

Better Together:

Optimizing Summer Meal Programs in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties



SUMMER FOOD

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May 2017



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Executive Summary

Background: Thousands of children in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties rely on free and reduced price meals during the school year to meet their basic nutrition needs. In the summer months, these same students still need healthy, free meals. Summer meal programs meet this need. Schools, libraries, community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, and government agencies can all host summer meal programs in areas where 50 percent or more of the child population qualifies for free and reduced-price meals. At these sites, any child aged 18 and under can receive free meals during the summer. In California, the summer meal programs are administered by the California Department of Education and are federally funded.

While these meal programs are a crucial to children in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, they are dramatically underutilized compared to the National School Lunch Program. In 2015, 22 percent of free and reduced-price lunch participants were reached during the summer in San Mateo County, and 16 percent in Santa Clara County.ⁱⁱⁱ When these programs are underutilized, children are vulnerable to hunger and are at a higher risk of experiencing summer learning loss. **Therefore, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties has made expanding child access to healthy summer meals a new goal.**

Methodology: This report draws from three main sources: interviews with stakeholders involved in summer meal programs; a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of libraries and community-based organizations involved in summer meal programs; and an evaluation from the Pediatric Advocacy Program at Stanford School of Medicine titled “Lunch at the Library: A Community Based Approach to Addressing Food Insecurity.”ⁱⁱⁱⁱ This report identifies barriers to optimizing summer meal programs and proposes recommendations on how the community can better support these critical programs.

Conclusions: A program can often improve its reach through simple solutions. For example, a site may only need expanded educational programming to attract more children or consistent volunteers to run more smoothly. **The barriers to optimization for these programs are largely solvable.** While not all problems have an easy solution, most challenges can be assuaged by increased collaboration, heightened awareness, and creative use of existing resources. The communities in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties can ensure that more children have access to meals throughout the summer if they work together. Collaboration is crucial to achieve the ultimate goal of increasing children’s access to healthy summer meals to not only prevent food insecurity, but also prevent learning loss that can disadvantage low-income students for their entire academic careers.

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I must also thank the nutrition directors, librarians, non-profit leaders, and others who graciously made time to speak with me about the challenges their programs and children face. Their deep knowledge of their communities and commitment to feeding children is humbling. Their observations and knowledge are the foundation of my findings, recommendations, and conclusions. Their input is represented in this report, but all errors and misrepresentations are mine alone.

Finally, thank you to the Congressional Hunger Center staff for their support and guidance during my time in San Jose

Sincerely,



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Background:

Federal Summer Nutrition Programs

Each school year, millions of children in California rely on school meals to meet their basic nutrition needs. In 2015, more than 2.2 million children ate school lunch at a free or reduced-price through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). However, when school ends for the summer and children go home, they can fall victim to hunger without the support of these school meals. The Federal Summer Nutrition Programs (FSNP), or summer meal programs, are a crucial solution to combating summer hunger. Each summer, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), an extension of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), serves thousands of hungry children in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. **The Federal Summer Nutrition Programs are federally funded, state-administered nutrition programs that provide meals for eligible children during the summer months when they do not have access to the meals they depend upon during the school year.** FSNPs, provide crucial assistance to families who struggle to put food on the table.

Through these programs, children aged 18 and under who live in low-income areas can receive meals, free of charge, from local schools, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, libraries, and other community organizations. These meal sites must be located in areas where 50 percent or more of the child population qualifies for free and reduced-price meals during the school year. A site located in an eligible area, can serve up to two meals a day at no cost to any child who participates in mealtime. The federal government reimburses the site.

In 2015, 35.88 percent of California children were eligible for free and reduced-price meals.^v However, only 15 percent of these eligible children participated in summer meal programs in 2015.^{vi} Locally, the summer meal program participation rates are also cause for concern:

in San Mateo County, 22 percent of free and reduced-price lunch participants utilized these programs, while in Santa Clara County the number was lower at 16 percent.^{vii, viii}

These numbers indicate that thousands of low-income children are at risk of hunger over the summer.

The Cost of Summer Hunger is High:

Summer hunger negatively impacts a child’s ability to learn and health.

Summer meal programs immediately provide nutritious food and increase food security. **However, these programs effect long term educational and health outcomes for children.**



Education:

Summer meal programs are critically important for low income children who are more likely to experience food insecurity over the summer. Because low-income families rely on the school lunch and breakfast programs during the year, families usually spend an addition \$300 per month on food during the summer, which can be a significant financial strain.^{ix} Summer meal programs are also critical to low-income children because they are more susceptible to the “summer slide” than their higher-income peers. “Summer slide” refers to the learning loss that happens over the summer when children are not in school.^x When low-income children experience summer slide compounded with food insecurity, they return to the classroom, behind their wealthier food-secure classmates.^{xi, xii} Schools must reteach what was lost over the summer, which can cost around \$1,540 per student each year.^{xiii} Summer slide compounds over years, contributing to achievement gaps that can leave low-income students several grade levels behind their wealthier peers.^{xiv} However, nutritious food supports cognitive function and brain development and can mitigate the effects of summer learning loss.^{xx} In addition, food insecure children are also less likely to graduate high school and pursue higher education, which impacts their careers and earnings later in life.^{xvi}

Education Impacts

-  **Cognitive Functioning and Development**
Nutritious meals protect against cognitive decline²²
-  **Summer Learning Loss**
Children from low-income families lose more than two months in reading achievement compared with their peers from higher-income families²²
-  **Achievement Gap**
About two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years²⁶

Source: No Kid Hungry, Share Our Strength



Health and associated costs:

Food insecure children are more likely to experience colds, migraines, and stomach aches.^{xvii} Children in food insecure households are also more likely to be iron deficient, which impacts their cognitive and physical development.^{xviii} Furthermore, food insecure individuals are more likely to be obese, which causes multiple negative health outcomes including hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.^{xix} These health outcomes result in higher medical costs and strains health care systems.^{xx}

The summer meal programs are a clear solution to summer slide and are necessary to close the achievement gap.

In 2015, Deloitte conducted a report on behalf of Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Campaign. The report included an Impact Extrapolation to imagine what the national impact would be if each eligible child were connected to a summer meal program.



As many as 1 million more children would be food secure.^{xxii}



Up to \$50.6 billion in re-teaching costs could be conserved and reallocated to teaching new information.^{xxiii}



With a decrease in the summer slide and improved health outcomes, more than 81,600 children would graduate from school annually.^{xxiv}



With increased food security, there would potentially be 22,800 less children hospitalized annually.^{xxv}

It is difficult to predict what these numbers would be on a local level. However, it is clear that summer meal programs have significant positive economic, health, and educational impacts. This is why Second Harvest Food Bank has been working for several years as part of a regional coalition aimed at expanding summer meal programs. However, Second Harvest will now take a leadership role in broadening the scope of this coalition with the ultimate goal of expanding child access to healthy summer meals. Second Harvest has also made improving community utilization of federal nutrition programs a priority in its 2016-2019 Strategic Plan. Yet in order for the Food Bank and other community organizations to progress and support summer sites in optimizing summer meal programs, it is crucial to understand why the programs are not fully optimized.

