



38 Eastwood Drive, Suite 100  
South Burlington, VT 05403

P: (802) 865-0255  
F: (802) 865-0266  
[HungerFreeVT.org](http://HungerFreeVT.org)

## **Details of the Request for \$12,000,000 to Operate Universal Summer Meals Programs for Children in Need, Ages 0-18, Throughout Vermont**

Prepared by Anore Horton, Executive Director, Hunger Free Vermont, for the Food Security Coalition  
June 9, 2020

According to the AOE survey of school districts, we estimate that it will cost each summer meals sponsor (either a school district or a community nonprofit) on average \$5,000 per week to deliver summer meals to all children whose families request them. Sponsors covering large geographic areas will need more:

**90 summer sponsors x \$5,000 in weekly meal delivery costs x 8 weeks = \$3,600,000**

**35 summer sponsors x \$10,000 in weekly meal delivery costs x 8 weeks = \$2,800,000**

**TOTAL: \$6,400,000**

- There were 61 summer meal program sponsors in 2019. We expect that a larger number of sponsors may be needed to significantly increase the number of children reached by meals this summer.

According to AOE survey of school districts, the additional costs summer meal sponsors will incur in order to safely provide meals to Vermont children this summer are:

- PPE for meal program and delivery staff
- Packaging materials to safely package meals for delivery
- Extra labor costs due to need for increased staff to pack meals

**\$2,300,000 to reimburse sponsors for actual costs they incur in these areas that will exceed the federal per-meal reimbursement payments they will receive.**

- This works out to an average of \$2,300 per week of summer meal service per sponsor to cover all additional costs.

Some school districts are not able to sponsor meal programs this summer. In these cases, it is essential that new and creative partnerships are created in Vermont communities to fill in these gaps and ensure that no children go hungry this summer. Local nonprofits could partner with local restaurants to provide summer meals.

**\$3,300,000 to cover the additional training, labor, and production costs above and beyond the federal per-meal reimbursement rates required to get these new partnerships up and running for both nonprofit sponsors and local restaurant meal vendors.**

**These funds should be managed and disbursed by the Agency of Education**, which administers the federal Summer Food Service Program. The Food Security Coalition commits to working with AOE to recruit summer meal sponsors where school districts will not be providing this service, and to engaging in a broad outreach campaign to make sure all Vermont families know where and how to access these meals for their children. Hunger Free Vermont has raised private funds to engage in outreach and promotion of summer meals that we will leverage in support of this state effort.

**Vermont has a child hunger crisis right now. Food insecurity among Vermont children has increased 60% since March.** School is ending this week in most of Vermont, and with it is ending the delivery of breakfasts and lunches to thousands of children. Without a commitment from State government to cover the costs of meal delivery, PPE for meal program staff, safe packaging for the meals, and increased labor -- all necessary as a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic -- 65% of school districts and supervisory unions say they will not provide summer meals for children. If this funding is approved, then the majority of school districts will step up and continue to provide meals. The Vermont Agency of Education and nonprofit partners are ready to get into action quickly to help get summer meal sponsors up and running so that we limit the meal gap for Vermont kids, but it cannot happen without fully funding this request.





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**Summary of Data from the Vermont Agency of Education’s Survey of School Districts Regarding Their Plans to Operate Summer Meal Programs – provided by AOE; data collected at the end of May:**

- Around 36% of schools plan to stop offering meals in Mid-June.
- Around 29% of schools plan to stop offering meals at the end of June.
- Around 29% of schools plan to continue offering meals throughout summer.
- Around 6% of schools are undecided.

**If you are not planning to continue offering meals, or are considering reducing your level of service, please tell us why. Check any of the following reasons for making this decision:**

**Summary of data:**

- 37% of schools indicated that the cost of operating SFSP exceeds reimbursement.
- 37% of schools indicated that contracts expire or do not allow employees to work over the summer, staff are not available to work or do not have capacity at the SD/SU level.
- 26% of schools indicated it for other reasons (Difficulty complying, do not need summer meals, need to clean, never done summer meals, need the waiver, etc.).

**Some assistance may be available if the state is able to pay for items directly and apply for FEMA reimbursement. Which, if any, of the following forms of assistance would allow you to offer meals over the summer or increase the capacity of your summer meals program (check all that apply):**

**Summary of data (schools could select multiple answers):**

- Around 3% of schools will continue SFSP and do not need further assistance.
- Around 7% of schools cannot operate SFSP regardless of assistance.
- Around 28% of schools need help with transportation of meals.
- Around 27% of schools need packaging materials provided by the state.
- Around 18% of schools need PPE provided by the state.
- Around 11% of schools would pre-purchase meals provided by the state.
- Around 6% of schools need additional funding for labor costs and additional personnel.

**Would any of these other forms of assistance from the state allow you to offer meals over the summer (check all that apply):**

**Summary of data (schools could select multiple answers):**

- Around 8% of schools would like guidance on how to work with another SFA.
- Around 36% of schools would like guidance on identifying other funding sources to cover costs of meals.
- Around 16% of schools would like access to screened volunteers through the state system.
- Around 8% of school would like thorough training on SFSP.
- Around 25% of schools indicated if FEMA or the State covered costs, they would continue serving meals.
- Around 17% of schools indicated no they would not continue, regardless of funding.
- Around 48% of schools indicated maybe continuing if funding was available.
- Around 10% of schools did not provide an answer.

**Please use this space to tell us anything else you want us to know about what is impacting your decision making around summer meal service, and what we can do to help:**

- **General responses:**
  - Do not have staff available for the summer because they don't want to work, feel underappreciated, have other plans, are burnt out and need a break or cannot continue working.
  - Do not have the funds to be able to continue providing meals over the summer. The cost of operating SFSP will exceed reimbursement.
  - Transportation costs are a huge concern and does not seem feasible to be able to continue this approach.

**Optional: If you have the information available, please tell us the approximate weekly cost, in excess of your SFSP reimbursement, to operate your current meal distribution model (delivery, grab-and-go, etc.), and please indicate what that model is:**

- Total additional costs over reimbursement: \$20,000-30,000 or \$5,000/week. Many are already operating at a deficit.
- Quoted at having \$125,000-200,000 costs just related to the bussing of meals for the entire summer.
- Grab-and-go models unless there is a way to cover the cost of bussing meals.