

Summer Food Service Program Webinar Transcript Rural Focused Organizations

Thank you, and good morning to all of our friends in rural America. Whether it's very early or almost lunchtime for you, I want to thank you for joining us today for our Summer Food Service Program webinar that focuses on the very special challenges, situations and opportunities that exist in rural communities to feed hungry children during the summer.

Before the session kicks off, I'd like to review some logistics of how to use the webinar tool. For the handouts for today's session can be found in the handout tab of the live meeting tool and the handout tab is on the top right-hand side of your screen, and it looks like three little pieces of paper all together. If you click on that tab, you will see handouts are available for you to download to your computer which include this PowerPoint presentation as well as some useful resources from our case study today from New York.

At the end of the presentation, there will be a question-and-answer session following our conversation. You may ask a question through the webinar tool by typing your question into the Q & A tab which is 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, on-demand in the very near future. And, further information will be e-mailed out to all the people that registered.

So, before further ado, I'd like to welcome Ms. Cheryl Cook the Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development. Cheryl brings with her a distinguished record of service as well as a keen understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities of rural America. Before joining USDA, Cheryl served as the Deputy Secretary for Marketing and Economic Development at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. And in that role, she worked with several agencies and created partnerships and collaborations with the food and nutrition service, the animal and plant health inspection service and the agricultural marketing service. So, Cheryl is passionate about collaboration will be giving introduction from the rural development perspective. Thank you Cheryl.

Well, thank you. Good morning everybody it is a great pleasure to be here on behalf of both Secretary Vilsack and Under Secretary for Rural Development, Dallas Tonsager. I think I'm one of the few people in the Whitten Building here in Washington DC who actually does go home to rural America every night. I am still in my small community is South Middleton Township in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. And, this is an issue that has been near and dear to me for a long time. Seeing how my own community has struggled with keeping kids fed when school is out. I'd like to welcome all of you to this important webinar on feeding hungry children in rural America this summer. Now, President Obama and Secretary Vilsack are committed to making sure the government agencies working together in new and exciting ways to address complex problems like hunger and poverty. As president Obama recently said, hunger is a problem we can solve together.

I am delighted that so many of our rural development employees were able to join us on this call to learn about how they can expand the reach of the Summer Food Service Program into their areas. Rural Development enjoys 47 state offices and hundreds of local offices throughout the country giving us a huge network that we can draw upon in helping to tackle this problem. USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans. USDA Food and Nutrition Services' mission is to provide children and needy families better access to food and a more healthful diet through its food assistance programs and comprehensive nutrition education efforts. These goals naturally complement one another when we will talk about hungry children in rural America.

Just as every American should have access to decent, safe, affordable housing, utilities, community facilities, and support for small business development, no American should go hungry in the wealthiest nation in the history world. This is especially true when it comes to our children who represent our nation's future. As we all know, hunger doesn't take a summer vacation. Each summer 18 million students are at risk of going hungry when the school year ends and school lunches are no longer available. For many children, school meals are the only complete and nutritious meals they eat all day. In the summer, they go without.

This summer, the need will likely increase and rural communities are too often under-served by this program. The Summer Food Service Program can help fill the summer meal gap for low income children. Faith-based community and private nonprofit organizations can make a real difference in the lives of hungry

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children by serving meals with the Summer Food Service Programs which is a Federally funded program administered by states that reimburses organizations for meals served to children during the summer.

The major challenge that we have seen in my home state in Pennsylvania, and it is true of rural communities all over the country, is the transportation to actually get children to the meals. And, as we have seen the economy suffer, as we've seen state budgets tighten, as local governments have tightened their budgets, it is going to be harder this year than it has been a long time to make sure that kids can get to Summer Food Service Program sites. That really leaves us two options. One is to get creative about the possibility for mobile sites that can bring meals to the children. The other is to sign up a lot more sites, so that we can minimize the amount of travel that parents need to engage in to get their kids to some place where they can eat.

Many of the sites that are already funded by Rural Development, particularly in our community facilities program, are eligible to participate in Summer Food Service. Schools, churches, recreation and community centers, playgrounds, multi-family housing projects, senior centers, fire halls, parks, campgrounds, even fairgrounds can serve meals in neighborhoods with high percentages of low income families. These venues are safe and familiar locations where children might naturally congregate during the summer.

