

2026 Project Bread Summer Eats Grant Program

Project Bread is pleased to offer a grant opportunity for Massachusetts Summer Food Service Program sponsors to support increased participation and quality of the Summer Eats Program for the 2026 season.

Background

Project Bread is a statewide organization committed to preventing and ending hunger in Massachusetts. For thirty years, Project Bread has worked with Massachusetts communities to increase participation in Summer Eats (the USDA Summer Food Service Program), in partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Project Bread's Child Nutrition Team provides technical assistance and innovative solutions to support sponsors that are implementing and expanding Summer Eats programming. For over ten years, Project Bread has offered grants to support summer sites, especially new sites, and strategies to reach more kids and teens. Our goal is to ensure that all children in Massachusetts remain nourished throughout the summer months, when school is not in session.

Eligibility

- In 2026, Project Bread's Summer Eats Grant Program is open to any new* or existing Summer Food Service Program sponsor operating open sites in Massachusetts. (*If you will apply to become a new sponsor through DESE for summer 2026, you are eligible for this grant.)
- Sponsors must commit to operate one or more open sites to be eligible. Sponsors that operate solely closed sites are not eligible for the grant program.
- While individual sites are not eligible to apply, we strongly encourage sponsors to work with current and potential sites to develop grant proposals that best meet the needs of their communities.

Award Range and Allowable Expenses

- Summer Eats sponsors are eligible for expansion grants of up to \$7,500, depending on the number of open sites you will operate, and the proposed scope of work and impact.
 - Sponsors operating 1 open site are eligible for a maximum of \$3,000.
 - Sponsors operating 2-3 open sites are eligible for a maximum of \$4,000.
 - Sponsors operating 4-7 open sites are eligible for a maximum of \$5,000.
 - Sponsors operating 8-10 open sites are eligible for a maximum of \$6,000.
 - Sponsors operating more than 10 open sites are eligible for a maximum of \$7,500.

(*In application, sponsor must detail the number of open sites that they operated last year, plans for continuation or closing of any sites, and *detail specific plans* for any new/additional sites to be operated in 2026 in order to include proposed new sites in total quantity.)
- Grant funds may be used for equipment, transportation, promotion/marketing expenses, and staffing (hourly worker pay or stipends) to support Summer Eats expansion plans.
- Funds may not be used for retroactive expenses incurred prior to receipt of the grant award.
- Funds may not be used for food or non-durable disposable supplies (paper products, packaging, etc.), gift cards, or staff/administrator salaries (hourly pay or staff stipends are allowable).
- Monetary awards are accompanied by comprehensive technical assistance and support.

Funding Priorities

All efforts to expand participation in Summer Eats in Massachusetts will be considered for funding. However, five priority areas for funding have been identified:

- New open site locations that serve a population previously unserved or underserved by Summer Eats - either new sponsors operating new open sites, or existing sponsors taking on new open sites.
- Initiatives focused on bringing meals to neighborhoods to expand access within the community, such as efforts to *establish* or *grow* “non-traditional sites”, i.e., mobile sites, sites at housing properties, libraries, farmers’ markets, local non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, etc., and initiatives focused on addressing transportation/accessibility barriers unique to your community.
- