

Federal Nutrition Funding to Support Your Summer Program

Do you run a summer program for children? Do you struggle to provide healthy meals? Are you spending money on food that could be used for programming or to serve additional children? The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) can help, and recent changes to SFSP simplify some of the administrative requirements, making it easier to receive federal funding to feed children during the summer.

SFSP reimburses public and private nonprofits, including schools, park and recreation departments, public housing authorities, health departments, food banks, YMCAs, Police Athletic Leagues, Girl Scouts, churches, synagogues, and mosques, for serving meals and snacks during the summer (or during the extended breaks of year-round schools). These SFSP “sponsors” can serve one or multiple sites in the community. The meals and snacks can be purchased from a vendor or prepared at the summer program if there are adequate kitchen facilities.

To qualify, the site must be located in a low-income area or serve primarily low-income children (at least 50 percent of the children in the area or enrolled in the program must be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals). While some sites may choose to simply serve meals, the best Summer Food sites combine food with educational and enrichment activities.

If you are a smaller organization – and your community already has an existing Summer Food sponsor – you can ask to participate as a site through the existing sponsor. This reduces the administrative work for the summer program, but the menus usually are determined by the sponsor, not the summer program.

To sponsor a summer food program or to find out if there is a sponsor that is willing to serve sites in your community, contact your state child nutrition agency, www.frac.org/afterschool/pdf/state_contacts.pdf. For more information, visit www.frac.org/afterschool/summer.html.