



## Site Recruitment Strategies

Summer Meal sites are where all the hard work of the State agency, partnering organizations, and sponsors come together. The site is the physical location where meals are served, and its characteristics represent a key component of the Summer Meal Program's success. A well-coordinated site recruitment strategy helps ensure children have access to the foods they need to thrive, all year round.

Go to [USDA and Partner Resources](#).

### Characteristics of Successful Sites

- **IMPACT:** Sites should be located in high-need neighborhoods and communities with large concentrations of children.
- **ACCESSIBILITY:** Sites should be easy to reach by foot, car, and public transit.
- **SAFETY:** Sites located in “trusted” venues, such as schools, places of worship, and libraries, are generally more successful than those located elsewhere.
- **“MEAL-FRIENDLINESS:”** Ideal sites have tables and chairs readily available, kitchens to prepare and clean up meals, large refrigerators to store leftovers, and restrooms for kids and staff to use, when needed.

### Accessing Capacity

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) uses mapping technology and data from a wide variety of sources to help State agencies, sponsors, and partners clearly see where sites are needed. Sponsors can utilize the Capacity Builder to find potential sites and local partners in their targeted areas.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/capacitybuilder>



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### Summer Meals Toolkit

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider,  
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## Outreach to Potential Operators of New Sites

Once sponsors have determined their targets, an effective outreach strategy is needed to get new sites on board. Mailings and e-mail campaigns are good tools to quickly get the word out about Summer Meals.

- **Mass Mailings**

Sending a form letter, via electronic or traditional mail, is one simple outreach strategy that allows sponsors to reach many potential sites. The cover letters, fact sheets, and outreach questionnaires that you mail to potential site managers should answer:

- What are the Summer Meal Programs?
- Why are Summer Meal Programs important in this community?
- How can community organizations become involved in Summer Meal Programs?

E-mail campaigns can also include a link to a “Summer Meal Short” to promote the Summer Meal Programs. Sharing these fun, five-minute videos is a great way to introduce potential site managers to Summer Meals.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U\\_93W0U3E8U&list=PLBccton6gOdp0d5YdliI3TtRcSDtCdmzH](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_93W0U3E8U&list=PLBccton6gOdp0d5YdliI3TtRcSDtCdmzH)

- **Specialized Mailings**

Sending targeted letters to past sites thanking them for their participation and encouraging them to host a site again is a proven strategy for site retention and Program consistency. A special mailing also presents an opportunity to share any Program changes or updates.



## Media and Community Engagement

Working with traditional and social media resources, networking with community leaders, and enlisting the support of Summer Meal champions provide a variety of avenues to spread the word about Summer Meals.

- **Local Newspapers**

A newspaper article can be used to share the importance of Summer Meal programs in the community and to explain the role of local support in the program’s success.

While a summertime story may not benefit in this year’s recruitment effort, positive media attention at any time of year is helpful for future site recruitment. Story pitches may include:

- A call for organizations to volunteer as sites;
- An announcement about an informational meeting for interested sites; or
- An article highlighting a summer “site success.”

- **Local Television and Radio Stations**

Local news and public broadcasting stations may be willing to produce a short segment, or share a “Summer Meal Short,” to promote site recruitment. The visual and recorded content of TV and radio segments may be more memorable and have greater reach than a print media piece. Sponsors may promote the segments by sharing video clips and recordings via the web after they air.

- **Community Newsletters**

Web-based calendars, newsletters, and local event pages are great places to promote Summer Meal events and post site recruitment information. Most print and television media outlets have these resources publically available online. Sponsors should look for a “submissions” box or contact the event page coordinator to share information about their Summer Meal Programs.



- **Social Media**

Sponsors may consider reaching out to community members with large “followings” on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites when planning their site recruitment strategy. School superintendents, local governments, and other community leaders may help with recruitment by sharing information, posting links, and encouraging their friends and followers to support the Program.

- **Community Meetings**

Hosting an information session for potential site managers gives sponsors an opportunity to provide information and address any concerns about running a summer site. Sponsors may consider inviting a veteran site manager to the meeting to provide an “on the ground” perspective to the Program and to answer site-related questions from potential site managers.

Attending events related to fighting poverty and hunger or improving the wellbeing of children are ideal places for site recruitment. Sponsors may:

- Run a “Site Recruitment Table;”
- Post flyers throughout the venue;
- Place Summer Meal materials in event “swag bags;” and
- Network!

- **Summer Meal Champions**

Partnering with veteran site managers, representatives of State-wide advocacy organizations, and local celebrities, such as legislators, chefs, professional athletes, and other trusted community leaders, can add credibility to site outreach and aid with recruitment efforts. Summer Meal champions can help spread the word by:

- Recording a “call for sites” to air on local radio stations;
- Recording “robo-calls” for sponsors to use to recruit sites by phone;
- Hosting media events promoting site recruitment efforts; and
- Committing to making site appearances at kick-off events and before and after the Program begins.





## Resources

### USDA

- *Capacity Builder*  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/capacitybuilder>.
- *Program Guidance*  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/handbooks>
- *Summer Meals Toolkit*  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-toolkit>
- *Summer Meal Shorts*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U\\_93W0U3E8U&list=PLBccton6gOdp0d5YdliI3TtRcSDtCdmzH](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_93W0U3E8U&list=PLBccton6gOdp0d5YdliI3TtRcSDtCdmzH)

### Food Research and Action Center

*Summer Meals Matter*

<http://frac.org/webinar-and-conference-call-recordings/>

### New York City Coalition Against Hunger

*A Best Practices Handbook for Volunteer Managers*

[https://nyccah.org/files/2013%20SFSP%20Best%20Practices%20Handbook\\_0.pdf](https://nyccah.org/files/2013%20SFSP%20Best%20Practices%20Handbook_0.pdf)

## For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and achievable for your Program. 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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