There are two ways to get involved with the Summer Food Service Program. Your organization might become a food service program site where meals are served, or perhaps of some sponsor that both serves meals and keeps track of the accounting and paperwork. Sponsors are reimbursed for all meals that are served that meet USDA's nutrition standards.

On behalf of our Under Secretary, Dallas Tonsager, I'd like to encourage all Rural Development employees to actively communicate with the people they are serving about the benefits of this and other Food And Nutrition Service programs. Almost by definition, many of the customers that we serve Rural Development Will be eligible for some aspect of what Food And Nutrition Service does serving millions of Americans every day to have access healthy, nutritious and affordable food. Please take advantages of the excellent resources that our colleagues from Food And Nutrition Services have put together on webinar, and let your grantees, borrowers and other local partners know how they can be part of this important effort to be sure that all America's children have access to nutritious food 365 days a year. With that, I'll say thank you for the opportunity to be on this webinar today, and turn things back over to Amber.

Thank you so very much Cheryl. We really appreciate the opportunity to have you encourage the Rural Development folks that work with USDA and work out in the communities to continue to promote this program. We are now going to move on to the presentation portion of our webinar today. But first, again my name is Amber Herman, and I work with the United States Department of Agriculture Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships within the office of the Secretary. And, we defer to our good friends at the Food and Nutrition Service for the who are the technical policy experts and we will have one of them on the phone with us today, Susan Ponemon, who will be helping with the question-and-answer session.

So first off, I want to give a bit of background about the Summer Food Service Program. It provides free nutritious meals, as we've heard, to children in mostly low income areas. Participating children must be 18 years of age or younger. And, the program operates when school is not in session, which is typically from the end of the school year in late May or early June until school year starts up again usually in late August or early September. But, these dates vary across the country and it's important to work with your state agency to help define the dates for the Summer Food Program. The Summer Food Service Program is federally funded, but is administered by a state agency, generally, the Department of Education.

But, your assistance with the Summer Food Service Program is needed. There are 18 million children in the country that are eligible for the program, but only 3 million of them receive meals through the Summer Food Service Program. The problem with low participation is especially critical in rural areas where transportation issues may be an obstacle. But, regardless of your location, there is a good chance that a Summer Food Service Program is needed in a community near you. We are looking for new sponsoring organizations that will put the program together and help feed hungry children in your community.

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What are the benefits of the Summer Food Program? Well, the program provides nutritious meals to needy children. In many communities, the two meals received by the children may be the only meals they receive each day during summer vacation. Hang on a second. Sorry, thank you. The program provides children the nutrition they need to learn, play and grow. The food energy will help them properly develop, stay healthy and be ready for the new school year. The program helps low income families stretch their food buying dollar through the summer months. Remember, when the child is in school, lunch, and many times breakfast, is provided at no charge or very little cost for nine months of the year. But, that's just not the case during the summer time and we all know how much a growing teenager or middle school student can eat. At last, the activities and programs that these children are in engaged in helps keep them mentally challenged and ready to go for school when it starts back up in the fall.

There we go. 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 and then provided a lunch before the children leave the site. A snack may be served, but it does not count as a meal. There is an exception for the two meal rule, camps, as well as sites that serve children of immigrant workers, may serve up to three meals per day -- excuse me, per child per day. And, all meals must meet USDA standards to be eligible for reimbursement. A typical lunch may consist of a meat and cheese sandwich, carrot sticks, an apple and a carton of milk.

The Summer Food Service Program begins when a community works with the state agency. State agencies are responsible for all administrative requirements of the program. To participate in the Summer Food Service Program, each sponsoring organization must sign an agreement with the state agency. The agreement sets forth the responsibilities of the state and the responsibilities of the sponsor. The state is also responsible for providing training and technical assistance to all the sponsors. States want sponsors to succeed so they will work with you every step of the way to assist both new and experienced sponsors. State agencies are also responsible for monitoring the operations of participating sponsor organizations.

So, what exactly does a sponsoring organization do? Well, they are the bread-and-butter of the Summer Food Service Program and they are responsible for a wide range of functions. First, they accept the financial and administrative responsibility for their program. Second, they manage the the food service. This means the sponsor must have food preparation facilities or the capacity to oversee a food service management contract. Sponsors also train and monitor sites and site personnel, arrange for meals at each site, oversee the operation at each feeding site, assure that all paperwork is completed accurately and in a timely manner, and most importantly, submit the claims to get their money back.

