



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Summer Sizzle: Elevating the Summer Food Service Program
(Regional Collaboration Category)

Executive Summary:

In the summer of 2023 Chesterfield County Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services (CFNS), launched an exciting and innovative collaboration with the Chesterfield County Farmers Market. Recognizing the significant potential for synergy between the CFNS department and the local farming community, Casey Dickinson (CFNS) met with Christine Allen, who held dual roles within the Chesterfield Cooperative Extension and as the Farmer's Market Coordinator. Realizing the opportunity to tap into Christine's expertise, networks, and resources, CFNS saw the chance to elevate the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) by incorporating it into the farmers market setting with fresh, local fare and community engagement.

CFNS emphasized the importance of teaming up with local growers and encouraging children to explore new culinary experiences. "At the farmers market, we prioritize farm-to-school and scratch cooking in an outdoor setting," Casey explained. This endeavor not only highlighted the department's dedication to innovation but also emphasized its commitment to community welfare. By prioritizing farm-to-school practices and scratch cooking, the collaboration demonstrated the department's forward-thinking approach to enhancing the SFSP, thereby positively impacting the lives of the children and families it serves.

Problem or need addressed by the program:

The SFSP is vital for providing essential nutritional support to children during the summer break, bridging the gap when schools are not in session. Serving lunches at the Chesterfield County Farmers Market offered numerous benefits, including access to fresh, locally sourced ingredients, which significantly enhanced the nutritional value of meals. This initiative also bolstered support for local

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agriculture, fostering partnerships with nearby farmers and providing avenues for community involvement. Collaborations with community partners offered educational enrichment opportunities for children to deepen their understanding of food origins and agricultural practices.

Program Description:

The Chesterfield County School Board places a high priority on the wellness of both students and staff members, employing a comprehensive approach that encompasses a wide array of policies, practices and the active involvement of the Board-appointed School Health Advisory Board. Embracing division-wide and individual school initiatives related to wellness, the board advocates for the nourishment of every child, ensuring their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and mental well-being.

Active involvement in all student activities underscores the board's commitment to fostering healthy learning environments that encourage healthy, active choices and behaviors. The board extends its support to the Food and Nutrition Service's breakfast and lunch programs, recognizing the vital role of nutritious meals in fueling students' bodies and minds. Berkely Dunbrack, the Director of Food and Nutrition Services, confirms the board's unwavering support for the department's initiatives in serving the Chesterfield community.

During the summer of 2023, from June 28 to August 9, families visited the Chesterfield Farmers Market located at 601 Mimms Loop, within the Chesterfield County government complex. The market experienced consistent attendance with over 1,000 visitors each week, peaking at 2,123 customers on August 2. Throughout this period, Chesterfield Food and Nutrition Services (CFNS) provided a total of 475 meals. To ensure accessibility, yard signs were placed to guide passersby to the CFNS booth, while

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Christine Allen utilized social media platforms to encourage attendance. A fun promotional video was created that provided the advantages of the SFSP at the farmer's market.

The farmer's market menus were centered on locally grown Virginia agriculture. The food products featured were not only sourced from the market but were also available for purchase, establishing a direct link between consumers and local growers. The decision of the farmers market to accept SNAP benefits played a crucial role in enhancing access to fresh, healthy foods, thereby promoting food security and fortifying the well-being of the community. All menu offerings adhered to SFSP regulations, prioritizing minimally processed foods to provide wholesome and nutritious meals.

The menu offerings were created to strike a balance between familiar favorites with inventive twists and prioritizing minimally processed foods to ensure wholesome and nutritious meals. Descriptions on the menus utilized engaging language such as "zesty" and "scratch-made" to convey the freshness of the dishes.

Weekly menus offered Homemade Macaroni and Cheese paired with a Zesty Cucumber Salad, 100% Grass Fed Beef Tacos served alongside a Chilled Corn Salad and Pizza Munchable accompanied by a Grilled Zucchini Salad. Protein Bento boxes featured local hard-boiled eggs served on a Frisbee, while the Chicken Caesar Wrap included local microgreens. For those looking for the familiar, Cheeseburgers with a side of local melon salad and honey were available and Yogurt Smoothies with blueberries provided a refreshing finale to the summer menus.

The weekly nutrition-based activities were selected to align with the menus and highlighted the local ingredients of the week. These activities catered to a diverse audience, offering everything from

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engaging story time sessions featuring books like “Zora’s Zucchini” to immersive experiences like observing honey bees and their hive. The Dietetic intern created nutrition activities flyers, incorporating elements from MyPlate to promote balanced eating. The integration of Smoothie Bike provided a fun experience for the children to blend a smoothie, using the same recipe that CFNS used to prepare smoothies for their meal.

Program Cost:

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), is a federally funded program overseen by the United States Department of Agriculture. Each lunch is reimbursed at approximately \$5; the goal is to keep food and product cost under that per meal. Generally, we have been able to accomplish our goal by cooking from scratch. Their primary aim is to guarantee that children from low-income backgrounds have access to nutritious meals during the summer months when schools are not in session. The SFSP provides free meals to children 18 years and under at approved sites. The fact that the Chesterfield Farmers Market is situated in an area where over 50% of the population qualifies for free and reduced-price meals underscores the importance and impact of this initiative to address insecurity.

