

Maine Department of Education Child Nutrition Services

Summer Food Service Program Outreach Project 2022

Expansion and Areas of Focus Recommendations Report

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Summer Food Service Program

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The primary role of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is to provide free, nutritious meals to children and teens aged 18 and younger during the summer months when school is not in session. Mainly operating in the summer months when school is not in session and children no longer have access to school meals, this program has also been vital in ensuring Maine children have access to nutritious meals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As concluded in SFSP Outreach 2021, the engagement in the Summer Food Service Program is not solely that of what a district can provide, but also of who is able to be there to receive the support. Awareness of and access to the program are key factors in expanding the SFSP (Hass, M. P. Maine Department of Education Child Nutrition Services Summer Food Service Program Data/Needs Analysis and Expansion Recommendations Report. September 30, 2021). An increase in social media activity, radio, and television marketing and promotion of the SFSP was recommended for the program's continued success as these routes remain increasingly effective in how countless families and children that would benefit from the Summer Food Service Program receive pertinent information. In addition to providing new, updated material offerings to go home with children at schools regarding the SFSP from Spring onward, SFSP Outreach 2021 also recommended a tangible presence at events and community establishments to help reach more families and community members, carry over recognition, and drive participation into the forthcoming Summer Food Service Programs.

The implementation of MDOE Child Nutrition's "Hot Lunch Summer" social media campaign and SFSP site finder website (www.hotlunchsummer.com) helped facilitate

increased program recognition and participation statewide. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, statewide radio, and television stations ran 15, 30, or 60 second ads beginning the week of April 25, 2022, through August 2022 promoting the SFSP with an original song and coordinating graphics explaining the nutritious fun provided by SFSP sites all summer long across Maine. The “Hot Lunch Summer” site finder website allows folks to enter a Maine zip code and once loaded, SFSP sites will show, in map and text forms, within a selected milage range (5 – 15 miles). Information available per site includes sponsoring organization name, site name and address, meal(s) offered, meal service timeframe, start and end dates of service, days of operation, and other contact information beneficial to families and children, keeping in mind those who may be unwilling to ask for assistance or directions to a feeding site.

Correspondingly, to further implement recommendations from SFSP Outreach 2021, for a second year, the Maine Department of Education Child Nutrition Services received USDA grant funding to aid in the increased knowledge of and participation in the Summer Food Service Program throughout the State of Maine. The Department once more contracted a statewide network of SFSP Outreach Coordinators within each of Maine’s nine school Superintendent Regions from mid-June through August 2022. Maine’s Superintendent Regions are as follows: Aroostook County; Penquis Region (comprised of Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Somerset counties); Washington County; Hancock County; Mid-Coast Region (comprised of Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties); Western Maine (comprised of Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford counties); Cumberland County; Kennebec Valley (comprised of Kennebec and Waldo counties); and York County.

SFSP Outreach Coordinators for 2022 were hired from within the Superintendent Regions they served and worked to engage community partners, conducted grassroots outreach using materials from the DOE, as well as completed a data/needs analysis of their region. The SFSP Outreach Coordinator contractors hired were local school district food service individuals and those familiar with their respective area's SFSP. Several of the Outreach Coordinators from 2021 joined the project again in 2022, along with a few new-to-the-project individuals. After extensive outreach recruiting and posting of the position, limited employee prospects resulted in a few of the 2022 Outreach Coordinators covering more than one Superintendent Region, in relatively close location to their originally covered Region. Washington County was covered along with Aroostook County, York County was covered along with Cumberland County, and Hancock County was covered along with the Mid-Coast Superintendent Region. Kennebec Valley was originally solely covered, although a few weeks into the project, the Kennebec Valley Outreach Coordinator accepted a full-time position in another local school district and was unable to devote enough time to SFSP Outreach. The Mid-Coast/Hancock County Outreach Coordinator offered to help cover the Kennebec Valley Superintendent Region as well for the remainder of the project, being a resident of Kennebec County. After the start of the project, other potential contractor prospects reached out regarding assisting with SFSP Outreach. Their contact information has been saved for potential future projects.

Together with the 2022 SFSP Outreach Coordinators efforts, the following sections summarize data gathered and regional needs, along with expansion and areas of focus recommendations for 2023 and future Summer Food Service Programs.

SFSP Outreach Project 2022 Discussions by Superintendent Region

Aroostook County

All throughout Summer 2022 SFSP event participation, discussions, and grassroots outreach, the SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Aroostook County found that there is still a serious need for program education. Many community members and families with children are still not aware of the Summer Food Service Program. Aroostook County DHHS offices were one the best partnerships made during SFSP Outreach 2022, per the Aroostook County Outreach Coordinator. They are very supportive of the program and distributed materials to all families that came into their offices. Continuation of in-person, grassroots methods of SFSP Outreach during the Summer months, as well as prior to or year-long promotion of the program would support further program education efforts.

The “Hot Lunch Summer” jingle was marvelously popular with children in Northern Maine, as well as throughout the state. When participating in an outreach event at the Houlton Children’s Farmers Market, the SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Aroostook County had numerous children come up and sing the original song. The “Hot Lunch Summer” jingle YouTube ad particularly stood out to K-8 children. Extension and maintenance of the current “Hot Lunch Summer” marketing campaign into upcoming programs will increase positive program recognition and participation.

The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Aroostook County also found that while there were less sites in operation in the Superintendent Region than last year, overall, there was not an effect on the number of participants. Many of the sites that were not

available during Summer 2022 were mobile sites or extra sites within close regional areas. The availability of meals wasn't affected, but with a single regional site available, parents'/guardians' ability to get children to the site may have been impacted in the cases of mobile sites not being available.

