



Summer Food Service Program Rural Transportation Grant 2005-2006 Progress Report

Background

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265) provided \$4 million to establish Rural Transportation Grants for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The statute required grants be made to not more than five States and no more than 60 service institutions to increase participation at congregate feeding sites through innovative approaches to overcoming limited transportation resources in rural areas. The statute also required reports on progress be submitted to Congress in January 2007 and January 2008.

In 2005, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) conducted a competitive grant process and awarded grants to 30 service institutions in five states. Of these, 27 institutions actually participated in the 2006 SFSP. The following is a report of the use of funds awarded and the progress made thus far by each grantee.

Program Design and Request for Applications

A Request for Applications (RFA) was released by FNS on January 19, 2005. State agencies interested in applying for grants were to submit a letter of intent by March 15, 2005. Applications were due June 15, 2005. The RFA was sent directly to all States administering the SFSP. The grant opportunity was promoted at the 2005 Summer Food Partnership meeting and key members of the advocacy community such as the Food Research and Action Center and the School Nutrition Association were also encouraged to publicize the availability of these grants. The announcement was published on the FNS and grants.gov websites and was circulated through the Agency's faith and community based partners' listserve.

State agencies compiled the proposals of interested local service institutions into one statewide application. Individual service institution proposals were then evaluated on the merits of the project design, organizational experience, management/staff capability, budget appropriateness and economic efficiency.

Selection Process

Thirteen States representing 91 service institutions submitted applications. Of the 91 service institutions, 53 were school districts and 38 were community-based organizations, 58 percent and 42 percent respectively. A panel of FNS staff reviewed and scored the 91 proposals.

Awards were announced December 13, 2005. Awards were made to two institutions in Texas, eight institutions in Oregon, seven institutions in New York, six institutions in Mississippi, and seven institutions and the State agency in West Virginia. In the early months of 2006, institutions prepared to begin transportation projects for the summer 2006 season.

Attachment A describes each awarded project and provides a brief summary of the successes and challenges each project experienced in summer 2006, the first year of the grant period.

Summary of Progress Thus Far

In the first year of the grant period, projects experienced different degrees of success, yet all grantees report that the transportation funding has enabled them to reach children that would not have otherwise been able to access the program.

The majority of applicants overestimated the participation numbers they would be able to generate by adding transportation to a summer food service program. Of the 27 institutions participating in 2006, only 11 met or exceeded their participation estimates. The remaining institutions fell far short of their projections, most serving 10 percent or less of the projected number of children.

For the most part, projects have been successful at using existing resources or generating new resources to add transportation services to their summer programs. Nearly all have met their goals to establish meal sites in the rural areas of their communities or to transport children from those rural communities to central meal sites. In 2006, 78 new meal sites were established or served by the awarded service institutions. As a result of transportation services, approximately 2,977 more children were served by the participating service institutions in 2006 than were served the previous summer. Most project leaders remain optimistic that as communities become more aware of the services, participation will continue to increase.

Transportation services seemed to have a positive effect on increasing participation in multiple meal services. Many sites were able to add a second daily meal to their existing program or saw a marked increase in participation in multiple meal services by children that were transported to the site. For example, one site in New York experienced a slight decline in average daily participation over last year, but by adding a breakfast service, was able to increase the total number of meals served. In all, approximately 100,115 additional meals were served in 2006 by rural transportation grantees, a 37 percent increase over 2005.

Early evaluation of the efficiency of providing transportation services suggests that it is heavily dependent upon the service delivery model employed. It appears that the well established programs had an easier time meeting cost efficiency goals than those that were starting new programs in 2006. It is anticipated that the per meal cost of providing transportation will improve for most grantees in subsequent years. It also appears that transporting many children from outlying communities to centralized sites is more cost efficient than distributing meals to remote areas where small numbers of children congregate. Further evaluation will enable FNS to identify those service delivery models that are most efficient and thus would benefit from additional transportation resources.

