

WASHINGTON SUMMER FOOD GUIDE



Food Lifeline is a nonprofit hunger relief organization committed to ending hunger in Western Washington. They work to distribute over 35 million pounds of food each year to their network of 275 member agencies including food banks, meal programs and shelters, in 17 counties.

This Summer Meals Guide was originally developed by a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow, Rebecca Van Maren, who was placed at Food Lifeline September 2010-February 2011. It is intended as a way to engage community organizations, such as food banks, in providing summer meals throughout the state of Washington. It has since been updated.

Updated Spring of 2014

WHAT IS THE SUMMER MEAL PROGRAM AND WHY IS IT NEEDED?

For many kids who rely on school meals during the year, summertime leaves them wondering what's going to happen now that school breakfast and lunch are on a break too. Communities need a program that can help provide children food they need for healthy development through the summer and to begin their new school year.



The Summer Food Service Program is a federal entitlement program to help meet the needs of children during the summer. This program helps organizations provide free, nutritious meals to children when school is not in session for extended periods of time. Schools, public agencies, and private nonprofit organizations may apply to sponsor the program. Sponsors of the program can provide up to two healthy meals or snacks per day to children eighteen and under. They also receive reimbursement through US Department of Agriculture which can help to cover the necessary costs of food and administering the program. In Washington, the program is overseen by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Office of Child Nutrition Services (OSPI/CNS). Meal sites are located in areas where more than half of the kids in the local school are eligible for free or reduced-price meals during the school year in low income communities.

OSPI/CNS encourages innovative ways to feed hungry kids during the summer, and there are multiple ways that an organization can become involved. The program may be run by one organization working alone or by a partnership between multiple organizations or individuals. The key measure of success is feeding more hungry kids in your community this year than the year before.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT ROLES YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN TAKE WITH SUMMER FEEDING:

ADMINISTRATIVE SPONSORS can be a school district, private school, local government agency, non-profit organization (including faith based organizations), tribe, or camp. The sponsor accepts financial and administrative responsibility for managing the meal program. They attend OSPI's training, select sites, arrange for meals, train and monitor sites, and maintain and complete paperwork, including the reimbursement claims.

VENDORS are organizations with core competencies in meal production. They could be school districts, food service management companies, restaurants, hospitals, casinos, or others. Sponsors may choose to contract with a vendor to provide some, or all, of their meals. Partnering with a food vendor may be a good option for sponsors who don't have the facilities, staff, or knowledge to prepare meals that meet USDA guidelines.

SITES are physical locations where meals are served during a supervised time period. Sites could be located at parks, pools, community centers, churches, apartment complexes, schools, mobile home parks, or libraries. Sponsors may operate their own sites or partner with other agencies which will provide a location and staff. Sites must have a *Site Supervisor* who is responsible for setting up and cleaning up the site, supervising the food service at the site, serving meals to the kids, and recording and reporting the number of meals served each day. The two most common types of sites are *open* and *closed enrolled* sites.

Open sites are the best way to reach all the kids in your community. They must be located in the attendance zone of the local school where at least 50 percent or more of the students qualify for free or reduced school meals. Another way to qualify the site is based on Census data showing where 50 percent or more residents are low income (at or below 185% of federal poverty level). These sites must be able and willing to serve any child under the age of nineteen. These sites are able to serve up to 2 meals or snacks per child per day.

Closed sites qualify children individually. At least 50 percent must be from households at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Typically these sites are used to provide meals to children enrolled in activities with limited available space, such as a day camp. These sites may also be used to feed youth in summer programs that are not located in high-need areas, but are specifically intended to serve at-risk youth.

What role can your organization play with Summer Meals? Who can you partner with in your community to feed kids during the summer?

PROGRAM FLOW CHART

FEDERAL

USDA Food & Nutrition Services



STATE AGENCY

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction:

Child Nutrition Services



SPONSORS



SITES



PARTICIPANTS

Children under the age of 19

SUMMER MEALS PLANNING TIMELINE

OCTOBER-DECEMBER:

Find out if there was a summer meals program in your area the previous summer by searching www.parenthelp123.org under "Food Resources". Be thinking about if you have the capacity to run a program, or ability to expand your current operations. Talk with your peers who are currently running a program. Approach your board with your intent to research the program further, if applicable. Take into consideration your organizations fiscal year and budget.

