

Going Mobile to Increase the
Reach of Summer Meals
A Feasibility Study for the Rochester
Community

April, 2016



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Rochester Area Community Foundation

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Executive Summary

CGR was engaged by Rochester Area Community Foundation to conduct a feasibility study of a mobile summer meals program for the City of Rochester. This study informs a multi-year, community-wide effort to increase the usage of summer meals in the City. A number of cities across the country have begun to include mobile meals as part of their efforts to provide meals to low-income children during the summer months, and CGR was asked to determine whether a similar model could work in Rochester.

To complete this study, CGR researched existing programs elsewhere in New York and the rest of the nation, interviewing program operators; researched regulations impacting on mobile meals; analyzed the reach of Rochester's current summer meals initiative and identification of gaps; and did an initial assessment of the receptivity to mobile meals in under-served neighborhoods in Rochester, informed by stakeholder engagement through interviews and a brief parent survey.

CGR interviewed staff from four programs in New York State and five programs elsewhere in the nation: Federal Way, WA; Colorado Springs, CO; New Haven, CT; Broward County, FL; and Little Rock, AR. Our key findings from these case studies were:

Mobile programs are a relatively new extension of existing programs in most communities. All of the mobile meals programs we studied were established within the last 7 years, and were built upon the existing infrastructure of other food service programs within the city. Most efforts began as pilot programs, and some remained quite small, while others scaled up considerably.

The models vary in how “mobile” they are. Most serve food directly from a vehicle and have multiple stops, but there are a few other variations – in New York City, each food truck has only 1 stop per day, and in Broward County, trucks bring lunches to public housing developments that are served in community rooms.

Operations were similar across the sites, with most using two staff members per truck, identifying stops based on gaps in the fixed network of meal sites, and adjusting based on participation. Some programs offered other literacy, play or computer opportunities for children in addition to meals. Only one program offered meals for purchase to adults.

Program operators felt their mobile approach was helping the meals program to reach under-served neighborhoods and children. Another benefit they discussed was the opportunity to reduce food waste with a mobile program.

Challenges including, in some locations, some meals being “disallowed” for federal reimbursement because children were observed taking meals off site. This was not consistently across the programs, though, with some communities reporting little scrutiny.

Costs to operate a mobile program tended to be a bit higher than fixed-site programs both because of the costs of vehicles and staff to deliver and serve meals. However, some communities were able to obtain used vehicles for free or very cheap, and leasing a vehicle is also a lower-cost option.

In examining the possible costs and benefits for a Rochester mobile program, CGR estimates the total costs for a program using one vehicle to be \$24,000 if it were possible to obtain a donated vehicle, or \$36,000 to lease a vehicle. If the program were able to serve 150 meals a day, it would make a slight profit (\$1,900) under the donated-vehicle scenario or incur a loss of more than \$10,000 if a vehicle were leased.

Our analysis of the reach of the 2015 program found that several City neighborhoods may be consider under-served by the fixed-site network. These included Maplewood, Lyell-Otis, the 19th Ward, and the North Edge. Initial conversations we had with community leaders in some of these neighborhoods, as well as Rochester Public Library staff, suggests they would be highly receptive to working with a mobile meals program.

After that analysis was completed, the Rochester City School District finalized its plans for summer learning in 2016, with an expected decline in programs from 40+ to 30+ and about 2,500 fewer students served, dropping to 10,000. In addition, some relatively large sites for both summer learning and meals do not appear in the 2016 catalog, including Schools 3, 9, 28 and 33. If our preliminary analysis is correct, it may be worth considering whether to deploy a mobile meals truck to the Upper Falls and Beechwood neighborhoods.

In addition, it appears there will be 3 new RCSD summer learning sites in the 19th Ward and 1 in the North Edge neighborhood, which may reduce the need for a mobile truck in these neighborhoods.

Based on this analysis and findings, CGR recommends:

- A mobile program should be explored with a small pilot program this summer as a way to reach young people in under-served neighborhoods. Starting with one truck, preferably donated or leased and not heavily customized, would be most economical. As we have learned, changes in the fixed-site network, particularly in RCSD summer learning sites, may leave unexpected gaps in the meals initiative from summer to summer. A mobile program can be a particularly nimble way to

respond to these changes and work to ensure that children have access to healthy meals in the summer.

- While we had initially proposed focusing on under-served neighborhoods on the West side of the City, the new information from RCSD makes us reconsider and instead suggest perhaps one route on the West side and one route on the East side. The West side route might focus on the Lyell-Otis and Maplewood neighborhoods, and the East side route on Upper Falls and Beechwood where large summer learning programs at Schools 9 and 33 appear not be planned for summer 2016. Libraries, playgrounds, parks and basketball courts are all good potential stops.
- It would be most efficient to enlist an existing meals provider to operate the mobile route(s). The administrative infrastructure needed to operate a summer meals program is considerable, and several mobile meals trucks will probably not distribute meals at a high enough volume to support the food preparation and administrative support needed to operate a summer meals program. Therefore, the most effective way to pilot the approach would be to enlist a current sponsor to operate the program: Foodlink, the City of Rochester, or RCSD. Providing some start-up funding and /or assistance with finding a used vehicle, and perhaps some funding to serve meals to adults at no charge, may be beneficial in attracting a sponsor.
- If no current sponsors are interested or have the capacity to begin such an effort, then perhaps a community non-profit could become a sponsor and rely upon a food service vendor to serve as the administrative and food service backbone for a mobile meals program.
- Partnerships with community organizations such as affordable housing providers, libraries, recreation providers, etc. could add appeal and activities to a mobile program.
- In addition, apart from the mobile meals approach, we recommend a continued focus on marketing and promoting awareness of the existing network of fixed sites – many active neighborhood leaders we interviewed were unaware of sites in their areas. We wonder if a new approach to signage, perhaps larger or otherwise more visible or eye-catching signs at fixed sites, would make a difference in overall community awareness.

Thank you for the opportunity to study this important issue and make these recommendations.

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Staff Team

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Introduction

CGR was engaged by Rochester Area Community Foundation to conduct a feasibility study of a mobile summer meals program for the City of Rochester. This study informs a multi-year, community-wide effort to increase the usage of summer meals in the City. A number of cities across the country have begun to include mobile meals as part of their efforts to provide meals to low-income children during the summer months, and CGR was asked to determine whether a similar model could work in Rochester. The study is aimed at helping to answer the following questions:

- Would we expect a mobile program to increase the number of meals served in a community?
- How likely is it that a mobile program will reduce food waste?
- What are the likely capital and operating costs of a local mobile program?
- What is the likely demand for such a program?
- Are there programmatic considerations and partnerships that could be considered as a way to draw youth and/or families to a mobile program?
- Where might a local mobile program be targeted within the city?
- What regulations or policies might impact a local mobile program (possible examples include a 2-hour limitation for serving meals and a prohibition against taking food off-site)? Are there advocacy efforts around those that should be made?

Project Approach

This assessment of the viability of a mobile meals program is based on research into existing programs elsewhere in New York and the rest of the nation, an understanding of the regulations impacting on mobile meals, an analysis of the reach of Rochester's current summer meals initiative and identification of gaps, and an initial assessment of the receptivity to mobile meals in under-served neighborhoods in Rochester, informed by stakeholder engagement.

CGR conducted interviews with individuals in New York State and throughout the country who study, fund, or operate mobile meals programs. This task was complemented by a review of available program data or other assessments and case studies. Our case study research encompassed nine mobile summer meals programs in New York and elsewhere in the country. Programs outside of New York were selected based on suggestions from a national expert on mobile summer meals, online research, and the community's similarity to Rochester in size and density. We

intentionally excluded programs serving rural communities, as the nature and cost of those programs differs considerably from programs in urban areas like Rochester. CGR also analyzed the regulations governing mobile meals programs, and discussed implications with mobile meals program leaders in New York State and elsewhere in the country.

In examining the local options for mobile meals, our team analyzed trends in the reach of the current initiative, including mapping the locations and capacity of summer meals sites in 2014 and 2015 and calculating the density of school-aged youth by neighborhood within the City.

Finally, CGR conducted interviews and focus groups with neighborhood organizations, service providers and parents to determine the level of demand for a mobile meals program in specific under-served neighborhoods and to solicit suggestions about the best places within the community to distribute meals.

Overview of Rochester's Summer Meals Initiative

In summer 2015, Rochester's summer meals initiative provided more than 412,000 meals to children and youth, a 30% increase from summer 2012. Meals are provided at school sites, recreation centers and community-based agencies as part of a broad partnership led by the Summer Meals Partnership of Rochester.

Summer meals are provided under the federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) designed to fill the nutrition gap for children and youth during the months when school is not in session. The program serves youth 18 and under in areas where at least 50% of students are eligible for free and reduced school lunches. In the City of Rochester, all students are eligible for free lunches under the Community Eligibility Option for high-poverty areas. Rochester's child-poverty rate in 2010-14 was 52%, up 14 percentage points from 2000 and one of the highest rates in the nation.

Federal and state funding cover most of the costs associated with administration, preparation and delivery of meals to summer meals sites through a reimbursement system, but most sites need to cover some costs related to staffing, programs and overhead. Food is provided by three main sponsors, the City of Rochester, Rochester City School District and Foodlink.

In 2013, CGR completed a broad assessment of summer meals for the Rochester Area Community Foundation and the larger community and made several recommendations aimed at increasing the reach of summer meals. As mentioned above, the community has made significant progress, particularly in just the last year

or two, in increasing the number of meals served. That progress can be credited to several factors, including the Rochester school district increasing summer programs and availability of meals, as well as earlier recruitment of community-based sites by Foodlink and the support of a new summer meals coordinator working to increase communication and coordination across the system. Examining the feasibility and likely costs and benefits of a mobile meals effort is a logical next step in the community's thinking about how to further increase the reach of summer meals.

National Scan of Mobile Meals Efforts

CGR consulted with Misha Marvel from Hunger Solutions New York and Signe Anderson from the Food Research and Action Center to help identify programs in New York and elsewhere in the country that have successfully implemented mobile meals programs. They also provided guidance on best practices for mobile meals program. and referred us to the “No Kid Hungry: Mobile Meals Playbook,” a federal resource discussed later in this report and a valuable aid to determining the viability of a mobile meals program.

CGR interviewed staff from four programs in New York State and five programs elsewhere in the nation. The mobile meals model is still relatively new nationally, and programs in various communities have evolved somewhat differently from one another. Appendix A contains detailed summaries of each of the nine programs we reviewed, while themes and important findings are discussed here.

In 4 of the 9 communities (Federal Way, WA; Colorado Springs, CO; New Haven, CT; Broward County, FL), before the inception of a mobile program, summer meals had only been available to children attending summer school – there was no network of community-based sites or even meals provided at recreation centers as we have here in Rochester. In several of the other communities (including Syracuse, Schenectady and New York City), mobile programs were added on to a more robust summer meals program as exists in Rochester.

The table below outlines key information about each interviewed program.

Program Location	Operator	Year Began	Number of Vehicles	Own/Lease Vehicles	Typical Locations	# of Sites
Schenectady, NY	Non-Profit	2013	2 Food Trucks	Leased, then Owned	Playgrounds, Basketball Courts, Street Corners	15
Syracuse, NY	School District	2015	1 District Truck	Owned	Libraries	3
New York, NY	School District	2010	4 Food Trucks	Owned	Parks	7
Gates, NY	School District	2011	3 Vans	Owned	Parks	12
Broward County, FL	Non-Profit	2014	Multiple Catering Vehicles	Contract with Caterer	Public Housing Developments	25
Little Rock, AR	Non-Profit	2012	11	Leased	Churches, Parks, Apartment Complexes	60
New Haven, CT	School District	2010	1 Food Truck, 3 School Buses	Owned	Public Housing, Parks, YMCA	32
Federal Way, WA	School District	2013	3 Buses	Owned	Low Income Housing	7
Colorado Springs, CO	School District	2010	5 Buses	Owned	Parks, Low Income Housing	16

Program Origins and Operators

All of the mobile meals programs we studied were established within the last 7 years, and all but one were extensions of existing programs to provide summer meals to low-income children. The exception to that rule was the program in Broward County, Florida, which originated as a mobile meals program for children in public housing. That program was also unique because it was operated by Meals on Wheels, while all others were either operated by the school district or a non-profit that works with low-income children and families (as opposed to seniors). Six of the nine mobile summer

meals programs were provided through the local school district, while three were operated by a non-profit organization.

Most efforts began as pilot programs, and some remained quite small, while others scaled up considerably. The size of the city does not seem to be the determining factor in how large a mobile program grows. New York City, despite a population of over 8 million residents, operates a relatively modest mobile meals programs, and employs four trucks to serve meals at 7 different locations each summer. The program in Little Rock, Arkansas (a considerably smaller city) grew rapidly from inception in 2012, and delivered mobile meals to 60 sites in 2015. Our review seems to suggest that mobile meals programs grow larger in places where the fixed-site infrastructure is not particularly robust.

All 9 of the programs were built upon the existing infrastructure of other food service programs within the city. These mobile meals programs are able to leverage food preparation resources, the billing infrastructure, and the administrative support of the typically larger fixed-site network in a specific area.

