

Summer Food Service Program Webinar Transcript RC&D Councils

Thank you. Welcome and thank you for joining us today to learn more about the Summer Food Service Program. My name is Usha Kalro and I am with the USDA. Food and Nutrition Service. I also have here with me Susan Poneman.

Hi everyone.

Before proceeding, I would like to review some logistics of the Webinar Two. First, handouts for today's session can be found in the Handout tab of the Live Meeting Two. The Handout tab is on the top right-hand side of your screen and looks like three pieces of paper. By clicking on that tab, you will see handouts available for you to download to your computer. There will be a question and answer session following today's presentation. You may ask a question through the Webinar Two by typing your question into the Question and Answer tab located at the top left-hand side of your screen or by pressing star one on your phone. This session is being recorded and will be available online and on demand in the near future. More information on this will be emailed out to all registrants.

At this time we are very happy to have John Haugen, Executive Director for the National Association for the Resource Conversation and Development Councils to give today's welcome. John?

Thank you Usha. On behalf of the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils in Washington, D.C., I would like to welcome the folks who have taken time from their busy schedules to participate in this webinar and learn about how their councils can work with the Food and Nutrition Service on their Summer Food Service Program. As you all know so well, our councils are all about making things happen and improving the quality of life in communities across this great land. Today you are going to learn about something you and your councils can do to improve the quality of life for low-income children who depend on free or reduced-price school meals during the school year. During the summer months when children don't have access to school meals, the US Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program makes a tremendous difference in these children's lives by providing access to nutritious lunches. Children are the future of every nation and their education and nutrition is an investment in our country's future. However, children who miss meals are more likely to be sick, absent or tardy, disruptive in class, inattentive, and more likely to score lower on achievement tests.

The need for nutritious meals does not end when school is out. In order to insure that the nutritional needs of low-income children are met while school is out, it is essential that there is commitment from individuals and communities to meet this need. The Summer Food Service Program is targeted to low-income areas where fifty percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. However, despite the best efforts at the federal and state levels, the Summer Food Service Program is vastly under-utilized. To put it simply, there just aren't enough sponsors and feeding sites in communities with the highest need, and more sponsors are needed to bring this wonderful program to under-served areas. Today you will learn about the Summer Food Service Program and what your councils can potentially do to help meet the nutritional needs of low-income children during the summer months when they are not in school.

The National Association of RC&D Councils has entered into a partnership with USDA's Food and Nutrition Service to help them with this very worthwhile program. Last November, we sent each RC&D Council a CD that is simply called "Food and Nutrition Service." If you have not had an opportunity to view it, I urge you to do so. And if you have seen it, I urge you to watch it again after this webinar. You and your RCD Council members are all about ideas and making things happen, and I am confident that you will have terrific ideas about what you and your councils can do and accomplish working in tandem with the FNS. Thank you for your participation in this webinar and thank you for all that you do to improve the quality of life in your communities. And please do not hesitate to contact your national office if you feel we can be of assistance. We would like to hear about what you are doing and accomplishing so that we can put these stories up on our website and inspire others to duplicate your efforts. My e-mail address is initial jhaugen@sso.org. And our general telephone number is (202) 434-4780. And with that I will turn the program back to Usha Calro.

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Thank you, John. Let me begin by providing some background information. The Summer Food Service Program provides free nutritious meals to children in mostly low-income areas. To participate in this program, children must be eighteen years of age or younger. This program operates when school is not in session, typically from the end of the school year in late May or early June until school resumes, usually late August or early September. These dates vary widely across the country. The Summer Food Service Program is federally funded but it is administered by a state agency, generally the Department of Education. We need your help, and here is why. There are over eighteen million children in the country that are eligible for the summer program. But, only three million of them receive meals through this program. The problem with low participation is especially critical in rural areas where transportation issues may be an obstacle. Regardless of your location, there is a good chance that a program is needed in a community near you. We need new sponsoring organizations that will put a program together and feed hungry children.

What are the benefits of this program? The program provides nutritious meals to needy children. In many communities the two meals received by the children may be the only ones they receive each day during their summer vacation. It gives children the nutrition they need to learn, play and grow. This nourishment will help them properly develop and stay healthy to begin a new school year. It helps low-income families stretch their food dollars through the summer months. Remember, while the child is in school, lunch, and many times breakfast, is provided to the child at no charge or very little cost for nine months of the year. And let's not even talk about the eating machine a teenage boy can be. And lastly, the activities help keep the kids mentally engaged and ready to learn when the new school year begins.

