

Best Practices for Using Umbrella Sponsors to Expand the Afterschool Meal Program

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SCOPE | State, County, Local PROGRAM | The Afterschool Meal Program

PRACTICE | Championing the use of “umbrella sponsors” is a key strategy to grow participation in the Afterschool Meal Program.

WHY | Healthy afterschool meals are crucial for children who attend a variety of programs after school hours. And for many low-income children, meals provided by the Afterschool Meal Program may be the last opportunity for nourishment until the next school day. Yet, across the nation, too many interested afterschool programs do not participate in the Afterschool Meal Program because they feel that they lack capacity to apply for, and then to administer, the Afterschool Meal Program. This is where umbrella sponsors can help.

Developing the capacity of umbrella sponsors results in:

- ✓ more enrichment programs serving afterschool meals and snacks;
- ✓ more children and teens accessing the nutrition needed to engage fully in afterschool enrichment activities; and
- ✓ more federal funding leveraged to feed children and teens in low-income communities.

BACKGROUND | Umbrella sponsors may be local government agencies, school districts, food banks, youth-serving organizations, and other private nonprofits. They fill a critical need by overseeing multiple, and often smaller, afterschool enrichment sites

that need administrative support to participate in the Afterschool Meal Program. (The official name of this program overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture is the Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program.) Umbrella sponsors may also provide training to sites on program requirements.

Umbrella sponsors are supported by federal funding provided through the Afterschool Meal Program. Afterschool program providers participating under an umbrella sponsor can redirect funding previously spent on food for other afterschool enrichment program priorities.

SPOTLIGHT | With support from the Walmart Foundation, FRAC and the YMCA of the USA have partnered to build the capacity of local YMCAs to become umbrella sponsors for child nutrition programs. In many instances, local YMCAs not only sponsor YMCA affiliated-sites, but also other sites in the community in need of a meals sponsor.

Umbrella sponsors can benefit from economies of scale, helping to ensure their financial viability. For schools, umbrella sponsorship can increase the budgets of school nutrition programs and allow some schools to move part-time employees to full time. For organizations that also sponsor multiple Summer Food Service Program sites, umbrella sponsorship of afterschool meal

sites often allows them to employ their staff year-round and creates the opportunity to negotiate better contracts with meal vendors, since the sponsor purchases meals year-round instead of a few months at a time.

KEY STEPS | Whether you are an advocate working to identify potential sponsors for sites, or trying to improve the capacity of existing sponsors, here's how umbrella sponsorship can bring the benefits of afterschool meals to more children:

Learn the requirements for becoming an umbrella sponsor: Local government agencies, school districts, or large nonprofit organizations are all eligible to become sponsors. The state agency that administers the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) – typically the education or child care agency – determines who can become an umbrella sponsor and provides training and technical assistance on operating the program.

Umbrella sponsors must:

- oversee the operation of the Afterschool Meal Program at multiple sites, sometimes at very different types of sites;
- keep accurate records and fulfill monitoring requirements for all sites; and
- ensure sites receive enough meals that comply with the federal nutrition requirements.

If you are interested in becoming an umbrella sponsor, contact the [state agency](#) that administers CACFP in order to apply.

Recruit afterschool enrichment programs that can benefit from the support of a sponsor: Umbrella sponsors must recruit qualifying sites to participate in CACFP. To build expertise, umbrella sponsors often begin small before adding too many sites. Sites are eligible if they are located in a low-income area where at least half of the children attending the local elementary, middle, or high school are qualified to receive free or reduced-price school meals. Anti-hunger advocates, state and local afterschool networks, and intermediaries can help identify afterschool programs operating in eligible communities. For instance, Summer Food Service Program sites often

operate afterschool programs and would be interested in participating in the Afterschool Meal Program if sponsors were available to help.

TIPS |

- Sponsors should encourage sites to maximize meal service options by serving both a meal and a snack.
- Sponsors should encourage sites to operate after school during the week, as well as on weekends, and during school holidays.