Finally, while \$1,058,157 was committed by FNS for summer 2006, only \$661,639 was expended by the grantees. Coupled with the low number of awarded institutions relative to the amount available, it is questionable whether growth alone will result in the projects using all of the available funding in three years. Therefore, FNS will review the original proposals submitted by the non-funded service institutions in awarded States and invite those institutions to strengthen their original proposals – adapting them to a two-year project. Those that can meet the competitive criteria may be invited to participate in the 2007 and 2008 SFSP Rural Transportation projects. This will help increase the number of participating service institutions accessing the available funding. It will also make the SFSP accessible to more eligible children in rural areas.

FNS will also work with State agencies in the next several months to improve the data collection and reporting from grantees. While we provided prototype reports to States, we encountered challenges in our attempts to gather sufficient information to evaluate grant performance. In preparing this interim report, it became clear that inconsistency in the types of data being submitted by grantees makes it difficult to properly evaluate progress and outcomes of rural transportation efforts. We will provide more specific guidance to States on exactly how they should measure and report information from grantees.

Attachment A
State by State Description of Awarded Projects and Progress for Summer 2006

Texas

The **West Texas Food Bank** was granted \$119,903 for three years to lease two vans to deliver food to four sites every day for ten weeks. In 2006, the project used \$36,077 of its grant funding and served 2,822 meals. As a new SFSP sponsor, the food bank began SFSP operations at four sites and served 1,348 lunches over 54 days. Though they had estimated serving 400 – 500 children per day, the project experienced difficulty in reaching potential participants, averaging only 48 children per day.

The **East Texas Food Bank** was granted \$137,134 over three years to deliver meals, every other day, to 17 new sites in an expansive rural area. In 2006, the project used \$11,941 of its grant funding and served 55,856 meals. The project increased by 12 the number of SFSP sites, to 23 in 2006, generating a 146 percent growth in the number of meals served. The average daily participation increased by 312 children during the 2006 summer season.

Oregon

Integral Youth Services was granted \$63,946 over three years to lease a van and purchase storage equipment to transport meals to four rural farming communities. In 2006, the project used \$26,696 of its grant funding and served 3,585 meals. The project established meal service in four new sites in rural communities, serving an average of 101 children per day.

North Bend School District #13 was awarded \$198,993 over three years to purchase and outfit 6 vans (two vans per year) to transport food to 22 rural sites. In 2006, the project used \$66,831 of its grant funding and served 24,453 meals. The project purchased two vans and added one new site to their existing SFSP, bringing their total sites to 23. Average daily participation increased by approximately 107 children to 499 per day and they served an additional 5,239 meals over 2005 levels.

Baker School District 5J was granted \$21,062 over three years to lease vehicles to transport meals and children to rural sites. The school district experienced a significant staff change prior to starting the SFSP and requested to postpone the beginning of their rural transportation project until summer 2007.

Jefferson County School District 509J was awarded \$205,622 over three years to use school district buses to transport children to five rural sites. Due to unforeseen circumstances unrelated to operating the rural transportation grant, the school district was unable to begin operations in 2006. They were granted a one year postponement and are working with FNS to amend their project design in an appropriate way to meet the requirements of the program.

Winston-Dillard School District #116 was granted \$22,700 over three years to use school district buses to transport children to an existing summer meal site. In 2006, the project used \$2,450 of its grant funding and served 2,352 meals. The school district established transportation services at its

existing SFSP site. Although average daily participation did not increase, an additional 133 meals were served, meaning children were more likely to be present for both breakfast and lunch than in previous years. The district felt increasing activity offerings will help improve participation in future years.

Bend-La Pine School District was awarded \$91,605 over three years to lease buses to transport children to ten meal sites. In 2006, the project used \$19,517 of its grant funding and served 4,063 meals. The school district established transportation services on three bus routes and increased the number of SFSP sites by three. Average daily participation increased by 94 children over 2005 participation.

FOOD for Lane County was awarded \$54,595 over three years to purchase equipment and lease two buses to transport food to three rural sites. In 2006, the project used \$13,587 of its grant funding and served 1,470 meals. The project served three rural sites out of a central kitchen and increased participation by 22 children per day. While participation at the satellite sites was lower than anticipated, the project added a breakfast service at the central site. Children receiving transportation services were able to stay for both breakfast and lunch, doubling the number of meals served at the central site over the previous year.

