



Tips for Sponsors: Completing the Turnip the Beet Nomination Packet

These tips will help you to complete the Turnip the Beet Nomination Packet. We appreciate your commitment to serving nutritious, appealing meals and thank you for applying!

Short Answers

1. How were the meals prepared to be age appropriate for the population being served?

What to include:

- Specific examples of how meal sizes, textures, and types were adjusted by age group.
- Use of USDA meal pattern guidance or other age-based nutritional standards.
- How special dietary needs (e.g., allergies, sensory needs) were accommodated.

Tip: Specify if menus differed for younger versus older children and include examples like finger foods for younger children or larger portions for teens.

2. How did you gather feedback from children about the meals served at the summer sites?

What to include:

- Tools used (e.g., surveys, suggestion boxes, taste tests, group discussions).
- Frequency (e.g., daily, weekly, once per summer).
- Changes made based on feedback (e.g., added more fruit choices, swapped unpopular items).

Tip: Share real quotes or data (e.g., “80% of kids preferred whole grain wraps over white bread sandwiches”).

3. How were nutritious foods such as vegetables, fruits, and whole grains incorporated into menus and promoted to children at summer sites?

What to include:

- Specific vegetables, fruits, and whole grains served (e.g., fresh carrots, brown rice, whole grain pasta).
- How these were presented to appeal to kids (e.g., rainbow veggie wraps, fruit kabobs, smoothies).
- Strategies for promotion (e.g., posters, staff encouragement, fun food names).

Tip: Describe partnerships with local farms or the use of seasonal produce to enhance nutrition and freshness, and how these activities were promoted to children and families at the site.

4. What, if any, food and nutrition-based activities were offered at the summer sites (or included with rural non-congregate meals)?

What to include:

- Examples: cooking demos, nutrition education games, garden tastings, USDA resources.
- How these were integrated into the meal service (e.g., before/after meals, during snack time).
- Participation rate or child engagement anecdotes.

Tip: Be specific by including what the activity was, when it happened, and how it helped engage children and support healthy eating habits.

Menus and Other Supporting Documents

You must include a one-month menu for EACH program type as applicable (Summer Food Service Program [SFSP] or the National School Lunch Program's Seamless Summer Option [SSO]). All menus must have met USDA program regulations. A sample menu is provided in the nomination packet for reference.

- **Submit a separate menu** for each program type offered.
 - Recommend submitting one meal type only per program type. This streamlines the menu review process for eligibility of an award. (e.g., one-month lunch menu only).
- **Mark up your menus** to highlight standout features like:
 - **Made-from-scratch meals**
 - **Local foods** – Specify “local” fruits, vegetables, milk, or dairy products, and food items.
 - **Whole Grain-Rich (WGR)** – Label items clearly on menu and specify in short answers.
 - **For SSO only:** WGR requirements must still be met during shortened weeks (less than 5 days).
 - **Fruits and vegetables**
 - Specify fruit options instead of “fresh fruit available” or “fruit variety every day.”
 - For salad bars, specify what fruits and vegetables were offered and when.
 - **Milk** – Include types of milk offered (e.g., whole, low-fat or fat-free, unflavored milk).
 - **Yogurts** – Indicate if 12 grams of added sugar or less per 6 ounces or provide a nutrition label of product(s).
 - **Water availability** – Include if offered.
- **Double-check vegetable subgroups (for SSO only)** to ensure proper crediting and meal pattern requirements were met. Reference the USDA Crediting Vegetables Tip Sheet: <https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/cn/crediting-tipsheets/vegetables>
- **Clearly identify all food items** on the menu. If an uncommon brand or product name was used, please provide a Child Nutrition (CN) Label or a manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (PFS) if available.

Tips to Earn an Award

Demonstrate that Meal Pattern Requirements are Met

Ensure it is clear on the menus that SFSP or SSO meal pattern requirements were met and that all required meal components were included in each meal.

- Missing a meal component (e.g., milk or fruit is missing from one or more days on the menu) is the most common reason applicants do not receive an award.
- Another common issue is lack of specificity of what food items were offered, especially vegetable subgroups (for SSO only) and indicating WGR items.

Submit All Relevant Menus

Ensure a one-month menu is provided for each meal service offered (e.g., congregate, non-congregate).

Be Specific and Detailed

Avoid generalities. Share actual foods served, names of activities, and concrete examples.

Tips to Earn an Award *(continued)*

Describe Each Meal Service

If offering both congregate and non-congregate meals (e.g., mobile meals, home delivery, parent/guardian pick up) clearly describe each type in the short answer section. Additionally, if different menus were used for each meal service type, please provide a copy of both menus.

Include Data

Mention numbers whenever available (e.g., number of children served, percent increase in fruit servings, number of events).

Tell a Story

Use anecdotes to demonstrate impact (e.g., "One child said the smoothie bike was their favorite part of the summer!").

Highlight Improvement

Mention any changes made since previous years or in response to feedback.

Attach Photos/Documents

Visual aids can strengthen your submission. Sponsors must submit a signed photo release for any photos with children pictured.

Complete Bonus Criteria

They help you stand out and are strongly considered for awards.

The Turnip the Beet Awards support USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins' commitment to create new opportunities to connect America's farmers to nutrition assistance programs; infuse each federal nutrition programs with new energy and vision; and strengthen strategies to encourage healthy choices, healthy outcomes, and healthy families.

To learn more about Turnip the Beet, please visit: <https://www.fna.usda.gov/sfsp/turnip-the-beet>.

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