Many towns in Aroostook County had sites that were sponsored by a larger district. This was also seen during SFSP Outreach Project 2021 and while it works, there are areas for improvement. There continues to be a significant issue with transporting meals from the prep location to the serving site. Many of the serving sites are Rec Centers who rely on volunteers. Aroostook County is vast and driving 20+ miles is not expedient, particularly in terms of food safety. The Presque Isle School District (RSU 79/MSAD 01) covers an extremely large area with satellite sites. The Aroostook County SFSP Outreach Coordinator detailed that the site coordinators and Food Service Director work very well together, do a fantastic job of planning, accommodating needs, as well as keeping meals and staff/volunteers safe. The only issue remains in finding transportation to deliver meals to some of the more remote locations. These areas could benefit from an additional site to help minimize travel for parents and staff.

Penquis (Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Somerset Counties)

The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for the Penquis Superintendent Region started the 2022 Outreach Project similar to last year by using the previously compiled list of all districts, schools, and sites in the Region. The Outreach Coordinator reached out to see if districts/schools were running a SFSP this year, also making sure the information listed was accurate. SFSP outreach services and materials were offered such as

bookmarks, rack cards, SFSP posters, and lawn signs to all contacted. During the Penquis SFSP Outreach Coordinator's grassroots outreach through the Region, the search was continued for more locations that would be acceptable to potentially have a summer feeding site in the future, then any location suggestions and other information was shared with the Food Service Directors and/or leaders of the currently running programs. Field response included gratitude for the outreach program because it allows the opportunity to connect with other Food Service Directors and brainstorm what does and doesn't work in different SFSPs.

SFSP outreach materials were made available at the Maine Whoopie Pie Festival June 25th in Dover-Foxcroft, the largest annual event in Piscataquis County. At the Old Town Riverfest, Northern Light and 5210 representatives displayed SFSP posters and had other outreach materials available to community members. For a second year, Center Theater, a performing arts and movie theater in Dover-Foxcroft, showed the "Hot Lunch Summer" ad in the running credits before each movie with local locations, dates & times. It is incredibly important to continue raising awareness in the community about the Summer Food Service Program, along with maintaining and adding to these important partnerships for future program success.

The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for the Penquis Region feels that some local churches still have not tapped into the potential opportunities that the SFSP could provide for their Children's Vacation Bible Schools. SFSP information was shared with church officials in Dexter, Dover, and Exeter, and recommended they reach out to local schools to be included in the planning of next year's summer children's events. Many local businesses and farmers markets displayed SFSP materials. Hospitals and libraries

in the Penquis Region were also great supporters in putting the word out to families and distributing SFSP materials. Children's Museums were also found to be a great place to promote the SFSP and would also be good places to host a program, reaching many more children and families in the Region.

Washington County

The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Washington County's grassroots efforts were mainly concentrated on the eastern portion of the Superintendent Region along Route 1, the more populated areas of the Region. The Outreach Coordinator was originally individually covering Aroostook County, an already vast area, but offered to help with SFSP outreach in Washington County as well. Contacts were made remotely and travel days to the Region arranged as able. As also seen in the Aroostook County Superintendent Region, the Washington County Superintendent Region DHHS offices were extremely helpful in getting the word out to families who may benefit from the Summer Food Service Program. The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Washington County delivered SFSP materials to the main office in Machias and from there, rack cards and bookmarks were distributed to case managers to hand out to families across the county. Contacts were similarly made with Downeast Community Partners in Machias, who also received a large amount of SFSP materials and distributed to their programs that assist families and children.

Additionally, the Rec Director in Calais was contacted and received SFSP materials. The Rec program in Calais, and other Rec programs throughout Washington County, operated the SFSP for their programs during the Summer of 2022 with good

participation numbers and continue to be a supportive resource for SFSP promotion. Sites offering enrichment or physical activities have historically reached more children, as well as provide a source of fellowship for families. Children of Washington County, and statewide, would greatly benefit from additional sites, specifically sites offering activities.

Healthy Acadia maintains a comprehensive listing of Food Security Organizations (<https://www.healthyacadia.org/hffa-fsn>). The listing is published on their website and is a collaborative effort of the Hancock County Food Security Network and The Washington County Food Pantry Network. The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Washington County was able to outreach to food pantries in the Region with SFSP materials using the very helpful contact and location information Healthy Acadia's listing provided. Continued and additional partnerships with community organizations statewide that specifically support children and families would provide additional promotional and engagement opportunities for the MDOE SFSP and increase participation in due course.

Hancock County

The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for the Mid-Coast Superintendent Region also remotely covered the Hancock County Superintendent Region, along with assistance from the Child Nutrition office with materials distribution and mailing. After the SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Hancock County reached out to schools/current sites within the Superintendent Region, it was found that most had previously received, by their own request, all the materials and resources needed to promote the SFSP to families and

community members. While eager to talk about the SFSP and appreciative of the outreach work being done by Child Nutrition, schools statewide have been very aware of and proactive in encouraging participation in the program. This observation was noted as an increase in community program awareness for 2022. An increased emphasis on promoting the SFSP at community establishments and businesses in relative location to schools/current sites may be more helpful in increasing future program participation and awareness.

Hancock County's SFSP Outreach Coordinator also reviewed Healthy Acadia's comprehensive listing of Food Security Organizations and distributed SFSP resources to food pantries in the Region to be included in their offerings to families. As previously noted in SFSP Outreach Project 2021 and observed again during SFSP Outreach Project 2022, there continues to be families residing in pockets of poverty statewide that must travel quite a distance to access a SFSP site. Within Hancock County, for example, families wishing to participate in the SFSP residing in Ellsworth would need to travel to Bucksport for the nearest SFSP site, over 23 miles away. A statewide mobile SFSP feeding unit, or 'food truck' staffed by volunteers, with partnerships and sponsorships from local businesses to help reduce operating expenses, could help bridge this gap and feed more Maine children in need. Volunteer partnerships with schools that have a food service van could help kick start this model.