Beaverton School District Nutrition Services Department was awarded \$61,558 over three years to purchase equipment to transport food to five sites. In 2006, the project used \$15,675 of its grant funding and served 4,322 meals. The school district added three mobile sites, serving an additional 153 children and 4,967 meals in 2006.

New York

Fort Plains Central School District was awarded \$55,417 over three years to use school district buses to transport children to two existing SFSP sites. In 2006, the project used \$21,414 of its grant funding and served 9,682 meals. The school district established transportation services to augment the existing SFSP. With the addition of transportation and lunch services at the high school site, the program experienced a 79 percent increase in meals served over the previous summer and nearly doubled its average daily participation to 257 children per day.

Cattaraugus Community Action, Inc. was granted \$80,816 to deliver meals in four rented vans to 23 sites over three years. In 2006, the project used \$9,611 of its grant funding and served 15,497 meals. The project increased the number of SFSP sites from one in 2005 to 11 in 2006. They increased average daily participation by 348 children and served 15,497 meals.

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. was granted \$81,000 over three years to deliver meals to up to 32 sites using rented vans. In 2006, the project used \$26,468 of its grant funding and served 37,838 meals. The project established services at four new rural sites, bringing the total number of sites to 28. However, overall 2006 average daily participation declined by 88 children when compared to 2005. The project experienced difficulty reaching out to potential participants in rural areas and is working to improve awareness of the program in future years.

The ***Food Bank of Central New York*** was awarded \$80,087 over three years to deliver meals to 11 communities and 21 sites using vans already owned by the food bank. In 2006, the project used \$24,267 of its grant funding and served 30,171 meals. The food bank increased the number of SFSP sites by five to 29 sites. However, 2006 average daily participation declined by 76 children. This was largely due to the loss of three previously operated sites due to site ineligibility, bringing the numbers down. The project staff has developed new community partnerships aimed at improving participation in 2007.

The ***Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County, Inc.*** was granted \$90,169 over three years to lease two vans to deliver meals to 21 sites. In 2006, the project used \$11,718 of its grant funding and served 18,203 meals. The project recruited five new rural sites but experienced a decline in average daily participation of approximately 48 children. Some of this decline was due to inconsistency in site operations stemming from lack of volunteers and troop deployments causing the number of potential participants to decline when families left the area.

Corning Painted Post Area School District was awarded \$139,490 over three years to transport children and food to 13 sites using school district vehicles. In 2006, the project used \$46,642 of its grant funding and served 18,657 meals. The project added seven new rural sites to their SFSP. They increased average daily participation by about 72 children, to 424. School and kitchen renovations were a major barrier to program success but the project staff reports this will not be an issue in 2007.

The ***Bolivar-Richburg Central School District*** was awarded \$70,326 over three years to transport children to three meal sites using school district buses. In 2006, the project used \$21,958 of its grant funding and served 5,812 meals. The school district increased the number of summer sites from two in 2005 to four in 2006. However, the sponsor experienced an overall decline in participation of about 13 children per day, serving only 146 children on average.

Mississippi

The ***Coffeerville School District*** was awarded \$110,649 over three years to purchase a van and equipment to transport food and to use school district buses to transport children to summer sites. In 2006, the project used \$35,437 of its grant funding and served 7,669 meals. The school district established one new SFSP site resulting in an increase in average daily participation of about 80 children.

Hazlehurst City School District was awarded \$37,632 over three years to rent school buses to transport children to meal sites. In 2006, the project used \$5,928 of its grant funding and served 1,730 meals. As a new SFSP sponsor, the school district established meal services in their community and served an average of 91 students per day.

Holmes County School District was granted \$125,840 over three years to rent school buses to transport children to five program sites. In 2006, the project used \$7,117 of its grant funding and served 31,702 meals. The school district added two new meal sites and increased average daily participation by 217 children. The school district only used about 19 percent of the funds granted as they were able to effectively coordinate existing resources to add transportation services.

