

How to Become a Nebraska Summer Meals Sponsor



When school is out for summer, many kids across Nebraska go without consistent meals. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is the connecting point for these kids to get free meals they need.

Why are summer meals important to our community?

During the school year, kids with low incomes can get free or reduced-price breakfast and/or lunch at their school. However, when summer comes, the added pressure of providing meals for kids falls on caregivers who may have trouble with the additional expense (estimated at \$300 per child per month). In short, kids have a harder time getting consistent meals when school is out. Lack of food can lead to hunger, malnutrition, problem behavior, absences from school, and more. Making sure kids get the food they need should be a priority for every community in our state.

What is the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)?

The SFSP is a federal child nutrition program that feeds thousands of children across Nebraska who may be without consistent meals during the summer. The SFSP offers all kids age one to 18 a free breakfast and/or lunch in a high-needs location that is supervised, safe, and welcoming. SFSP sponsors take on the task of running sites in their communities that provide meals for kids.

Who can be an SFSP sponsor?

The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service administers the SFSP through oversight, publishing regulations and setting payment rates. Nebraska's SFSP is administered by the Nebraska Department of Education. Locally, sponsors run individual sites where food is served. This is where you come in! Approved sponsors may be:

- Public or private nonprofit schools
- Public or private nonprofit universities or colleges
- Camps
- Local, municipal, county, tribal, or state governments (like libraries)
- Faith-based and other non profit organizations
- Others

Why become an SFSP sponsor?

SFSP sponsors get children the nutritious meals they need when school is not in session. The SFSP provides Nebraska sponsors with reimbursement for meals served through the program but they need help from people who know and understand the community to help coordinate and administer those meals! Sponsors can engage employees or volunteers to work to make their community a better place to grow up and raise kids.

What are the local sponsor's responsibilities?

Sponsors provide meals for free to the children who come to their site(s). They must also attend the state agencies training (around April), locate and recruit eligible sites (see site qualifications below), hire/train/supervise staff and volunteers, arrange preparation of the meals, monitor the site, prepare the reimbursement claims, and ensure project sustainability.

What are the qualifications for an SFSP site?

The sites must be in low income communities where a need exists. Current regulations require sites to participate in areas with 50% poverty or 50% of students on free or reduced-price meals. The sites must be safe and supervised environments where kids can eat the food. These sites could be schools, parks, libraries, farmers markets, apartment complexes, churches, or community centers.

Find SFSP FAQs from the USDA here:
fns.usda.gov/sfsp/frequently-asked-questions



How does the sponsor prepare the meals?

Meals are served through:

- Preparing their own meals following meal patterns set at the federal level by the USDA (“self prep” meals receive slightly higher rates of reimbursement),
- Purchasing meals through an agreement with an area school, or
- A contract for meals with a food management company.

Where does the local sponsor get the funding for the SFSP?

The Nebraska Department of Education reimburses local sponsors for the meals they provide. The state agencies and local sponsors enter into an agreement after the state agency approves the sponsor and trains them on how sponsors serve reimbursable meals through SFSP.

How are sites classified?

Sites can be classified as follows:

- Open site: low-income areas where at least 50 percent of children residing in the area are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, based on local school data or census data. The meals are served free to any child at the site on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Closed enrolled sites: for a specific group of children who enroll in an organized program or who do not reside in an eligible low income area. The site becomes eligible for SFSP if at least half of the enrolled children qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Meals are served free only to enrolled children.
- Camps: offer regularly scheduled food service along with organized activities for enrolled residential or day campers. The camp receives reimbursement only for meals served to enrolled children who qualify for free and reduced-price meals.

How to locate SFSP program sites?

Before creating a new SFSP site it is important to first find out if there is an existing site in your area. Text “FOOD” or “COMIDA” to 304-304 or use the USDA’s Meals 4 Kids Map to find the 2023 sites. There are over 200 SFSP sites with nearly 60 sponsor participants in Nebraska.

How to apply to become a SFSP sponsor in Nebraska?

The Nebraska Department of Education Office of Nutrition Services, who administers the SFSP, is the best place to get answers and learn more. Sponsors sign up to participate each year around February, train in March and April and launch operations in June. The Federal deadline to participate is June 15th.

For more info:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/how-become-sponsor>

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-101-sfsp>

<https://neappleseed.org/summerfood>



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