Mobile Meals Models Vary Considerably

By definition, a mobile meals program is one that serves eligible children directly from the vehicle, and does not rely upon a fixed site to refrigerate or heat meals prior to serving. However, our review revealed that some programs are considerably more “mobile” than others. The program in Schenectady, NY, which began in 2013, operates along several fixed routes in the community each day, distributing meals at a number of different playgrounds, parking lots, basketball courts, and popular streets among local youth. This contrasts with New York City’s program, where each food truck only has one stop each day, and serves meals at that location throughout the entire mid-day period. A third model is found in Broward County, Florida. There, trucks bring lunch to public housing developments, and the food is served and consumed in community rooms within the housing complex. The program operates similarly to a traditional fixed-site model, and would be classified as such if the food was delivered and stored at the facility for some period before serving.

Operational Considerations

Identifying Locations

Mobile meals programs across the country all seemed to tailor their site selection criteria to meet identified gaps in their fixed-site network. However, the approach to finding these underserved areas varied considerably among the nine communities. Some programs, like New York City, relied upon their partners in other governmental entities (the Parks Department, in NYC’s case), to identify potential sites. Others, like the Schenectady Inner City Ministry, took advantage of their own deep understanding

of the city and mostly identified sites on their own. The program in Little Rock, Arkansas met with community leaders, faith groups and managers of low-income housing to find and prioritize locations.

Without conducting a detailed assessment of the programs in each of these nine cities, it is difficult to conclude which approach to identifying sites was most effective at addressing community needs. It does appear that nearly all efforts involved a bit of trial and error, and many programs changed sites in the first few summers before finding a consistent approach.

Staffing

Nearly every program reviewed employed a two-staff model for distributing mobile meals. One person was designated as the driver, while the other was tasked as the server. However, the people occupying those roles were often interchangeable, and both ended up assisting with serving meals in busier distribution areas.

The only exception to this model was the program in New York City. The New York City mobile meals program employs four staff on each food truck. This higher staffing level was partially due to the higher volume of food distribution at the City's sites, but was also the result of civil service job classifications and various union work rules.

Programmatic Options

Several of the mobile meals programs CGR reviewed as part of this assessment tried to find some way to link their distribution of summer meals with some other effort to serve children in the community. Several programs were established to serve children in library- or recreation-based programs. Others, particularly those that targeted low-income housing developments and public housing for meals distribution, decided to accompany their food distribution efforts with other critical summertime services. These efforts ranged from relatively low-cost efforts to distribute books and board games to children along with meals to more expensive mobile meals programs that included computer labs on the meals trucks or structured summer learning programs built around the expectation of the midday meal. Programs sometimes delivered these other services directly; in other instances, summer meals supplemented existing efforts at a library, recreational center, or playground.

Serving Meals to Adults

For the most part, the case study communities did not report serving meals to adults, though in one community, meals were offered at the USDA reimbursement rate for summer meals: \$2.30 for breakfast and \$3.75 for lunch. This was Colorado Springs, which reported that it sold very few meals to adults, less than 5% of its total. Other communities discussed the complexities that would be involved with adding a cash operation to its mobile meals program and said that was a disincentive.

Impact of a Mobile Model

Benefits

The 9 mobile providers had similar motivations for establishing mobile meals programs in their community. Nearly all pointed to perceived gaps within the pre-existing summer meals service network. A mobile program, despite the initial start-up costs and slightly higher ongoing expenses, was seen as a flexible method of providing summer meals to areas that lack capacity or willing providers. It also had the ability to respond to changing or emerging needs in a way fixed sites cannot. Several programs in our review introduced or expanded operations as a result of school closures or shifts.

Several interviewees highlighted the marketing benefits of a mobile meals effort. Aside from the meals provided directly to children from the trucks, many program organizers believe that, if presented attractively, the trucks can heighten awareness about the broader summer meals effort within their community. As several interviewees put it, the mobile meals trucks are literally billboards for the summer meals effort in a community. Supplemental funding from private donors or foundations was often necessary to wrap the food trucks or converted school busses. Not every community took advantage of this advertising opportunity, but those that did spoke to merits of the aesthetic investment.

Finally, if managed well, a mobile meals program can reduce food waste. If some amount of food was not served in a day, and remained refrigerated throughout the entire day, it can be recirculated and served the following day. This contrasts with the typical approach to managing traditional sites. There, if food is not served for whatever reason (low attendance in a given week, for example), it is discarded.

Challenges

When asked to share the biggest challenges of a mobile meals program, most interviewees pointed to two main obstacles.

First, the congregate feeding requirement, which ensures that children are actually consuming the meals, is difficult to enforce in a mobile meal setting. Locations like a park, playground, or parking lot are designed to be open and accessible to the community. It is a natural and understandable impulse for a child receiving lunch to walk away from the food truck and consume the meal wherever they please. While the reported level of oversight varies from place to place (even within New York State), several providers mentioned the frustration of having some meals disallowed¹ as the

¹ At the end of each day, programs tally the number of meals served and send it to USDA for reimbursement. If a meal is disallowed, USDA won't provide reimbursement, even if the meal was actually served.

result of site visits from state oversight bodies. If state inspectors witnessed children walk away from the congregate feeding area without consuming the summer meal, those meals would be determined non-reimbursable under the federal summer meals guidelines, forcing the program operator to absorb the cost. Many mobile meals operators have attempted to reduce the degree of this problem by providing tables and seating. Some have tried to cordon off the feeding area, and others even moved the location of the service to a more enclosed or controlled setting. If these efforts prove unsuccessful and state scrutiny is heightened, it could be difficult for some of these mobile meals programs to remain viable.

Second, while all of the programs we interviewed appear to be successfully operating within the federal summer meals reimbursement rate, the added operational costs of fueling and maintaining vehicles does tighten the margins on the program. In addition, mobile meals staff were typically paid exclusively through the federal meals program, while many site-based programs rely on a mix of different funding streams, including the federal meals program. This reliance on the federal payment means that service volume at each meals distribution site is critical to assuring the operational viability of the program.

Overall Impact

While few of the programs interviewed had been formally evaluated or done careful tracking of their impact, all of the operators felt the program was successful in that needed meals were served, the cost did not exceed available revenue, and at least some children who would not otherwise participate benefited from the program. Most interviewees said the mobile program helped them reach young people who were not able or likely to attend a fixed site, and that the slightly higher cost of mobile meals vs. fixed-site meals was manageable.

Each of the 9 programs established their program in response to a perceived community need. In some places like Broward County, only students enrolled in summer learning programs were receiving summer meals. Therefore, the designers of that community's summer meals program were able to easily determine that any new summer meals effort would be able to serve a high number of previously unserved youths. The explosive growth of the program in that community validated that determination.

Other communities, such as Schenectady, decided to add a mobile meals program on top of an already well-established fixed-site system. They did so in part to reverse a multi-year trend of declining summer meals participation, but also because they identified gaps in their network of sites, from both a geographic perspective and a sense that a significant number of city youth were not accessing site based summer programming. The program operators believe that 15% growth in the overall summer meals program from 2013 to 2015 (reversing a multi-year decline) was largely due to

the mobile meals program, both in terms of accessing young people who were not engaged in other programs and in building visibility for the broader summer meals program.

Mobile Meals Program Costs

The costs of a mobile summer meals program should be divided into two major areas - start-up expenses and ongoing operating costs. The primary barrier that impacts the ability of a community to establish a mobile meals program appears to be the capital investment required to begin the effort. Programs affiliated with school districts seem to be able to take advantage of existing vehicles, while those programs not operated by a school system need to acquire vehicles.

Exact prices varied, but multiple sources indicated the cost of purchasing and outfitting a brand new food truck to distribute mobile meals is about \$65,000. The cost of leasing a food truck for the summer, and not heavily customizing it, is approximately \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year. Another option to explore is soliciting a lightly used food truck from a local company. New York City did so to establish its mobile meals fleet. School-based programs are able to equip existing buses with coolers, ice and limited exterior branding for less than \$5,000 for a summer. Installing refrigeration capabilities appears to cost roughly \$10,000.

From an operating cost perspective, several interviewed communities indicated that mobile programs tend to have higher costs than traditional sites, and the summer meals program is already a low-margin enterprise for most traditional sponsors. The No Kid Hungry: Mobile Meals Playbook resource also finds that mobile programs tend to have somewhat higher costs, and additional funding is needed beyond the federal reimbursement to keep them sustainable. Interviewees pointed to importance of sufficient volume to ensure financial viability. On the other hand, these programs also seem able to limit food waste more efficiently than fixed sites, and therefore may achieve some savings from that efficiency.

While each community seems to have a different break-even point, all agreed that the program needs to deliver a certain number of meals each day to pay for the staff, fuel, and meal costs that comprise the primary expenses of the program.

For a mobile meals effort to be financially viable without additional funding support, the total program cost divided by the number of meals served must be at or below the rate that USDA reimburses for each meal. Our review of mobile meals programs throughout the country revealed a range of per-meal costs for food only from \$1.10 to \$2.70 among the communities included in our review. It was not possible to calculate a total per-meal cost because of the differing structures of the programs.

For example, district-sponsored mobile programs like New Haven, CT and Colorado Springs, CO have considerably lower costs per meal than the effort in Little Rock, AR. All of the meals in New Haven and Colorado Springs are prepared in the district's central kitchens using staff, ingredients and menus similar to what is provided during the school year. In addition, both districts also operate fixed school-based sites, which serve the same meals as their mobile sites. These factors, along with a focus on cold rather than hot meals, helps to keep each meal's cost down.

The nature of each districts' budgeting – both mobile and fixed summer meals are considered one program – makes it difficult to calculate non-food costs (primarily labor to cook, package, and sort meals for distribution, in addition to supervisor salaries). These costs therefore are not fully allocated in the program's calculation of per-meal costs. In addition, each extra meal prepared by the districts, either for mobile or fixed sites, has a very low marginal cost. This is because the initial investment required to produce the food – a kitchen, staff, and ingredients – is already in place in a district and can be shared between mobile and fixed sites.²

In contrast, the program in Little Rock (ARDC) sourced all its meals through an outside vendor (PepsiCo). The comparatively expensive cost per meal includes all of the labor required to cook, package, sort, and distribute meals to ARDC's central location. ARDC determined that using an external vendor was the only viable way to reach large numbers of children in that community, as the organization does not possess the food service infrastructure required to prepare meals on such a large scale. The financial arrangement with PepsiCo does not achieve discounted costs as the volume of meals increases.

It is easiest for a program that is already operating as a fixed-site sponsor to expand to a mobile program. The additional food-related costs for a school district or larger community summer meals provider to prepare mobile meals are quite low, so staff salaries and vehicle costs are the main additional costs. However, smaller program sponsors without the capacity to prepare many meals in-house must turn to external vendors to prepare, and sometimes serve, mobile meals.

To the extent that mobile programs can use donated vehicles and volunteers to serve and clean up meals, costs are obviously reduced, and some of the communities interviewed were able to keep expenses down in these ways.

² This is only the case if all meals are prepared in a central kitchen (as is done in New Haven and Colorado Springs). If there are separate kitchens for each fixed site, or a separate kitchen for mobile vs fixed sites, then each extra meal's marginal costs are higher (the initial investment must be made for each location).

Mobile Meals Program Cost Variables

The No Kid Hungry campaign, a national effort to reduce childhood hunger and food scarcity, operates an online Center for Best Practices in the areas of school breakfast and summer meals. The website contains a substantial amount of information aimed at helping communities assess the viability of a mobile meals program in their region. One particularly helpful tool is a downloadable mobile meals calculator. This calculator allows one to explore different scenarios and helps an individual or collaborative effort determine whether a program can be financially viable in their community.

While there are many variables that contribute to the cost of a mobile meals program, the four factors listed below seem to be particularly determinative:

- **Program Sponsor and Vendor:** Is it an existing community summer meals provider or new entrant? Are mobile meals provided by existing school district or food bank staff, or an external vendor?
- **Food Service Vehicle:** Is the vehicle purchased new, used, donated, or leased? Is it a full sized food truck or a full sized transport van?
- **Staff:** How many staff are assigned to the vehicle? Are they all paid, or are some volunteers?
- **Food:** Does the vehicle provide hot and cold meals?

Likely Costs and Benefits for Rochester

The information gleaned from other communities and the No Kid Hungry website allowed CGR to project some preliminary costs for operating a program in Rochester. The table below details the estimated profitability of one mobile meals vehicle (leased and not heavily customized) sponsored by one of the three existing summer meals providers, given certain expectations of meals served each day. The model assumes 5 days per week of food service for all 10 weeks of the summer.

REVENUE	100 Meals Per Day	150 Meals Per Day	200 Meals Per Day	150 Meals Per Day (no vehicle costs)
Lunch Reimbursement Amount (\$3.4875 per meal)	\$17,438	\$26,156	\$34,875	\$26,156
EXPENSE				
Staff Costs (2 Staff @ \$12 per hour, 6 hours per day)	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Food Expenses				
Food Purchase/Prep (\$1.75 per meal)	\$8,750	\$13,125	\$17,500	\$13,125
Food Waste	\$438	\$656	\$875	\$656
Supplies and Disposables	\$150	\$225	\$300	\$225
Total food costs	\$9,338	\$14,006	\$18,675	\$14,006
Transportation				
Vehicle Costs	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	
Maintenance	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750
Mileage	\$1,375	\$1,375	\$1,375	\$1,375
Insurance	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
Total transportation costs	\$14,225	\$14,225	\$14,225	\$2,225
Total Expenses	\$31,563	\$36,431	\$41,100	\$24,231
Profit/Deficit	-\$14,125	-\$10,275	-\$6,225	\$1,925

While each of the first three scenarios result in an overall deficit, the loss shrinks after each additional meal served by the program. If one excludes the cost of leasing the vehicle, the mobile program actually turns a slight profit at 150 meals each day. Different approaches to obtaining a vehicle – either buying a new vehicle, heavily customizing a vehicle, or using a donated vehicle such as a school bus – would change the financial scenario considerably. As well, a mobile program offered by an organization other than a current meals sponsor would have the same costs, as well as additional expenses for food preparation and program administration.

