



HNS # 03-2026

Original Signed

MEMORANDUM

To: School Food Authorities and Community Organizations

From: Melissa Conner, Senior Deputy Associate Superintendent
Arizona Department of Education, Health and Nutrition Services Division

Date: March 3, 2026

Subject: Application for Summer Meal Programs

This memorandum provides School Food Authorities (SFAs) and Community Organizations (COs) application requirements and deadlines for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This memorandum also reminds SFAs of their eligibility to apply for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or to extend the NSLP for any school that is hosting an academic summer school. Attached are questions and answers (Attachment A) intended to provide clarification to entities applying for summer meal programs.

Applying for Participation in the Summer Food Service Program

This memorandum marks the start of applications being available in CNPWeb and CNP Management Plans and Budgets for Program Year 2026 (PY 2026). To participate as a sponsor for the SFSP or SSO, schools and COs must submit a complete application to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Health and Nutrition Services (HNS) by **May 29, 2026**.

Any applications received after May 29, 2026, will not be considered for SFSP sponsorship. However, participation as a site under an approved SFSP sponsor may be an option. Each site participating in summer meal service must have an approved application prior to serving meals to claim the meals for reimbursement.

For new prospective entities, the first step towards participating in the SFSP program is to complete the [SFSP Prospective Entity Form for Community Organizations](#). For additional clarification or assistance during this process, please contact ADE's Health and Nutrition Services Onboarding Team via [HelpDesk](#) or by calling 602-542-8700.

All organizations applying to operate the SFSP must demonstrate to the State Agency, compliance with the performance standards for financial viability, administrative capability, and program accountability, recently codified at 7 CFR 225.6(d). Compliance is demonstrated by sponsors through the submission of a management plan and a complete budget documenting the anticipated costs,

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revenues, and sources of revenues for the SFSP operation. The requirements and level of detail required in the management plan may vary for experienced sponsors and those with operational problems. The SFSP management plan and budget are submitted by sponsors in the CNP Management Plans and Budgets web-based system.

Good standing is defined as “the status of a program operator that meets its Program responsibilities, is current with its financial obligations, and, if applicable, has fully implemented all corrective actions within the required period of time.” For SFAs applying for SFSP, the successful operation of the NSLP may be considered sufficient evidence of compliance with administrative capability and financial viability. Therefore, SFAs in good standing who have not experienced operational problems will not be required to submit a management plan. However, the State agency may request additional evidence of administrative capability sufficient to ensure the SFA can comply with the performance standards for the SFSP. SFAs must also submit an Annual Financial Report (AFR) to ADE to be considered in good standing and will be exempt from submitting a budget if financial viability is evident through the submission of the Food Service AFR.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) institutions must demonstrate compliance with financial viability, administrative capability, and program accountability; therefore, COs will still be required to submit a management plan and budget for SFSP participation.

ADE also requires all applying sponsors to submit an SFSP sponsor application and site applications in CNPWeb for each meal service site. The sponsor application gathers details on how the sponsoring organization operates its summer programs, including general information about the sponsoring organization, its meal pattern, and meal-counting procedures, as well as anticipated revenues and costs. HNS has updated the language in Section 7 of the sponsor application for SFAs, replacing “New Meal Pattern” with “NSLP/School Breakfast Program (SBP) Meal Pattern”. COs can only participate in summer meals under the SFSP Meal Pattern, while SFAs have the choice of either the SFSP Meal Pattern or the NSLP/SBP Meal Pattern. Schools will need to indicate if they operate NSLP to be eligible to utilize the NSLP/SBP Meal Pattern. If a school does not operate NSLP, it will only be eligible to utilize the SFSP Meal Pattern. All sites under the sponsoring organization must operate the same meal pattern. Meal patterns may be switched but only on a monthly basis, and sponsors must notify the state agency and be approved in CNPWeb by your assigned Specialist prior to implementing the change. Each site application will include detailed options for non-congregate meal service types. Sites that are eligible and implementing the non-congregate meals service style must indicate all meal service types they offer. The following meal service types are allowed for non-congregate meal service:

- Home delivery single-day issuance
- Home delivery multi-day meal issuance
- Home delivery bulk distribution
- Meal pick-up single-day issuance
- Meal pick-up multi-day meal issuance
- Meal pick-up bulk distribution
- Mobile meal single-day meal issuance
- Mobile meal multi-day meal issuance
- Mobile meal bulk distribution

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An operator of a non-congregate meal service must indicate the maximum number of days of meals provided per child for each meal type selected.

