

***Summer Food Service Program
Rural Transportation Grants
2009 Report to Congress***

Background

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265) provided \$4 million over three years 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 not 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 2007 and 2009.

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, 28 institutions conducted grant funded projects in 2006. In an effort to expand the reach of the project, FNS extended 2007 and 2008 grant funding to additional service institutions in three States, bringing the total number of awards to 39.

The following is a report of the use of funds awarded, progress made by each grantee, the impact of the project on SFSP participation in rural areas, and recommendations for further action to improve rural summer food access.

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 required 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 2005 summer food partnership meetings where key members of the advocacy community such as the Food Research and Action Center and the School Nutrition Association were encouraged to publicize the availability of these grants. The announcement also 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 single statewide applications. Individual service institution proposals were evaluated on the merits of the project design, organizational experience, management/staff capability, budget appropriateness and economic efficiency. States with quantities of high scoring service institution proposals were awarded funding for those service institutions.

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. Initial 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 2006 summer season.

In an effort to expand the reach of the grants in 2007, FNS amended the competitive scoring range of the original proposals, awarding grants to nine additional service institutions in three of the awarded States. By 2008, one service institution in Texas, nine in Oregon, seven in New York, seven in Mississippi, and twelve institutions and the State agency in West Virginia participated in the project, for a total of 36.

Service institutions developed methods of overcoming transportation barriers in their unique rural areas. All program service models moved meals to small meal sites in rural areas, transported children from rural areas to a central meal site or some combination of both.

Attachment A describes the grant award amount, project design, challenges or successes and plans to continue or discontinue offering transportation services for each service institution funded by the grant.

Impact on Participation and Cost

Meal Sites:

Participating institutions were generally successful in increasing the number of meal sites in the rural areas they served. Those institutions participating for three years increased the number of meal sites from 146 in 2005 to 226 sites in 2008, an increase of about 55 percent. Those institutions participating for two years were more successful in increasing the number of meal sites, going from 15 in 2006 to 73 in 2008, more than three times the previous number. All but six of the institutions receiving grants initially increased the number of sites they served in rural areas. By the end of the project, most were able to maintain some level of site increase, but by 2008, eight had scaled back the number of sites they served. One service institution had fewer sites in 2008 than before the grant, and three had stopped participating in SFSP in 2008. Institutions reported various reasons for site declines. Some found their early, rapid expansions too difficult to maintain, particularly in those areas where participation was less than expected. Others struggled to maintain service levels because of unexpected fuel price increases. Three stopped providing summer meals altogether. Most service institutions experienced a steady cycle of changing sites, meaning some sites would drop out, while others would join. This is a common challenge throughout the SFSP, and suggests the transportation grants did not have an impact on site retention.

Meals Served:

Providing transportation services appears to have improved participation in most areas. The average number of children served daily – calculated by dividing the total number of lunches by the days of service for each institution – increased between 50 and 80 percent. Those service institutions participating all three years of the grant served an average of 5,306 per day before commencing the transportation project and by 2008 were serving an average of 7,367 children

per day. Those service institutions participating in the last two years served about 1,445 children per day before the grants, and 2,602 per day in 2008.

The total number of meals served also increased annually, though at diminishing rates. Among those institutions that started in 2006, the number of meals served increased by about 66,668 in 2006, by 30,640 in 2007, and 13,087 in 2008 over each preceding year. Those institutions that started in the second year of the grant had initial increases of 48,745 meals, but in 2008, the increase slowed to only 7,142 additional meals. The participating institutions increased the number of meals served by 6.5 percent between 2006 and 2008. This compares to an overall increase in the number of meals served statewide in those States of 4.2 percent between 2006 and 2008. In all, over 1.3 million meals were served by participating service institutions over the life of the grant.

Per-Meal Cost:

The cost per meal of providing transportation varied greatly between institutions and over the life of the grant. In 2006, the per meal transportation cost ranged from \$0.21 to \$12.47 per meal, with an average of \$3.22. In 2007, the range was \$0.56 to \$54.12, with the average per meal transportation cost at about \$4.14. By 2008, the per-meal cost of providing transportation services through the grants ranged between \$0.40 and \$37.11, averaging \$4.38 per meal. Sixteen institutions did make modest improvements to per meal efficiency between their first and final year of the grants, however lower than anticipated participation and increased fuel prices reduced efficiency over time for most service institutions.