Regulations Governing Mobile Meals

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is administered by the Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA authorizes the New York State Education Department to administer SFSP in this state. Mobile meals are governed by the same SFSP guidelines as traditional fixed site summer meals programs; we briefly summarize the relevant regulations below.

All of this information summarized below is provided in greater detail within a complete guide for SFSP sponsors published by the USDA, available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/AdminGuideSponsors.pdf>

Sponsor Eligibility

Sponsors must be tax exempt and demonstrate the administrative and financial ability to manage the program effectively. Eligible sponsors include public or private school food authorities, universities, units of government, summer camps, and any other type of private non-profit organization. Sponsors are required to:

- Attend State training
- Locate and recruit eligible sites
- Hire, train, and supervise staff and volunteers
- Competitively procure food
- Monitor all sites
- Prepare claims for reimbursement

Sites

If a site is located in an area in which 50% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced price meals, and the meals are available to all children in the area on a first-come first-serve basis, then the site is considered open. Sites that are on mobile summer routes generally fall into this category.

In 2014, USDA released a memorandum³ to provide guidance on the use of a mobile feeding model in the SFSP. The memo subjects sponsors operating mobile feeding sites to the following requirements:

³ http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP%2002_SFSP%2002-2014os.pdf

- Each location where a bus or other vehicle stops to serve meals must meet the site eligibility criteria and other requirements set forth in Program regulations;
- Serving locations along a mobile meals route must be approved by a state's program administrator. Each stop is treated as a separate summer meals feeding site and vehicles must follow a consistent and advertised meal service schedule at the various locations.
- Sponsors of mobile sites must take extra precautions to ensure that food is safe for children to eat. At a minimum, food must be maintained at the proper temperature along the entire delivery route, to be monitored with a food thermometer;
- A site supervisor⁴ must be present at each meal service;
- Sponsors and sites must adhere to all other rules and regulations governing the SFSP. Most significantly, meals must be consumed on site (congregate feeding requirement), except if they have been given prior approval by USDA and/or the presence of excessive heat at an outdoor site makes it unsafe to do so.⁵

Current Reach and Gaps in Rochester's Summer Meals Initiative

To inform the discussion of a possible mobile meals program, this section presents a brief analysis of overall trends in summer meals and a geographic analysis of where meals are served and which neighborhoods may be considered under-served within the City of Rochester.

Recent Trends

As mentioned early in this report, the Rochester community has made definite progress in expanding the reach of summer meals. As shown in the table below, most of the increase occurred in the last year, from 2014 to 2015. The largest increase came in meals served by the Rochester City School District. Meals provided by Foodlink and by other, smaller community sponsors also increased significantly. The table below does not include snacks but does include breakfasts, lunches and suppers.

⁴ A site supervisor may be a trained volunteer or staff person who has attended the sponsor training and is responsible for serving and cleaning up after meals, ensuring sanitary and safe conditions, ensuring that children eat all meals on site, planning and organizing site activities, and taking accurate meal counts.

⁵ See http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP14_SFSP08-2015os.pdf for more information about this exception.

Recent Trends in Total Meals Served					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change
Foodlink Inc	61,247	66,809	62,180	74,374	21%
City of Rochester	92,302	93,642	106,614	86,112	-7%
Rochester City School District	143,591	145,030	129,727	215,780	50%
Main sponsors	297,139	305,481	298,521	376,266	27%
Other sponsors*	20,903	20,408	33,159	35,917	72%
Total	318,042	325,889	331,680	412,183	30%
<i>*Includes Monroe Community College, University of Rochester and others offering summer learning programs.</i>					
Source: CGR analysis of Summer Meals Partnership data					

July continues to be the biggest month for summer meals, and total meals served during July increased dramatically from 2012 to 2015, with most of the increase occurring from 2014 to 2015.

Meals Served by Month					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change
June	14,687	15,979	3,508	6,182	-58%
July	208,656	224,960	239,026	324,873	56%
August	94,699	84,950	89,146	81,128	-14%
Source: CGR analysis of Summer Meals Partnership data					

Lunch continues to be the most common type of meal served, though growth has been faster in breakfasts and supper.

Trends in Types of Meals Served					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change
Breakfast	133,618	140,344	153,020	181,949	36%
Lunch	179,462	179,972	174,814	223,106	24%
Supper	4,962	5,573	3,846	7,128	44%
Source: CGR analysis of Summer Meals Partnership data					

The total number of meals sites has increased 7% since 2012, with the growth coming in closed sites. The number of open sites has actually declined in the last few years. Closed sites serve children and youth participating in a program at the location, while

open sites may serve children in a program but are also open to young people walking in.⁶

Trends in Numbers of Sites					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change
Closed Enrolled in Needy Area	24	30	27	48	100%
Closed Enrolled in Non-Needy Area	3	3	3	0	-100%
Non Residential Camp	1	1	1	0	-100%
Open	79	75	71	68	-14%
Total	106	108	101	113	7%
Source: CGR analysis of Summer Meals Partnership data					

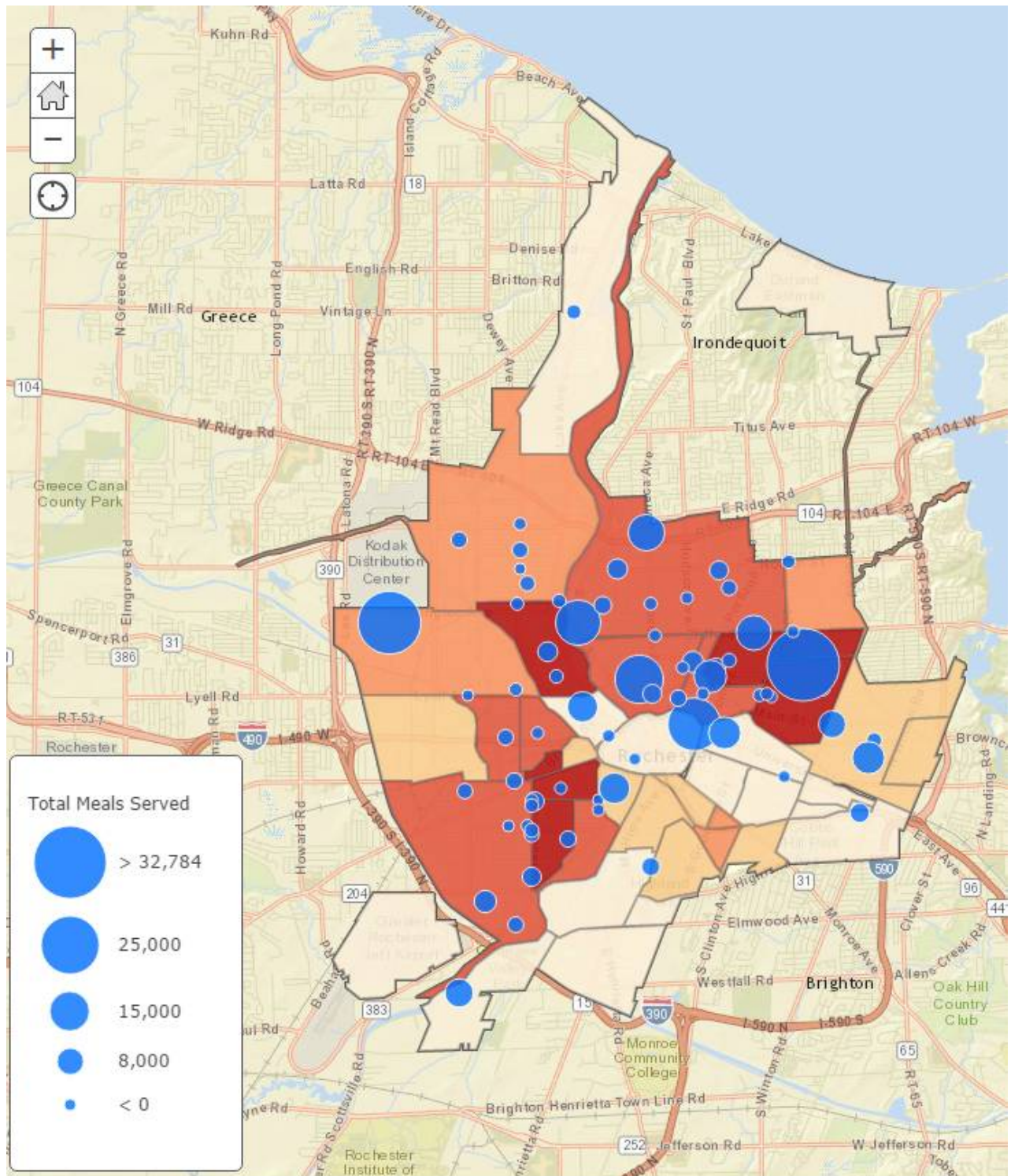
Map Analysis

To look at the geographic coverage provided by the current summer meals network of sites, CGR mapped open sites operating in 2015 within the City of Rochester. The map below also shows the density of students in each neighborhood, with the darkest orange color representing the densest neighborhoods in terms of students (2,300 to 3,100 students per square mile). In addition, the map depicts the reach of the summer meals sites by the size of the circle at each site. The largest circles are sites where more than 32,800 meals were served.

To identify potentially under-served neighborhoods, we look for areas with high student density and small or no summer meals circles. Doing so puts an initial focus on the following neighborhoods: Maplewood, Lyell-Otis, the 19th Ward, and the North Edge. Below the Citywide map, we provide zoomed in images of these areas that also show the locations of schools, libraries and housing complexes.

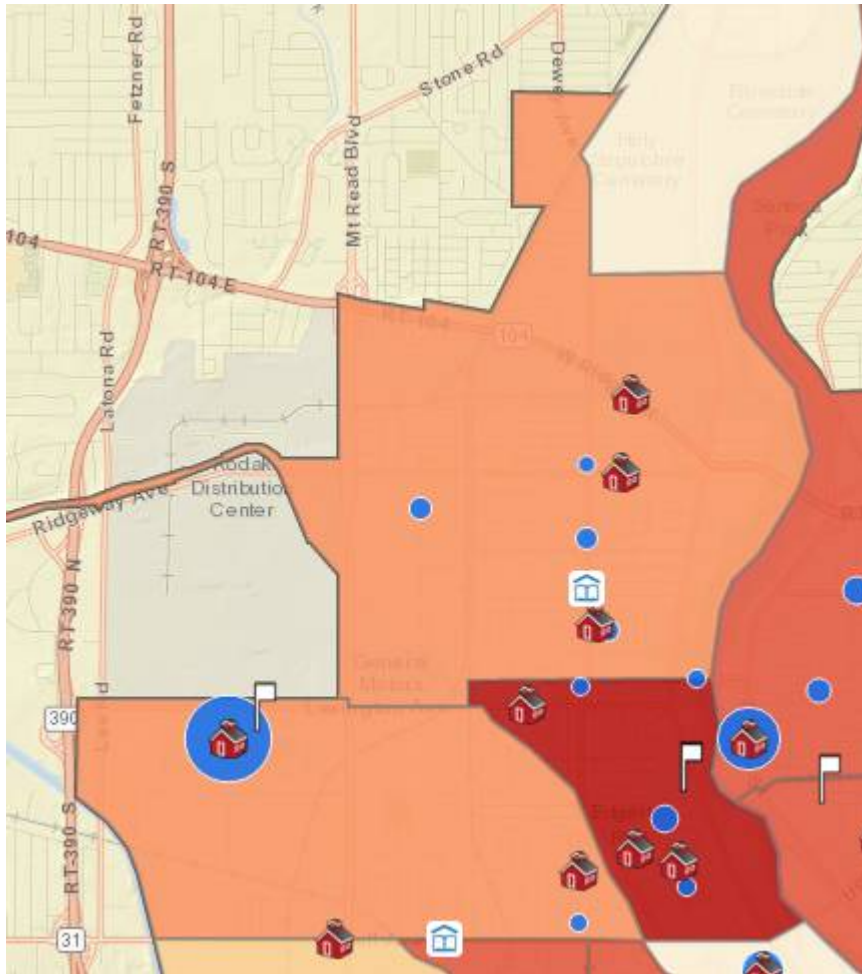
⁶ The change in closed enrolled sites from "non-needy area" to "needy area" from 2014 to 2015 reflects a change in categorization of sites at Harley School, Nazareth College, Horizons and Monroe Community College – not a change in their physical location.

