



Summer FAQ

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Who can operate SFSP and NSLP?

SFSP: Public and private nonprofit schools, local government agencies, such as parks and recreation departments or county health department, private nonprofits, such as YMCAs and Boys and Girls Clubs.

NSLP: Public and private nonprofit schools are able to provide summer meals through NSLP either through the Seamless Summer Option which operates under the same rules as Summer Food, but provides the slightly lower NSLP free reimbursement rate for all meals served, or through NSLP under the same rules as the school year to feed students who are attending summer school.

What is the difference between a sponsor and a site?

A sponsor enters into an agreement with their state agency to run the program. Local governments, school districts, and nonprofits can sponsor summer meal sites. Sponsors receive reimbursement for each eligible meal and snack served at meal sites.

A site is the physical location where children receive meals during the summer. Sites may be located at schools, parks, recreation centers, housing complexes, Indian reservations, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, houses of worship, camps, summer school, and other places where children congregate. Sites work directly with sponsors.

Should a summer program operate SFSP itself or participate through a sponsor?

Organizations with the capacity to operate a food service can consider sponsoring the SFSP. Sponsors attend trainings, arrange for meals to be prepared and delivered, monitor sites and prepare claims for reimbursement.

If an organization does not have the financial or administrative ability to be a sponsor but wants to provide meals, it can work with existing sponsors to do so. Organizations also may consider operating as a site under an existing sponsor first and then later transitioning to sponsoring once familiar with the program.

How many meals and snacks can a site provide each day?

FRAC recommends sponsors serve two meals per day, which is the maximum number of meals allowed. This ensures that children receive more of the nutrition they need to reduce hungry during the summer months. It also allows the organization to receive the maximum funding possible, creating economies of scale and making the overall program more economically feasible.

Sites can serve a maximum of two meals per day or a meal and a snack. USDA guidelines state that sites cannot serve both lunch and supper.

Summer camps (both residential and non-residential) and sites that serve primarily migrant children can serve up to three meals a day. Camps are only reimbursed for meals served to children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

What's the difference between "Open" and "Enrolled" sites?

Summer food sites can either operate as "open" or "enrolled" sites. An "open" site is one located in a low-income area where at least 50 percent of

the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. The site is then open to all children in the community ages 18 and under. At an “enrolled” site, only children enrolled can participate. The site qualifies if it is located in a low-income area or if 50 percent or more of the children enrolled in the program are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

How does a site know it’s located in a low-income area?

You can use either a school’s percentage of free and reduced-price students or census data to determine whether or not your summer program is located in a low-income area (i.e. where at least 50 percent of the children are eligible for free and reduced-price meals) and therefore qualifies as a site. To qualify using school data, contact your school food service department for further assistance.

It is important to note that even if your site is located at a middle school or high school, you can use nearby elementary school data to qualify your site. Often times, elementary schools have higher percentages of free and reduced-price students so it may be advantageous to use them to qualify your site.

To qualify a site using census data, you can use FRAC’s Summer Food Mapper. You simply enter the address of the site in the Summer Food Mapper and it will tell you whether or not the program qualifies.

Does summer nutrition reimbursement cover all costs?

Many summer sponsors find that the SFSP or NSLP reimbursements cover the entire cost of the meals and snacks they serve.

Even if the entire cost of providing summer meals is not covered, many still decide to participate because they feel that feeding the children in their community is important and SFSP and NSLP provide substantial funding for the meals and snacks that help support summer programs and reduce childhood hunger and improve health.

Should sponsors have food provided by a private vendor, or prepare it on site?

Relatively small sponsors or those that have the facilities to produce meals and snacks may find it easier and more cost effective to prepare it on site. Preparing food also gives the site control over the quality of the food and the variety of the menus.

What are some private vendors that could provide the food?

School nutrition departments, community kitchens, food banks, meals on wheels, or hospitals may be interested in vending the food.

School nutrition departments, meals on wheels, and hospitals already have the infrastructure to provide food and may be interested in providing additional work opportunities for their employees.

Community kitchens and food banks are possibilities, as providing meals through the child nutrition programs is a natural outgrowth of their mission.

If none of these entities are available, most communities have traditional for-profit vendors that can provide food.

Is a site required to provide an education or recreation program?

Sites do not need to provide enrichment or educational activities (although most do), but it helps draw more children to sites. Children can simply gather at a school, park or other community site to eat their meal or snack without any type of programming taking place at the site.

What support can state agencies provide?

The state agency, which is usually located in your state's department of education, agriculture, or health, administers the summer nutrition programs. It is required to train sponsors each year and will provide you with the materials you need to sponsor the program. Often times, staff can help you with menu planning and provide you with outreach materials. The state agency also will collect all of your paperwork and process your reimbursement.