

Fieldwork for an Evaluation of UIFSM

Call for Expressions of Interest

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) is an independent, impartial and evidence-based research institute that aims to promote high quality education outcomes for all children and young people, regardless of social backgrounds. It is seeking a research partner to deliver the fieldwork elements of an evaluation of the implementation in England of the Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) policy.

1. Background

The School Food Plan¹ recommended that the Coalition Government extend free school meals (FSM) to all pupils in primary schools in England, citing evidence that it would lead to positive improvements in health, attainment and social cohesion, and help families with the cost of living². Following its announcement in September 2013, UIFSM was introduced in September 2014 via the Children and Families Act 2014 and stipulated that all children in state funded schools in reception, year 1 and year 2 should be provided a free school lunch. Schools have been provided revenue and capital funding to support delivery.

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) has been commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the implementation of UIFSM. As the policy has been rolled out nationally, the study will build on the evidence generated by the Evaluation of the Free School Meals Pilot carried out between 2009 and 2012³ and focus on describing and analysing the national implementation.

2. Methodology

The study will:

- a) assess the nature of delivery in schools across the country, to gauge the extent to which the impacts observed in the pilot are likely to have been replicated in roll-out, and learn lessons about the delivery of increased school meal take-up;
- b) obtain perceptions of impacts for education, health, food production, and household finances from school staff, caterers, pupils and parents;
- c) analyse administrative data and management information on take-up, child health and educational outcomes, combined with information on variations in delivery, to further explore the implementation and potential impacts of the national policy; and
- d) combine the information from (a) to (c) with wider data and modelling to assess the monetary value of costs and benefits, and overall economic impacts, where possible.

Strands (a) and (b) will be informed by the following fieldwork elements:

- Surveys of school heads, catering staff and teachers (a combination of interviews and online/paper surveys) – covering delivery methods and costs of the policy (including start-

¹ <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-school-lunch-for-every-child-in-infant-school>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-free-school-meals-pilot-impact-report>, and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/implementing-the-free-school-meals-pilot>

up and ongoing costs), details of changes in food provided and take-up, perceptions of impacts on behavioural and education outcomes, and wider perceived effects.

- A survey of parents – covering impacts on household finances and routines and perceptions of health and educational/behavioural effects for children.
- Around 10 case studies based around single schools, including interviews with staff, parents, pupils and external school food providers, to cover the same issues in more depth.

3. Requirements

The EPI seeks a research partner to:

- design the fieldwork instruments and recruitment strategy - working with EPI staff to integrate the fieldwork elements with the wider aims and methods of the research;
- manage the recruitment of fieldwork participants;
- deliver the fieldwork; and
- report results to EPI.

The reports and data produced would be used by the EPI in deliver of parts (c) and (d) of the study, and to produce their overall evaluation report.

4. Timing

The following is the current, indicative timetable for the study:

1. Deadline for Eols – 9 December 2016
2. Invitation to Tenders (ITTs) issued – 16 December 2016
3. Deadline for ITTs – 13 January 2017
4. Contract start – 27 January 2017
5. Fieldwork – March to June 2017
6. Report – September 2017

5. Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. Experience and proficiency in designing, conducting and analysing robust research fieldwork, preferably in the field of education and/or health;
2. Organisational capability in delivering research projects; and
3. Organisational expertise in and experience of successfully engaging school leaders, teachers, businesses, parents and pupils in research, including achievement of strong response rates to surveys.

6. Submitting an expression of interest

Expressions of interest of no more than 1,200 words should be submitted to info@epi.org.uk by 9th December.

For more information, please contact us on info@epi.org.uk or 02073401160.