



Turnip the Beet: High Quality Meals in the Summer Meal Programs

2017 Award Overview

General Information

What is it?

The **Turnip the Beet Award**, by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), recognizes outstanding summer meal program sponsors across the nation who work hard to offer high quality meals that are appetizing, appealing, and nutritious during the summer months. The award is open to all sponsors. Three award levels are available: Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

Why is it important?

Offering high quality meals during the summer is important for a number of reasons. Summer sites have the opportunity to positively impact children's development by offering nutritious meals and encouraging children to develop healthy habits at a young age. In addition, kids vote with their feet in the summer! Offering meals that children enjoy can help sustain and increase participation. It's a win-win, so let's *turnip the beet* on meal quality in the Summer Meal Programs!

Who is eligible to apply?

All summer meal program sponsors, including Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Seamless Summer Option (SSO) sponsors, may be eligible for a **Turnip the Beet Award**. Nominated sponsors must be in compliance with all SFSP or NSLP/SSO regulations, as applicable. Meeting the award criteria and winning an award does not replace SFSP or NSLP/SSO requirements. Nominated sponsors are required to be in good standing with the SFSP or NSLP/SSO. This means the sponsor had no major findings and program violations, or completed and implemented all corrective actions from the last compliance review, was not found seriously deficient in the past two years (at the time of the nomination), and has never been terminated from the Summer Meal Programs.

How are sponsors nominated?

Sponsors may submit a self-nomination or be nominated by another party. The sponsor or other party must fill out the *2017 Turnip the Beet Nomination Form* and submit a one month menu to their Summer Meals State Agency contact. Menus should be detailed enough to demonstrate that the meals meet the evaluation criteria listed below. For example, menus should describe whether vegetables and fruit are fresh, frozen, canned or dried, indicate the type of milk (e.g., fat content and if it is flavored), and identify whole grain-rich and local food items.

Sponsors may choose to submit supporting documents to further illustrate the quality of their meals, such as ingredient lists, product formulation statements, or a recipe to verify a food item is whole grain-rich (e.g., contains 100 percent whole grains, or contains at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grains in the food are enriched); news clips about the program; photos; testimonials; or invoices of local food purchases.

State agencies establish their own due dates for submission of **Turnip the Beet** nominations (form, menu, and supporting documents). Sponsors should contact their Summer Meals State Agency to learn when their nomination is due. State agencies must then review and forward all nominations to their Regional Office by Friday, November 17, 2017. FNS will notify the winners in writing in early 2018.

What are the prizes?

- **Bronze, Silver, and Gold winners:** featured in USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Summer Newsletter and receive a certificate.
- **Silver and Gold winners:** featured on U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) blog.
- **Gold Award winners:** identified as a **Turnip the Beet** winners on FNS’s Capacity Builder (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/capacitybuilder>).

What resources are available to help sponsors improve the quality of the meals they serve?

FNS has an abundance of resources available for sponsors to help make the summer meals they serve more appetizing, appealing and nutritious. Sponsors should check out the following resources:

- Nutrition Guide for Sponsors (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/NutritionGuide.pdf>) includes best practices and tips for serving high quality meals and incorporating local foods, as well as sample cycle menus;
- Offering Healthy Summer Meals That Kids Enjoy (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-healthy-summer-meals>), available in English and Spanish, is a colorful 4-page resource with practical ideas for small changes that Summer sponsors can implement at their sites to improve the nutritional quality of meals served and make foods more appealing to children and teens;
- Team Nutrition Resource Library (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resource-library>) has free nutrition education materials to help reinforce and complement the nutrition messages taught by serving healthful foods;
- Farm to Summer website (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/farm-summer>) has an abundance of ideas for “bringing the farm” to summer sites, using local foods to improve meal quality, and keeping kids engaged with hands-on activities;
- Summer Meals Toolkit page (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-toolkit>) offers healthy menu planning ideas and tips for serving meals family style; and
- Smarter Lunchroom Strategies (<https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/>) are free or low-cost solutions that nudge children to voluntarily select the healthiest food. While these strategies are designed for schools, they can easily be adapted for summer sites.