Sponsoring organizations can be any type of organization, with exception of a for-profit organization. So, you can be a sponsor if you are community and faith-based group, a private nonprofit, a local government, school systems, colleges and universities participating in the national youth sports program, migrant centers and Indian reservations.

A feeding site can be located in a number of places, indoors and outdoors. In fact, a feeding site can be just about anywhere. Parks, swimming pools, community recreation centers, churches, playgrounds, mosques, synagogs, housing projects, camps, both residential and nonresidential, schools, migrant centers or even libraries. Basically, there are two types of feeding sites. The first is an open site. These sites serve meals free to all children ages 18 of age or younger. The second type is an enrolled site, these sites require the children's family to participate or -- excuse me, this site requires the children's family to complete an enrollment form and a household income application. There will be more about this on the next slide.

In order for a site to be eligible for the program, it has to meet one of the next two criteria. For an open site, the location where meals will be served must be located in a school attendance area where 50% or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced price meals. The 50% criteria is based upon school data or census data. Your state agency can provide substantial technical assistance in making these determinations for your community. For an enrolled site, families must submit a household income application for each child enrolled in the program. If 50% of the applications demonstrate eligibility for free or reduced priced meals then this site may serve free meals to all children. These criteria, we understand can sound a little bit

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confusing, but your state agency will be able to help you walk through the process and determine if the area you want to hold the Summer Food Service Program should be an open or an enrolled site.

But, of course it is the government, so there's two expectations -- or exceptions to the basic site eligibility rules. Residential and nonresidential 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 immigrant workers -- or migrant workers. In order for the state 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 two types of reimbursement to defray the costs of operating a Summer Food Service Program. Sponsoring organizations receive reimbursement for operating costs which can include the cost of the 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 of 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.

So, what can you do to help feed hungry kids this summer? You can become a sponsor of the program. Or, if you want a little less responsibility, you can help supervise a feeding site. Or, you can oversee an activity program at a feeding site. Many folks spend their summers looking for interesting and innovative activities for their children. We have even had a zoo representative bring animals to a feeding site for show and tell, and they fed a lot of kids that day. If you have meal preparation facilities, you could be a meal vendor. As a vendor, you would enter into a contract with the sponsor to provide the meals for all the sites.

So, here are just a few organizations you may want to contact to obtain community information or form partnerships with. These are not your usual suspects, so bear with me. The mayor's office, they are going to know community organizations that you can potentially partner with. County Extension Agents, they usually know your community fairly well and other organizations that do a lot of outreach to families in need. Boys and Girls Clubs, they are also aware of the local children's programs that exist in the community. The Salvation Army is known for hosting successful sites, and many Summer Food Programs are sponsored by the Salvation Army. Police and fire departments, they are usually willing to help community organizations and for rural development purposes a community facility such as a fire or to police department can serve as a feeding site. Local community groups like the Rotary Club can possibly help with funding for transportation issues, or provide volunteers to help with transportation. And, local libraries often have summer reading programs and a building that is suitable for serving meals. These are just a few of the ideas and shortly we'll be hearing from Chris Wallace who will share her ideas about creative ways to partner in rural America to make the Summer Food Service Program work. But, we recommend this list as an example of community groups to connect with.

There are some key ways to have a successful Summer Food Program and we'd like to share some of our best practices with you. The first is to have creative activities for kids and teens. We have found that providing a meal is not enough to draw children to a site. However, add one or two meals to your recreational program, and you've got 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 the best resource for getting out information and providing input on how to make a program successful. Be resourceful and innovative looking for opportunities, especially unlikely ones. For example, in rural Nebraska, a sponsor was having difficulty finding a meal vendor. They approached a local hospital that was very interested in helping improve the health of children, and needed very little technical assistance on how to serve nutritious meals. When you partner the hospital up with a community group and you add children, you have a successful Summer Food Program.

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Above all, you need to find a local champion, especially in rural areas. This is someone who is going to go the extra mile to get the job done. This person needs to know and understand that starting a program, especially in a rural area, can seem very difficult at first. But, your hard work will pay off. Especially, if you reach out to your community and to the state for assistance. Local champions in rural America for the Summer Food Service Program have proven to be creative, innovative and self-starters. Every community has a few local champions, you just need to find them, or recognize that you are actually in fact one of them.

