

# The Dallas County Summer Meals Sponsor Council

A Collaborative Approach to Summer Meals

Texas Hunger Initiative  
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## KEY TERMS

**Summer Food Service Program (SFSP):** Also referred to as Summer Meals or summer feeding, the Summer Food Service Program is a federal nutrition program that provides free, nutritious meals to children in lower-income areas during the summertime when school is not in session. SFSP provides meals (i.e., breakfast, lunch, snack, supper) to children ages 18 and under.

**Seamless Summer Option (SSO):** The Seamless Summer Option is a continuation of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) that schools can run during the summer time. This program follows slightly different rules for meal requirements and reimbursement rates per meal but functions with the same purpose of feeding children meals during the summertime.

**Sponsor:** Also known as a Contracting Entity or “CE,” sponsors are at the heart of the USDA Summer Meal program. A sponsor contracts directly with the State agency for overall management of operations at one or more sites (also called “meal sites”). While responsible for the operation of Summer Meal sites, sponsors also must ensure access to meals is available and known to eligible children in their communities. A sponsor can be a school, nonprofit organization, or a unit of local, municipal, county, tribal, or State government.

**Site:** A site is the physical location, approved by the State agency, where Summer Meals are served during a supervised time period. Sites can be located at schools, recreation centers, playgrounds, parks, churches, community centers, day camps, housing projects and complexes, and migrant centers, or on Indian reservations.

**Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA):** The Texas Department of Agriculture is the administrator of the USDA Summer Meal program. Sponsors contract with TDA to run their Summer Meals programs.

**Vendor:** A vendor is a third-party food service company that prepares the food that is served to sites. The meals from a vendor must follow strict USDA nutrition guidelines. Sites can be their own vendor, known as self-prep, or a sponsor can act as a vendor for their sites.

**Average Daily Participation (ADP):** The Average Daily Participation or ADP is the average number of children participating in Summer Meals each day. ADP can be calculated at the site level, sponsor level, local and state level to help measure Summer Meals’ impact.

## INTRODUCTION

During the school year, millions of children receive free and reduced priced meals through the National School Lunch Program. But when school is out, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP or Summer Meals), a federal nutrition program, seeks to fill this gap by providing children access to free and nutritious meals throughout the summer. However, only about 14% of the millions of children that qualify for the program nationwide participate in Summer Meals.<sup>1</sup> Several barriers can prevent kids from accessing these meals during the summer, such as program awareness, access to sites, safety, and social stigma. Local communities and states have been working to overcome these challenges through more coordinated efforts. In Dallas County, Texas, sponsors – the nonprofits, school districts, and government agencies that run the Summer Meal Programs – have united to close the participation gap and ensure no child goes hungry through the Dallas County Summer Meals Sponsor Council.

Through a shared vision of eliminating child hunger in the Dallas County area, Baylor University's Texas Hunger Initiative - Dallas (THI) and the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas (UWMD) convened the Dallas County Summer Meals Sponsor Council in the fall of 2013. Composed of Summer Meals sponsors, the Dallas County Summer Meals Sponsor Council works diligently to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Summer Meals program in the Dallas area in order to ensure healthy summer meals for every child. The Sponsor Council is reducing child summer hunger by increasing the capacity of the sponsor community to serve more children, increasing awareness of the program in the greater community, and ensuring every child has a meaningful and positive experience at Summer Meals sites. After months of research and strategic planning, the Sponsor Council first met in November 2013. Through sponsor-driven programming, the Sponsor Council focuses on the following objectives:

1. Continuously improve the child's participation and experience through training and support for operational success including marketing, promotion, increased site coverage, information on youth engagement, volunteer recruitment, and fundraising.
2. Actively collaborate and share best practices with area sponsor community.
3. Focus more on sponsor mission and less on time-consuming administrative tasks. The Council will act as a liaison for the collective concerns of sponsors to the TDA, streamlining dialogue to simplify processes and reduce complexities.

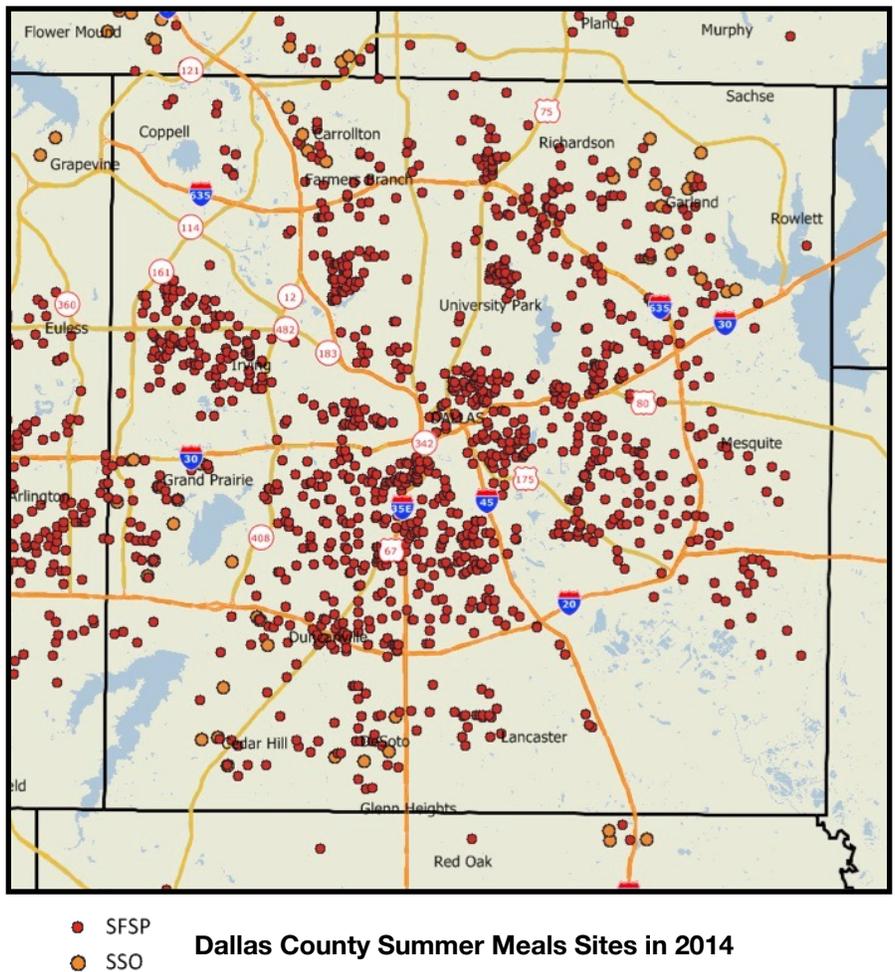
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<sup>1</sup>"Map the Meal Gap." Feeding America. 2012. Web. 1 Feb. 2015.

