



## Rural Development

Despite recent increases in participation, reaching children in rural communities is a challenge for Summer Meal sponsors and State agencies. Partnering with USDA's Rural Development (RD) agency to serve children in hard to reach areas is a proven practice that has helped remove barriers to participation.

Go to [Resources](#).

### Connect with RD

RD is committed to improving the economy and quality of life in rural communities by providing loans, grants, and loan guarantees; promoting economic development; and offering technical assistance. Summer Meal operators and State agencies can connect to RD programs and services through 47 State offices and USDA Service Centers in counties across rural America.

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/>

RD prioritizes funding and technical assistance towards tribal communities, faith-based and neighborhood partnerships, and communities experiencing chronic poverty. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has found an ally in the fight against childhood hunger through RD's housing partnerships and funding opportunities.

### Housing Partnerships

Multi-family housing complexes are ideal partners for Summer Meals.

- Many housing developments have community rooms or outdoor space available to host breakfast, lunch, supper, or snacks.
- Housing residents may be interested in volunteering to supervise meal services.
- State and local RD offices can help get the word out about the problem of summer nutrition and share information about site locations and meal times.



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### Summer Meals Toolkit

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider,  
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A variety of options may be available to sponsors interested in establishing meal service sites at RD facilities.

- *Multi-family Housing*  
These developments are home to many low-income children who could benefit from participating in Summer Meals.
- *Senior Housing*  
In several States, community rooms at senior housing developments have been successful intergenerational Summer Meal sites.
- *Farm Labor Housing*  
About 600 such units are financed by RD every year. These sites are typically larger than traditional multi-family housing units, and often have community rooms conducive to meal service.
- *RD-Funded Cooperatives*  
Over 20,000 RD borrowers exist throughout the country. Many cooperatives already support local anti-hunger efforts, such as weekend backpack programs for students.

## RD Funding Opportunities

RD is currently engaged in several initiatives to create prosperity in rural communities, some of which may be employed to support Summer Meals.

- *Community Facilities Direct Loans and Grants*  
This Program supports the development of essential community facilities, including local food systems, in rural areas. While grant funding is very limited, a larger pool of low-cost direct loan funds offers a terrific opportunity to help rural communities meet their transportation needs.
- *Economic Impact Initiative Grants*  
This funding assists in the development of essential facilities in rural communities with extreme unemployment.
- *Rural Community Development Initiative Grants*  
This funding supports housing, community facilities, and community or economic development projects. Summer Meal Programs operated by public agencies, non-profit corporations, or Indian Tribes may be eligible for funding.  
<http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-community-development-initiative-grants>.





## Spotlight on Virginia!

Local, State, and Federal partners teamed up to bring Summer Meals to children in Central Virginia. Each team member brought a key element to the partnership: the Central Virginia Food Bank sponsored the program, the Summer Food Service Program funded the meals, and local RD multi-family housing complexes hosted the children, turning ordinary community rooms into fun-filled Summer Meal sites where kids could count on a healthy lunch every day. With over 270 multi-family complexes located across Virginia, some of which are in persistent poverty counties, this partnership has the potential to benefit many children Statewide.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Q: What if the management at the housing site is too busy to operate a meal service?***

Find staffing support! On days the RD site manager has to be away, it is helpful to have extra staff members, paid or volunteer, available to fill in. Here are a few options:

- Recruit an adult resident to supervise the meal service.
- Many public and private schools have volunteer service requirements. Inquire about getting your site on a list of student service opportunities.
- Even if positions are unpaid, older students may be interested in participating to gain community-based experience and build their resume.

### ***Q: What if my local housing authority doesn't have a community room?***

Have a picnic! Meals can be served outside the building or at a nearby park. Sponsors can consider investing in tents or collapsible canopies so the children won't be exposed to too much sun or rain. Community organizations may be willing to donate a canopy for such a use. Mobile Summer Meal units may also be able to help. Check with your State agency to see if any mobile units could make an extra stop at your site.





***Q: What about liability insurance?***

Liability insurance is typically covered under the housing development's standard liability coverage. If site managers are still concerned about liability, they can consider operating a closed enrolled site rather than an open site.

***Q: Okay – I'm ready to partner with RD! What's next?***

For more information or to talk with a field staff member, sponsors can contact their local RD offices. Local and State offices are invaluable partners, and can provide sponsors with community-specific resources.

- *USDA RD State Offices*  
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/page/state-offices>
- *USDA Service Center Locator*  
<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

## Resources

### USDA

- *Community Facilities Grants Available to Summer Food Service Program Sponsors*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUJjQnY0yWM>
- *Summer Meals: Engaging Rural and Housing Communities*  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-engaging-rural-and-housing-communities>
- *How Housing Communities Can Feed Summer Meals for Children*  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/how-housing-communities-can-feed-summer-meals-children>
- *FNS Summer Meal Capacity Builder*  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/capacitybuilder>

### National Rural Housing Coalition (NRHC)

*Members In Action*

<http://ruralhousingcoalition.org/about/coalition-highlights>





## **Rural Health Information Center**

*Your First Stop for Rural Health Information*

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/>

## **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>

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