The Summer Food Service Program provides two meals per child per day. Any combination of two meals may be served except lunch and supper. Normally a program will provide a breakfast when the children arrive, then provide a lunch before the children leave the site. A snack may be served, and it does count as a meal. There is an exception to the two-meal rule. **INAUDIBLE**, as well as sites that serve children of migrant workers may serve up to three meals per child per day. And all meals must meet USDA standards to be eligible for reimbursement. A typical lunch may consist of meat – of a meat and cheese sandwich, carrot sticks, an apple, and a carton of milk.

The summer program begins when a community works with a state agency. State agencies are responsible for all administrative requirements of the program. To participate in this program, each sponsoring organization must sign an agreement with the state agency. The agreement sets forth the responsibilities of the state and the sponsor. The state is also responsible for providing training and technical assistance to all sponsors. The state wants sponsors to succeed so they will take every step necessary to assist both new and experienced sponsors. State agencies are also responsible for monitoring the operations of participating sponsoring organizations. Sponsoring organizations are the bread and butter of the summer program and are responsible for a wide range of functions. First, they accept financial and administrative responsibility for the program. Second, they manage the food service. This means the sponsor must have food preparation facilities or the capability to oversee a food service management contract. Sponsors also train and monitor sites and site personnel, arrange for meals at each site, oversee the operations at each feeding site, assure all paperwork is completed accurately and in a timely manner, and most importantly, submit claims for reimbursement.

Several types of organizations can be sponsors of this program. They include such groups as community and state-based organizations, private nonprofit organizations, local governments, school systems, colleges and universities participating in the National Youth Sports program, migrant centers, and Indian reservations for feeding sites can be located in any number of places, indoors and outdoors. Some examples of sites may be parks, swimming pools, community and recreation centers, churches, playgrounds, housing projects, camps, both residential and non-residential, schools, **INAUDIBLE** centers, libraries or just about anywhere where there are children. Basically there are two types of feedings sites. The first is an open site. These sites serve meals free to all children eighteen years of age or younger. The second type is an **INAUDIBLE** site. These sites require the child's family to complete and enrollment form and a household income application. More about this on the next slide.

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In order for site to be eligible for the program, it must meet one of two criteria. For an open site, the location where meals will be served must be located in a school attendance area where fifty percent or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The fifty percent criteria is based upon school data or census data. Your state agency can provide substantial technical assistance in making these determinations. For an enrolled site, families must submit a household income application for each child enrolled in the program. If fifty percent of the applications demonstrate eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, then the site may serve free meals to all children. These criteria may sound a bit confusing, but your state agency can help you through the process.

There are two exceptions to the basic site eligibility rules. Residential and non-residential summer camps may serve up to three meals per child per day. However, only meals served to children who meet the free or reduced-price meals criteria based upon household income applications will be reimbursed. The second exception is for feeding sites that primarily serve children of migrant workers. In order for the site to be determined eligible, the location must be certified by a migrant organization then the site may serve up to three meals per child per day to all children.

USDA provides reimbursement to defray the costs of operating the Summer Food Service Program. Sponsoring organizations receive one reimbursement for both operating and administrative costs. Operating costs include the cost of food, food supplies such as paper bags and napkins, and the cost of labor to prepare the meals. Sponsors also receive administrative reimbursement for costs associated with doing paperwork, training, monitoring of sites, and all the other functions we discussed earlier. Additional reimbursement is also provided to sponsors that operate sites in rural areas or prepare their own meals, sometimes referred to as self prep.

What can you do to help? You could become a sponsor of the program. Or, if you want less responsibility, you could supervise a feeding site. Or you could oversee an activity program at a feeding site. Many folks spend their summers looking for interesting and innovative activities for children. We even had a zoo representative bring animals to a feeding site for show and tell. If you have meal preparation facilities you could be a meal vendor. As a vendor you could enter into a contract with the sponsor to provide the meals for all the sites. Here are a few organizations you may want to contact to obtain community information or form partnerships with. These are not the usual suspects, so bear with me. The mayor's office. They will likely know community organizations you can partner with. **INAUDIBLE** extension agents. They usually know their community and other organizations. Boys and Girls Clubs. They are probably aware of many local children's programs. Salvation Army. Many successful sites are sponsored by this organization. Police and fire departments. They are usually willing to help community organizations. Local community groups like the Rotary Club can possibly help with transportation issues. And local libraries may often have summer reading programs and a building suitable for serving meals. Contact these organizations plus others in your community that may be helpful.

