



# Six Reasons to Offer **Rural Non-Congregate** Summer Meals

## 1. REACH MORE KIDS WHERE THEY ARE

- Eliminates the need for on-site congregating. Meals can be picked up or delivered, which is ideal for rural and remote communities.
- Supports working families. Parents can pick up meals during flexible hours, increasing access for kids whose parents work during the day.
- Serves children in extreme heat. Arizona's summer temperatures make outdoor congregate feeding impractical and unsafe in many areas.
- Ideal for transportation-challenged areas. Parents may not have access to reliable transportation for daily on-site feeding.

## 2. FLEXIBILITY FOR SPONSORS & SITES

- Simpler site models. There is no need for staff for meal consumption supervision or enrichment activities.
- Mobile delivery options allowed. Meals can be dropped off at homes, community hubs, or designated rural locations.
- Weekend and multi-day meal distribution allowed under USDA non-congregate flexibilities.
- Combines easily with other outreach. Great for food box programs, home visits, or mobile libraries.

## 3. ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY AT SCALE

- Arizona has high child food insecurity. Over 1 in 5 children face hunger, especially when school is out.
- Bridges the summer nutrition gap. Keeps kids nourished when school meals are not available.
- Targets underserved communities. Non-congregate options especially benefit tribal, rural, and low-income areas.

## 4. FUNDING IS AVAILABLE

- Federal reimbursement is available through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO).
- No cost to families. All meals are served free to children 18 and under.
- Operational and administrative costs supported. It helps reduce the financial burden on sponsors.

## 5. PROVEN SUCCESS IN ARIZONA

- Strong results from past pilot programs—families report high satisfaction with flexibility and access.
- Expanded USDA guidance for summer 2024 supports continued non-congregate options in rural areas.

## 6. SIMPLE ELIGIBILITY

- Sites located in areas where 50% or more of children qualify for free or reduced-price meals.
- Can partner with local schools, housing authorities, parks, libraries, and tribal entities.
- The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) provides training, tools, and technical assistance.

## NEXT STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED

- Identify your eligible site(s)
- Contact the Arizona Department of Education – Health & Nutrition Services for training and application support
- Choose your operating model (pickup, delivery, multi-day distribution, etc.)
- Promote the program in your community

For more information, please contact ADE Health and Nutrition Services via [HelpDesk](#).