Mid-Coast (Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc Counties)

When the SFSP Outreach Coordinator for the Mid-Coast Superintendent Region contacted or visited community establishments and SFSP sites, it was asked what could

be done to improve Maine's Summer Food Service Program. Some feedback received, again during SFSP Outreach 2022, included getting the site lists/promotional materials out to families and community members earlier in the program season. In SFSP outreach discussions at the Rockport Library, it was suggested to list who is offering meals on the poster locally (site locations), or a place to write it in. The SFSP magnets that were new to the Outreach Coordinators' materials offerings this year were extremely well received, along with the recipe sheet for Harvest of the Month June and July vegetables. The primary feedback received was that this program is truly needed. The meals provided are helping many struggling families and are greatly appreciated. The Outreach Coordinator also shared that the Whitefield School Principal, within the Mid-Coast Superintendent Region, received many emails thanking School Food Service Employees for their efforts and stating how much this program is valued and helpful to families. They served 6933 meals in July 2022, per the Mid-Coast Superintendent Region Outreach Coordinator, also RSU 12's Food Service Director.

Wiscasset Rec makes use of a 'food truck' to deliver meals with great success and positive feedback. This model was encouraged from Outreach Project 2021 and should continue to be adopted throughout the State. The Mid-Coast Outreach Coordinator proposed to connect with individuals who own food trucks in the Region. Food truck owners and employees could volunteer their time/services to pack SFSP meals during their off hours and hand them out at locations in their similar routes. The Outreach Coordinator for the Mid-Coast Superintendent Region also suggests continuing making the connection between schools, libraries, and other congregation areas such as beaches, playgrounds, parks, and potentially help schools set up at those

locations to serve meals. Many area parents already bring their children to the aforementioned places in the summer months, and if the SFSP were offered, parents wouldn't need to worry about packing a lunch and could take part in the program, thus increasing program recognition, increase the number of children participants fed healthy meals during the Summer, and potentially increase positive word-of-mouth promotion of the SFSP.

Western Maine (Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties)

During grassroots outreach, the SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Western Maine again this year found that many Food Service Directors still have concerns over the future of the Summer Food Service Program if the criteria to qualify remains the same. Not having the waivers continued (i.e., non-congregate feeding, parent/guardian pick-up) and then two weeks into SFSP programming, having them put in place was not helpful to the sites that couldn't run them initially due to being ineligible. Able to speak from firsthand knowledge, the Western Maine SFSP Outreach Coordinator detailed that RSU 16 did not qualify without the waivers in place, so staff and sites were informed that there would not be a program. By the time the Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022 was signed, it was too late to start a program as staff and sites had made other arrangements. As also noticed in other parts of the State of Maine, while happy to talk about SFSP outreach, Western Maine schools have been proactive in encouraging participation in the program and distributing materials in the community, Lisbon School District's Nutrition Director Allison Leavitt a particular highlight.

Transportation continues to be a barrier in the more rural areas of Western Maine. The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Western Maine found more families knew about the Summer Food Service Program than last year in the Norway area. An encouraging outreach success, yet there continues to be many families that don't know where in the area to find the SFSP sites, as feedback received during outreach at Norway Farmers Market. New this year to the SFSP outreach material repertoire, the magnets and bookmarks have been a huge hit statewide. Television ads featuring the "Hot Lunch Summer" jingle have also been well received in Western Maine. Extension and maintenance of these marketing and site location resources will be key for future program participants engagement in the SFSP.

In travels throughout the Region outreaching with SFSP information, the Western Maine Outreach Coordinator talked with many town clerks and librarians who would like to be given the SFSP materials every Summer to be able to distribute and promote the program at their locations. During outreach at the library in Waterford, the librarian was quite pleased that there was a SFSP site in Waterford this year. When the Western Maine Outreach Coordinator had spoken with library staff in 2021, there were no SFSP sites in Waterford. It would be most helpful to have the information to libraries and town offices well before the SFSP begins to reach more families and community members. An outreach program in the beginning of June where SFSP materials, posters, signage were distributed to town offices/city halls, public libraries, DHHS offices, and similar community establishments would also help grow recognition and program participation.

Cumberland County

Throughout SFSP Outreach Project 2022, the SFSP Outreach Coordinator for the Cumberland County Superintendent Region found that families with children living in temporary housing at shelters or motels are at an increased vulnerability for hunger, predominantly in Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook. Moving forward, it is suggested that SFSP Sponsors/Site Coordinators focus closely on the aforementioned site locations and how accessible meals are for those children. The emergency nature of these sites, many of which were added on an ongoing basis after the signing of the Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022, indicates a high level of need in these specific areas. A tailored approach and special focus towards emergency housing sites would be most helpful as this is clearly where the highest level of need exists in Cumberland County. Per the SFSP Outreach Coordinator for Cumberland County, some of the languages that could be incorporated into future SFSP promotional material, specifically for the Region, include Acholi, Dari, Dinka, Farsi, Lingala, Swahili, Tagalog, Urdu, Tigrinian, Kinyarwanda, Kinyamulenge, Kirundi, and Luganda. Updates to currently available Limited English Proficient SFSP materials in Arabic, French, Portuguese, and Somali to align with current marketing campaigns would also be helpful in this mission of inclusion, equity, and accessibility. Additional SFSP sites at food pantries in the towns of Raymond, Naples, Sebago, Gray, and Windham, as well as SFSP sites at local churches in Baldwin and Pownal would reach more of the remote, underserved populations in Cumberland County.

A food rescue organization to amplify as a potential partner for future Summer Food Service Programs in the Cumberland County Superintendent Region is the Locker

Project (<https://mainelockerproject.org/>). The Locker Project provides access to healthy food at 34 public schools and pre-schools in Portland, South Portland, Gorham, and Westbrook. Their school-based take-home food programs reach thousands of food insecure students and families every month. The Locker Project partners with agencies and community groups across Greater Portland to reach families in need who may not be able to access school programs, and also has a robust summer feeding model that operates free fresh food events throughout Southern Maine, often partnered with other organizations offering resources and activities. In conjunction with schools and mobile feeding units, future partnerships with the Locker Project, and other similar community organizations, would reach and nourish more children in the State of Maine.

