

2016
ACTION
TOOLKIT

EXPANDING SUMMER LEARNING, MEALS AND JOBS FOR AMERICA'S YOUNG PEOPLE





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Summer Opportunities Matter for Communities

Over the summer many young people and their families lose access to critical supports that keep them safe, healthy and engaged in learning and meaningful work experiences. Studies show that providing summer opportunities, including jobs, learning, and meals, prevent academic regression and weight gain, divert youth from criminal involvement and reduce violence.

Need to Scale High-Quality Programs and Practices

Community leaders from across the country are working to expand summer opportunities by replicating successful, evidence-based practices through cross-sector collective impact approaches. Such practices include:

- creating a community-wide summer steering committee;
- assessing gaps in services and developing an action plan;
- focusing resources on research-based interventions;
- leveraging funding and capacity community-wide for marketing, data management and quality assurance; and
- finding creative and sustainable ways to fund summer opportunities long term.

This Action Tool is designed to share the key steps you can take this summer to increase access to high-quality summer learning, meals and jobs opportunities in your community. Whether you are a city, nonprofit, school, business or philanthropic leader, you will find examples of how your peers across the country are finding innovative ways to move summer from a time of risk to a time of great reward.

Key Steps to Maximizing Summer in Your Community

1. CONVENE YOUR SUMMER DREAM TEAM

Communities can increase efficiency and effectiveness and leverage many diverse resources in the summer, but only by creating a cross-sector approach. Unless you intentionally set a table for summer, it's unlikely the key players will come together.

Diverse leaders that represent key constituencies and entities (e.g. city and/or county agencies, schools, funders, program providers, intermediaries, families and youth) should lead and share accountability for the development and implementation of the summer learning action plan (see Step 2!). Recognized leaders within the community, such as mayors, superintendents and business and school leaders should act as summer learning champions to build awareness about summer learning investments and opportunities and help influence supportive policies and practices across the community.

Visit pages 14-18 for tips on how key stakeholder groups including educators, museums and libraries, mayors, state legislators and governors can play a role in expanding access to summer learning, meals and jobs.

Key steps to forming your dream team:

- Form a Summer Steering Committee with representation from each sector: identify locations such as schools, libraries, employment agencies, nonprofits and public housing authorities reaching a critical mass of young people in the summer and make sure they are at the table.
- Set regular standing meetings, with a special focus in the months leading up to and immediately following the summer.
- Identify a summer coordinator or lead agency or intermediary that is responsible for organizing meetings and conducting follow up; this could be someone in your Mayor's office, children and youth agency, United Way or another funding intermediary.



2. FOCUS YOUR RESOURCES AND ASSETS TO MEET KEY NEEDS

Communities need a portfolio of summer learning, wellness and employment opportunities to effectively and affordably support all learners and all families year-round. Based on research on effective models and unmet demand, communities should ensure their summer learning portfolio enables young people to keep learning in five key ways.

Keep Kids Learning to get lost in a book.

- Distribute books through book banks, mobile distribution and center-based programs.
- Promote E-book and E-reader programs.
- Implement a citywide library program and library card sign-up.
- Equip parents and caregivers to support new and growing readers at home.

Resources

First Book is a non-profit social enterprise committed to providing access to equal, quality education. First Book provides educators and programs serving children in need with the essentials that help kids learn, for free or at a greatly reduced cost. These resources include brand new, high quality books, school supplies, educational games, devices, digital learning tools and other basic needs for children from birth to 18.

When you sign up, you can access First Book's resources for the children you serve and help benefit other educators like you. Visit www.firstbook.org/summerlearning.

Open eBooks is a brand new app that will give children in need access to a digital library of thousands of popular and award-winning children's and YA eBooks for free as part of the White House ConnectED Initiative. Never before have educators and librarians had the ability to actively teach digital literacy, encourage family engagement and share the love of reading through millions of mobile devices already in the hands of young people and their families.

Open eBooks is now available on both iOS and Android devices and is made possible through a partnership between Digital Public Library of America, The New York Public Library, and First Book, with assistance from Baker & Taylor. This effort is supported by the generous commitments of publishers with funding support provided in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

For more information on eligibility and to learn how to access Open eBooks for the children you serve, visit www.openebooks.net.

Scholastic Literacy Partnership recognizes that the community is rich with caring adults who are looking to support student achievement and help mitigate the summer learning loss. By providing special book discounts and other benefits, Scholastic works to both sustain and expand the outreach of local literacy programs serving children in need. Scholastic offers various tips, tools and resources for schools, families and communities to access over the summer months to support their summer reading programs.

Visit Scholastic.com/face/mybookssummer to access:

- Community Engagement Guide: A simple guide with tips on how to engage the community in Summer Reading, including an event announcement template, press template and other resources.
- Latest research and tools to make summer reading effective.