What are some of the keys to a successful summer program? Over the years we have found five ingredients for a successful program. The first key is to have creative activities for kids and teens. We have found that the meal is often not enough to draw children to a site. However, add one or two activities to your recreation program, you have a winning combination. Partnerships are becoming more important as funding for children's programs continues to decrease. There may already be an established program in your community that could serve a breakfast when children arrive and lunch before they leave.

Next, involve parents whenever you can. Parents often know the community and the neighborhood children very well and are often your best source of information. Be resourceful and innovative. Looking for opportunities, especially unlikely ones, are important. For instance, in rural Nebraska a sponsor was having difficulty in finding a meal vendor. They approached a local hospital that was very interested and needed very little technical assistance on how to serve nutritious meals. Above all, you need to find a local champion, especially in rural areas. This is someone who will go the extra mile to get the job done. The sponsor needs to know and understand that starting a program, especially in a rural area, may be difficult at first but that his or her hard work will pay off in the end. Local champions are creative,

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innovative and self-starters. Every community has a few local champions. You just need to find them. Perhaps that champion is you.

So getting started. You're probably thinking, where do I begin. The answer is easy. Just contact your state agency. Your state agency will provide you with an application, training on the required paperwork and will help you with every aspect of the program. To find your state agency, please visit the USDA website on the Summer Food Service Program and click on Getting Started to find your state. The state contact list is attached and it can also be found on line.

Okay. We will open the floor for questions and answers now. If you would like to ask a question, please press star one on your phone or type your question directly onto the Question and Answer tab on the top of your webinar screen. Operator, are there any questions on the line?

We show no questions at this time. When you do press star one, please record your name clearly. We do require your name to be recorded in order to ask the question.

While people are thinking about any questions to ask, is there anyone online who would like to share a success story with us and the rest of the group? Please do so now. Press star one or type in your story or your question in the Q&A section.

We do have a question on the phone line from Joe Heller. Your line is open.

Yes, I was just wondering how farmers that glean products and donate them currently to food pantries would be able to participate in your program and any suggestions that you might have as to how they would be able to possibly be recipients of some funds.

INAUDIBLE take that question? Thanks, Joe, for a very good question. We encourage our sponsors and the sites to work together to partner with each other and so what, um, a farmer may want to do is to contact the state agency and find out which sponsors are operating the program in his community and see if they would be – if there would be an opportunity for, um, him to, uh, provide some fresh produce to the program. The program has very specific nutritional requirements and, um, for reimbursement. Meals include fluid milk, a fruits and vegetable, a protein, and a bread or grain product. And so perhaps the farmers who you work with might be able to partner with a sponsor or a site in his community to provide some of the nutritious food that the program relies upon.

Thank you.

We have a question here via email, and the question is could a local grocery store host a program?
Susan?

Um, businesses are eligible to participate as sites, and certainly a sponsor can partner with a business such as a grocery store to obtain food or, um, other incentives that could be used in the program. A grocery store, though, is not eligible to be a sponsor of the program but it's certainly one of the very important community enterprises that a sponsor may want to partner with.

Thank you, Susan. Uh, here is another question. How do we find out what agency within our state to contact? Can and RC&D Council work directly with FNS instead?

The program is administrated nationally by the Food and Nutrition Service of the US Department of Agriculture. However, USDA provides funding to each state to manage the program within their state, and it's the state agency that enters into an agreement with the local organizations to operate the program. So most state agencies are, in fact, the same agencies that operate the national school lunch and school breakfast program as the State Department of Education. In some cases you'll find the Agriculture Department or the Department of Health or even Human Services may be the state administering agency. You can find a list of all of those state agencies in the attachments that are, uh, Usha was referring to, um, the attachments to this presentation. But also on our website at

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www.summerfood.usda.gov. If you go to Contact Us and look under Child Nutrition Programs you will find the Summer Food Program state administering agencies.

