



Hosting Events

Hosting a kick-off event to promote Summer Meals is the ideal opportunity to engage sponsors, partners, families, and the community! Planning additional events throughout the summer energizes participants and showcases the great work communities are doing to provide Summer Meals to children.

Go to [Resources](#).

Kick Off Events

What:

A kick-off event introduces Summer Meals to your community. It can be whatever kind of event you want to make it, with the goal of getting parents, children, and the community excited about your Summer Meal Program.

When:

The best times to host a kick-off event are at the beginning of June during National Summer Kick-Off Week, right after the academic school year, a week before your program begins, or on the first day of your program.

Where:

The place will depend on the number of people expected, funds available, and your organization's capacity. Some good examples include community centers, public libraries, municipal parks, and meal service sites.

Who:

Partner engagement is the key for any successful event! There are many organizations in your community working in different capacities to provide services to families. Teaming up with different groups can make your event the hub for sharing information about these community services. Partners can spread the word about your event to more people in the community.



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Summer Meals Toolkit

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Consider teaming up with local organizations, such as your area food banks, WIC clinics, schools, libraries, hospitals and community health centers, fire and police departments, radio and television stations, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, Girl Scouts, military support and youth service organizations, utility companies, museums, municipal parks and pools, colleges and universities, and American Red Cross and 2-1-1 chapters.

How:

Events could be as simple as inviting parents for a day of fun to kick-start your summer meal site, or a major event with public officials, celebrities, and media. The size and scope of your event is up to your organization and its capacity. It is a good idea to combine efforts with your city, State, and local nonprofit agencies to raise awareness, provide information, encourage participation, and really make a splash!

Whatever you choose for your event, be sure to make the activities fun, fresh, and entertaining. Here are several examples:

- *Health Fair* – Have medical professionals available to give families advice and tips on staying healthy in the summer time.
- *Stretching Exercises* – Get families active with easy exercises to get their blood pumping and their stomachs ready for summer meals.
- *Watermelon Eating Contest* – Show that kids can have fun with healthy foods.
- *Music and Dancing* – Get your local radio stations involved by providing music for your event and advertising for your summer meal program.

Keeping the Momentum

Kick-off events set the stage for the summer, but it’s important to maintain momentum to keep the community engaged and coming back to your site week after week. Hosting events, similar to your kick-off event, can re-engage your community and remind families of the importance and availability of Summer Meals. It can also ensure you reach as many children in your community in need of healthy meals as possible.





Did You Know? Historically, site attendance drops off after July 4th every summer. Take advantage of community events surrounding Independence Day and make a plug for Summer Meals at parades and neighborhood barbeques! The San Diego Unified School District holds barbeques all summer long to keep families aware of their summer meal sites. Find out how at:

<http://sdusd-newsfeed.blogspot.com/2013/06/summer-fun-cafe-kicks-off-summer-lunch.html>

Resources

City of Redlands and Redlands Unified School District

Redlands summer lunch program serves up fun at kick-off event

<https://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/2019/06/12/redlands-summer-lunch-program-serves-up-fun-at-kick-off-event/>

Eat Smart New York

Low-Income Families Targeted in Health-Driven Summer Meals Program

<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/hudson-valley/news/2019/07/11/summer-meals-programs-about-more-than-just-free-food#>

Food Bank of South Jersey

Food Bank of South Jersey Kicks Off 2019 Summer Meals Program with “Kidsfest”

<https://foodbanksj.org/2019/07/02/2019kidsfestpressrelease/>

Foodlink, New York

Summer Meals Kickoff in Rochester

Collaborative approach to ensure more kids participate in FREE meals

<http://foodlinkny.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Summer-Meals-Kickoff-Press-Release1.pdf>

Hillsboro City Schools

HCS Tomahawk program hopes to serve 550 daily

<https://www.timesgazette.com/news/38496/summer-food-kick-off>





National League of Cities

Five Ways Cities Can Promote Afterschool and Summer Meal Programs

<http://citiesspeak.org/2015/01/28/5-ways-cities-can-promote-afterschool-and-summer-meal-programs/>

Nutrition Development Services, Pennsylvania

Summer Meals Kick-Off Events

<http://www.healthymealsforchildren.org/?p=1457>

Youth World Dallas Learning Center, Texas

Summer Food Program Kickoff event @ World Youth Center

http://www.flickr.com/photos/dallas_isd/sets/72157630121331486/

For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and achievable for your Program. The Summer Meals Toolkit has even more creative ideas and resources at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-toolkit>

Do you have more questions? Sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for answers. State agencies should contact their Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office.

List of FNS Regional Offices: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

List of State Agencies: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-contacts>

USDA and its recipient institutions share responsibility for compliance and oversight to ensure good stewardship of Federal funds.

