

Summer Food Service Program

Rooted in Excellence Information Sheet

Summer Meals Rooted in Excellence Awards

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) offers Rooted in Excellence awards to recognize outstanding Washington nutrition programs. Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors are invited to apply for one award and may choose to apply within either the Culinary Cultivator track or the Nurturing Navigator track. Sponsors must be in good standing in other Child Nutrition Programs and not identified as high risk to be eligible for the awards.

Innovation

Throughout the application, you may see the term “innovative.” We understand that innovation may be expressed in a variety of ways and may look different depending on sponsors’ goals and priorities. Review these examples of innovation below.

- i. Sponsor implements a new [tool/process/approach] for [specific aspect of congregate/non-congregate feeding] and collects [feedback, observations, performance data] to evaluate its impact on [program outcomes/participant experience].
- ii. Sponsor actively gathers [feedback/input/data] from [participants/families/community partners] and applies it to [improve program/enhance meal service/adjust processes].
- iii. Sponsor identifies [specific challenge/barrier] in [congregate/non-congregate feeding process] and develops solutions to address it.
- iv. Sponsor reviews [program outcomes/data/feedback] and demonstrates willingness to [adjust strategies/modify processes/adopt new practices] based on lessons learned.

Culinary Cultivator Awards

The Culinary Cultivator awards recognize sponsors that demonstrate excellence in non-congregate feeding, culinary innovation, culturally inclusive menu development, and Farm to Summer practices. These efforts help connect participants to fresh, local foods and celebrate the diverse cultures and communities that the sponsors serve. As a reminder, Child Nutrition Program sponsors are responsible for ensuring standardized recipes and menus meet meal pattern requirements. For more information on how to standardize recipes, visit the Institute of Child Nutrition’s [USDA Recipe Standardization Guides for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) or [School Nutrition Programs](#).



Non-Congregate Excellence

This award recognizes sponsors that go above and beyond in non-congregate feeding. Sponsors should highlight creative approaches to meal service in non-congregate feeding. Applications should include supporting documentation, photos of meals served, menus, participant and family testimonies, etc.

Application Checklist

Sponsors who can check at least **two** boxes from this section are eligible for the Non-Congregate Excellence award. Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Provided non-congregate meals that were appealing to participants, used participant feedback to modify meals provided, which can also include meal presentation.
- ☐ At least 50% of the fruits and vegetables served are fresh rather than packaged items like juice or applesauce, and juice is offered no more than three times per week.
- ☐ Utilized more than one non-congregate flexibility such as multi-day issuance, Bulk, Parent Pickup, Mobile Route or Home Delivery.
- ☐ Developed and implemented an innovative approach to non-congregate feeding which resulted in an increase in participation
- ☐ Integrated local Items into the menu at least three times per week for the summer and labeled them on the menu.
- ☐ Participated in Farm to Summer Week.

Application Question

Information provided will be used to draft a success story for sharing with community partners and administration.

- In a few sentences, please describe how your organization uses innovative approaches in non-congregate feeding.

Menu Planning Champion

This award recognizes sponsors that emphasize strategic menu planning and offer nutritious and appealing meals. Applications should include supporting documentation such as copies of menus, photos, and/or participant and staff testimonials, etc.

Application Checklist

Sponsors who can check at least **three** boxes from this section are eligible for the Menu Planning Champion. Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Menu includes at least two hot food items per week, per meal type.

- ☐ Weekly Menu includes a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables such as dark green, red and/or orange, starchy and other vegetables, as well as beans and peas (legumes).
- ☐ Three or more meals have at least two fresh vegetables and/or fruits per week.
- ☐ Juice is offered to meet the fruit and vegetable requirement no more than two times per week, per meal type.
- ☐ Fifty percent or more of grains served are whole grain-rich, per week, per meal type.
- ☐ Grain based desserts are served less than two times per week.

Application Question

Information provided will be used to draft a success story for sharing with community partners and administrators.

- In a few sentences, please describe how your organization uses strategic menu planning to support nutrition goals and improve meal quality for participants.

Culturally Inclusive Meals

This award honors sponsors that increase the cultural diversity of their meal offerings. Recipes may be sourced externally, such as from the [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#), [Chef Ann Foundation Lunch Box](#), [Healthy School Recipes](#). Applications should include supporting documentation, such as menus, standardized scratch cooking recipes, documentation of taste testing (such as scoring sheets/data, quotes from participants, photos of food served), flyers, training certificates, photos, etc.