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## DALLAS COUNTY SUMMER MEALS SPONSOR COUNCIL

Now starting its second year, the Sponsor Council is building off of the lessons learned from summer 2014 and is seeking to establish the Sponsor Council as a sustainable structure of support for sponsors in the Dallas region. Based on sponsor feedback on the Council's first year, the Council will be focusing its efforts on four key focus areas for the coming years: marketing and outreach, food quality and cost, programming, and operational excellence and TDA advocacy. This document provides insight on the work of the Sponsor Council, the challenges and opportunities for ending summer hunger in Dallas County, and how the Sponsor Council is fighting to close the gap in ending child hunger.



(Data Source: North Texas Food Bank and Texas Department of Agriculture)

### Hunger and Poverty in Dallas County

Although Dallas County may be a land of opportunity for many, hunger and poverty remain a serious challenge. The poverty rate has increased by 41% since 2000 while the overall population in Dallas has grown by about 5% in the same time period.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, poverty in Dallas has disproportionately affected people of color with the poverty rate at 30% for Hispanics and African Americans and 10% for Non-Hispanic Whites. Dallas also ranks the worst in child poverty in cities over a million with an overall child poverty rate of 38%.<sup>3</sup> 74% or over 300,000 children in Dallas County now qualify for free and reduced priced meals, but only about 14% receive these meals during the summertime.<sup>4</sup> With more than 1 in 4 children in Dallas County facing food insecurity, there is no time to wait to ensure these kids receive the meals they need.<sup>5</sup>



**28.6%** of children in Dallas County are food insecure.

**38%** of children in Dallas live in poverty.

**74%** qualify for free and reduced priced meals.

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<sup>2</sup> "Mayor's Taskforce on Poverty: Council Briefing." Dallas City Hall. Dallas, Aug. 2014. Web. 1 Feb. 2015. <[http://dallascityhall.com/government/Council%20Meeting%20Documents/Poverty\\_Task\\_Force\\_082014.pdf](http://dallascityhall.com/government/Council%20Meeting%20Documents/Poverty_Task_Force_082014.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "Map the Meal Gap." Feeding America. 2012. Web. 1 Feb. 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## SPONSOR COUNCIL YEAR I: DEVELOPING A UNIFIED PLATFORM FOR DALLAS AREA SPONSORS



Sponsors at meeting with TDA and USDA

### **Why a Sponsor Council?**

While many communities have 3-25 sponsors providing Summer Meals, Dallas County had over 100 sponsors before the creation of the Council. With such an exceptionally high number of sponsors serving meals at over 1,000 sites, the Summer Meals landscape faced many challenges relating to duplicitous efforts and competition, and possessed few resources to foster more coordinated support. Dallas area sponsors have found Summer Meals to be a highly competitive environment, with sponsors competing for sites, resources, and participation at their sites, while still struggling to meet the needs of at-risk youth in the summertime. Hence, Dallas County needed a more unified approach to ensure all need could be met for Summer Meals. Recognizing the potential of such a robust and diverse sponsor population, THI and UWMD employed the best practices of other sponsor collaborative models in other communities - like Milwaukee's Hunger Taskforce - to foster a coordinated and collaborative approach to summer food.

### Sponsor Council Development

Through months of research and strategic planning, THI and UWMD found that the creation of a sponsor coalition could best fulfill the needs and interests of sponsors. By benchmarking sponsor support organizations and identifying the sponsor needs that a potential coalition could meet, the two organizations developed the Dallas County Summer Meals Sponsor Council. Working with Dallas-based Bain Consulting’s Inspire research team, THI and UWMD surveyed sponsors on how a sponsor council could best provide support and how they would like to be engaged within a council. We found that 68% of sponsor respondents were interested in participating in a Council. Sponsors were both interested in addressing the challenges of competition through a Sponsor Council as well as growing their organizations to their full potential, with 75% of sponsors believing they had the capacity to serve more meals the next year. Sponsors felt that they could increase their capacity and impact through support in the following areas: fundraising, advertising, and advocacy to the TDA. Ultimately by creating a Sponsor Council, sponsors could effectively come to the table with the shared goal of ending child summer hunger by increasing their organizations’ impact. Launched in November 2013, the Sponsor Council supports over 30 of the 80 sponsor organizations currently serving the Dallas region.

### Goals and Objectives of the Sponsor Council



## SPONSOR COUNCIL YEAR I HIGHLIGHTS

We accomplished a great deal in our first year through targeted programming, timely deliverables, and event support. Below is an overview of some of our most exciting accomplishments.



**TDA/USDA Presentation & Q&A Session:** As part of our strategy to build a stronger partnership between TDA and sponsors, we hosted TDA and regional USDA representatives in January 2014 and provided an opportunity for sponsors to ask questions and address challenges with Summer Meals.

Representatives from TDA and USDA answering questions from Sponsor Council members.

### Site Mapping Analysis:

Through a partnership with the North Texas Food Bank, we performed a site mapping analysis of all the sites in Dallas County and identifying areas of met and unmet need. This mapping analysis helped increase awareness of the Summer Meals landscape, enabling sponsors to make an informed decision about where to grow their programs.



Site Mapping Analysis Handout



Yard signs posted at Summer Meals Site.

### Marketing and Outreach:

As a unified approach to increasing awareness and participation in Summer Meals, we provided thousands of customizable flyers and yard signs to sponsors. Labeled “Free Summer Meals Available Here” in English and Spanish, these bright orange signs’ simple message was effective in increasing awareness and participation and can be reused each summer.