The average per meal transportation cost was as much as 79 percent higher than the current operational reimbursement rate provided for each meal during each year of the grants. It is important to note that participating institutions received the grant funding in addition to the regular per meal reimbursements received from SFSP. Thus the average cost to the federal government of providing the meals in sites participating in the grant, including transportation costs, was \$7.29 in 2008, compared to \$3.04 received by rural sites not participating in the grant.

Key Factors Contributing to Project Success

Reaching eligible children was a key challenge for service institutions, even after establishing and promoting transportation services. Of the 38 sponsors that initiated grant projects, only nine sponsors met or exceed their participation goals, while five failed to achieve even 10 percent of their participation targets. Eight institutions were serving fewer children at the end of the grant than before they added transportation services. However, the majority of service institutions identified the grant as an effective method of increasing access to SFSP in rural areas. Many stated that the rural areas served were only able to participate as a result of the grant funding. Most service institutions reported that they will not continue providing transportation services in 2009 without supplemental funding.

Although there seems to be no single factor which contributed to the success of the projects in serving additional children, the ability to react quickly to challenges that occurred during the course of the grant was critical for nearly all service institutions. Several projects that relied heavily on partners, such as churches and schools, experienced sharp declines in participation if

the partnering entities discontinued their service. Some service institutions that relied less heavily on specific entities, but instead chose locations near parks, swimming pools and libraries were able to sustain participation at higher rates than those who did not.

The service delivery model employed by sponsors also seems to affect individual project participation levels, though differently in each community. Some developed mobile or “roving” sites that brought food to children in unserved rural areas, some transported children from rural areas to a central meal site, and still others combined both models to take food to outlying sites and to transport children to that site. While all three models showed varying success in improving access to meals, in general, transporting children to a meal site appeared to be less expensive on a per meal basis. Economies of scale are an important factor in the design of the SFSP and its reimbursement structure. The grant tested model of delivering meals to a distant rural site that may not attract enough children to achieve any such economy of scale appears to be inefficient in both cost and time.

Ten grantees have built sustainable programs and will continue to offer meal and transportation services in 2009. Three service institutions reported that they will not offer any summer meal service in 2009 and four are unsure if they will continue to do so. Most grantees expressed an interest in continuing the meal service in the areas served by the project; however thirteen reported that the final determination to continue the project sites is contingent on funding from other sources. Nine grantees stated that, while a site may be sustained, transportation to/from the site will not. This will likely decrease participation by those eligible participants who cannot attend the site without some sort of transportation provision.

Conclusion

The funding infused by the rural transportation grants did help defray the costs of equipment purchases and transportation services, but the grants have proven to be a highly cost inefficient method of ongoing support for SFSP in rural areas. In 2008, the average per meal cost for participating service institutions to provide transportation services was nearly 40 percent higher than the per meal reimbursement rate provided by SFSP. On average, participating institutions spent \$4.25 in grant funding per meal to provide transportation services. Adding the grant funds and the regular reimbursement rates in 2008, participating institutions received about \$7.28 in Federal funds per meal served, more than two and a half times the regular reimbursement rate.

At best, the grants allowed new or struggling sponsors to temporarily reach into remote areas and serve children that otherwise would not have been served. The grants also helped previously high-performing sponsors provide equipment upgrades and service improvements while only modestly improving participation. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that other sponsors nationwide already provide transportation services to augment their SFSP through creative partnerships and private funding sources. Some were even able to do so within their regular SFSP reimbursements, since the nationwide expansion of simplified cost accounting procedures allowed flexibility in the use of reimbursements.

It is evident through reports from participating service institutions that economies of scale could not be reached, particularly in very rural areas, in a way that makes ongoing transportation

services for congregate meal sites a reasonably efficient endeavor. Driving fifty to one hundred or more miles roundtrip to either move food or children was too costly, both in time and fuel. Many sponsors described remote meal sites that regularly served five or fewer children or central sites in communities with total populations under 200 people. There is no doubt that the children served benefit from access to summer meals, but some sponsors ultimately decided to abandon the transportation component or summer meal services altogether due to the extremely high per-meal cost.

Transportation has long been considered a primary obstacle to access to summer meals in rural areas. However, close examination of the challenges encountered by service institutions during the project shows that many reported problems are common to all SFSP institutions regardless of their location. For example, many sponsors reported difficulty in obtaining and maintaining support from community partners, particularly those that offered potential gathering places and enrichment activities for children. Sponsors also struggled to inform parents of the availability of meals or to effectively encourage them to allow their children to participate. Finally, enticing children to attend and return to meal sites remained a struggle for most participating sponsors. Some did not want to take a long trip into town, some did not like the food provided. None of these challenges is unique to rural areas. However, they do suggest that the perception that rural sponsors need only to overcome transportation barriers to fight hunger in the summer may be inaccurate.

Recommendations

USDA appreciates the concern and intent that led to providing rural transportation grants. Given the experiences reported by the participating States and service institutions, USDA does not recommend continuing or expanding the rural transportation grants.

ATTACHMENT A

PROJECT SUMMARIES BY STATE AND SERVICE INSTITUTION

Texas

The ***West Texas Food Bank*** was granted \$119,903 over three years to lease two vans to deliver food to four new SFSP sites every day for ten weeks. They estimated they would serve 400 – 500 children per day.

As a new SFSP sponsor in 2006, the food bank began operations at four sites and served 1,348 lunches over 54 days. The project experienced significant difficulty in reaching potential participants, averaging only 48 children per day. In 2007, the food bank consolidated to two sites and offered fewer serving days. The project also focused significant efforts on outreach to the communities served. Despite the shift in operations and additional outreach in the second year, the project achieved participation averages of nine to 12 children per day.

The sponsor withdrew from the project in 2008, citing lack of interest in the rural communities it served.

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. They estimated they would serve 360 children during summer 2006.

The food bank initially opened 23 sites in 2006, doubling the number of sites they served by delivering shelf stable meals. Though participation increased, the children did not like the shelf stable meals and the food bank felt delivering meals to an increased number of sites was not efficient or sustainable. Beginning in 2007, the Food Bank opted to decrease the number of SFSP sites to 12 and change its service model to transport children to meal sites. Fresh meals were prepared and outreach was also increased. The food bank was able to meet its participation targets with fewer sites and the children seemed to prefer the fresh meals.

Though the food bank reported better efficiency and sustainability with its revised service model, the actual cost per meal of providing transportation services to children increased significantly. The food bank initially had the best efficiency cost in 2006 of about \$0.21 per meal. In 2008, the per meal cost for providing transportation services was about \$1.80.

The food bank plans to continue offering SFSP in 2009, and is seeking private funding to cover transportation services.

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. They estimated they would serve 160 children in 2006.

The project was successful in establishing meal service in four new sites in very rural communities with very small populations (50 – 200 people), serving about 100 children per day. The efficiency of the project improved slightly over time but the per meal cost to move food to rural areas remained very high at around \$5.29 in 2008. The meals were helpful to children who lived within the four small towns, however, many children that lived outside of the towns were unable to get to the meal sites.

The sponsor intends to continue meal service in 2009 and is seeking private funding to cover the cost of mileage and staff time.

North Bend School District #13 was awarded \$198,993 over three years to purchase and outfit six vans (two vans per year) to transport food to 22 rural sites. They estimated they would serve 2,300 children in 2006.

The North Bend project purchased six vans and added seven new sites to its existing SFSP between 2006 and 2008. Average daily participation increased by approximately 121 children to 713 per day, but far short of the projected reach of 2,300 students. The project also aimed to reduce negative attitudes about free meals, and appeared to succeed in that aspect as the sponsor reports children lined up and waited daily for the meal service vans to arrive.

The sponsor will continue to use the vans to serve meals in the targeted rural areas in 2009. Mileage costs will be covered by the school district and private funding.

Baker School District 5J was granted \$21,062 over three years to lease vehicles to transport meals and children to rural sites. They expected to serve 750 children in 2006. The school district experienced a significant staff change prior to starting the SFSP and requested to postpone the beginning of its rural transportation project until summer 2007. The new staff significantly scaled back the scope of the project.

