

Summer Meals 2017 Strategies & Tactics from the No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices

The [Center for Best Practices website](#) is your go-to reference for accessing these resources, which may be located under the **Summer Meals** section and the **Sponsor Center**. These reference documents and toolkits were designed with you in mind, and we welcome your feedback.

Core Strategies

- **Collaborative Planning** – Collaborative planning is the [foundational summer meals strategy](#) that allows stakeholders to join and address child hunger in creative ways that no individual organization can carry out on its own. The Center for Best Practices [No Kid Hungry Summer Collaborative Planning Toolkit](#) is an online resource designed to help State Agencies, community nonprofits, school districts, and local government officials engage partners and hold meetings to plan and evaluate summer meals programming.
 - Listen to a [recorded webinar](#) reviewing the toolkit and hear from partners who have successfully implemented collaborative planning processes in their communities.
- **Key Partnerships** – In addition to schools, which are natural partners in summer meals, seek out the following community partners to support or expand meals programming and enrichment activities at sites:
 - **Libraries** are natural partners who have shown success in reaching children with meals in both urban and rural communities. Meals can support programming already in place, in a safe frequented by the entire community. See what has been working in California with [Lunch at the Library](#), and learn more about getting new, low-cost books to existing sites with [First Book](#).
 - **Healthcare** facilities have become key partners in summer meals. Many hospitals have become [summer meals sponsors or sites](#), as well as [WIC clinics](#). In addition, doctor's offices and community health centers are ideal locations to promote the program through posters, business cards and word-of-mouth. This [implementation guide](#) walks decision-makers through the different elements of becoming a sponsor or site, and our [outreach toolkit](#) provides materials that healthcare leaders can use to increase program awareness.
 - **Public Housing** represents an area for program expansion that requires collaboration between property managers, program sponsors, and State Agencies. Use [USDA's Capacity Builder](#) to identify public housing sites in eligible locations, and then reach out to your state [HUD](#) or [Rural Development](#) representative for help connecting with the right management staff. Engagement with decision-makers is key, as they can support site staff to set aside time to support programming by serving meals or leading activities.
 - **Faith-based** communities share a [commitment to their communities](#) that can be leveraged to further support summer meals programming. Religious congregations may be interested to host a meals site, provide volunteers, or lend physical resources, such as a bus or van, to support sponsors.
 - **Senior Centers**: In communities around the country, SFSP and senior nutrition programs providers are aligning efforts to serve both communities. No Kid Hungry and the Meals on Wheels Association of America developed an [introductory brief](#) and a joint [case study](#) that highlights a model program and gives advice for developing similar partnerships in your community.
 - **Parks & Recreation** departments operate in many towns and cities and are natural partners for connecting meals to activities. Encourage sponsors to communicate with parks and rec staff in late winter or early spring so they can explore opportunities to make meals available to children.
- **Schools as Nutrition Hubs** – Schools operating as Nutrition Hubs help children access the nutrition they need throughout the year by operating all available federal child nutrition programs —school breakfast, lunch, supper, and summer meals. In addition to keeping children healthy and well-fed, this strategy also helps maximize program revenue, optimize staff time, and achieve economies of scale. No Kid Hungry's [Schools as Nutrition Hubs](#) brief is a great resource to understand this emerging strategy in child nutrition, and can be used to create buy-in among school district leadership. Keep up with updates and fresh resources on Nutrition Hubs by subscribing to the Center for Best Practices' ['What's New'](#) newsletter.

- **Year-Round Meals** – The Summer Food Service Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk [Afterschool Meals](#) component naturally complement each other. Creating a seamless year-round experience can promote the financial sustainability and growth of capable sponsors to help them expand their programs. It is never too early to start planning a transition between summer and afterschool meals: review this [program comparison](#) chart and encourage sponsors to contact their State Agency to begin the application process in a timely manner.
- **Mobile Meals** – The [Mobile Meals Playbook](#) can help sponsors assess the benefits and potential costs of developing a mobile meals route and delivery service. Based on their assessment, sponsors are able to effectively make plans for a new mobile program or adopt best practices to improve an existing program.
 - Listen to a [recorded webinar](#) reviewing exceptional mobile meals programs from across the country, as well as a presentation of the Mobile Meals Playbook available from the Center for Best Practices.
 - If your community has [fixed route public transportation](#), there may be an opportunity to promote summer programs alongside these services to make sites more accessible to youth.
- **Engaging Elected Officials** - Elected officials can help open new doors for expansion opportunities and raise awareness about summer meals programs among the public. In particular, municipal and state-level officials have an interest in supporting initiatives that address the needs of their constituents, and may become champions for programs once they see them in action. No Kid Hungry has developed resources to help [mayors](#), [state legislators](#) and [governors](#) understand how they can positively affect programming that serves children when school is out, as well as a [summer site visit toolkit](#) for use by sponsors and community nonprofits.
- **Meal Quality** – High-quality meals are appealing, appetizing and nutritious. They help kids stay healthy, and they may increase program retention rates that help stabilize program finances. Challenge, support, and recognize sponsors who adopt one or more of the following tactics to maximize meal quality:
 - Transition from cold to hot meals
 - Conduct taste tests
 - Introduce local foods
 - Increase fresh fruit and vegetable offerings

Have you considered?

Late Breakfast with Supper: *By having meals later in the morning, older kids are more likely to be awake and ready to eat. In addition, serving supper instead of lunch puts the meal at a time parents are more likely to be around to help with logistics, and keeps sites from having to deal with extreme heat in the middle of the day.*

For additional information on preparing healthy, tasteful menu offerings that appeal to children, consult USDA's [Summer Nutrition Guide](#) and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's [Smart Food Planner](#).

Additional Resources & Tactics

- **Operating Days** – Challenge sponsors to add one or more weeks of service during the summer, or to operate on weekend days. This is an opportunity to increase service to children and families while maximizing reimbursement and providing employment opportunities for food service staff.
- **Sponsor Retention** – Our [No Kid Hungry Strategies for Sponsor Retention](#) document provides a timeline with specific actions to help campaigns support sponsors as they plan their programs.
- **Program Budgeting** – [Financial Management](#) resources are available to assist sponsors with developing a working budget, conducting sensitivity analyses, and bookkeeping.
- **Outreach Materials** – The [Sodexo Foundation Summer Meals Outreach Toolkit](#) provides template materials to help spread the word about summer meals: press releases, flyers, posters and other creative collateral.

Learn more about these strategies and tactics at the [Center for Best Practices](#) website, including information about upcoming webinars on our [events page](#). Questions? Reach out at bestpractices@strength.org.