2015 Summer Meals Sites and Student Density by Neighborhood



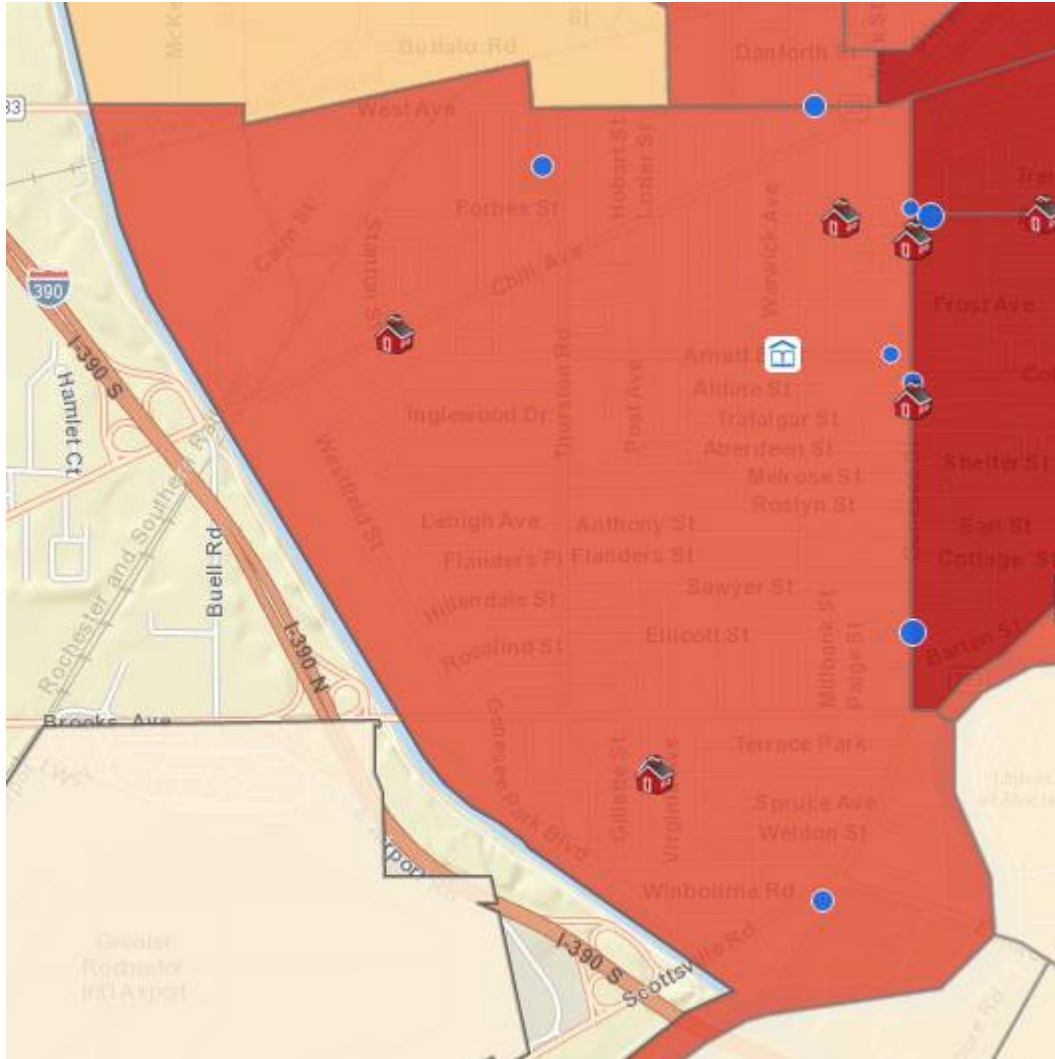
Maplewood and Lyell-Otis

The Maplewood neighborhood is depicted in roughly the center of this map, showing the three schools, one library and four summer meals sites. To the south and west of Maplewood is the Lyell-Otis neighborhood, which contains the large school/summer meal site of Edison Technical and Occupational Center and a housing complex (shown as a white flag). The darker orange neighborhood to the east of Lyell-Otis is Edgerton.



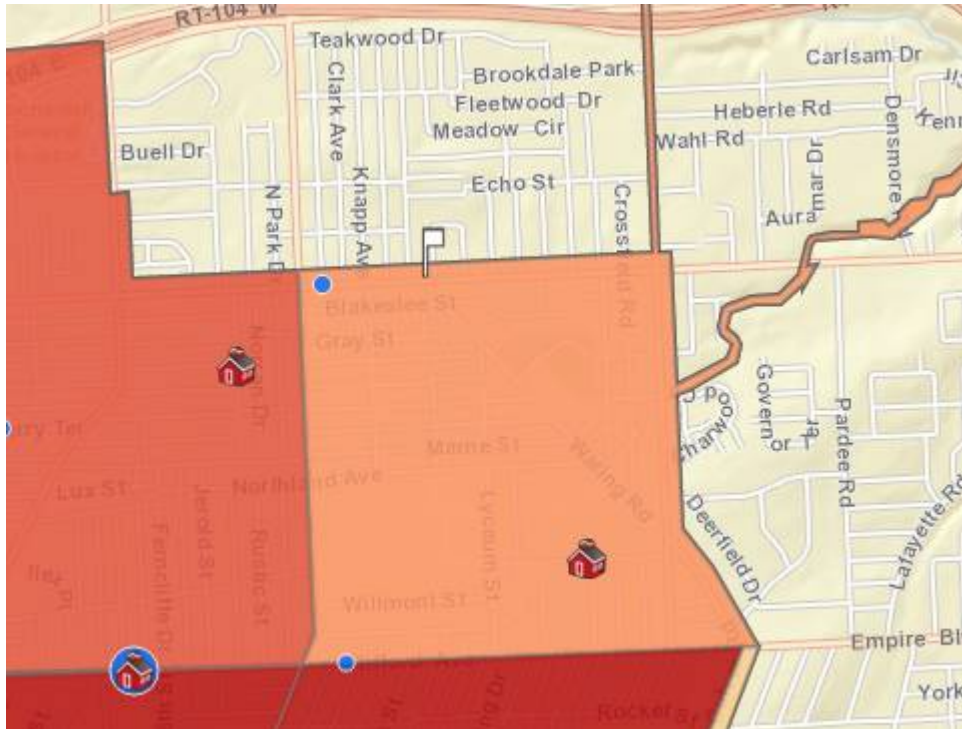
The 19th Ward

The 19th Ward has several summer meals sites on its borders but lacks programs throughout most of the heart of the neighborhood.



North Edge

The small North Edge neighborhood borders the Town of Irondequoit to the south and the 14621 neighborhood to the west.



While these are some initial thoughts about neighborhoods that could be targeted with a mobile meals program, CGR encourages the Rochester community to access and use the interactive map developed for this project, available at <http://arcg.is/1M9nlzH>.

RCSD's Summer Learning Plans

After this analysis was completed, the Rochester City School District finalized its plans for summer learning in 2016. As outlined in the brochure available online at <http://www.rcsdk12.org/domain/9739>, the number of students expected to be served will fall from about 12,500 in 2015 to 10,000 in 2016, and the number of programs from 40+ to 30+.

Some relatively large sites for both summer learning and meals do not appear in the 2016 catalog, including Schools 3, 9, 28 and 33. These schools are in neighborhoods that we had not identified as under-served – Corn Hill, Upper Falls, Culver University East, and Beechwood. If our preliminary analysis is correct, and there are no summer

programs at these locations, it may be worth considering whether to deploy a mobile meals truck to these neighborhoods, particularly Upper Falls and Beechwood, which did not have other large meals sites in 2015.

In addition, it appears there will be 3 new RCSD summer learning sites in the 19th Ward and 1 in the North Edge neighborhood, which may reduce the need for a mobile truck in these neighborhoods.

Potential Opportunities for Mobile Meals in Rochester

CGR reached out to community leaders and parents to gather some initial feedback and recommendations regarding a potential mobile meals effort. If a mobile program is pursued, its organizers will want to explore these ideas in more depth with a wider cross-section of people, but we hope these initial conversations are useful as a starting point.

Community Input

CGR reached out to community leaders and organizations in neighborhoods underserved by the 2015 summer meals network to begin conversations about the possibility of a mobile program. Although we were not able to connect with everyone we sought out, each person we did talk with was very interested in and supportive of a mobile meals program. There was a widespread perception that more access to nutritional meals is needed for children in the summer in several parts of the City and a willingness and interest in working with organizations that could provide additional access.

We asked about specific locations that might work well for a mobile meals stop. In the Lyell-Otis neighborhood, a neighborhood association leader suggested two basketball courts that regularly draw a large number of youth during the summer. One court at Otis and Burrows streets often has 60-80 youth, and another at Santee and Villa streets at J.P. Riley Park often hosts 30 or 40 youth. The neighborhood leader said there is a tremendous need for food in the neighborhood and that food basket distributions in recent years had attracted large crowds and run out of food fairly quickly.

Members of the 19th Ward Community Association also said more meals support is needed and that lots of children and youth remain in the neighborhood during the day in the summer. They identified a few potential stops for a mobile program, including the Arnett library branch, Aberdeen Square Park, and the Community

Association building itself – it has a large driveway and yard and picnic tables in the back.

We were not able to connect with the Maplewood neighborhood association, but we did discuss the possibility of the Maplewood and other library branches serving as mobile meals stops with library system area coordinators and the assistant library director. They confirmed that several branches have a need for meals and a large number of children and youth spending their summer days there. These include the Charlotte, Maplewood, Lyell, Lincoln, Wheatley and Arnett branches. Some of the branches have offered snacks or suppers in recent years for children participating in the Learning Lab program, a part-day program and a partnership with the Rochester City School District and Encompass Resources for Learning. It is not clear at this time whether the Learning Lab program will take place in summer 2016 – conversations are ongoing. The library leaders would like to see a mobile program expand access to healthy meals at library branches but cautioned that libraries are short-staffed and probably cannot devote much if any staff time to setting up, serving or cleaning up meals.

Parent Survey Results

In order to gather some feedback from parents about the idea of a mobile meals approach, CGR posted a brief survey online and distributed it through several parent networks, including the Flower City Parents Network, Greater Rochester Parent Leadership Training Institute, and a few school Parent-Teacher Associations. The survey should not be considered representative of parent opinion in general, as it was not randomly distributed, but it does offer some parent perspectives that are worth considering. A total of 81 people responded to the survey, with just under 20% of say they had participated in summer meals and 60% saying they knew someone who had participated.

Respondents overwhelmingly favored a mobile meals program, with 85% saying it would benefit families and 15% saying it might benefit families. “I think a food truck with healthy appealing options would be awesome!” one respondent wrote. Two respondents specifically suggested hosting a site in the Lyell-Otis neighborhood.

Over 90% of respondents said they thought parents or caregivers should be able to eat with children at a mobile meals program. In open-ended responses, a few respondents said they were concerned that participation in mobile meals would be limited if parents/caregivers were not able to eat with children at mobile sites. “I worry kids would not access foods if parents were excluded, or may sacrifice a portion of their food so their family could also eat,” said one respondent.

When asked what they thought parents or caregivers could afford to pay for a meal, 39% said they could afford \$2-4 and 23% said less than \$2. Nearly 40% of respondents said they thought that parents and caregivers could not afford to pay anything. "I think it might be difficult for parents and caregivers to pay. If they are coming for free lunches, generally they are in need of some help with money," said one respondent.

Do you participate in summer meals?

Yes	19%
No	81%

Do you know a participant in summer meals?

Yes	60%
No	40%

Would a mobile program benefit families?

Yes	85%
No	0%
Maybe	15%

Should parents be able to eat w/ children?

Yes	93%
No	8%

Can parents pay/how much?

Less than \$2	23%
\$2-\$4	39%
\$4-\$6	1%
More than \$6	3%
I answered no	39%

In open-ended responses, many respondents mentioned the need for meals to provide both a range of choices and high-quality, healthy food. Specific responses included:

"The meals must have some variety. My son has stopped eating the breakfast provided because it is the same food every week."

"Meals should be healthy and not packages of nasty, sloppy, cold-cut sandwiches every day."

Recommendations

Despite substantial growth in the Rochester's summer meals initiative over the past several years, there is still room for improvement. Meals are not equally accessible to children and families throughout all areas of the city, and many children and youth are not engaged in the school or recreation programs providing the bulk of the meals throughout the summer. In addition, changes in the fixed-site network, particularly in RCSD summer learning sites, may leave unexpected gaps in the meals initiative from summer to summer. A mobile program can be a particularly nimble way to respond to these changes and work to ensure that children have access to healthy meals in the summer.

Test the Mobile Meals Approach with a Pilot in Summer 2016

Start Small

Nearly all providers of summer meals we spoke to in New York State and elsewhere in the country began their program with just one or two trucks. All but one (New Haven, CT) began their program by either repurposing an already owned vehicle or leasing one for several months. Starting small and minimizing startup costs appears to be the prudent way to begin this program.

Consider Establishing 1-2 Routes

While we had initially proposed focusing on under-served neighborhoods on the West side of the City, the new information from RCSD makes us reconsider and instead suggest perhaps one route on the West side and one route on the East side. The West side route might focus on the Lyell-Otis and Maplewood neighborhoods, and the East side route on Upper Falls and Beechwood where large summer learning programs at Schools 9 and 33 appear not to be planned for summer 2016. Libraries, playgrounds, parks and basketball courts are all good potential stops.

Work to Enlist an Existing Meals Provider

The administrative infrastructure needed to operate a summer meals program is considerable, and several mobile meals trucks will probably not distribute meals at a high enough volume to support the food preparation and administrative support needed to operate a summer meals program. Therefore, the most effective way to pilot the approach would be to enlist a current sponsor to operate the program: Foodlink, the City of Rochester, or RCSD. Providing some start-up funding and /or assistance with finding a used vehicle, and perhaps some funding to serve meals to

adults at no charge, may be beneficial in attracting a sponsor. (As a note, the question of whether it is necessary or important to offer meals to adults will be better answered as part of a pilot approach – based on our interviews, we think it is possible that a truck stopping at libraries, parks, playground, etc. may reach a sufficient number of children who are not in the care of parents or other caregivers, and so feeding adults may not be a pressing issue.)