In 2007, the school district established three meal sites, but decreased to two sites in 2008. The project had limited service of 12 and eight days in 2007 and 2008, respectively. The district served about 40 children per day. The short duration, low attendance and long distances traveled combined to create a very high per meal cost between \$4 and \$6.

The district will not offer summer food in 2009.

Jefferson County School District 509J was awarded \$205,622 over three years to use school district buses to transport children to five rural sites. They estimated they would serve 216 children in 2006. Due to unforeseen circumstances unrelated to operating the rural transportation grant, the school district was forced to postpone participation in SFSP until 2007.

By 2008, the school district increased the number of meal sites to six and served 7,492 meals, nearly double the first year numbers. Average daily participation increased from 109 in 2007 to 192 in 2008. Each year, the district carefully monitored participation and made changes in location and meal times to respond to community preferences and thereby increased participation. Additionally, the district found efficiencies in delivering meals that reduced the

need for funding to less than half of the anticipated grant amount. Despite increasing participation and lower than anticipated costs, the efficiency of serving meals was poor, with an average per meal cost over \$5.

The district reports extraordinary community support for the program with parents eagerly transporting children to the meal sites to eat. However, the district is uncertain whether it will continue the program in 2009 due to district-wide budget concerns.

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. They expected to serve 120 children in 2006.

The school district was successful in establishing transportation service at their SFSP site. Average daily participation increased from 62 in 2006 to 120 by 2008. Transporting children to an existing meal site also proved an efficient model for the district, keeping the per meal cost between \$1 and \$2.

The district intends to continue transporting children to its summer meal service in 2009 and will use district or private funds to cover costs.

Bend-La Pine School District was awarded \$91,605 over three years to lease buses to transport children to 10 meal sites. They estimated they would serve 3,115 children in 2006.

The district initially opened two sites, but disappointing response curtailed hopes for expansion. Average daily participation decreased from 94 in 2006 to 41 in 2007. The district found that students and parents did not find the long bus ride worth the effort to secure a meal. Additionally, difficulties finding staff that wanted to work during the summer, along with the withdrawal of entities that the school district relied on for enrichment opportunities contributed to the challenges in carrying out the project. The district dropped the program in 2008 and will not participate in 2009.

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. They expected to serve 272 children in 2006.

The project served three rural sites out of a central kitchen and added a breakfast service. By 2008, breakfast service was discontinued, which contributed to a steep decline in the number of meals served. Average daily participation also decreased from 24 in 2006 to 18 in 2008. Lack of recreation resources and the school district's decision to forgo a summer school program in 2008 were cited as obstacles to success. Additionally, the small population of children, approximately 200, limits the potential size of the program, and significantly increases the per meal cost of transporting food to this rural area, reaching more than \$15 per meal in 2008.

The sponsor will continue to provide meals to the rural areas if the school district chooses to operate summer school in 2009.

Beaverton School District Nutrition Services Department was awarded \$61,558 over three years to purchase equipment to transport food to five sites. They estimated they would serve 1,000 children in 2006.

The school district added 13 mobile sites by 2008. Although the 2006 estimated participation was not met, the project nearly tripled participation over pre-grant years, with an average of 666 children served in 2008. In addition, project efficiency, which was poor at \$3.63 per meal served in 2006, improved significantly to just \$.44 in 2008. This improvement is likely due to non-recurring equipment purchase costs in the first year, combined with participation increases over time.

The district will continue to offer summer meals in the rural sites. They will seek private funding to cover any costs not covered by the regular SFSP reimbursement.

Harrisburg School District #7 was awarded \$26,466 over two years to transport children to an existing SFSP meal site.

The project met its participation goal by serving an average of 187 students in 2008; a significant increase over the approximately 100 students they served prior to participating in the grant.

While the district will continue to offer summer food in 2009, it will not continue to transport children due to lack of funding.

Lebanon Community Schools was awarded \$27,616 over two years to rent three vans to transport meals to 15 new meal sites. They expected to serve 600 students in 2007.

The district established 17 meal sites by 2008. Participation was much lower than expected with an average of 230 students served in 2008. The district developed strong partnerships with organizations offering activity programs (e.g., vacation bible schools) in outlying areas. Therefore, the district plans to continue to offer meal service in these areas in 2009.

New York

Fort Plain Central School District was awarded \$55,417 over three years to use school district buses to transport children to existing SFSP sites. They expected to serve 250 children in 2006.