Kennebec Valley (Kennebec and Waldo Counties)

The Kennebec Valley Outreach Coordinator started the project by distributing materials and connecting with community members at locations across the Region including town offices and city halls, grocery stores (chain and local), doctor and dentist offices, libraries, and DHHS offices. In SFSP discussions at the Searsmont Library, the librarian and assistant spoke about parents needing to drive their children 15 miles away to Belfast for meals as the most local site/school lost funding. It is imperative all parents/guardians of children attending schools in the State of Maine, regardless of income or program need, fill out the Meal Benefit Application as this continues to be a determining factor for school nutrition and other federally funded programs.

The Kennebec Valley Superintendent Region was originally solely covered, although a few weeks into the project, the Kennebec Valley Outreach Coordinator

accepted a full-time position in another local school district and was unable to devote enough time to SFSP Outreach. The Mid-Coast/Hancock County Outreach Coordinator offered to help cover the Kennebec Valley Superintendent Region as well for the remainder of the project, being a resident of Kennebec County.

Libraries in the Kennebec Valley, and statewide, continue to be instrumental in having SFSP material available and in view of community members of all ages. The Boys and Girls Club in Gardiner, and Clubs in other parts of the State as well, have been great assets for program promotion and participation. Offering SFSPs at Lake State Parks and Bicentennial Nature Parks, along with signage for additional area sites, would reach and benefit more school-aged children and families. Other area town offices, such as in Windsor, may also benefit from the added foot traffic of offering the SFSP. Other websites or community resources listed on SFSP materials could reflect continued partnerships with other Child Nutrition programs and may boost recognition and participation in all Department programs.

York County

Per the SFSP Outreach Coordinator for York County, who also covered Cumberland County, several sites in the area are doing exemplary work in feeding their communities most at-risk. One example in particular is RSU 57 in Waterboro where the nutrition team procured a Full Plates Full Potential grant that allowed them to create a community event highlighting the SFSP. The following is an excerpt from the School Nutrition Director, Vanessa Richardson: "On Saturday, July 23, 2022, RSU 57 School Nutrition staff promoted their summer meal site by participating in the Shapleigh

Community Day event. Staff handed out free t-shirts and healthy snacks to kids and marched in the parade (along with the van purchased using last year's Full Plates Full Potential grant funding). We held a free kid's raffle which included a variety of gift baskets in themes of fishing, sports, arts & crafts, etc. This is the first time our department has had the opportunity to participate in this type of event. We are very grateful to have received the funding from Full Plates Full Potential again this year to make this event successful.”

Vanessa Richardson and RSU 57 are great contacts moving forward to others in York County regarding information on the Full Plates Full Potential grant process, especially in terms of procuring a mobile feeding unit for the district and holding a successful community SFSP event. This would be most important in rural areas where the need is higher, such as in Waterboro, Shapleigh, and Hollis. Throughout the York County Outreach Coordinator’s research and SFSP outreach, no better organizational advocate or partner was found for Child Nutrition to focus on building a strong relationship with than Full Plates Full Potential. Full Plates Full Potential is dedicated to increasing access, removing barriers, investing in child nutrition programs through grants and business partnerships, and advocating for long term solutions to child hunger in the state of Maine. The mission and goals of Full Plates Full Potential undeniably align with the SFSP. Further expansion of MDOE CN SFSP and Full Plates Full Potential partnerships would be helpful to future program successes.

Another highlight from this summer’s grassroots outreach in York County focused on Kittery Public Schools. Food Service Director Wendy Collins is a farm-to-school leader in the field who cares about local procurement and food education for students.

Prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kittery Land Trust Farm and Kittery Public Schools operate a partnership that involves food education integrated into the curriculum as well as gleaning, as developed by the Kittery Land Trust Farm's Giving Garden. Also, at the Kittery Community Market, connections were made with Dot Avery, founder of the market. The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for York County found Dot a joy to connect with and a person who is clearly passionate about the work she does to support local food solutions to hunger. The Kittery Community Market participates in Power of Produce Club (POP), a \$2.00 voucher program for kids to purchase a piece of produce each week, and Maine Harvest Bucks that earn \$1.00 for every \$1.00 spent with SNAP/EBT at the market. The SeaCoast Fridge a community fridge/food station where community members can take what they need and leave what they can, located in the Kittery Community Center. SeaCoast Fridge is also equipped with a kitchen and partners with restaurants that share extra produce. The SFSP Outreach Coordinator for York County noted that funding for the Maine Harvest Bucks programs will be coming to an end soon, which would be a true loss in terms of low-income families and community members access to fresh produce. Transportation and access to food at pick-up sites remain major barriers for families and community members in York County.

Transportable initiatives such as the mobile farmers market 'Gather' and a food truck called 'Red's Good Vibes' transport free food to rural and food desert/low access areas in York County. Continuation and expansion of programs with MDOE CN partnerships such as these is imperative in feeding more Maine children and families statewide.

Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022 and Subsequent Effects on SFSP 2022

The Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022 (KKFA) President Biden signed into law on June 25, 2022, provided additional support and resources to help Child Nutrition Program operators continue to serve healthy meals to children during this continued challenging time. In early July 2022, the State of Maine acknowledged receipt of several Keep Kids Fed Act USDA Nationwide waivers that impacted 2022 Summer Food Service Program operations. Waivers included: Nationwide Waiver of the Summer Sponsor Application Deadline and to Allow Reimbursement for Meals Served Prior to Notification of Approval for Summer 2022 Operations; Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-Congregate Feeding for Summer 2022 Operations – EXTENSION 7; Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children for Summer 2022 Operations – EXTENSION 7; and Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions for Summer 2022 Operations – EXTENSION 4. All KKFA waivers were made available to the field on the Child Nutrition website and were to be applied for and approved for their respective use(s).

