

# ENDING CHILDHOOD HUNGER

A STATE AGENCY CHECKLIST



*center for* BEST  
PRACTICES

As a child nutrition program state agency official, you play a critical role in ending childhood hunger. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and NSLP Seamless Summer Option, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which includes the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program, are all invaluable sources of support to children and families struggling with hunger. State agencies can strengthen and expand these programs so that they seamlessly reach children year-round wherever they live, learn, and play, allowing them to grow up healthy and reach their full potential. These tips can help you to enhance each child nutrition program as well as the coordination between programs and other partners. You may have already successfully implemented many of these practices, but reviewing your current operations and considering new ideas will help you to further improve your administration and promotion of these vital programs.

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## ADMINISTRATION AND COLLABORATION

### INTERNAL STAFFING

❑ **Convene pertinent agency officials and program directors or managers to improve coordination across programs.**

- Discuss opportunities for collaboration and streamlining.
- Ensure that employees across programs are familiar with the other programs, can answer basic questions accurately, and know where to refer organizations for additional information.
- Encourage program staff to take a similar approach to technical assistance and compliance for a more consistent experience among organizations participating in multiple programs.

❑ **Develop a staffing model that maintains program integrity while promoting growth.**

- Consider whether your staffing model is working as effectively as possible for your state.
  - If your program(s) have grown or changed recently, your staffing model may not be optimally aligned with the current workload and priorities.
  - A different model may increase the program staff's efficiency depending on your state's size, geography, and host agency/agencies as well as the existing staff size and expertise.
  - Balance the amount of knowledge required to administer specific programs or sub-programs, the skill sets required for different functions (like training versus auditing), and the client experience, especially for those participating in multiple programs or working with different departments within your host agency.
  - For ideas on other possible staffing models, read No Kid Hungry's report on [State Agency Administration of Afterschool Snack and Meal Programs](#).
- Provide onboarding and ongoing training and development opportunities for program staff.
- Encourage staff to attend agency, USDA, and partner organization trainings and meetings.
- Leverage contractors and temporary staffing to manage increases in workload if federal and/or state funding do not allow for additional FTE's.



### EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

❑ **Convene child nutrition program directors, managers, and agency officials from other agencies** if the programs are not all housed within the same host agency. Several states have either the CACFP or the NSLP/SBP in a separate agency from the other programs.

- As with collaboration within the agency, explore opportunities for streamlining, data sharing, and cross-promotion across agencies. Many school districts and non-profit sponsors operate multiple child nutrition programs and value a seamless transition with consistent guidance.
- Collaboration can be informal or formal, including inter-agency agreements or shared procurement for IT systems.
  - For example, an agreement could outline ways that the NSLP state agency assists with administration or monitoring of school districts operating the CACFP Afterschool Meals Program.

❑ **Meet with other agency officials**, such as those responsible for administering WIC, SNAP, or subsidized child care, as well as other social service agencies and providers, to discuss opportunities for cross-promotion, streamlined services, and data sharing.

❑ **Develop and encourage relationships** between agency staff and non-profit organizations, like state anti-hunger organizations, that can extend agency efforts to enhance and expand the programs.

- ❑ **Post or release information about state agency strategies and priorities as well as program data** to enhance transparency, facilitate collaboration, and share knowledge of trends that may impact planning.
  - Make program data publicly available for analysis through agency websites or school report cards/assessments.
  - If data analysis and mapping are beyond the capacity of the state agency or agencies, implement data sharing agreements with agencies or non-profit organizations that are able to provide this support.
- ❑ **Encourage program staff to participate in existing coalitions or workgroups.** For example, ensure that child nutrition programs are represented in a state task force to address hunger and food insecurity, or statewide initiatives to address summer learning loss, or food policy councils.

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

- ❑ **Maximize State Administrative Expense Funds, State Administrative Funds (for SFSP), Audit Funds, and (if applicable) Reallocation Funds** by careful planning and regular tracking to ensure full utilization as well as by leveraging efficiencies and economies of scale through cross-program procurement and contracts.
  - Plan for the possibility of spending or obligating remaining funds before the end of the fiscal year.
  - Generate ideas in advance for allowable expenditures if funding permits. For example, designing and printing outreach materials, upgrading technology and equipment, or purchasing training materials.
  - Be familiar with federal, state, and agency policies, procedures, and deadlines. Knowing the timeline and requirements for procurement at various purchase thresholds can facilitate planning and expedite purchases.
- ❑ **Coordinate internal and external training dates, other events, and deadlines** where possible to avoid schedule conflicts and better manage workloads.
- ❑ **Coordinate administrative reviews and site visits** when possible.
  - When possible or optional, offer organizations the option for a combined cross-program review versus separate reviews. The NSLP/SBP and CACFP financial review for schools must be conducted simultaneously, but other review elements may or may not be combined.
  - Share documents that would expedite a review.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR PROGRAM OPERATORS