Therefore, **the purpose of this report is to explore the barriers to optimizing summer meal programs, areas of investment, and opportunities for program growth, with the end goal of increasing the number of children who access summer meals.** It is intended for the use of **Second Harvest** as well as **schools, non-profits, religious institutions, and local elected officials.** It aims to shed light on the challenges summer meal program providers face, as well as the opportunities to improve the programs' implementations.

About the Summer Meals Programs:

There are two Federal Summer Nutrition Programs: the Seamless Summer Option and the Summer Food Service Program. All federal meal programs are funded by the federal government and administered by state agencies.

- **National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option (SSO):** The Seamless Summer Option allows schools to feed children during the summer using the same rules and regulations as the NSLP during the school year. A school qualifies to administer SSO if 50 percent or more of the students in the surrounding area qualify for free and reduced-priced meals (FRPM). Many times, SSO is used to feed children who are in summer school programs. However, children from the community that are not enrolled in summer school are also allowed to go to any school administering SSO and receive free meals.
- **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP):** The Summer Food Service Program is designed for local government agencies, non-profits, camps, organizations that serve migrant children, National Youth Sports Programs, and faith-based institutions that wish to act as sponsors.^{xxvi} Sites are eligible to administer SFSP if they meet at least one of the following criteria: at least 50 percent of children in the surrounding area qualify for FRPM; at least 50% of students participating in a program individually qualify for FRPM; or, if the site serves mostly migrant children. Programs are reimbursed to serve either a maximum of two meals per day or one meal and one snack. However, if a site is registered as a camp or a migrant organization, it is reimbursed up to three meals a day.^{xxvii} Once a site is registered as eligible, all children in attendance may eat free.

There are three groups involved in summer feeding:

- **Sponsor:** The sponsor communicates with the California Department of Education (CDE), which administers the program. This is the group that CDE reimburses for the meals and that manages the meal site. Sponsors can be schools, faith-based institutions, sports teams, non-profits, camps, local government agencies, or organizations that serve migrant children.^{xxviii}
- **Site:** The meal site is the location where the children eat the meals. Sites are safe, supervised areas.
- **Vendor:** The vendor is the organization that prepares the food. This can be a school, a non-profit, or a for-profit food service agency. The food must meet United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition standards.

Types of Sites:

- **Open Sites:** A site is an “open site” if 50 percent or more of the surrounding child population receives FRPM. Any child aged 18 and under can receive meals free of charge.
- **Enrolled Sites:** A site is an “enrolled site,” also called a “closed site,” if the program only provides meals to children enrolled in the program. An enrolled site qualifies if it is located in areas where 50 percent or more of the surrounding child population receives FRMP or if 50 percent or more of the enrolled students qualify for FRMP.

Methodology

The findings and recommendations of this report are based on qualitative interviews, a 2016 evaluation “Lunch at the Library: A Community-Based Approach to Addressing Food Insecurity” conducted by the Pediatric Advocacy Program at Stanford School of Medicine, and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The qualitative interviews collected information from individuals who administer summer meal programs. “Lunch at the Library” used qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate lunch in the library programs in San Jose and San Mateo County. The SWOT analysis gathered information from librarians and community-based organization leaders who oversaw summer meal programs in summer 2016. These data are presented together to produce an in-depth portrait of the summer meal programs from the perspective of the people who administer them on a community level.

We use the “she” pronoun to refer to all respondents, regardless of gender, to maintain confidentiality.

Interviews:

This report provides an analysis of qualitative information collected from individuals involved in the administration of summer meal programs. This is an exploratory study that used face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data from 22 individuals representing 19 groups. This interview style allowed us to gain detailed insight into the barriers to growth, opportunities for expansion, and areas of investment for summer meal programs from the people who oversee their operation (see Appendix A).

Criteria for Selection: We selected respondents using five-year trending data from the California Department of Education that shows the number of summer meals served each month of each year that SSO and SFSP were in operation from 2012 to 2015. From this data, we selected sponsors who had experienced either substantial increases or decreases in program participation between 2012 and 2015. We also chose sponsors who had multiple sites in operation and therefore large reaches into their communities. In addition, we identified sponsors by geographic location to ensure that perspectives from both Santa Clara and San Mateo counties were both represented. Four main groups were interviewed:

- Nutrition Services Directors
- Kitchen Staff
- Librarians
- Community Based Organization Leaders

Recruitment: We recruited participants via email and telephone. They were given an explanation of the project and why they had been selected for participation. Several individuals that were originally selected for participation did not reply to emails and phone calls. Interviews took place between November 2016 and January 2017.

“Lunch at the Library: A Community Based Approach to Addressing Food Insecurity:”

“Lunch at the Library: A Community Based Approach to Addressing Food Insecurity” is an evaluation by the Pediatric Advocacy Program at Stanford School of Medicine of the summer 2016 lunch in the library programs in the City of San Jose and San Mateo County. The report evaluates food security amongst participants, explores the barriers to accessing community food resources, and shares participant perspectives on the summer meal program in the library.^{xxix}

SWOT Analysis:

Second Harvest convened librarians and community-based organization leaders from both San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties to conduct a SWOT analysis. Facilitators from the YMCA, Second Harvest, and the Pediatric Advocacy Program at Stanford School of Medicine encouraged participants to describe what they believed to be the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the summer meal programs. After the participants contributed their input, there was an open discussion of each category (see Appendix B).



Findings

1. Food:

Schools: At times, nutrition directors struggle with equipment and labor constraints to make the food both healthy and kid-friendly while staying within budget. In interviews, directors reported that food preparation spaces vary drastically: Some kitchens are fully equipped to cook all meals from scratch while others are equipped to make “fast scratch” meals. Fast scratch is a combination of processed food, such as a premade, frozen chicken patty, paired with made-from-scratch items, such as fresh buns. Other food preparation spaces only have heating capacities, so all of this food arrives prepackaged, precooked, and frozen.

Similarly, directors reported that their labor capacities vary school to school. While the scratch kitchens have workers who know how to cook, warming kitchens do not need or have staff with the same skill sets. Because the capacity of each kitchen is different, nutrition directors have different abilities to alter food to meet children’s preferences. Generally, directors with scratch and fast scratch kitchens are more equipped to adapt their food to the students’ likings and can offer a wider variety of new options.

In addition, nutrition directors reported altering the food they prepare as a result of limited staff and financial resources. For example, respondents repeated many times that the children prefer hot meals. While most sites offer choices between hot entrees and cold, one site opted to serve exclusively cold food because a cold meal can be offered again the following day if it is not eaten and is therefore lower risk and cheaper for vendors. Another director reported serving food that was easier to eat without utensils because the serving site did not have seating for the children while another director noted that she typically prepared more processed food over the summer than in the school year due to labor shortages.

