

Summer Meals Planning Meeting Facilitator Guide

This document is designed to help you facilitate a planning meeting of organizations and government entities working together to increase access to summer meals. It provides suggestions and detailed instructions for each of the major activities. Ideally, this will help you lead the meeting and make the right adjustments to the agenda.

Meeting Goals

- Develop a shared vision for summer success
- Identify challenges to and opportunities for expanding access to summer meals in 2014
- Brainstorm ideas and resources to address challenges and act on opportunities/innovations
- Solidify roles and commitments for summer meals activities

Introductions

The most important part of opening a meeting is to make sure that people understand what they will accomplish that day, what structure you will use to get there, and who is in the room with them. Below are a suggested set of talking points to get there.

1. **Thank you for coming:** This can be formal or informal. If there is a host organization or special guests, this is a great opportunity to acknowledge them or give them a chance to share a few words
2. **Review Agenda:** This doesn't have to take long, but it helps to put the goals and major activities in your own words and highlight the times you will break/eat lunch.
3. **Review Ground Rules:** Below are suggested ground rules to go over. After reviewing, ask participants if these are the right rules and if there are any more to add. When you have a complete list, ask everyone to nod or vocalize agreement to use the rules.
 - Remove distractions – or remove yourself to avoid distracting others
 - Step up and step back – make sure all have the chance to participate
 - Respect all perspectives and voices – focus on opportunity, not judgment
 - Meet your needs (restrooms, food, water, etc.)
 - Parking Lot for issues that we want to capture but aren't part of this agenda
4. **Introductions:** This is a chance for everyone to say their name, title and organization – even if most everyone is familiar working with each other.
 - How does your organization help serve kids during the summer?

Room Set-Up: Prior to starting the meeting, you may want to have the agenda, ground rules, and heading for the Parking Lot written on chart paper and posted around the room. This will provide a visual reminder and help you refer back to the agreed upon plan of action any time that the conversation goes off track or becomes unproductive.

Activity 1: Assessments: Where we are starting in 201X

The purpose of this activity is to get everyone on the same page about the state of summer meals in your state or community. It is a chance to share information that has been collected and analyzed by the state agency or a nonprofit, ideas listed below. Most of this information should be developed into a presentation ahead of time rather than spontaneously contributed. Though participants should have the opportunity to share any data they may have collected about summer. If there is not very much information to present you can shorten the time allotted.

What to present

- Data about summer performance the previous year (i.e., number of meals served, distribution of sites in the state,
- Information about the experience of families, sponsors and sites (i.e., surveys, stories)
- Any existing plans that have been developed prior to the meeting (i.e., notes from the previous year's debrief)
- Draft goals for the year

Prompt Questions:

- What else do we know about the state of summer meals?
- Does this surprise you based on your own experience?
- What else might we want to learn about summer in our area?

Capturing Responses: For this activity, do not worry about capturing data presented from reports, but do keep a bulleted list of responses to “What else do we know about the state of summer meals?”

Activity 2: Visioning: The Best Summer Ever!

The purpose of this activity is to develop a shared sense of purpose amongst stakeholders and get them thinking big-picture about a good program would look like. Your role as the facilitator is to keep them focused on a best-case scenario future, versus getting caught up in what is currently possible or reasonable to expect for this year. If it is helpful, think of this like brainstorming where the focus is on generating ideas, not assessing them.

Instructions to the group

- For the next exercise we will imagine what it would look like to have the best summer program possible in this area
- Take five minutes to yourself and write down a few words to describe what it would look like
- At that point we will share results and identify common themes
- Remember that visioning is about the best state of being, not just what is currently possible
- Here are some more questions to help you think through this exercise (*read prompt questions*)
- (*after quiet writing*) Now that you have had a minute to think, who would like to share their thoughts?

Prompt Questions:

- What would a strong summer program look like in our area?
- What neighborhoods would we be reaching?
- What would the sites/food sources be like?
- What food would be served?

- Who would be involved?

Identifying Themes:

Once participants have shared their ideas, you can start to scan the paper for themes. If it is helpful, underline the words that relate to each other. You can ask the participants to share any themes they see in addition to those you can see. If it is helpful, you can have a volunteer or co-facilitator come up and help with the underlining and writing.

Capturing Responses:

For this activity, start with chart paper labeled “Vision for _____,” inserting the name of your state or community. When you are ready to identify themes, start a new section of chart paper titled “Vision: Themes”. You can take down the brainstorming, but if possible, keep the vision themes visible during the meeting to help keep participants focused on what is most important.

