

Hunger Free Summer Hubs Needs Assessment: Coconino, Mohave & Navajo Counties

Executive Summary

Background

The Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center (SIRC) was pleased to collaborate with St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliance and Feeding America on the Hunger Free Summer Hubs Initiative, funded by the ConAgra Foods Foundation.

This executive summary provides an overview of the results of a comprehensive needs assessment conducted across three rural, northern Arizona counties—**Coconino, Mohave** and **Navajo**. The purpose of the needs assessment was to increase knowledge about:

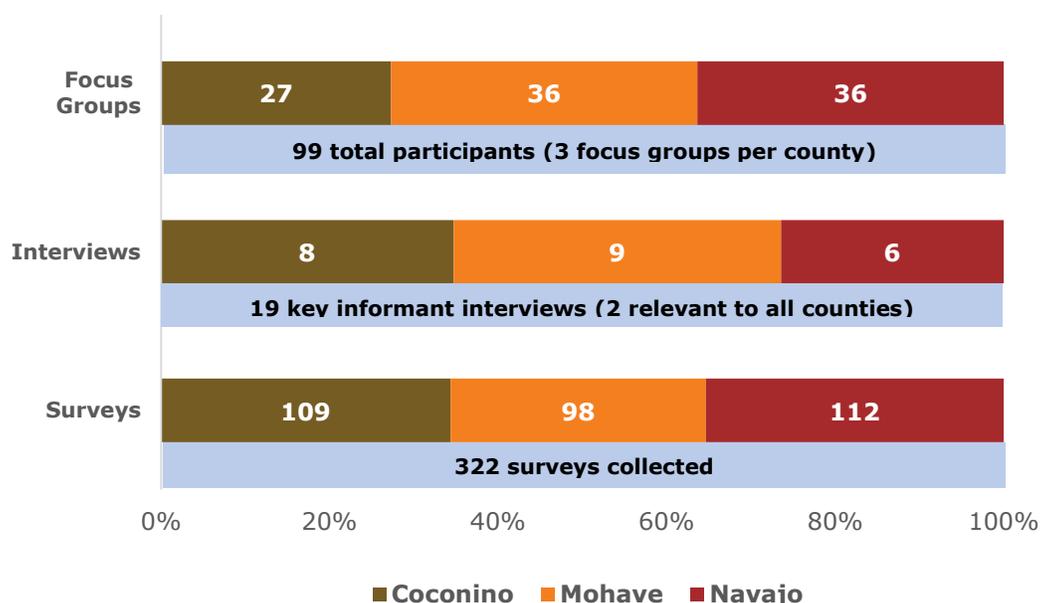
- Available food resources and other supplemental nutrition programs being accessed in these counties during the summer months;
- Barriers and obstacles that may prevent clients from reaching and/or participating in available resources;
- Level of need in these areas and the programs/services that may best meet the needs of families with children during the summer months; and,
- Opportunities for expanding sponsorship and promotion of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in these areas.

The results of the needs assessment will inform the development and/or expansion of programs and services aimed at increasing access to meals for children and their families during the summer months in the target counties.

Methodology & Samples

Data were collected through a multi-method approach consisting of key informant interviews, surveys, focus groups, and resource mapping.

A customizable map of resources is available here: <http://bit.ly/1PqEMS7>



Summary of Findings

General Themes

Higher food needs exist in the summer

- 63% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that it was harder to feed their children in the summer when families have to replace free and reduced food services offered through schools.

Seasonal population and employment changes present unique challenges among residents in many communities across northern Arizona

- Summer unemployment is often higher in areas where snow-birds and winter visitors account for much of the entertainment and recreational service industry, or in towns where education organizations provide a large proportion of the available employment opportunities.
- In contrast, in tourist towns, such as Page, employment opportunities (and thus incomes) increase during the summer as retail, hospitality, food, and recreation organizations increase staffing levels to accommodate the influx of visitors.



While resources exist, community members are often unaware of them

- Although there were many barriers discussed during the data collection, generally speaking, whatever resources adults are not using, it tends to be because they do not know about them, do not qualify, or cannot get there.
- More than half (51%) of survey participants had not heard of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

Barriers to Supplemental Food Access

Low awareness of summer food programming across all counties

Under-utilization of government supplemental nutrition assistance benefits among those who qualify due to:

- Lack of knowledge of government benefits
- Difficulties/inability to access federal/state services in a timely manner (e.g., long wait times, documentation requirements)
- Limited access to DES/WIC offices and authorized SNAP/WIC retailers
- Stigma

Lack of transportation / high cost of transportation / distance to services

- In many of the smaller communities, the closest DES office to apply or renew SNAP and/or WIC benefits is often an hour or more away

Many cities with limited access to affordable, local food store options, especially for fresh produce and high quality meat

Inadequate staffing/volunteers to sustain services or expand hours of operation

Participant Needs & Suggestions

Increase number and frequency of supplemental food services (e.g., food boxes and daily meals)

Make opportunities easy to access (e.g., central locations or mobile food options)

Provide high quality foods, especially meats and fresh produce, that families know how to use

Provide options for meals such as food boxes, hot meals and sack lunches



Summer Food Service Program Suggestions

- Provide healthy, balanced meals in a safe, secure location;
- Offer non-congregate feeding options (especially for teenagers/older youth);
- Provide other programs or activities at the same time;
- Offer multiple food options to accommodate food preferences and allergies;
- Be available to all children under 18 regardless of income; and
- Offer adult meals at little to no cost.

Project Recommendations

1. Localize the solution to the community

What will work in Flagstaff will not work in some of the more rural, outlying, or remote communities.

2. Greater need for food service programs exists in some of the smaller communities that have few services/resources currently in place

This is particularly true for those communities with higher Native American populations. While the costs to add programming where little to none exists will likely be higher and planning efforts more time intensive in these areas, providing even a small amount of additional services could benefit a large percentage of the targeted population.

3. Strengthen existing services

Many communities, such as Flagstaff and those in Mohave County, have services already available that could be enhanced by strengthening existing infrastructure and providing additional support (e.g., funding, staffing, volunteers, and outreach) to local community organizations.

4. Increase community awareness of existing resources

Study participants were eager to learn about and take advantage of any and all available resources.

5. Provide training to new and existing supplemental food service providers

Topics to consider include cultural competency, customer service, and volunteer recruitment and retention

6. Consider sustainable staffing and volunteer sources (e.g., K-12 and Head Start teachers)



Study Results - Coconino County

	Flagstaff	Fredonia	Page
Food insecurity rate ¹	21.3%	17.7%	16.5%*
# of children ²	13,157	491	2,464
% of children in poverty ³	26.9%	15.5%	22.4%
F/R lunch rates	18-94%	76%	55-69%
# Open SFSP sites (2015)	9	0	1**
# Supplemental food resources ⁴	14***	2	6
Key summer food barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited program knowledge/awareness - Lack of transportation - Poor food quality - Disinterest among children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited access to supplemental food - Stigma - Cost of travel/lack of transportation - Limited knowledge (eligibility & food prep) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of access to summer food programming - Distance/lack of transportation for those on the reservation - Limited hours of operation (soup kitchen) - Limited staffing / volunteers
Participant suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer food to-go - Provide more meal options - Provide additional activities/socialization opportunities - Add a centralized location - Supplement prepared meals with weekly food boxes (veggies, meat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide summer food programming - Offer activities/ socialization opportunities for children - Offer nutrition/ cooking classes for families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand soup kitchen hours and set up soup kitchens at chapter houses on reservation - Offer a mobile food program for reservation communities - Offer non-congregate feeding options - Provide child care / additional activities with food program
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flagstaff Family Food Center - Flagstaff Unified School District - Continuum of Care network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fredonia Care & Share - Fredonia Public Library - Fredonia-Mocassin Unified School District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circle of Page - Encompass Health Services - Churches - Tribal leadership (chapter administrators and staff)

¹Data provided by St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance from Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap Study.

²United States Census Bureau (2015). 2009-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, Table DP05.

³ Of children in families, percent below 100% FPL. Source: United States Census Bureau (2015). 2009-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, Table B05010.

⁴Including DES and WIC offices, TEFAP providers, WIC authorized vendors, and FMNP sites.

***As evidenced by study participants' self-reported cities of residence, residents of reservation communities up to 3 hours from Page travel into Page to receive services. Child poverty rates in communities such as Kaibeto and Kayenta range from 42-57%.**

**There are no SFSP sites within the actual City of Page. The 1 site listed is Kaibeto Boarding School, which is 18 miles from Page on the Navajo Reservation.

***Not including dozens of additional community agencies that distribute supplemental food to children and families on behalf of the local food pantry (Flagstaff Family Food Center & Kitchen).

Study Results - Mohave County

	Bullhead City	Kingman	Lake Havasu City
Food insecurity rate ¹	22.5%	20.8%	18.8%
# of children ²	7,573	6,208	9,395
% of children in poverty ³	31.6%	28.9%	21.6%
F/R lunch rates	61-93%	50-94%	44-81%
# Open SFSP sites (2015)	8	10	8
# Supplemental food resources ⁴	11	11	8
Key summer food barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited program awareness - Lack of transportation - Stigma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distance/ lack of transportation - Limited hours of operation/ limited options outside of work hours - Limited program awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stigma - High costs of summer programs (e.g., city parks & rec programs that offer SFSP) - Lack of program knowledge/ awareness
Participant suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase outreach/ awareness of programs - Start a community garden at a local school - Provide summer transportation (e.g., buses) - Offer a variety of meal options (hot meals, take-home items, discounted produce) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer bi-monthly food boxes (meat, vegetables, rice, beans) - Provide daily sack lunches (rather than hot meals) at schools - Allow food to be taken to-go - Offer free or low-cost adult meals (current price of \$3.50 is too high) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase outreach/ awareness of programs - Provide daily sack lunches at schools - Allow food to be taken to-go - Increase staff training and improve customer service - Offer end-of-month food boxes to meet increased family food needs
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bullhead City School District - Churches - DES/WIC - Head Start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kingman Unified School District - Kingman Area Food Bank - Head Start - Other community and faith-based organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interagency Council Community Food Bank - Lake Havasu City Parks & Recreation - Lake Havasu Unified School District - Other community organizations

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Study Results - Navajo County

	Holbrook	Snowflake (Taylor)	Winslow
Food insecurity rate ¹	22.5%	14% (16.8%)	20.3%
# of children ²	1,407	1,994 (1,379)	2,617
% of children in poverty ³	25.7%	8.7% (20.8%)	36.4%
F/R lunch rates	65-74%	32-53%	58-75%
# Open SFSP sites (2015)	0	1	5
# Supplemental food resources ⁴	4	5	5
Key summer food barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited access to supplemental food resources - Poor food quality - Long lines - High temperatures - Lack of transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stigma/pride - Limited access to food resources - Poor food quality - Poor customer service at food pantries - Distance / limited transportation - Short growing season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of transportation - Limited fresh food options/poor food quality - Stigma - Language (Navajo) - Limited SFSP meal options - Cost of adult SFSP meals
Participant suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin a summer food program that alternates prepared meals and sack lunches M-F - Provide a mobile sack lunch distribution service at the splash pad and Hunt Park - Provide activities/ programming - Offer free meals to all children under 18 - Provide adult meal options for \$1.75-\$2.00 - Provide supplemental food boxes on Fridays with water and produce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer non-congregate feeding options - Provide a weekly food box with fresh items that families can prepare at home - Provide quick and easy recipes with food boxes - Select locations convenient to both Snowflake and Taylor residents (e.g., the Junior High School) - Provide a wide range of food pick up hours to accommodate different schedules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide daily sack lunches at 4 sites across town M-F - Provide a weekend backpack program - Allow food to be taken to-go - Provide multiple food options to accommodate food preferences and allergies - Increase awareness of food programs and resources - Improve transportation options
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holbrook Unified School District - First Southern Baptist Church - University of Arizona Cooperative Extension - Holbrook Senior Center and Food Pantry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Snowflake Unified School District - Country Store - Silver Creek Senior Center - Shepherd's Kitchen and Thrift of the White Mountains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Head Start - Winslow Unified School District - Chartwells - St. Vincent de Paul

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