



Best Practices for States

How can States fight childhood hunger and improve access to Summer Meals for children? The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is working closely with a number of State agencies and other State partners to increase participation in the Summer Food Service Program and the Seamless Summer Option of the National School Lunch Program.

Ten Tips to Support Summer Meal Programs

Here are ten of the best practices to support community sponsors and sites. These strategies can help create successful Summer Meal Programs in every State!

1. Participate in State partner meetings to coordinate planning, share ideas and leverage resources. In each State, the FNS Regional Office works with the State agency to plan a meeting of key summer partners. Successful meetings result in a comprehensive plan with specific commitments from all attendees to contribute towards expansion of Summer Meal Programs.
2. Gain support from State and local elected leaders to ensure that resources are available to expand Summer Meal Programs. States make the he largest gains when governors, mayors, and other public servants champion Summer Meal Programs.
3. Contact sponsors from previous summers directly to increase sponsor retention and expansion. State agencies can determine if sponsors are returning, and encourage them to take on new sites, keep sites open longer, serve additional meals, and add more operating days.
4. Consider State flexibilities and actions to make it easier for local organizations to participate. For example, Colorado eliminated certain site approval requirements that discouraged participation. Arkansas issued a short-term health inspection waiver that allowed sponsors to meet summer facility guidelines.
5. Implement USDA waivers, simplification efforts, and demonstration projects such as allowing non-congregate feeding in cases of extreme heat. These flexibilities help reduce barriers to participation.



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Summer Meals Toolkit

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6. Partner with effective anti-hunger coalitions to leverage community resources. Communities with engaged school food authorities and parks and recreation departments are better able to expand and develop fewer integrity issues.
7. Renew Federal connections with Housing and Urban Development and USDA's Rural Development agencies. These connections can support sites, increase participation at public housing developments, and identify potential funding resources for community facilities and mobile feeding options.
8. Promote the Summer Meal Site Finder and the 2-1-1 hotline. These tools publicize location and meal times to help families find summer meal sites in their communities.
9. Seek outside sources of funding for programming and other costs not covered by USDA reimbursements. Outside funding can have a significant effect on the ability of community sponsors and sites to participate and grow.
10. Participate in State partner debriefing meetings at the end of the summer. These meetings allow State teams to evaluate the success of their Summer Meal Programs and begin planning for the next year.

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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