Activity 3: Challenges and Opportunities (Section 1)

The purpose of the first section of “Challenges and Opportunities” is to define the most important areas for collaborative action based on participants understanding of the environment in the state. It should build on the assessment session (where things are now) and the vision session (where we want to be). We have provided “buckets” to help start the process of organizing challenges and opportunities that align with those used in our sample plan, but you can adjust based on the needs of the group. Or, you can choose not to have any buckets and develop groupings from the responses.

Activity Overview:

This activity starts with individuals taking a few quiet minutes to generate the most important challenges and opportunities that they want to address this summer. They should write one idea per piece of paper so that you can sort and group them by similar ideas. Your job as the facilitator is to start to group similar opportunities/challenges, getting the consent of the group that the ideas really are aligned, and develop ONE list of priorities for the group to address.

Sample overview talking points

- For this activity we want to determine
- On your tables you will find pieces of colored paper and markers
- Please write one challenge or opportunity per piece of paper – use as many as you need!
- When you are finished, you will place your challenges and opportunities under one of the three buckets for work:
 - Outreach
 - Increasing/Retaining high-quality sponsors and sites
 - Program integrity and improvement
- If it doesn’t fit or if you aren’t sure where to place the paper, put it on the side and we can make sure that it ends up somewhere
- After you complete your ideas we will start to group the similar challenges and opportunities so we have a list of what is most important to this group
- Then we will break for lunch, after which we will start to talk about the strategies to address these challenges and opportunities.

Optional Activity:

During the next activity you will start to work on specific challenges/opportunities and will likely not have time to cover every topic that interests the group. If you have time at the end of this discussion and before starting lunch, have participants put a sticker or check mark next to their top three areas to discuss. Then you can take on each area based on priority, making sure you have the most time for the most critical conversations.

Capturing Responses:

For this activity you will need a large working space – either a wall or a series of easels. Participants are posting their ideas, so you can either collect those papers at the end of the meeting or take a picture to keep the details. For the groupings, you can either add a piece of paper to the groups that names the theme or you can start a fresh piece of chart paper so you have a list.

Activity 4: Challenges and Opportunities (Section 2)

The second part of this exercise takes these major areas to address and starts to narrow down the strategies and stakeholders who will be involved. The conversation starts by taking a first challenge/opportunity, better defining it, then listing the strategies and resources you can use to address it. When the group seems finished adding to that section you can move on to the next challenge/opportunity. During the course of the activity you might have new strategies, resources, or ideas emerge to add to a previous challenge/opportunity. This information will be further organized after the meeting and used to develop the draft plan.

Optional Handout:

You can distribute the handout “Planning Template” for people to use at their seats to develop their own ideas. It not necessary, but may be helpful to some participants.

Prompt questions:

- Defining the challenge/opportunity:
 - Why is it a challenge/opportunity?
 - Where is it a challenge/opportunity?
 - What is the impact of this challenge on reaching kids?
- Addressing the challenge/opportunity:
 - (if not clear) What strategies should we plan to use?
 - What are the resources we have in the room to put towards this?
 - What assets or resources are there in the community?
 - What other ideas could we pursue in this area?
 - Who can commit to helping with this action?

Capturing Responses: For this exercise you will want to use one piece of chart paper per idea (knowing it may continue on to a second or third page). Start by labeling the page with the name of the challenge or opportunity. Then write underneath that “Definition” to capture the first information shared. When you move on to discuss solutions, draw a horizontal line to start a new section and label it “Actions.” Make sure to capture the names of participants or organizations as they are tied to resources and activities.

Next steps + Closing

At the end of the meeting, this time is designed to not only make sure that next steps are clear, but also that participants leave with a sense of accomplishment and excitement toward working together to carry out the plan. It is ideal to leave the full time, but if previous activities run long, this is another place to cut out time. You can also end early if the wrap-up doesn't take very long. Like the welcome and introductions, this is another opportunity to have a host organization say a few words and to thank everyone for their continue work together.

Begin by starting a list of next step activities, making sure to associate a specific person with each next step. Because the activity involved identifying a series of activities and who will be involved, start by asking or announcing who will own typing up and sharing that document back with the group. Below are a series of guiding questions around next steps:

- What else will need to happen to get this planning process moving?
- What items from the parking lot will we want to address?
- Are there other action items for the group?

Next, recap the major activities from the day, reminding everyone of how much they have accomplished. Finally, give everyone the chance to share a final reflection on the day (suggested question below). You can have it go around in a circle or give people the chance to share something only if they would like to and in any order (often called popcorn style).

- What is one thing you are excited about for this summer?

That reflection process ends the meeting, other than any housekeeping items or social activities you may have planned around the meeting.