So, now you are thinking how do I get started? Well, one thing you can go to is our website, and then 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 getting the program started. To find your state agency, you can visit the USDA website on the Summer Food Service Program. Or, there is contact information listed on the handouts at the top of the webinar tool.

So, that's the end of our presentation today. But, I wanted to introduce Ms. Chris Wallace, she is the Director of Food Services for Corning City School District. She has a BS in foods and nutrition, has worked in the school food service since 1979 in both Connecticut and New York, and in both contract management sites and self-operated districts. And, she has begun her passion for the Summer Food Service Program in 1999 in Addison, New York. If you give me just a moment, I'll be able to transfer over to her PowerPoint, but I'd like to give the floor to Chris.

Thank you, and hello everyone from snowy upstate New York here. It's going to be heartwarming if nothing else to talk about the Summer Food Service Program. And, the PowerPoint that's going to be scrolling through as I am talking kind of shows, in picture format, my efforts when I moved to Corning as the Food Service Director in the school district there.

Expanding the existing Summer Food Service Program as I found it. It started with three sites in school buildings and it was a breakfast only program. And, upon my arrival and after some running numbers and realizing at that point that about 33% or 34% of the students in that school district were eligible for free and reduced meals during the regular school year, it became apparent to me that it was really a underutilized program and there was a serious need to expand it.

Not living in Corning, and being new to Corning as well as new to New York State, I figured I really needed to educate myself about who was operating programs, and where, in the summer. So, I literally started with the phone book and went through calling churches, student groups, cultural places, the museums and cultural centers in Corning. And, set up a first meeting, and out of that first meeting, four years ago now I think, maybe five years ago, we came up with the Corning Area Summer Collaborative. And, these are groups that take eight programming for kids in the summer, our own school district, resource agencies like the Food Bank of the Southern Tier. Our local newspaper that provides support services in a number of ways to help us grow the program.

And, a lot of the information that you are seeing here is just reinforcement of what you've already heard this morning. There is nothing more effective than matching student activity sites with food. It creates the interest on the part of the kids that want to come back so you have consistent attendance. It makes parents comfortable about leaving their children in sites where they know there is adult supervision and interesting activities for their children, and it just creates an environment that brings success not only to the agencies providing the programs but to the sponsor as well.

Over the three years, we also received a USDA rural transportation grant 2006, 2007 and 2008. That really created a huge forward momentum for our summer programs. The funds from that grant allowed us to provide transportation on school buses in a rather limited -- a little limited way from our regular school year. But, we ran minimized bus routes that allowed our kids to be brought from home school sites to summer programming sites. It also allowed us to put an additional delivery truck of our food service departments loaded with packed meals out to programming sites that operated outside of our actual school district.

We are a combined school district. In 1952, 56 different villages and communities in our area combined to form one district. So, we are a huge geographic area, 257 square miles worth of area to cover. During the regular school year, not such a big deal because our buses bring kids into our buildings. In the summer, we

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really have to turn things around. We bring children in for the four weeks that our district runs an enrichment program in our school buildings. And then, when that program ends, we kind of turn the tables and we load vehicles up and send them out to sites through our district to where the kids are congregating in kind of smaller formats.

That money allowed us to increase our program from three original sites to anywhere from 14 to 17 sites in the last year or two. We now do breakfast, lunch and snacks in different combinations at our sites. Our numbers in some locations have, I don't even know the word, it is higher than 10 times. I know quadruple and quintuple, but it just hugely exponentiates the amount of kids we are able to reach with meals. And, although to me personally, that's the goal, that's the most important thing. Sometimes it is good to step back and say that in these rural areas where kids receive most of their socialization opportunities at school, in the summer when these kids are back home in their rural isolated areas, it's just as important to them to provide the continued socialization and recreational opportunities that all of our collaborators in Corning are able to do for them. The food is really important from my context, but for the kids, it's the whole picture.

And, as we are scrolling through here, you can see all the different opportunities that kids have to have fun. They are also learning, these are educational opportunities for the kids although hopefully they would see it mostly as fun. And, embedded in all of this programming are the meals and snacks the children receiving.

We also used our three-year granting time frame to develop documentation and data so that we could convince the administration in my school district to continue funding transportation once that grant period ended. Prior to the grant, we had no transportation component, and the program was certainly much smaller than it has grown to be now. We now routinely serve in our largest block of programming, which is the four week enrichment program in our school buildings, over 400 elementary age children. And, we were really gratified that three-year grant window. Allowed us to develop the documentation and to grow the program and to show the administration how important and how successful it was in keeping nutritious food available for these kids. Extending that learning period so they were better able to come back in September and start right back in learning again.

