



Rural Development

Curtis Anderson  
Acting Administrator

Rural Housing Service  
1400 Independence Ave, SW  
Room 5014-S  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Telephone: (202) 692-0268

TO: State Directors  
Housing and Community Program Directors  
Rural Development

FEB 27 2018

FROM: Curtis M. Anderson  
Acting Administrator  
Rural Housing Service

SUBJECT: Hosting the U.S. Department of Agriculture Summer Meals  
Program at Rural Development-Financed Housing  
Properties and Community Facilities

This Unnumbered Letter (UL) is to promote the participation of Rural Housing Service (RHS)-financed housing properties and community facilities in the [Summer Food Service Program](#), operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and also known as the Summer Meals Program.

Rural Development is focused on delivering efficient and effective customer service while improving the quality of life and creating prosperity in rural communities. The Summer Meals collaboration provides a great opportunity to build innovating partnerships and leverage our collective resources to feed rural children during the summer. The Summer Meals Program provides low-income children with healthy meals at no cost during the summer when school is out. This program is critically important for many rural children, who may be at risk of going hungry when they do not have access to free and reduced-price school meals. Summer Meals are provided by local sponsoring organizations, which are reimbursed by FNS for the meals served to children. (Find your local sponsoring organizations by contacting the State Agency that administers your state's Summer Meals program at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-contacts>.) The role of RHS is to provide sites where meals can be served—a function we fill very well since the housing and facilities we finance are community anchors across rural America and can be the perfect home bases for providing vital services to children.

EXPIRATION DATE:  
February 28, 2019

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:  
Housing Programs

USDA is an equal opportunity lender, provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (PDF), found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

RHS has been a strong participant in Summer Meals in recent years, primarily by recruiting Multi-Family Housing (MFH) properties to serve as meal sites. This works well in many rural communities, allowing local sponsoring organizations to deliver meals directly to the properties where children live. In 2017, we far surpassed our previous year total by enrolling 384 MFH properties, an all-time high. This was 79 more properties than we were able to serve the year before, and tripled the number from 2014. Attachment A lists the number of MFH properties that served as meal sites in each state in 2017.

In 2018, we intend to feed more children than ever in rural communities by expanding Summer Meals participation across all of RHS.

- **MFH properties continue to be anchors for the Summer Meals Program in rural America. In 2018, we are aiming for a 20 percent increase in the number of participating properties over our total from 2017.** In other words, our goal is to enroll a total of 461 properties as meal sites. This means each state should recruit one to two additional properties over last year. Along with hosting meal sites at their properties, property owners and managers can also participate by working with their local sponsoring organizations to transport resident kids to a nearby meal site regularly throughout the summer.
- The Summer Meal Program is not just for **Section 515** properties, as it can also be beneficial for our **Section 538** properties. If there is a **Section 538** Lender in your state that might be interested in this opportunity, we encourage you to share this information with them.
- **As in the previous year, we are working with staff to reach out to Community Facilities borrowers and grantees in their states to encourage them to enroll as Summer Meals sites.** RHS-financed Community Facilities can also serve as meal sites in areas that have great need for meal programs. Many types of Community Facilities—such as community centers, schools, libraries, and daycares—are natural gathering places for families and children, and some may already host summer youth activities to which they could add meal services with the help of a local sponsoring organization. **In 2018, we are setting a goal of enrolling a minimum of one RHS-financed Community Facility in at least 30 States as a meal site.** Many of you are already working with your CF borrowers and finding interest in this opportunity. Since this is a new element of RHS' participation in Summer Meals, we will be following up with further information and materials.
- In some cases, Self-Help communities that have common spaces for residents could also serve as Summer Meals sites. **If there is a Self-Help partner in your state that might be interested in this opportunity, we encourage you to share this information with them.**

In order to strengthen our participation in Summer Meals and feed more kids, we need to boost our outreach on this important program and track the properties and facilities that sign up. We have created a new Summer Meals SharePoint site, and we ask that you keep it updated with information about the participating properties and facilities in your state:

[https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/RD\\_HCFP/SummerMeals/SitePages/Home.aspx](https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/RD_HCFP/SummerMeals/SitePages/Home.aspx)

We also encourage you to get involved and spread the word early. State agencies and sponsoring organizations hold planning sessions months before the summer begins, and taking part in these can help

maximize participation in your state. We also encourage you to work with your state partners, RD Community Economic Development (CED) leads, and FNS colleagues to identify areas not currently being served and in need of meal services, and to extend outreach to those areas to identify possible sites.

We stand ready to support you and your property owners/managers and borrowers in this important endeavor and will provide additional tools and resources over the winter. If you have any questions regarding this UL, please contact:

- Multi-Family Housing: Gina Wepplo at (202) 720-1611, or Ancil Green at (202) 690-0760;
- Community Facilities: Geoffrey Armes at (202) 720-1498; or Surabhi Dabir at (202) 260-8080
- Single Family Housing: Andria Hively at (360) 753-7724

More information on Summer Meals can be found at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program>.

#### **Four Steps to Encourage Property Owners/Managers and Borrowers to Sign Up for Summer Meals**

1. Contact your FNS Regional Office and the State Agency coordinating your state's Summer Meals Program to learn how to bring the program to your housing properties and community facilities. You may want to ask about the dates of your state's Summer Meals planning meetings.
  - a. Contact information for FNS Regional Offices can be found at:  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>.
  - b. Contact information for State Agencies can be found at:  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-contacts>.
2. Send a letter inviting your property owners/managers and borrowers to participate in the Summer Meals program. See Attachment B.
3. Follow up on the letter with phone calls and site visits.
4. Customize the template op-ed with state-specific information and submit to local media outlets. See Attachment C.

**NUMBER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING PROPERTIES  
PARTICIPATING IN THE SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM IN 2017**

| <b>State</b> | <b># MFH<br/>Properties<br/>Participating</b> | <b>State</b> | <b># MFH<br/>Properties<br/>Participating</b> |
|--------------|---|--------------|---|
| PR           | 64  | NJ           | 4   |
| TN           | 61  | PA           | 4   |
| VA           | 46  | WV           | 4   |
| KY           | 40  | AZ           | 3   |
| TN           | 18  | ID           | 3   |
| CA           | 21  | IA           | 3   |
| OH           | 21  | AR           | 2   |
| SC           | 17  | CO           | 2   |
| NV           | 13  | KS           | 2   |
| OR           | 11  | MO           | 2   |
| MS           | 7   | WI           | 2   |
| NM           | 7   | HI           | 1   |
| TX           | 7   | NC           | 1   |
| IN           | 6   | OK           | 1   |
| NH           | 5   | WA           | 1   |
| DE           | 4   | WY           | 1   |

**DATE:**

TO: Property Owners and Managers of USDA Rural Development Community Facilities

FROM: (State Director/CP Director)  
USDA Rural Development

RE: Hosting USDA Summer Food Service Programs at Community Facilities

In **STATE** and across the nation, many children receive free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch while school is in session through USDA's School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs. However, when schools let out for the summer, many of these children are likely to have limited to no access to breakfast and lunch. Together we can work to ensure that kids who rely on free and reduced-priced meals during the school year have access to food during the summer too.

USDA's Summer Food Service Program serves free, healthy meals to eligible low-income children and teens during the summer months when they're not in school. Community Facilities sites funded by USDA Rural Development provide great opportunities to host the Summer Food Service Program. With your participation in the program, your community can receive meals from local sponsoring organizations (such as Boys and Girls Clubs, local school districts, etc.). Sponsors prepare or order the food, deliver it to your community and are reimbursed by USDA for the costs.

Rural Development is committed to providing efficient and effective customer service while improving the quality of life and creating prosperity in rural communities. The Summer Meals collaboration provides a great opportunity to build innovative partnerships and leverage our collective resources to feed rural children during the summer.