- Scholastic Summer Reading Solutions: My Books Summer catalog and TrackIT!
- Customized solutions for districts, schools or organizations: Student self-select, custom letters, backpacks and more.

myON is a personalized literacy environment that offers unlimited access to thousands of enhanced digital books, dynamically matched to each individual student's interests, Lexile® reading level and grade level, along with a suite of literacy tools that foster engagement and achievement. From their dashboards, students can choose from a recommended list of texts that match their interests and are at their target Lexile® level for reading growth. They can access and complete reading and writing projects assigned by their teachers, and track their own progress, too.

Embedded metrics monitor student activity and growth, with real-time reports available for individual students and in the aggregate for groups, classes, schools and districts. Students can access myON online with any web-enabled device and offline using free mobile apps for iPad, Android, Chromebooks and Kindle Fire HD.

myON offers an annual unique turnkey campaign to encourage students to keep reading over their summer breaks, and help the adults in their families and communities support them. Resources include suggested activities as well as templates for letters to parents and families in English and Spanish, login cards, posters and certificates, scripts for school leaders to produce automated phone calls to families, messaging for PSAs and other outreach activities and social media, along with many other themed materials. For more information, visit www.myON.com.



Keep Kids Learning to fuel their minds and bodies.

- Expand awareness and availability of summer meals programs.
- Expand access to facilities, parks and programs that offer physical activity and exercise during the summer months.

Resources

The **USDA Food and Nutrition Service** offers many resources to assist States and sponsors in administering USDA summer meals programs. Some current resources include:

- *Power Up for Summer Fun!* Download and distribute Program flyers throughout your State.
English: http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/Summer_Flyer_En_508.pdf
Spanish: http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/sp-Summer_Flyer_508.pdf
- *Economic Benefits of Summer Meals*. Find specific information on state participation rates and how increases in participation can boost Federal financial support for your State.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/get-involved/feeding-more-children-during-summer-months>
- *National Hunger Hotline*. Ensure your State registers their summer sites with the National Hunger Hotline by calling 1-866-348-6479.
- The *FNS Website* has a subscription feature for any new guidance that is issued related to the SFSP: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/subscriber/new>
- *FNS Regional Office Contacts*:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

The **Food Research and Action Center** (FRAC) offers a variety of resources, including its annual *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation* state-by-state report on summer meals provision. Visit www.frac.org and click on Data and Publications to see how your state is doing and learn key strategies for increasing access to summer meals.

No Kid Hungry offers a variety of research and resources designed to expand access to summer meals. The Summer Collaborative Planning Toolkit is designed to help state agencies and nonprofit organizations, including No Kid Hungry Campaigns, develop a collaborative plan to increase participation in summer

meals. It includes helpful tips, sample and template materials to implement a planning process and examples of collaborative summer planning in action.

Visit <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/free-summer-meals-kids> to access a variety of summer resources.



Keep Kids Learning to show that hard work pays.

- Engage the public and private sector to offer summer work experiences coupled with meaningful college prep coursework.
- Provide college counseling, college visits and financial literacy workshops for middle and high school students.

Resources

Building on **New Skills at Work**, a five-year, \$250 million global workforce readiness initiative, **JP Morgan Chase** has invested an additional \$80 million to strengthen and expand jobs programs for youth, including a focus on summer jobs in 15 major cities.

As part of this investment, JP Morgan Chase is working with mayors, nonprofit organizations and other private sector employers to engage young people, particularly those at risk and disadvantaged during the summer, and provide them with skills-based training that will help build a strong foundation for their future career. Two annual reports on this effort describe challenges, common priorities and components, best practices and recommendations for continuing to improve these programs.

Visit www.jpmorganchase.com/skillsatwork to read the 2016 report, *Expanding Economic Opportunity for Youth through Summer Jobs*.



Keep Kids Learning about the power of teams.

- Engage and equip community members and young people as volunteer tutors, reading partners, STEM mentors and summer program staff during the summer months.
- Highlight local service learning opportunities and organizations during the summer.
- Provide leadership development opportunities in summer programs for young people of color.

Resources

The **AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates** program offers individuals the opportunity to become engaged in a community through an existing VISTA project for 8 to 10 weeks during the summer. VISTA encourages existing sponsors and partners who work with disadvantaged youth to consider using the Summer Associates program to enhance their existing programs as appropriate by providing opportunities to engage disadvantaged youth in productive service activities in the summer.

Summer Associates choose from projects throughout the country, based on their skills and interests, and serve with community-based organizations, working to overcome poverty. Assignments may involve academic tutoring; camp counseling; recruiting and training community volunteers; teaching computer literacy skills; establishing partnerships with local businesses, organizations, churches, and schools; planning community meetings; or handling public relations.

Visit my.americorps.gov to apply.

Keep Kids Learning anytime, anywhere.

- Create a community passport program to encourage visits to local cultural institutions and learning spaces. Offer free or discounted public transportation and admission to key cultural institutions, learning centers and facilities.

- Ensure community hubs for broadband and digital learning access are available and accessible.
- Tap into a connected learning platform to offer digital badges to recognize learning all summer.

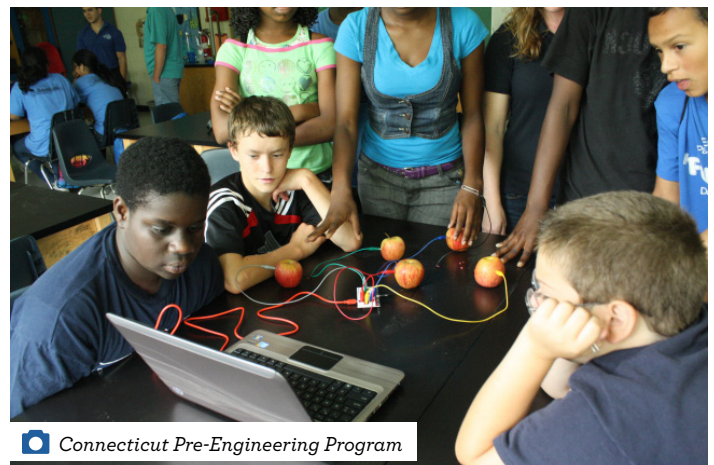
Resources

LRNG is a bold new endeavor to close the opportunity gap by transforming how young people access and experience learning and the paths they can take to success. Working together with schools, city leaders, businesses and community institutions such as libraries and museums, LRNG is building an ecosystem of learning that combines in-school, out-of-school, employer-based and online learning experiences into a seamless network that is open and inviting to all youth. LRNG is transforming learning from something young people do to something they live.

Using a tech platform that allows youth to find and pursue interest-driven learning experiences throughout the community and online, while earning badges to document their learning, LRNG aims to close the opportunity gap and create new avenues to 21st century opportunities and jobs for all young people.

A key component of the movement is LRNG Cities, which create a citywide campus for learning connected to the national LRNG network. Piloted for the past several years in Chicago, Dallas, Pittsburgh and Washington, DC, the movement will double this summer with the addition of four to six cities. The new Cities of LRNG will be announced in March.

For more information, visit www.lrng.org.





3. GET EVERYONE ROWING TOGETHER

Community-wide summer learning, meals and jobs efforts should be guided by a multi-year, community-wide summer learning action plan that includes defined goals and strategies and aligns with education and out-of-school time priorities.

Where to Start:

- With local intermediary and steering committees, assess resources, gaps and vacancies. Answer the questions—how many summer opportunity “slots” do we have for meals, learning and jobs in our city? How is opportunity distributed by age and zip code? Where are there already waiting lists we can fill?
- Based on this data, develop an action plan for increasing access, coordination and quality.
(Go to www.summerlearning.org/CommunityActionPlans for examples of ways communities have begun to tackle these questions).
- Build shared accountability across sectors for performance targets outlined in the summer learning action plan.

In addition to priorities around marketing, data and quality discussed in the next sections, key tips for maximizing the cross-sector impact of your summer include:

- Align program start and end dates and times of major providers to enable transportation and facility sharing.
- Compare and align eligibility requirements across programs so that programs or sites providing multiple services or using multiple public funding streams can simplify eligibility tracking and reporting.
- Proactively plan the school facilities summer maintenance schedule with summer school and other summer providers who use school buildings for programs.
- Align mobile health screenings/immunizations with city-wide summer learning opportunities.
- Engage law enforcement in offering evening and weekend activities, especially for teens.
- Centrally train volunteers (including high school students) and mentors for deployment city-wide to parks and rec centers, meal sites, public housing authorities and schools.
- Partner with local colleges to send pre-service teachers into community settings as tutors and staff.
- Start the library summer reading program while school is in session; create a good habit of reading and reward young people for their participation to keep them reading all summer long.

4. SPREAD THE WORD

Instead of going it alone, leverage the marketing muscle (and budgets) of all of your key stakeholders by joining forces to create shared tools and resources for families and young people to find out about summer learning, meals and jobs opportunities.

Where to Start:

- Build a citywide marketing campaign, and brand your effort in a fun and inclusive way.
- Create a centralized “program locator” for young people and families that includes summer learning, meals and jobs opportunities, whether it be a printed catalog, web database or 211 call center.
- Hold a citywide summer kick-off fair or block party to create a one-stop shop for resources and program sign-ups.
- Get creative about sharing the summer message; engage barber shops, doctor’s offices, grocery stores and other trusted and frequented community hubs to share information with families.
- Conduct robo calls, door knocking and home visits to connect families with summer learning and meal resources.

Spotlights

Baltimore

In 2012, Baltimore’s Summer Jump programs were advertised through backpack letters home, summer learning fairs, three direct mailings, advertising at city bus stops, and radio and TV commercials. In addition to these strategies, under the umbrella of Baltimore City Super Summer, Baltimore City Public Schools and its partners developed a shared marketing strategy that included Super Summer branding and messaging.

