Proactive Planning for Summer Meals Sponsors

Start here:
One of the best ways to sustain, strengthen, and expand your program is to approach planning as a year-round endeavor. This resource is a road map to help identify activities that can benefit your program at different times throughout the year. It also highlights important regulatory tasks necessary to participate in the Summer Food Service Program and NSLP Seamless Summer Option. Use it as a guide to define and refine your summer planning. *Consider developing your own timeline and checklist, adding in dates and staff roles and responsibilities. Update your document annually ahead of planning in November-December.*

Year-Round

- Participate in statewide or regional sponsor groups (if available) to network and exchange best practices with peer organizations. This will support program growth at your organization and across your region. *Contact No Kid Hungry at bestpractices@strength.org for additional information.*
- Attend your required state agency trainings to stay informed of policies and procedures and timelines for sponsor application.

October-November

- Submit August meal count claims, if you have not yet done so.
- If offered, attend your state agency or No Kid Hungry sponsored summer debrief session to review this year's outcomes and capture learnings to inform next summer's work.
    - Use the debrief session as an opportunity to set internal goals for your program and establish or deepen community partnerships.
- Use USDA's Capacity Builder and No Kid Hungry's Averaged Eligibility Map to identify areas for program expansion.

Sign up for our What's New Newsletter to receive program updates, learn about new resources, and register for upcoming webinars! For more summer meals resources, check out our website.

December-January

- Begin site recruitment for the upcoming summer. Focus on where kids are in your community, and where you might place sites to bring summer meals as close to them as possible. Example partners include:
  - Libraries
  - Pools and splash pads
  - Recreation centers
  - Summer camps
  - Apartment complexes
  - Etc. *You can find more ideas on our [website](#)!*
- Start budget, menu, and staff planning.
- Discuss plans for large-capacity projects, such as mobile vehicles. Refer to the [No Kid Hungry Mobile Meals Toolkit](#) for guidance and examples.
- Review and update, where needed, procedures for sponsor record-keeping to ensure all essential documentation is maintained as required by USDA and/or state agencies.

February-March

- Continue site recruitment and planning (e.g., meal production and delivery, staffing, etc.).
- Begin volunteer recruitment and community partner engagement to identify additional support services or programming (e.g., SNAP-Ed, the library's bookmobile, etc.).
- Begin developing a marketing and outreach campaign to ensure families and children know about your program. No Kid Hungry's [Summer Meals Outreach Toolkit](#) contains downloadable and customizable resources for you to use to promote summer meals in your community.
- Identify and apply for grant opportunities. The Center for Best Practices [What's New Newsletter](#) often includes information about funding options available for programs. *Contact No Kid Hungry at bestpractices@strength.org to learn more.*
- Begin your state agency's Summer Food Service Program or NSLP Seamless Summer application.
- Review and update, where needed, training materials for sponsor staff and site staff.
  - *Consider creating an online site guide using a Dropbox or Google Drive folder to easily provide and update materials for site staff.*

April-May

- Finalize and submit your application to your state agency to participate in the Summer Food Service Program.
- Attend state agency sponsor training.
- Confirm meal production and delivery plans.
- Continue to participate in the [No Kid Hungry summer webinar series](#).
- Carry out marketing and outreach activities to raise awareness among families and children about summer meals. No Kid Hungry's [Summer Meals Outreach Toolkit](#) contains template resources for you to use to promote summer meals in your community.

Remember to share this resource with a friend or coworker!

April-May (continued)

- Conduct site staff trainings for all personnel involved in your meals program.
- Conduct pre-operational visits for new sites.
- Confirm staffing and timeline for completing required site monitoring visits.
- Collaborate with your state agency and other sponsors in your area to support each other's outreach efforts. Be aware of where other SFSP sites are located to avoid duplication and facilitate cross-promotion
- *Think ahead to the Fall:* Assess opportunity to transition to CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals by using this Afterschool Meals and Summer Meals Comparison Chart. *Contact your state agency or No Kid Hungry at bestpractices@strength.org for additional assistance.*

June-July

- Continue marketing and outreach activities.
- Host kickoff, media, and community events.
- Invite community leaders and legislators to visit one of your sites. Send them this Summer Meals Engagement Toolkit for Elected Officials to encourage their participation in the program.
- Host a "spike" event to maintain or boost program attendance. Consider special menus (e.g., barbecue, cookout), guests (e.g., local "stars" like TV or radio hosts, elected officials, or a local band), and themes to make it memorable. Adding activities for children and families helps attract participants too.

August-September

- Submit final meal count claims to your state agency, if you have not yet done so.
- Conduct a program evaluation to identify opportunities for improvement:
  - Compare end-of-year finances to initial projections.
  - Administer surveys or convene discussion groups to gather feedback from program participants.
  - *Contact No Kid Hungry at bestpractices@strength.org for assistance.*
- Send out "thank you" notes to program staff and partners to recognize their service.
- Prepare your summer meals sites for a transition to afterschool meals.