**Rural Development invites you to join the Summer Food Service Program and provide free, healthy meals to children living in your community.** Your responsibility in this effort is manageable: You are expected to provide a location for meals to be distributed (indoors or outdoors), provide oversight and keep records. Details would be worked out with the sponsor organization in your town.

Learn more at [www.summerfood.usda.gov](http://www.summerfood.usda.gov). Here you can find many resources, including information specifically for property managers. Find your local sponsoring organization by contacting your State Agency at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm).

Thank you for considering taking part in this valuable program. Please call (State CP Director/Staff) if you have questions for Rural Development.

Let's help eradicate child hunger in **STATE**.

Best regards,

**SIGNATURE**

**SAMPLE OP-ED**

USDA To Help Feed Hungry Children This Summer

by **[NAME]**, *USDA Rural Development State Director for [STATE]*

As we near the end of another winter, many parents and children are already beginning to think about summer. Sadly, though, the thought for some parents is: "How will I feed my children?"

Childhood hunger is a persistent problem in many parts of rural America. This especially so during the summer when school is out and many poor kids do not have enough to eat. My agency, USDA Rural Development, is working closely with our sister agency, the Food and Nutrition Service, in an innovative partnership to help alleviate hunger by providing nutritious meals to children during the summer. Together, we are working to implement Secretary Perdue's vision to "Do right and feed everyone."

This year we're expanding our reach into rural communities. We're looking at innovative ways to strengthen partnerships and support infrastructure in rural communities. Rural Development is committed to providing efficient and effective customer service while improving the quality of life and creating prosperity in rural communities. The summer meals collaboration provides a great opportunity to build innovative partnerships and leverage our collective resources to feed rural children during the summer.

Our approach to this work is governed by the three priorities Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue established for USDA Rural Development: Infrastructure, Partnerships and Innovation.

Modern infrastructure is a necessity -- not an amenity -- for any community to thrive. No matter what zip code you live in, infrastructure is a foundation to provide a high quality of life and economic opportunities. USDA's Community Facilities and Rural Housing programs have helped to finance modern facilities such as libraries, schools, community centers and apartment complexes that will serve as feeding sites. If we address rural infrastructure needs, many of the other challenges in rural places become much more manageable.

Rural Development is committed to expanding our impact through partnerships. Our collaboration with partners in the Summer Food Program is a great opportunity to build more partnerships and leverage collective resources to feed more rural children during the summer.

Finally, USDA will seek to improve the Summer Food Service Program and all of its programs to better serve customers through innovation. With Secretary Perdue's creation of the Innovation Center, USDA staff are empowered to develop new approaches that better serve our mission and to collect new ideas and turn them into best practices. We welcome any new and innovative approaches and partnerships that will allow us to deliver our programs more efficiently and effectively to rural communities and customers.

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To be successful in our efforts, we need your help.

If you know of a great location to host meals this summer, please contact me at (INSERT A NAME AND PHONE NUMBER.). My staff and I will be reaching out to schools, libraries, community centers and other locations throughout the state during the next several weeks. We will invite them to host a summer meals site.

(INSERT A 2017 SUCCESS STORY ABOUT A SITE FROM YOUR STATE. 3-5 SENTENCES. Example: Last year, hundreds of children ate healthy, nutritious lunches Monday through Friday at... OPTIONAL: INDICATE IF USDA HELPED FINANCE THE SITE EITHER THROUGH RUS OR CF.)

Let's work together like never before to establish more summer feeding sites in [STATE] this year!

For additional information about the Summer Food Service Program, go to [www.summerfood.usda.gov](http://www.summerfood.usda.gov). Together we can make a difference!

For more information about how to sign up to host summer meals, go to [www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/how-become-sponsor](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/how-become-sponsor).

*(The writer is Director of the USDA Rural Development Agency in STATE)*