A centralized Super Summer website and the regional call center, 211 Maryland, acted as community hubs for information on all summer learning academies, food programs, reading programs, and other programs such as camps, recreation programs and sports leagues. Partners launched a comprehensive communications campaign including press conferences, PSAs, recruitment events, direct mailings and neighborhood canvassing that reached more than 40,000 residents throughout the city. Each participating partner received training on centralized messaging so that they could provide information to families on all Super Summer offerings.

Providence

Each year the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) organizes a popular Citywide AfterZone end-of-year celebration with 400 middle school youth in attendance. At this event, PASA staff are able to promote the summer program and speak directly with parents, families and students. The organization also hosts a series of school-based recruitment fairs over the course of the spring and visits students in their classrooms to present to smaller groups. Other recruitment and promotional techniques employed have included bilingual, automated phone calls to families featuring Providence’s mayor on behalf of middle school principals; staff interviews on Spanish language radio; and direct student outreach from principals, teachers and counselors at the schools.

Since the program is a joint venture with Providence Public Schools and involves hiring teachers, guidance counselors and social workers from each middle school, they all take an active interest in recruiting their students and promoting the program in their schools.

The Ultimate Block Party

The Ultimate Block Party (UBP) and the Association of Children’s Museums (ACM) have created a partnership to bring the science of playful learning to millions of children, families and educators in order to:

- Create a bridge between play researchers and children’s museum practitioners demonstrating how to put the research into everyday learning practices.
- Launch a national, regional and local communications platform with the latest play research for families and practitioners.
- Facilitate sustainable community events across the United States for families around playful learning.

The Ultimate Block Party engages the community in a hands-on, interactive celebration that brings the arts and sciences of learning to life. The initial UBP events were held in four cities, NYC, Baltimore, Boston and Toronto, with over 100,000 participants and laid the groundwork for a model that can be implemented nationwide.

ACM includes over 300 museums with 31 million visitors each year. Children explore the world through exhibits and programs informed by education standards and child development theory.

5. KEEP TRACK OF WHAT’S HAPPENING

A strong summer system includes an agreed upon process for data sharing, collection and analysis across summer opportunity stakeholders. The system should include summer data on participation, quality, and outcomes of a variety of learning, meals and jobs opportunities.

Where to Start:

- Track participation—The most important thing you can do is to begin to track participation in a uniform way across your community. You should be able to answer the questions—*who is participating in our programs, and how often?* Create a simple Excel spreadsheet to share with all major providers and provide training on how to use it to track daily attendance.
- Develop a data sharing agreement—A data sharing agreement enables you to use unique student identifiers to track young people as they move from program to program across your community. Typically data sharing agreements include a school district, community-based organizations and an intermediary such as a university. Such data collaboratives allow summer stakeholders to understand what a typical summer looks like for their most high need populations and track the long-term relationship between summer program participation and academic and career success. Finally, a data sharing agreement enables a community to determine which programs are most effective for which students and use that data to recruit young people into the best summer opportunities for their needs and assets.

Spotlights

Grand Rapids

Believe 2 Become (B2B) is a community-wide collaboration in Grand Rapids, MI, aimed at increasing the academic achievement of 12,000 children in four urban neighborhoods. B2B seeks coordinated, cradle-to-graduation alignment of preschool, in-school, and out-of-school time programs and related support systems. In order to answer key questions around program effectiveness and impact across the city and over multiple years, the local school district, foundation and state university agreed that sharing of longitudinal, student-level data was required, but significant technical, regulatory, and political obstacles stood in the way. The parties worked through multiple challenges and forged a Master Data Sharing Agreement (MDSA) that facilitates real-time data analysis for program staff and broader evaluation of the initiative. Learn how they broke through the barriers at <http://cridata.org/B2BMDSA/>.



Southwest Academy Magnet School for Science and Engineering Chorale

Boston

Under the leadership of Boston Afterschool and Beyond, the Achieve, Connect, Thrive (ACT) framework unites stakeholders from across Boston around the skills young people need to succeed. Derived from the best of the youth development field, and afterschool program providers themselves, the skills in the framework are those that research from a number of fields, including education and developmental psychology, suggests are important for success in school, college, and 21st Century careers. Four power skills—critical thinking, perseverance, self-regulation, relationships with peers—serve as the foundation of year-round trainings and peer learning between district teachers and community educators. In 2015, 79 summer programs in Boston participated in the ACT framework, using common measurement tools to assess program quality and student skill development from multiple perspectives. Analysis shows a significant increase in skills among more than 5,600 participating Boston children in 2015. To learn more about the ACT Framework, visit http://bostonbeyond.org/initiatives/act_framework/.

6. FOCUS ON QUALITY

Research shows that the quality of programs plays a significant role in short and long term youth outcomes, yet many programs struggle to find the funding or capacity to plan professional development and training for staff. One of the many benefits of a community-wide system for summer opportunities is the platform it creates for common training and continuous quality improvement offerings. Many communities develop or adopt program quality standards and tools for observation and create peer learning networks for sharing resources and best practices.

