2014 Summer Strategies

**Strategy:** Recruiting new sponsors

**Rationale:** Identifying strong organizations that already serve their communities and have the capacity to effectively lead a summer meals program increases the number of potential quality sites in an area and the number of children served over the summer. These sponsors may be schools, local governments, large nonprofits, or churches with a history of serving their community and managing complex programs.

**Challenges:** Becoming a sponsor for the first time is a lengthy application process; hesitancy to take on the responsibility of a federal program; learning to use the program well takes time; new sponsors may not have the ability to run many sites the first year.

**Tactics:** Identify areas of need in a state and connect with potential sponsoring organizations; identify schools in low-income areas that are not yet serving summer meals; present opportunity to potential sites; provide mini-grants to incentivize organizations to start using the program.

**Resources:** Outreach staff, SFSP or SSO materials, mini-grants, community connections, Deloitte tool

**Strategy:** Recruit new sites

**Rationale:** Identifying area-eligible organizations and/or locations that can be connected to a sponsor increases the opportunities for kids to access free meals. Particularly, identifying the opportunity for new mobile sites/programs is a promising practice for reaching new kids in a community.

**Challenges:** Finding a strong match between site and sponsors; identifying places that are not already acting as a site and are interested

**Tactics:** Identify areas of need in a state and connect with potential sites; present opportunity to potential sites; provide mini-grants to incentivize organizations to start using the program

**Resources:** Outreach staff, mini-grants to sponsors, community connections, Mobile Meals Playbook

**Strategy:** Provide mini-grants to sponsors to expand programs

**Rationale:** Existing sponsors that already manage a program may be well suited to grow their program and providing small grants to overcome barriers to growth can result in new sites.

**Challenges:** Sponsors may be hesitant to increase their summer programs

**Tactics:** Identify strong sponsoring organizations, provide access to grant application and support to complete

**Resources:** SOS grants team and technology
Strategy: Retain previous sponsors

Rationale: Sponsors with experience tend to have the most success running programs and require less staff attention than new sponsors. Also, maintaining existing programs can decrease site drop-off from the previous summer

Challenges: Sponsors may have valid reasons to leave the program; difficulty broadly connecting to previous sponsoring organizations

Tactics: Survey or otherwise connect to sponsoring organizations to learn their intentions for the upcoming summer; start discussions with sponsors considering leaving to identify ways to keep them with the program

Resources: Staff time, access to sponsor contact information, sponsor survey, mini-grants

Strategy: Help state provide texting service for summer meals

Rationale: Texting provides the means for low-income families to learn about sites throughout the summer, an important resource given the dynamic summer meals landscape.

Challenges: Data needs to be provided by a state agency and regularly updated for use of the tool; some states have had challenges with the format

Tactics: Connect state agency to Share Our Strength staff

Resources: Staff time, state agency connection, Share Our Strength texting system

Strategy: Conduct outreach to children and families

Rationale: Recent national research shows that only 40% of low-income families know about summer meals programs in their area, showing a need for stronger communication to potential participants.

Challenges: Timing of promoting tools to find sites before sites are approved, organizing volunteers, potential low return on efforts, time-consuming to promote individual sites

Tactics: Create materials for distribution (can use Share Our Strength materials), develop channels to distribute such as schools, community organizations, local businesses and canvassing days, hold kick-off events, reach out to media to share information about texting, websites and hotlines, use social media to promote texting, websites and hotlines, etc.

Resources: Staff time, material costs, community connections, Sodexo Foundation Summer Meals Outreach Toolkit

Strategy: Publish Summer Meals Report

Rationale: Keep partners and community leaders informed about and accountable to the state of summer meals by publishing a report summarizing summer strategies and outcomes.

Challenges: Collecting timely and accurate data from state agencies

Tactics: Collect and analyze data from state agency, design report, create distribution plan and distribute report

Resources: State agency cooperation, basic document design skills, online or paper publishing resources
**Strategy**: Convene Summer Meals Planning Group

**Rationale**: By bringing together stakeholders including state agencies, sponsoring organizations and other nonprofits or associations that serve children you can identify new opportunities, align resources, disseminate best practices and push for greater efforts/bolder goals for that year. This should ultimately result in creating a state- or community-wide plan for the year.

**Challenges**: Collaboration is challenging and time consuming; not all critical partners may choose to participate; partners may promise more than they actually deliver

**Tactics**: Identify critical partners and invite to the table, develop an agenda and concrete ways for partners to engage, develop an accountability model for the group, celebrate successes as they come

**Resources**: Staff time, strategic partners, meeting space

**Strategy**: Host a Summer Meals Summit

**Rationale**: Bringing together broad summer stakeholders from around the state allows you to engage more voices in planning and disseminate best practices and new resources.

**Challenges**: Money and time costs for organizing the meeting

**Tactics**: Plan the summit meeting early in the summer planning process and invite stakeholders from across the state to attend, follow up with attendees to secure follow through and maintain momentum, evaluate the success of the meeting

**Resources**: Meeting space, costs for space, food and presentation aids (or securing donations), speakers or facilitators, Share Our Strength materials for distribution

**Strategy**: Pursue summer meals legislation

**Rationale**: Legislation can create a mandate for schools to provide summer meals programs or allocate state funds to create new or expand existing programs.

**Challenges**: Not a lot of evidence of effectiveness, potentially time consuming effort that doesn’t succeed

**Tactics**: Identify legislative champions, develop partnerships to push for legislation, advocate for change

**Resources**: Staff time, strategic partners, persuasive materials, lobbyist (optional)