

Solicitation for State Agencies: Summer 2010 Demonstration Projects

Authorization

These demonstration projects are being conducted under the authority and funding provided by the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-80). The Appropriations Act authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to use \$85 million to develop and test alternative methods of providing access to food for low-income children in urban and rural areas during the summer months, when schools are not in regular session.

Purpose of the Summer 2010 Demonstration Projects

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was created to provide nutrition benefits during the summer to children living in low-income areas. These children were thought to be at risk of hunger or nutritional deficiencies when they were not receiving free or reduced price meals through school. This has been further supported by research demonstrating that food insecurity among children increases during the summer months.

Though the SFSP aims to fill the nutrition gap that low-income children experience over the summer, the Program has been unable to achieve the same level of program participation as school meal programs achieve during the school year. While 19 million children receive free or reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program, only about 3 million children receive meals during the summer.

The Summer 2010 demonstration projects will begin the process of examining ways to increase food security among low-income children by improving access to nutrition assistance during the summer months. These projects will involve providing incentive funds through the SFSP. States that have been identified as having high rates of childhood food insecurity and low rates of SFSP participation are encouraged to apply to be selected to participate in one of the two demonstration projects being implemented in 2010.

Project Descriptions

For Summer 2010, two types of demonstration projects will be implemented and evaluated. Each project must be available Statewide to eligible sponsors. These two projects have been selected because they will test financial incentives to address barriers to access in SFSP that have not been tested previously. The two projects are:

1. **Activity Incentive Project-**

This demonstration project will provide funding to support activity costs for all approved SFSP sponsors in the selected State that plan and implement enrichment or recreational activities to engage children at approved SFSP meal service sites. Activities and special events help draw children to the meal service sites and keep site participation stable and high. Sponsors that provide enrichment and recreational activities have the opportunity to create a compelling reason for children to come to the site. The goal of this

demonstration project is to provide sponsors with additional funding to create activities at their meals sites that will increase SFSP participation.

Allowable activities to be funded through this project must be those that are provided to children at a feeding site with the purpose of attracting children to that site. Eligible sponsors are expected to provide activities for children at these sites on most, if not all, days of operation. Some examples of activities that will be eligible for this incentive include but are not limited to: sports, arts and crafts, tutoring, games, lessons, and playing music. These incentive funds may also be used in part for any sponsor or site staff costs incurred from adding these activities.

Sponsors will be eligible for activity incentive funds for each site they operate that has these enrichment or recreational activities. Incentive funds must only be used by sponsors for allowable costs associated with these activities and not for other SFSP allowable costs or non-Program costs. These funds are intended to support activities which did not exist previously at sites and would not be otherwise offered (i.e., incentive funds must not supplant other funds available to a sponsor for activities). This funding may not be used to pay for transportation to bring children to the sites.

The demonstration project must be available Statewide, and the State agency should make an effort to have participating sites in all parts of the State. The selected State agency must promote the demonstration project among all approved and potential SFSP sponsors, and determine which sites in the State are interested in receiving the incentive and able to implement it. The State agency also must ensure participating sponsors have sufficient systems in place to track incentive funds usage.

State agencies that apply for this project will need to submit a plan that describes how they will assess and approve allowable activities and how they intend to disburse incentive funds to sponsors.

2. **Extending Length of Operation Incentive Project-**

This demonstration project will provide additional funding to all eligible sponsors in the selected State that operate meal service sites for a minimum of 40 days in the summer. This number of days was selected because it is a large portion of the typical summer break from the school year. An additional **50 cent** reimbursement will be provided for each lunch served at sites that are open for this length of time or longer. Some sponsors are not able to stay open due to financial limitations and other constraints, so their SFSP sites only operate for limited periods of time. The goal of this demonstration project is to help these sponsors afford staying open longer so they can feed children in their communities for as long a portion of the summer as possible.

The demonstration project must be available Statewide, and the State agency should make an effort to have participating sites in all parts of the State. The selected State agency will need to promote the demonstration project among approved and potential

SFSP sponsors, and determine which sites in the State are interested in receiving the incentive and able to operate for the required period of time (40 days) or longer. Not all sites under a particular sponsor must operate for 40 or more days for the sponsor to be eligible to receive the incentive. However, the incentive will only be provided for lunches served at sites that agree to operate for the required period of time or longer.

The purpose of this demonstration is to determine whether a financial incentive can encourage programs of longer duration, thereby improving access for low-income children. States are encouraged to work closely with sponsors that previously operated for fewer than 40 days to expand program operations, and State proposals will be evaluated on their potential for success in this regard (see below).

The selected State agency must implement an effective system for tracking each potentially eligible site's actual days of program operation.

A total of two States will be selected to participate in the Summer 2010 demonstration projects, one for each project. USDA will require that these two States will continue to implement these same two demonstration projects at least through Summer 2011. State selection for one of the projects this year will not preclude participation in future SFSP demonstration projects.

