



Food That's In . . . When School Is Out! Summer Food Service Program for Children

Building Partners for Summer Food

Partnering with individuals, community groups, public agencies and businesses is a way of obtaining needed resources for your Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Whether at the State or local level, finding partners to supplement your existing resources can result in a stronger SFSP. Partnering can also generate interest in the SFSP, build community support, and help you to better meet the nutritional and developmental needs of the children you serve.

How Can Partners Contribute?

Partners can help in any number of ways short of being responsible for the overall SFSP administration.

- **Outreach.** Partners can help States find new sponsors, help sponsors find new sites, or raise community or neighborhood awareness of the location of SFSP sites. Statewide advocacy groups, local organizations, public agencies and businesses all have experience with, and systems for, communicating with the public. They can help you “get the word out” about SFSP.
- **Money.** Financial assistance can be used to improve outreach, meal quality, or Program activities.

SFSP regulations require all Program income be reported, which may result in sponsors receiving less reimbursement. Sponsors should discuss the fiscal implications of all partnerships with the State agency.

- **Other Resources.** “Resources” can mean more than money. A partnering organization can provide staff or member volunteers, facilities, and equipment. Volunteers can help with the meal service or they can plan and conduct special activities for the children. They may be willing to provide business expertise like accounting or procurement. Teenagers and college students may be available from community organizations or government programs such as the Joint Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or AmeriCorps.

- **Meal Preparation and Distribution.** Sponsors who cannot prepare their own meals can find a partner, such as a school or food service management company, to prepare and/or distribute meals. Sponsors must pay for these meal services out of their Federal operating reimbursement. Your expectations regarding the preparation, distribution, quality and payment for the meals must be carefully spelled out in the contract, as should the flexibility to meet changing circumstances. Sponsors should not underestimate the time and energy needed to build a good working relationship with their meal vendor, and should consult their State agency for help with the writing of bid specifications and the procedures for the competitive bidding process.

Why Run an Activities Program?

Combining good meals with engaging activities at your sites will help in two ways:

- more children will come to your sites, thus increasing and stabilizing attendance and improving financial stability; and
- well-nourished children will be able to take better advantage of the developmental opportunities offered in your activity program.

How Can Partners Help?

Partner with an organization that has the skills and experience to run an activities program. Volunteers from such an organization can help design and operate an activities program under your supervision, or may be able to help publicize your Program.



Potential Partners Who Can Help

Organizations and people interested in children and children's issues will be your most likely partners. Find local partners affiliated with national organizations that support SFSP.

Schools (teachers, food service directors, superintendents, school board members, school nurses)
County, city and town administrators
Public Housing Authorities / Resident Councils
Food Banks and other emergency food organizations
Pediatricians
University and community college nutritionists
Boys and Girls Clubs
Anti-hunger advocacy organizations

Parent-teacher organizations
Parks and Recreation Departments
Community Action Agencies
Religious organizations
Local businesses
Cooperative Extension offices
Child Care Workers
Social Workers
Public Health Nurses
Civic Organizations
Dietitians
YMCA and YWCA



Steps in Building Partnerships

- Establish your goals. What do you want to achieve?
- How do you need help in accomplishing your goals (Outreach, activity programs, meals, money)?
- Find partners whose skills and resources are different than yours. Good partnerships exist when both parties can better achieve their goals by working together.
- Provide your potential partners with information about the need for SFSP.
- Know how each potential partner could help accomplish your goal, but be open to modify your plan as a potential partner offers their own ideas.
- Define roles and tasks. Agree on a written description of each partner's responsibilities.
- Find ways to publicly thank your partners. For example, a local business supporting your site might appreciate a sign at the site which acknowledges their support.



Final Consideration in Developing Partnerships

Do you really want a partner? Not every partnership is wise or appropriate. You should be clear about the purpose and expectations of the partnership. Even when you share a common

purpose, other factors may prevent a successful partnership. For example, if your potential partner is in financial trouble, they may not be able to keep their financial commitments.

Where is the money going? Do you pay your partner for goods or services? If so, carefully spell out the terms of any financial agreement in writing.

Partnerships work well when each partner brings their own resources, financial and otherwise, to the relationship, but misunderstandings over money can easily destroy a partnership and your SFSP.

Trust is the key. Many sponsors underestimate the time and energy required to build and maintain trust in a successful partnership. Occasional misunderstandings are inevitable. Sponsors must be proactive in resolving those misunderstandings.

In a good relationship both partners will immediately bring problems to the other's attention. Don't wait; small problems can become big ones and threaten the partnership.