Prior to Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022 (KKFA) being signed into law on June 25, 2022, the State of Maine Department of Education Child Nutrition Summer Food Service Program approved 395 sites for Summer 2022 (CNP Web, June 10, 2022). At the end of SFSP 2022, and after the signing of KKFA of 2022, 465 sites operated programs (CNP Web, August 16, 2022), a 17.72% increase. Sites that were added after the signing of the KKFA included several hotels and emergency shelters in the Southern and Central Maine areas used to house new Americans and families with children most in need. Other sites added post KKFA included locations at town beaches and parks, a

daycare facility, housing developments, and schools that may have missed the June 1st deadline for MDOE SFSP applications due to lack of staffing or supply chain disruptions. Correspondingly, by the date of the signing of the KKFA of 2022, many school nutrition departments' that weren't able to run a SFSP in 2022 due to staffing, supply chain issues, etc. had already made other arrangements and weren't able to rally a program in such short notice. Field response during SFSP Outreach 2022 included appreciation for the KKFA, along with the request for matters such as this to be enacted well before the start of the SFSP to allow for preparation, as opposed to enacting SFSP related changes several weeks into the program.

SFSP Outreach 2022 Field Survey and Results

After extensive SFSP Outreach Team discussions, together with the statewide SFSP Outreach Coordinators, a brief survey was developed for the field regarding the 2022 Summer Food Service Program. All statewide SFSP Outreach Coordinators concurred that the field should be surveyed within the first few weeks of schools being back in session as Food Service Directors may be able to be more easily reached and responses received in September from schools the Outreach Team hadn't been able to reach this Summer.

A field survey was approved by the CN Director and Assistant Director, concluding that a survey would be a good way to assess the success of extra outreach efforts this year. Qualtrics version approved by MDOE Communications/Data Office. The following is an image of the Qualtrics online survey sent out to the field on the Child

Nutrition listserv just before 9am September 9, 2022, and closed on September 16, 2022, at 4pm:



SFSP Outreach 2022 Field Survey

Thank you for your time in answering this questionnaire regarding your experience with the Maine Department of Education's Summer Food Service Program during the Summer of 2022

1. What was your role with SFSP this Summer?

- Sponsor
- Site Coordinator
- Other employee
- Food Service Director

2. What town or area did your SFSP service?

3. Did you see a change in SFSP participation this year as compared to 2021?

- Increase
- Decrease
- Neither
- I have no experience with SFSP 2021 participation to make an informed choice

4. Do you feel SFSP sites were easily accessible to families in your area?

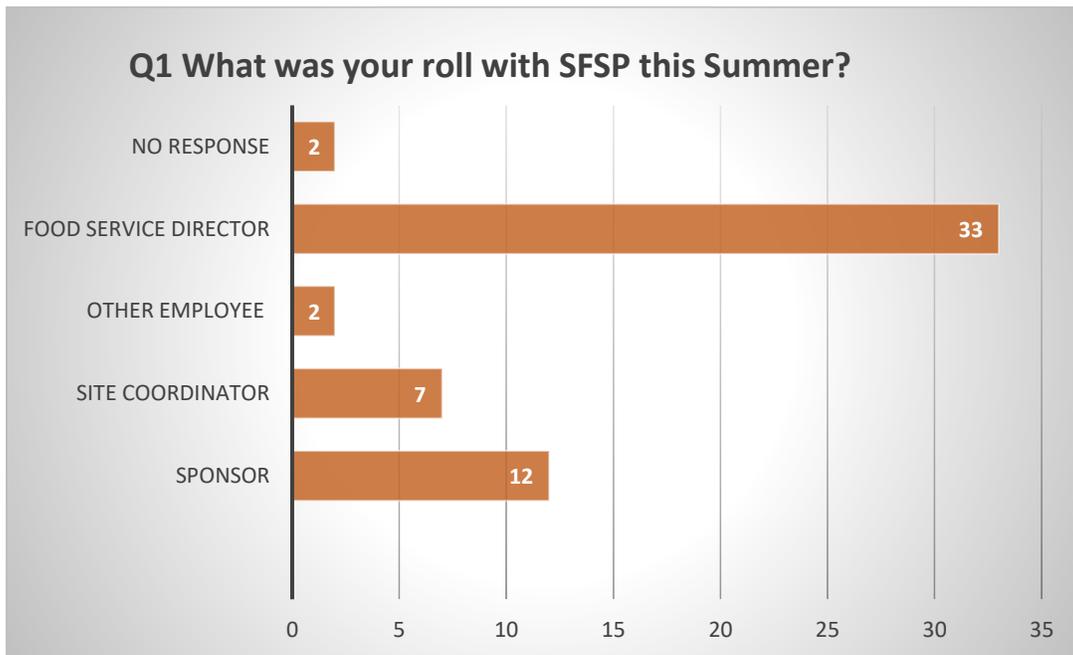
- Yes
- No
- If No, please explain:

5. Did you see or hear advertisements for SFSP's "Hot Lunch Summer" over the past few months?

- Yes
- No
- If Yes, where:

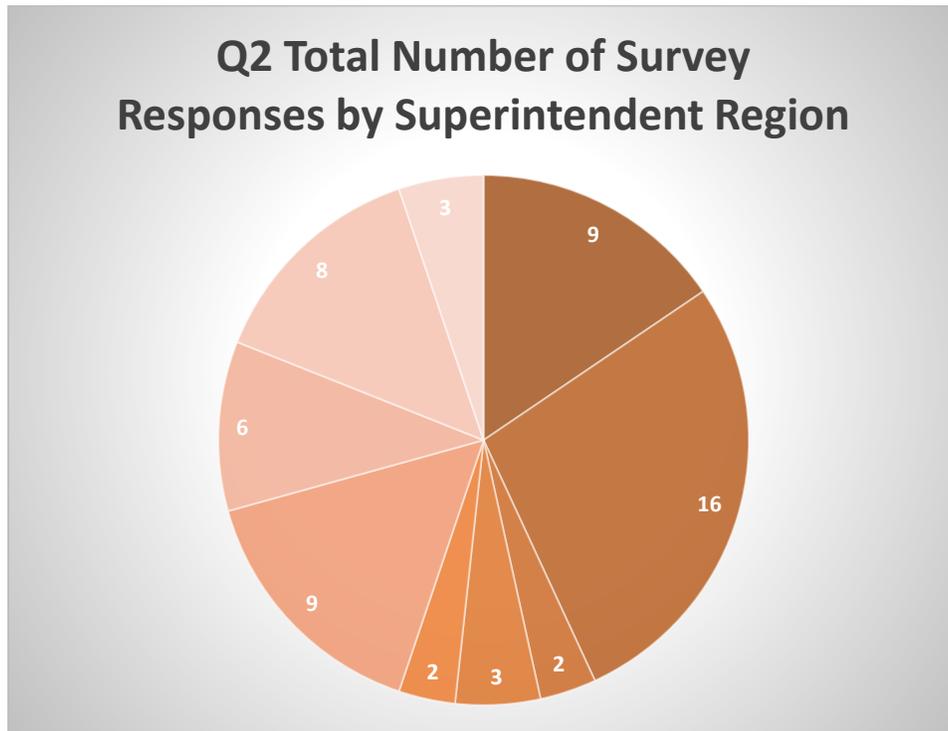
6. Do you have any suggestions or observations you would like to pass on to Child Nutrition regarding the Summer Food Service Program?

Results were received, analyzed, and quantified. 56 total responses were received from the field, over a 50% response rate as there were about 120 Sponsors for SFSP 2022. Shown below are results in various forms for each question of the SFSP Outreach 2022 Field Survey, with open-ended questions being shown as direct quotes from the respondents.

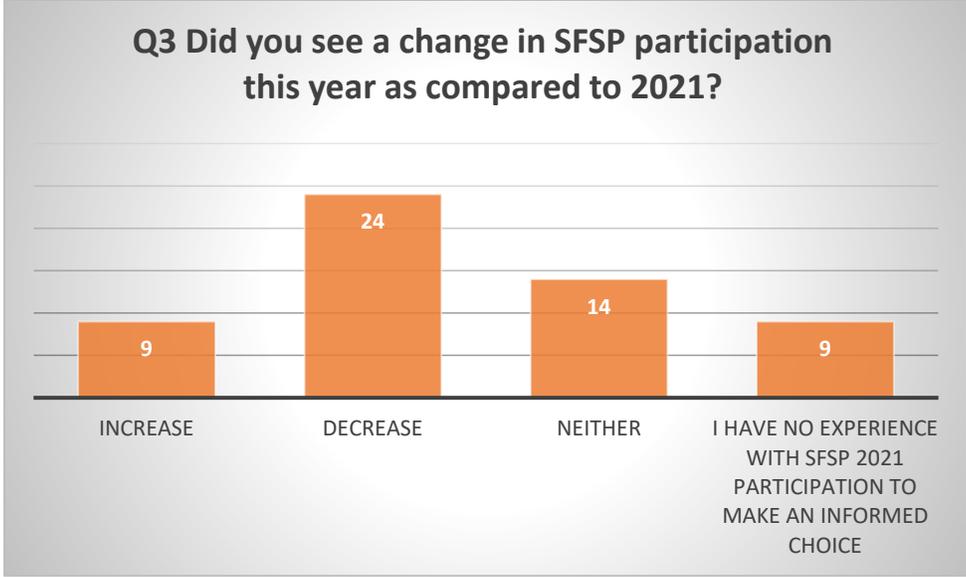


Q1 What was your roll with SFSP this Summer?	Total Number of Responses
Sponsor	12
Site Coordinator	7
Other Employee	2
Food Service Director	33
No Response	2

A few field responses included service to more than one Superintendent Region,. Both Regions were tabulated in Total Number of Responses below for Question #2. One field response did not include a service Region.



Maine Superintendent Regions	Total Number of Responses
Aroostook County	9
Penquis (Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Somerset Counties)	16
Washington County	2
Hancock County	3
Mid-Coast (Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc Counties)	2
Western Maine (Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties)	9
Cumberland County	6
Kennebec Valley (Kennebec and Waldo Counties)	8
York County	3



Q3 Did you see a change in SFSP participation this year as compared to 2021?	Total Number of Responses
Increase	9
Decrease	24
Neither	14
I have no experience with SFSP 2021 participation to make an informed choice	9

Areas of SFSP participation increase in 2022 as compared to 2021 included respondents specifically in Madawaska, Bangor, Brewer, Jackman, The Forks, Sedgwick, Presque Isle, Mapleton, Easton, Mars Hill, Bridgewater, Trenton, Whitefield, Windsor, and Chelsea. Aroostook, Penobscot, Somerset, Franklin, Kennebec, Hancock, and Cumberland Counties respectively.

Respondents who saw similar participation numbers in 2022 versus 2021 served children in areas including Washburn, Wade, Perham, Athens, St. Agatha, Stoneham, Dexter, Lincoln, Bucksport, Orland, Verona Island, Prospect, Houlton, Boothbay,

Wiscasset, Brewer, Dover-Foxcroft, Belfast, and Kittery. Areas of Aroostook, Somerset, Oxford, Penobscot, Hancock, Piscataquis, Waldo, and York Counties respectively.

Decreases in SFSP participation were made known by respondents servicing Sabattus, Litchfield, Wales, Waterville, Winslow, Vassalboro, Fort Kent, Falmouth, Westbrook, Bingham, Moscow, Howland, Enfield, Lowell, Old Orchard Beach, Old Town, South Portland, Hiram, Fryeburg, Naples, Bridgton, Casco, Lewiston, Fort Fairfield, Caribou, Bethel, Stratton, Eustis, Rumford, Mexico, Sumner, Strong, and Princeton. Seemingly more rural areas of Androscoggin, Kennebec, Aroostook, Waldo, Lincoln, Knox, Cumberland, Somerset, Penobscot, York, Oxford, Franklin, and Washington Counties experienced a decrease in program participation. Explanations as to potential causes of 2022 SFSP participation decreases are shown below in Question #4 results from field respondents.