Libraries: Librarians reported that their children and families like the food that they purchase from a for-profit food service company. During the SWOT analysis, librarians noted that the food they served was one of their strengths: they know the food is healthy, the children like it, and they were able to offer a nice variety. The “Lunch at the Library” study found that parents liked and trusted the food.^{xxx} This food service company has nutrition standards that exceed USDA and Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act requirements and only offers food with no artificial flavors, colors, preservatives, or high fructose corn syrup.

Librarians noted in interviews that it could be difficult for them to ensure that program participants follow USDA guidelines, such as eating all of the food onsite. They also reported struggling with extra food waste due to strict health department guidelines.

Best Practices:

- Scratch kitchens and fast scratch kitchens allow for the most flexibility in meeting students’ preferences while also satisfying nutrition standards.
- Purchasing USDA commodity meats saves money and allows directors to allocate more resources to purchase other high quality ingredients.

- Maintaining education gardens and purchasing local produce exposes children to new foods and serves as an educational opportunity to teach children about nutrition.
- Food surveys give directors clear feedback about what the children do and do not like about the food. Directors can apply findings from surveys conducted during the school year to summer meal programs to adapt their menus and recipes.
- Nutrition guidelines that exceed USDA standards are trusted by parents and children alike and provide children with healthier meals.

2. Families:

Schools: Many nutrition directors stated that they are put in a difficult situation when parents accompany community children during mealtime. While sites are allowed to feed all children for free, they are not permitted to give adult guardians food unless they pay for it. The price of a parent meal varies: one school reported charging parents \$1 for a meal, another reported charging \$3.25. However, some directors noted that parents cannot always afford this cost, even if it is only \$1.



Directors reported this to be a problem because parents are often hungry as well. “Parents are not allowed to eat...but we wish we could feed the whole family,” one director noted. Directors also stated that they hate explaining to the children that their parents are not allowed to eat. One director lamented, “we just want to feed everyone in the community.”

Libraries: At the targeted libraries interviewed, Second Harvest paid for adults’ meals. The librarians reported this as a “Strength” in the SWOT analysis because it keeps families together and fostered community. In addition, “Lunch at the Library” reported that parents enjoyed eating with their children and felt like mealtime “strengthened family bonds.”^{xxxi}

Best Practices:

- External sources of funding pay for parent meals, which allows families to stay together and bond during mealtime.
- More parents are able to participate in mealtime at schools when directors charge as low as possible for parent meals.

3. Programming

Schools and Community-Based Organizations: The most successful meal programs offer programming in addition to the food. The impact of programming is so significant on meal participation numbers that many nutrition directors do not sponsor meal sites unless there is an existing “captive audience” of children.

The majority of attendance at summer meal programs is from students attending summer school, known as Extended School Year (ESY). However, schools also host coding, literacy, and dance camps during the summer months. Children who were not enrolled in ESY and came just for a meal, known as community children, were not offered any additional programming. Directors believe that lack of programming for community children deters people from attending mealtime. When ESY ends, program participation plummets, and many nutrition departments close their doors until school begins again. Sometimes, organizations that summer programming such as Boys and Girls Clubs or the YMCA walk children to near-by open school sites so that children can participate in meal time.

Libraries: Programming was also very important for meal attendance at libraries. One librarian explained: “Many people stay in the library as long as there is a program. You need more than just lunch. There is a big difference [in attendance] when there is more programming.” Librarians also intentionally scheduled programming around mealtime to draw in more people. In the SWOT analysis, librarians noted that their ability to combine library programs with meal programs maximized attendance. Several libraries had programs that included adult family members in addition to children, which was also listed as a strength in the SWOT analysis.

Best Practices:

- Including all children and their parents during mealtime programming increases attendance. This way, children receive a free, healthy meal and free educational enrichment. These two services work in tandem to attract community children in high numbers and reduce the summer slide.

4. Collaboration:

Schools and Community-Based Organizations: Some nutrition directors provide meals for community-based organizations that host children over the summer including the Parks and Recreation Department, the YMCA, and the Boys and Girls Club, faith-based organizations, and daycares. However it can be difficult for schools to do this because the rules delineating the roles of sponsor, site, and vendor can be complicated. Sometimes these rules prevent directors from serving as sponsors and vendors to community organizations. In other cases, these organizations walk children to nearby schools for lunchtime, which is generally easier for everyone because the community based organizations do not have to act as sites or sponsors and the schools do not have to manage extra paperwork. The community-based organizations simply take advantage of local open sites.

Libraries: The majority of librarians stated that near-by organizations bring children to the library to eat for lunch in the summer.

Best Practices:

- Collaboration between schools, libraries, and community-based organizations increases the number of sites children can attend. This can be especially beneficial for families who face transportation problems.
- When schools, libraries, and community-based organizations identify their resources early in the year (January and February), it is easier for them to align their goals and work together during the summer.

- The City of New York collaborated with Share our Strength’s No Kid Hungry Campaign and the Laurie M. Tish Illumination Fund coordinated to serve over 8.1 summer meals. Notably, this effort included mobile feeding trucks which alone fed over 500,000 children in one summer.^{xxxii} Public-private partnerships are crucial to expanding the number of children reached by the summer meal programs.

5. Promotion/Outreach:

Schools and Community-Based Organizations: Nutrition directors use a combination of flyers, banners, “robo-calls,” and social media to promote the summer meal programs. Directors believed that word of mouth is the most powerful tool in spreading the word about summer meals. However, directors know that their advertising is not reaching all families. One director observed: “Nothing has worked well to get the community children to come and eat.” Another stated: “It is difficult to reach the children. We don’t really know where they are over the summer.” Most nutrition directors simply do not feel that they have the financial or labor resources to fully promote the programs in their communities. Nutrition directors and community-based organization leaders generally believed that more time and money would improve marketing and also noted that there was a need for collaboration amongst all summer meal providers to have a truly successful promotion campaign.



Libraries: Libraries generally have flyers and banners, and publicize the summer meal programs in newsletters. However, librarians also felt that they were underperforming on marketing due to labor and financial restrictions. Like the nutrition directors, librarians also believed that word of mouth was their strongest form of advertising. In the SWOT analysis, they cited “getting the word out” as a potential threat to the program.

Best Practices:

- Radio ads, newspaper ads, social media, and robo-texting are all effective.
- Serving food samples a week before the program begins is a good way to remind the community about the meals.
- Coordinated marketing campaigns involving local government, schools, libraries, anti-hunger advocacy organizations, and community-based organizations are highly effective. This type of coordination allows for standardization in messaging as well as large-scale campaigns. Notably, New York City pioneered a postcard mailing campaign that disseminated over 600,000 cards, posters, and other materials to families.^{xxxiii}

6. Staffing:

Schools: In general, nutrition directors reported that their employees like the summer meal programs. Many of the cafeteria workers are close with the families and know that the children need food. The programs also provide an opportunity for staff to make extra money over the summer. Similarly, community-based organization staff like the programs because the children are better behaved when they are well fed.