And, I think we're getting close to the end of this. For those of you out there trying to decide whether you think you might know a potential sponsor or becoming a potential sponsor, it is important when you are speaking to people and trying to recruit groups and organizations to simply show them the need. I have rarely encountered an agency or an organization when presented what they need in their local area has not been interested in finding out how they can help. All of the agencies and the kinds of agencies that were listed before, faith-based agencies, youth groups, youth clubs, cultural groups like libraries, museums, etc. are more than willing to open their facilities, to volunteer their staffing for opportunities that are going to benefit children. It's a great cause. I don't really have to do a lot of convincing, all I have to do is provide data that shows the need in their area and 99 percent of the time people are willing to step up.

Once you have gotten their interest, if you can just show them how they can help. Perhaps they can open the programming they already have to the food component if it wasn't already there. Perhaps they can expand the programming time so that instead of just having one meal, they now are able to accommodate two meals or a meal in a snack. Perhaps they don't currently have any programming in their facilities but they can open their facility for it. Perhaps they can take their program and can expand it from one week to two weeks. I think we have reached the end.

Yes. Thank you Chris. And, I want to bring attention to the number of partnerships that Chris Wallace has mentioned here that we often don't hear about, with museums, cultural groups. Could you talk about how you approach a group that usually doesn't -- may not run summer activities and how you've been able to convince them that having their staff involved is a useful activity?

Sure. We -- it became apparent early in the organizing of the agencies in this collaborative that we all came from different places and we all had sort of a different interest. So, we early on, divided the agency members into three categories. The first category was referred to as child care sites or agencies. And those were like the Boys and Girls Clubs, the -- what we have called Kids Adventure club which would be like a latchkey

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program. The YMCA which offered day care. Any sort of day care, even our enrichment programs, because those were programs where kids were located at a specific site with an agency program surrounding it.

The second group became programming agencies and those were our museums, the libraries, groups who had people and programs that could entertain kids. And, working with them, we worked with them in two ways. One was to allow our children access to their premises for their programs and as the collaboration evolved over two and three and four years, they actually started developing programs designed to be taken into school buildings, into church buildings, into childcare centers. They had what they developed, they called them roadshows. So programming developed out of this collaborative.

In the last group were what we called the support groups. This was the food banks who could do advocacy and promotion for us. Our NOAB people, local newspaper who ran advertising and scheduling information at no charge. So, that was one of the ways we created it, we broke it out so that meetings were held based on someone's personal interests, and then every so often we would have all collaborative agencies come together again.

Fantastic, thank you for sharing that with us, and your pictures are spectacular. They're really fun, and I think it shows that the children do come because of the activities. And, since the USDA doesn't pay for the activities, that's really where partnership comes in. And, for all of those of you who are on the phone considering being involved, to provide activities, to be that space where the food is served, or to actually prepare and provide the food. There's a role here for everyone. And, I think that Chris has highlighted that, and with some pictures that even the local zoo and the museums and the childcare centers and the newspaper. There is a role for everyone and that's what it really takes to do this in a rural community is collaborative partnership. So, thank you so much Chris.

We're going to move into our question and answer session. Just a moment here. There we go. So, if you would like to ask a question on the phone, you can press star one. You can also type a question into the Q & A tab on the top toolbar. And, we will go to the operator now if you could open the phone line for questions.

All right. Once again, to ask a question please press star one. Please remember to unmute your phone when prompted to record your name. One moment for our first response.

I am showing no questions at this time.

Okay, we've got some questions here that are coming through the tool. The first question is can there be a feeding site without any activities or programs? And, the answer to that is yes, you can have a feeding site without any programmed activities. The -- Your state agency will reimburse you for the food served. So, from our end that is the most important part. However, we have found in doing the Summer Food Program over the years, that without having an activity of some kind, children likely won't come. And so, to really get the maximum impact and for all of the effort that you put in making sure that there is food there, you need to make sure that children show up. And, the best way to do that is usually to have some kind of recreational activity of some kind, or educational opportunity.