Q4 Do you feel SFSP sites were easily accessible to families in your area?	Responses: Yes or No If no, please explain:
No Response	1
Yes	46
No	9
	Explanations:
	“The high school no longer qualified as a site and it caused issues with families not wanting to go to the church and eat there” (Fort Kent)
	“No public or school provided transportation to the site or neighborhood delivery” (Falmouth)
	“we are rural and transportation cost were high for familys.” (Waldo County)
	“Residential Camp” (Located in Stoneham)
	“We have open sites but generally only the students in summer school participate. I am not sure the kids who might need it have transportation to get to it.” (Dexter)

	“Our Lake site increased this year but our school site decreased. I think the decrease was due to the parking lot and school driveway being torn up to be paved it looked like the school was closed as a result.” (Winthrop)
	“Open only to students attending a summer school program.” (Brewer)
	“Geographically too far to travel to sites.” (Hiram and Fryeburg)
	“Waldo County had accessibility issues”

Explanations above, and forthcoming, also include the respondents service Region, as previously stated in responses to Question #2. Transportation, accessibility, and secular preference of sites continue to be barriers in more rural parts of Maine, along with some difficulties meeting program qualification requirements.

Q5 Did you see/hear advertisements for SFSP’s "Hot Lunch Summer" over the past few months?	Responses: Yes or No If yes, where:
No	9
Yes	47
	16 With Explanations:
	“TV Radio” (Washburn, Wade, Perham)
	“Television, signs posted, flyers” (Athens)
	“on the radio” (Penobscot and Aroostook Counties)
	“TV I believe” (Falmouth)
	“radio/ tv” (Waldo County)
	“TV ads were awesome!” (Oakland area and China)
	“TV” (Madison)
	“tv and radio” (Presque Isle, Mapleton, Easton, Mars Hill, Bridgewater)
	“facebook” (Winthrop)
	“TV” (Bucksport, Orland, Verona Island, Prospect - RSU 25)
	“TV ads” (Boothbay and Wiscasset)
	“Multiple times on TV” (Brewer)

	"YouTube advertisements and Coast 93.1" (Old Orchard Beach)
	"Radio, Local Movie Theater" (Dover-Foxcroft)
	"tv ads, posters, online" (RSU 74, Somerset County)
	"newspaper" (Princeton, Washington County)

Per field response, television, radio, and social media outlets were the greatest and most receptive locations for SFSP marketing promotions. Also, per field response, areas that did not see/hear advertisements for MDOE's "Hot Lunch Summer" marketing campaign included Dexter, Jackman, The Forks, Houlton, Stacyville, Kittery, Standish, Lewiston, and Strong. Printed materials are still needed and looked-for in more rural areas of all Maine counties and Superintendent Regions.

Q6 Do you have any suggestions or observations you would like to pass on to Child Nutrition regarding the Summer Food Service Program?	
"We should continue to allow the grab and go option as participation increases when we offer that" (Madawaska)	
"We need to make it so kids don't have to eat on site. We picked up once they were able to eat at home." (Waterville/Winslow/Vassalboro)	
"We should be able to continue the grab and go option and also the area eligibility waivers as it increases our participation and more kids are fed." (Fort Kent)	
"I was not contacted by outreach for the summer program"	
"We would have more participation if the grab and go option and the meal time flexibility was a yearly option." (St. Agatha)	
"some of the parameters in this program make it hard to serve the most vulnerable." (Waldo County)	
"I think part of the challenge for our school is that our students are spread over 4 or more towns. They may not be able to get here for a meal. But going to them is not feasible either because we might travel out to a site but only see 10 kids in that area." (Dexter)	
"Keep non-congregate feeding allowed." (Oakland area and China)	
"Providing breakfast when kids get lunch is a definitely needed for kids experiencing food insecurity." (Westbrook)	
"Our Summer Food Service Program did not fare well this summer. People got spoiled when we were delivering meals, and this summer our only participants were	

those students who were in our summer school program and our sports camps. A big disappointment.” (MSAD 13)
“Sending out the material sooner. Before school ends so it can be available for parents.” (Whitefield, Windsor, Chelsea)
“Our district is small but the economic impact hasn’t affected our families as negatively as in other areas. I believe there is a lot of local, state & federal support that families can access that hinders the school meal initiative.” (Howland, Enfield, Lowell)
“Sadly, I don’t see us continuing this program if participation and staffing continues like this for another year. I wonder how we will be able to serve our own summer school students.” (Old Town)
“Covid waivers such as bundled meals, etc. during SFSP 2021 made distribution and household pick up less burdensome and catered to households to make the process much more simple and appealing.” (South Portland)
“Great seeing the ad on tv” (Trenton)
“Having a specific online SFSP training; preferably through YouTube that can be used for the training requirement” (Cornville, Skowhegan, ect)
“The smiles on the kids faces when they receive their free summer lunch is very rewarding.” (Kittery)
“The waivers allowing parent pickup and non-congregate meals made SFSP much more accessible. We wish this guidance had come out earlier so that we could have better prepared.” (Lewiston)
“We had a very slow start due to the non wavier at the start, then things got very busy” (Naples, Bridgton, Casco)
“seems like we offered plenty of options.” (Stratton/Eustis, ME)
“GREAT TV ads!!!!” (RSU 74)
“eliminate the congregate meal - allow families to grab n go.” (Rumford, Mexico, Sumner)
“Waivers for delivery to rural children” (Strong)
“We lost a lot families coming for meals due to the shortage in lifeguards at our Augusta Pools” (Kennebec and Waldo)

The previous table highlighting Question #6 of the SFSP Outreach 2022 Field Survey offers suggestions, comments, and discussion points from the field in regard to future Summer Food Service Programs, as well as gratitude and contentment with the program and recent marketing campaigns. All feedback is valuable and greatly appreciated. Federal regulations that the State of Maine must adhere to may inhibit implementation of some of the above field recommendations regarding non-congregate feeding, mealtimes etc.. Nevertheless, having these noteworthy conversations, further

connecting, and partnering MDOE CN Team members with school officials and community members to feed more Maine children will continue to be of utmost importance for the future of the Summer Food Service Program.