Application Checklist

Sponsors who can check at least **two boxes** from this section are eligible for the Culturally Inclusive Meals award. Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Developed a new culturally inclusive scratch recipe based on participant interest that meets SFSP meal pattern requirements. Definition: Food that honors diverse cultures and dietary needs.
- ☐ Gathered participant input or feedback to modify the menu, and responded to that input by adding a new, culturally inclusive menu item.
- ☐ Highlighted specific cultural food traditions during the summer.
- ☐ Featured a culturally inclusive scratch recipe (entree or side) at least twice during the summer.
- ☐ Hosted a community event that included a culturally inclusive food item for participants, families, and/or the community.

- ☐ Engaged in taste testing of new culturally inclusive recipes with participants at least once during the summer.
- ☐ Included cultural education during taste tests or meal service to increase awareness of the meal's cultural significance.

Application Questions

Information provided will be used to draft a success story for sharing with community partners and administration.

- In a few sentences, please describe how your organization supports cultural diversity in its meal offerings.

Farm to Summer

This award celebrates sponsors maximizing their Farm to Summer program and use of local foods. Applications should include supporting documentation, such as photos, invoices, recipes featuring local ingredients, flyers for events, menus, signage, etc.

Application Checklist

Sponsors who can check at least **two** boxes from this section are eligible for the Farm to Summer award. Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Procured products directly from a local farm or food hub.
- ☐ Served locally produced foods such as vegetables, fruits, grains, milk, or meat/meat alternates, as part of the reimbursable meal at least three times during the summer.
- ☐ Sourced summer meal ingredients from the school or onsite garden or farm.
- ☐ Highlighted locally grown, caught, and raised foods using signage, menus, newsletters, web or social media content, or other materials for participants or families.
- ☐ Hosted a farmer to provide education, such as a classroom discussion, presentation, or information table.
- ☐ Held taste tests of local foods for participants at least once during the summer.
- ☐ Used [geographic preference](#) (local as a specification or defined scoring advantage) for procurement of local unprocessed agricultural products.
- ☐ Formalized policies or procedures to support sustainability of farm to child nutrition activities.

Application Question

Information provided will be used to draft a success story for sharing with community partners and administrators.

- In a few sentences, please describe how your organization is maximizing Farm to Summer and the use of local foods.

Scratch Cooking

This award recognizes sponsors that feature scratch-made recipes at least two times a week for a month or who have developed one new standardized recipe during the summer. Sponsors may source recipes from Child Nutrition Program recipe databases, such as the [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#), [Chef Ann Foundation Lunch Box](#), or [Healthy School Recipes](#) or develop a new recipe in-house. New scratch recipes should be developed in accordance with the [USDA recipe standardization process](#). Applications should include supporting documentation, such as menus, standardized recipes, documentation of taste testing (scoring sheets/data, photos, participant quotes, photos, etc.), photos of new scratch menu items, etc.

- Speed-scratch menu items are not qualifying menu items for this award. Speed scratch menu items are dishes prepared with a combination of processed or convenience ingredients and unprocessed ingredients, such as spaghetti sauce made with canned sauce, ground beef, fresh herbs, and diced vegetables.
- Scratch food production uses ingredients as close to their original state as possible. Acceptable processed ingredients in scratch prepared menu items include pre-packaged tortillas, pizza dough, buns and breads, dry pasta, canned beans, unseasoned cooked meat and fruits/vegetables, and frozen fruits and vegetables.

Application Checklist

Sponsors who can check at least **1** box in **both** Scratch Cooking sections are eligible for the Scratch Cooking award. Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Developed new scratch recipe(s) according to the USDA recipe standardization process that contain the minimum creditable amount of at least one meal component and fit into weekly meal pattern requirements. If menu items contain grains, they must be whole grain rich and cannot be a grain-based dessert.
- ☐ Featured existing scratch-made recipes sourced from Child Nutrition Program recipe databases at least twice during the summer.

Additional Scratch Cooking Activities

- ☐ Taste tested scratch-made items with participants two to three times during the summer.
- ☐ Conducted surveys, polls, or provided other feedback opportunities about menus for participants and families.

- ☐ Provided education about the recipe(s) (cultural origins, ingredient sourcing, culinary information, nutrition education, etc.).
- ☐ Used innovative strategies to involve participants in the preparation of scratch-cooked meals (for example, a build-your-own taco bar) or connected scratch cooking with site events (such as 4th of July or other summer celebrations, etc.).

Application Question

Information provided will be used to draft a success story for sharing with community partners and administrators.

- In a few sentences, please provide additional details about how increasing the frequency of scratch cooking or the development of new standardized recipes has impacted your organization. Examples include seeing an increase in meal participation, less food waste, positive participant feedback, etc.

Nurturing Navigator Awards

The Nurturing Navigator awards recognize Sponsors that demonstrate excellence in promoting their programs through innovative marketing, delivering impactful nutrition education, developing strong partnerships, and engaging their community.