Where to Start:

- Use last summer's data on both program quality and program outcomes to update summer learning strategies.
- Select a lead intermediary to provide professional development and technical assistance linked to common quality standards for all providers involved in the system.
- Select common standards, tools and processes for quality assessment and program improvement.
- Plan opportunities for providers to share resources and best practices connected to common quality standards.

Spotlight

The Summer Learning Program Quality Intervention

Anchored in years of research and evidenced-based practices, the specially designed Summer Learning Program Quality Intervention, created by The Weikart Center and NSLA, helps summer program providers that run formal, enrollment-based programs, turn data into useful information for program improvement—both very short-term goals during the session as well as medium and long-term goals between summer sessions.

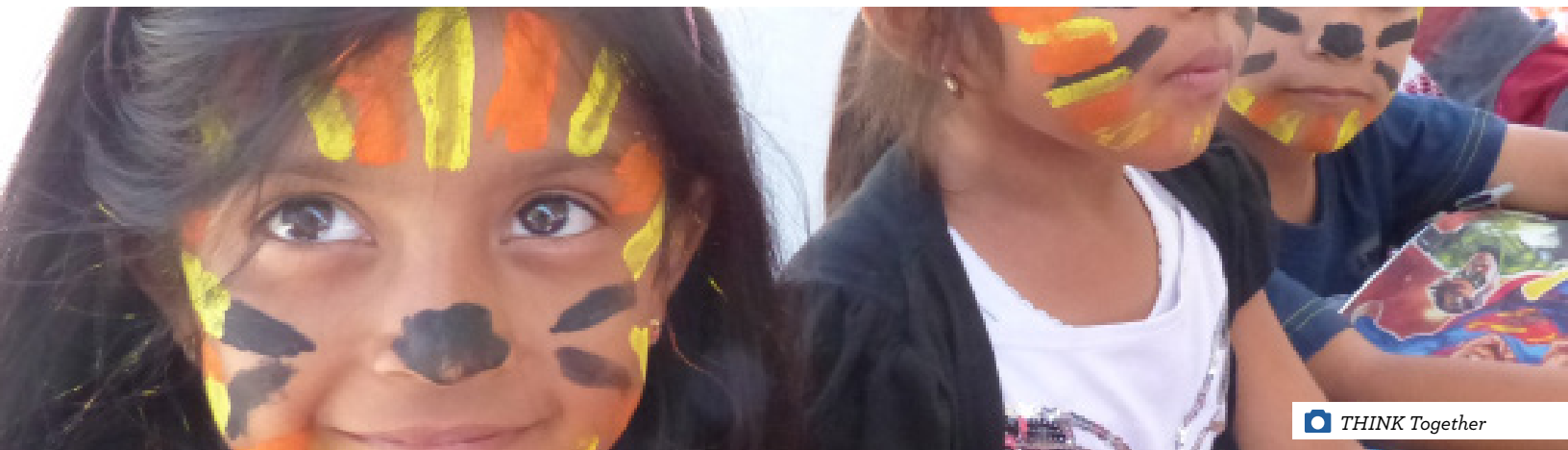
The Summer Learning Program Quality Intervention (SLPQI) is a continuous improvement intervention for summer learning programs that includes four core components: (1) a standard and measures for quality of management and instructional practices – the Summer Learning Program Quality Assessment (Summer Learning PQA), (2) training and technical assistance supports, (3) performance data products and (4) a continuous improvement cycle that fits the prior three elements to local circumstances and resources. The SLPQI and the Summer Learning PQA were designed to advance the science and practice of continuous improvement by focusing on qualities of learner experience that optimize skill-building in specific domains, active-participatory and academic. For more information, visit <http://cypq.org/SummerLearningPQI>.

7. MAKE SURE SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES ARE HERE TO STAY

Summer programs often suffer from leftover syndrome—they are planned at the last minute based on funds that are left over from the school year. This habit limits the reach, quality and impact of programs and prevents young people from building strong habits of participation since programs are often only available for one or two summers. While there are many sources of public funding that can be used in the summer, in most cases, there are very few requirements to use them in that way. Therefore, community-wide systems can make a big impact by making long-term plans to combine and dedicate funds to summer opportunities.

Where to Start:

- Develop a resource map to understand how the system is supported by the following sources: local private foundations; business donations and sponsorships; local public funding; national foundations; state funding; and federal funding.
- Establish a local funding collaborative, combining administration of multiple funding sources and centralizing resource distribution, financial reporting, and compliance across the system. Dedicate at least one staff position in an intermediary organization to these tasks.
- Ensure funding goes beyond program slots to cover program capacity-building; community-wide marketing and communications; and program evaluation.
- Consider long-term solutions such as dedicated state and local funding.



Spotlights

Oakland

The Oakland Fund for Children and Youth was established in 1996 when Oakland voters passed the Kids First Initiative, an amendment to the City Charter, to support direct services to youth under 21 years of age. The measure was reauthorized in 2009 for an additional twelve years (2010-2022). This measure sets aside 3% of the City's unrestricted General Fund and requires a three-year strategic plan to guide the allocation of funds. The fund will disburse \$13.5M total in 2016-2017, of which a little less than one third will go to summer programs.