CHALLENGES |

- Sometimes sponsors struggle with overseeing multiple sites with different staffing models and facilities.

LESSONS | *Ensure accountability:* Frequent reporting from each site to the sponsor enables umbrella sponsors to meet all program requirements, facilitates consistent communication between all sites and the sponsor, and quickly allows the umbrella sponsor to address needs or challenges that may arise. Many sponsors require that sites report the number of snacks and meals served on a daily basis. Additionally, many umbrella sponsors offer frequent training to sites to ensure program compliance on all levels of operation.

Build capacity: Most umbrella sponsors choose to standardize the meal service across sites, but some are able to offer a variety of options for meal delivery and service to their afterschool program sites. Some sponsors choose to serve a cold meal, brown-bag style, while others incorporate a hot-meal service. Umbrella sponsors can use existing resources and tools to build capacity to produce, transport, and deliver meals and snacks. For example, kitchen facilities already approved to operate the National School Lunch Program may be able to provide food for afterschool programs that are located at, or near, the same site as the kitchen facility. To the extent possible, umbrella sponsors should offer a variety of meal and snack-serving options so that a site can choose what works best for it.

EXAMPLES |

- **Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Maryland:**

The Division of Food and Nutrition Services of MCPS provides suppers to about 60 locations and afterschool snacks to nearly 65 locations, serving between five and 350 children at each site. MCPS also offers annual training to site managers on program requirements. This model benefits from leveraging the use of school kitchen facilities and school meal staff to expand afterschool nutrition to the broader community. Since the school kitchens have already been found to comply with state and local health and safety standards, and staff are familiar with preparing meals that comply with federal nutrition standards, the MCPS Division of Food and Nutrition Services is able to sponsor — and thereby provide — meals to enrichment programs (outside of the schools) throughout the county. MCPS has the afterschool program staff pick up the food and store it at the afterschool site. Afterschool program staff email school-based supervisors the number of children participating in afterschool programs and the number of meals and snacks served each day.

- **Jacksonville Children's Commission (JCC), Florida:**

JCC sponsors nearly 60 afterschool sites, with the vast majority providing a supper or a supper and a snack. The sites serve about 7,000 children on an average day. The meals and snacks are supplied by the same vendor used by the schools. JCC initially only sponsored school-based sites, but was able to expand to community-based afterschool sites by offering transportation and delivery options. Site managers of community-based sites pick up the meals and snacks at the school nearest to the site, while sites located at schools receive the meals vended to that school. A hot supper is served at the start of all afterschool programs to ensure that food temperature is maintained, with snacks served about 30 minutes before the children go home. JCC collects paperwork from each site on a weekly basis to ensure compliance with program requirements. It also requires annual and ongoing training for all program staff, particularly to account for potential staff turnover throughout the school year.

- **Harvesters Food Bank, Kansas and Missouri:**

Harvesters Food Bank sponsors, supplies, and delivers hot or shelf-stable suppers to about 50 urban, suburban, and rural sites in Kansas and Missouri. Harvesters Food Bank educates its surrounding communities about the Afterschool Meal Program and contacts potential sites, especially where there is a gap in meal program availability, such as in rural communities. Harvesters Food Bank uses an online reporting system to record daily meal counts and for site supervisors to request the number of delivered meals for the following day. Sites also are required to submit original copies of attendance and meal-count records to Harvesters Food Bank on a weekly basis.

MORE RESOURCES

FRAC's Afterschool Meal Guide:

<http://bit.ly/fracafterschoolmealguide>

Sample Legislation:

- To find out which states have passed mandates in support of the Summer Nutrition Programs, refer to [FRAC's Summer Nutrition Programs State Mandate Chart](#).

For technical assistance, contact:

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For more on ending hunger, read FRAC's [A Plan of Action to End Hunger in America](#).