Expansion and Areas of Focus Recommendations for SFSP 2023

Continuation of (when pandemically safe to do so) in-person, grassroots methods of SFSP Outreach during the Summer months, as well as in months prior to or year-long promotion of the program would support further increases in positive program recognition and participation. Extension and maintenance of the current “Hot Lunch Summer” marketing campaign into SFSP 2023 programs, and beyond, would also continue increasing program recognition and, ultimately, participation. Less printed materials could be budgeted for future SFSPs, accompanied by an increase in television, radio, and social media presence, as this remains the primary method individuals receive and find pertinent information. Other websites or community resources listed on SFSP materials would reflect continued partnerships with other Child Nutrition programs and may boost recognition and participation in all Department programs.

There continues to be a surprising number of families that do not know about the Summer Food Service Program. A parent and community member survey where MDOE CN could receive more constructive feedback on how the SFSP can improve, add site locations, where further promotions should be, etc. would be helpful for future programs. SFSP Outreach Coordinators have been ‘verbally surveying’ community members regarding the aforementioned subjects throughout the past two years of this project. A

brief, online survey in the coming 2023 Spring and Summer months may receive more responses and feedback for program improvements and expansion. QR codes placed on signage for SFSP 2023 containing the parent and community survey about the program and areas for expansion/improvement, where survey results were gathered continually and evaluated in September, would additionally receive significant and vital feedback for future programs.

Schools throughout the State of Maine have been increasingly proactive in encouraging participation in the program, often times dispersing SFSP materials themselves within their own communities. Inspiration to schools statewide from MDOE Child Nutrition to promote the SFSP within their communities may also assist in increased program recognition, participation, and potentially business sponsorships or donations. Additional emphasis promoting the SFSP at community establishments and businesses in relative location to schools and current sites may be more helpful in increasing future program participation and awareness. It would be furthestmost helpful to have SFSP site information to libraries and town offices well before the SFSP begins each year to reach more families and community members. A MDOE CN SFSP Outreach mission in early June with SFSP materials, posters, and signage distributed to town offices/city halls, public libraries, DHHS offices, WIC offices, and similar community establishments would also help grow recognition and program participation.

Should USDA funding be received to continue this vital SFSP outreach and expansion work in 2023, an increase in Outreach Coordinator rate of pay, or the addition of mileage reimbursement, would be helpful in relation to ongoing fuel and cost of living inflations. More remote Superintendent Region coverage with an increase in

mailing of SFSP materials may also assist in alleviating fuel concerns. An alternative, potentially feasible SFSP Outreach Project model was seen in the State of Oregon. One (1) Summer Food Service Program Outreach Coordinator was hired in the Spring of 2022 for a 2-year contract, covering the entire state on a hybrid basis with usage of a state vehicle. This SFSP Outreach model may be more practicable if future outreach project hiring, and fuel uncertainties arise together with an increase in continuous outreach needs.

A great deal of overall positive feedback and appreciation for the Summer Food Service Program was received during SFSP Outreach Project 2022. Meal specific feedback noted in social media comments from parents included requests for lower sugar, less processed items, along with requests for actual 'hot' lunch items that correlate with the SFSP promotion. Understanding supply chain disruptions of late, food safety concerns, and portability, an increased emphasis on fresh, local produce and warm meals, such as grill items or fresh fruits and salads, when feasible, would offer an exciting variety for participants and inclusion of community voice.

It remains imperative that all parents/guardians of children attending schools in the State of Maine, regardless of income or program need, fill out the Meal Benefit Application as this continues to be a determining factor for school nutrition and other federally funded programs. A tailored approach and special focus towards emergency housing sites, along with an incorporation of varying languages into future SFSP promotional material, and updates to currently available Limited English Proficient SFSP materials in Arabic, French, Portuguese, and Somali to align with current marketing

campaigns would also be supportive in the mission of inclusion, equity, and accessibility to the Summer Food Service Program.

As suggested by Dot Avery, founder of the Kittery Community Market, a 'master list' of statewide food resources, including but not limited to the SFSP, would be tremendously valuable to community members, as well as raise awareness and Summer Food Service Program participation. Building upon the SFSP outreach materials and map developed for 2022 programs, having a master list/map of food resources in the State of Maine that include SFSP sites, along with food pantries, farmers markets, and other community hunger initiatives, would help folks be able to gain valuable information and plan ways of accessing food that they need.

Many local churches have yet to access the potential opportunities that the SFSP could provide for their Children's Vacation Bible Schools. Children's Museums were also found to be a great place to promote the SFSP and would also be good places to host a program, reaching many more children and families statewide. Children and families throughout the entire State of Maine would greatly benefit from additional SFSP sites, specifically sites offering activities or by offering the SFSP at family activity-based locations.

Transportation continues to be a barrier in the more rural areas of the State of Maine. A statewide mobile SFSP feeding unit, or 'food truck' staffed by volunteers, with partnerships and sponsorships or donations from local businesses to help reduce operating expenses, could help bridge this gap and feed more Maine children in need. Volunteer partnerships with schools that have a food service van could help kick start this model.

In conjunction with schools and mobile feeding units, future partnerships with the Locker Project, continued partnerships with Full Plates Full Potential, and other similar community organizations would reach and nourish more children in the State of Maine. It is of upmost importance to continue raising awareness in the community about the Summer Food Service Program, along with maintaining and adding to these important partnerships for future program successes.