



Kick-off events can be a great way to let families in the community know about your Lunch at the Library program and generate excitement about the start of summer. In addition to drawing new families to your library, events can present an ideal opportunity to start or strengthen partnerships with other city or county departments and community agencies. Events can be as large or small as you want and can be planned on the fly with the help of nimble community partners. Below are some ideas if you are considering a kick-off event:

- ❖ **Start the discussion with your meal provider early.** As soon as you've confirmed that your library will be a site, discuss with your meal provider the possibility of a kick-off event. They will likely need to plan for extra meals and this is an opportunity for them to think about what kind of presence they would like to have at the event (e.g., promotion materials). Sometimes meal providers may be able to have staff at the event if there is a larger than normal anticipated attendance. In some instances, school districts have provided free produce or covered the cost of adult meals for the kick-off event.
- ❖ **Do an assessment of community partners to invite to the event.** (See Our Community Asset Mapping Guide on the Lunch at the Library website). This is a perfect opportunity to reach out to other local government departments such as public health, police, fire, public works, or recycling and offer the opportunity to provide information, activities or education at the event. They may have fun giveaways alongside important information to share with the community. This is an opportunity for other agencies to learn more about the library too. Community partners such as First 5, the local food bank or museum and other community-based agencies make wonderful additions to your event. Cooking or karate demonstrations, book giveaways or even a hula hoop contest can bring added energy to your event. Container gardening is an easy way to also promote healthy eating at home. Be sure to think about:
 - *Layout* – Where will you station your community partners? Plan adequate spacing for those leading activities and those who will just have a resource table.
 - *Tables* -- Will partners need to bring their own tables or will the library provide that?
 - *Flow* – Think about the sequence of activities to ensure that there is adequate space and that bottlenecks will not be created. Think about the flow of the lunch service too. If the location where lunch will be served has capacity limitations, consider for a staggered lunch service, two serving lines or back-up spot for kids to eat.
 - *Partner acknowledgement* – How will you acknowledge partner involvement? This could be in the form of inclusion in promotional materials, mention in speaker remarks, or simply a post-event thank you note including event highlights.
- ❖ **Invite your elected officials.** This is a great opportunity for your local leaders to see your library in action as well as providing them a chance to interact with the community in a fun setting. It is helpful to give them a clear role in the event (e.g., opening remarks, guest reader, contest judge, serving meals) to make them feel comfortable participating in the event and help community members feel comfortable interacting with them.
- ❖ **Promote the event!** This is very media-worthy community event. Consider asking a local media personality to broadcast live from the event or contact the assignment desks at local outlets in the days leading up to your event. Be sure to ask your community partners to help promote the event. An added bonus of inviting your great community partners to participate in your event is that they have networks of their own and can help share your flyer. Day-of social media posts can also help generate participation in your Lunch at the Library program in the days following the event.
- ❖ **This is an ideal time for summer reading and library application sign-ups.** Make sure to have plenty of library card applications as well as whatever tools your library is using to sign kids (and adults) up for summer reading.
- ❖ **Events don't have to be in the beginning of summer.** Some libraries and their meal providers use the slower pace in the middle of summer to host an event and bump up participation.

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