

County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency

353 West Julian Street
San Jose, California 95110-2335



DATE: November 2, 2021

TO: Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: Robert Menicocci, Social Services Agency Director *RM*

SUBJECT: Off Agenda Report RE: Strengthening Summer Meals

On June 16, 2021, the Children, Seniors, and Families Committee ("CSFC") requested that the Social Services Agency ("SSA") submit an off-agenda report regarding continued funding needs for the Strengthening Summer Meals program of Second Harvest of Silicon Valley ("Second Harvest"). Caregiver Meals (meals which are distributed to the adult escorts of eligible children) are an important component of Second Harvest's Summer Meals Program.

The initial contract between the County and Second Harvest for the Strengthening Summer Meals initiative was in the amount of \$392k for a three-year period beginning in FY 2019-2020. Going forward, the contract needs to be extended and additional ongoing funds need to be allocated; a detailed follow-up report will be submitted by SSA and Second Harvest by January 2022.

Contract History

In the FY 2019-20 budget, the Board of Supervisors approved \$35,500 in inventory item funding to expand the reach of free federally-funded summer meals under the administration of Second Harvest. A budget allocation of \$24,798 provided approximately 5,836 meals to adult caregivers in conjunction with 29,782 meals for children at 14 priority sites in Santa Clara County.

On January 14, 2020, the Board received a legislative file (#99442) from the SSA outlining Second Harvest's 3-year plan to promote the increased utilization of free federally funded summer meals for eligible children by offering free meals to caregivers. The services provided by Second Harvest would reduce hunger and food insecurity for both children and caregivers in low-income families.

Based on the information and analysis reflected in the legislative file, the Board approved caregiver meal reimbursement to be administered by Second Harvest for \$392,000 through March 1, 2023. The cost breakdown for the \$392,000 was \$106,000 in 2020 followed by \$143,000 in 2021, and \$143,000 in 2022.

Board of Supervisors: Mike Wasserman, Cindy Chavez, Otto Lee, Susan Ellenberg, S. Joseph Simitian
County Executive: Jeffrey V. Smith

The Summer Meals Program Plays an Important Role in Reducing Summer Food Insecurity for Both Children and Caregivers

The Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option (combined, the “Summer Meals Program”) feed kids 18 and under during the summer months while school is not in session and students become increasingly vulnerable to hunger. Schools, libraries, community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, and government agencies can all host summer meal programs. There is no registration required for participants and everyone 18 years of age or under will be served a meal. (1)

Summer food insecurity impacts children, but it also has a considerable effect on parents, caregivers and other members of the household that are impacted by the decrease in resources available for household food needs. While meals for children are eligible for federal funding, the caregivers of children have generally not been able to participate in meals. However, providing caregiver meals can provide incentives to bring children to these meal sites for nourishment and enrichment. (2)

As part of Second Harvest of Silicon Valley’s mission to ensure that everyone who needs a meal can get one, Second Harvest is invested in building community awareness and participation at summer meal sites, by ensuring that summer sites are accessible and operating in high need areas and through the allocation of infrastructure grants for under-resourced sites. Second Harvest works with a coalition of government agencies, school administrations, and nonprofit partners in Santa Clara County to plan for and promote summer meals.

The Pandemic Changed the Summer Meals Delivery Model

In spring 2020, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) responded to the pandemic and subsequent economic crisis by issuing historic nationwide child nutrition waivers that allowed for increased meal service flexibility. In a typical year, summer meal sites must be in areas where 50 percent or more of the child population qualifies for free and reduced-price meals (FRPM). These waivers removed the area eligibility requirement so that meals could be served anywhere, allowed meals to be served outside of the normally required mealtimes, and encouraged caregivers to pick up meals for their children, including bulk pick up to cover multiple days of feeding children. Federal USDA programmatic waivers are in effect through June 2022. (3)

2019-2021 Data; 2021 Data Still Provisional

Due to area eligibility flexibility, Santa Clara County experienced a 35 percent increase in summer meal sites, particularly at school locations. Additionally, Second Harvest provided a wide-ranging outreach initiative to build awareness of summer meal site locations and policies. In summer 2020, over 35,000 flyers, 38,000 door hangers, 200 banners, and 50,000 bookmarks were distributed at diverse community locations like schools, libraries, and individual households in under-resourced zip codes. Digital advertising/marketing was also utilized, resulting in approximately 70,000 views and 900,000 impressions, respectively. Furthermore, TV advertising was employed,

resulting in 1.8 million impressions. Finally, Second Harvest received and responded to 1,879 text messages inquiring about summer meal locations.

In Year One of this initiative, summer 2020, there were varying levels of requests for caregiver meal funding, given pandemic constraints around meal service, despite an increase in the number of summer sites. Some previously participating sites opted out of providing caregiver meals, and some summer programs closed or limited their service, often citing staffing limitations. Although convenient, Grab-and-Go meal service meant sites were not lively, attractive hubs for community gatherings and recreation. Finally, site providers and staff noted the difficulty in identifying if 80 percent of adults requesting meals were caregivers, given the flexibility of the USDA meal waivers.

Overall, 19,985 caregiver meals were served in conjunction with 193,211 meals for children at a cost of \$78,804. Second Harvest claimed \$34,027 for outreach and promotional expenses, for a total expenditure in Year One of \$112,831. Although data is still being gathered for Year Two, summer 2021, Second Harvest received requests for over \$127,000 for caregiver meal funding from a total of nine school districts and community organizations.

Additional Ongoing Funds Will Need to Be Allocated for FY 2022-2023 and Beyond

Second Harvest is in the process of collecting additional information and data relevant to analysis of this initiative. Furthermore, more research is needed to determine the effects of coinciding federal pandemic response on the administration of this program in Year One and Year Two.

SSA and Second Harvest recommend a more detailed follow-up around the implementation of this program, including interviews of caregiver meal site operators and school district food service to determine community impact, challenges, and successes during Year One and Year Two. Interviews will commence in October 2021 and conclude early November 2021. A legislative file will be submitted by January 2022 to the Board of Supervisors to formally request a contract extension and additional ongoing funding for the Strengthening Summer Meals Program.

References:

- (1) The United States Department of Agriculture, "Summer Food Service Program". <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program> Accessed October 2021.
- (2) Bruce JS, De La Cruz MM, Lundberg K, Vesom N, Aguayo J, Merrell SB. Combating Child Summer Food Insecurity: Examination of a Community-Based Mobile Meal Program. J Community Health. 2019 Oct;44(5):1009-1018. doi: 10.1007/s10900-019-00675-0. PMID: 31073855.
- (3) The United States Department of Agriculture, "Child Nutrition Covid-19 Waivers". <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-disaster-assistance/fns-responds-covid-19/child-nutrition-covid-19-waivers> Accessed October 2021.

c: Chief Board Aides
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