However, it can be difficult for nutrition directors to find sufficient staff over the summer because the shifts are short and the schedules are not consistent. For example, one school was only able to offer staff three hours of work a day. In addition, summer positions in the kitchen are considered entry-level positions and pay less than the year-round contracts.

Multiple directors mentioned that it has been a challenge to find any staff at all because workers are being forced out of the Bay Area due to high cost of living. The decrease in available workers, coupled with decreasing enrollment in low-income schools, whose students are also being squeezed out of the area, makes it very difficult to run a financially viable program. This is because low-income student populations are declining, resulting in lower participation in meal programs and thus lower reimbursements for the schools. Lower reimbursements makes it difficult for nutrition directors to pay staff, which, they noted, has resulted in a decrease in hours they can offer employees during the summer months. It is also a challenge to find sufficient custodial staff and supervision during the summer because USDA guidelines limit where schools spend reimbursement funds.

Libraries:

Librarians reported in interviews that most staff see the benefit of the summer meal programs and the need for summer feeding in the community and are therefore willing to do a program that is outside the typical scope of their work. They like interacting with the families and the program gives them a break from their daily routine. However, in the SWOT analysis, they reported that staff shortages and limited staff time are weaknesses to the program.

Best Practices:

- Regular presentations at libraries and community-based organizations on the importance of child nutrition and the impact of summer meals improve staff buy-in.
- The earlier in the year schools tell cafeteria staff that there are available positions for summer meal programs, the easier it is to fill vacancies.
- Using volunteers, parents, youth empowerment, and employment programs are creative solutions that help solve staffing shortages.

7. Duration and Capacity of Program:

School: Nutrition directors reported a variety of program schedules. Some programs begin the Monday after school ends and run until school begins again in August. However, most meal programs only last as long as their summer programming, which is usually between 4 to 6 weeks. This means that there are several weeks during the summer when children do not have any options to receive free meals. There are a few meal programs that remain open after programming has ended, but directors reported that participation drops dramatically and it is difficult to keep the program open.

At many schools, the meals are served in two sessions: The first thirty minutes are open to children enrolled in the programming and the second thirty minutes are open to community children.

Some sites have breakfast and lunch, others just serve lunch. This is largely dependent on the duration of the programming. Several directors were interested in adding breakfast as a second meal, but were unsure how to incorporate it into programming schedules. They stated that breakfast would only be successful if it was held after programming began.

Schools do not serve meals on the weekends because labor is too expensive and there is no programming to provide captive audiences. Directors know that they will not have sufficient participation if the meals are not paired with programming.

Librarians: The Librarians are mindful of school calendars and do not schedule programming or meals that conflict with school events, such as open house. Library schedules vary, but they generally host summer meal programs for longer durations than schools because they control their own programming schedules. It can be difficult for libraries to serve multiple meals due to limited staff. Some libraries serve breakfast on weekends, but have less staff on Saturdays.

Best Practices:

- At schools, it is most effective to serve breakfast after morning programming has begun. This way, children do not have to arrive early to receive two meals.
- Using volunteers on weekends can help libraries serve weekend meals.

8. Space/Meal Environment

Schools and Community-Based Organizations: Most schools serve summer meals in their cafeterias. If the cafeterias are not available, children eat outdoors in a covered area. At some sites, the students did not have seating, which was uncomfortable for the children.

Librarians: Different libraries have different space limitations. In the SWOT analysis, some librarians identified “open space for families to hang-out” as a strength of the meal programs. However, others described space limitations as a program weakness. It was reported that meal preparation can be difficult if it is done in break rooms.

Best Practices:

- It is best when children have seating and are able to attend a summer meal program at the school they attend during the year. In some locations investing in picnic tables with umbrellas could be highly efficacious.
- Staggered meal service ensures that all children have a place to sit and eat at libraries. If children are served in waves, those who have already eaten can give up their seating for those who have not.



Barriers to Program Optimization

After a thorough analysis of the findings, the barriers to the optimization of the summer meal programs became clear. Schools, community based organizations, and libraries face different challenges to realizing optimization. Therefore, the barriers to program optimization are divided into three groups: Schools, Libraries, and Community Based Organizations.

I. Schools:

1. It is can be challenging for nutrition directors to meet children's unique eating

preferences: The nutrition directors that reported the best responses to their food generally had more kitchen equipment at their disposal, such as central kitchens that had the capacity to make food from scratch or fast scratch. Their food service workers were also equipped to cook. These directors had more flexibility to alter recipes and generally were able to incorporate feedback from students quickly. However, not all schools have as much flexibility.

2. Trade-offs: Directors need to ensure that their program costs are covered by federal reimbursements or need to seek supplemental funding so they can pay their staff and make ends meet. Therefore, they must make trade-offs that can be counter to student preferences. For example, some directors served less-preferable cold meals instead of hot meals to save on costs or served less-perishable fruit like apples and oranges that could be used a second day despite complaints of monotony.

3. Parents not permitted to eat meals: Since parent meals are not allowable under program guidelines, it can be stressful for them when they are hungry and cannot receive food. Many directors want to feed hungry parents but are not able to do so. While some schools offer parent meals at a reduced price, sometimes even the reduced price is unaffordable. The program can be a difficult sell for parents to take the time, especially if they are working, to bring their children to a short, thirty-minute meal that they cannot eat themselves.

4. Lack of programming available to the community: Nutrition directors universally reported that the most significant factor in meal participation was programming. For example, when summer school or other summer programs end, meal participation numbers plummet. For this reason, most schools end meal service with the programming. Therefore, there are several weeks in the summer where children cannot access free meals.

- Lack of programming for community children (children not enrolled in summer school or other programs) limits participation. If there is no programming available for these children, they are less likely to come.
- Schools do not provide meals during the weekend because there is no accompanying programming. They know that they will not have sufficient participation to cover the cost of meal service and therefore do not operate on Saturday and Sunday. Therefore, there are two days a week where children cannot access free meals.
- There are schools in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties that are eligible to host summer meal programs but do not because they do not have summer school or other programming. This limits the number of sites serving meals.

5. Lack of assistance in program promotion: Nutrition Service Divisions (NSD) need assistance to improve collaboration with other stakeholders in the community to expand promotion.

6. Uncertainty about where children are in the summer months: Some nutrition directors do not know where the community children go or what they do over the summer. They are aware that they are not reaching the children but it is difficult for them to develop a marketing strategy because they have little information on the childrens' whereabouts.

7. The rules make it difficult to collaborate: Many school nutrition programs act as a sponsor, vendor, or both for community-based organizations, libraries, or faith based institutions. Schools already have staff dedicated to managing records, which makes them ideal candidates to serve as sponsors for other organizations. However, the guidelines dictating the relationship between sponsor, vendor, and site can be confusing and deter groups from entering into agreements. This results in missed opportunities for schools to feed community children.