Seattle

The Families and Education Levy is a property tax levy approved by Seattle voters in 2011, with funding awarded from school year 2012-13 through 2018-19. It is administered by the City's Office for Education — distinct from, but in collaboration with, the Seattle School District—and accountable to a community Levy Oversight Committee and the Seattle City Council. The Levy funded 16 summer programs at 25 sites for a total of \$1.7 million in 2015.

Birmingham

The SAIL (Summer Adventures in Learning) funding collaborative was developed in response to a survey of 37 Birmingham, Alabama area summer programs, conducted by the National Summer Learning Association in 2011. Through this important partnership, funders committed to use a joint application process for nonprofit organizations wishing to receive grant support to enhance or add consistent academic components to summer youth programs.

SAIL began in 2012, when three funders informally worked with 12 programs. SAIL organized formally later that year, with six funders awarding 19 grants totaling \$500,000 to summer 2013 programs. For 2016, \$862,000 has been awarded to 38 programs. Building upon the successes of the partnership in the Birmingham area, SAIL will expand into Alabama's Black Belt region this summer.

By leveraging the funds of 11 private funders, SAIL enables a baseline of quality assurance and capacity-building across all programs it funds. The components are:

- **Group Education:** SAIL hosts three forums each spring, addressing a variety of topics chosen to strengthen the programs.
- **Communication and Informal Education:** SAIL maintains a group e-mail distribution list and communicates regularly with the summer learning community. Peer-to-peer learning is encouraged in several ways: panel discussions at forums, informal communication between meetings and small-group meetings.
- **Resource Development:** SAIL works to see that programs have access to resources needed to conduct quality programs, including educational service providers and enrichment providers. SAIL also maintains a staffing webpage and facilitates the enrollment of summer programs in feeding programs which supply meals at no cost.
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** SAIL requires grantees to use Renaissance Learning's STAR Assessment for reading and math. The SAIL funders provide STAR at no cost, train the programs on proper use of STAR to create individualized learning plans, transport the programs to a testing site if needed, and administer the tests. The programs (and the funders) use summary data from STAR to evaluate overall program effectiveness.
- **Standardized Reporting:** Grantees are required to submit program results in a standard format. The elements of the report are chosen to reinforce best practices.
- **Continuous Improvement:** All reports are compiled and sent to each grantee, after which all grantees participate in a post-program review in which successes are celebrated and "defects are cherished."

Appendix

Engaging Key Stakeholders on Your Summer Dream

Team Educators

Summer is an ideal time for students to explore new activities that peak their interest. Even one to two weeks of experiential learning can go a long way. Moreover, we know that young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer.

We have interviewed a number of educators who have led summer planning efforts in their schools and districts. Here are some tips they have shared for fellow educators and administrators on ensuring ALL students in a school community have access to summer learning opportunities:

1. **Start Early:** Plant seeds on summer opportunities as early as the start of the new school year. Winter breaks are also a good time for motivating families and students to take action and create a plan, especially applying for financial aid and jobs.
2. **Designate a Summer Point Person or Committee:** Identify a project manager on all things summer, including researching opportunities, communicating information, and continuing a school-wide push for summer plans. For example, this person is responsible for organizing a summer fair, or circulating one summer opportunity a week for teachers to share with students and families.
3. **Use People Power within School:** Use staff to help drive the process. For example, ask every teacher to target ten students with whom he or she has a trusting relationship, until each student has a plan for summer in place, and do the following:
 - Leverage what you know about students' interests and keep an eye out for fitting activities and jobs.
 - Talk with families—help them fill out forms, and let them know there may be a sliding scale on prices.
 - Put up visual images of summer opportunities in classrooms and hallways.
4. **Family-to-Family Communication:** Sleep-away camps or YMCA programs are not necessarily a familiar concept in all communities and cultures. Therefore, ask families to talk to each other about opportunities, especially families that have already been through the summer planning process or experienced camps they liked. This can help break down fears and apprehension about safety, and even encourage families to send students or siblings in pairs or groups to camps and activities.
5. **Student-to-Student Communication:** Ask students to speak to peers to spread the word and mentality of—*if I can do this, you can do this too*. For example, students present on what they did last summer at a summer fair, school assembly, or during a class; and use social media to showcase summer activities.
6. **Prep Students for Job Search Process:** Coach high schoolers, and even middle schoolers, by organizing faculty, volunteers, alumni, and peers to conduct resume building workshops, mock interviews and dress up days, and connections to local employers, including municipalities.

Museums and Libraries

The traditional school calendar is not meeting the needs of 21st century children and families. Recent research shows that children suffer major academic and skills developmental setbacks over the summer months. The result is significant loss of knowledge, which is seen not only in poor performance on standardized tests, but also in reading, spelling and math computational skills. Children from low income families are at a higher risk of losing more than two months equivalent of reading over summer due to sheer lack of connected learning opportunities. This makes the need for quality summer programs critical nationwide.