The school district established transportation services to augment two existing SFSP sites serving breakfast and lunch. The meal services were used to entice children to attend summer school and summer recreation programs. Although participation was lower than expected, the program was able to grow consistently through the duration of the grant, moving from an average daily participation rate of 75 in 2005 to 190 in 2008. The growth in the program also supported growth in the educational and activity programs offered at the school sites.

The school district will continue to provide meal services in 2009 but is unlikely to find sufficient funding to continue to offer transportation services.

Cattaraugus Community Action, Inc. was granted \$80,816 to deliver lunches in 4 rented vans to 16 sites over three years. They expected to serve 848 children in 2006.

The project successfully increased the number of SFSP sites from 11 in 2005 to 13 in 2008. Although there was an increase in average daily participation by approximately 195 children from 2005 to 2008, daily averages around 500 were far less than expected.

The sponsor will continue to operate the summer program in 2009. However, it currently plans to use the staff's personal vehicles to deliver food rather than rented vans.

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. was granted \$81,000 over three years to deliver meals to up to 32 sites using rented vans. They estimated they would serve 1,083 children in 2006.

The project initially established services at four new rural sites, however, in 2008, the total number of sites decreased to 22, fewer than were participating prior to the grant. Average daily participation remained slightly above 2005 levels. With fewer sites and minimal participation increases, the grant does not appear to have had any effect on expanding access to summer meals in this community. Rather it appears that consolidating operations has improved efficiency, keeping the sponsor's average per meal cost at about \$0.62. The sponsor reported that the extra transportation funding allowed them to use regular SFSP reimbursements to improve the quality of the meals served.

Throughout the grant, the sponsor has developed strong partnerships with the local governments and schools. The sponsor anticipates that it will be able to continue providing meals at the same levels in 2009.

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. They expected to serve 635 children in 2006.

The food bank successfully increased the number of SFSP sites in the first year by adding sites in remote areas. However, it served fewer children and fewer meals overall than in pre-grant years. Participation did increase slightly in the second year, but by 2008, participation was at essentially the same rate as in 2005, prior to the grant approval.

The food bank anticipates that it will be forced to reduce the number of sites it serves in 2009. They will seek private donations to continue delivering food to remote areas.

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. They expected to serve 750 children in 2006.

The project initially increased the number of sites it served but experienced a decline in participation and number of meals served. By 2008, the number of sites and participation was equal to levels achieved prior to starting the grant. One contributing factor to low participation in this community may be a transient military population with frequent troop deployments,

which causes the number of potential participants to decline when families leave the area. The sponsor also found it difficult to maintain volunteers to help supervise rural meal sites.

The sponsor will continue to provide summer meals but will be unlikely to continue service in more rural areas without funding to cover the additional expenses.

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. The district estimated it would serve 225 children in 2006.

The project operated a total of 14 rural sites in 2008. Over three years the sponsor increased average daily participation by about 130 children, to 387. Focusing on recruiting sites where large numbers of children gather and augmenting existing activity programs with food and transportation improved the success of this project.

The district has decided to cover the cost of transporting children to sites with other funding sources for 2009. The meal service is self-supporting at current participation levels and the district expects to continue delivering food to rural areas.

The **Bolivar-Richburg Central School District** was awarded \$70,326 over three years to transport children to three meal sites using school district buses. They expected to serve 130 children in 2006.

The school district operated five summer sites in 2008. On average, daily participation hovered around 100 children. The close proximity of the sites to public pools and libraries contributed to consistent participation throughout the duration of the project.

The sponsor expects to reduce the number of sites that it serves in 2009, but is working to continue to offer transportation services to the most popular sites.

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. They estimated they would serve 300 children in 2006.

The school district established one additional meal site and minimally increased participation to just over 200 children per day. It is possible that bussing children and opening a second site made access to meal service more convenient to participating children, but not more attractive to non-participating children.

The district intends to continue transportation services in 2009 and is seeking funding from local sources.

Hazelhurst City School District was awarded \$37,632 over three years to rent school buses to transport children to meal sites. They estimated they would serve 550 children in 2006.

The district was successful at establishing transportation services for its existing SFSP site but was unable to achieve anticipated participation. Average daily participation increased slightly from about 150 to about 175 students per day.

