during COVID-19
  - Facilitate discussion of future qualitative and implementation research (works in progress, gaps, needs)
  - Provide forum for dissemination of COVID-era qualitative findings to practitioners and policy makers
- Structure
  - Monthly to bi-monthly all group meetings to provide synthesis updates, share works in progress, discuss findings with involve policy/practice stakeholders
  - More regular meetings with a small writing group for synthesis led by a student or early career person
- Products
  - Scoping review manuscript + policy or practice brief
  - Present works in progress and identify grant collaborators

# Next Steps

- Email [hannah.lane@duke.edu](mailto:hannah.lane@duke.edu) to be added to the listserv and nominate a student or early career person (including yourself!)
- First meeting will be **April 2022**
- Please include your preference for meeting time options (every other month)
  - **First Mondays** of the month after 12pm EST OR
  - **Second or third Wednesdays** of the month between 2-3 pm EST