Mississippians for Community Development was awarded \$82,130 over three years to rent vehicles to transport meals to program sites. In 2006, the project used \$19,641 of its grant funding and served 25,660 meals. The project added three new meal sites to their existing SFSP and increased average daily participation by 447 children. The project was able to rent some of the equipment it had originally intended to purchase, which helped improve project efficiency.

Moss Point School District was awarded funding but withdrew prior to commencing program operations. Hurricane Katrina rendered the school district unable to provide any program services in 2006 and they were unsure about their ability to do so in 2007 and 2008.

Picayune School District was awarded \$135,231 over three years to transport children to meal sites. In 2006, the project used \$44,579 of its grant funding and served 16,523 meals. The school district added transportation services to their existing SFSP and increased average daily participation by 255 children. The project experienced difficulty finding staff willing to work as bus aides during the summer months, limiting their ability to properly staff all the routes.

West Virginia

The **West Virginia Department of Education** was the only State agency that requested funds to administer the Rural Transportation Grant. They were awarded \$217,723 over three years to hire part-time staff to administer the program and provide training to participating institutions. In 2006, the State agency expended \$13,319 to hire staff, train institutions and meet program administrative requirements related to the project.

Davis and Elkins College Upward Bound Programs was awarded \$22,200 over three years to lease a van to transport students to a residential summer program. In 2006, the project used \$4,236 of its grant funding and served 2,676 meals. The project added a transportation component to their existing SFSP and increased daily participation to 46 children, more than doubling the previous year's average of 21 children per day. As this is a residential program, the daily participation was more consistent.

McDowell County School District was granted \$79,200 over three years to use school district buses to transport children to five meal sites. In 2006, the project used \$26,620 of its grant funding and served 11,477 meals. The school district added a transportation component to its existing SFSP and increased the number of sites from four in 2005 to ten in 2006. Average daily participation increased by 314 students and nearly 4,000 more meals were served than in the previous year. However, the school district did not properly plan for vacation and sick leave for bus drivers, causing the district to exceed the approved grant budget by approximately 50 percent. A budget amendment was approved for the allowable portion of the costs.

The **Monroe County Board of Education** was awarded \$120,086 to use school district buses to transport children to summer sites. In 2006, the project used \$29,954 of its grant funding and served 7,525 meals. The school district increased the number of meal sites from two in 2005 to four in 2006. However, the program only served an additional 13 children, on average. The project struggled to make contact with potential participants and is working to improve outreach for summer 2007.

The ***North Central WV Community Action Association*** was granted \$69,094 over three years to use school district buses to transport children to summer sites. In 2006, the project used \$11,308 of its grant funding and served 7,092 meals. The project increased the number of SFSP sites by one and increased average daily participation by 57 children, serving about 123 per day. The project experienced difficulty recruiting bus drivers and worked well into the summer season adjusting bus routes to maximize participation.

Playmates Preschool and Child Care Center, Inc was awarded \$314,052 over three years to transport meals to summer program sites. In 2006, the project used \$64,034 of its grant funding and served 21,807 meals. The project increased the number of SFSP sites by one, bringing the total to seven. The transportation services increased the average daily participation by 282 children for a daily average of 464.

The ***Shack Neighborhood House*** was awarded \$108,649 over three years to rent two vans to transport children to five sites. In 2006, the project used \$30,672 of its grant funding and served 1,195 meals. As a new SFSP sponsor in 2006, the project established meal services at five sites in their rural community. Participation fell far below the estimated 175 average daily participation, instead serving an average of only 25 children per day. Heat and the lack of activities for children may have hindered participation. The project staff is seeking additional community resources to improve outreach and participation in 2007.

The ***Southern Appalachian Labor School*** was awarded \$28,500 over three years to purchase two vehicles to transport children to a meal site. In 2006, the project used \$13,941 of its grant funding and served 2,195 meals. The school added transportation services to their existing SFSP, increasing average daily participation by only two children. However, by adding a breakfast, increasing the days of service and transporting children, they were able to serve 901 more meals than the previous year.