Operator are there any, um –

Yep. Next question.

On line?

Next question comes from Chris Groskits. Your line is open.

Uh, yes, I also emails the question in, but I just want to know is there any instance where the, uh, the cost for the meals may be advanced rather than reimbursed?

There are – the reimburse – um, payments are directed to the sponsors to help reimburse them for the cost of preparing or serving meals to children. And in some states advance funds are available. Those kinds of issues are among the issues that the state agency discussed with the sponsors in the annual training that the sponsors are required to attend.

We have another question here, and it is, is there a minimum size in rural areas? What is the reimbursement rate for meals and labor?

Keep in mind that the Summer Food Service Program is a congregate meal service program. That means that it is designed to provide nutritious meals to children who are eating together in groups. There isn't a minimum size; there isn't a maximum size, but, um, it is designed to serve children in group settings. The reimbursement rates for rural sites is somewhat higher than for some other sites. Um, in most states the combined reimbursement rate for breakfast is \$1.8475. For lunch or supper it is \$3.2475. And for a snack it's .7625 cents. And the reason it goes out to such a long decimal is because the reimbursement rate is based on a formula and so that's why, um, the number is so, um, is a fraction of a whole dollar.

Thank you, Susan. I'll also read out the next question. It says, this sounds like a terrific program. What is the financial incentive for RC&D to become involved?

Well the reimbursement again goes to the sponsor, and it's intended to reimburse the sponsor for the cost of food so that the sponsor could provide, um, could use its other funds to – for other types of activities. So it's a way of helping the children in the community to just have better nutrition and just to have a safe and supervised environment to spend their time when they are not in school.

Operator, are there any questions on line?

I show no further questions on line.

Then I'm going to ask the next question from here. How do we find out if someone in our area or county is already sponsoring this program?

Your state agency staff will be able to help you identify other sponsors as well as sites in your community and in your state. So please contact your state agency.

The next question here is, how much are sponsors reimbursed per meal per child?

As I mentioned the reimbursement rates are about \$1.80 – just over \$1.81 for breakfast; about \$3.20 for lunch or supper, and for snacks it's about \$.75. The rates are just slightly lower in urban areas and in programs where the food is purchased, but in rural areas as well as in urban areas where, um, the food is prepared on site, um, the rates are a little bit higher. And also in the states of Alaska and Hawaii the rates are just slightly higher.

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Um, the last question that I have here online, which doesn't mean this is the last question we'll answer, but what I see here is, what is the reimbursement for labor?

Labor is an allowable cost. Sponsors incur labor costs for supervising their sites, for not only for the people who prepare the meals but also for their staff who serve the meals and receive the meals from the vendor or who supervise the children as they are eating the meals. Sponsors also have labor costs incurred when for their monitors and for the people who compile the claims for reimbursement. But all of those costs are allowable and are included under the combined reimbursement rate.

Operator, any calls on line?

We show no questions on line. Again as a reminder, to ask a question press star one on your phone and record your name clearly.

At this time I'd like to remind everyone that we have excellent information available on our website. So please, I encourage you to visit the website. Everything we covered today is available on the website including those reimbursement rates we gave you. I do have one more question here. It says, can you expound upon the administrative costs that are reimbursed? How are that figured?

Well sponsors, um, receive a combined rate, a single rate of reimbursement that covers all – or helps to reimburse them for all of their food service costs as well as their administrative costs. And as part of the process of applying to the program, each sponsor completes a budget and, uh, works with the state agency that, uh, the state agency approves the budget and, um, and would include costs of monitoring, of maintaining the financial management of the program, of, um, administrative costs also include any costs for office costs or, um. Again, when the sponsor attends training, the state agency will go over all of the financial and administrative responsibilities of the program, including a review of all allowable costs for the program and reimbursement.

Operator, any questions on line?

I'd like to just emphasize that it's really important to develop your relationship with your state agencies and to contact them for, um, technical assistance in, um, understanding the requirements of the program and in participating in the program.

We do have a question on the phone line from Sue. Sue, your line is open.

Hi, this is Sue Sutherland. Um, I'm curious if John is still in the room? John Haugen?

John, are you still here with us?

Operator, if you could un-mute his line that would be great please.

And if he's there, I was curious as to what role did John see, um, the RC&D Councils taking and what would be the first step?

