

SACRAMENTO SUMMER LUNCHBOX



Hosting a Summer Meals Kick-Off Event

OVERVIEW OF SUMMER KICK-OFF EVENTS

A summer kick-off event is a perfect opportunity to engage the community and promote your summer meal site while having a fun, family friendly event. The scale of your summer kick-off event will vary depending on your organizations capacity and resources available.

Kick-off events help to introduce the summer meals to your community. The goal of the event is to get parents, children and the community excited about your summer meal program.

The Sacramento Summer Meal Collaborative wants to promote all summer kick-off events throughout the region. Use this guide to help you decide if hosing a summer kick-off event is the right fit for your program.



SACRAMENTO SUMMER LUNCHBOX RESOURCES ONLINE

Go to yourlocalunitedway.org/sacsummerlunchbox for sample flyers, newsletter copy, calendar listings, parent letters and social media posts you can use to craft your unique message that fits your audience(s).

When should a kick-off event happen? The best time to host a kick-off event is at the beginning of the summer after the school year is completed. It can be the week your summer meal program begins or it can even be the first day of your summer meal program. Promotion of your summer kick-off event should happen well before the school year ends.

Where should a kick-off event take place? Your location will depend on the number of people you expect to attend, funds available and your organization's capacity. Kick-off events can take place at:

- A meal service site
- Community centers
- Libraries
- Parks
- Other large community gathering spaces



Presented by the Sacramento Summer Meals Collaborative

▶ yourlocalunitedway.org/SacSummerLunchbox



Who should be involved in the kick-off event? Engaging community partners is key to a successful kick-off event! Ideas for partnership include:

- Local food banks
- WIC clinics
- Schools
- Libraries
- Community health centers
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- YMCAs
- Girl Scouts
- Fire and police departments
- Local radio stations
- Local TV stations
- Youth service organizations
- Local bands or musicians
- Local artists
- American Red Cross
- Local theatre companies
- Museums
- 211
- Local sports teams

In addition to the partnership ideas above, reach out to your local elected officials to not only attend the event but also to help promote the event. Local leaders can play a critical role in helping to raise awareness of summer food service program sites and engaging them with your summer kick-off event can help encourage more participation.

Consider recruiting volunteers to help host fun activities for parents and families. Refer to the Activities Kit for fun ideas of games and activities you can offer at your summer kick-off event.




PROMOTING YOUR SUMMER KICK-OFF EVENT

SPREAD THE WORD

Begin sharing information about your summer kick-off event before the school year ends so families know when and where the event is taking place.

- Post flyers in the neighborhood surrounding your event site
- Utilize social media to invite community members
- Notify local media
- Invite local elected officials and ask for their office to promote the summer kick-off event to their constituents
- Encourage event partners to promote the event through their website and social media
- Display yard signs outside of your kick-off event space and in the surrounding community. Yard signs are an affordable way to promote your event.
- Partner with your local school
- Send a flyer home to parents
- Write an article for the school newsletter
- Ask the principal to send a robo call home to parents

Sample article for the school newsletter: Don't let healthy eating stop just because school is out! Did you know that having kids at home over summer vacation can add up to \$300 to your monthly food bill? Save time and money by taking advantage of free summer meal programs right here in our community and join [INSERT AGENCY NAME] ON [INSERT EVENT DATE, TIME, LOCATION] to learn more! You can also text FOOD to 877-877 or visit bit.ly/findsummermeals to find a location near you, where your kids can eat for free all summer long. USDA's free summer meals programs are open to all kids 18 and under, no paperwork or proof of income required!

- Use one of the images available through the  [Sacramento Summer Lunchbox](#)

Sample robo call home to parents: Good morning/afternoon/evening [SCHOOL NAME] parents. This is Principal [NAME]. It's been a pleasure watching your children learn and grow this school year. Don't let their progress stop just because school is out. Free summer meals are available to all children 18 and under right here in [COMMUNITY NAME]. To find the location nearest you, text FOOD to 877-877 or (if in Sacramento) dial 211. Don't let healthy eating take a summer vacation. See you next year."

Sample robo call home to parents: Good morning/afternoon/evening [SCHOOL NAME] parents. This is Principal [NAME]. Are you worried about how you're going to feed your kids this summer when school is out? Text the word FOOD to 877-877 to see if there's a USDA summer meals program near you where your kids can eat for free. Healthy eating shouldn't stop when school is out. Just texts FOOD to 877-877 or (if in Sacramento) dial 211. See you next year.



FIND ADDITIONAL WAYS TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY ALL SUMMER LONG

Traditionally, participation in the Summer Food Service Program declines after the July 4th holiday. Keeps the momentum going during the entire summer by hosting additional events throughout the summer to keep the community excited and engaged. These events can be simple but will help to remind families and the community about the importance and availability of summer meals.

Simple event ideas include:

- Invite the police department to come to a meal site to do child fingerprinting or have lunch with a police officer.
- Partner with your local public health department to distribute information and health screenings.
- Invite the local library branch to visit your summer meal site to sign kids up for summer reading programs or enroll in a library card.
- Partner with local businesses by hosting employees to volunteer at your meal site and lead activities with kids. Or ask local businesses for material or monetary donations to support an arts and crafts day or to sponsor a bounce house for the day.
- Work with your local food bank to do a mobile food distribution at your summer meal site. This is an opportunity to connect with families and provide valuable nutrition beyond your summer food program for the entire family.

ARE YOU READY TO HOST A SUMMER KICK-OFF EVENT?

That's great! Register your summer kick-off event with the Sacramento Summer Meals Collaborative. Registering your event is easy, email Noukoushua Yang at Noukoushua.Yang@uwccr.org to let us know the details of your summer kick-off event.

Resources compiled from California Summer Meal Coalition and USDA.



KICK-OFF EVENT PLANNING CHECKLIST

Ready to host a summer kick off event but you aren't sure where to start? Use this checklist to help guide you through the event planning process! Not every section will apply to your event, use what you need or add additional sections to accommodate your event needs.

	Due Date	Person Responsible	Date Completed
Budget			
Prepare event budget			
Identify funding sources			
General			
Identify event location			
Set event date			
Prepare and sign contracts			
Reserve equipment (table/chair rentals, DJ or sound system etc)			
Food			
Identify menu			
Confirm caterer or food vendor (if using vended meals)			
Create shopping list (if self-prep)			
Event Activities			
Identify entertainment for the event (DJ, live music or invite local radio station)			
Identify community partners to host interactive booths (child fingerprinting, face paint, arts and crafts, fun games etc)			
Marketing & Promotion			
Develop flyers and yard signs & identify partners to promote event			
Identify partners to promote event			
Invite local media			
Volunteer & Partner Recruitment			
Post volunteer opportunities on United Way Volunteer Center			
Outreach to local schools or community groups to recruit volunteers			
Post Event Wrap Up			
Send thank you cards to event partners			
Host an event debrief with key staff and volunteers to identify what worked well and what to change for next year			