## SPONSOR COUNCIL YEAR I HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

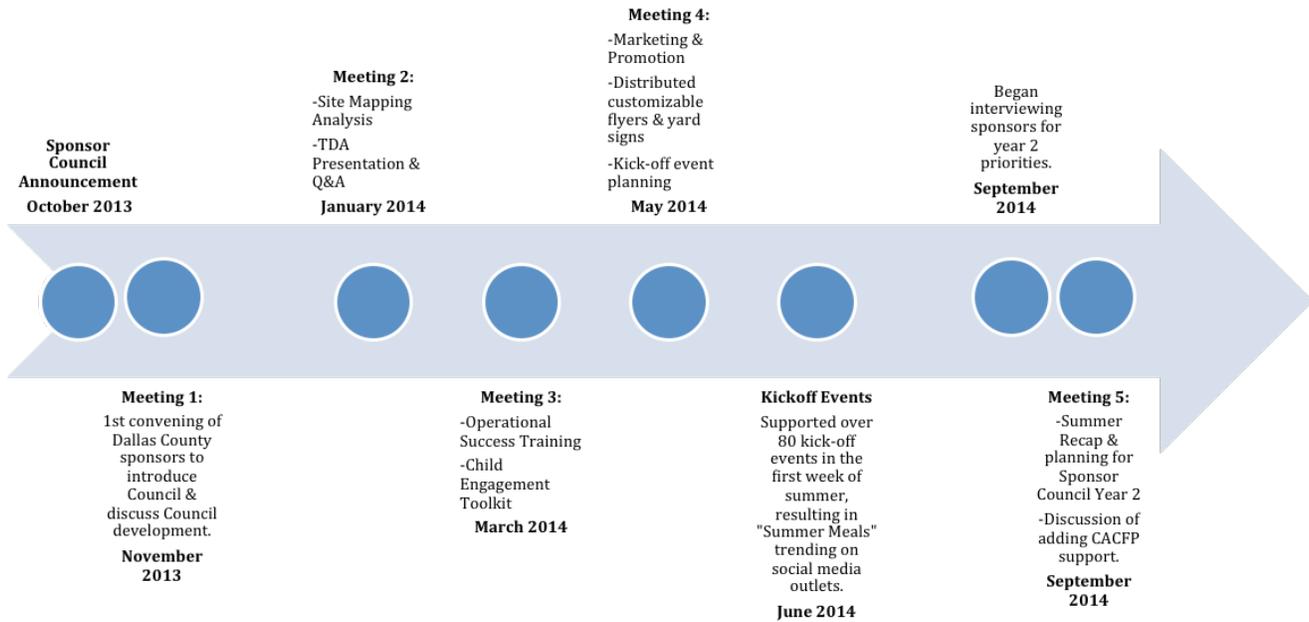
**Power Up:** Created by UWMD, Power Up resources were given to all sponsors seeking to develop and increase the depth of their programming. These books provided programming and activity guides to engage children in physical activity with curriculum requiring little to no equipment.

**Kick-Off Events:** Through a coordinated marketing campaign, we supported over 80 kick-off events during the first week of summer. Sponsors interested in hosting a kick-off event were provided sporting equipment like hula-hoops and basketballs, additional yard signs, Power Up materials, and social media support, coverage, and volunteers.



Kids playing at a Summer Meals Kick-off Event.

## Sponsor Council Timeline of Year I



## SPONSOR COUNCIL YEAR II: BUILDING CAPACITY AND PROVIDING TARGETED SUPPORT

As the Sponsor Council's first summer came to a close in August 2014, THI - Dallas and UWMD reconvened to evaluate the efficacy of the Sponsor Council and plan for the future of the Council. We wanted to evaluate what worked well, what did not, and how the Sponsor Council could provide long-term, sustainable support. As a part of this planning process, we interviewed approximately 28 of the 80 Summer Meals sponsors to inform and drive the future efforts of the Council.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Interview Design

The interview was designed to be conducted in-person with the administrator or implementer of the sponsor organization's program. The interview was designed to take 30-60 minutes to administer and was divided into three sections. These sections sought to answer three overarching questions: How do sponsors run their programs? What are the challenges and opportunities for running Summer Meals in Dallas County? What can the Sponsor Council do to help sponsors? In summation, the responses to these questions helped us identify the resources and capacity needed to increase the efficacy and impact of Summer Meals in Dallas and ensure that the Sponsor Council engages all sponsors meaningfully. Additionally, these interviews sought to identify ways to increase sponsor leadership and consistent participation at meetings.

#### Examining how sponsors run their programs

Part I of the survey sought to delve further into the numerous ways sponsors run and support their programs and sites. We asked about basic operational practices in regards to staffing, meals, types of sites served, programming, and years of experience in program. While there are national surveys that provide an overview of Summer Meals sponsors and programs, we recognized that the unique landscape and sheer number of sponsors necessitated closer examination to understand the nuances of running a Summer Meals program in Dallas County. By learning more about how sponsors run their programs, we could tailor our support to complement their program structure and capacity.

**Identifying challenges and opportunities for running Summer Meals in Dallas County**

In preparation for designing these interviews, we compiled Summer Meals best practices from various Summer Meals publications as a reference for successful Summer Meals program approaches. These best practices typically focus on the following areas: marketing and outreach, programming and activities, operational and financial practices, and menu and food costs. We incorporated these focus areas in Part II of the interview to identify and measure the challenges and successes of running SFSP/SSO within our region. Likewise, we used these responses to assess the extent to which sponsors were implementing best practices and identify any potential barriers that may prevent sponsors from employing them. Finally, compiling best practices research and assessing best practices among our sponsors allowed us to examine whether these national practices were relevant and feasible for Summer Meals in Dallas County.

**Determining what the Sponsor Council can do to help sponsors**

For Part III, we sought to evaluate the support the Sponsor Council provided in its inaugural year and determine how sponsors would like the Council to support them in the future. We asked about their involvement in the Council, what value the Council added to their programs, their interest in collaborating with other sponsors, and how the Council could provide them support in the future. In conjunction with the first and second parts of the interview, this section enabled us to identify connections between the types of support sponsors wanted with their organizational structures and types of programs they run. Additionally, we asked about interest in leadership opportunities and working groups.

**TABLE 1. SUMMER MEALS SPONSORS IN DALLAS COUNTY 2014**

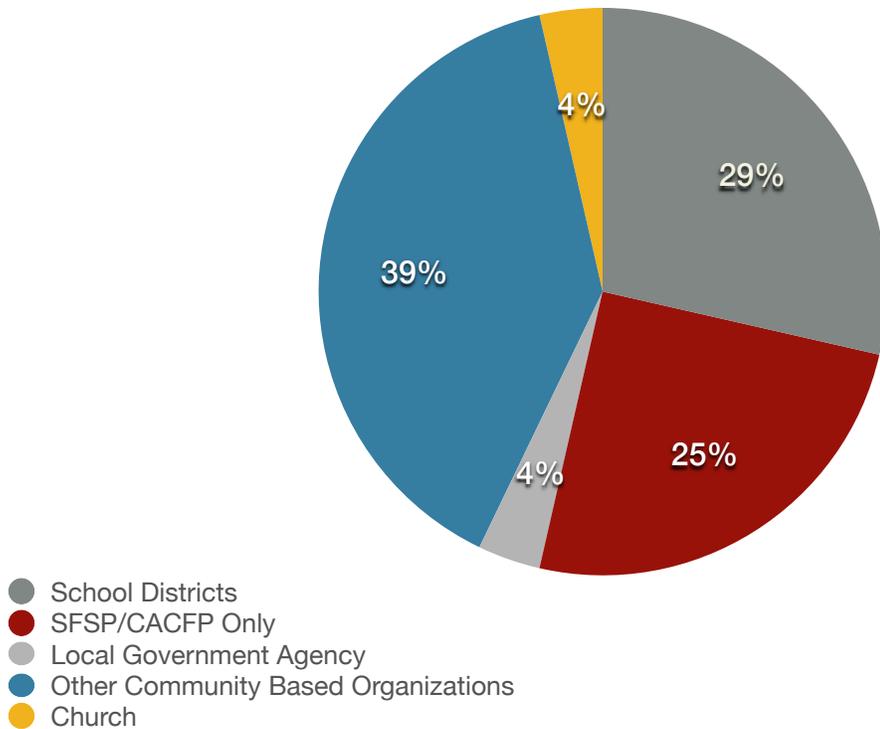
	<b>Sponsors Interviewed</b>	<b>All Sponsors in Dallas County</b>	<b>Interview Representation</b>
<b>Number of Sponsors</b>	28	80	35%
<b>Number of Sites</b>	708	1338	52.9%
<b>Meals Served in Dallas County</b>	3,176,373	7,451,443	42.6%