Can you all hear me?

Yes, we can.

I think that they're making that pretty clear by suggesting that the initial contact with state agencies – it sounds like they're really going to be the ones to kind of, um, get the process going because all of this may sound fairly daunting on first hearing about it but the folks that have done this and know how it works, you know, have been doing – have been working with other sponsors in this program so it's old hat to them and they can probably allay and put to rest a lot of the fears the council members might have with this. Sue, we really see this as, um, as something that's – that's really critical for, uh, for the future

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for our young people because what we're hearing is, and especially in these tough economic times. So many children and folks and families are kind of slipping through the cracks. And for those of us that take, you know, good food and eating for granted and it's an essential part of our lives sometimes forget that there are, oh I guess the figure is eighteen million children in this country are maybe not getting the right kind of nutrition they needs. Is that an accurate figure? I've heard different figures so I'm not sure. But this is one of those things that our councils can do to improve quality of life for some of the less fortunate in their communities. And that's why we entered into this partnership with FNS. Does that answer your question?

It does. Thank you.

You're welcome. How are you and Kit doing?

Great, thanks.

I have one more question here. Are there funds under this program for getting the children to the eating site?

Well, again, all of the reimbursement comes under that combined rate. Um, one reason we encourage sponsors to develop partnerships with a variety of community groups is to help them to get the food to the kids and the kids to the food. And I know, well we all know in rural areas, even in urban areas, that is quite a challenge. But again we would encourage any interested sponsor to contact the state agency and to find out more from the state agency.

Thank you Susan. We have another question here. What is the time frame for contacting the sponsor and becoming a sponsor?

Well the state agencies are getting ready to start their training for the summer 2010 program right now as we're speaking together. So it's really crucial to contact the state agency as soon as you can and to, um, most programs do begin as early as May or into June. In school districts where there is year-round school, the Summer Food Service Program also occurs during those other times when children have long periods of vacation. The deadline for each state's application process is now posted on our website, so please, again, go to www.summerfood.usda.gov and you'll be able to find a link to those application dates there.

Thank you. Operator, are there any questions on line? Would someone like to share a story with us, a success story, maybe, at this time? Please press star one on your phone and share a success story with us. John, is there anything you would like to add?

Can you hear me?

Yes, we can.

Um, well, no, I think you have covered a lot of territory. Again, as I was saying to Sue, I think that, uh, you know, as much as our council members are doing in their communities and they're probably sitting back and thinking gosh, this is just, you know, probably potentially a wonderful program but we're feeling kind of overwhelmed with what we're doing right now, and I guess I would encourage them to contact, you know, with further questions, specifically the state agency and maybe get a little more detail about what those folks have been doing, how they have seen this program work within their communities, and what they see as the potential. You know, our council members you know, know their communities better than anyone. They volunteer their time and hours and energy because they love their areas and they want to do good work and they want to see an improvement in the quality of life out there. And I know there are council members, maybe some that weren't able to, to, uh, you know, participate in this webinar even though they had registered and there were some that just probably couldn't even register because they have so many other things going on, but the people in the communities understand the facilities that are available for this kind of thing. You know there are places, I know in Washington, D.C., for instance,

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there are – there are elementary schools that are used as feeding sites for these programs and that works out real well because young people, you know, are familiar with going to that place, and it's comfortable and natural for them to go there in the summer to eat just as they go there during the year to go to school. There are potentially sites all over this great country that are underutilized in the summer and what a wonderful thing to see young people have a chance to get nutritious meals and food in the day and what a tremendous sense of satisfaction it would be to know that you had played a part as a council in helping meet the nutritional needs of these under-utilized – of these underserved individuals. So I would encourage people to talk among there – I would encourage our council members to talk among others, maybe other people that network when they go to state and regional meetings, and to see if they – if they are familiar with this program, if they have any other interest in it and maybe they'll have some stories they can share, but I think that there's a tremendous potential here to do some good, and that is what our councils are so good at doing.

Thank you John. Any – any questions?

I show no questions on the phone line.

Okay. Again, I would encourage you to please go to our Summer Food website, www.summerfood.usda.gov. A lot of your questions are answered on this website. And at this time, if there are no other questions I would like to thank every one of you for being present at this webinar and that then concludes the webinar.

Thank you Usha.

Thank you so much everyone.