Program Results/Success:

This program was instrumental in sourcing over 100 pounds of local produce, including items purchased from growers at the Chesterfield Farmer’s Market when available. Chesterfield Food and Nutrition Services (CFNS) procured 80 local eggs and over 10 gallons of fresh local milk from producers in the Greater Richmond area. While weekly, local features primarily spotlighted fruits and vegetables, CFNS also showcased local ground beef, milk and honey, further supporting their commitment to promoting locally sourced ingredients.

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Every week, the CFNS meal site buzzed with activity as the team set up tents, picnic blankets and bales of hay, creating an inviting atmosphere. A prominent banner highlighted the farm-to-school process while the serving table displayed the day's menu and nutrition flyers. A colorful poster introduced the local grower of the week. The feedback from the community was overwhelmingly positive. Many expressed a desire to see similar options available in school cafeterias, sparking conversations about the National School Lunch Program and its benefits.

CFNS established partnerships with organizations dedicated to nutrition and food-related activities, collaborating through educational donations and volunteering. Among the valued partners were The Dairy Alliance, The Virginia Beef Council, The Chesterfield Cooperative Extension, The Chesterfield County Library, The National Honey Board, No Kid Hungry-VA, and The Virginia Egg Council. Their generous contributions and time supported our initiatives, reinforcing our shared commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles and combating food insecurity.

Berkley Dunbrack, Director of Chesterfield Food and Nutrition Services, underscores, "Providing meal access to the students of Chesterfield County is a goal that none in this department takes lightly. The program that Ms. Dickinson developed for the Chesterfield Farmer's Market is an outstanding example of this goal. By providing freshly prepared meals from locally sourced produce and facilitating student-farmer interactions, we deepen our efforts to instill lifelong nutritional principles."

Worthiness of an award:

"Summer Sizzle" improved the Summer Food Service Program by integrating fresh, local foods and community engagement, expanding Farm to School initiatives beyond the classrooms and cafeterias.

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While emphasizing the sourcing of local foods for school meals and integrating nutrition education, these programs also benefited the wider community and food system.

At the Chesterfield County Farmers Market, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) offered free lunch meals, ensuring children's access to nutritious food. Scratch-prepared meals, using locally sourced ingredients, not only nourished children but supported the farmers.

Menus featured local Virginia products, highlighting a weekly seasonal harvest. Each menu was thoughtfully crafted to be visually enticing and nutritionally balanced, presenting vibrant trays of colorful offerings. Family-sized recipes were provided, encouraging meals at home. Descriptions emphasized "scratch-made," "fresh," and "local" ingredients, reflecting a commitment to quality. All grains were whole, prioritizing health and nutrition. Each week, a 'Meet the Producer' poster showcased a local grower, their product and farm.

This program has been recognized by the following media outlets:

- In 2023, the CFNS proudly received the esteemed USDA Turnip the Beet Gold Award, a prestigious recognition of the department's outstanding performance in their Summer Meals Program. This accolade not only commended CFNS on their excellence but also set a notable national benchmark for other sponsors to aspire to. CFNS stood out as the sole district in Virginia to be honored with this prestigious award, underscoring their commitment to delivering exceptional meal services in the community.
- CFNS was acknowledged by the Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs, Virginia Department of Education, in the April 2, 2024 edition of their online newsletter, 'The Scoop.'

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This recognition reaffirms their position as a leader in school nutrition programs and their positive impact on the community.

- Chesterfield County Public Schools' Creative and Mediative Services issued a media release announcing the launch of an innovative program by the CFNS department. Titled: "Food and Nutrition Services is dishing up fun and delicious free lunches at farmers market," this innovative program aimed to provide both enjoyment and nutritious sustenance to the community.
- During a subsequent Chesterfield Board of Supervisors meeting, Dr. Joseph Casey, a prominent figure among Chesterfield County Administrators, expressed commendation for the CFNS summer feeding project. Dr. Casey underscored the importance and highlighted its significant impact on the community.
- The USDA recognized this concept in their monthly e-newsletter of the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program, *The Dirt*.
- Casey Dickinson will present this concept at the upcoming National School Nutrition Association Annual National Conference in Boston, July 2024. This presents a valuable opportunity for CFNS to showcase their innovative approach to a wider audience, potentially sparking similar initiatives across the nation.

In conclusion, the "Summer Sizzle" Initiative by CFNS exemplifies efforts to provide nutritious meals, support local agriculture and engage the community. Through partnerships and proactive leadership,

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CFNS is paving the way for the future, emphasizing local foods and community well-being. The program's recognition underscores its dedication to excellence, innovation and sustainability.

Supplemental Materials:

- enclosed

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Supplemental Materials:

- Chesterfield Food and Nutrition Services [2023 Turnip the Beet Sponsor Gold Level](#).



- Chesterfield Food and Nutrition Services 2023 [Farmers Market Introduction Video](#).
- [Media Release](#) from Chesterfield Creative and Media Services | Chesterfield Food and Nutrition Services is dishing up fun and delicious free lunches at farmers market
- Chesterfield and [Virginia Farm to School](#) Banner.

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Summer Food Service Program @ Chesterfield Farmers Market
Highlighting Local Beef on July 5, 2023



Summer Food Service Program @ Chesterfield Farmers Market
Highlighting Local Zucchini on July 12, 2023



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Summer Food Service Program @ Chesterfield Farmers Market
Highlighting Local Eggs on July 26, 2023

