

Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service Agency Report:

Agency and Mission: U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS)

FNS' mission is to reduce food insecurity and hunger in America. We are committed to ensuring access to healthy and safe food for those participating in our programs, including expecting mothers, infants and children in child care and school, low-income families going to food banks, local farmers markets, and local supermarkets. These are investments that support education, health care, and a competitive workforce.

FNS works to end hunger and obesity through the administration of 15 federal nutrition assistance programs including Women Infants and Children (WIC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). In partnership with State and Tribal governments, our programs serve one in four Americans during the course of a year. FNS collaborates with public, private and non-profit partners to provide children, teens, and low-income adults access to healthy food and nutrition education in ways that support American agriculture and inspire public confidence. No American should have to go hungry.

A Significant Program Implemented in Coordination and Collaboration with Other Federal Agencies: USDA FNS Summer Meals Program. During the summer months, millions of low-income children and teens lose access to school breakfast, lunch, and after school meals that are available during the regular school year. FNS' Summer Meals Program fills these gaps, providing free meals and snacks to low-income children 18 and under when school is not in session.

During this Administration, USDA FNS has partnered with federal agencies—USDA Rural Development, Housing and Urban Development's Public and Indian Housing, the Department of Defense, the Department of Transportation, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Corporation for National and Community Service—to expand the reach of our Summer Meals Program.

Initial Steps Taken to Sustain this Program and the Coordination and Collaboration with Federal Agencies: Since 1968, there has been a federally funded summer food program in one form or another. Since that time, FNS has continually expanded the Summer Meals Program, trying to reach as many eligible children and teens as possible. FNS' work with other Federal agencies has helped to further this expansion.

Innovative Approaches Developed to Sustain the Relationships with Other Agencies: Four themes showcase how FNS has built and expanded upon successful, collaborative partnerships with other Federal agencies.

1. Commitment from Leadership: One key to successful partnerships with other Federal agencies for FNS has been securing interest and commitment from top leaders. Overseeing multifamily housing sites in rural areas, Rural Development's Administrator, Tony Hernandez, clearly saw the value of enabling the children and teens living in these complexes to eat where they live throughout the summer months. Accordingly, he publicly committed to increasing the number of RD multi-family housing sites serving as summer meal sites in 2015 by 50%. RD's Rural Housing Service (RHS) surpassed its 50% goal for summer 2016 by increasing its SFSP sites by 71% over last summer. In 2015, 184 properties participated, and 310 properties participated in 2016. RD was able to attract children on site as well as other kids in the neighborhoods. RHS will push the goal in core programs up to 300 or more properties in 2017 and the number of facilities participating will be even higher.
2. Funding: FNS leveraged the valuable programs operated by other Federal agencies by providing funding to reach teens at risk of juvenile delinquency with FNS' Summer Meals Program. In both 2015 and 2016, FNS provided funding to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to sponsor 50 summer VISTAs each year. The Summer VISTAs helped serve meals, expanded activities at summer meal sites, and helped to get the word out in eligible communities about summer meal site locations. This financial commitment from FNS, and other entities, enabled CNCS to expand its Summer VISTA program, placing over 650 Summer VISTAs across 32 states in 2016. Six out of the 16 Summer Opportunity Hub cities hosted Summer VISTAs: Baltimore, DC, Detroit, Flint, Houston, and New Orleans.
3. Commitment to Joint Problem Solving: FNS has persistently engaged other federal agencies where immediate opportunities are not apparent. For example, FNS and the Department of Education (DoED) have been in discussions for a number of years, and did some collaborative engagement, e.g. a joint letter from Secretaries Vilsack and King on the importance of summer meals. However, the two agencies could not quite find the right connection or fit to make the kind of impact on summer meals for which FNS was hoping. Through persistent problem-solving and relationship-building, FNS and DoED identified that Title 1 funds may be used to provide summer programs and activities for eligible (at-risk) students. These discussions have laid the groundwork for creative implementation and a projected joint letter for 2017.

Similarly, FNS and the Department of Transportation (DoT) tried to resolve how to leverage DoT's resources to transport children and teens to summer sites and food to summer sites. Bringing in one of DoT's Federal Transit Administration's nonprofit

partners, the National Center for Mobility Management created the pamphlet *Transportation Strategies to Connect Youth with Summer Food Programs*.

4. Leveraging Unique Communication Channels: Federal agencies have tremendously valuable communication channels that can be leveraged to share mutually-beneficial information. For example, FNS leveraged unique communication channels of USPS and DoD to help get the word out about summer meals to important audiences.

FNS provided USPS with 5,144 zip codes—some of the most under-served communities in the country. USPS posted flyers about FNS’ Summer Meals Program, in both English and Spanish, in the post offices in these communities from June through Labor Day.

FNS worked with the Military and Family Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense, on summer meals promotion via *Military One Source*, the resource hub for military families located throughout the nation. Summer sites were reflected within the resource tool’s GIS mapping and site information was available online through the 24/7 *Military One Source* hotline. Additionally, DoD publicized summer meal availability through the *Military One Source* Facebook and Twitter accounts.

The media product, “*Summer Jobs + Summer Meals = Summer Opportunity!*” was released on May 23, 2016 by FNS and the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment & Training Administration (ETA). The newsletter was sent to over 65,000 summer meals and youth jobs stakeholders. This joint product was also featured on FNS’ Summer Meals website.

Barriers: Competing priorities among Federal agencies can sometimes hinder partnerships. However, finding a mutually beneficial vehicle of operation can help partnering agencies advance both priorities when addressing juvenile justice and delinquency prevention.

Recommended Strategies or Approaches for Other Federal Agencies: FNS has had great success partnering not only with Federal agencies, but also with local law enforcement, leveraging their community knowledge and communication channels to spread the word about FNS’ programs to at-risk youth.

The Maine Department of Education collaborated with the Council for a Strong America, an umbrella organization made up of five non-profits representing police officers, religious officials, military personnel, and business leaders. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, an organization of law enforcement leaders with a goal of reducing juvenile crime, provided summer meal information to more than 150 police chiefs and 16 sheriffs across the state to get the word out to families about summer meal sites operating in their neighborhoods.

In Sacramento, CA multiple community organizations, including the local law enforcement agencies, bonded together to create a wide range of safe nighttime activities for teens in high-crime areas to participate in during summer meal supper service at local parks. No deaths, shootings, or killings occurred in these areas during the months of the program.

Partnerships are not limited to law enforcement when addressing issues of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. FNS strongly encourages positive alternative activities coupled with summer meals for all youths, especially those youth most at risk for delinquency. In Maryland, more than 8,000 Baltimore City young adults participated in a five-week summer job-matching program, YouthWorks, for the second consecutive year. Teens worked five hours daily at nonprofit organizations, camps, and other public and private organizations. YouthWorks helped spread the word to its youth workers about the Family League of Baltimore's summer meal sites. With the help of YouthWorks' promotion, the Family League of Baltimore was able to increase its summer meals footprint from eight sites in 2015, to 40 sites this past summer.