



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Food and
Nutrition
Service

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SUBJECT: Promoting Nutrition in Summer Meals

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) were established to ensure that low-income children continue to have access to nutritious meals when school is not in session. To meet this need, sponsors and sites are encouraged to take steps toward improving the nutritional quality and appeal of summer meals served. This memorandum highlights existing policies and procedures that can assist with serving more nutritious meals that appeal to children in the SFSP and the SSO.

Procurement

Initial solicitations for food service management companies (FSMC) should specify the minimum meal pattern benchmarks that must be met, according to Program regulations. Sponsors can also create solicitations that allow bidders to go beyond those minimum requirements in order to ensure more nutritious and higher quality foods, with broad appeal to participants throughout the summer, will be provided.

Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foods

SFSP sponsors may be eligible to receive USDA Foods for use in summer meals either directly from the State distributing agency or the local school food authority (SFA). USDA Foods can help stretch food budgets, meet meal pattern requirements, and meet the highest safety and nutrition standards. Fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, lean protein, including meat and poultry, and other healthy food choices are available from USDA at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd>.

Local Foods

Summer is a perfect time to incorporate the bountiful harvest of fresh fruits, vegetables, and other local foods. No matter the size of the summer meal operation, there are many options for finding and sourcing local foods. Some SFSP sponsors choose to purchase foods directly from local farmers, ranchers, and fishermen. In some areas, producers have organized into cooperatives, aggregating their products and combining their marketing efforts. These groups are more likely than a single producer to be able to fulfill large orders, deliver directly to SFSP sponsors, and to provide some minimal processing. Some, but not all, cooperative efforts to pool products are known as ‘food hubs.’

Mainline distributors and food service management companies are also able to accommodate requests for local products. In many instances, working through distributors to bring local products into summer programs can be easier than sourcing foods directly. In fact, SFSP providers are often surprised to learn that their current distributors are *already* working with local producers. Another tool for purchasing local foods, called Geographic Preference, is particularly useful in formal solicitations where respondents are ranked and scored.

For more information about purchasing local foods using the geographic preference option, please see SFSP 06-2010, *Geographic Preference for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in the Child Nutrition Programs*, November 13, 2009, at http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP_08_CACFP_05_SFSP_06-2010_os.pdf and SFSP 02-2013, *Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As – Part II*, October 9, 2012, at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP03-2013os.pdf>.

For assistance in procuring local foods, many states have personnel in their departments of agriculture or education who are available to assist. For a complete listing, please see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/state-contacts>. Additionally, county Cooperative Extension Offices, another resource, is available at <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/>.

Resources for School Sponsors

SFAs Participating in the SSO: Program regulations require that SFAs participating in the SSO serve meals meeting the new NSLP meal pattern. As a reminder, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) issued comprehensive guidance for the SSO, which grants flexibility to the grade and age group requirements and allows open and restricted open sites to make accommodations. Refer to SP 32-2013, *2013 Edition of Questions and Answers for the National School Lunch Program’s Seamless Summer Option*, March 29, 2013, at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2013/SP32-2013os.pdf>. These flexibilities increase the ability of SFAs with diverse student populations to more easily participate in SSO, while still meeting meal pattern requirements.

SFAs Participating in the SFSP: SFAs participating in the SFSP are allowed the flexibility of following the meal pattern requirements of either the school meal programs or the SFSP [7 CFR 225.16(f)(1)]. Prior approval is not required before substituting one meal pattern for the other, only notification to the State agency. This option allows SFAs to seamlessly continue implementation of NSLP meal pattern requirements year-round.

Sponsors may also benefit from the wide variety of nutrition education resources available through Team Nutrition, at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/team-nutrition>. Many of the resources in the Team Nutrition library can be used to reinforce and complement the nutrition messages taught by serving healthful foods in the SFSP.

SFSP Meal Patterns for Children Under Six and for Teens

The quantities of each food component required for the SFSP meal pattern are designed for children between the ages of 6 and 12. However, children of other ages may also be served meals at the SFSP site. The following guidance should be helpful to sponsors or site operators who are concerned that the minimum required amounts of food may not be suitable for some participating children.

Meal Patterns for Children Under Six: The regulations allow State agencies to authorize sponsors to serve food in smaller quantities than are indicated in the SFSP meal pattern to children under six years of age [7 CFR 225.16(f)(2)]. The sponsor must be able to ensure that variations in portion size are in accordance with the age levels of the children served. Sponsors wishing to serve infants under 12 months of age need additional approval from the State agency. In all of these cases, the sponsor must follow the age-appropriate meal pattern requirements under the Child and Adult Care Food Program regulations [7 CFR 226.20]. The form of the food items served should be appropriate to the children's feeding abilities so they can be easily consumed during the meal service period. For example, fruit should be cut into smaller pieces so that it is easier for younger children to eat.

Meal Patterns for Teens: The regulations also allow children ages 12 to 18 to be served larger portions than the minimum amounts of food specified in the SFSP meal pattern, based on the greater food needs of older children [7 CFR 225.16(d)]. There are no maximum limits on any of the food components in the SFSP meal pattern. To improve the nutrition of participating children, additional foods may be served [7 CFR 225.16(f)(8)]. However, additional foods purchased with Program funds must meet meal pattern requirements, in order for sponsors to receive reimbursement for the meal [SFSP 06-2012, *Serving Additional Foods in the Summer Food Service Program*, November 23, 2011, at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SFSP06-2012.pdf>].

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State agencies are reminded to distribute this information to Program operators immediately. Program operators should direct any questions regarding this memorandum to the appropriate State agency. State agency contact information is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>. State agencies should direct questions to the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cynthia Long
Director
Child Nutrition Division