The district opted not to participate in the project in 2008, but continues to offer meal services without transportation.

Holmes County School District was granted \$125,840 over three years to rent school buses to transport children to five program sites.

The district added three new meal sites over the course of the project and provided transportation services. Overall, the project increased participation significantly, reaching as many as 500 more children a day at its peak. The school district initially used only about 19 percent of the funds granted as it was able to effectively coordinate existing resources to add transportation services. This provided an excellent overall efficiency, with an average per meal cost of less than \$0.40.

The district will continue to offer meal services and transportation in 2009, but expects limited success with reduced resources to fund the project.

Mississippians for Community Development was awarded \$82,130 over three years to rent vehicles to transport meals to three program sites and to form new sites in remote areas.

In the first year of the project, the sponsor doubled the number of sites and nearly tripled the number of meals served. In the following years, the sponsor scaled down the program, ending with four sites and serving about 240 children per day. The project was able to rent some of the equipment it had originally intended to purchase, which helped improve project efficiency. However, decreasing the number of sites and the number of meals served, the per meal costs increased from \$0.77 in 2006 to \$1.80 per meal served in 2008.

The sponsor would like to continue to offer meals in the remote areas, however it is unlikely to do so without additional funding.

Picayune School District was awarded \$135,231 over three years to transport children to meal sites. They expected to serve 300-400 students in 2006.

The school district experienced initial success by adding transportation services to its existing SFSP and adding a new site, which increased average daily participation by 167 children in 2006 to 479. However, in subsequent years, the district reduced the number of sites and by 2008 participation decreased to just 179. The project experienced difficulty finding staff willing to work as bus aides during the summer months, and participation declined when the district did not have funding to offer educational activities in conjunction with the meal program.

The district will continue to offer meals, but will not offer transportation services without additional funding.

Canton Public Schools was awarded \$105,695 over two years to transport children and food to rural meal sites. They expected to serve 1750 students at six sites in 2007.

The district opened six sites and served over 1200 students in 2007. In 2008, however, the district reduced the number of sites to four and average daily participation fell to about 912.

The district will continue to offer summer meals but will not provide transportation services in 2009 because it is too costly.

Piney Woods School was awarded \$87,624 over two years to transport children to an existing SFSP site. The school expected to serve 300 students daily.

The school successfully added transportation services to its summer meal program. The school fell short of its goal to increase participation; serving approximately 161 children per day, about 30 more students than they typically served before the grant. However, they did manage to more than double the number of meals served by extending the days of service from 15 to 31.

The school will continue to offer summer meals but will not provide transportation services in 2009.

Hancock County School District was awarded \$80,143 over two years to transport children to two existing SFSP sites. The district expected a daily participation rate of 304 children.

The district established transportation services to its two existing summer sites and opened a third site in 2008. Although the average daily participation rate in 2008 was lower than anticipated at 273, the district was successful in achieving an overall increase of 151 students over 2006 participation. It also appears that adding the distant third site and high fuel costs had a negative impact on the per meal efficiency of the project, increasing costs from \$0.93 in 2007 to over \$3.00 in 2008.

The district will continue to offer meal services in 2009 but is unlikely to continue transporting children due to the high costs and the length of time children spend on busses.

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.

The State agency was successful at hiring staff, training institutions and meeting program administrative requirements. However, they overestimated the amount of funding necessary to operate the program at the State level, using only about 18 percent of the funding awarded.

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. They expected to serve 122 students in 2006.

The project successfully added a transportation component to its existing SFSP and doubled daily participation, reaching an average of 41 children by 2008. However, they fell far short of their initial goal.

The sponsor will continue to offer summer meals and transportation services in 2009.

McDowell County School District was granted \$79,200 over three years to use school district buses to transport children to new and existing meal sites. They estimated that they would serve 350 children in 2006.

The district successfully added a transportation component to its existing SFSP and doubled the number of sites it served to seven sites by 2008. Average daily participation increased by 70 to 157 between 2005 and 2008.

The district will seek funding to continue offering meal services in the expanded areas.

The ***Monroe County Board of Education*** was awarded \$120,086 over three years to use school district buses to transport children to summer sites. They estimated that they would serve 330 children in 2006.

