



June Funding Tip

Using TANF American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funds to Support Summer Food Service Programs

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently announced they will allow Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funding received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to be used to support the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This funding tip highlights how organizations implementing SFSPs can access TANF funds to expand and improve their services.

The growing need for access to food resources is demonstrated by a recent rise in food instability, with 22.5 percent of all children now living in food insecure households. Food insecure households are defined as those that lack access to enough food to fully meet basic needs at all times due to a lack of financial resources.¹ The SFSP, funded by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) helps needy families gain access to nutritious meals during the summer months. For families that rely on child nutrition programs during the school year, the loss of those benefits when school dismisses for summer vacation strains an already tight budget. However, partially because of the financial and administrative challenges in providing a SFSP, many children do not receive this benefit; only one in six children who received free and reduced lunch during the 2007-2008 school year was served by the SFSP.² Accessing additional TANF funds can help SFSPs close this gap.

When accessing federal funding sources, it is important that program leaders determine whether a specific funding source is worth pursuing. Consider the following questions to assess if a specific federal funding source meets your program's goals and resource needs.

- 1. Does this funding support the goals and priorities of my organization?** What types of investments can the funding source support? Does it align with your organization's priorities and needs?
- 2. How do you access these funds?** What types of programs or organizations can apply for the funds? Can youth programs apply directly for the funds or do funds flow through the State or Local government?
- 3. Should I apply?** How many grants are given out each year? What is the average grant size? What are the reporting requirements? Is it worth the time and effort to apply?

¹ http://www.frac.org/html/hunger_inl

² Food Research and Action Center. "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition

1. Does this funding support the goals and priorities of my organization?

Accessing TANF funding can help organizations implementing a SFSP expand their capacity and serve more children. TANF funds can be used to support summer food sites provided the project will not last more than four months, and will not prevent families from receiving other food benefits. HHS encourages TANF administrators to partner with organizations hosting summer food sites to blend the two funding streams (SFSP and TANF) to offer additional services. For example, SFSP reimbursements can cover the cost of food while TANF funds can support transportation of children or food to the site, recreational activities that attract and retain participants, or meal preparation costs that are not otherwise reimbursed under the SFSP.

2. How do you access these funds?

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), States meeting specific criteria became eligible to apply for additional funding to support TANF activities. Seventeen states are eligible to receive these “emergency funds” in fiscal year 2010.³ Additionally, a provision in the guidance of the ARRA funds removes prior restrictions on the expenditure of “carry over funds,” thus broadening their use.

In States receiving TANF emergency funds, youth programs currently operating a SFSP can contact their State’s TANF administrative agency to explore accessing those dollars. Contact information for State TANF administrative agencies is available at:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/states/tanf_dir.html.

Additionally, youth programs not currently operating a SFSP can support summer nutrition efforts in a variety of ways. Non-profit organizations, local, municipal, and state governments, schools, and colleges and universities play important roles in the SFSP program.

- These organizations can **volunteer** at a SFSP site. They can provide the staff, materials, and time necessary to develop fun and engaging activities that hold the interest of youth, and make the program successful.
- They can **open a SFSP** site and /or share the location of other sites. Because of a lack of SFSP sites, many eligible youth do not receive services in a typical summer. If an organization lacks the capacity to manage a program, they can volunteer space at their site for use by a SFSP site sponsor.
- Non-profit organizations, camps, local or state government agencies and schools or universities can **sponsor** a SFSP site. Sponsors must have strong internal systems capable of managing the program’s administrative and financial requirements. Food may be provided by the organization or purchased from a vendor.⁴

³ Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah, see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/recovery/tanf-faq.htm>

⁴ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/>

For more information, contact your State's Child Nutrition Program Administrative agency. To learn who to contact in your State, visit:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

3. Should I apply?

- a. TANF funds are relatively flexible.** Leaders of summer food service sites need to make a compelling case to State TANF administrators regarding how the use of these funds will support needy families in the community.
- b. Ask about reporting requirements.** Programs considering using TANF funding for the SFSP should learn about the reporting requirements tied to this funding in their State. Special reporting responsibilities are required for many ARRA funding sources.
- c. The planning timeframe is short.** SFSP sponsors should contact TANF administrators immediately to use these funds for programs and activities this summer.

For More Information:

The Food Resource and Action Center: www.frac.org

Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/>

United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>

Other Resources:

The Finance Project has an extensive body of information and resources to help leaders finance and sustain effective *programs* that support the positive development of youth, and develop *systems* that provide an infrastructure to help coordinate and guide investments in youth.

Visit The Finance Project's [Youth Programs Resource Center](#) for tools and resources on financing, and sustaining youth programs. For more information on how to [Find Federal Funding](#) see The Finance Projects online database, which highlights over 100 federal funding sources that can support youth programs.

The Finance Project does not give grants or provide funding for projects. We provide leaders with the information, tools, advice, and training to identify financing strategies that fit their needs and to build their capacity to successfully sustain programs over time.