If no current sponsors are interested or have the capacity to begin such an effort, then perhaps a community non-profit could become a sponsor and rely upon a food service vendor to serve as the administrative and food service backbone for a mobile meals program. This model is successful in Little Rock, AR and in different parts of Texas, but those programs' vendor (PepsiCo) require a minimum volume of meals to be served in order to serve as a vendor. For a pilot mobile program, a vendor could be a local caterer or meal provider (such as Meals on Wheels) that has both the ability to supply meals below the USDA reimbursement rate and the flexibility to work closely with the sponsor on a small scale.

Consider Community Partners

Many other programs nationally rely on a partnership between the mobile meals program and some other organization or unit of government. Broward County, Florida is an example of a successful partnership between the meals provider and the local housing authority. Syracuse, New York's program is a collaborative effort with the library system, while New York City's is with the Parks Department. The Rochester library system is a willing partner to work with in 2016; managers of low-income housing developments in under-served neighborhoods may also be worth talking to about working together to make a mobile program successful.

Other Recommendations

Outside of the mobile meals approach, our research found that awareness of summer meals fixed sites remains a challenge. While we believe the Summer Meals Partnership's efforts have made progress, we still encountered active neighborhood leaders who were unaware of sites close to home. Therefore, we recommend continuing a focus on marketing and promoting awareness, and would suggest that the community consider a new approach to signage, perhaps larger or otherwise more visible or eye-catching signs at fixed sites.

Appendix A: Case Studies

New York State Programs

CGR identified and interviewed three urban mobile meals program providers in New York State, and also spoke with one suburban program in Monroe County. These four programs were selected because they have experiences with New York State Department of Education Summer Meals oversight and could provide insight on how best to structure the programs to meet state and federal regulations. A summary of our review of these programs is below.

Schenectady, New York

The Schenectady, NY summer meals program is operated by the Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM), a faith-based organization that serves meals at 30 fixed sites and 15 mobile distribution locations. CGR interviewed Jessica Underhill, the Director of Community Impact for the United Way of the Greater Capital Region, and Reverend Phil Grigsby, the Executive Director of SICM, by phone to learn more about the origins and current operations of that program.

Origin of Program

The mobile meals program in Schenectady, NY began in 2013 when the United Way of the Greater Capital Region issued a RFP aimed at increasing summer meals utilization in the region. That United Way has been concerned about hunger issues locally for a number of years, and views the summer meals program as a key component in the fight to reduce food scarcity for children. Leadership there were concerned that the summer meals utilization had been declining for several years, and wanted to find ways to reverse that trend. SICM responded to the RFP with a proposal to pilot a mobile meals program.

The United Way funded the program's start-up costs, which included the rental of a bus for the summer months. In total, the United Way invested \$12,000 to get the mobile program off the ground.

In 2014, the program received grant funding from several sources to purchase two 14-foot long diesel-powered trucks. These trucks, which are the same make and model as most Fed-Ex delivery trucks, were retrofitted to add refrigerators that run off the vehicle's engine. The combined cost for purchasing and retrofitting the two trucks was \$129,000. Gasoline powered trucks could have been purchased for about \$10,000 less per truck, but SICM staff learned that running refrigerators off gasoline-powered trucks is a challenge, and the units were more prone to failure.

Sites & Demand

SICM selected sites based on the organization's understanding of gaps in their fixed site network and staff's awareness of areas where middle and high school students are more likely to congregate. The program experimented with different sites during the first year of the program, but settled on a consistent route during year two of the program. Stops include several playgrounds, a public pool, a library, a hospital parking lot near basketball courts, a low income housing development, and a few popular street corners in the city. SICM staff had lawn signs made that announced "Mobile Meals Stop Here" along with the time the truck could be expected.

Compared to other mobile meals programs CGR studied, the Schenectady program's trucks make more stops per day. Reverend Phil Grigsby reported that each truck makes 5 stops per day, and tries to distribute food, ensure it is consumed, and move on within 20 minutes. The program's stops are also in a fairly tight geographic area within Schenectady, and are often only a few minutes from one another. This results in fewer meals being served per stop than other programs, with an average of roughly 163 meals being served by each truck per day, or slightly more than 32 meals per stop.

Food

In the pilot year of this program, SICM only distributed tuna fish and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches along with the standard side dishes. After purchasing its own trucks, the program was able to expand food offerings a bit, and offers different options each day of the week. The trucks typically distribute a combination of shelf-stable and refrigerated meals. The fixed site locations offer hot meals 2 or 3 days per week, but according to SICM leadership, the mobile program still generates sufficient demand with just a cold food option.

Other Programming

SICM's mobile meals program distributes meals at a mix of structured and unstructured program sites, and prioritizes coverage and speedy meal distribution over complementary programming like a library program. Therefore, SICM's summer meals program does not include any non-food related programming, although it does have a program meant to incentivize regular participation in the program. For example, receiving ten lunches in a row makes a youth eligible for a drawing to win a free bicycle.

Training & Staff

The mobile meals trucks are operated by two paid SICM staff, in contrast to the fixed site approach, which typically relies on one paid staff and volunteers from some of churches and other faith groups. This makes a cost comparison between the two approaches difficult as SICM's fixed sites rely heavily upon free labor to ensure the

program remains sustainable. Mobile meals staff salaries are paid for as part of meal reimbursement from USDA, and do not receive any funding from other sources. All mobile meals staff receive a consistent set of food safety training. Staff have also indicated to SICM management that the mobile meals program is a desirable work assignment, and most prefer it to working at a fixed site all summer.

While SICM's director did not share precise program costs, he did indicate that while operating costs are significantly higher for the mobile programs, the programs do not lose money each year.

Impact

The United Way has funded an independent assessment of the mobile meals program since its inception in 2013. The 2015 evaluation was shared with CGR to help support this project. This assessment included mobile site visits, surveys of parents of meal plan participants, and staff surveys. Parents who completed the survey were overwhelmingly supportive of the program, and indicated that the summer meals program helps them with household expenses and ensure their children have healthy food to eat.

The evaluators concluded that the mobile model of meal delivery seems to be successful, and that the program had consistently improved over the three years of the evaluation. Separately, the Executive Director of SICM believes that 15% growth in the overall summer meals program from 2013 to 2015 is largely due to the mobile meals program, both in terms of accessing young people who were not engaged in other programs and in building visibility for the broader summer meals program. The mobile meals program distributed nearly 7,000 meals in 2015, while the overall summer program grew by 10,000 from 2013 to 2015. Both the Executive Director and Jessica Underhill from the United Way reported that the trucks that drive around the Schenectady effectively serve as mobile billboards for the program, and help build community awareness for the larger program.

Syracuse, New York

The Syracuse City School District operates the summer meals program in the City of Syracuse. CGR interviewed Ken Warner, the Director of Food Service for the District, to learn more about how the mobile meals program in that city is structured.

Origin of Program

The Syracuse mobile meals program began in 2015, and startup costs were funded by grants from the Food and Research Action Council and a local foundation. District staff were concerned about how best to serve food to city youth who weren't engaged in any of the summer programming operated by the schools, the City's recreation

department, or any of the church operated programs. The school district is the sole administrator of the summer meals program in Syracuse, and therefore felt that it was the only local entity positioned to operate a mobile program within the city. After a brief internal assessment, the staff realized that the school district itself had sufficient vehicles and staff to administer a mobile program without much additional cost. Grant funding was used to purchase coolers, tables and other program basics.

Sites & Demand

District staff mapped the addresses of students and compared it to the locations of schools and other community providers open in the summer. They quickly identified several areas with significant poverty and without summer meals providers. Three of the neighborhoods had public libraries that were perceived as quite popular among children and families during the summer months. District and library staff quickly agreed to pilot the program in those locations.

The program started without any advance advertising or any fanfare. A truck with free summer meals simply began appearing at each library during a specific time each day of the week. The number of meals distributed rose steadily at one site from 5 meals on the first day of the program operation to 80 meals at the end of the summer. This site was considerably more popular than the other two libraries, but participation did rise at all three sites over the course of the summer.

Vehicles & Routes

While the Syracuse program is categorically a mobile meals program (meaning meals are distributed to children from the truck, rather than dropped off at the beginning of the day and stored by the fixed site), it also operates similarly to traditional fixed site models. The program exclusively partners with the library system, as opposed to distributing meals at a playground or a popular street corner. Meals are distributed by district staff and library staff, and have evolved to become a part of the libraries' programming over the course of the summer. The vehicles used to deliver the meals are not trucks outfitted to promote a mobile meals model, they are simply district-owned trucks. The truck delivers meals to the same three libraries each day, and does not make any other stops.

Food

The Syracuse mobile program serves only cold meals at the libraries, in contrast to the hot lunches available at most other summer meals programs in the city. All meals are prepared at a central location. As the trucks were not outfitted with running refrigerators, staff had to ensure that coolers and ice were sufficient to keep meals cold throughout the several hours of distribution.

Other Programming

The Syracuse mobile meals program operates in a close partnership with the Onondaga County library system, and serves as a complement to that organization's summer programming. Together, they attempt to address summer learning loss and reduce food scarcity for lower-income families in Syracuse, while also providing a safe place for residents to congregate during the summer months.

Training & Staff

The two staff who operate the mobile meals program in Syracuse are school district employees, and receive the required food handling and safety training of any school food service worker. Their salaries are paid through the summer meal reimbursement funding, although a bit of outside grant money helped support the program during the first few weeks of the mobile program's operation. These district staff are supported by designated library staff, who help ensure that food is distributed and consumed on site, rather than taken away from the library.

Impact

The Syracuse program has only existed for one year, and was developed without a plan to evaluate the impact of the program. However, the District believes the mobile meals pilot was successful according to two key criteria. First, while the program does not make money for the district, it also did not lose any money, which was the fear of some staff within the district. Second, despite the modest launch of the program and almost no advertising, demand for summer meals at the libraries grew throughout summer. The mobile meals program served just over 2,000 meals during the summer, or roughly 100 per day, with far more meals being served in August than in July.

New York City, New York

The New York City Department of Education has operated a form of a mobile meals program since 2010. With over 8 million residents and a population density of more than four times greater than Rochester, it is difficult to draw many direct operational lessons from New York City's experience operating a mobile meals program. CGR interviewed Bart Pelucco, Director of the SchoolFoods Services program within the Department of Education, to glean lessons from his experience as an operator of the longest tenured mobile meals program in New York State.

Origin of Program

The mobile meals program in New York City originated in 2010 with one truck, and was intended to serve meals to children in parks and playgrounds throughout the city. The program expanded to two trucks the following year, and four in 2013. New York City's mobile meals program operates significantly differently than other programs

reviewed as part of this national scan. The four trucks that make up the program are specifically designated to work with New York City's Parks Department to provide meals at facilities that lack the site-based physical capacity to refrigerate and serve meals to eligible youth. The sites were identified by the City's Parks department as having high numbers of low-income children and space to create a congregate feeding area.

Sites & Demand

Trucks leave from different locations throughout the city and serve meals for the lunchtime hours in a number of different parks throughout the city. The largest program is at Corona Plaza in Queens, which served an average of 1,630 lunches per day last summer. Most other sites average between 200 and 500 meals served per day. In all cases, the mobile truck is stationary throughout the day. While the four trucks used by the NYC program remain stationary throughout the day, they do change sites slightly throughout the summer. In 2015, food trucks provided meals at 7 different locations during different parts of the summer.

Unlike programs in Schenectady and Syracuse, New York City has encountered reimbursement disallowances resulting from children not consuming meals on site after receiving them from the mobile food trucks. In response, staff have tried to cordon off the serving area, moved the serving areas, added tables for children to sit, and asked staff to encourage meal recipients to eat the meal near the truck. These efforts have been somewhat successful, but program administrators have also begun to include a level of reimbursement disallowances into the cost of operating a mobile program.

Vehicles & Routes

The four vehicles that make up NYC's mobile meals fleet were either purchased or donated. The vehicles were acquired for this program were all used, but none had accumulated many miles. The Department of Education retrofitted the vehicles to install water and refrigeration and wrapped them with the summer meal program's logo and signage. The Department of Education believes this model of using gently used trucks is considerably more financially prudent than purchasing brand new vehicles.

Food

New York City's mobile meals program serves several types of sandwiches each day, along with the required side dishes and milk. The food is prepared by Department of Education food service staff in the Bronx. The trucks only have the capacity to store several hundred meals, so the most popular distribution sites in Corona Plaza and

Flushing Meadows need to be resupplied by other Department of Education delivery trucks throughout the day.

Mobile meals cost \$2 per meal served in NYC, not including labor costs, higher than other locations reviewed. Given staffing costs described in more detail below and a reimbursement rate of \$3.745 per meal served, New York City staff have determined that they need to average at least 200 meals per location each day to pay for the core operational costs of the program.

Other Programming

New York City's mobile meals program serves mostly to support regular summer activities in city parks, and staff there have not attempted to add any complementary program components to the mobile meals program.

Training & Staff

Each mobile meals truck is staffed by four Department of Education food service employees. Union and civil service rules require separately proscribed job duties for the truck's driver, loader, and servers. The Department estimates absent those work rules, the volume of meals served would at least three staff to manage the programs on site.

Impact

The New York City mobile meals program has not undergone a detailed impact assessment. Staff there believe the program is an integral part of the City's overall effort to provide meals to low income families throughout the summer, but also acknowledge that it comprises a relatively small share of the summer meals program. Only about 6% of summer meals are served through this mobile program (84,000 of roughly 1.4 million total meals). New York City staff believe that mobile meals reach children who are not engaged in summer school or other structured programs, and therefore provide a valuable services to a number of low income city children.