8. Declining enrollment as a result of high cost of living: Many nutrition directors described declining enrollment as a threat to their programs. The high cost of living is squeezing low-income families out of the Bay Area into the Central Valley. School funding is declining with enrollment, and the numbers of children who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch is the first to drop. For these same reasons, available staff is also declining. People are relocating to cheaper areas and some are commuting several hours to work in the Bay Area. Decreases in participation in the NSLP and summer meal programs are leading to lower reimbursement rates, which is in turn harming staff because nutrition directors cannot offer as many hours to their employees.

- Because the free and reduced-priced eligible populations are decreasing, schools with low income students are no longer qualifying for summer meal programs, even if they still have a lot of children who fall victim to hunger over the summer. If schools no longer meet the 50 percent threshold of students who qualify for FRPM, they are no longer eligible to serve summer meals to other needy students.

10. The program environment is not always welcoming for community children: Each school varies, but some schools do not have in-door seating for children during the summer, which is not welcoming to community children. In addition, schools sometimes forget to open gates for the community families during mealtime, thus excluding them from the program entirely.

11. Stigma: Students face stigma for participating in the summer meal programs, especially if they are participating in a program at a school that they do not attend. For example, sometimes the closest meal program for an elementary student may be at a nearby high school, or vice versa.

12. Transportation: Not all eligible sites operate. Therefore, families may have to go a long distance to reach a program, which can be a serious deterrent especially if families do not have cars and have to walk with multiple children.

II. Libraries:

1. Volunteers: It can be challenging for librarians to find sufficient volunteers to assist with mealtime.

2. Space Constraints: Libraries sometimes do not have necessary equipment in the correct places, such as sinks in community rooms where mealtime is usually held. It can also be difficult to serve so many children in libraries with limited seating.

3. Transportation: Not all libraries that qualify to host summer feeding do so. Therefore, some families are forced to travel farther for meals than they would if all eligible libraries hosted the program. The distance can deter families from going at all. This is an especially critical problem because libraries are uniquely positioned to provide programming, resources, and meals for the whole family.

III. Community-Based Organizations:

1. Lack of Awareness: There are a number of community-based organizations in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties that host summer programming for children. They have the necessary “captive audiences” and may be near schools, but are not participating in SSO programs. In other cases, there are CBOs that are near libraries or clusters of other CBOs and faith based organizations that have enough children to run successful meal programs but do not.



Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is needed to understand why the number of children reached by summer meal programs is low. Nutrition directors, librarians, and community-based organization leaders know some of the impediments to program participation, but a survey of eligible families, including those who participate and those who do not, would reveal the barriers that prevent program optimization. Further research is also needed to understand how low-income families meet their children's nutritional needs in the summer if they are not using the summer meal programs.

Recommendations for Addressing Barriers

Recommendations for Addressing Barriers:

In order to ensure that more children have access to food during the summer, it is crucial that all parties involved in FSNPs work together to overcome the barriers to program optimization. This not only includes local agencies such as Second Harvest, but also the local, state, and federal governments.

I. Federal Government (USDA):

1. Streamline the administration of the summer meal programs. Even when organizations are well-trained and adequately staffed to administer the summer meal programs, program administration can take valuable time away from staff who could be focusing on other enrichment activities. If the program were administered electronically through an app or a website, operation could be more efficient.

2. Expand Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC). Summer meal programs are a critically important for children over the summer. However, there are certain barriers that some families cannot overcome due to the structure of the programs. For example, some children are not able to participate in the summer meal programs due to parent work schedules, long distances, safety concerns, or limited transportation options.^{xxxiv}

Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC) is an excellent solution for children who face insurmountable barriers to accessing FSNPs. SEBTC provides food assistance to children who qualify for FRPM using the same concept as an EBT card. This provides families with more resources to spend on healthy, nutritious food.^{xxxv} SEBTC was first piloted in 2011 and has been expanding ever since but remains a demonstration project only available in some areas.^{xxxvi} The pilot programs have been very successful in lowering the most severe forms of food insecurity among children and have additionally “enabled families to eat significantly more fruits and vegetables and whole grains.”^{xxxvii} In addition, Summer EBT for Children reduces strain on emergency food systems.^{xxxviii} Nationally available SEBTC would work in tandem with summer meal programs to reduce childhood food insecurity and should be expanded from a demonstration project to a full program.

II. State Government:

1. Prepare to Pilot Summer EBT for Children. California should try to pilot SEBTC.

2. The California Department of Education (CDE) can take a more active role in regional facilitation. CDE can facilitate sharing of best practices among summer meal program administrators and can help prioritize the use of administrative funds from the USDA to do so. More uniform training on the administration of the programs and the relationship between sponsors, vendors, and sites will enable sponsors to feed at more sites, especially schools.

In addition, CDE can help coordinate a marketing campaign between community-based organizations, schools, and libraries. Finally, CDE can encourage sites that are area eligible but not serving meals to participate.

3. Streamline the administration of FSNPs. CDE could explore options to streamline the administration process and can especially focus on moving the process online.

4. Feeding America’s State Legislature Summer Advocacy Checklist:^{xxxix}

- Raise awareness about the importance of summer meal programs by visiting programs during the summer months. Celebrate the beginning of summer by attending kick off events at schools, libraries, and community-based organizations. Promote summer meals hotlines and texting numbers on council members’ websites. Record PSAs and robo-calls. Ensure summer meal information is on state government websites. Use social media to promote summer meal programs.
- Sponsor legislation that encourages all eligible sites for summer to participate. Require participation in high need areas. Make changes that enhance administrative efficiencies. Allocate funding to sponsor programming available to all community children, not just those enrolled in summer school. Allocate funding to support implementing summer meal programs at new and existing sites.
- Set goals for state summer meal program participation rates. Convene private and public stakeholders to develop and implement a plan for expansion. Require updates on progress to the legislature.
- Work with the community to establish more summer sites. Collaborate with faith and community leaders, schools, and local officials. Provide a list of summer meal programs and identify underserved areas.

III. Local Government:

1. Both San Mateo and Santa Clara County governments can participate in a promotion campaign. It is difficult for schools, libraries, and community-based organizations to market the programs due to time and budget constraints. The county governments have broad reach, so they have an excellent opportunity to spread the word to more people. They can also promote the summer meals texting hotline and explore creative marketing ideas such as post card campaigns.

2. Government agencies within San Mateo and Santa Clara county governments can serve as sponsors. There are additional opportunities to act as sponsors and sites to serve meals. There are many organizations that could serve as vendors, such as for-profit food service companies and schools, and there are many areas that host children over the summer that do not have feeding, especially-low income housing complexes.

3. Make more grant money available for summer meals. Programs do not always have the necessary resources to pay for marketing, supervision, or custodial services. If and when possible, local governments can make more grant money available for the summer meal programs. Grants can be issued specifically to cover the cost of parent meals, which would allow families to eat meals together, a clear best practice.