In each site application under Section 4, a new question has been added, titled "Non-congregate Rural Designation." When a site is designated as rural, there is an approval timeframe of five years, and this section will document the duration of rural eligibility. This section will be completed by the assigned HNS Specialist after the submission of the sponsor and site applications with the following information:

- Rural Designation Determination: (eligible/ineligible)
- Rural Designation Determination Beginning Program Year
- Rural Designation Determination Ending Program Year

ADE HNS will seek approval from USDA to allow SFSP and SSO sponsors, in good standing, to operate outdoor meal sites as non-congregate sites on days when the National Weather Service has issued a Heat Advisory, Excessive Heat Warning, or Excessive Heat Watch for the area where the site is located. Upon approval for this waiver, ADE HNS will provide additional guidance on how SFSP and SSO sponsors can opt-in to this waiver and report usage.

Training for Summer Meal Service Programs

ADE HNS is hosting a special edition **Staying on Track webinar** on **April 7, 2026**, that will address summer meal applications and eligibility, SUN Meals To-Go, SUN Bucks, and nutrition promotion during summer meal service. HNS highly recommends attendance at this webinar. Additionally, ADE HNS will be offering the **Summer Feeding Options for Schools webinar** on **April 16, 2026**. This webinar will review the ways that operators are able to provide meals during the summer months and will feature guest speakers who have successfully operated different summer feeding options. Please register for these webinars in the [ADE Professional Learning and Development \(APLD\)](#).

SFAs and CACFP institutions familiar with operating a federal child nutrition program are encouraged but not required to attend training prior to submitting the SFSP application.

New organizations applying to operate the SFSP are required to complete the State agency training during the prospective entity process.

- [Orientation for Sponsoring Organizations: SFSP](#)
- [Civil Rights Compliance for Child Nutrition Program Operators](#)

All approved SFSP administrative staff must be informed about program requirements and attend the necessary sponsor-led training. Sponsoring organizations are required to provide training for their administrative and site personnel and must not allow a site to operate until personnel have attended training that covers the purpose of the SFSP, site eligibility, recordkeeping, site operations, meal pattern requirements, and the duties of a monitor. Additional training for Summer Meal Programs can be found on the [Summer Meal Service website](#).

USDA Foods and Summer Meals

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The USDA Foods in Schools program supports domestic nutrition programs and American agricultural producers through purchases of 100 percent American-grown and produced foods for use by schools, child-care facilities, and institutions operating SFSP and SSO.

SFSP and SSO operators are encouraged to indicate “YES” to participate in the USDA Foods in Schools program question within Section 5 of the sponsor application. SFAs operating the SSO or SFSP may use the remaining USDA Foods in Schools entitlement and donated foods allocated for NSLP in School Year (SY) 2025-26 for their summer meal operations. COs approved to operate the SFSP can request to participate by contacting ADE HNS at USDAFoods@azed.gov and will be provided entitlement to order fresh produce through the USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (USDA DoD Fresh). If an operator needs to establish a new delivery site for the USDA DoD Fresh, they should contact ADE at USDAFoods@azed.gov. It is imperative that all delivery sites comply with the minimum requirements for receiving shipments, and that all shipments meet the necessary criteria for ordering and receipting.

Additional Summer Feeding Options for School Food Authorities

NSLP Seamless Summer Option

Schools participating in the NSLP or SBP are eligible to apply for the SSO to operate sites that meet the same eligibility requirements of SFSP. Once approved, the school serves meals free of charge to children, including teenagers, through age 18. Meals are reimbursed at the free rates for school lunches, school breakfasts, and afterschool snacks, which are slightly lower than the SFSP Program rates.

ADE requires all applying SFAs to submit a sponsor application and site applications. In general, the sponsor application gathers details on how the sponsoring organization runs its summer operations, such as general information about the sponsoring organization, menu, and meal counting procedures. The site application documents site operations such as mealtime, location, site classification, and eligibility.

Sponsor and site applications will be submitted to ADE through the web-based application, CNPWeb. All applications must be approved by HNS before meal service begins.

Extending the NSLP

SFAs may choose to operate NSLP and claim reimbursement for meals (lunches under NSLP and breakfasts under the SBP) served during the summer months to children enrolled in summer school, which USDA defines as an integral part of the curriculum or an extension of the local educational program. The SFA also has the option to operate the Afterschool Care Snack Program through NSLP to provide snacks served in afterschool care programs used for children on days attending summer school. ^(O&A)[*Afterschool Snacks, Questions and Answers, Edition 3 in response to SP 99-4 CACFP 99-4: Reimbursement for Snacks in After School Care Programs*](#)^(O&A). SFAs that intend to operate NSLP to provide meals during summer school should contact the assigned HNS specialist to confirm eligibility and discuss application requirements.

Additional Reminders

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As a reminder, the At-Risk Afterschool Meals component of the CACFP may only be operated during the academic school year. For further guidance, please review [CACFP 08-2012: The At-Risk Afterschool Meals Component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Questions and Answers](#).