The next question is how many weeks does a typical Summer Food Program last? Well, because each sponsor and their site -- so, again sponsors being the people providing the food and the sites being the places where that food is served, can decide how long they want to run the program. For example, some churches located in low income areas might host vacation Bible school for children. And, that only last a couple of days. Other programs run meals and have meals available for children for several months. But, mostly programs run just a few weeks. Ideally, children need food all summer, and we strongly encourage groups to provide food for longer periods of time versus shorter periods of time. The other reason for that is that it takes a lot of effort and collaboration and partnership and planning to make this happen. It makes more sense to do all of that if you plan to serve meals for a longer period of time than for just a week or so.

Do you have any questions coming in from the phone?

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Yes, our first question comes from Ed Curnow.

Yes, can a charter school be a sponsor for a this summer program? A nonprofit charter school?

To the best of my knowledge, a charter school can be a sponsor. If you are serving through the National School Lunch Program, then there is actually an easier administration process. There is less paperwork if you're ready doing the National School Lunch Program. And, I'd be happy to get you in touch with someone who can explain the nuances of that. But any non-profit organization can be part of the Summer Food Service Program.

Okay, thank you.

No problem.

I have another question from Lauren Davenport. Your line is open.

Yes, I would like to know, is there a minimum number of children required to be in a feeding site or a minimum number of children if you are going to be a sponsor?

That is an excellent question. I am going to pass that question to Susan Ponemon who is more of our technical policy person. But, it's often very difficult to predict how many children will actually show up for the program unless you are doing something like busing them in and people have enrolled to be a part of that program. So, if none of the children show up, but you've provided meals, I am not sure if those meals have to be consumed to be reimbursed. Susan, could you speak to that?

Sure, thanks for the question. There is no minimum number of children, there is no maximum number of children except for private nonprofit sponsors with sites that are limited to serving 300 children a day. But, in any case, it's important to keep in mind that the purpose of the program is to provide nutritious meals to children in congrative settings. So, that means serving meals to children who sit down to eat together. And so, although there is no minimum, it is expected that the children will be eating together as a group. And, your state agency can provide you with more assistance in trying to determine what would allowable, what would be appropriate for your site.

We have a question coming in through the webinar tool. Asks, how much seed money is required to start the program? And, I think this depends on what you are and what you are doing. And, how collaborative and creative you get. I think all of us realize that seed money helps get a program started. But, if you start working with your school district, like as in Chris' example, that is already running the summer -- the National School Lunch Program during the school year and is now providing food during the during the summer. Then, your expenses for activities or recruiting other people to help supervise the feeding sites, is really going to vary depending on how creative you are. Chris are you still on the line?

Yes, I am.

Can you talk a little bit about how you guys got started, and you've had various experiences in other places other than where you are right now starting the Summer Food Program. Can you speak to this a bit?

Yes, it is a little different than the regular year-long programs because of the fact that you have to frequently take food out on the road so to speak. So, there is some equipment needs. You need to make sure that you have thermal containers. Temperature controls are very important in order to insure the safety of the food. So, you need thermal containers, chill packs, and those do require an investment. We've worked to get other funding sources for that. We have applied and received grants to provide that kind of equipment. Also, thermometers are required. You might canvas local Lions Clubs, Rotaries, service organizations in your community that might not be able to provide volunteers or any thing else except money, but that money might be used for those initial equipment purchases.

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Thank you Chris. We have another question. Is the USDA offering in a grant opportunities to support summer feed feeding programs, particularly funding to support transportation costs? And, as Chris mentioned, their school district had received a rural transportation grant a few years ago. But, the Department of Agriculture is no longer offering transportation grants. However, it might be worth speaking to your state agency about the potential for using Recovery Act Tanf money to support recreational activities for the Summer Food Program. So, if you're looking to help supplement your program, that's a conversation you might want to have with your state about finding some creative ways to help use their Recovery Act funds, particularly related to block grants of Tanf.

Also, starting in summer of 2010 there are going to be some new demonstration projects. For example, next month there will be an opportunity for 10 state agencies to apply for a special grant to improve access for children to the Summer Food Service Program. And, additional demonstration projects are planned for the summers of 2011 and beyond.

Fantastic.

I have a question that might be helpful if it's answered by Chris if you're still there.

Yes.

If you provide meals for 100 children and then only 50 show up. How do we recover the cost for the 50 meals not used? Food cost loses are one of our biggest challenges.