Feeding America's Mayor's Summer Advocacy Checklist:^{x1}

- Participate in collaborative planning for the summer with Second Harvest, schools, community-based organizations, and libraries to set a goal for the number of meals served and prioritize expanding access to the summer meal program.
- Work with city agencies to increase the number of government sponsors, especially in high need areas.
- Work with government workforce development programs to authorize volunteer time or career development hours to support the summer meal sites.
- Meet with school principals or the district superintendent encouraging schools to remain open during the summer to serve meals to children and to promote summer meal sites to families.
- Participate in marketing outreach of the programs. Celebrate the beginning of summer at kick-off event at a library serving meals. Challenge city council members to do the same. Incorporate summer meals into literacy or grade-level reading campaigns. Promote free national texting service through PSAs, robo-calls to families, social media, city government websites, inserts with utility bills, and the city services hotline.
- Work with Valley Transit Authority (VTA) to provide free rides for kids to summer meal sites and leverage federal transportation funding to support efforts to connect children with summer meal sites.

IV. Corporations, Foundations and Hunger Advocates

1. Make financial investments to support and expand summer meals. Programs do not always have the necessary resources to pay for marketing, banners, staffing, seating, internships, transport vans, supplies, or small equipment. Foundations can make more grant money available for the summer meal programs. Grants can be issued specifically to cover the cost of parent meals, which would allow families to eat meals together, a clear best practice.

2. Facilitate collaborative planning. Collaboration is an essential component to optimizing summer meal programs. Hunger advocates can identify gaps in summer feeding and connect summer meal stakeholders who can offer solutions. Early planning is crucial for the success of these programs.

3. Identify area eligible organizations and conduct education and outreach campaign. There are many sites in Second Harvest's service area that have captive audiences of children over the summer. If these sites are area eligible or have 50 percent or more of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, then they can host the SFSP. Hunger advocates have an opportunity to increase the number of sponsors in the community and also the number of sites with whom existing vendors can collaborate.

4. Organize a list of community organizations that host children during the summer that can be given to schools looking to expand feeding. If existing sponsors can develop a better understanding of where children go over the summer, then they can conduct their marketing more efficiently and effectively. They can also make their own partnerships.

5. Provide more outreach for families at summer sites: Parent hunger is a problem. Hunger advocates can have a stronger presence at schools, CBOs, and libraries conducting outreach to needy families. They can provide information on CalFresh, food pantries, food distribution schedules, and other public benefits to ensure that families are supported and healthy.

6. Educate libraries and CBOs on the benefits of FSNPs. Librarians reported that busy staff were more likely to support hosting summer meal programs when they knew about the nutritional and educational benefits of children having access to healthy, consistent food over the summer. To encourage expansion of the summer meal programs, advocates can make sure that the benefits of summer meals are loud and clear to existing and potential program administrators.

V. Office of Education and School Districts:

1. Utilize community liaisons to communicate with parents about summer feeding programs at schools and other sites. Community liaisons are an underutilized marketing tool for summer feeding. Not only can community liaisons promote summer meal programs at the schools they represent, they can also present parents with information about all meal programs in the area including ones at community-based organizations and libraries. Community liaisons interact with families on a daily basis, so their endorsement of summer meal programs would go a long way.

2. Strengthen communication between nutrition directors and those directing summer programming: Many schools only serve one meal a day. Sometimes, the programming is too short and a second meal is not possible. However, this is not always the case and there is opportunity for breakfast if it is served in the morning after programming has begun. It was reported by nutrition directors that serving breakfast before the programming begins will yield low participation. Therefore, nutrition directors can coordinate with the educators who control the summer programming to implement breakfast in the classroom or grab-and-go breakfast so that children can have two meals. Not only will this be good for the student's educational attainment and nutritional needs, it will provide the nutrition programs with additional reimbursements.

3. Incorporate children into menu design process. To improve program participation and create tastier food, schools can make an effort to incorporate children into the menu design process. One school conducted a survey twice a year to determine student preferences. The NSD that oversaw the survey process reported positive feedback from her students about the food. NSDs can also consider hosting taste tests with children before they decide upon a menu to ensure that they enjoy the food.

4. Offer professional development opportunities for staff. Schools can offer more professional development opportunities for their lunchroom staff as a first step in making food more appealing to children. For example, there are cheap learning tools that help make the presentation of food more appealing, such as the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement which teaches staff how to make small changes in the presentation of food to make healthier choices more appealing to students.^{xii} In addition, the Dairy Council of California also offers professional development and has free nutrition education materials.^{xiii}

5. Make mealtime more inviting for parents. While parents are not allowed to eat meals for free under summer nutrition programs, they should still feel welcome to bring their children. If a parent does not feel comfortable, they simply will not bring their children. Schools can

encourage parents to attend by offering parents a piece of fruit like an orange if they are hungry themselves. In addition, schools can review USDA guidelines, and avoid practices like separating parents from their children during mealtime.

6. Pilot mobile feeding. Due to transportation restrictions, some children will not be able to attend a summer meal program. Schools can pilot mobile feeding options and collaborate with institutions that already have captive audiences over the summer, such as public parks.



7. District leaders can take up a more active role in summer meal programs. District leaders should support principals and nutrition directors in promoting the summer meal programs. They can help ensure that schools are welcoming environments for community children and also help coordinate the promotion of the programs on a broader level.

8. Look for inexpensive or no cost inclusive programming. Schools can make meal time more welcoming for community children by offering programming around or during meal time. Even something as simple as story time could suffice for young children. In addition, the Dairy Council of California offers free nutrition education and free programming.^{xliiii} More inclusive programming will attract more children.

9. Vend to church camps and other local organizations. The more schools can vend to other organizations, the more children will be able to participate in summer meal programs.

10. Participate in collaborative planning. Schools are a crucial component in collaborative planning, especially because they can vend to faith-based organizations and community-based organizations. It is essential that all stakeholders participate in collaborative planning for each summer to expand the reach of summer meal programs.

11. Develop creative business models. With decreasing enrollment, some nutrition directors have observed decreased participation in summer meal programs. It is crucial that these summer meal programs are preserved. Therefore, schools can develop other sources of revenue, such as catering or expanding to universal breakfast during the school year, to ensure the future of summer programs. In addition, while the Community Eligibility Provision does not affect the eligibility of summer sites, it could give participating schools extra revenue and is a good option to feed more children.

12. Make summer meals a priority in the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). Schools can prioritize summer meal programs when they develop their Local Control Accountability Plans. Extra funds for summer can go to marketing, extra staffing, summer programming, and picnic tables and umbrellas for schools that do not have seating.

VI. Libraries:

1. Use volunteers to staff library summer feeding programs. Libraries can seek consistent volunteers to help support their summer programs. Reliable volunteers could be found through colleges or work programs in the area, such as San Jose Works.

2. Conduct more outreach to schools. Libraries are ideal sites for summer meal programs because they offer programming for community children and, with the support of Second Harvest, also offer meals to parents. They have an opportunity to reach more students if they focus their outreach on schools and nearby CBOs that serve low-income families.

