Using Data

Data is a powerful advocacy tool and, when used correctly, invaluable in targeted program expansion. For example, you can use data to identify service gaps in your community, locate new sites, and boost the credibility and reach of Summer Meal marketing efforts. This toolkit page is designed to provide guidance to partners, State agencies, and Regional Offices interested in using data to build capacity for Summer Meals.

Go to **Resources**.

Mapping Tools

Mapping tools, available from USDA and partner organizations, can be used to visualize and locate areas of need and to determine summer feeding gaps in your community. Many maps also provide authoritative information around poverty and food insecurity that will be helpful in promoting Summer Meal Programs.

USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

- *Capacity Builder*
  This tool allows users to see where Summer Meal sites are or have been in their communities, and add "layers" of information, such as poverty data, in absolute numbers and relative percentages. Potential site locations and partners (Rural Development multi-family housing units, libraries, museums, and schools) can be added to the map, and previous site locations can also be highlighted, helping to prevent site overlap.
  http://www.fns.usda.gov/capacitybuilder

- *SFSP Summer Mapping Demo for State Agencies and Regional Offices*
  This video explains how the Capacity Builder works.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbPDT_7xpSo&feature=youtu.be

- *Area Eligibility Mapper*
  This map shows the locations of areas served by schools where at least 50 percent of enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
  http://www.fns.usda.gov/areaeligibility

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- *Rural Designation Tool*
  State agencies and sponsors may use this tool to determine if a proposed site may be designated as rural for purposes of SFSP.
  https://www.fns.usda.gov/rural-designation

USDA Economic Research Service (ERS)
Food Access Research Atlas
This tool, formerly known as the Food Desert Locator, gives a spatial overview of indicators of access to food stores in low-income areas. Users can create maps showing various food access indicators, such as food deserts and participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and download the data.
http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas.aspx

Feeding America
Map the Meal Gap
These maps provide information about hunger at the community level, including food security estimates, food price variation, and the "food budget shortfall" for low-income families.
http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/?_ga=1.225873373.614849146.1427906999

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)
Summer Food Mapper
The Mapper identifies areas that qualify for Summer Meal Programs through census data. It also includes childhood poverty rates and other demographic data.
https://frac.org/research/resource-library/summer-food-mapper

Studies

Data on childhood hunger and poverty can be used to recruit new sites and sponsors and to promote Summer Meals in your community. Partner organizations have credible, timely, and relevant reports you can use with confidence when explaining the importance of your program.

Feeding America

- *Hunger in America*
  This study examines charitable food distribution, the demographics of food bank users in America, and the importance of Federal programs in addressing hunger.
  https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/hunger-in-america

- *Teen Hunger*
  This study analyzes qualitative data from a series of focus group discussions with teens, ages 13-18, in 10 low-income communities across the country.
  https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/teen-hunger-research

FRAC

- *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report*
  This annual report outlines national and State findings regarding Summer Meal Program participation. It also highlights areas where growth is needed and offers strategies to increase participation.
  https://frac.org/research/resource-library/summer-nutrition-report-2020

- *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Breakfast Status Report*
  This annual report analyzes participation in the summer breakfast component of the Summer Nutrition Programs.
  https://frac.org/research/resource-library/summer-breakfast-status-report-2020

Share Our Strength: No Kid Hungry Campaign

- *Summer Nutrition Program Social Impact Analysis*
  This report synthesizes existing research on summer meals and presents a primary data analysis from Maryland schools to demonstrate positive impacts of providing summer meals to children.
  http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/resource/summer-nutrition-program-social-impact-analysis

- *Summer Hunger Is Too Expensive To Ignore*
  This short report provides a compelling summary of the findings and the impact of increased access to summer nutrition.
  http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/resource/summer-hunger-too-expensive-ignore

- *Summer Meals Survey*
  This PowerPoint provides an overview of the Share Our Strength Summer Meals Survey findings, highlighting barriers to participation and recommendations to improve access.
  http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/SOS%20-%20Summer%20Meals%20Survey%20Report%20FINAL2.pdf

USDA ERS

- *Household Food Security in the United States in 2019*
  This report provides statistical information about food security rates. It also includes specific information about child hunger rates and the impact of Federal food assistance programs.
  https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=99281

- *Children's Food Security and USDA Child Nutrition Programs*
  This report presents statistics on food insecurity among households with school-age children. It summarizes recent research on the effects of child nutrition programs on children's food security and diets and discusses recent developments in nutrition assistance for school-age children.
  https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=84002

Resources

USDA ERS

- *Publications – Child Nutrition Programs*
  Search all ERS publications related to Child Nutrition Programs.
  https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/#!topicid=14832&subtopicid=14873&series=&authorid=0&page=1&sortfield=date&sortascending=false

- *Rural Poverty and Well-Being*
  Find links to information and helpful resources on rural poverty and income topics, including *Rural America at a Glance*, a comprehensive summary of rural issues released by ERS each fall.
  http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being.aspx

Share Our Strength: No Kid Hungry Campaign
Summer Meals Resources
A collection of resources for implementing Summer Meals.
http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/resource-center

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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