JANUARY:

OSPI releases the current year's eligibility information that will tell you which schools have 50% or more students signed up for free or reduced meals. This information will help you decide where you could locate your summer meal sites. Some existing sites may be in your area. Look to see how many days they operated; some only run for a week or two during the summer. Think about how your organization can help to better serve your community. Hold a planning meeting with school food services staff, community agencies, church and local leaders to identify existing program summer meal programs, areas of need and suitable meal sites. Contact your local health department and inform them of your intention to operate a food service program and ask them for specific requirements you must meet, such as food handler's permits or other concerns.

FEBRUARY:

You will need to submit your intent to participate to OSPI/CNS explaining how you will structure your program. Now is a great time to start thinking about some questions before you submit your application. Where will your sites be located? What is your Summer Food budget? Which model would work best for your organization -will you prepare your own meals or use a vendor? Will you hire additional staff or rely on volunteers? Call OSPI to talk with the staff working on Summer Food to see how sites would qualify. Also ask to be put on their mailing list to receive further information on trainings for the upcoming summer. Start to solicit potential partnerships (food vendor, summer programs, and site locations), asking if they would be interested in assisting to operate a free lunch site for children.

MARCH:

The application paperwork you will need to fill out is usually emailed to you this month. It is strongly recommended that you complete the application forms and submit them as soon as you can.

APRIL:

OSPI holds its mandatory trainings throughout the state during this time. It is strongly encouraged that you attend the training in your area as early as possible to help maximize the time you have to plan. Try to accomplish some of your planning before you attend OSPI's training. However, the training will provide you the opportunity to learn more about the program, and answer any questions you might have. Identify your staffing and training needs to run a successful program and develop a budget that meets these goals. Keep talking to local agencies and organizations that serve families and kids about your summer meal plans; start planning a collaborative outreach campaign to families.

MAY:

OSPI usually holds a makeup training this month. However, keep in mind that your application to OSPI is due by mid-May and early planning leads to more successful programs. Conduct SFSP training for your site monitor, supervisors, and volunteers. Conduct pre-operational site visits. Make purchases necessary for the program's operations (coolers, canopy, tables, trash cans, etc). Prepare your outreach materials once you've located your sites. If you are doing outreach with nearby schools, make sure you give them the materials with enough notice to disperse them before school ends. There are other resources available to you with some great outreach ideas. Review the "47 Ways to Promote your Summer Meal Program". The USDA has a great outreach toolkit on their website as well. See below in the resource section for details.

JUNE:

This is the month that summer meals begin; celebrate with a kick-off party and continue your outreach efforts.

JUNE-SEPTEMBER:

Continue your outreach efforts; it may be helpful to do outreach reminding people of the program during the month of July. Submit your monthly reimbursement claims to OSPI/CNS; continue to conduct site monitoring. Evaluate your menu, and make necessary changes to better serve the kids and have a successful program. Evaluate your program and sites; solicit input from site supervisors, families, kids, etc.

TO ENSURE HIGH QUALITY SERVICE AND TO PROVIDE SAFETY USDA REQUIRES:

- Monitoring of the sites to insure that the guidelines are being followed. Each sponsor must complete for each site: a preoperational visit, a first week visit, and a review within the first four weeks. However, additional monitoring should be conducted; this could be daily, weekly, monthly, or only as per federal regulation.
- Checking with your local health department to ensure you are meeting the safety standards that they require.
- Take exact counts of meals during the meal service – not afterwards. Because programs are reimbursed with federal funds, proper meal counts are very important. You will be submitting your meal counts to OSPI/CNS on a monthly basis. It's important to keep track of the meals at daily point of service to reduce questions later in the month. You will be reimbursed a flat rate for all qualifying meals. Kids are allowed to eat the meal only on site. Sponsors are only reimbursed for the meals that are correctly served, counted, and reported to the state agency, so having adequately trained staff or volunteers working at the site is critical.