Yes it is, unlike regular school year where, you know, you have your kids signing up for lunch in the classroom and then the count goes down to the cafeteria, We work very closely with the site coordinators at each site, and with cell phones being where they are today, we have phone contact with every site. We know approximately how many meals to be prepared for those sites that are not actually preparing right there like a school building. The ones we are shipping out to. If they vary more than two or three meals from that expected count, they call us and we make the adjustments in the meals being packed for them. It is probably the most challenging thing for us production wise is those counts. We're very careful with our shipping techniques, so that if there are meals that come back, we follow the chain. If you can reuse those things, or use them as extras, there is a minimal amount that can be served as extras and still recover the cost. But, you need to maintain very very close communication with the site coordinators so that those counts are controlled as closely as possible.

Thank you Chris.

[Barking]

And a puppy.

One of the questions is, has the money been allocated to states, or how would someone apply? So, your -- the way the funding works is as follows. The federal government gives your state funding for the Summer Food Service Program. Your state then asks you to apply to either be a sponsor, and as a sponsor you provide food. Or, to enroll as a site. And, as a site, you don't get any funding to provide space for kids to be fed. But, as a sponsor, since you are preparing the food, you're the group that receives reimbursement. So, the state will reimburse you for the food. And you ask, how do you apply? You have to contact your state agency. And, you ask who is that? Then, go up at the top of the webinar on the right side, there's three little -- an image of three little pieces of paper all sort of shuffled together. If you click on that, there is a spot that says state contacts, and you can download the updated state contact information, or the existing state contact information, and that -- they'll be able to help you.

Do we have any questions from the phone?

Yes, we have a question from Anthony. Your line is open.

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Good afternoon panel. I was just wondering, latchkey kids by definition are kids who come back to an empty home because her parents are at work. In my rural community, I see more than just that. I see kids who have special needs, some kids who are disabled. And, we've had some difficulty in trying to explain that need to USDA in the past. That there is a standard that those types of meals cannot be reimbursed. I would like to know, are there any suggestions that you have, beyond just us taking the meals out there without getting reimbursed, for reaching kids who were in those particular situations? And, in particular, since the USDA's mission is to help secure healthy meals to kids, we've also noted in our needs assessments, along with social services, that many of the kids who are at day care homes may or may not necessarily be receiving high-quality meals. That is also another area that we could certainly -- we would certainly like to market our services to as well. But again, the issue of being able to reimburse those types of kids becomes an issue with the USDA. Any thoughts, any ideas as on how we might be able to, you know, seek a solution to that situation?

Thank you very much for your question. I'm going to take a stab at this and we'll see if Susan can follow up with more of a technical detail. The challenge here is that the law states you are reimbursed for meals served in a congregate setting. Meaning everyone has to come together and sit down and eat together. Which, in the groups of children you're mentioning, obviously don't fit into the ability to congregate somewhere which is why those meals are not reimbursed. But, we hear you and how frustrating that can be. The other -- so, the challenge there is that this program doesn't fit that need and we recognize that. Susan, do you have anything to add to that?

Well, I wanted to mention that for family child care homes that are registered or licensed, that the Child and Adult Food Care Program is an important nutritional resource for children, and a resource for providers. If a family day care home is not licensed and is not eligible to participate, it may be worthwhile to contact your state agency and discuss how to reach those children through the Summer Food Service Program. But, the intent of the Child and Adult Food Care Program is to provide -- is to reach those children. The other thing is that USDA is very very concerned about innovative ways of trying to reach the needs of children in all sorts of situations. That's why this year we are starting with a very small demonstration project. But, in coming years there will be other opportunities to look at innovative ways of trying to provide nutrition to children in a variety of settings. And, so there are some opportunities, I know USDA is certainly interested in hearing more about the needs that -- in your communities and how we can best provide services to the children in your communities. Both within the current Summer Food Service Program structure and outside of that structure.

May I say something?

Yes, please.

You ladies, I definitely respect and thank you so much for your information for your guidance. I asked that pro-question because we have already followed that route. In fact, getting our congressman involved to no avail. The problem is that law. There are a large proportion of kids in rural communities who cannot -- and has been alluded by this presentation, cannot get to congregate sites because of transportation. One of the innovations that we offered to USDA was that they consider a small percentage of kids that we might be able to reach on a trial basis that would correlate to the already -- the policy that already exists that covers the number of second meals that these children can receive. It's a small number, but it is allowed. The answer was a resounding no. Not only did we receive that information to me directly, the executive director of our program, but that was also communicated to our Congressman.