- ❑ **Streamline program applications and data systems.**
  - Take an inventory of documents that applicants and renewing organizations must submit for each program. Determine whether any applications or forms can be shortened or simplified.
    - While many elements are required by federal regulation, it may be possible to eliminate some elements or improve the clarity.
  - Ensure that organizations participating in one child nutrition program do not have to submit duplicative information and documents when applying or renewing for another program.
    - If possible, make applying or renewing for CACFP Afterschool Meals part of the annual NSLP/SBP application.
    - Develop tailored, shortened application forms, application addenda, or application modules for organizations transitioning from one program to another.
  - If it is not possible to create a shared online application and data system that can transfer pertinent information across program modules, implement standard data-sharing procedures.
- ❑ **Issue joint policy memos and guidance** on topics that apply to multiple programs or to organizations that participate in multiple programs in order to ensure that timely, clear, and consistent information is being given to everyone.

## OUTREACH AND PROMOTION

- ❑ **Cross-promote the programs** to encourage strong sponsors to operate multiple child nutrition programs.
  - Leverage agency and program communications to promote other child nutrition programs.
  - If school districts or sponsors are unable or unwilling to sponsor multiple programs, develop a system to ensure that their schools and sites are connected with sponsors in other programs.
- ❑ **Apply for AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers** to help with outreach to schools, organizations, and families. Government agencies may apply to the Corporation for National and Community Service for AmeriCorps members through national-direct grants, or to state commissions that leverage state AmeriCorps grantees and grant dollars for direct community service. Agencies may apply to state VISTA offices for summer VISTA or year-round VISTA volunteers.
  - In addition to raising awareness, volunteers can also help with training and technical assistance on implementation and best practices.
  - Volunteers may also be able to develop outreach materials.
  - They may be able to write case studies on successful programs or reports on special projects to help disseminate best practices and new ideas.
  - Providing volunteer-led activities or youth development may also increase participation at Summer and Afterschool Meals sites.
- ❑ **Utilize data and mapping** to identify the most the strategic targets.
  - Map SFSP and CACFP sponsors and sites in order to identify service gaps.
  - Use data to identify high-performing schools, sponsors, and sites who may be champions for the programs and sources for best practices.
  - Use data to identify potentially underperforming schools, sponsors, and sites for technical assistance.
- ❑ **Provide recognition or give awards** for high-performing schools, school districts, sponsoring organizations, and sites.
  - Lead a “challenge” for schools, sponsors, or sites to compete for increased participation and reward those with the biggest increases.



## FOR CACFP AT-RISK AFTERSCHOOL MEALS STATE AGENCY OFFICIALS

- ❑ **Support and provide guidance on effective Afterschool Meals Program models** that align with USDA policy so that sponsors and sites can effectively increase participation. This includes:
  - The **Umbrella Model**, which allows all eligible children, including athletes and children who choose not to participate in activities, to have the Afterschool Meal as part of a broad, overarching afterschool program that makes one or more activities available to everyone.
  - **Supper in the Classroom**, which allows students to eat in their classroom immediately following the final bell and participate in a simple enrichment activity, like homework help or reading aloud.
- ❑ **Promote Afterschool Meals** to schools, SFSP sponsors and sites, parks and recreation departments, food banks, state afterschool alliances and networks, 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees, YMCA branches, Boys and Girls Clubs, and any other state-based afterschool programming funders or advocates.
  - Leverage agency communications, such as newsletters sent to school administrators or nutrition directors.
  - Present at agency-sponsored events, such as annual training for school food authorities, as well as pertinent community or association events.

❑ **Streamline and clarify health and safety standards.**

- Collaborate with relevant state, county, and municipal health and safety officials as well as SFSP state agency officials to develop, clarify, and/or streamline health and safety standards for Afterschool Meals sites.
- Provide clear and easy-to-access guidelines to sponsors and sites on how to meet health and safety standards depending on location and meal service type (e.g. hot versus cold meals).

❑ **Take advantage of USDA-approved streamlining options.**

- Waive pre-application training requirements for school food authorities. Provide tailored, on-demand training on CACFP-specific requirements and procedures, such as web-based training modules.
- Eliminate the requirement for school food authorities and successful SFSP sponsors to document financial viability and administrative capability.

❑ **Provide annual training tailored to Afterschool Meals sponsors, especially schools.**

- Create web-based training modules if it is not possible or convenient to hold in-person training sessions for this segment of CACFP participants.