WORKING WITH A VENDOR

Using a vendor is a common way of providing meals through this program. However, there are some things to consider as you go through this process. Even though there are multiple ways to find and contract with a vendor, there are two ways that are the most common. First, would be for the sponsor to release an Invitation for Bid (IFB) to let vendors in your area know about the opportunity to provide meals for your program. How you present your IFB can drastically impact the quality of food and service you receive through this agreement. In an IFB, sponsors are limited by federal procurement regulations to three factors in determining which vendor gets the contract:

- Cost (the predominant factor)
- Responsibility (for example, the vendor's financial situation or past record)
- Most importantly for improving nutritional quality; responsiveness to the sponsor's terms as stated in the IFB

The more specific you are (with nutritional standards especially) the higher quality of food and service you receive from the vendor and the more flexibility you have in deciding which vendor you accept. Consider improving the quality by including increased nutrition (fresh produce, whole grains, vegetarian meals, etc), greater meal variety, more leak-proof packaging, clearer meal substitution procedures, and timely deliveries.

If your contract will be for an amount under \$100,000 you do not need to enter into a formal bid process and can identify a vendor on a smaller scale. For this method, the sponsor will draft a simple solicitation to obtain pricing quotes in writing. A best practice is to obtain quotes from three different sources. However, in smaller communities, that might not be an option and that is still acceptable.

The Food Research and Action Center has a great guide for working with vendors:

<http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/summermeals2007.pdf>

STATE WIDE OUTREACH

- WithinReach is OSPI/CNS's statewide outreach partner for the Summer Meals program; they have a great tool on their website that helps providers and families find the closest summer meals sites. Search "Food Resources" at www.ParentHelp123.org or call the Family Food Hotline (888-4-Food WA).
- Food Lifeline, Northwest Harvest and Second Harvest were able to collaborate and deliver over 50,000 flyers to food banks and meal programs throughout the state to increase awareness of Summer Meal Programs. Through this partnership, thousands of families visiting their local agency go home with flyers advertising the statewide Family Food Hotline and online search tool to find a meal site in their communities.

CREATIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In many communities, Summer Meals couldn't happen without the development of partnerships. Below are some ideas

- Parks and Recreation- collaborate with existing summer programs, recruit to teach activities at your sites, host a site at one of their centers
- Schools- host a site, distribute printed outreach materials before school ends, act as vendor, great pool of people to hire as staff to work at your summer meal site
- Churches- collaborate with existing summer programs (Vacation Bible School, etc), volunteers, distribute outreach information to their congregations
- Local Businesses- ask to post flyers at their business, solicit donations for the program, and provide volunteers or activities at the site. Great free marketing for them and free activities for your kids!
- Family and Social Service Providers- ask local health professionals to come and do health screenings, distribute dental hygiene kits, talk about safety and get families connected to other services in your area
- Libraries- ask Librarians to come and do a story time with the kids, incorporate additional activities, or a book distribution, promote their summer reading programs
- Community Groups like Rotary, Red Hats, Kiwanis- great source for volunteers, help with outreach, ask for donations to distribute: prizes, books, fresh produce, sport equipment for use at the site

The City of Walla Walla Parks and Recreation Department sends out the schedule of their sites with the water bills that are sent to over 9,500 people in their city. They also are able to send out an email to their database of people who have registered for activities within the Parks and Rec Department.

IDEAS FOR PROMOTING YOUR PROGRAM

- Media release – all sponsors are required by USDA to issue a media release with information about their program; be creative and make it engaging to ensure widespread use of it by local media.
- Radio ads and PSA
- Send home information on the back school breakfast and lunch menus
- Have a kickoff event at the end of the school year with a sample meal
- Give away extra items at your site (bag of produce for them to take home, first aid kit, etc)
- Place flyers at pediatricians' offices
- Post banners, posters and yard signs in high traffic areas
- Hang door hangers throughout neighborhoods with a meal site
- Encourage word of mouth advertising
- Recruit apartment managers, school principals, mayors and others to promote the local program
- Post information in PTA newsletters, library, post office, and other community bulletin boards
- Coloring pages or book marks for kids
- Distribute flyers to staff at local WIC and DSHS Community Service Offices to share with their clients
- Equip your van with a music player, like an ice cream truck

- Have special visitors like firefighters, mascots, magicians, librarians to your meal sites
- Have activities for kids at your sites; read, play games, nutrition education, contests, or arts and crafts
- Have parents who come to the site promote it on their Facebook page to other parents
- Partner with existing summer programming for kids
- Work with local movie theatres to have a summer food slide show before movies start
- Send home a flyer for the program wrapped around a piece of produce (ex: apple or potato)
- Ask the local school/school district to promote meal sites and times through the use of the Robo-Call system.