To further the current summer opportunity efforts and aim for a collective impact model,

Communities can:

- Include museums and libraries in initiatives designed to increase family engagement in summer opportunities in addition to using library and museum facilities as community gathering places and digital learning hubs.
- Convene community development and other urban and rural revitalization organizations to partner with museums and libraries to connect all available community resources and services for underserved, vulnerable families and children (e.g., transportation, reduced-fee structures).
- Partner with libraries and museums to launch public information campaigns that raise awareness of the roles museums and libraries play in supporting summer opportunities.

School districts and early learning programs can:

- Offer joint professional development to teachers and museum and library staff to create a common understanding of standards, curricula, and instructional practices in schools and the available resources at museums and libraries.
- Establish partnerships with local libraries and museums to develop contextual educational enhancement tools and services that support new expectations for building content knowledge.
- Consider leveraging family engagement expertise and programs in museums and libraries to supplement school-based efforts.

Museums and libraries can:

- Proactively establish strong partnerships with a wide range of schools, community organizations and cross-sector stakeholders in order to optimize resources and contribute towards larger community initiatives around STEM, STEAM, Making and Digital Literacy.
- Provide parental and family support and access to quality programs and services, especially for vulnerable populations.
- Build exhibits and programs that are informed by recent research on the brain, executive function and learning.
- Embed rigorous evaluation into program development and base programs on research and evidence.

The following are examples of projects and partnerships funded by the **Institute of Museum and Library Services**.

Museums for All (<http://www.museums4all.org>): Museums for All is a cooperative initiative between the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) to ensure that every family and child has access to a high-quality museum experience. Museums for All museums offer a deeply discounted admission, not exceeding \$3.00 per person, to any individual or group of four individuals presenting an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.

Museums for America (www.imls.gov): This IMLS grant program supports projects that strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public. The following projects specifically support summer opportunities:

- [Tucson Children's Museum \(2015\)](#)
- [Armory Center for the Arts \(2015\)](#)
- [Pacific Science Center \(2014\)](#)
- [Boston Children's Museum \(2013\)](#)
- [San Antonio Children's Museum \(2013\)](#)

Accelerate Summer (<http://www.urbanlibraries.org/accelerate-summer-initial-findings-pages-450.php>): The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) and the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) have been working in partnership to investigate and identify the ways in which public libraries are delivering summer learning activities. Read the full update at <http://www.urbanlibraries.org/accelerate-summer-initial-findings-pages-450.php>.

Some exemplary IMLS-funded summer opportunities at the state level include:

Idaho Commission for Libraries initiatives:

In an effort to address “Summer Learning Loss” among Idaho elementary students, ICfL and Idaho public libraries scheduled weekly visits to free summer lunch sites to provide story times and distribute books that the children could borrow and return without a library card. The program later expanded to provide story times, books, and activities to children attending free lunch programs in parks serving low-income neighborhoods.

Kentucky Department for Libraries

Taylor County Public Library Preventing Summer Reading Loss - Through a partnership between the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA), the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), public libraries and local partners, the Preventing Summer Reading Loss – Fueling the Mind project enabled libraries to expand their traditional summer reading programs into new areas targeting at risk children and families being served by KDE's summer food service.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 35,000 museums. Their mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Their grant making, policy development and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive.

To learn more, visit www.imls.gov.

State Elected Leaders

Champions for Summer Meals

During the school year, 22 million children receive free and reduced-price meals through the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs (NSLP). But when school is out, many low-income children relying on these school meals go hungry.

To fill this gap, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides Federally funded meals through the summer meals programs, including the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option. These programs provide free, nutritious summer meals to children at approved sites in areas with high concentrations of low-income children. Unfortunately, these summer meals reach only about 16 percent of the eligible children.

As an elected leader in your state, you have the opportunity and ability to make a real contribution towards the success of the summer meals programs.

Throughout the nation, state elected leaders and legislatures who have expressed strong support for the summer meals programs have shown increases in participation. In 2015, over 190 million meals were served during the summer months. State leaders play a critical role because they are trusted sources of information and possess a clear understanding of the specific needs of their communities.

Below are simple steps that you can take as an elected leader to promote the summer meals programs and expand participation within your state. USDA also has many resources that can help. By working together, we can ensure no child goes hungry this summer!