❑ **Publicize performance data.**

- In collaboration with NSLP/SBP state agency officials, work with pertinent education officials to have Afterschool Meals performance data posted on school websites and/or included in school report cards.

## FOR SUMMER MEALS STATE AGENCY OFFICIALS

❑ **Where SFSP and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) are administered separately, ensure collaboration** to reduce duplication of effort.

❑ **Lead statewide or regional collaborative planning efforts** with sponsors, other agencies and community partners, or support other organizations in leading collaborative planning, to ensure efficient use of resources and maximized reach.

❑ **Form sponsor councils or create mentoring programs** to foster peer-to-peer learning and support among program sponsors.

❑ **Develop application and approval systems and deadlines** that allow sponsors to add new sites or close underperforming sites throughout the summer in response to demand.

❑ **Leverage statewide or city initiatives and events to raise awareness** about Summer Meals among organizations, families, and children.

❑ **Create a statewide Summer Meals promotional campaign** in collaboration with state and city officials as well as advocates and sponsors.

- Consider rebranding Summer Meals rather than referring to it as the “Summer Food Service Program.” For example, Michigan uses the slogan “Meet Up and Eat Up” while Florida calls a Summer Meals site a “Summer Break Spot.”
- A cohesive statewide campaign, rather than having individual sponsors or cities develop branding, can amplify efforts to boost awareness and reduce confusion among children and families.

❑ **Promote tools that increase awareness of the Summer Meals program and connect families to nearby sites**, such as the [Summer Meals texting program](#), the USDA [National Hunger Hotline](#), and the USDA's [Summer Meals Site Finder](#) website.

❑ **Encourage school districts to promote Summer Meals** by sending home information at the end of the school year and recording robo-calls with information on finding a site.

❑ **Promote practices that increase access and participation**, such as:

- Serving more than one meal per day at each site (such as adding breakfast or a snack in addition to lunch),
- Allowing sites to operate in the evening and serve suppers,
- Adding service days, especially at the very beginning or end of the summer,
- Serving meals on weekends, and
- [Mobile meals](#) routes that reach areas that do not have the capacity to operate sites.

- ❑ **Collaborate with pertinent state, county, and city agency officials on opportunities to provide transportation** for children to and from Summer Meals sites, or leverage existing transportation to deliver meals to sites.
- ❑ **Publicize performance data.**
  - In collaboration with NSLP/SBP state agency officials, work with pertinent education officials to have Summer Meals performance data posted on school websites and/or included in school report cards.

## FOR NSLP / SBP STATE AGENCY OFFICIALS

- ❑ **Use data to determine which districts/schools are eligible to enroll in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)**, then encourage districts/schools to adopt CEP and provide technical assistance to ensure accurate and maximized utilization.
- ❑ **Work with pertinent education officials to have Lunch and Breakfast performance data posted** on school websites and/or included in school report cards.
- ❑ **Provide education and training on Breakfast After the Bell (BAB) models** to encourage districts/schools to implement BAB, and/or partner with other organizations to provide training.
- ❑ **Target equipment grants** to districts/schools implementing BAB models, such as:
  - Breakfast in the Classroom – breakfast is served and eaten in the classroom after the official start of the school day.
  - Grab and Go to the Classroom – students pick up breakfast on the way to class before and after the bell. Students are allowed to eat in class.
  - Second Chance Breakfast – breakfast is served during a break in the morning, usually between first and second period via Grab and Go, or Cafeteria style.
- ❑ **Track each school's Breakfast service model** (e.g. Traditional Cafeteria Before the Bell, Grab and Go Before the Bell, Grab and Go to the Classroom, Breakfast in the Classroom, etc.) in order to assess performance.
- ❑ **Provide technical assistance** for BAB implementation and maintenance.
- ❑ **Create a network of school-based champions**, such as school nutrition directors, teachers, and principals that are executing high quality and innovative lunch and breakfast models in order to share best practices and provide guidance to their peers.
- ❑ **Showcase schools** that have high lunch and breakfast participation to celebrate their achievements.
- ❑ **Host or promote a statewide Breakfast Challenge** to promote Breakfast participation.



#### ABOUT THE NO KID HUNGRY CENTER FOR BEST PRACTICES

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry® campaign is ending childhood hunger by connecting kids to the healthy food they need, every day; teaches families how to cook healthy, affordable meals through Cooking Matters®; and invests in community organizations that fight hunger. The No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices provides the tools and resources needed to help elected officials and their staff, educators and community leaders achieve success in fighting childhood hunger. Learn what works in the fight against childhood hunger and discover toolkits, case studies, hunger stats, issue briefs, reports and more at [BestPractices.NoKidHungry.org](https://BestPractices.NoKidHungry.org).



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