Ways to Lower Food Costs in School Nutrition Programs

- Estimate quantity purchases over time to increase economies of scale bid pricing.

- Set a goal for managing food costs. Allocate a percentage for food costs of total revenue.

- Monitor and calculate meal costs on a regular basis.

- Use standardized recipes.

- Pre-cost and post-cost menus to ensure food items are within predetermined costs levels.

- Use cycle menus.

- Reduce plate waste by analyzing reasons for discarded foods.

- Use portion control tools to ensure accurate serving sizes of menu items.

- Avoid overproduction of food by careful forecasting. Consider the weather, school activities, and short-day schedules for students.

- Calculate kitchen waste and account for why it happened.

- Review production records on a regular basis.

- Manage the purchase of food items through bids.

- Keep specialized purchases to a minimum.

- Maintain inventory control.

- Prohibit the removal of food items from the premises. Do not allow “leftovers” to be taken home; this is an illegal practice.

- Follow receiving and storage procedures to minimize shortages.

- Decrease food costs through use of USDA Foods.

- Implement security measures. Product theft can cause major increase in food costs.