Suburban Monroe County, New York

Debbie Beauvais, the Food Service Director for the Gates-Chili, East Irondequoit, and East Rochester School Districts, was interviewed by CGR staff to understand how a summer mobile meals program operates in parts of suburban Monroe County.

While Ms. Beauvais is responsible for food service programs in all three school districts, a mobile summer meals program primarily exists in Gates-Chili, not the other two districts. Also, the mobile meals program in Gates-Chili is structured slightly differently than other program reviewed as part of this assessment.

Origin of Program

The mobile meals program in Gates-Chili began as a result of conversations between Ms. Beauvais and the director of summer recreation programs in Gates. Foodlink had provided meals to children participating in summer recreation, but the responsibility fell to the recreation staff to support the distribution of meals and ensure that meals served met food safety standards. Ms. Beauvais concluded that the district could administer a mobile program relatively easily, and ease the administrative placed upon town recreation staff.

This program received a small amount of funding from FRAC and some refrigerated bags for storage from the Dairy Council.

Sites & Demand

The Gates-Chili program uses three vans to deliver food to two or three structured summer programs each day during the lunchtime window. While the program began as a way to serve meals to children participating in the Town of Gates' recreation programs, it has evolved to deliver meals to a day care center in the town, the BOCES alternative school program, and the summer program at Hope Hall. As Gates is a mixed-income community and more affluent than the City of Rochester, not all of the meals provided by the mobile meals program are reimbursable through federal summer meals funding. Therefore, the program also collects payment from the recreation program and other sources. In total, about 70% of the mobile meals served in 2015 were reimbursed through the federal summer meals program. In 2015, the mobile meals program delivered an average of 30-50 meals a day to a total of 12 sites, although not all sites participated in the mobile program throughout the entire summer.

Vehicles & Routes

The Gates-Chili mobile meals program uses school district-owned vans to deliver meals to the various sites. The participating sites have varied a bit over the several years of the program, but the relatively close proximity of all the sites to Gates-Chili High School, combined with the ability to access different numbers of district vehicles and food service staff has allowed the program to adapt routes and staffing easily from year-to-year.

The Gates-Chili program has only delivered meals to structured summer programs, and has not experimented with the idea of delivering meals to youth not engaged in programs. However, Ms. Beauvais has identified the possibility of doing so in low-income housing developments in the Town of Irondequoit.

Food

Unique among the mobile meals providers in New York State, the Gates-Chili program serves both hot and cold food through the mobile meals program, although not all sites receive hot food. The close proximity of the sites to the high school and the relatively low volume at each site allows the mobile meals staff to serve hot meals at some sites before they grow cold.

Other Programming

The Gates-Chili mobile meals program exists to complement structured summer programs at private schools, parks, and other settings, and therefore does not operate any supplemental programming on its own.

Training & Staff

The program is staffed by district food services employees. Each vehicle is staffed by two individuals, and their work is primarily supported by a cook and site managers at Gates-Chili high school.

All mobile meals program staff are trained to understand food safety expectations, food distribution and consumption rules, and other regulatory issues. Some staff have struggled to manage the differences between school year regulations and the slightly different standards for the summer meals program, but the differences are not operationally problematic.

Impact

The program has steadily grown since it began five years ago, but has not undergone an assessment to determine how effectively it reduces food scarcity in Gates.

National Programs

Our nationwide scan of mobile summer meals programs found several from whose experience Rochester could draw upon. Here, we summarize in detail five programs in other states. The following table compares various demographic statistics for each of the comparison areas:

City	State	Population	Median HH Income	Child Poverty
Rochester	NY	210,000	\$30,800	52.5%
Colorado Springs	CO	445,800	\$54,200	18.6%
New Haven	CT	130,300	\$37,500	32.2%
Little Rock	AR	197,700	\$46,400	20.9%
Ft. Lauderdale	FL	165,500	\$48,900	16.2%
Federal Way	WA	89,300	\$54,200	12.5%

Colorado Springs, CO: Summer Food Service Mobile Program

CGR reached out to the Assistant Director of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) for Colorado Springs District 11, who is responsible for administering the summer meals program. District 11 serves as the sponsor for all SFSP sites in Colorado Springs.

Colorado Springs is, on the surface, a relatively affluent urban area (the median household income is tied for highest among the case study cities). However, the city has pockets of highly concentrated poverty and racial segregation by neighborhood. The city as a whole is 80% white, 6% African American, and 17% Hispanic or Latino of any race.

Origin of Program

The mobile program started in 2010, after the Assistant Director learned about a New Mexico district's success with a mobile meals program. The impetus to form a mobile meals program was sparse attendance at school-based summer meals sites. The Assistant Director talked to other district departments, city agencies, and a local food bank to ascertain the reason for low attendance. The stakeholders found that the primary barrier to attendance was a lack of transportation, due to the following reasons:

- Colorado Springs is a car-centric city (fewer sidewalks and crosswalks, high speed limits, etc), which makes walking to a site unrealistic and unsafe for many children.

- Colorado Springs regularly reaches temperatures above 90°F in the summer, creating danger and discomfort for students who might otherwise walk.
- District budget cuts ended many summer school programs – all of which served lunch – that had previously been providing school bus transport to children.

As with other mobile meals programs, the person leading the charge surmised that more students would be reached at their place of residence or recreation.

Sites & Demand

Site selection was a multi-step process. The district:

- Worked with other district departments and USDA to identify qualifying (>50% Free and Reduced Price Lunch eligible) neighborhoods.
- Talked to a local food bank to help identify both food deserts with a lack of grocery stores and also areas where children congregate (apartment complexes, parks, trailer courts).
- Contacted each potential site's manager (the City for parks, building manager for apartments and trailers) asking for permission to set up a mobile site. Stressed that there would be no effort/cleanup/cost required on the part of the site.

The Assistant Director found that most sites were very receptive; Memoranda of Understanding were signed by the end of March with building/trailer court managers. Each year, the Assistant Director goes back to each location and resigns an agreement, in which the coming summer's schedule is agreed upon.

In order to estimate demand for meals at each stop, the FNS business manager was able to provide the Assistant Director with the number of district children who lived at each residential complex.

In the first year (2010), nine sites agreed to host a mobile stop, in addition to a few school-based sites. By 2015, the number of mobile stops grew to 16, while the number of school based sites also increased to 12. The total number of meals served grew from 25,000 in 2010 to 80,000 in 2015. Half of all meals served in 2015 were at mobile sites.

On average, 560 meals were served per day in 2015. Some routes served more than 300 meals/day, while others only served 50-75 for their three stops. There was significant variability due to weather – when sunny and temperate, the total meals served were around 700; if it was very humid or there was inclement weather, about 200 meals were served per day.

Vehicles & Routes

Five trucks, used during the year by FNS, are used to deliver food. The trucks have a simple district branding but nothing specific to the summer meals program. The district's transportation department also allows FNS to use their minivans over the summer to deliver or retrieve extra meals as needed.

The summer program's budget is based on meal reimbursement figures released by the USDA in January. The district doesn't separate the budget for the mobile program from fixed-site summer meals.

In general, after accounting for fuel, labor, food, and other costs, each route has to serve at least 75 meals (25 kids served at each of three stops) per day for the program to cover its costs. As the summer progresses, daily updates with the number of meals served at each site allow for a more accurate estimate of demand. Routes that don't meet the 75 meal threshold for financial viability are supported by routes which exceed the threshold.

Each route consists of two or three stops; site distribution between routes was based on driving distance from the central kitchen, distance between each stop, and anticipated demand (to try and meet the 75 meal viability threshold per route). The majority of routes have three locations 10-15 minutes apart, with a stop time of 30 minutes at each location.

Food

All meals are prepared in a central kitchen from which the trucks depart with all of the meals needed for the route. Cold meals are much more cost-effective and logistically simple; however, the menu was designed to be "upscale" – that is, no PB&Js or turkey and cheese subs, but rather teriyaki chicken salad, chef salad, BBQ chicken wrap, etc. The menu spanned a two-week cycle. There was demand among students for hot meals, and so in 2015, one hot meal per week was served (growing program made it more financially feasible than it was before).

Food safety was a top priority for the program, especially as the trucks used were not refrigerated. Specific steps taken include:

- Sanitation and handwashing stations were provided on every bus, paid for using grant monies. The brand used was PolyJohns.
- Proper heating and cooling equipment kept food fresh and safe; food thermometers were provided on each vehicle to ensure food stayed at proper temperature.

- All meals were prepared and pre-packaged at the central site. This greatly reduced the opportunity for food to be contaminated.

The average cost for meals – i.e. just food – in 2015 was between \$1.10 and \$1.32. This does not include costs for staffing, vehicles, etc. Food costs were kept low by using a similar menu to the school year (sourcing ingredients was the same process as during the year), serving mostly cold meals (cold meals can be kept refrigerated and served the next day, whereas hot meals must be served on that day), and by using district staff to prepare food.

At the beginning of the summer – before demand at each site was established – 75 meals were loaded onto each truck; if it became apparent that more would be needed, the driver would relay this to the central kitchen, who would deliver the extra meals via minivan to the truck's location. As the summer went on and drivers continued to relay the days' demand at each site, the Assistant Director was able to load the trucks with a more accurate number of meals. These steps helped to reduce food waste to a minimum.

Other Programming

From Year 2 onward, requests were sent out to all staff of the district to donate books to be distributed at the mobile sites. Each child was allowed to take one book, and could exchange that book at any time during the program. During summer 2015, 4,000 gently used books were given away to participants in the mobile program.

One large local food pantry partnered with the program in 2015 to distribute a large amount of free produce (unsold from local farmers markets) to parents of mobile program participants. Each site had one distribution day per year, which was advertised heavily to the parents throughout the summer.

The director of the program expressed a desire to increase the amount of educational and extracurricular programming available, and lamented that the limited staff time prevented allocating additional resources for programming.

Training & Staff

All staff involved in the mobile meals program (drivers, cooks, and servers) are district employees. Their salaries are paid for as part of meal reimbursement from USDA. No matter the seniority/tenure of staff, all employees for SFSP are paid at entry-level district wages for the position they apply for. Each staff member has to apply for SFSP positions before the summer; there are usually many more applicants than positions. Selection is based on seniority, experience with SFSP, and the route which the person applies for.

The Assistant Director has prepared a thorough training checklist for summer meals, provided in Appendix C of this report. Included are specific instructions regarding food safety, uniforms, signage, meal distribution, site setup and takedown, and contingencies in case of inclement weather.

Impact

Colorado Springs' mobile program was launched as a reaction to the closing of many school-based summer programs which served as closed SFSP sites. In planning a summer feeding program, FNS essentially started from scratch and realized that the best way to reach the most kids in their city was to deliver food to where children naturally congregated. As the program has grown and developed since its inception, the mobile program has become integrated with FNS's fixed sites at schools (even when there are no summer programs).

A small total staff dedicated to the mobile program limits the amount and variety of extracurricular programming at mobile sites. The Assistant Director stressed that she would like to provide more programming, but is unable to do so at current funding and staffing levels.

Little Rock, AR: Food for Good

CGR reached out to the Arkansas Dream Center (ARDC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with nine locations throughout Arkansas. ARDC and the Little Rock School District are the main sponsors for SFSP programs in Little Rock and surrounding communities. The district only operates sites at its schools (both closed and open), while ARDC only operates mobile sites.

Little Rock is a medium-sized city with pockets of concentrated poverty. During the summer, temperatures frequently rise above 90°F, which discourages children who are not enrolled in summer programs from engaging in activities and travelling to fixed meal sites. The city as a whole is 49% white, 42% African American, and 2.7% Hispanic or Latino of any race.

Origin of Program

ARDC first became a sponsor in 2011. During its first year, ARDC prepared and delivered all of the meals, rather than partnering with a vendor. While successful – the program served roughly 300 meals per day in 2011 – the organization was too small to expand its reach using this model (i.e. handling all logistics and vending themselves).

ARDC's initial success prompted a meeting with the local Department of Human Services, representatives from the governor's office, and PepsiCo, to discuss implementation of a mobile program.

PepsiCo's Food for Good program partners with school districts and other SFSP sponsors throughout the country (especially in larger cities such as Austin, TX, Detroit, MI, and Chicago, IL) as both a vendor and logistical partner for mobile meals programs. PepsiCo offered to partner with ARDC to launch a mobile program in summer of 2012. In order to make the program work financially, PepsiCo needed ARDC to serve at least 1,000 meals per day. With the promise of support, if needed, from other agencies and nonprofits in Little Rock, an agreement was signed for PepsiCo to serve as the vendor for Little Rock's SFSP program. PepsiCo continues to serve as the vendor and logistical partner for the program.

Sites & Demand

ARDC identified eligible areas in Little Rock and contacted managers of churches, parks, and apartment complexes in those areas. For the first year, 60 sites agreed to serve as mobile feeding sites. Strong buy-in was achieved by stressing the minimal effort required on the part of the host site, and the advantages of having free meals and activities for low-income children during the summer months.

Demand was estimated by speaking to apartment managers about the number of families in their units, and by going door-to-door to assess interest in a summer meals program. Throughout the summer, supply was adjusted daily according to demand at each site. During the first year of the mobile program, 54,000 meals were served. For the three years since, close to 80,000 meals were served throughout the summer. Each site serves roughly 20-25 children per day, although there is a fair amount of variation.

Many, but not all, sites were visited twice a day by the mobile program to serve breakfast and lunch or supper. Whether or not a site was served twice depended on the specific route – i.e. if most sites were clustered close together, then a truck could circle back around after serving breakfast.

The program was advertised through a combination of site-specific fliers, press releases, and yard signs.