RESOURCES

- *Feed Your Brain grants* are possible through a partnership with *School's Out Washington, Children's Alliance and Discuren Charitable Foundation* and provide funding only for rural communities to offer summer literacy programming and open summer meal sites. This program not only addresses the child's need for food, but also helps address summer learning loss. Programs may apply for up to \$5,000, which may be used for a range of program costs (e.g. salaries, training, transportation, curriculum, supplies, equipment, furniture, and contracted services) except for food costs. The request for proposal is available in January on School's Out Washington's website; applications are due late March/early April. For more information, please visit their website: <http://www.schoolsoutwashington.org/228/FeedYourBrainGrants.htm>
- *United Way of King County* provides funding for the startup, expansion or operation of summer meal sites located in King County. This opportunity is also released in January.
- *Meals for Kids Grants* are provided through state funds administered by OSPI Child Nutrition Services. There is approximately \$70,000 specified for Summer Meals grants, for sponsors that are starting up a new summer program or expanding an existing program. The funds can be used for equipment, outreach materials, staffing, or other needs related to starting up or expanding a summer meal program. These funds must be used by June 30, so it's hard to use these funds for staffing; recipients mainly use grants for equipment and/or outreach.
- An *Advanced Payment from OSPI* is available upon request. The advanced payment can provide you with funds early to help off-set the costs of starting your program, rather than having to wait for reimbursement payments. These funds, if provided early, would be deducted from funds you would later receive from the first reimbursement.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUMMER MEALS

- Summer Meals Online Tool Kit for Washington State: <http://parenthelp123.org/professionals/food-resources/summer-meals-resource-toolkit>
- The US Department of Agriculture (USDA): <http://www.summerfood.usda.gov>
- The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC): <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/summer-programs/>
 - FRAC's guide to working with vendors: <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/summermeals2007.pdf>
- Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon: <http://oregonhunger.org/summer-food>

CONTACTS

For information on guidelines and how to qualify your sites:

OSPI-Child Nutrition Services
1-866-328-6325
Jennifer Mitchell, MS, RD
(360) 725-6056
jennifer.mitchell@k12.wa.us

OSPI-Child Nutrition Services
1-866-328-6325
Amber Horan
(360) 725-6202
amber.horan@k12.wa.us

For information on outreach, best practices, partnerships and advocacy efforts:

Children's Alliance
Linda Stone
(509)747-7205
linda@childrenalliance.org

WithinReach
Sue Waldin
(206) 830-7646
suew@withinreachwa.org

For information on existing summer programs in your community or the *Feed Your Brain grants*:

School's Out Washington
Virginia Eader
(206) 336-6924
veader@schoolsoutwashington.org

For self-prep models:

St. Leo's Food Connection
(253) 383-5048
keving@foodconnection.org

Thurston County Food Bank
Robert Coit
(360) 352-8597
director@thurstoncountyfoodbank.org

Des Moines Area Food Bank
Kris Van Gaskin
(206)878-2660
dmafb@bigplanet.com

Auburn School District
Carol Barker
253-931-4972
cjbarket@auburn.wednet.edu

Food Lifeline's Kids Cafe Program
Rebecca Van Maren
206-545-6600 ex 3606
rebeccav@fll.org

For vended models:

YMCA of Greater Seattle and the Boys and Girls Clubs of King County
Nicole Lowe
206-678-3471
nlowe@seattleyymca.org

BEST PRACTICES

Here are some great examples of how your peers throughout the state are using innovative ways to reach kids during the summer. Keep in mind there are various ways you can implement your program and these are just some best practices.