Data from Texas Department of Agriculture

**Sponsor Interview Demographics**

Using the list of Summer Meals sponsors who were active from 2013-2014, we invited all sponsors the opportunity to interview. Ultimately, 28 of 80 sponsors were interviewed, representing 52.9% of all sites and 42.6% of all meals served in Dallas County in 2014 (see Table 1). Of the sponsors interviewed, 8 were school districts, 19 were community-based organizations, and 1 was a non-school government agency. Of the community-based organizations, 7 of the 19 were chiefly CACFP/SFSP organizations and 1 was a church (see Figure 1). Among these sponsors, about 33% served 1-9 sites, 44% served 10-29 sites, 15% served 30-80 sites, and about 7% served over 100 sites. 57% of organizations have been sponsors for 4-6 years, coinciding with the increased need during the Great Recession. These numbers similarly reflect the overall composition of sponsor types and sizes according to the data currently available.

**FIGURE 1. SPONSOR BY ORGANIZATION TYPE**

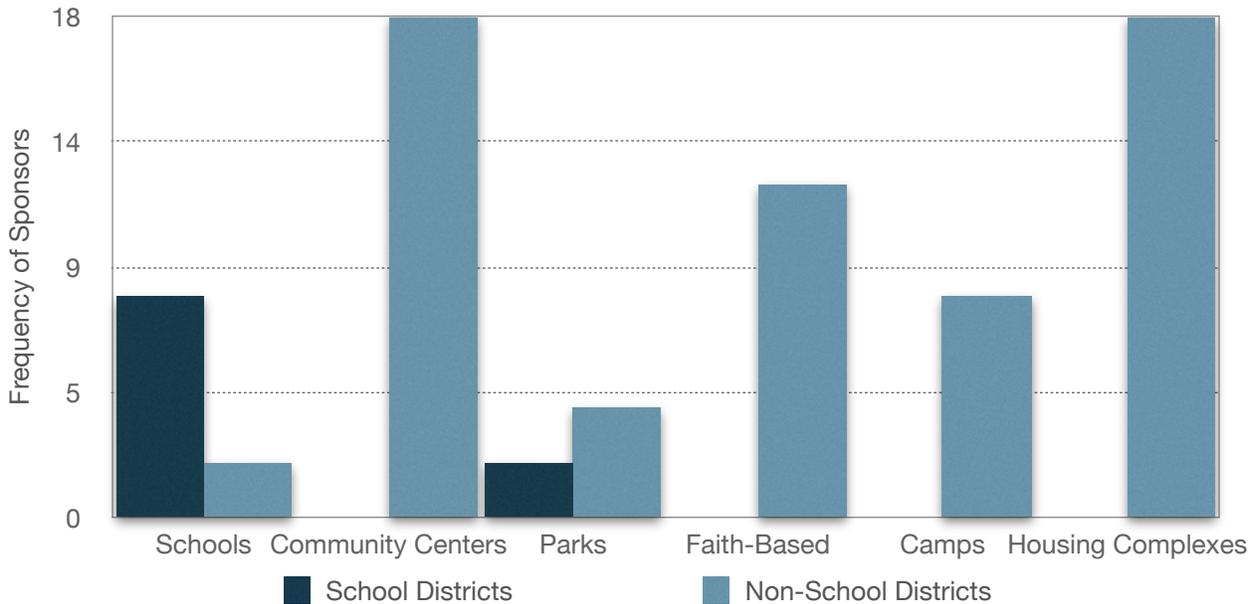


## KEY FINDINGS

### HOW DO SPONSORS RUN THEIR PROGRAMS?

Dallas County sponsors operate a great variety of programs ranging from the how and where they run their programs, the type and depth of programming, to the variety and quality of meals they serve. All sponsors had paid employees with about 43% of sponsors having had volunteers at least once during the summertime. While some sponsors had volunteers, these volunteers tended to be sporadic or volunteered only for specific events, and were not integral components of their programs. Sponsors found volunteers to be insufficient replacements for paid staff and were primarily assigned to nonessential roles such as greeting kids or packing delivery vehicles.

FIGURE 2. FREQUENCY OF TYPES OF SITES OF SCHOOL & NON-SCHOOL SPONSORS



### Types of Sites and Programs

Sponsors operated their programs at a number of different types of sites. School district sponsors operated primarily at schools, but some also sponsored public sites like parks and recreation sites. Outside of school districts, almost all sponsors with greater than one site had sites at community centers (like Boys and Girls Clubs)

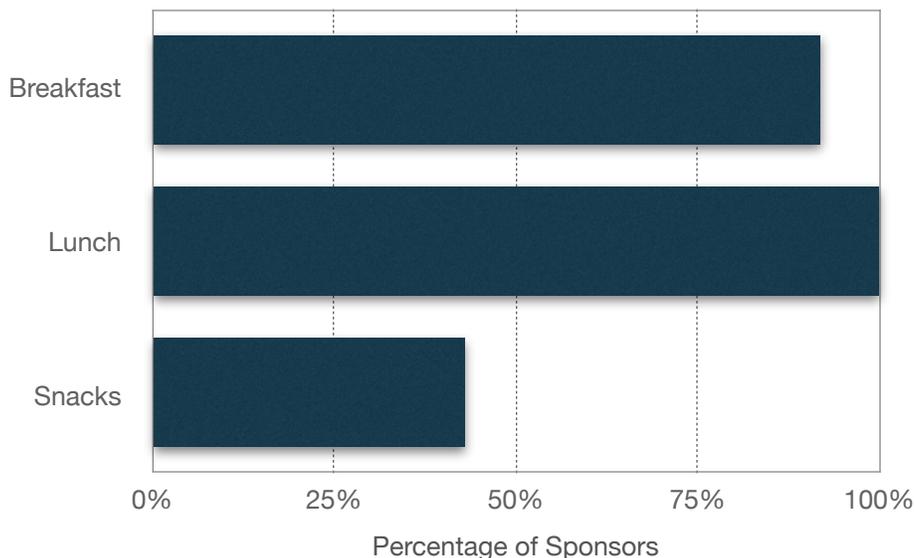
(85%), housing complexes and apartments (80%), and over half had faith-based sites (60%) (see Figure 2).