Vehicles & Routes

For the first year, 11 trucks were leased from Ryder for the duration of the summer. ARDC was able to lease the trucks at very low prices through negotiations with PepsiCo.

Each truck was wrapped with PepsiCo's "Food for Good" branding and was equipped with a music box to announce its arrival. Site coordinators set up a pop-up canopy and tables at most sites to help beat the heat.



Food

All food was purchased from PepsiCo in frozen form; once thawed, each meal has a shelf life of roughly 7 days. In route, meals were stored in highly efficient coolers (8-10 hours cool without power) provided by PepsiCo, allowing a truck to load up on both breakfast and lunch for all routes at the beginning of the day. Students had one meal option per day, with an allergy-friendly option available at all times.

The cost of each meal was roughly \$2.70 per meal (a national rate at which PepsiCo sets all of its Food for Good summer meal prices). It is important to note that this is more expensive than any other program CGR interviewed, and consumed more than 70% of the per-meal reimbursement from USDA. ARDC said that despite the high cost, the logistical support, increased volume (PepsiCo has no maximum number of meals, while other programs may be limited by their vendor's capacity), and lower negotiated rates with truck leasing made the partnership beneficial. In addition to the USDA reimbursement, ARDC has a target of an additional \$0.50 per meal raised from fundraising and grants in order to make the program financially feasible.

ARDC does not have a meal purchase option for adults or children.

Other Programming

Each truck has an activity box with games, hula-hoops, jump ropes, books, and other activities. In addition, churches often sent volunteers to sites once a week to provide various types of educational programming (healthy eating, skits, etc.). An AmeriCorps member travels to each site once a week to teach nutrition and healthy eating habits. Each truck was given leeway in regard to additional program offerings as long as they did not increase the cost; any suggestions and ideas were vetted by ARDC.

Training & Staff

All staff are hired through ARDC and paid with a combination of grant funding, fundraising, and USDA reimbursement. Each vehicle has one driver and one or two site coordinators per truck.

Impact

ARDC found substantial demand for summer meals in their area. While the Little Rock School District hosts both open and closed sites at many of their schools, ARDC's focus on non-school sites minimized competition with the district. In effect – although there was no explicit coordination between the district and ARDC – both programs work in tandem to serve both students who are in summer programs or live close to schools and those who are unable to reach the school-based sites. Therefore, the mobile program seems to have a significant impact on improving the reach of SFSP throughout Little Rock.

Federal Way, WA: FRED Buses

FRED – short for Fun, Read, Eat, Dream – is the mobile summer meals program operated by the Federal Way Public Schools (FWPS) in Washington State near Seattle. The city, located between Seattle and Tacoma, is less than half the size of Rochester and demographically dissimilar. However, the success of FRED yields many lessons for launching a mobile summer meals pilot.

Origin of Program

Federal Way is an ethnically diverse city: 61% of its residents are white, 10% are African American, 15% are Asian, and 17% are Hispanic or Latino of any race. While its poverty rate (16%) is low relative to many of the cities examined for case studies, there are neighborhoods of highly concentrated poverty, in which many of the school district's students eligible for free or reduced price lunch reside.

The district had offered summer meals as part of summer school programs for many years before discussion began about a mobile program. The main impetus to begin the program, in addition to continuing expansion of the number of children fed, was to include educational and recreational enrichment along with free meals. In late February 2013, the Director of Food and Nutrition Services (Mary Asplund) and the Assistant Superintendent (Carol Matsui) began planning and advocating for a summer mobile meals program throughout FWPS and the community.

Sites & Demand

Ms. Matsui and Ms. Asplund identified 7 neighborhoods which, by virtue of their high rate of free and reduced price lunch recipients, were eligible to host open SFSP sites. In

cooperation with the City and the local housing authority, FWPS reached out to building managers/operators of major housing developments in these neighborhoods. While some refused to host FRED buses – due, according to Ms. Asplund, to a combination of not enough advertising/outreach at that point, and a worry that there would be a lot of logistical legwork for the developments – a total of 6 open sites were selected at low-income housing developments for the pilot year. One more has since opened, bringing the total for summer 2015 to 7 sites.

All staff involved in the program were district employees. Each bus had one driver and two food service employees who stayed on the bus for the duration of the route. AmeriCorps members came independently and were only involved in enrichment activities.⁷

Initial site demand was estimated by obtaining the number of school-aged children at each location from FWPS's enrollment figures. Initially, FWPS stocked each bus with the number of meals corresponding to the number of children at each site and included shelf-stable meals in case demand was higher than supply. At the end of each day, figures for the number of meals consumed were used to adjust the number of meals to be included on the route for the following day. As the summer progressed, the number of children remained stable and there was little to no difference between demand and supply (helping to reduce food waste).

Vehicles & Routes

Much of the mobile summer program was built around the vehicles themselves. The district's transportation department donated three handicapped-accessible buses deemed unfit for regular student transportation, but safe for non-student transport use⁸. District employees and volunteers leveraged roughly \$130,000 in funding (grants from United Way and State Dept of Education, fundraising, and district budget monies) to purchase the materials required to renovate the buses. Most of the labor was done by the district's transportation and engineering employees.

Much of the planning and initial investment centered on rehabilitation of the three buses. After completely gutting the inside of the buses, the district outfitted each vehicle with:

⁷ By law, AmeriCorps members are not allowed to supplant work that would be performed by a FWPS employee.

⁸ Ensuring that a donated vehicle meets safety standards is essential. Complex regulations governing student transportation mean that many school buses and other transportation vehicles may be suitable for many uses, even though they can no longer be used for daily student transportation. The district worked closely with the transportation department and an engineer to ensure vehicles were safe and within regulation for transporting food and other items.

- New linoleum flooring
- New shelving and tables
- Wiring for all electronic needs
- Deep cycle marine batteries, diesel generators, and inverters (to power hot carts and refrigerators)
- Hot carts (already owned by district)
- Commercial refrigerators (retrofitted from out-of-use freezers owned by the district)
- Plastic tables and chairs
- Retractable awning
- Laptops with pre-installed, kid-friendly programs
- WiFi internet access
- Books, games, school supplies, etc.

Each bus was fully repainted in green, and wrapped with graphics advertising the FRED mascot (a cartoon frog) and the school district.

FRED buses run routes from Monday through Thursday. Two buses stop at two sites for 90 minutes each, while the third bus stops at three sites for 60 minutes each.



Food

All food is prepared in the district's main kitchen. Throughout the summer, a roughly equal number of hot and cold meals are served. Before the summer, a large number of meals were prepared (mostly hot meals) and subsequently frozen to be used throughout the summer. Students had one meal choice each day, with a rotating menu. On average, between 400 and 500 meals were served each day for all three routes.

Impact

The mobile program successfully expands the reach of the district's fixed-site SFSP program by serving meals to children who, for varying reasons, can't go to a fixed site. In addition to serving food, the buses work as a marketing tool for summer meals in

general, as well as a source of extracurricular programming for children who may otherwise lack enriching summer programming.

The mobile program makes meals available to children outside of school settings, and informal feedback from students and parents was highly supportive. Including Internet access and extracurricular activities along with meals helps to both draw children to the program and reduce summer learning loss, according to organizers.

New Haven, CT: Mobile Summer Meals

New Haven is a small city about two hours northeast of New York City. Out of the case study cities on this list, New Haven is most comparable to Rochester in terms of its concentrated poverty. Two-thirds of students in the school district are eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch, and the majority of neighborhoods in the city qualify for open-enrollment sites according to USDA guidelines.

New Haven Public Schools is the only SFSP sponsor within the City of New Haven.

Origin of Program

Like Rochester, New Haven's areas of concentrated poverty tend to be in the inner city and are marked by older housing stock and large low-income housing developments. Students who are enrolled in the district's summer programs are able to get free lunch from their programs; however, this leaves out thousands of students who are eligible during the school year for free or reduced price lunch but are unable to access fixed-site options during the summer.

Initial interest in a mobile program was spurred by a meeting of the district, End Hunger Connecticut (anti-hunger nonprofit), and the United Way of Greater New Haven. At that time, only school-based sites were open for summer meals. United Way agreed to donate a refurbished food truck to try and increase the geographic and programmatic reach of the district's summer meals program.

The program was advertised through a combination of banners, fliers distributed at housing sites, and outreach to governmental and community agencies (including the police department).

Sites & Demand

Site selection involved consideration of housing authority buildings and parks nearby, YMCAs and Boys & Girls Clubs, and splash pads (areas with sprinklers where kids can 'beat the heat'). With help from the Housing Authority of New Haven, the district initially selected about six sites at which to distribute meals from a food truck.

Following the success of the pilot, the district continued to expand the program over the next few years; as of summer 2015, 32 of the 82 total summer meals sites are mobile stops served by the food truck and three school buses.

Each vehicle stops at four sites for lunch and another four for supper. Due to the high proportion of students enrolled in summer programs, demand tends to increase substantially for supper (especially at sites located near rec centers, at which many students enrolled in summer school spend their evenings).

Currently, the entire summer meals program (including both mobile and fixed sites) serves between 6,000 and 7,000 children out of the roughly 21,000 children enrolled in the district.

Vehicles & Routes

A commercial food truck was donated by the United Way of Greater New Haven in 2010 for use in a mobile meals program.

For the first few years, the number of sites was limited by having only one vehicle. However, beginning in 2014, the district began using three district buses (on loan at no cost from the transportation department) in order to quadruple their reach.

All budgets for the program were routed through the district's Nutrition Services budget. Labor costs included a driver and 1-2 servers for each of the routes. Besides an initial grant in 2010 to help get the program off of the ground, the entire cost of the program is covered by reimbursements from USDA.

Food

Initially, the food truck just had a cooler and distributed standard bagged lunches to kids (sandwich, snack, milk). In the last few years, the truck has been upgraded to allow hot meals as well as cold meals. In 2015, between 2 and 3 hot meals were served per week, and cold meals were served on the other days.

All food is prepared in the district's central kitchen at the start of the day. This helps control costs, as the meals for both fixed school-based sites and mobile sites are made at one time in a central location.

Other Programming

The district partners with a local food bank, which on occasion brings a mobile pantry to mobile meals sites near housing developments. These mobile pantries are geared toward helping parents who might otherwise not have access to fresh produce or other food. At each event, most or all of the food brought by the food bank was taken home by parents.

A light schedule of educational programming was implemented in summer 2015. The programs, which usually ran one day per week at each site, included yoga classes, board game days, a small mobile library, and other educational or physical activities.

Impact

As is true for several of the other communities interviewed, New Haven extended summer meals beyond schools using a mobile program, expanding access to children who are not attending summer learning programs. About 40% of the places where meals are served in New Haven are mobile meals stops.

Broward County, FL: Summer BreakSpot

Although the program is administered through the Broward Meals on Wheels and Broward County Public Schools, the majority of stops and children served reside in urban Ft. Lauderdale. Therefore, for demographic and geographic comparisons, we will be looking at the City of Ft. Lauderdale rather than the county as a whole.

Origin of Program

Broward County Public Schools, with an enrollment of more than 260,000, serves meals to students enrolled in summer school. These closed sites have been operating for many years, but only reach a relatively small number of students and end well before the new school year begins. For the 62% of district students who are eligible for free/reduced price lunches, they had no options for free summer meals outside of the closed district programs until implementation of the mobile meals program.

Spurred by an advertising/promotional push by Florida's SFSP program – Summer BreakSpot – the South Florida Hunger Coalition convened a partnership between local anti-hunger and community-welfare groups: Broward County Meals on Wheels (BCMOW), Broward County Housing Authority (BCHA), Broward Regional Health Planning Council, and Florida Impact. Based on the results of this meeting, the Meals on Wheels program agreed to serve as both the site sponsor and vendor for four pilot sites in summer 2014.

In addition to USDA SFSP reimbursement funding, Meals on Wheels leveraged funds totaling \$43,000 from the Children's Services Council of Broward County and the Community Foundation of Broward. Funding was used primarily for the hiring of site coordinators.

Sites & Demand

From the program's inception, the Housing Authority acted as a key partner and stakeholder for the program. For the pilot year, four housing authority sites were selected to serve as open-enrollment sites for the mobile program. To estimate

demand at these sites, the Housing Authority sent short surveys to every residence to determine the number of school-aged students per building, and parent interest. These data informed how many meals were sent out on day one to each of the sites. Each day, the number of meals served was reported back to Meals and Wheels to adjust demand for the following day. By the end of the summer (especially due to the end of school- and YMCA-based summer programs), demand at each site had doubled.

For the subsequent year (summer 2015), the program was expanded to serve 25 sites for 5 days per week, with an average of 2,500 meals served per day across all sites. Meals on Wheels plans in 2016 to sponsor between 60 and 70 sites across the county, including housing authorities, YMCAs, and recreational centers.

During summer 2015, Broward County Public Schools – perhaps in response to the success of the mobile summer meals program – quadrupled the number of closed sites at schools to 70. These sites ran for the duration of the district's summer programming and were only open to those enrolled in that programming.

According to USDA regulations, meals were served and eaten in the same site. This was usually a rec room or gathering room at the housing authority site, or a cafeteria or picnic area at a YMCA or recreational center.

Vehicles & Routes

Meals on Wheels contracts with a caterer, who is responsible for the logistics of meal preparation and transportation to the sites. The vehicles that deliver meals are the caterer's standard vehicles – i.e. there is no program-specific wrapping or advertising.

It's important to note that the program in this way is much more like a fixed-site than a mobile-site program: vehicles deliver meals to rooms/eating centers at sites in which programming is offered and meals are served.