ST. LEO'S FOOD CONNECTION

St. Leo's Food Connection hires high school and college aged staff for their program. Every morning the staff prepares the sack lunches at a central location. Then they are counted and put into coolers which are delivered by the staff to multiple sites. Staff members drive their own vehicles and are reimbursed for mileage and gas, in addition to their hourly wage. Depending on the site locations, they may deliver meals to multiple sites each day. Typically they arrive at the site, serve meals, and then move on to the next site 30 minutes later. For St. Leo's, sites at apartment complexes work really well, especially when they are able to gain the manager's buy-in for the program. St. Leo's has also hired adults as site supervisors. They have hired moms to run the sites as a way to increase site participation, and as a way to provide low income families with some income.

THURSTON COUNTY FOOD BANK

Thurston County Food Bank sponsored a few traditional (USDA) sites during the summer. They provided unitized meals (prepackaged) purchased from a vendor. Most of these meals were frozen to thaw and serve, or shelf stable. Milk and other perishables were provided separately. They used vans to transport meals to their sites, and typically have 2 staff per van. They also operated a self-funded mobile meal program.

DES MOINES AREA FOOD BANK

Des Moines Area Food Bank has gained some great experience operating their Summer Meals Program. They chose to prepare their meals using volunteers and in the church kitchen adjacent to their food bank. They put the sack meals into coolers with ice packs and drove their van to each site. Employees would drive the food bank's trucks, so to minimize insurance costs; they hired two staff drivers who were over the age of 25. They also hired an additional staff, younger than 25, to assist with the program. Staff stayed at each site for 30 minutes, and then moved on to the next site. Some of their sites are locations used with their backpack program during the school year, and they have also started serving lunches on Saturdays at the Farmer's Market. In an effort to reduce waste, and provide choice, they have started using the "offer versus serve" method enabling participants to pick the items they wanted for lunch, while still meeting guidelines. They have also operated sites working with a vendor to provide meals out of their direct service area.

AUBURN SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Auburn School District has exemplified what it means to make summer meals accessible to kids. Noticing that kids weren't able to make their way to parks to eat lunch while parents were at work, they started bringing the meals to the kids. They have sites at locations such as parks, summer schools, YMCA, apartment complexes and day cares, in

addition to school sites. They outfitted seven small school busses which the district had sent to the surplus with hot boxes, insulated containers, and other needed supplies. They use 6 of the district's central kitchens to prepare the food for up to 8 sites each. The food is then put onto the bus and the driver/site supervisor drives the meals to the kids for lunch. Once at the site, they unload a table from the bus and set it up with their variety of food. The kids enjoy their meal, and then they pack up and move onto the next site. They primarily use employees for this model, having 2-3 staff per site. However, they have been able to use volunteers as well.

MANSON SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Manson School District uses the Simplified Summer Food Service Program. They are a small district with one elementary school and utilize its central kitchen to prepare meals. Their cook prepares all the meals and delivers them to their 5 locations. They serve breakfast and lunch at the one elementary school, 3 low income housing complexes, and at a community park. They have also worked in conjunction with a church offering Vacation Bible School in the past. Their program typical serves less than 200 kids and it has a big impact for the participants in a small community.

Transportation can be one of the main barriers for kids to participate in Summer Meals. The most effective way is to transport the meals to the kids. While we know that the best sites are located where children can walk safely, that isn't always an easy thing to accomplish, especially if you're located in a rural area.

FOOD LIFELINE

Food Lifeline sponsors programs across Western Washington's counties, reaching urban and rural communities. Through their Summer Food model, they provide cold meals to site requiring no preparation. They use unique food sourcing connections to purchase kid friendly items to provide ready to eat meals and snacks. This enables sites to participate that may not have the resources to prepare their own food. Their sites can also use the "offer versus served" best practice method of meal distribution, enabling the participants to have choice in what they'll eat for lunch. This program model meets national Feeding America Kids Cafe requirements, reduces waste, maintains high food safety standards, and has been used in centers, parks, apartment complexes and on field trips. Many of their Summer Meal sites also participate in their afterschool meal program. Their program is able to operate in their 17 county service area in Western Washington.