The school district increased the number of meal sites from two in 2005 to eight by 2008. However, at its peak, the program served just under 200 children on an average day, only slightly more than it served before transportation services were provided.

The district is seeking other funding sources to continue the meal and transportation services in 2009.

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. They expected to serve 300 children in 2006.

The project initially made a modest expansion from two to eight sites by 2007. However, this had little or no impact on the average number of children served. In 2008, the project increased the number of SFSP sites to 24, and was able to increase average daily participation from about 100 to nearly 700 children and served an additional 30,000 meals. The project experienced its success by changing its model to reach children in sites where they congregate as well as bussing children to centralized sites.

The sponsor intends to continue to offer summer meals in 2009 but expects reduced services due to funding constraints.

Playmates Preschool and Child Care Center, Inc was awarded \$314,052 over three years to transport meals and children to summer program sites. They expected to serve 1,000 children in 2006.

The project grew from five to seven sites over the course of the grant. The transportation services nearly doubled to a daily average of 296 in 2008.

The sponsor will continue to provide meals to the summer sites, but expects that without transportation services, participation will decline.

The ***Shack Neighborhood House*** was awarded \$108,649 over three years to transport children and meals to five new rural sites. They expected to serve 175 children in 2006.

The project successfully established a new SFSP at five sites, however participation fell far below estimates, serving an average of 16 children per day in 2008. The project efficiency cost to provide the transportation services was the lowest of all grantees costing an average over the life of the grant of \$28 per meal.

The sponsor is seeking private funding to continue to offer meal and transportation services.

Step by Step/Big Ugly Community Center was awarded \$97,408 over two years to transport children to meal sites. They expected to serve 225 children in 2007.

The project started with three sites, but one site dropped out in 2008, significantly impacting participation and efficiency. Therefore, although the grantee increased its operating days to 40 in 2008, the average daily participation decreased from the 2007 peak of 116 to only 68 in 2008.

The sponsor is seeking private funding to continue the transportation services.

Cabell County Board of Education was awarded \$66,109 over two years to transport meals to new rural sites. They expected to serve up to 400 children in 2007.

The project successfully increased the number of SFSP sites from three to 21 by 2008. Although participation was lower than expected, the project increased the number of children served daily by nearly 200.

The sponsor will continue to provide summer meals at one site in 2009, but will not continue to transport meals to rural sites. The average per meal cost of nearly \$2, is too high for the sponsor to cover.

Kanawha County Board of Education was awarded \$64,827 over two years to transport children and meals to as many as 27 new rural sites. They expected to serve 200 students.

The project established six meal sites. The sponsor experienced many barriers beyond transportation that limited the number of sites it was able to open including partnerships that did

not materialize and a fire that delayed the opening of one site. However, despite the limited number of sites, the sponsor still served an average of 121 students each day in 2008.

The sponsor will continue to offer summer meals in at least one location in 2009, but will not offer transportation services.

Doddridge Ecumenical Outlet was awarded \$15,845 over two years to transport meals to rural sites. They estimated that they would serve 105 children in 2008.

With the help of outreach and strong partnerships, the project successfully doubled the number of sites to eight. Average daily participation was 99 children, close to the target and triple the number of children served prior to starting the grant. Even with small numbers of children, the project was able to keep the per meal cost below \$1.50 by using personal vehicles and reimbursing for mileage.

The sponsor is seeking funds to continue to provide services in rural areas.

Ritchie County Schools was awarded \$48,058 over two years to transport children to meal sites. They expected to serve 100 students in 2007.

The project successfully added transportation services to two summer meal sites. The project served hot meals, which the district reports contributed to consistent rates of increased participation. Though falling slightly short of its goal, the project served an average of 83 children in 2008.

The sponsor will continue to offer meals in 2009 but will not be able to transport children to meal sites.

The ***Southern Appalachian Labor School*** was awarded \$28,500 over three years to transport children to meal sites. They estimated that they would serve 60 children in 2006.

The school added transportation services to its existing SFSP increasing average daily participation from 25 children in 2005 to about 70 in 2008. The sponsor expanded to an additional site in 2007, increasing participation and lowering the per meal cost of providing transportation.

The sponsor will continue to offer meal services in 2009 but will likely reduce the number of days of service.