Marketing and Promotion

This award recognizes sponsors that have worked to promote their program and inform families and the community of the great work they are doing. Applications should include supporting documentation, such as press releases, social media posts, flyers, photos, documentation of family nights/programming, articles, etc. If you saw increased participation, include that in your application.

Application Checklist

Sponsors who can check at least **three** boxes from this section are eligible for the Marketing and Promotion award. Please check all boxes that apply.

- ☐ Engaged in promotion via social media at least twice during the summer.
- ☐ Created and distributed materials like maps, photos of the site, and/or digital/text reminders ahead of time to help people easily find the location.
- ☐ Provided clear, branded signage at key areas, including directional arrows, markers, or site staff to guide participants to the meal location during operation.

- ☐ Gathered feedback from participants to improve access to meals, and used the feedback to update signage or directions.
- ☐ Created and distributed a video to promote the summer meals program.
- ☐ Hosted a community event for families and/or the community.
- ☐ Created and distributed site-specific promotional materials and/or activities to spread awareness of the summer meals program.
- ☐ Engaged participants in the marketing of summer meal programs (student recipe contests, participant contributions to sites social media, participant creation of promotional materials, etc.).

Application Question

Information provided will be used to draft a success story for sharing with community partners and administrators.

- In a few sentences, please share how your organization engaged in marketing your program to families and the community.

Nutrition Education

This award recognizes sponsors that have created or expanded nutrition education opportunities for participants or families. Applications should include supporting documentation such as photos, flyers, program planning information, agendas with learning objectives, presentation materials, etc.

Application Checklist

Sponsors who can check at least **two** boxes from this section are eligible for the Nutrition Education award. Please check all boxes that apply.

- ☐ Provided nutrition education to participants or families.
- ☐ Sent nutrition information home to families at least once per month during the summer.
- ☐ Hosted a culinary class or demonstration for participants or families.
- ☐ Participated in Harvest of the Month/Summer at least once per month during the summer.
- ☐ Provided garden-based nutrition education for participants.
- ☐ Incorporated nutrition education in the meal service area using menus, posters, signage, or displays to highlight nutrition and health benefits, cultural origins, locally sourced ingredients, cooking methods, etc.

- ☐ Developed other new nutrition education programming outside of the categories above (please describe in application).

Application Question

Information provided will be used to draft a success story for sharing with community partners and administrators.

- In a few sentences, please share how your organization engaged in nutrition education activities with participants and families.

Partnerships and Engagement

This award recognizes sponsors that have strengthened partnerships and/or community engagement to improve nutrition and/or wellness. Applications should include supporting documentation, such as flyers, posters, photos, training documentation, quotes from staff/participants, letters of collaboration with external partners, etc.

Application Checklist

Sponsors who can check at least **two** boxes from this section are eligible for the Partnerships and Engagement award. Please check all boxes that apply.

- ☐ Worked with partners or outside organizations to plan and host activities or events that increase participation in summer meal programs.
- ☐ Collaborated and established a relationship with other sponsors and/or community partners to help manage summer meal operations, including meal delivery and/or other related logistics, to increase Summer Meals participation.
- ☐ Increased opportunities for summer participants feedback such as establishing meal or menu surveys, creating a summer meals participant advisory board, etc.
- ☐ Collected input from community members and families by hosting conversations, surveys, or outreach activities to identify optimal locations for summer meal sites that best meet participants' needs and ensuring that the site is easy for participants and families to locate through clear directions, signage, and outreach.
- ☐ Developed innovative approaches to strengthen partnerships or engage the community.

Application Question

Information provided will be used to draft a success story for sharing with community partners and administrators.

- In a few sentences, please describe the partnership and engagement efforts at your organization.

Leadership

This award recognizes sponsors who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to promoting the Summer Food Service Program. Recognition is given to those leaders who advocate for the expansion of the summer meals and actively share their successes and offer mentorship. Applicants are encouraged to include supporting materials such as social media content, flyers, photos, or any type of documentation.

Application Checklist

Sponsors who can check at least **two** boxes from this section are eligible for the leadership award. Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Participated in the SFSP advisory council group.
- ☐ Provided mentorship or technical assistance to new or emerging sponsors.
- ☐ Supported professional development or training for staff or community partners to expand understanding of summer meals.
- ☐ Participated as a lead or co-facilitated a local, regional, or statewide initiative that strengthened summer meal access or awareness.
- ☐ Developed a summer meals program practice tool or created a partnership model.
- ☐ Developed a plan to improve collaboration between other child nutrition programs such as Farm to Child Nutrition, NSLP, and CACFP.
- ☐ Demonstrated measurable growth in participation, access points, or community engagement compared with the previous year.

Application Question

Information provided will be used to draft a success story for sharing with community partners and administrators.

- In a few sentences, describe how you have taken a leadership role in advocating for summer meal programs or how your mentorship has supported others involved in summer meals.

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