Evaluation Criteria

Nominations must clearly illustrate how the meals are appetizing, appealing and nutritious. Nominations are evaluated in two parts in order to receive a score.

Part 1: Short Answer Questions

Sponsors must answer the following questions to demonstrate how the meals served at their summer sites are high quality.

- 1. How are the meals culturally appropriate?** (Describe how meals are appropriate for the race, ethnicity, and religion of the population being served, including traditional foods. For example, traditional Native community foods, such as wild rice and bison, are offered at a site attended by Native American children; or alternatives to pork are served at sites attended by children who are Muslim or Jewish.)
- 2. How are the meals age-appropriate for the population being served?** (Describe how meals served are appropriate for the age of the children being served. For example, food is cut into bite size pieces for young children, or the sponsor offers different meals to appeal to various age groups that attend the site.)
- 3. Are tastes tests, surveys, or other methods used to gather feedback from children about the meals served at the summer sites?** (Describe any methods used to gather feedback from participants.)
- 4. How are healthy foods marketed to children?** (Describe how healthy foods are encouraged. For example, fun descriptors are used in menus and signage or healthier choices are placed prominently in the service area to encourage consumption.)
- 5. What, if any, food and nutrition-based activities are offered at the summer sites?** (Describe activities related to MyPlate activities, cooking, local foods, gardening, farming or other food and nutrition topics.)

Bonus: Are any Team Nutrition resources used at the summer sites?

Part 2: Additional Criteria

The submitted menu and short answer questions will also be evaluated based on the additional criteria below. The menus and short answers do not need to meet all of the additional criteria below. The more additional criteria met through the menu and short answers, the increased chance Sponsors have of earning an award and attaining a higher award level.

- Locally produced vegetables, fruits, grains, or meat/meat alternates are served as part of the reimbursable meal and promoted as local foods at least one time per week, per meal type (e.g., if a summer site serves breakfast and lunch, a local food is served and promoted at a minimum of one breakfast meal and one lunch meal per week).

Bonus: Seasonal food activities are offered at the summer site (e.g., nutrition education lesson about seasonal foods, cooking demonstrations with seasonal foods, organized gardening activities, hosting a local farmer at the summer site, etc.).

- Entrees repeat 2 times or less per month.

Bonus: Menu includes at least one hot food item per week.

- Meals include a variety of colors, flavors (e.g., tart, sweet, spicy, savory, sour, bitter, umami, etc.), and textures (e.g., crunchy, juicy, chewy, soft, etc.).

- A wide variety of vegetables and fruits are served throughout the week.

Bonus: At least one serving each of dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas (legumes), starchy vegetables, and other vegetables are served per week.

Bonus: The majority of vegetables and fruits are fresh.

- At least half of the grains served are whole grain-rich (e.g., contains 100 percent whole grains, or contains at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grains in the food are enriched).

- Sweet grains (e.g. cookies, cakes, brownies, fruit turnovers, doughnuts, toaster pastries, or sweet rolls) are served only 2 times per meal type per week (e.g., if a summer site serves breakfast and snack, a sweet grain is served at no more than two breakfast meals and two snacks per week).

Bonus: Sweet grains are not served.

- Only low-fat (1%) or fat-free dairy products (including milk, yogurt, and cheese) are served. If 1 year old children attend the summer site, they are served whole milk.

- Water is available at no cost.

Scoring

Nominations are scored based on the following:

- **Short Answers (0-13 points):** Sponsors can receive up to 2 points per question and will receive 3 bonus points when they demonstrate their use of Team Nutrition resources at summer sites.
- **Additional Criterion (0-18 points):** Sponsors can receive 1 point per criterion met and 2 points per bonus criterion.

10-17 points = Bronze award; 18-25 points = Silver award; 26-31 points = Gold award

Questions?

Any questions regarding the **Turnip the Beet Awards** should be directed to your Summer Meals State Agency or Regional Office, as appropriate.