While sponsors may close sites when summer camps ends or when ADP drops, for instance, 75% of sponsors operated their programs at at least one site for virtually the whole summer, which spans 10-11 weeks. 14.3% of sponsors operated their programs for 7-9 weeks and 10.7% of sponsors (exclusively school districts) operated their programs for 4-6 weeks, the length of the Seamless Summer Option for summer school. For sponsors who operated their programs all summer long, many noted that they continued to work with their sites during the school year through the CACFP program, with several expressing interest in CACFP expansion support.

### Meal Service

All interviewed sponsors served lunch and almost all offered breakfast at at least one of their sites (92%) (see Figure 3). 42.9% also served snacks at at least one of their sites. 71% of sponsors served hot meals at least 3 days a week, citing child preference for hot meals. 78.6% of sponsors were exclusively self-prep, 17.9% served exclusively vended, and 3.6% (1 sponsor) served both vended and self-prep meals. Sponsors indicated increased quality of food and lower costs as the primary reasons for serving self-prep. Sponsors who served vended meals cited the large size and scale of their programs as the primary reason for serving vended meals.

FIGURE 3. MEALS SERVED BY SPONSORS



### **Programming**

All sponsors had programming at at least one of their sites, with 89% of sponsors having programming at all of their sites. Some sponsors were responsible for programming at their sites but most programming was provided by the site organizations (53%). Sponsors were most frequently responsible for programming at housing and apartment complexes, while school sites were exclusively responsible for programming (e.g., summer school and summer programming). Of the sponsors who provided programming, 28.6% were “very satisfied” with the programming they provided, 64.3% were “somewhat satisfied” and 7.1% were “neither satisfied nor unsatisfied.”

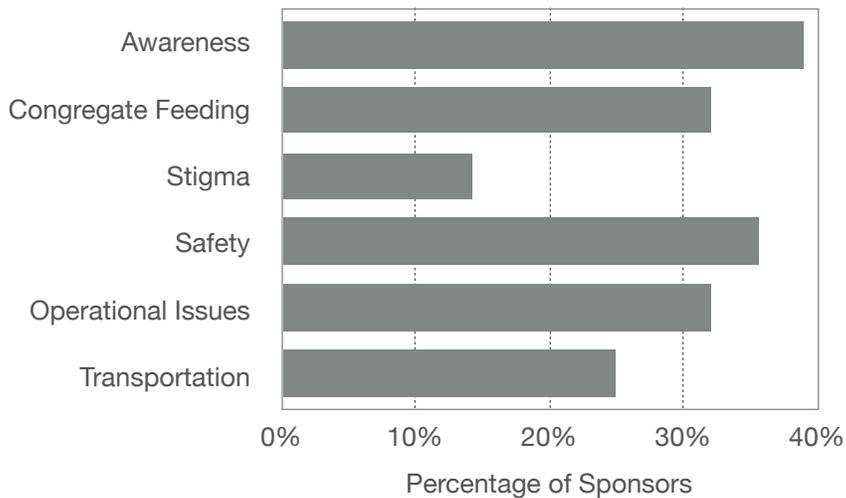
### **Sponsor Growth**

27 of 28 sponsors intended to continue being a sponsor next year with only 1 sponsor unsure whether they will continue next year. While sponsors expressed different levels of capacity to take on new sites, 57% of sponsors wanted to increase their number of sites for 2015. 14% wanted to maintain their number of sites (many citing the desire to focus on increasing their average daily participation at these sites) while 10.7% felt they had met or surpassed their current capacity and wanted to decrease their number of sites. 17.9% of sponsors were unsure whether they wanted to change their number of sites for 2015. 75% of sponsors increased their average daily participation (ADP) from 2013 to 2014, 3.6% stayed the same, 3.6% decreased, and 17.9% were unsure whether their ADP increased or decreased.

### **WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RUNNING SFSP/SSO IN DALLAS COUNTY?**

Depending on the types of programs, size, and scope of different sponsor organizations’ programs, sponsors faced a number of challenges and achieved a range of success in summer 2014. 67.9% of sponsors rated their program this past summer as either “excellent” (25%) or “very good” (42.9%); 25% of sponsors rated their summer 2014 program as “good” and 7.1% as “fair.” Sponsors cited increased ADP (57%) and site growth (42.9%), operational success (35.7%), and lack of issues or unforeseen challenges (32%) as the primary reasons their summers were successful.

**FIGURE 4. BARRIERS SPONSORS INDICATED TO PARTICIPATION**



### Barriers to Participation

While most sponsors conducted substantial outreach, many barriers still presented challenges to getting more kids to participate in summer meals (see Figure 4). Lack of awareness (39.3%) and safety (35.7%) were cited most frequently, followed by congregate feeding and heat (32.1%) and site operational challenges (32.1%) such as site accessibility or locating an appropriate site within a high need area. Barriers due to congregate feeding were cited as especially challenging in Dallas County due to the excessive heat during summer. Transportation (25%) and social stigma (14.3%) were also stated as major challenges.

### Sponsor Challenges

When asked about their two biggest challenges in providing Summer Meals in 2014, about one-third of sponsors indicated issues with the Texas Department of Agriculture as their greatest challenge in serving Summer Meals (see Figure 5). Specifically, sponsors cited issues with unclear communication, inconsistent directives, and an arduous audit process. Other sponsor challenges included staffing (28.6%) (staff turnover, site coordinator compliance, and general staffing challenges), logistics and planning (25%), and finance and budgeting (21.4%).