- Use your visibility to draw attention to summer meals by participating in the Annual National Summer Food Service Program Kick-Off Week. Events held during this week attract media attention, which helps spread the word to families that free meals will be available in their community.
- Empower your community organizations to champion summer meals! Let these groups know that federal funds are available to support their efforts and that the city is supporting them as well. Highlight their efforts in local media and city newsletters or other publications, thereby gaining free press for summer meals and ensuring more families know summer meals are available for their children.
- Work with your colleagues and let them know expanding summer meals is a priority and you will work with them to increase access for low-income children.
- Establish a summer meals workgroup in the legislature with your colleagues and local organizations that have a vested interest in the health and safety of low-income children in the summer. Creative and innovative partnerships can lead to real change!
- Reach out to anti-hunger groups and the social service network to identify those areas that have the most need, and work with them to educate their clients and the community about where they can participate in the SFSP.
- Work with the governor and state superintendent to keep schools open in low-income areas to provide summer meals. Schools are ideal locations for summer meals programs because they are recognized as safe places that serve nutritious food.
- Ensure your other state agencies are engaged in the summer feeding effort. Departments of Education, Human Services, Agriculture, Housing and others that provide services to low-income citizens may have resources and can share information about summer meals with their clients.
- Promote summer meals through local human service agency newsletters, local newspapers, public service announcements and public speaking events.
- Make it competitive! Start a “Challenge” to encourage healthy competition among your fellow legislators to increase participation in their communities.

Governors

Champions for Summer Meals

Governors have the ability to make a real contribution towards the success of the summer meals programs. Throughout the nation, states with governors who have expressed strong support for the summer meal programs have shown increases in participation.

By increasing participation, you are not only enhancing efforts at ending childhood hunger in your State, but also accessing additional federal dollars for your communities in the form of combined reimbursements for meals and administrative costs.

In 2015, over 190 million meals were served during the summer months. To see the financial impact summer meals can make in your state, refer to the economic benefit tips featured below.

Around the nation, governors are demonstrating their commitment to ensuring that eligible children receive nutritious summer meals in a number of ways, including dedicating staff to retain and recruit summer meal sponsors and sites, working across agencies to reach participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and other programs for low-income families, and working jointly with state partners and community organizations to engage children and families.

To further support these efforts, we've included some actions you can take as governor to promote the summer meal programs and expand participation in your state. USDA also has many resources that can help, and our regional office that serves your state is ready to assist.

Below are some suggestions on how you can make a difference. By working together, we can ensure that no child is hungry this summer!

- Use your visibility to draw attention to summer meals by participating in the Annual National Summer Food Service Program Kick-Off Week. Events held during this week attract media attention, which helps spread the word to families that free meals will be available in their community.
- Encourage local leaders in rural areas and other parts of the state with areas of high need to promote summer meals in their communities. Let them know that USDA summer meals programs can bring additional federal funds and new jobs into their communities. Consider providing state funds to provide transportation for children in rural areas.
- Work with your executive team and let them know expanding summer meals is a priority for you and you will work with them to increase access for low-income children. Ensure that they are able to fully utilize the available USDA resources to effectively administer the programs.
- Establish a state summer meals workgroup, with staff from your office, and other agencies in your state that have a vested interest in the health and safety of low-income children in the summer. Creative and innovative partnerships can lead to real change!
- Reach out to anti-hunger groups and the social service network to identify those areas that have the most need and work with them to educate their clients and the community about where they can participate in the SFSP.
- Work with your state superintendent to keep schools open in low-income areas to provide summer meals. Schools are ideal locations for summer meals programs because they are recognized as safe places that serve nutritious food.
- Ensure your other state agencies are engaged in the summer feeding effort. Departments of Education, Human Services, Agriculture, Housing and others that provide services to low-income citizens may have resources and information about summer meals with their clients.

- Promote summer meals through state and local human service agency newsletters, local newspapers, public service announcements and public speaking events.
- Empower your community organizations to champion summer meals! Contact both large and small groups; let them know the state is ready to partner with them to ensure the community is aware of the SFSP sites in their community. Highlight their efforts in media or state newsletters, thereby gaining free press for the summer meals programs and ensuring more families understand nutritious summer meals are available for their children.
- Consider providing funding to summer programs that provide enrichment activities. These are shown to reduce the achievement gap, ensure children are ready to learn when they return to school in the fall and improve student test scores statewide. While USDA provides funding for meals and the administration of the meals programs, many of these vital summer programs need additional assistance to fully serve the children in your state.
- Make it competitive! Start a “Mayor’s Challenge” to encourage healthy competition amongst mayors to increase participation in their cities. Commit to making a guest appearance at the winning city’s Kick-Off Week Event next year. To encourage this effort with your peers, you could even start a friendly competition with other governors.

Summer Opportunities

The Summer Opportunities effort is just beginning! In partnership with the White House and several federal agencies, NSLA and Civic Nation are committed to:

- raising awareness broadly of the need for and benefits of summer opportunities;
- connecting and equipping communities to strengthen and expand their summer learning, meals and jobs systems; and
- building a more favorable policy context for summer opportunities to thrive.

If you have any questions about the content of this guide or requests for technical assistance, please email NSLA at opportunities@summerlearning.org or call (410)-856-1370.

About the National Summer Learning Association

The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works, offers expertise and support for programs and communities, and advocates for summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. NSLA’s work is driven by the belief that all children and youth deserve high-quality summer learning experiences that will help them succeed in college, career, and life.

To learn more, visit www.summerlearning.org.