3. Utilize the “share table” to minimize waste. The USDA allows the use of a “share table,” a table where children can place whole food and beverage items they choose not to eat as long as the food and beverage standards are still in compliance with local and state health guidelines.^{xliv} If the current and state guidelines are too restrictive, then the libraries can work with the health department to reach a solution that produces less waste.

4. Participate in collaborative planning. Libraries are especially important stakeholders in summer meal programs because they serve meals over the entire summer and offer programming to community children and families. It is essential that all stakeholders participate in collaborative planning for each summer to expand the reach of summer meal programs.

3. Participate in training opportunities. Organizations, such as the California Summer Meal Coalition, offer trainings and information on summer meal programs. If and when possible, libraries can participate.

VII. Community Based Organizations:

1. Community based organizations not involved in summer feeding can become sponsors.

There are still areas in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties that are area eligible but do not offer any summer meal programs. We know that transportation is a serious problem facing the community that will not be solved in the short term. Therefore, it is best to expand the number of sites in operation so as to limit commutes to programs.

2. Participate in collaborative planning. CBOs are a crucial component in collaborative planning. It is essential that all stakeholders participate in collaborative planning for each summer to expand the reach of summer meal programs.

3. Participate in training opportunities. Organizations, such as the California Summer Meal Coalition, offer trainings and information on summer meal programs. If and when possible, community based organizations can participate.

4. Universities and colleges can create volunteer and internship programs to get students involved in summer meal programs. There are several colleges and universities in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Colleges can work with schools, hunger advocates, libraries, and community-based organizations to create programs that help students gain volunteer and work experience while they help administer summer meal programs.

Additional Resources

The California Summer Meal Coalition: <http://www.ca-ilg.org/california-summer-meal-coalition>

The California Summer Meal Coalition (CSMC) is an initiative of the Institute for Local Government aimed at combating food insecurity and childhood obesity by increasing access to summer meal programs. CSMC collaborates with local and state leaders in child nutrition and health as well as local government, the California Department of Education, and the California Department of Public Health to promote the sharing of best practices in promoting and administering the summer meal programs. They facilitate information sharing and host annual trainings on administering the summer meal programs.

CSMC provides:

- Webinars
- Educational Events
- Sample Menus
- Toolkits on operations, outreach, and nutrition education

California Food Policy Advocates: <http://cfpa.net/summer-nutrition>

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.^{xiv} CFPA has a yearly legislative agenda promoting anti-hunger legislation, conducts hunger-related research, gathers hunger-related data, and has several issue-specific campaigns that promote the optimization of federal nutrition programs.

Summer nutrition is a focus area of CFPA. Its website includes a report analyzing summer meal participation in California for 2015, with program data broken down by county, and suggestions for federal, state, and local actions.

CFPA provides:

- Annual reports on the status of the summer meal programs
- Research, case studies, and info-graphics
- Legislation tracking and policy updates
- Summer meal program grant information

Food Research and Action Center: <http://frac.org/programs/summer-nutrition-programs>

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), is a national anti-hunger organization that conducts research on hunger, provides technical assistance to anti-hunger advocates and organizations, and promotes stronger local, state, and federal policies that reduce hunger, undernutrition, and obesity.^{xlvi}

FRAC has a program dedicated specifically to the summer meal programs. It conducts regular webinars including program administrators and experts from all over the country in addition to producing periodic reports monitoring and evaluating the function of the summer meal programs. FRAC also offers an online resource library and several tool kits on how to improve the implementation of the summer meal programs, with topics such as outreach, best practices, logistics, and model summer menus.

FRAC provides:

- Data points and research
- Information on how the programs function
- Summer Food Mapper that allows organizations to see if they are “area-eligible”
- News on the summer meal programs
- Best practices
- Summer meal program grant information
- Legislation tracking and policy updates
- Educational webinars

California Department of Education: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sf/sfspinfo.asp>

- Technical assistance, guidance, and resources
- Outreach resources
- Reimbursement information
- Program information and eligibility requirements

No Kid Hungry, Share our Strength: <https://www.nokidhungry.org/>

Share our Strength’s No Kid Hungry campaign aims to end hunger by connecting children to existing nutrition programs, such as the federal children’s nutrition programs, including the summer meal programs.^{xlvii}

No Kid Hungry develops private-public partnerships, including local elected officials, corporate and community leaders, educators, and other key stakeholders in communities to connect children to food.^{xlviii}

No Kid Hungry provides:

- Technical assistance, guidance, and resources
- Educational materials on the importance of federal nutrition programs
- Outreach resources to local government officials
- State-by-State Data
- Summer Meals News

US Department of Agriculture: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program>

- Program eligibility requirements and guidelines
- Information about reimbursement
- Sample summer meal newsletters
- Grant information
- Legislation and policy updates
- Best practices
- Summer meals toolkit
- Webinars and videos
- Capacity builder mapping tools and area eligibility mapping tool

Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties:
<http://www.shfb.org/>

- Research
- Technical Assistance

Grants

Fuel Up to Play 60: https://www.fueluptoplay60.com/funding/eligibility-and-guidelines#tab_use-of-funds-for-fuel-up-to-play-60

Grant Name: Fuel Up to Play 60

Description: Participating schools must be enrolled in Fuel Up to Play 60 and must participate in the NSLP. The funds may be used to support a range of activities and programming, but may not be used to subsidize food or the cost of meals to students in the meal programs. This grant could be a good opportunity to supplement or create programming to draw more children to summer meal programs. This grant is available every year.

Amount: \$300-\$4,000/year

Chef Ann Foundation: <http://www.chefannfoundation.org/get-involved/our-grants>

Grant Name: Periodically makes grants available, it is best to check their website or sign up for e-mail newsletters.

Description: The Chef Ann Foundation aims to provide tools to help schools serve children healthy and scratch-cooked meals with fresh, whole food. Many of their grants include awards for equipment and capacity expansion.

Amount: Awards vary from \$2,500-\$192,000, depending on the project and if the school or the school district applies for the funds.

USDA: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-grant-program>

Grant Name: Farm to School Grant Program. However, the USDA may offer other grants more specific to summer feeding, so it is best to check their website periodically or sign up for e-mail newsletters.

Description: The USDA annually awards up to \$5 million total in grants for training, supporting operations, planning, purchasing equipment, developing school gardens, developing partnerships, and implementing farm to school programs. The deadline for applications is each December.

Amount:

- Implementation grant awards range from \$65,000-\$100,000
- Planning grant awards range from \$20,000-\$45,000
- Support Service grant awards range from \$65,000-\$100,000
- Training grant awards range from \$15,000-\$50,000

California Department of Education (CDE): <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/profile.asp?id=3980>

Grant Name: CDE periodically offers grants. It is best to periodically check their website or sign up for e-mail newsletters.

Description: The USDA offers a variety of grants, some of which are specific to summer feeding.