### Sponsor Successes

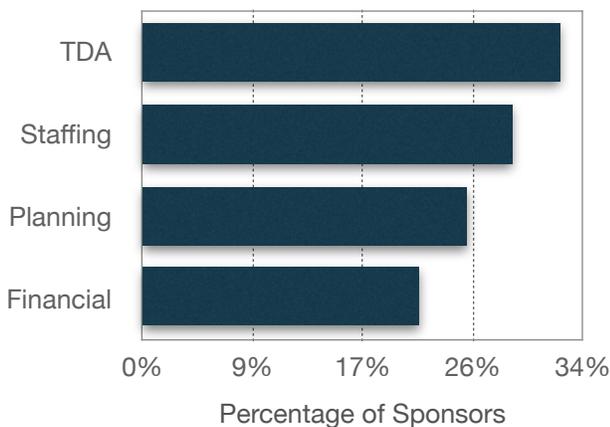
Despite many challenges, sponsors also shared several successes in their programs (see Figure 6). When asked about their two greatest successes for summer 2014,

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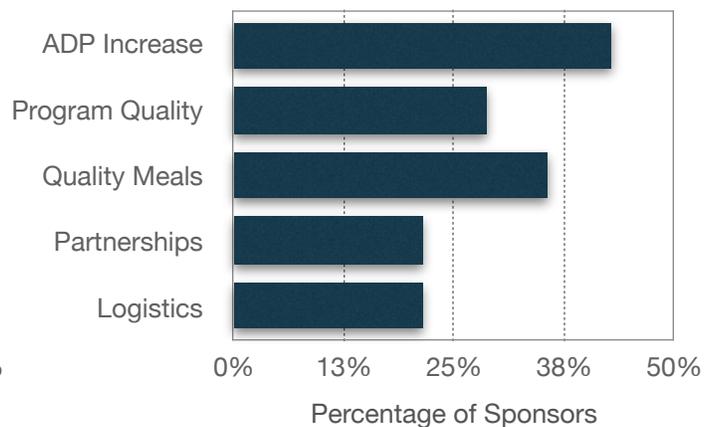
## DALLAS COUNTY SUMMER MEALS SPONSOR COUNCIL

42.9% of sponsors indicated that an increase in participation was among their greatest successes. Sponsors also indicated quality meals (35.7%) and the quality of their programs (28.6%) as major accomplishments. Partnerships with other organizations (21.4%), logistics and planning (21.4%), and having a positive impact on kids (17.9%) were also frequently cited.

**FIGURE 5. GREATEST SPONSOR CHALLENGES**



**FIGURE 6. GREATEST SPONSOR SUCCESSES**



### Managing Costs

With cost-management an essential component of running a successful program, we asked sponsors what they were doing to keep their programs cost-effective. Overwhelmingly, sponsors cited food budgeting (64%) as their primary approach to managing the costs of running the program. While sponsors were interested in serving higher quality food, cost limited their ability to do so. Many sponsors also cited using donations (35.7%) and fundraising (21.4%) to offset additional costs not covered by the federal reimbursement for meals. Planning (35.7%) and logistics (25%) best practices were also employed to manage program costs.

### WHAT CAN THE SPONSOR COUNCIL DO TO HELP SPONSORS?

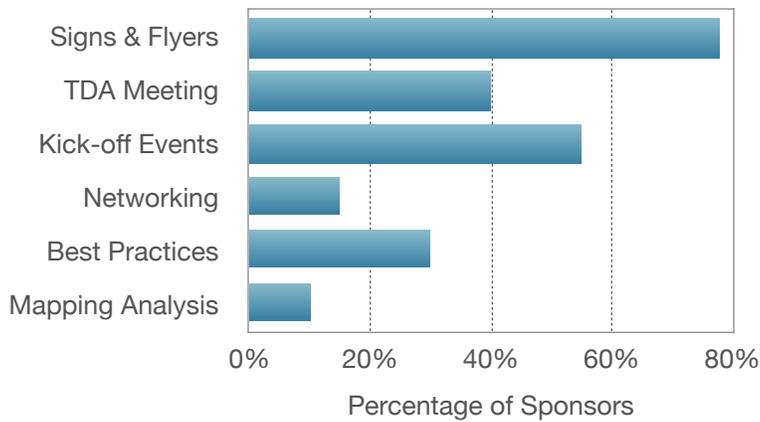
Of the sponsors interviewed, 71.4% have been to at least one Sponsor Council meeting, with 40% having attended at least half of the meetings. Of the sponsors who have attended a meeting, 85% found the meetings helpful in addressing Summer Meal challenges. 75% of sponsors indicated that the signs and flyers the Sponsor Council provided were helpful (see Figure 7). Sponsors most frequently cited the kick-off event support and Power Up resources (55%) the Sponsor Council

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## DALLAS COUNTY SUMMER MEALS SPONSOR COUNCIL

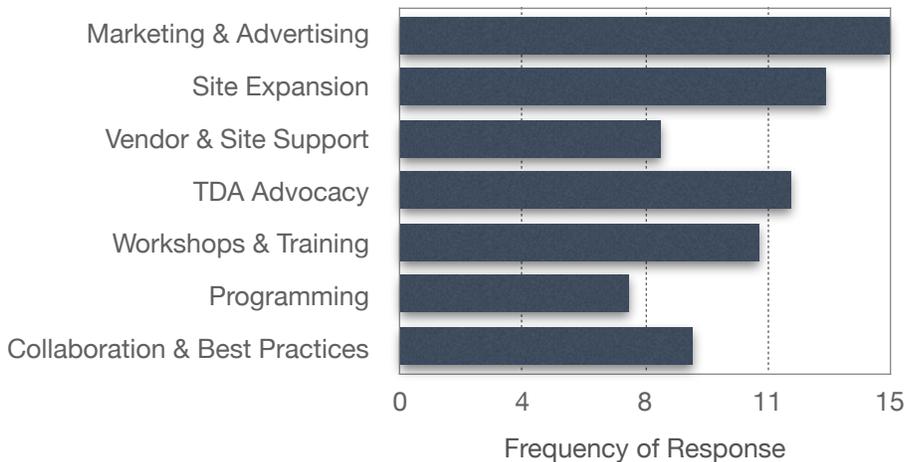
provided, followed by the meeting with TDA and USDA, as especially helpful (40%). Learning about best practices (30%), networking with other sponsors (15%), and the site mapping analysis (10%) were also cited as benefits of participating in the Sponsor Council. However, it must be noted that interviewees had different attendance levels at meetings and often could not speak to the helpfulness of meetings they did not attend.

