

Building Partnerships to Support Your Program

Summer meal programs present an unprecedented opportunity to bring together community partners to support the health and wellbeing of children and youth while also creating a more connected community when school is out. Communities across California have demonstrated that there are many creative ways to engage a range of city, county, school and other local partners in a way that creates shared goals and supports the efforts of each individual agency. This guide is designed to help you think about possible partnerships and opportunities.

Providing regular activities and programs at summer meal sites can help increase participation. If partner agencies cannot commit to providing regular complementary activities throughout the course of the summer, consider an “Adopt-a-Week” strategy, possibly in collaboration with other sponsors where activities can be rotated throughout the community. In addition to illustrating the importance of summer meal programs to families in the community, the following tips may bolster your efforts:

- Highlight how the partner’s participation at summer meal sites can help support its organizational goals;
- Help potential partners visualize the longer term benefits to the community (e.g., contribution to workforce-prepared next generation, mitigation of social isolation and/or risk of gang involvement, stimulation of robust inter-agency collaboration);
- Include a specific ask, if possible. Remember that other agencies can contribute in ways beyond funds.

Below are some examples to consider as you assess the community for potential collaborators.

Agency	Examples of activities
Police / sheriff / probation / district attorney’s office	Child fingerprinting, information distribution (National Night Out/neighborhood watch/crime prevention, gun safety), “comida/lunch w/cops,” opportunities for parents to talk about issues of concern with law enforcement leaders, Chief as a guest reader, visit from police mascot (e.g., McGruff), activities managed by police explorers or school resource officers, exploration of police vehicles
Public health / healthcare providers / hospitals / clinics	Information distribution, health screenings, diabetes or asthma management workshops, mobile clinics, insurance enrollment, nutrition education (e.g., fruit-infused “spa water” and games that keep kids moving
Public works / recycling / water /utilities / waste management	Activities to promote conservation or recycling, crafts using recycled/repurposed materials, art contest (conservation, anti-food waste) with winning art displayed in city hall or on school website

Agency	Examples of activities
Fire Departments	Fire truck/firefighter visit, home/fire safety basics, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) information distribution, hot day cool-down, uniform speed-dress-up game
Libraries / Museums	Bookmobile, summer reading sign-ups and activities, techmobile, guest readers, maker spaces. Some museums have mobile programs that may be able to visit your site.
Rotary Clubs	Guest readers, STEM activities, site volunteers
Local businesses	Financial literacy (banks/credit unions), construction crafts (hardware store, local contractor/developer), STEM (biotech, technology, even big box stores, local community college), physical activity (ROTC or military installation), job application/interviewing workshop for teens (local store managers), donated materials (hula hoops, soccer balls, a bike for a raffle drawing). Even a business like a car dealership may be interested in supporting kids by purchasing inexpensive sports equipment or craft materials. Ask for help underwriting advertising. The ad sales team at local media outlets may be able to assist in connecting your agency with a corporate partner interested in doing good for the community.
School districts	<p>Taste tests – help develop the school year menu; Summer activity package– incentives/prizes given for completion of activities and return to summer meal sites; teachers/volunteers to assist with English as Second Language tutoring; summer art contest before school lets out with winners announced at kick-off. A popular coach can do a basic skills clinic.</p> <p>High schools may be great sources for teen volunteers to assist with activities. Consider stipends or school credit as incentives and to encourage reliable help.</p>
Master gardeners / UC Cooperative Extension / farmers	Farm to Fork activities, “know your farmer,” mobile farm (e.g., dig in the soil, meet the chickens), nutrition education/gardening
Social services	Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), WIC, other assistance programs, resources for foster care kids/families
Animal rescue groups / county animal shelter	Animal education
Urban muralists / art guild / dance groups	Collective art project / dance performance demos / lessons

Agency	Examples of activities
Military – school liaisons	In communities with high military populations, there are often liaisons to assist families with acclimating to the community and school.
Community college/ university	Volunteers to assist with activities, and subject-specific activities
Elected officials	Lunch with the mayor/councilmember, guest readers, Kids Leadership Lunch where kids meet with the mayor over lunch and talk about community issues
Early-age agencies (Head Start, Migrant Head Start) / First 5	Books, information for families, services
YMCA / Boys & Girls Club	Activities, BGC youth volunteers/employees
Local transportation agency (LTA)	Subsidize bus passes; explore feasibility of collaborating with programs that transport seniors and disabled community members; explore if/how your agency can provide in-kind local match to support LTA efforts for federal funds for bus service (in return for supporting transportation to summer meal sites); Tulare County’s Loop Bus is funded through gang prevention efforts and transports youth to activities.
First 5	Some have regional parent groups that can help get the word out, or resource centers may be able to assist with outreach.
Spanish language media	Consider establishing a summer-long cause related marketing relationship to include a set number of promos (e.g., during traffic or weather report), live kick-off broadcasts, guest appearances.
Food bank	SNAP outreach, summer meal outreach, produce for families to take home. If fresh produce storage is a challenge, consider exploring whether the food bank has cold storage space that could be rented.

Lunch at the Library is a project of the California Library Association, supported by the California State Library with funds from the State of California.

For more information about Lunch At the Library, visit LunchAtTheLibrary.org.