Food

Meals were the same as were normally offered at other Meals on Wheels programs. During the first year, only cold meals were served. However, during the second year, most meals were hot (switch based on resident feedback).

Meals on Wheels issued a specific RFP to serve as the vendor for its summer meals program. Meals on Wheels was able to contract with a caterer to provide high quality hot meals at a cost below the USDA reimbursement rate.

Staff & Training

One unique aspect of this program among all case studies was that Meals on Wheels – using grants from local foundations as well as USDA reimbursement – trained and hired residents as part-time site administrators at each housing site. The initial staff of four grew along with the increase in sites to 13 in 2015. This allows setup/takedown of each site to be done before and after the trucks arrive (allowing a shorter stop and therefore more sites per route) and provides jobs to disadvantaged residents, as well as creating liaisons who are familiar with the residents and site and can increase resident buy-in.

Due to the rapidly expanding program, Meals on Wheels has hired a full-time Youth Program Coordinator and has created an office of youth services.

Other Programming

Various community organizations including local YMCAs and the police and fire departments provided in-kind programming at summer feeding sites. These included healthy choice-making activities, tour of a fire truck, and summer safety from the police department. Meals on Wheels is working to expand programmatic offerings during summer 2016.

Impact

This program has expanded from a small pilot to thousands of meals a day. Pre- and post-program surveys indicated that parents were enthusiastic about and grateful for the program.

Appendix B: No Kid Hungry Mobile Meals Playbook

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Campaign works to end child hunger through education, research, logistical and financial support. The Mobile Meals Playbook was developed in response to an increase in interest for mobile programs from SFSP sponsors around the nation. The Playbook was developed from interviews conducted with mobile meals programs throughout 2014.

The Playbook can be accessed at <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/mobile-meals-playbook>.

More information about the Playbook is available in this pre-recorded webinar: <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/Mobile%20Meals.mp4>

A summary of the different sections of the online Mobile Meals Playbook follows.

Mobile Meals in Action

This section includes five summaries of mobile meals programs around the country. These include:

- Hunger Free Heartland: a food bank-sponsored mobile meals programs that serves urban, rural and suburban children throughout the state of Nebraska.
- CitySquare: a very high volume program that uses PepsiCo as their vendor and logistical partner. CitySquare operates in Dallas, Houston, and Austin.
- Lunch Express: a summer meals program that serves multiple stops in rural Northeast Tennessee.
- Arkansas Dream Center: this program, serving students in and around Little Rock, is profiled in the above case studies.
- NYC Department of Education: utilizes a mobile program to reach portions of its thousands of eligible students over the summer.

Is Mobile Right for You?

This section contains a checklist to help a program determine the financial and demand-related feasibility of a mobile summer meals program.

Mobile Meals Calculator

This section contains a link to and explanation of an excel tool that helps to plan the financial aspects of a mobile meals program.

The calculator itself is an excel workbook with five worksheets:

1. Overview: Instructions for using the calculator.
2. Program Assumptions: Allows a user to input various figures such as the target number of meals served, staff salaries, and anticipated cost per meal.
3. Set Assumptions: Contains spaces to enter other startup and operational assumptions/costs, as well as the USDA's reimbursement rates for different types of meals.
4. High-Level Budget: Contains the output of the above calculations. Includes expected revenue, expenses, and number of meals served.
5. Summary and Scenario Planning: Calculates estimated additional funding needed, as well as the change in cost based on increases or decreases in the number of meals served.

Planning Your Program

This is an in-depth section that dives further into various aspects of a program that should be considered before launch:

- How to select target communities
- How to identify, contact and gain approval for new sites
- How to identify potential partners
- How to leverage additional funding and resources
- How to decide between vending or preparing your own meals
 - How to select a vendor
- How to decide between serving hot or cold meals

Best Practices for Mobile Operations

This is a summary of interviews with more than 20 mobile programs around the country. The topics include:

- How to determine which type of vehicle is right for your program
- How to hire, fund, and train staff and volunteers
- How to create demand and conduct outreach into target communities

- How to forecast demand and manage fluctuations in demand
- How to evaluate and improve your program

Appendix C: Sample Checklist

Colorado Springs District 11 SFSP Mobile Route Training

The following training checklist was provided by the director of the mobile program. Each staff member must go through a thorough training before working in the mobile meals program.

Site Customer Service:

- Park and set up in designated area which has been pre-determined
- Set up and take downs must not impact property. Do not set up on grass unless approved by site manager
- Private property is to be respected – always defer to Property Management
- Set safety chocks for vehicle and pocket keys
- Set out D11 trash can for meal service. All trash must be removed before leaving

Staff:

- Must wear D11 uniform either chef shirt or polo shirt
- D11 hat or funny hair to be worn over hairnet
- ID badge must be visible
- Be sensitive to the property being visited – low income areas may not be what you are used to.

Meal Service:

- Set up handwashing station – wash hands after setting equipment up
- Set up sanitation buckets/chic towels
- Serve meals from 8' folding table that is covered with table cloth or Cam kiosk
- Required signage:
 - ✓ Justice for All
 - ✓ Power Up – meal sign
 - ✓ All meals must be consumed
 - ✓ Meal service times
 - ✓ Face Menu
 - ✓ Spanish sign
- Milk barrel with frozen slats for milk storage – holds 2 crates of 50 cartons
 - ❖ May use an insulated milk bag which holds one crate of milk for meal service
- Garbage can placed out for customer service
- Offer vs Serve meal plan – provide sack to start and children select sides
 - ❖ Place sticker on sack that informs customer “Food may not be removed from area”
- Keep count of customers – clicker provided if requested
- Truck carries enough meals for 3 stops

- Truck may need to be resupplied if more children than estimated show up for meal supply
- **Children must stay in the area to eat meal**
- **Parents may not eat off of child's plate**
- Have book cart set out for children to select a book
- At end of meal service pack up equipment and remove all trash from site.
- Trash bag must be secured inside of garbage can – if full, secure bag and place on floor of the truck
- **Contact Production Center and report status of meals – do you need to be resupplied**
- **Time table must be adhered to – cannot be late to next stop/CDE rule**

Food Safety:

- Food is prepped at Production Center
- Food is pre-packaged
- Whole fruit may be served with tongs (no oranges-too messy to clean up all peelings at site)
- Prior to loading truck for delivery temp food and record on Daily Temp Log
- If no refrigerated truck used follow these procedures:
 - Use 8/12 case milk cooler in white trucks or:
 - ✓ Use bakers rack with adjustable shelves
 - ✓ Place 4" full pans of frozen water at top/middle of rack
 - ✓ Place containers of food on rack
 - ✓ **Cover bakers rack with frozen ice pillows and covered with insulated bag**
- Set up sanitation buckets – soapy water bucket and sanitation bucket
- Set up handwashing station
- At site take out only enough food for stop/close up zippered bag
- Wash hands and take temp of food and record on Daily Temp Log
- Wipe thermometer off with alcohol prep pad before and after using
- Set up Water Vat and cups for beverage option.
- Set up food in black hotel 4" hotel pans in kiosk wells or on table top
 - ✓ Set out sides first followed by entrée and milk
 - ✓ Place paper sacks at beginning of line
 - ✓ Fill sacks according to customer selections
- Use clicker or make notation on daily count sheet to tally customers at site
- After meal service place leftover food items back in container and put on truck
 - ✓ Per National Restaurant Association ServSafe program" Holding Food without Temperature Control" can hold TCS (Time Temperature Control for Safety) foods for up to 6 hours – if temp at beginning was under 41 degrees and time is recorded. Food may not exceed 70 degrees and

food is discarded at end of 6 hour period. Mobile routes are timed not to exceed 2.5-3hours.

Inclement Weather:

- Routes must have plan for serving during inclement weather
 - ✓ Club house or breezeway of building
 - ✓ Pavilion
 - ✓ Easy Up Dining fly

Office Case:

- Steno pad with pencils/pens
- Signs
- Paperwork
- Thermometer and alcohol pads

Last Day Equipment must be:

- **Washed, dried and returned to location obtained from**
- **Truck must be cleaned and swept**
- **Briefcase and contents turned in to PC Manager**

Appendix D: Survey Responses

Below please find the open-ended questions from CGR's parent survey, along with verbatim responses.

If you have thoughts about whether or how a summer meals food truck opportunity might help, please put them here:

- The opportunity would be excellent and I am very interested.
- Identify areas of the city w/ greatest need in order to target specific communities that will benefit most
- I think there should be dietary options. My family qualifies for food stamps but my kids will never be able to take advantage of this program, as we don't eat meat and dairy (vegan). I wish when we talk about programs that are around to help others, we would take everyone into consideration and maybe even extend the compassion to nonhuman beings. Many progressive School Districts and communities have looked at the cost of animal agriculture (it takes more of all resources to produce a no vegan meal- water, land, fuel, and it uses more carbon emissions), why are we so backward thinking in Rochester?
- Need to get the word out
- Meals should be healthy foods!
- feed hungry children
- Healthy food options are limited to a lot of families, especially when the children are not in school. I think this is a great idea.
- I think a food truck with healthy appealing options would be awesome!
- families in Rochester are in great need of healthy alternatives
- Something that offers prepared healthy foods or the option to take foods home to freeze and eat at a later time would be beneficial (like meals on wheels frozen option)
- There are some places it would be a better service than others. So maybe someone should try and find out where the need us higher.
- I really think that the truck is a beautiful idea.
- Food trucks for the city are very important. Lots of the children of the will be home alone. Chances are there will be more fires as the children try to cook for themselves as their parents are working. Even more, my daughter was robbed by

knife point about 5 years ago by a 14 year old boy who said that he was just hungry. Our children need help!

- If it is not cold cuts everyday then it may work...no pre- packaged high sodium meals...more healthy fruits..and offer cold smoothies for hot summer days
- A food truck will change the delivery style but if the food is not appetizing and delivered by kind, loving nurturing spirits the kids won't come. I know sometimes our youth don't present themselves with the best language but the truck management must maintain a standard that teaches another way.
- Last year the schools that participated was too far away from my home. Being at a park or a library would benefit my family greatly.
- I hope it will have much better tasting meals then the nasty food RCSD give the kids.
- I think it could reach kids that don't enjoy the rec center setting or aren't in a community program.
- summer meals could benefit from being coupled with the same time and sites as rec on the move! Play hard then eat!
- Please have meals be healthy and not full of sugar
- Bringing trucks to community centers, parks and playgrounds could benefit many families.
- The meals must have some variety. My son has stopped eating the breakfast provided because it is the same food every week. No variety! Same cereal-cinnamon toast crunch, cheese sticks, breakfast bar-same flavor all year, and some kind of cookie. 180 days of the same food--YUCK
- More locations would help reach more children! We all want our community's children to be healthy and happy, so this would be one more way to make this happen!
- I believe that raising a family is a hard job, sometimes kids may not get the nutrition they need due to parents stretching the tight budget..I believe this information is informative as well as useful for kids and families through the community..I think this program will allow kids to have a nutritious meal and parents could have some breathing room over the summer..thanks for even considering this program GOD BLESS YOU ALL

Any other ideas or comments?

- They should also give the families a snack bag/box to take home with healthy information.
- I think it might be difficult for parents & caregivers to pay. If they are coming for free lunches, generally they are in need of some help with money.
- Make a site at Linden and Meigs Playground
- I would think if a family or person is in need of these services, they would not be able to afford the food. I would rather they keep their money for their families. \$2.00 is a lot when you do not have it or it is your last money you have. Thanks,
- great concept
- Get rid of processed food in favour of fresh, organic, clean foods so that our kids don't just eat, but eat well.
- If parents eat then they could pay a small fee. Too much food is wasted. We see it all the time in schools.
- Think there should be a minimal \$1 charge for even the kids meals
- Asking for donations or fundraising to cover cost of parents/caregivers might be an option. I worry kids would not access foods if parents were excluded, or may sacrifice a portion of their food so their family could also eat.
- About paying that parent might be struggling to pay.
- SHOW THE CHILDREN OF OUR CITY THAT YOU CARE. SHOW THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY THAT YOU CARE!
- Teach people to grow their own gardens
- Meals should be healthy and not packages of nasty, sloppy, cold cut sandwiches everyday. More healthy vegetables and dips, more good tasty fruits.
- To reach many families with children to feed all summer. I say feed parents for no charge with their children. Promoting families that share meals together have an opportunity to bond & encourage each other to succeed.
- My answer to number 6/7 depends. Can someone pay with a benefit card if that is all they have?
- Ask for donations... you will be surprised.
- I answered no, however have a system in place for anyone that would like to donate. This way they don't feel like they are getting handouts.

- Offering this service to churches in the community may create more free summer programs in the communities.
- a definite need in our community.
- This is a fabulous idea! Although, perhaps the adults could give a donation rather than a specific amount, as funds become strapped at various times during the month. Like a "suggested donation of \$3.50 per adult" would mean that some would be able to give more, and others less, but the monetary value of the meal would be recognized. We are so thrilled to be considered for this premier program! Our area greatly needs assistance, but we can't change things by ourselves. It truly takes a village! We are very excited to partner with your group on this terrific plan! THANK YOU!
- Thanks for the opportunity to take part in such a wonderful program the city of Rochester has to offer...may everyone get meals this summer and be ROCHESTER HEALTHY!!!
- I think some parents could afford it and some wouldn't be able to afford it. Why not request a certain amount but allow for those who can't? I don't think one answer fits all here. Great work! What an awesome idea to do this.