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released multiple updates in the form of memorandums providing guidance and revisions on implementing SFSP and SSO non-congregate meal service in rural areas during summer meals. These memorandums can be found on the [HNS/USDA](#) memos page:

- SFSP 03-2024, SP 05-2024: Implementation Guidance for the Rural Non-Congregate Option Provisions of the Interim Final Rule, Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs
- SFSP 04-2024, SP 06-2024: Rural Designations in the Summer Meal Programs – Revised
- SFSP 07-2024, SP 13-2024: Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas Questions and Answers
- SFSP 08-2024, SP 15-2024: Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas: Questions and Answers #2
- SFSP 09-2024, SP 08-2025: Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas: Questions and Answers #3

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ATTACHMENT A
Questions and Answers

Application Deadlines and Requirements

1. Are requests for additional sites considered after May 29, 2026?

Yes, operators may notify ADE HNS of new sites at any time if operating SSO or SFSP. To request new sites, operators will submit the Add/Change/Delete form and attach documentation including site's eligibility, and if applicable, a signed non-associated site agreement.

2. Do SSO applications in the CNPWeb have a May 29, 2026 deadline?

SSO applications can be submitted after May 29, 2026, but must be submitted by the June 15th deadline, as required in 7 CFR 225.6(b)(1). Applications must also be submitted and approved prior to the start of meal service.

3. Does the SFSP application need to be in 'submitted' status or 'approved' status by May 29?

The management plan, budget (if applicable), and CNPWeb applications must be submitted by May 29. If any part of the application needs revision or has a 'rejected' status on or after May 29, the application may still be considered for SFSP sponsorship.

4. Does the SFA need to complete a management plan or budget when applying for SSO?

No. SFAs in good standing that apply for the SSO will only to submit CNPWeb sponsor and site applications.

Site Types and Eligibility

5. What are the eligibility requirements for the different site types: open, open-restricted, closed enrolled, and camps?

SFAs and COs that are approved to operate SSO or SFSP may serve meals free of charge to all children 18 years and under. The types of sites are allowed to participate based on the eligibility described below:

- Open sites: all children eat free in communities where at least 50 percent of the children are eligible for free/reduced-price school meals.
- Restricted open sites: all children eat free in communities where at least 50 percent of the children are eligible for free/reduced-price school meals. Attendance is limited for safety, control, or security reasons.
- Closed enrolled sites: sites within the community where only the enrolled group of low-income children eat free. The site must either be area eligible, or at least 50 percent of the children enrolled must be low-income. Sponsors are required to keep enrollment records and participant eligibility documentation each month to verify that at least 50 percent of the children are eligible.
- Camps: residential or nonresidential day camps that offer regularly scheduled food service as part of an organized program for enrolled children. Camps do not have to establish area eligibility. However, they must collect and maintain participant eligibility documentation. Camps are only reimbursed for meals served to enrolled children who meet the free and/or reduced-price eligibility standards.

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6. What year can school data be used to qualify sites for this summer?

Current-year school data may be used to establish area eligibility for the SFSP and SSO, excluding camps. For a site to be determined area eligible, school data must indicate that the proposed meal site is in the attendance area of a school where at least 50 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. Area eligibility determinations made using school data must be re-determined every five years, in accordance with the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act as outlined in [SP 08, CACFP 04, SFSP 03-2017: Area Eligibility in Child Nutrition Programs](#).

7. Can a site applying for closed enrolled (SSO or SFSP) operation use census data to qualify for participation?

Yes, the site may use any of the following to qualify school data, participant income application data, or census data. If census data or school data does not support area eligibility, closed enrolled sites may collect income applications for the enrolled students and are considered eligible if 50-percent or more of the enrolled students are free or reduced eligible. Entities may use the [CACFP and SFSP Area Eligibility Mapper](#).

8. Can a high school-only district use area eligibility information from an area elementary school?

Area eligibility may be established for a site that does not have at least 50 percent of the children enrolled at the site eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the NSLP or SBP if the site's physical address is located within an official school boundary of another site that is 50 percent free or reduced-price eligible. Sites using this method to support area eligibility would obtain an official school-boundary identifying map, match the site's addresses to the map's boundaries, and retain the map as documentation. Entities may use the [Hometown Locator](#).

9. Are sites eligible and approved to operate the summer meal programs before 2026 still eligible?

Sites previously determined area eligible based on school data or census data are effective for five years; SY 2021-22, SY 2022-23, SY 2023-24, SY 2024-2025, SY 2025-2026 approvals are applicable and do not need to redetermine eligibility.