National League of Cities: <http://www.nlc.org/article/national-league-of-cities-announces-champs-initiative-in-three-states-to-provide-more>

Grant Name: Cities Combating Hunger through Afterschool and Summer Meal Programs (CHAMPS).

Description: In 2016, the CHAMPS grant was aimed at local governments who participated in afterschool and summer meal programs in Kansas, Alabama, and California. Plans for a 2017 grant are not guaranteed, but future awards are possible.

Amount: Up to \$40,000.

Appendix A

Summer Meal Program 2016 Provider Survey

Date: _____

Name: _____

Organization: _____

I. Food:

Total # of meals provided: _____

Do you serve: Breakfast: _____ Lunch: _____ Snack: _____ Supper: _____

Hot meals _____ Cold meals _____ Combination _____

Percentages free and reduced? School: _____ District: _____

- 1.) Tell me about the food; do your clients like it? What do you wish you could change about it?
- 2.) Are adults allowed to eat with their children?

II. Programming:

- 3.) Do you have programming in addition to the meals? If so, what is it? If not, why not?
- 4.) Does your programming include families or just the children?
- 5.) What would make your programming better or what would help you start additional programming?
- 6.) Are there organizations around your sites that have summer programming? Do you collaborate with them?
- 7.) Do you ever meet or collaborate with other summer feeding sites such as religious institutions, other schools, non-profits, and community organizations?

III. Promotion/Outreach:

- 8.) What is your marketing strategy for your summer feeding program?
____ banners ____ flyers ____ school involvement ____ radio ____ other

Describe:

- 9.) What works well for you? What has not worked well?
- 10.) Do you have a kickoff event or awareness raising activities before the summer?
- 11.) What have been challenges in marketing?

- 12.) What would help you expand the reach of your marketing?
- 13.) Do you market to other community organizations, faith communities, schools, or housing complexes?

Staffing:

- 14.) How do your staff and volunteers feel about the summer feeding program?
- 15.) What are your challenges with staffing?
- 16.) What has worked well for you with staffing?
- 17.) What would help you with your staffing and labor concerns?

IV. Capacity/Duration of Program:

- 18.) What are the dates and times of your program and how do they line up with the school year?
- 19.) (For Libraries and other non-school institutions) Do you have an interest in operating year-round? If so, what do you need to make this possible?
- 20.) Do you serve multiple meals? If not, what would you need to make this possible?
- 21.) Do you serve meals on the weekends? If not, what would you need to make this possible?
- 22.) Do you have adequate, comfortable, and inviting space to conduct your program?
- 23.) What are things about the space that you wish you could change to make meal time easier?

V. General:

- 24.) What lessons have you learned, both good and bad?
- 25.) If you could make one change to the program, what would it be?
- 26.) What type of outside assistance is the state giving you? (ie. administrative, informational, educational)
- 27.) Whom have you found to be particularly effective in furthering the program? (i.e. staff, administrators)
- 28.) Who else should we be talking to?
- 29.) Would you be interested in collaborating with other summer meal producers to plan for summer 2017?
- 30.) Would you be interested in participating in educational workshops on any of the following topics?
 - Grants
 - Marketing to children and families
 - Technical Assistance

Appendix B:

Summer Meal Program SWOT Analysis Library Celebration - 9/13/16

Objective: Grow the number of meals provided to children during the summer

Strengths:

Healthy food

- Revolution Foods
- Hot and cold
- Commitment to health
- Good portions and variety of food

Families like the food

Adult meals, feeding families

- Money available to feed adults

Marketing of food program has increased and results brought in more families to the program.

- STPL marketing: website, flyers, STPL bound

Programming

- Combine library programs with the meal programs to maximize attendance
- Family programming already going on during lunch hours
- Enrichment activities/ supplemental programming
- Captured audience at program

Location

- Children are already in the library
- Safe Place
- Nice big rooms for serving lunch and for families to hang-out together
- Proximity to schools
- Libraries accessible with an array of resource
- Relationship with schools and community
- LCD screens

Experienced staff

- Committed and dedicated people
- Engage/understand the community

Growth and expansion of access and resources

Share best practices from

Collective Impact: Second Harvest Food Bank, YMCA, Stanford University, Non-profit organizations, libraries

Weaknesses:

Availability to keep food warm

Locations/ Availability

- Over saturated food services in our neighborhood
- Need more space for customers to eat meals
- Transportation in SMC between locations
- Perhaps not enough space
- Lack of available feeding sites
- Need more locations to offer service
- Insecure neighborhoods

Adult meals and federal guidelines

- Fed rules: Not funding beyond 2 meals and 1 snack
- Inability to make meals “family” style
- Confusion about if it’s ok to feed adults (w/o kids) or not

Guidelines and reporting

- People can’t take food out of the room
- Restriction to eating in room turned away a lot of teens
- Reporting tedious and time consuming, saps staff motivation

Too many folks, not enough food

Limited staff time

- Lack of staffing/always changing staff
- Volunteers (need more help)

Cost

- Spent money on supplies (gloves, cleaner, trash cans, etc.)
- Lack of support for funding (staff, meals, etc.)

Overlap in services among different agencies (not talking to each other)

More engagement in room during lunch

Length of program (service times and date windows)

Busy Schedules

Program information not easily given, school district complained that they wanted to tell families before school gets out

Opportunities:

Expand opportunities outside of summer

- Year-round access to meals
- Organizations to take greater ownership of meal programs during school year

Identify new/non-traditional partnerships/funders

- Promote the program to local affordable housing
- Promote the program to schools
- New partners to reach more kids
- Collaboration with other agencies
- Find more outside funding
- Companies/organizations sponsoring volunteers support one day

Demonstrate collective impact

- Track outcomes (data)
- Greater recognition for work
- Align goals with county or other institutions

Empowering community

- Build more awareness within the community about the programs
- Greater support from policy leaders
- Elected officials can use this program to bring attention to the need of children needing meals

Create an herb garden

Strength in numbers through a collaborative

- More library branches serving meals
- Experienced library staff can train new sites
- More sites and sponsors
- Non-profits providing meals

More Music options

Funding

- Make new investments

Ready audience to engage and be informed about library and community programs

Staffing with work experience program workers

Threats:

Federal policy changes

- 2016 election results
- Not re-authorized at federal level
- Sustainability issues due to federal funding

Public thinking hunger has been addressed

Prohibitive regulations

- Government funding and regulation challenges

Staff (more): to outreach, to serve

- No idea what our staffing will be like (levels of experienced with this program)

- Staffing was a real challenge. Ensure staffing is adequate and budget allows for added workload

- Quality and quantity of volunteers uncertain

Losing funding

- Soft funding environment
- Finding funding as the program grows

Competing with other organizations offering free meals and food

Restrictive library policies

Getting the word out (Craigslist, etc.)

Sources

- ⁱ“Nutrition and Food Insecurity Profile: San Mateo County.” California Food Policy Advocates. 10 February 2017, cfpa.net/county-profiles
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