

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD AND NUTRITION DIVISION

# SUMMER BEST PRACTICES GUIDEBOOK



# 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.

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# SPREAD THE WORD USING SUMMER OUTREACH MATERIALS



The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has developed 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 [SquareMeals.org](https://www.squaremeals.org) under **Summer Resources** to view all materials featured in this guidebook.



# Promotional Materials and Support Resources

## AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

The following resources can be used to improve outreach efforts in your community. Download printable materials in English and Spanish online at [SummerMeals.org](https://www.SummerMeals.org) under **Summer Resources**.



## YARD SIGNS



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



## PRESS RELEASE (CUSTOMIZABLE)

(Insert Logo Here)

For Immediate Release:  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**SPONSOR NAME** \_\_\_\_\_ **WILL SERVE UP GOOD NUTRITION**  
**FOR LOCAL CHILDREN THIS SUMMER**  
Bringing healthy summer meals to \_\_\_\_\_ children ensures kids  
have a healthy vacation and return to school ready to learn.

**CITY NAME HERE** \_\_\_\_\_ **SPONSOR NAME** \_\_\_\_\_ will connect children 18  
years old and younger with healthy Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) meals at no cost to the child.  
SFSP is a U.S. Department of Agriculture nutrition program administered in the Lone Star State by the  
Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). For the children who rely on school meals during the academic  
year, these meals offer a source of good nutrition when school is out for the long summer vacation.

City name here \_\_\_\_\_ children need good nutrition year-round so they can learn, grow and succeed in life,"  
said \_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor representative's name and title here \_\_\_\_\_ "With nearly 2 million food insecure children  
living in Texas, these healthy meals are vital to nourishing young Texans during the summer vacation."  
(Add details specific to your SFSP program including kick-off events along with any information not  
subject to change)

Sponsor name \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the nonprofit organizations partnering with TDA to serve meals  
across Texas. Families are encouraged to use these three tools to find a meal site anywhere in the state.

- Call \_\_\_\_\_
- Visit \_\_\_\_\_
- Text \_\_\_\_\_

Organizations partner with TDA to serve meals in areas where more than 50 percent of children are  
eligible for free or reduced-price meals in the National School Lunch Program. Eligible sponsoring  
organizations include schools, faith-based groups, nonprofit summer camps, government agencies and  
other tax-exempt organizations. All meal sites must be sponsored by an organization that has a contract  
with TDA.

Summer food program meal sites help children succeed by providing the nourishment they need to return  
to school in the fall ready to thrive.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Contact: Sponsor contact information \_\_\_\_\_



## PROGRAM POSTER



**Helpful Tip:** Posters can only be used with property owner consent.



## PARENT INFORMATION CARD



## FILLABLE POSTER (CUSTOMIZABLE)

**COMIDAS SALUDABLES PARA NIÑOS EN EL VERANO**  
Se ofrece una comida de 18 años y  
menores y estudiantes con discapacidades  
hasta los 21 años.

**HEALTHY SUMMER MEALS FOR KIDS**  
No Cost For Kids 18  
years and younger and  
enrolled students up to 21 with disabilities.

For a Meal Near You  
Call 211  
or visit  
summerfood.org

Lugar: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hora: \_\_\_\_\_  
Días: \_\_\_\_\_  
Para más información, llame al: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dates: \_\_\_\_\_  
For more information, call: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Web Based Resources

AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

Promote your summer meal sites on your website or social media platforms. Download materials online at [SquareMeals.org](https://www.squaremeals.org) under **Summer Resources**.



## WEBSITE BANNER



## SOCIAL MEDIA SQUARE



## SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT PACKET

### Summer Meal Programs Social Media Support Packet

This Summer Meal Programs Social Media Support Packet provides social media posts you can use to increase awareness of your summer meal sites. There are also 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 of the summer meal program in your community.

#### Social Media Best Practices

Whether you are using Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, developing your social media strategy in advance can take the stress out of daily posts and ensure consistent messaging. Keep these best practices in mind when planning social media content.

Your audience includes parents, kids, local media, officials and community leaders. Language and content should be tailored to reach the appropriate audience. This may require communicating about your site and mission in several different ways. Remember to always keep the reader in mind as you write. Every message should be easy for your audience to read.

Use photos, videos or GIFs whenever possible. Posts with visual appeal capture a lot of attention. Facebook Video, Facebook Live and Instagram's Boomerang offer fun ways to add multimedia to communication platforms and can build brand trust and awareness among your audience.

A social media tag creates a short link to a profile and the post may be added to that person or group's timeline. This will increase the visibility of the posts beyond an immediate audience. This can help reach media and local officials. It also helps extend your posts' longevity.

Consider tagging local news outlets and writers, radio stations, mayors and schools.

Tag TDA on Facebook and Twitter

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

# SPREAD THE WORD USING SOCIAL MEDIA

## *Social Media Strategies*

Social media enables sites to share content in real time, connect with different audiences, post photos, and engage with those who may not know about the Summer Meal Programs. Developing a social media strategy can give structure to daily posts and ensure consistent messaging.

## *Best Practices When Planning Your Own Social Media Content*



### AUDIENCE

- Language and content should be tailored to reach the target group, whether it is parents, kids or the community. 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.
- Video and live streaming offer fun ways to introduce multimedia into communications.
- Research has shown that video posts offer excellent reach and no additional cost.



### 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 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 X, Facebook, and Instagram.  
X: [@TexasDeptofAg](#)  
Facebook: [@TexasDepartmentofAgriculture](#)  
Instagram: [@TexasAgriculture](#)



### POST ON MULTIPLE CHANNELS

- There are multiple social media channels including Facebook, X, Instagram and many others, all with different target audiences.
- Many of the tips from above resonate across all three channels.

# SPREAD THE WORD USING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Partnerships

Partnerships can boost your marketing efforts by combining forces and strengths. Read on to learn about building strong partnerships.



### CONNECTING WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS: MAYORS, JUDGES, CITY COUNCIL AND COMMISSIONER COURT MEMBERS

Communities and their local officials 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 [SquareMeals.org](https://www.squaremeals.org) under **Summer Resources**.

### CONNECTING WITH LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES AND FARMERS' MARKETS

Farmers' markets and locally owned businesses offer unique partnering opportunities. Coordinate with these businesses to display marketing materials to promote the Summer Meal Programs.

### COMMUNITY-BASED EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Many community partners and organizations send local families newsletters highlighting upcoming events and activities. Newsletters and email campaigns are sent directly to program participants and help increase awareness.

Partner with local organizations to share information through their communication channels. Be sure to include contact information, site locations and times for the Summer Meal Programs. Utilize the template copy and banners available for download at [SquareMeals.org](https://www.squaremeals.org) under **Summer Resources**.



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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the **USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form**, (AD-3027) found online at: **How to File a Complaint**, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call **(866) 632-9992**. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

mail:

*U.S. Department of Agriculture*

*Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights*

*1400 Independence Avenue, SW*

*Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;*

*fax: (202) 690-7442; or email: **program.intake@usda.gov**.*

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