10. What is a site cap for each meal service?

Sites participating in SFSP or SSO will have a site cap applied to each meal service in line with the requirements found in [SFSP 16-2015](#). The purpose of a site cap is to ensure that a site does not purchase and/or produce meals outside the capability of the site and the needs of the community, thereby reducing waste and protecting the integrity of the Program. Sponsors may seek an upward adjustment in the approved level for its sites by requesting a site review or by providing the State agency with evidence that the number of meals served exceeds the sites' approved levels. The sponsor may request an upward adjustment at any point prior to submitting the claim for the impacted reimbursement period.

Academic Summer School

11. What is the difference between extending the academic school year and offering summer school that counts towards graduation?

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Summer school is an additional session for select students who seek or need academic credits for graduation or promotion to the next grade. This documentation would need to be provided to the assigned HNS specialist before approval. Extending the school year would mean the end date of the current school year has been extended for an additional period, with all students being required to attend.

12. If a summer school site is not area eligible for SSO or SFSP, can the school provide meals at no cost to the student?

Sites operating both a summer school program and the NSLP will serve and claim meals following NSLP program regulations, which include counting and claiming the meals served based on the student's eligibility.

13. If a site does not qualify to serve all meals free this summer and is not operating a program that meets the definition of summer school, what are other scenarios/options the school can do to feed the children?

This is dependent on what programming is being offered at the site. The program may qualify as a camp or may qualify to operate a closed enrolled site under the SSO or SFSP.

Sites operating closed enrolled will make meals available to only the enrolled children attending the site, as opposed to the community. Closed enrolled sites must support area eligibility either by attendance area or may be located outside of an eligible attendance area. However, at least 50 percent of the children enrolled must be considered low-income.

When the site is not area-eligible, sponsors and SFAs must keep enrollment records and participant eligibility documentation each month to verify that at least 50 percent of the children are eligible.

Camps can be residential or non-residential, must have a regularly scheduled food service, must obtain or collect income applications to determine eligibility for enrolled participants and must maintain such records. Only the meals served to free or reduced-price eligible children at a site approved as a camp will be reimbursed under the SSO and SFSP. Camps may charge for meals provided to participants who are ineligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits.

14. Can a site that is area eligible be open while offering a summer school?

Yes, an area-eligible school can operate SSO or SFSP as an open site to reach the community, while the school location also has an enrolled group of students on the campus for summer school. Like the children in the community who come to the open site, the students in the summer school would also be able to obtain meals from the SSO/SFSP meals service at the site.

15. If an SFA offers a summer school and does not want to open the campus to the community, can the SFA operate SSO closed enrolled or restricted open sites?

No, summer school is not an acceptable reason to operate as a closed enrolled or restricted open site. Per USDA memorandum, [SP 09-2017: 2017 Edition of Questions and Answers for the National School Lunch Program's Seamless Summer Option](#), summer school is ineligible to operate as a closed enrolled for SSO. The site is still considered open and will serve on a first-come, first-served basis. Restricted open sites may limit attendance for security, safety, or

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control reasons. Alternatively, the site may consider continuing to operate the NSLP during academic summer school.

16. Can a site that is area eligible be open while offering a summer school?

Yes, an area-eligible school can operate SSO or SFSP as an open site to reach the community, while the school location also has an enrolled group of students on the campus for summer school. Like the children in the community who come to the open site, the students in the summer school would also be able to obtain meals from the SSO/SFSP meals service at the site.

17. If a program is referred to as summer school, but it is actually enrichment with no credit received, does the program have to offer meals to those students as a closed enrolled site?

No, the program may apply for either SSO or SFSP and operate as an open site if the site is area-eligible. The students attending the enrichment program can be served meals at this site in the same way the site serves the community.

18. Can a school or site participating under the SSO as an open site serve meals at staggered times for the community children and the school children attending summer school?

Yes, schools or sites participating under the SSO must ensure community children have the same access to the meals and meal services as the children enrolled in summer school. If meal service times are staggered, the same meal service opportunity (e.g. a lunch) must be provided to both groups, meaning the same meal is served for the same length of time for both groups. Sites requesting to offer staggered meal service times will need to communicate the meal service times as part of the application process by contacting the assigned HNS specialist.

19. What should I do if I have an area-eligible site but need an organization to sponsor this site?

Complete the PY26 Summer Food Site Interest Form [Here](#).

20. Will an administrative review occur if our district participates in Summer Nutrition Programs?

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): Administrative reviews are conducted by the State agency in the sponsor's first year of operating SFSP and then at least every 3 years.

Seamless Summer Option (SSO): The State agency conducts SSO Administrative reviews in the summer following the SFA's SY 2025-26 NSLP administrative review.

Extending the NSLP: Summer Administrative reviews will not occur for SFAs who have received an NSLP Administrative Review in SY 2025-26 and choose to extend the length of the NSLP operation dates through the summer months.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by

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USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the state or local agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, [AD-3027](#), found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. **Mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. **Fax:** (202) 690-7442; or
3. **Email:** program.intake@usda.gov.

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