



## Using Data

Data is a powerful advocacy tool and, when used correctly, invaluable in targeted program expansion. Data can be used to strengthen existing programs and to locate new sites by identifying service gaps in your community. Data can also be used to enhance outreach efforts, boosting the credibility and reach of other 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 visually and intuitively 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*

Here is a video that shows you how the Capacity Builder works.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbPDT\\_7xpSo&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbPDT_7xpSo&feature=youtu.be)



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### *Area Eligibility*

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>

- **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*

Here are 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](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. Additional information, including childhood poverty rates and other demographic data, is also provided.

<http://216.55.168.186/FairData/SummerFood/map.asp?command=scope&map=0>

- **Share Our Strength**

#### *State of Hunger Map*

This map shows Federal nutrition program participation and child food insecurity rankings in each State.

<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/nkh-summer-results#>

(Click *View the State of Hunger Map*)



## Calculator Tools

Partner organizations have built calculators that can be used to provide key decision makers with a business model explaining the financial feasibility – and potential benefit – of operating a Summer Meal Program.

- **Share Our Strength**

*No Kid Hungry School Calculator*

This tool allows schools to calculate annual estimated costs, expected reimbursement rates, and other financial factors involved in operating Summer Meal Programs.

<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/business-model-tool-0>

- **FRAC**

*Nutrition Program State Participation Calculators*

Here is a tool for State and local partners interested in analyzing Summer Meal Program participation data. Easy-to-follow instructions allow partners to calculate the amount of Federal dollars that may be lost due to low program participation.

<http://frac.org/reports-and-resources/nutrition-program-state-participation-calculators/>

## 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 2014*

This study examines charitable food distribution and the demographics of food bank users in America, every four years. The *Implications* section highlights the importance of Federal programs in addressing hunger.

<http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/hunger-in-america/>





- **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.

[http://frac.org/pdf/2014\\_summer\\_nutrition\\_report.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/2014_summer_nutrition_report.pdf)

- **Share Our Strength**

*Tackling Summer Hunger: Ensuring No Kid Goes Hungry When School is Out*

The 2013 Summer Meal Report provides data on efforts to increase Summer Meal participation through the No Kid Hungry campaigns. The report also includes best practice strategies for increasing participation.

[http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/Summer%20Meals%20Report%202014\\_FINAL\\_0.pdf](http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/Summer%20Meals%20Report%202014_FINAL_0.pdf)

## Resources

### USDA

ERS is a reliable and trustworthy source of information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, and the environment. ERS data, including the following resources, can be used to understand hunger in your community and improve Summer Meal Programs.

- *Household Food Security in the United States in 2013*

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.

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err173.aspx>

*Food Insecurity in Households With Children: Prevalence, Severity, and Household Characteristics, 2010-11*

This bulletin explores food insecurity rates among America's children and the role of Federal nutrition programs in addressing childhood hunger.

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib-economic-information-bulletin/eib113.aspx>





- *Children's Food Security and Intakes from School Meals*  
This study examines the impact of school nutrition programs on childhood food security, highlighting the significant proportion of nutrients children receive from school meals.  
<http://naldc.nal.usda.gov/naldc/download.xhtml?id=42320&content=PDF>
- *Rural Poverty and Well-Being*  
You can 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>
- *Domestic Food Security and Hunger Briefing Room*  
Here are additional links to readings, key statistics, graphics, research articles, and other useful information related to hunger and food security in communities across the nation.  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us.aspx>

## Share Our Strength

- *Summer Meals Research: From National Data to Local Opportunity*  
This webinar provides tips on using national and local research to improve the Summer Meal Programs.  
<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/events/2015/march/26/summer-meals-research-national-data-local-opportunity>
- *Level Up: Applying Technology to Summer Meals*  
This webinar gives strategies for using technology to build a more effective program at the State, sponsor, and site level.  
<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/events/2015/march/5/level-applying-technology-summer-meals>





- *Summer Meals Survey*  
This PowerPoint provides an overview of the 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>
- *Findings From Summer Meals Focus Groups*  
This PowerPoint outlines the results from seven focus groups meetings to assess familiarity with and interest in participating in Summer Meal Programs. It ends with ideas for increasing participation and suggested messaging strategies for sponsors and sites.  
<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/summer-meals-focus-group-findings>

## For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and achievable for your Program. For additional questions, sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for help. 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/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

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