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RELEASE: Gov. Reynolds, Iowa Department of Education announce new grant program to expand summer meal sites for children

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Governor Kim Reynolds★ Lt. Governor Adam Gregg

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Gov. Reynolds, Iowa Department of Education announce new grant program to expand summer meal sites for children

DES MOINES -- Governor Reynolds and the Iowa Department of Education today announced \$900,000 in competitive grants to help more Iowa children and teens access nutritious meals and snacks during the summer months. The grants will support school districts and other qualified organizations to serve additional communities through expanding participation in two existing federally funded summer child nutrition programs.

The Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option, administered by the Iowa Department of Education in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, help ensure Iowa children ages 18 and under have access to healthy meals and snacks during the summer. Through the new state-directed Summer Meal Program Expansion Grant, additional summer meal sites will be launched through these two existing federal programs to serve more children in currently underserved areas across the state.

“Providing young Iowans with access to free, nutritious meals in their communities during the summer months has always been a priority,” said Gov. Kim Reynolds. “With the Summer Meal Program Expansion Grant, we will expand these well-established programs across our state to ensure Iowa’s youth have meals that are healthy and use local community farms and vendors when possible.”

Qualifying Iowa schools participating in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program may apply as either a Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option sponsor. Private nonprofit organizations, community and faith-based organizations, higher education institutions and local government agencies are eligible to participate as a sponsor for the Summer Food Service Program.

“Through partnerships with community-based providers and schools, the Summer Meal Program Expansion Grant will build upon family-focused solutions to support child nutrition and well-being in the

summer,” said Iowa Department of Education Director McKenzie Snow. “The Iowa Department of Education remains committed to supporting students with healthy meals and food options, as it supports communities in growing the impact of existing child nutrition programs.”

Summer meals can be served at a variety of sites within the community, such as schools, churches, community centers, parks, libraries and camps. Prospective new meal sites must be located in an area where at least 50 percent or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Priority consideration will be given to applicants that establish a new open meal site, where all children ages 18 and younger are served. Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option sponsors that did not operate in 2023 or are in a county with two or fewer current meal sites will also be given stronger consideration.

“Many children rely heavily on these meals during the school year to provide them with the fuel and nutrition to grow healthy and become successful—the summertime is no different,” said Iowa Department of Health and Human Services Director Kelly Garcia. “Together, we are leveraging public-private partnerships to care for our children most in need.”

Eligible current and new sponsors that plan to add open meal sites may apply for reimbursement funding for up to \$10,000 for the first new site and \$5,000 for each additional site. Current sponsors may apply for a total of \$20,000, and new sponsors can apply for up to \$30,000. Sponsors who did not participate in 2023 and intend to provide meals to targeted groups may also apply for up to \$2,500 per site. Allowable reimbursement costs will include items such as local food purchases, program outreach and other operational expenses not currently covered through program reimbursement.

Applications for the Summer Meal Program Expansion Grant are now being accepted at [IowaGrants.gov](https://lowagrants.gov). The application deadline is May 7, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. The number of eligible applicants and corresponding budget proposals will determine the number and amounts of grants awarded.

Additional information on the Summer Meal Program Expansion Grant can be found on the [Department’s website](#).

Funds for the Summer Meal Program Expansion Grant are provided through State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds provided through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

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