**FIGURE 7. BENEFITS OF SPONSOR COUNCIL**



### Future Sponsor Council Support

**FIGURE 8. FUTURE SUPPORT DESIRED FROM COUNCIL**



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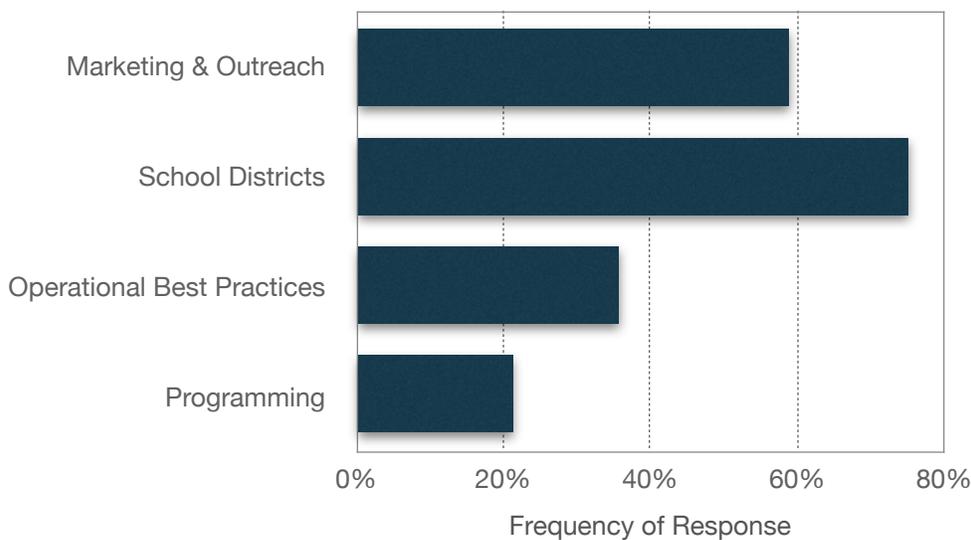
## DALLAS COUNTY SUMMER MEALS SPONSOR COUNCIL

We asked sponsors about how the Sponsor Council could provide support in the future and their responses all shared a common theme: increase capacity and program excellence in order to serve more meals to children (see Figure 8). Over 50% of sponsors were interested in receiving marketing and outreach support from the Sponsor Council, followed by 46% of sponsors wanting some type of support for growth and expansion. Sponsors expressed interest in workshops and trainings on program excellence (39.3%), learning about and sharing best practices (32.1%), support with site and food vendor relationships (28.6%) and support for creating and/or strengthening programming at their sites (25%). Over 40% of sponsors also indicated the need for the Sponsor Council to provide support to address challenges with the TDA and serve as their advocate with the state agency.

### Interest in Working with Other Sponsors

Despite expected challenges with competition, 75% of sponsors expressed willingness and time to work with other sponsors on addressing challenges or Summer Meals topics (see Figure 9). 59% of sponsors who were willing to collaborate with other sponsors were interested on working on advertising and outreach. 6 out of 8 schools expressed interest in working with each other to address school-related challenges and opportunities, while nonprofits were particularly interested in working on operational best practices (35.6%) and programming (21.4%).

**FIGURE 9. SPONSOR INTEREST IN SPONSOR COLLABORATION**



## RESEARCH SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Overall, our research found that sponsors view the Sponsor Council as a valuable resource for increasing their capacity and improving their program in order to close the summer hunger gap. In particular, sponsors were interested in the following support: marketing and outreach, operational excellence, advocacy with the Texas Department of Agriculture, programming, and food cost and quality. Additionally, sponsors also desired more tailored support that considered their operational practices and program structure as well as their years of experience and interest in site growth. With this feedback, we adjusted our support plan to provide more sponsor-specific resources and opportunities for sponsors with shared interests to work together.

From evaluating our first year of support and diving deeper to understand how the Sponsor Council could provide long-term, sustainable we support, we developed a three-pronged approach for the next steps of the Council: continued support, expanded support, and sponsor-led support. First, we are continuing to do the work that we did well, which includes programming, marketing and outreach, operational excellence, and TDA advocacy. Second, we are expanding this support and providing resources that will be impactful for both novice and experienced sponsors, including addressing food costs and quality. Third, through sponsor-led support, we are supporting sponsor-led solutions through working groups and sponsor collaborations to ensure that all sponsors get the resources they need to be successful. We used this three-pronged approach to create strategies for each of the focus areas as identified by the interviewed sponsors: marketing and outreach, programming, food cost and food quality, and operational excellence and TDA advocacy.

In an effort to connect these strategies and recognize sponsors making strides in these focus areas, we have created a Sponsor Recognition Program. This program will help the Sponsor Council recognize sponsors for their good work, and help identify how to best provide targeted support to sponsors. The following outline provides an overview of each focus area and strategy, and how the Sponsor Recognition Program will evaluate and reinforce these strategies.

## FOCUS AREA: MARKETING AND OUTREACH

### **Strategy 1 – Increase awareness and participation in Summer Meals through strategic marketing and advertising.**

#### **A. Continued Support**

- 1.1 Increase dissemination of yard signs and customizable flyers to promote a unified marketing approach.
- 1.2 Continue supporting more kick-off events media coverage in order to increase awareness of Summer Meals.
- 1.3 Promote calling 2-1-1 and texting 877-877 to find nearest site.

#### **B. Expanded Support**

- 1.4 Provide marketing training two months before summer begins to allow sponsors to fine-tune their marketing efforts.
- 1.5 Use Sponsor Council as unified body for greater marketing efforts.
  - 1.5.1 Advertise through radio, local government, and other far-reaching channels throughout the summer.
  - 1.5.2 Redouble marketing efforts during July to mitigate ADP drop 4th of July.
  - 1.5.3 Develop volunteer campaign to distribute outreach material and awareness of program.
- 1.6 Conduct focus groups with key community leaders of high-need areas to develop a strategic approach to increasing access and participation in Summer Meals in these communities.

#### **C. Sponsor-Led Support**

- 1.7 Coordinate with School District Working Group to direct students to other Summer Meals sites after summer school ends (if SSO).
- 1.8 Coordinate with school districts that waive out of Summer Meals to connect students with closest community-based sites.

## FOCUS AREA: FOOD COST AND FOOD QUALITY

### Strategy 2 – Help sponsors improve meal quality and address food cost.

#### A. Expanded Support

- 2.1 Create a vendor and food distribution company rating database (like Yelp) for sponsors to rate their satisfaction with the places they procure their food. This will allow sponsors to make informed decisions about where to buy their food in regards to cost and vendor quality.
- 2.2 Identify approaches to support a year-around model of addressing food costs in both Summer Meals and CACFP.

#### B. Sponsor-Led Support

- 2.3 Support Food Cost Working Group to help interested sponsors drive opportunities to address food costs and quality.
- 2.4 Harness buying power of sponsors to create opportunities to scale food costs by creating food-buying club with central distribution points for sponsors.



Kids enjoying their meals while wearing “No Kid Hungry” sunglasses.

## FOCUS AREA: PROGRAMMING

### Strategy 3 – Promote meaningful programming by helping sponsors develop and strengthen programming and activities at their sites.

#### A. Continued Support

- 3.1 Use Power Up, a child activity and programming guide, to help sponsors navigate programming and activity options at their sites.

#### B. Expanded Support

- 3.2 Provide more in-depth programming support through programming trainings, such as Playworks, which teaches organizations how to engage kids through effective programming in all settings.

#### C. Sponsor-Led Support

- 3.3 Support Programming Working Group to enable interested sponsors to identify opportunities for programming support and approaches to catering programming to more difficult sites to serve such as apartment complexes.



Bounce houses and playtime at Summer Meals site.

## FOCUS AREA: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE & TDA ADVOCACY

### **Strategy 4: Provide training and support that will help sponsors improve the operational practices and address challenges with the Texas Department of Agriculture.**

#### **A. Continued Support**

- 4.1 Provide opportunities for sponsors and TDA to interface in positive platforms. Continue Q&A meetings with TDA and USDA to address Summer Meals and CACFP challenges.
- 4.2 Share Summer Meals best practices research, national webinars, and resources.

#### **B. Expanded Support**

- 4.3 Adopt year-around model of support for child nutrition programs by expanding scope of operational support to include CACFP sponsors and programs.
- 4.4 Conduct mock audit and site coordinator trainings to help sponsors improve their programs and address challenges with TDA. These trainings will help sponsors address any operational issues before summer begins and feel more prepared for TDA audits and visits.

#### **C. Sponsor-Led Support**

- 4.5 Support School District Working Group to help school Food and Nutrition Departments navigate school specific challenges to running SFSP, SSO, and CACFP.
- 4.6 Use sponsor-led food-buying club (see strategy 2.4) to ensure sponsors are getting TDA-approved food items.

### SPONSOR RECOGNITION PROGRAM

During our interviews, many sponsors expressed concerns about the lack of positive support and recognition for successful sponsors. Modeled after FRAC’s Summer Meal Standards of Excellence, the Sponsor Recognition Program is a rating system that recognizes successful sponsors and supports sponsors in overcoming challenges and identifying opportunities to be as successful as possible. Sponsors that opt-in to the program will receive a Gold, Silver, or Bronze rating that they can use to help build their reputation as a great sponsor in the Dallas County area. Participating in the program will help sponsors access more targeted support from the Sponsor Council, recruit new sites and retain previous sites, and receive recognition for their programs. Whether sponsors use their ratings to recruit new sites or include on future grant opportunities, the Recognition Program will help sponsors develop their Summer Meals programs as programs of excellence. Ultimately, the Recognition Program will ensure that all participating sponsors are receiving the targeted support needed to eliminate child hunger.

### Sponsor Recognition Process

The process will consist primarily of a site visit to a set number of sites per participating sponsor. A liaison from the Texas Hunger Initiative will visit each site and conduct a brief survey with the site coordinator and note basic observations about the site. Using a basic checklist and survey, the sponsor will be evaluated on basic criteria related to: food quality, marketing and outreach, access to programming, and operational excellence (including site satisfaction).



Mesquite ISD and THI receiving “No Kid Hungry” proclamation from Mesquite mayor.

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## DALLAS COUNTY SUMMER MEALS SPONSOR COUNCIL

### Defining Gold, Silver, and Bronze Ratings

We recognize that good sponsors come in all shapes and sizes and that there is no one size fits all approach to being a sponsor. Our goal for the recognition program is for every sponsor in the Sponsor Council to earn at least a Bronze level rating and work towards a Gold rating. If a sponsor is following basic Summer Meals regulations and is engaging children at their sites, that sponsor should qualify for at least the bronze level rating. Silver and Gold ratings will be awarded to sponsors who go above the basic requirements of Summer Meals to give kids the best experience possible.

**Bronze Sponsors** meet TDA's minimum requirements for a summer food site and offer opportunities for youth engagement through welcoming environment and opportunities for programming. Bronze sponsors must operate for at least 4 weeks.

**Silver Sponsors** exceed the requirements of a Bronze sponsor. They demonstrate a commitment to serving higher quality food; effectively engage children through offering a welcoming environment and having opportunities for programming; conduct significant marketing and outreach; and operate for at least 6 weeks.

**Gold Sponsors** surpass bronze and silver requirements. They offer children the highest quality meals; have significant opportunities for programming, physical activity, and nutrition education; conduct extensive community outreach by targeting children of all ages, and operate for at least 9 weeks.



Sponsors at first Sponsor Council Meeting.

## Sponsor Recognition Program Guidelines

Focus Area	Bronze Level <small>(Must meet all of the following criteria)</small>	Silver Level <small>(Must meet all of bronze and the following criteria)</small>	Gold Level <small>(Must meet all of bronze, silver and the following criteria)</small>
<p><b>Marketing &amp; Outreach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Signs, flyers, posters, banners are posted and distributed.</li> <li>-All staff at site is aware of program and is welcoming to kids.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Marketing material is available in <u>English</u> and <u>Spanish</u>.</li> <li>-Hosts a kick-off event.</li> <li>-Site coordinators engage with kids.</li> <li>-Employs members of the community serving.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Outreach conducted specifically targeted to older children.</li> <li>-Visits surrounding neighborhood to tell families about program.</li> <li>-Promoted program through community publications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food Quality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Menu and service follows all TDA guidelines and regulations.</li> <li>-Food served in appealing manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Offers fresh fruits or raw vegetables multiple times a week.</li> <li>-Serves the main entree two times or less on the monthly lunch menu.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Holds a food-tasting event OR surveys children to learn which food they want to eat.</li> <li>-Offers additional servings and variety of fruits and vegetables.</li> <li>-Offers four different entrees or meat alternates throughout each week.</li> </ul>

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DALLAS COUNTY SUMMER MEALS SPONSOR COUNCIL

Focus Area	Bronze Level  (Must meet all of the following criteria)	Silver Level  (Must meet all of bronze and the following criteria)	Gold Level  (Must meet all of bronze, silver and the following criteria)
<b>Programming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Opportunities for programming are offered at each site every day.</li> <li>-Offers opportunities for physical activity each week.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Offers opportunities for physical activity everyday.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Offers significant opportunities for programming each day.</li> <li>-Offers nutrition education throughout the summer.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational Excellence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Operates at least 5 days a week for 4 weeks during the summer.</li> <li>-Receives average score on site coordinator satisfaction survey.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Operates at least 6 weeks during the summer.</li> <li>-Receives above average score on site coordinator satisfaction survey.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Operates at least 9 weeks during the summer.</li> <li>-Receives excellent score on site coordinator satisfaction survey.</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION

Ultimately, ending childhood hunger in Dallas County requires committed and coordinated effort between Summer Meals sponsors and support from the greater community. As the Sponsor Council grows and strengthens its year-around support, our focus areas and strategies will adapt and develop to facilitate this approach. As we work to expand the capacity and impact of our sponsors - through targeted support and our reinforcing Sponsor Recognition Program - we will help close the gap on child hunger and ensure that no kid goes hungry in the Dallas region.

## CONTACT US:

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