



Ten Tips for Success

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

1. **State partner meetings** provide an opportunity 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 were those that resulted in a comprehensive plan with specific commitments from all attendees to contribute towards expansion of Summer Meal Programs.
2. **Support from State and local elected leaders** ensures that resources are available to facilitate expansion. The largest gains are made in States where governors, mayors, and other public servants champion Summer Meal Programs. Where local leaders are less engaged, it is more difficult to obtain resources to facilitate expansion.
3. **Direct contact with sponsors from previous summers** increases sponsor retention and expansion. State agencies can improve sponsor retention by directly contacting all sponsors to determine if they are returning, and encouraging them to take on new sites, keep sites open longer, serve additional meals, and add more operating days.
4. **State flexibilities and actions to repeal additional requirements** make it easier for local organizations to participate. For example, Colorado eliminated additional requirements for the approval of sites that had discouraged participation. Arkansas issued a short-term health inspection waiver that allowed sponsors to meet summer facility guidelines.
5. **Implementing USDA waivers, simplification efforts and demonstration projects**, such as allowing non-congregate feeding in cases of extreme heat, help reduce barriers to participation.



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6. **Strong partners** in States with effective anti-hunger coalitions are better able to leverage community resources. Additionally, communities with engaged school food authorities and parks and recreation departments are better able to expand and develop fewer integrity issues.
7. **Renewing Federal connections** with Housing and Urban Development and USDA's Rural Development agencies supports sites and participation at public housing developments and identifies potential funding resources for community facilities and mobile feeding options.
8. **Summer Meal Site Finder and 2-1-1 hotline** publicize location and meal times to help families find Summer Meal sites in their communities.
9. **Outside sources of funding** for programming and other costs not covered by USDA reimbursements have a significant effect on the ability of community sponsors and sites to participate and grow.
10. **State partner debriefing meetings** at the end of the summer 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 compatible with your Program. For additional questions, sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for help. State agencies should contact their 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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