Dear Summer Partners:

Your passion for connecting children with the nutrition needed for an active, healthy summer is inspiring. Achieving our shared goal of making the Summer Meal Programs a nutritional foundation for children in need, depends on the synergy we bring to our missions. This year, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) will expand support of our partnership by connecting you with resources that will enhance your efforts to make meal sites appealing summer destinations in your community.

This guidebook details the summer resources TDA is providing and includes instructions for utilizing them effectively. As a dedicated sponsor of the Summer Meal Programs you know that increasing your community’s awareness of the availability of meals is just as important as developing robust meal sites complete with good nutrition and enrichment activities. Using the resources here will help ensure families know about the program you have worked hard to develop.

These TDA-developed materials will help your sites' promotional efforts look professional, support consistency, and increase effectiveness at little or no cost to you. You will also find resources that can help you implement best practices. Please utilize all the materials available for increasing awareness including the social media advertisements. For more information, please visit SummerFood.org/OutreachTools.

Thank you again for your dedication and commitment to connecting young Texans with good nutrition during the summer months. Have a great summer and I look forward to hearing more about your success.

Sincerely,

Angela Olige
Assistant Commissioner
Food and Nutrition Division
Texas Department of Agriculture
The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has developed a wide variety of outreach resources for the Summer Meal Programs to help you increase community awareness and connect more children with meals. This guidebook explains how contracting entities (CEs) can use these resources and marketing tactics to further support their efforts to achieve new successes and increase the number of children who visit their summer meal sites.

Visit SummerFood.org/OutreachTools to view all materials mentioned in this guidebook.
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PROMOTIONAL RESOURCES

AVAILABLE FOR ORDER AND DOWNLOAD
The following resources can be used to improve outreach efforts in your community. All resources can be found and downloaded at SummerFood.org/OutreachTools. TDA offers approved sponsors the opportunity to order our most popular summer materials on an annual basis via an online order form. The order form is also located on SummerFood.org/OutreachTools.

BOOKMARKS
Pass out bookmarks to students, libraries and local shops. Bookmarks are double-sided, English and Spanish, and are also available in a fillable option.
YARD SIGNS (CUSTOMIZABLE)

Yard signs are mini billboards that draw attention to your summer site when meal service begins. Customize the yard sign with your site information to direct participants to your meal site. Position yard signs in a high traffic area or near a busy intersection and provide an address, date and time your meal site will be open. All yard signs are double-sided, English and Spanish. TDA offers four different types:

1. Right arrow
2. Left arrow
3. Forward/up arrow
4. Fillable option

Helpful Tip: Yard signs can only be used with property owner consent.

DOOR HANGERS

Directly reaching families in high-need areas can be as easy as putting one of these hangers on a doorknob. Ask volunteers to distribute door hangers near your site to help boost participation. Door hangers are double-sided, English and Spanish, and are also available in a fillable option.

Door hanger distribution should be done in accordance with local regulations or apartment community management consent.

Door hangers should NOT be placed in mailboxes for any reason.
Display posters at local businesses and organizations so families in need will know about the program and how to find nearby meal sites. Suggested locations include libraries, shelters, food pantries, churches, hospital lobbies, doctors' offices, post offices, housing authorities, social service agencies, coffee shops, gas stations, Salvation Army and Goodwill locations. Make sure you receive shop owners’ approval before you hang the posters. Posters are available in both English and Spanish.

Use this postcard as a quick way to distribute information about the program. This card is great for placing on car windshields in busy parking lots close to your sites. This card is fillable, double-sided, English and Spanish.

Pass these cards out before the end of the school year to let parents know about the program. The cards can also be used by local shop owners as take-a-ways on counters and near cash registers. Parent information cards are double-sided, English and Spanish, and are also available in a fillable option.

Download the proclamation and send it electronically to the mayor’s office and ask that the mayor and city council members present this “Healthy Summer Meals for Kids” proclamation at a city council meeting.

Helpful Tip: Posters can only be used with property owner consent.
Customize your Web page by uploading the Web banner. Connect visitors to a Web page specific to your summer activities or to SummerFood.org! We also offer banners to customize your social media pages.

Use this Web button across your website and social media pages to direct families to your summer activities or to the mapping tool on SummerFood.org!

**WEBSITE BANNER**

**WEBSITE BUTTON**

**MEDIA SUPPORT MATERIALS**

**PRESS RELEASE (CUSTOMIZABLE)**

Fill in the blanks with local information and send it to local publications and broadcast stations. Newspapers, radio and TV stations may consider featuring you and your program in a local interest story for the community.

**RADIO/TV PSA**

Coordinate with your local radio and news stations to promote the Summer Meal Programs. Links to radio and TV PSAs are available for download at: SummerFood.org/Outreach Tools.

**NEWSPAPER ADS**

Place these ads in local magazines, newspapers, school newsletters or other publications you have in your community. The ads are currently available in English and fillable options in a variety of sizes.

**SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT PACKET**

This resource provides prewritten social media posts you can use to increase awareness of your summer meal sites. There also are photos and a campaign schedule. Utilizing the best practices and full social media campaign laid out in this packet will help your site increase awareness in your community.
Social media enables sites to share content in real time, connect with different audiences, post photos and engage with those who may not already know about the Summer Meal Programs. Developing a social media strategy can give structure to daily posts and ensure consistent messaging.

**HERE ARE A FEW BEST PRACTICES WHEN PLANNING YOUR OWN SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT:**

**AUDIENCE**
- Is the communication for parents, kids or the community? Language and content should be tailored to reach the appropriate group. This may mean communicating about a site in several different ways.

**PHOTOS AND VIDEOS**
- Social media posts that include either a photo or video catch readers’ attention more than words alone.
- Facebook Video and Facebook Live are fun ways to introduce multimedia into communications.
- Research has shown that video posts offer excellent reach and no cost.

Text “FOODTX” to 877-877 to find more sites.*

VISIT SUMMERFOOD.ORG

BRIGHTEN UP YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES with consistent messaging
CALL TO ACTION

- In marketing, a call to action is defined as an instruction to the audience that provokes an immediate response. It usually includes an imperative such as “find out more” or “click here.”
- The sample posts section on the next page includes an example of using a call to action.

TAGS

- When someone is tagged in social media with the user’s handle name preceded by the at symbol (@), it creates a short link to their profile and the post may be added to that person’s or group’s timeline. This could increase the visibility of the posts beyond an immediate audience.
- Tag TDA on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.
  Twitter: @TexasDeptofAg
  Facebook: @TexasDepartmentofAgriculture
  Instagram: @TexasAgriculture

POST ON MULTIPLE CHANNELS

- There are multiple social media channels including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- Many of the tips from above resonate across all three channels.
A FEW TIPS TO ENHANCE A POST’S READABILITY

**FACEBOOK**

1. Limit the amount of text and enhance it with visual content — links, images, videos.
2. Use hashtags in your text to connect multiple social media platforms.
3. Post updates at different times of the day and week to see which ones get the most views.

**SAMPLE POSTS**

The Social Media Support Packet is available for download at [www.Summerfood.org/OutreachTools](http://www.Summerfood.org/OutreachTools). It contains images, English and Spanish posts, and a calendar to take the guesswork out of creating a communications plan. It is easy to use. Just download the packet, copy and paste the text on any social media platform, upload the provided picture and post!

**BUILD AWARENESS**

“Nutritious meals are important for kids to learn and grow, even when school is out. That is why the Summer Meal Programs offer breakfast, lunch and supper for kids throughout the summer at no cost in your community. Here’s all the information you need: [Insert URL link for meal site information here].”

“Do you know a child in need of a healthy meal today? The Summer Meal Programs offer no cost and nutritious meals to kids 18 and younger during the long school vacation, and all they have to do is show up! A family can call 211 or visit SummerFood.org today to find the closest location.”

**CALL TO ACTION**

“Have you heard about our summer meals site? We are currently serving breakfast and lunch at no cost for kids 18 and younger this summer! Click here to find serving times which are located on SummerFood.org!”

**PROMOTE YOUR SITE AS THE PLACE TO BE THIS SUMMER**

“Our site offers meals at no cost along with fun activities for kids 18 and younger all summer long! Check it out!” Ideas for activities can be found on page 15 in this guidebook.

**TWITTER**

1. Character limits on Twitter are currently set at 280. A character is a space, letter or punctuation mark.
2. Large, high-quality images will post on the timeline.
3. Encourage retweets by using 1-2 hashtags per tweet.

**INSTAGRAM**

1. Use popular hashtags and only 1-3 per photo.
2. Fill out your Instagram bio so visitors can read about your efforts.

*Popular Hashtags: #summereats; #foodfriendsandfun; #SummerMealsProgram; #summermeals; #summerfood*
DIRECT MESSAGING
Teachers and schools have opportunities to directly connect with parents and students through school-based apps such as Class Dojo, Seesaw and Remind, text messaging services, or robo calls. Visit SummerFood.org/OutreachTools for sample messaging for texting tools.

PARTNERSHIPS

Many of the previously mentioned resources and communication tactics can be utilized to build strong and lasting partnerships with community leaders and local organizations. Read below to get a jumpstart on ideas for potential partners and the resources that you can use to reach them.

Connecting with Local Officials: Mayors, Judges, City Council and Commissioner Court Members
Local officials’ networks within their communities offer opportunities for increasing your sites’ visibility. Send the "Healthy Summer Meals for Kids" proclamation electronically to the mayor’s office and ask that the mayors and city council members present this proclamation at a city council meeting. Sample proclamations are available for download at SummerFood.org/Outreach Tools

Connecting with Locally Owned Businesses and Farm Fresh Network Members
Farmers’ markets and locally owned businesses offer unique partnering opportunities for strengthening connections within the community. Coordinate with locally owned businesses to display marketing materials to promote the Summer Meal Programs.