And we -- I, this is Amber. I really appreciate that you followed up and pushed hard. And, I think, as you've mentioned, some of these things are written into law and we're challenged because of that. So, I do want to -- we can -- we'd be happy to follow up with you after this. But, I do want to add -- have a few more questions asked and answered. But, as we are discussing here, we all know this program is challenging and that it's not perfect. And, that I think that FNS is taking a big step by thinking about the Summer Food Program differently, particularly in relation to some of these demonstration projects and pilot projects that will be coming up in the next couple of summers to test some of these ideas. So -- and, we are doing that because

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we have heard from people like yourself who have spoken out on behalf of children. So, we appreciate your dedication to that -- to the children, and we hear you loud and clear.

>> Thank you. And, hopefully there will be a Face book page or something like that, where other providers can network with each other so that we can collectively start to banding our voices together. And so, it's not just one person, these needs are going to transcend a lot of communities. So, I thank you ladies for your time.

Thank you.

We have another question, Susan, that you might be able to answer this. Speaking of rural, how is rural defined under the Summer Food service Program, and does it matter? And, is the Summer Food Service Program a rural only program?

No, the Summer Food Service Program takes -- provides nutritious meals to children in urban areas as well as in rural areas. The determination of what a rural area is, is defined in the regulations and your state administering agency will be able to identify for you which areas are considered rural and which are urban.

This is another great question. What requirements are there for nutritious food? We're exploring linking a local farmers market as a provider of some of the food. Is this possible? Chris, I don't know if you've -- if you're on the line, if you've had -- you've had salad bars. I don't know if those were coming from local farmers, but --

We --we have partnered with local farmers. Since our area doesn't enjoy the long growing season and that California and Florida might, summer programs are a great way to access the produce that we do have. The menu format is already prescribed as to what food components have to be there and in what serving size. But, within that format, you know, we use fresh vegetables, especially all summer long, in our packed meals. As well as as much fruit as we can get.

Thank you very much for that. And, I'm -- here the USDA, we are passionate about linking farmers with food service providers at schools and community groups. Which not only grows rural communities and brings dollars in, but also supports the network that exists in those communities. So, we're really excited any time that works really well. So, it's an extra -- another example of a good partnership.

I want to wrap up, is there any final questions from the phone line?

Yes, I do have a couple of questions.

We'll take one more question. And, just so everyone knows, the questions that are part of the Q & A on your -- in your webinar environment will be written down, and we'll get an opportunity to respond to those. So, thank you for contributing in that way too.

Go ahead, thank you operator.

Okay, our question comes from Mrs. McGuire.

Yes. Hi, I work for USDA Rural Development. And, I just wanted everybody to know that through Rural Develop a there is a Community Facilities Program that can help pay for capital costs of the Summer Food Program. We wouldn't be able to pay for the meals and the operating costs, but if there were -- was equipment needed, vehicles needed, that would be an eligible purpose. We can only fund nonprofits or municipalities. And, the way to get in touch with us is to go to the USDA website, go to Rural Development, and look up your state and look for the Community Facilities contact person.

Fantastic. There's also in your rural -- state rural offices in every state, there is a Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships Outreach Coordinator whose job is specifically, along with their other tasks, but one of their jobs specifically is to outreach to nonprofits and faith-based groups that are trying to serve their communities

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in creative and innovative ways. And, they would be able to help you work out the application and learn more about the process, particularly related to the Community Facilities grant. So, there are resources and people willing to help in rural America.

And, we have plenty of money this year because of the Recovery Act. So--

Fantastic. Thank you.

Okay.

Is there any final comments from Cheryl?

No, actually my staff is right on top of the Community Facilities Program information. But, you know, again, anything we can do to be helpful, anything we can do to work in partnership, not just with the Food and Nutrition Service, but with the communities that we both serve. We are happy to do it, and thank you so much for the chance to be with you today.

Yes. So, thank you to everyone who took a day out of your very busy schedules to be with us. We hope that this information was useful. Again, we encourage you to download the PowerPoint from the handout section in your webinar. If you have any questions, you can reach us here at the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships by visiting www.usda.gov/partnerships. And, we'll also get to your questions. so, thank you again and have a wonderful afternoon.