FNS will work closely with selected States to assist States in establishing operational details.

Demonstration Project Evaluation

An evaluation component will be incorporated into both demonstration projects to assess how effective these two interventions are at increasing access to and participation in the SFSP. After 2010, the evaluation will also focus on measuring the impact of particular interventions on food insecurity during the summer. All evaluation components will be designed and led by USDA or its contractors.

For these demonstration projects, at a minimum, USDA will need site level meal count data for each day for each site receiving the incentives. For activity incentives, USDA will also need information from the State agency on the amount of the funds provided and types of activities conducted, according to site. For length of operation incentives, USDA will need information from the State agency on the total number of days of operation, according to site.

The State agencies will be responsible for separating out the data necessary for the demonstration from all of the other data they collect for SFSP. This may require State agencies to establish new reporting procedures for participating sponsors. Specifically, for each meal delivery site the State must tell FNS whether the site increased its number of operating days (compared to last summer) to meet or exceed the 40 operating day criterion (or, if it is a new site, set its number of operating days to meet or exceed the 40 day criterion).

All other data for the evaluation will come from the existing program recordkeeping requirements for SFSP and NSLP, so the State agencies and sponsors participating in these demonstration projects will not be required to collect new types of information. FNS will

procure a contractor to assist in compiling the administrative data that is on file. Selected State agencies will be required to ensure the contractor has access to the data from the local level so that it is available to USDA through its contractor. The required data elements are ones that support the filing of forms FNS-418, FNS-269, as well as data normally collected by sponsors and sites, specifically:

- a. State level:
 - i. Number of authorized SFSP sponsors in the State
 - ii. NSLP and SBP enrollment: number of students approved for free meals, number of students approved for reduced price meals, total number of students enrolled, and the average daily participation for each of free meals, reduced price meals, and paid meals; provide the statewide totals and subtotals for each school district
- b. For each SFSP Sponsoring organization in the State:
 - i. Type of sponsor (school, government, residential camp, national youth sports program, non-profit private sponsor)
 - ii. Number of summer meal delivery sites
 - iii. For each of the sponsor's meal delivery sites, obtain from the sponsor:
 1. Total number of operating days site had meal service during the summer. (If available from Sponsor: number of operating days in each of May, June, July, August, and September.)
 2. Address of meal delivery site
 3. Number of activities offered, categorized by recreational, educational, other, and total
 4. Number of breakfasts, lunches, suppers, and supplements *prepared*. If available from sponsor: numbers for each of May, June, July, August, September
 5. Number of breakfasts, lunches, suppers, and supplements *served* to eligible children (firsts, seconds and total for each meal type). If available: by month.
 6. Average daily attendance. If available: by month
 7. Operating Costs – food, labor, other, and total
 8. Administrative costs
 9. All non-USDA income received for food service

Critical Dates

April 2, 2010
April 2010

Plans for Implementation are due to FNS
FNS will select one State for each of the two summer
2010 demonstration projects

Who May Apply

Any State agency that administers the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) AND that has been identified as one of the targeted states that have in combination the highest rates of childhood food insecurity and the lowest levels of summer meals participation. States may apply for one or both demonstration projects, but will not be selected for more than one. These States are: Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wyoming.

Funding and Duration

Activity Incentive Funding

The State selected for this project will receive a total amount of funds that they will allocate to eligible sponsors to pay for the cost of offering activities. The State will also be able to use demonstration project money for its own administrative costs related to operation and oversight of the demonstration project. States interested in being selected for this project must submit a requested funding level of Summer 2010 for activity incentives, including a plan for dispersing this money to sponsors. States must also provide an estimate and justification for any funding needed to administer the project. The State selected for participation in this project must be willing to commit to continue operating the demonstration project in Summer 2011.

Extending Length of Operation Funding

The State selected for this project will receive funds from USDA to cover the cost of providing eligible sponsors with additional per lunch reimbursements for eligible lunches. The State will provide sponsors with sites that are open for at least 40 days out of the summer with an additional 50 cents for every lunch that is served at that site. The State will also be able to use demonstration project money for its own administrative costs. States must provide an estimate and justification for any funding needed to administer the project. The State selected for participation in this project must be willing to commit to continue operating the demonstration project in Summer 2011.

Plan of Operation Submission Requirements

In order to apply for consideration to be selected for one of these two Summer 2010 demonstration projects, interested and eligible State agencies must submit a plan of operation that describes how they will implement the project if chosen. Given the short timeframe available for planning and operationalizing these projects for Summer 2010, plans should be brief but must include sufficient detail to provide assurances to FNS that the demonstration project would be successful.