Community Based Email Communication
Building partnerships within your community is a great way to increase program awareness and support. Many community partners and organizations send local families newsletters highlighting upcoming events and activities. Partner with local organizations to share information through their communication channels about the Summer Meal Programs. Newsletters and email campaigns are sent directly to program participants and help increase awareness. Be sure to include contact information, site locations and times. Utilize the template copy and banners available for download at SummerFood.org/Outreach Tools.
KICK-OFF AND SPIKE EVENTS

Kick-off events build awareness among parents, help recruit volunteers, and create excitement around summer meals! Additional events, called Spike Events, help sustain the enthusiasm to keep participation high! However you choose to celebrate summer meals, it’s important to make the events fun and exciting!

PLANNING A KICK-OFF EVENT

If you are hosting a kick-off event, the following are suggestions for choosing a date, time and place for increasing attendance.

Time and date:

June is the optimal month for kick-offs, perhaps the week before or the first week the Summer Meal Programs begin. In July, a spike event could be held to drive mid-summer awareness in the community to increase participation after summer school ends. To maximize media coverage, try to have your events on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday between 10 a.m. and noon. Typically, an event should be no more than an hour long.

When promoting your event, encourage kids to wear brightly colored T-shirts. This will create a very appealing visual element for your site and also looks great in pictures and on camera.

Types of speakers
(Recommendation: No more than five speakers at each event)

- Elected officials
- Local celebrity/sports figure/media personality
- Corporate sponsor representative
- Education representative (teacher, principal, food service administrator, etc.)
- Faith-based leader
- Parent or caretaker (When asking a parent, ensure they are good representatives, are comfortable having reporters ask questions and report on their life stories).

Building an audience:

The best demonstration of community support is an enthusiastic crowd. Think about ways to draw families to your event. Promote the event at local stores, laundromats, libraries, houses of worship, schools, child care facilities, and bus stops.

Potential ways to enhance your event include the following:

- Close to an area of need
- Accessible to the media
- Opportunities for media to observe the Summer Meal Programs and interact with kids
- Ample parking, easily accessible and near public transit
- Visual appeal (gardens, trees, other shaded areas, nearby activities, such as playscapes and jungle gyms, etc.)
EVENT PROMOTION

Social Media
- Post event invitations.
- Post updates on all social media platforms.
- Make sure to include hashtags on every post.
- Release the names of vendors to the public to spark community interest and involvement.

Materials
- Create flyers, pamphlets, and/or posters to advertise your upcoming event in your community.
- Ask local vendors to place the handouts by registers and on counters.

Partners
- Utilize partners and volunteers to pass out materials in targeted areas.
- Mayors and local businesses can promote your sites’ kick-off events through their communication platforms.

Tip: When creating your own materials, use Summer Meal Programs’ colors so all materials look consistent. This makes a memorable impression for the participants and creates trust.

A few other tips:
- Parents and children must sign a media release if they are willing to be interviewed and/or photographed.
- Hang banners and place brightly colored balloons to draw attention to the event and your meal sites throughout the summer.
- Ensure you have a photographer or videographer to record the event or designate a staff member to perform the task. Make sure to get good photos of speakers and attendees to use for content after the event.
- Create an inclement weather plan.
ARE YOU READY TO GO
ABOVE AND BEYOND?

If you are utilizing many of the resources and platforms already mentioned and are ready to enhance your summer operations and take your site to the next level, consider the following:

Event Activity Ideas: FOOD, FRIENDS AND FUN

The best demonstration of community support is an enthusiastic crowd. Think about ways to draw families to your event by promoting food, friends and fun. Potential ways to enhance your event include the following:

- Face painting
- Variety of local vendors (food, popsicles, snow cones)
- Reading club (no cost books for kids)
- Storytime
- Water gun splash
- Sack races
- Wheelbarrow races
- Tug of war
- Four square
- Tether ball
- Egg toss
- Raffles
- Dunking booth
- Board games
- Sports games
- Flying kites
- Hopscotch
- Jump rope
- Arts and crafts
- Sidewalk chalk
- Bean bag toss
- Kickball

Keep kids entertained while they eat by having various activities and items to play with!
BEST PRACTICES TO BEAT THE SUMMER HEAT!

• Choose a place at your site location that has a shaded area. (Kids can sit under trees to stay away from the sun.)
• Place food in the shade and in cooler so it is out of the sun and stays fresh longer.
• Offer water to keep the kids hydrated while they play.
• Offer frozen fruit treats. Consider making treats utilizing Farm Fresh seasonal ingredients. Visit SquareMeals.org/TexasFarmFresh to view the Seasonality Wheel to help see what produce items are in season.
• Offer sunscreen.

SUMMER PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS
Visit SummerFood.org/OutreachTools to order materials. The order form is available for summer sponsors and partners.
Summary

Using the tools and strategies in this guidebook will help set the stage for new successes as a partner in the Summer Meal Programs. When you serve appealing, great tasting meals and have an engaging meal site setting, there are no limits to the impact your program can have. By making this commitment to summer meals excellence, you help build a healthier future for your community and the entire state of Texas.