



Kick-Off Events

A Toolkit to Launch into Summer Food

Get the tools and information you need to build enthusiasm for your summer food program with a kick-off event that is creative, engaging, and exciting!





Summer Kick-Off Events

What Kick-off events introduce Summer Meals to your community. It can be whatever kind of event you want to make it, with the goal of getting parents, children, and the community excited about your Summer Meal Program.

When The best time to host a kick-off event is right after the academic school year ends, a week before your Summer Meal Program begins, or even the first day.

Where The place will depend on the number of people expected, funds available, and your organization's capacity. Some good examples include community centers, public libraries, municipal parks, and meal service sites.

Who Partner engagement is the key for any successful event! There are many organizations in your community working in different capacities to provide services to families. Teaming up with different groups can make your event the hub for sharing information about these community services. Partners can spread the word about your event to more people in the community.





Planning Involve community partners, parents, and caregivers in planning. Harness the power of your Parent Teacher Association or Organization!

Length Recommended length of a kick-off event is an hour or less, excluding set-up and break down time.

Theme Choose a fun, summer theme that resonates with your community.

Speakers Feature a speaker who will add interest to your event: the Governor, U.S. or State Legislators, coaches, local celebrities, USDA Regional and State Representatives, the Mayor, City Council Members, County Officials, other local leaders.



Special Guests Attract more media attention with guests that connect to child nutrition or your community, like those listed above, professional athletes, prominent civic and business leaders, or Local and State Board of Education Members.



Community Partners

Inviting community partners can help community members have fun while building their support network. Consider inviting:

- local fire or police departments
- the chamber of commerce
- parks and recreation
- Boy and Girl Scouts
- YMCA
- Boys and Girls Club
- National Park Service/Park Rangers
- Forest Service
- local health department
- local health clinic
- food pantries
- local cultural groups
- local radio station
- local companies
- university clubs
- high school clubs and sports teams
- National Summer Learning Association
- oral health (AZSmiles)
- Future Farmers of America
- 4-H Clubs
- libraries
- Arizona Department of Education
- Dairy Council of Arizona
- local farmers/ranchers

AZ Health Zone local contacts can support your connections to many community partners





Summer Kick-Off Events

Promotion There are countless ways to get the word out about summer food!



Media Invite local media to your event by either sending them an official press release or the event invitation.



Be sure to reach out to community newspapers, local television and radio stations, and even the school newspaper!

Sample Kick-Off Invitation

Join us for a celebration of the
Summer Food Service Program



Summer Food Kick-Off

Hosted by Your school district or organization

Date & Time Date and time

Place Our middle school campus

Address

Let's come together and
celebrate Summer Food!



Sample Agenda

Your event might be as simple as inviting parents and caregivers out to the first day or summer food, or it may be a major event with media attention. Below is a sample agenda.

Name of your organization



Summer Food Kick-Off

Welcome

[Person welcoming]

Enjoy Your Meal

[You're invited to get your first summer meal while a community group/dj/school performance group entertains you]

Summer Food Speakers/Special Guests

[speakers from community]

Recognition for Honored Guests

[Those who are important to Summer Food in the community]

Activities and Games

[Fun for the whole family]

Close

[Distribute info about summer meals schedule, circulate surveys, etc.]





Sample Invitation for a Guest/Speaker

[on your letterhead]

Dear [Policy Maker]:

On [date of event], [organization] will be hosting a summer kickoff event to introduce our summer program & meals to our community. Our goal is to get parents, children, and the community excited about our Summer Food Service Program.

We will be one of many sites offering summer meals across Arizona, providing an opportunity for kids and teens 0-18 to eat healthy meals and snacks during the summer months. Parents, media, employers, neighbors, school officials and others have been invited to help us rally support for safe and nutritious summer meals.

We would like you to be part of our local celebration, scheduled for [Date and time], [Place], [Address]

[Give a short description of what your celebration will include, as well as how you would like the policy maker to participate. An example below:]

Our program is going to include a half hour ceremony and we would be honored to have you as our keynote presenter.

Your role would include:

- A 15-minute statement of the benefits of summer meals/program opportunities
- Presentation of the proclamation to the program director

The benefits of offering quality summer meals are clear. Our site supports working families by ensuring that children are fed, safe, and productive when school is not in session, and it makes our community stronger by involving students, parents, business leaders, and volunteers. Not only do we offer a safe place for children who do not have access to school meals during the summer months, but we provide youth an opportunity to discover hidden talents as they grow academically and socially.

I look forward to having you join us for our Summer Kickoff Event. I will call you next week to confirm your availability. We hope that you will help us ensure youth are fed during the summer and give our children a brighter future.

Sincerely,
[Your name]



Sample Social Media Posts

Get free social media graphics in English and Spanish at the AZ Summer Meals website (www.AZSummerMeals.org).



Be sure to include all the event details in your post. Tag your own organization and any community partners involved in your kick-off. Use the hashtag #SummerMeals.

Start summer right with [TAG YOUR ORG] at TIME on DATE. We're kicking off a summer full of activities and healthy meals at LOCATION. Check WEBSITE for all the details. #SummerMeals



Kids and teens 0-18 can get free #SummerMeals with [TAG YOUR ORG] all summer long! Help us jump-start our program on DATE, TIME, LOCATION.

Kick off #SummerMeals with [TAG YOUR ORG] at TIME on DATE. Join us at LOCATION for a celebration of summer programs and free meals.



Resources

AZ Summer Meals Promotional Toolkit

Click on the SFSP Site Promotional Materials button for digital and print promotional materials for your summer feeding program. Available in both English and Spanish!

Dairy Council of Arizona

The Dairy Council of Arizona provides annual grants for summer food service programs. They also have free printed materials that are available to order with direct free shipping on the catalog. Downloadable materials are also available for free to print at school/home. Materials are available here:

<https://catalog.dairymanagement-west.com/>

Hosting Events, USDA Summer Meals Toolkit

USDA's resource for planning a kick-off event.

Break for a Plate (Alabama Dept of Education)

We adapted parts of this summer kick-off toolkit for our local audience.

Afterschool Alliance Lights On

Afterschool Alliance's planning and promotion toolkit for their annual Lights On event has resources you can adapt to suit your summer kick-off.

National Summer Learning Association

Use the toolkit resources for National Summer Learning Week as an example for your event and promotion.

Breakfast in the Classroom Toolkit

Tools used to promote breakfast can be adapted for you to promote summer food!



Telling the Story of your kick-off

1. Spotlight photos on your school/organization website



2. Tell the Arizona Department of Education & AZ Health Zone!

Spotlight Your Summer Meal Program:
We want to hear YOUR Story!

How is your Summer Meal Program making a difference in your community?

Submit an article, media clip, or your own story (brief narrative) about personal stories of success to ContactHNS@azed.gov.

3. Share media hits on your social channels

It's on! We're gearing up for #KickoffSummerMeals by getting the word out!
Help us share & invite Summer Program & Meals champions to join the celebration & showcase how #SummerMealWorks: (Signup Link)

4. Thank your community and partners!

Dear (INSERT NAME),

We feel nothing but immense gratitude for your attendance at our celebration kicking off our Summer Meal Program. You helped make this day even more special and memorable, and for that we are truly thankful! Your words of encouragement meant so much to us during this important event. We look forward to future opportunities for you to celebrate with us at (Organization).

Many thanks,
(Name)





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1. mail:
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture
3. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
4. 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
5. Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
6. fax:
7. (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
8. email:
9. Program.Intake@usda.gov

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