At a minimum, for either demonstration project the following information should be submitted:

1. Description of how the State agency plans to conduct the demonstration project, including the following project components:
 - Outreach and promotion to eligible sponsors
 - Training (State agency staff and sponsors)
 - Oversight/monitoring
 - Financial responsibilities
 - Reporting and evaluation
2. State Administrative Budget: A budget and justification for any administrative needs the State agency will have in implementing the project, including an estimate of expected administrative costs. This estimate must describe the administrative activities and their associated costs.
3. Staffing: How the State agency will staff the project, including the position titles and experience of the key staff members that will have responsibilities under the project, and the proportion of their time that will be devoted to the demonstration project.
4. Participation Estimate: An estimate of how many sponsors and sites in the State that can be expected to qualify for and be interested in participating in the demonstration project, as well as an estimate of participation at those sites.
5. Letter of Commitment: A letter of commitment from the State Commissioner or equivalent position expressing that the State will follow-through with participating in the demonstration project, including the evaluation component, and commit sufficient State effort to ensure effective operation in 2010 and 2011 if selected by USDA.

In addition to items 1-5, State agencies interested in being considered for the **Activity Incentive Demonstration Project** should submit the following information:

- A description of the process and criteria the State agency will use to assess the eligible types of recreational and/or enrichment activities that sponsors may implement at their sites to receive the incentive funds, including assurance that the demonstrative project funds will not be used to supplant other activity funds being used by sponsors. State agencies may not consider transportation to bring children or meals to SFSP sites to be an allowable activity cost for this project.

- A proposed plan for how the State agency would allocate the incentive to sponsors with activities at their sites (e.g. per meal reimbursement, lump sum). This should include how the State agency would determine the estimated amount of funding each sponsor would receive and how the State agency would ensure that the money was spent appropriately. If selected to participate in this demonstration project, USDA will use this proposed plan to work with the State to determine the best method for allocating this money to sponsors based on factors unique to the State.

In addition to items 1-5, State agencies interested in being considered for the **Extending Length of Operation Demonstration Project** should include an assessment of the anticipated impact of the incentive on increasing the number of sponsors which run programs of at least 40 days. This assessment should include data from Summer 2009 on the number of sponsors in the State that operated for 40 days or more and those that operated for fewer days. The State should include an assessment of the likelihood of the incentive to increase participation among the latter group, as well as encouraging new sponsors to participate and run programs of at least 40 days.

All plans of operation should not exceed 10 pages, and should be single-spaced, single-sided, and in 12 point Times New Roman font.

States interested in applying for both demonstration projects (though such States will only be selected for one project at the most) should submit two separate plans, one for each project. Each plan should not exceed 10 pages.

State Selection

FNS will evaluate the viability and merits of the applications received by the established due date, and make selections on the basis of their completeness and conformity to the requirements described in this solicitation. We will not be using a competitive process or ranking applicants when making our selection. We will be making our selection decision based on the needs and priorities we identify for these summer demonstration projects and will consider the following criteria:

Proposal Quality and Effectiveness

- Describes a clear, well-thought out plan for how the demonstration project will be implemented in the State which sufficiently addresses all components of the project (outreach, training, oversight/monitoring, financial, reporting and evaluation).
- Describes in detail the management functions of the SA for this demonstration project and how the funds will be dispersed to sponsors.
- Shows commitment to providing administrative oversight for the project.
- Identifies that there is strong interest on the sponsor level for the demonstration project.

- **In addition for the Activity Incentive Project:**
 - Describes a plan that appropriately and effectively identifies allowable site activities to be funded for this project.
 - Submits a clear and effective plan for dispersing funds to eligible sponsors.

State Agency Management

- Demonstrates a clear understanding of the goals and purpose of the demonstration project.
- Demonstrates that there will be a sufficient number of staff members with appropriate qualifications for managing the project, and that participation in the demonstration project will not negatively impact normal SFSP operations by the State agency.
- Identifies a clear and effective plan for overseeing and managing the demonstration project.
- Demonstrates the ability to adequately manage project funds.
- Includes a letter of commitment by the State Commissioner or equivalent position.

State Agency's Ability to Contribute to the Evaluation Component

- Understands the purpose and value of the evaluation component of the demonstration project, and is committed to assisting with this.
- Has the capability to separate and report the required demonstration project data to USDA.
- Demonstrates that the SA will bear the responsibility for ensuring that USDA receives any necessary data, and will not place this burden on sponsors or other local level staff.

FNS reserves the right to not select a State agency based on any of the above mentioned factors, or others. FNS may also consider additional factors, such as geographic distribution, in the selection process.

States need to be aware that if selected for one of the demonstration projects, they will be required to sign an amendment to their existing Federal/state agreement to include the conditions and parameters of participating in the chosen demonstration project.

Plan Submission Information

All required materials should be mailed to the following address:

Marisa Kirk-Epstein
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
Child Nutrition Division
Summer Demonstration Projects
3101 Park Center Dr., Room 640
Alexandria, VA 22314

No fax or email submission of applications will be accepted.