

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD AND NUTRITION DIVISION

HEALTHY SUMMER MEALS FOR KIDS

KICKOFF EVENT TOOLKIT



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SquareMeals.org



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TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL KICKOFF EVENT

Summer sponsors can host Summer Meal Program kickoff events to increase participation, help recruit volunteers and add excitement to their meal sites. Later in the summer, fun and entertaining follow-up events sustain the enthusiasm.

Event Planning Recommendations

Time and Date

- ✓ Set a date in early June.
- ✓ A July spike event could drive awareness
- ✓ Choose a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday between 10 a.m. and noon
- ✓ Typically, an event should be no more than an hour

Location

- ✓ Choose a popular site accessible to reporters
- ✓ The site should have ample parking or easy access to public transit
- ✓ Make the site appealing and welcoming with balloons, kids in bright T-shirts, banners, etc.

Speaker Ideas

- ✓ Elected officials
- ✓ Local celebrities, sports figures, media personalities
- ✓ Educators
- ✓ Faith leaders

Activity Examples

- ✓ Face painting
- ✓ Local vendors serving food
- ✓ Reading club
- ✓ Water gun splash
- ✓ Sack races
- ✓ Tug of war
- ✓ Tether ball
- ✓ Egg toss
- ✓ Raffles
- ✓ Dunking booth

Tips

- ✓ Plan for inclement weather
- ✓ Ensure you have someone get photos and video of the event
- ✓ Have parents sign a photo release (*in progress*)



Event Promotion

Social Media

- ✓ Invite community members online
- ✓ Announce vendor participation

Materials

- ✓ Create and distribute posters, flyers, and handouts
- ✓ Ask store managers to place handouts by registers

Partners

- ✓ Enlist volunteers to distribute materials
- ✓ Ask media, local officials, and businesses to promote the event online

Places for Promotion

- ✓ Mom & pop shops and grocery stores
- ✓ Libraries
- ✓ Gas stations
- ✓ Community centers
- ✓ Hospitals/doctor's offices
- ✓ Correctional facilities
- ✓ Non-Profits (churches, food pantries)
- ✓ Donation centers (Goodwill, Salvation Army)
- ✓ Variety stores (Dollar General, Family Dollar)
- ✓ WIC Clinics

Event Agenda (Sample)

Event	Time
Set up	8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
Event starts	11 a.m.
Lunch begins (i.e. Hot Dog, Local cucumbers, Fresh Fruit, and Milk)	11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.
Sack races (parent and child)	12:45 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.
Face painting (parent and child)	1:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.
Tug of War (Kids)	1:50 p.m. to 2 p.m.
Main raffle including any speeches from partners	2 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Clean Up	3 p.m. to 4 p.m.



GET THE WORD OUT WITH...

It is important to get the word out to your community ahead of time to promote your event. Below are tips and best practices to engage kids, parents, volunteers and staff for a successful kickoff event.

Social Media



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.

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

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

Post on Multiple Channels

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



Partnerships

Partnerships can boost your marketing efforts by combining forces and strengths.

Connecting with Local Officials: Mayors and City Councils

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 the mayor and city council members to present this proclamation at a city council meeting. Sample proclamations are available for download at [SummerFood.org/Outreach Tools](http://SummerFood.org/OutreachTools).

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 and Text Communications

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 [SummerFood.org/Outreach Tools](http://SummerFood.org/OutreachTools).

Create Flyers

Flyers Should be Bright and Eye-Catching

Include the Following:

- ✓ Event address
- ✓ Date and time
- ✓ Celebration description
- ✓ Activities, meals, freebies
- ✓ Call to Action - Join us! Come by, Visit

Examples of Past Flyers from Summer Sites



PRESS RELEASE (SAMPLE)

For Immediate Release
[Date]

**HEALTHY
SUMMER
MEALS
FOR KIDS**

CONTACT: [COMMUNITY LEADER/SPONSOR], [PHONE] [EMAIL]

[Community Name] KICKS OFF ANNUAL SUMMER MEAL PROGRAM

[Town Name], TX— [School/District Name/Sponsor Organization], will host a kickoff event for its summer meal site, [Location]. Summer Meal Programs help children and teens 18 and younger and enrolled students up to 21 years old with disabilities access no-cost meals each summer. Schools and nonprofit organizations partner with the Texas department of Agriculture (TDA) to serve these meals after school cafeterias close for the summer.

The event will take place at [Time] and the theme is [Name of Theme]. Speakers and featured guests planning to attend include [Name of Special Guests].

Each summer across Texas, millions of meals are served to children and teens at more than 4,000 sponsored sites. The kickoff event will generate the excitement needed to increase Summer Meal Program participation in [City].

While TDA's Summer Meal Program has grown, there remains a critical for summer meals, particularly in rural areas where children and teens often live further from school.

For more information concerning the kickoff rally, call [Local Number]. To learn more about TDA's Summer Meal Programs or the other Child Nutrition Programs, visit <https://squaremeals.org/Programs/Summer-Meal-Programs>

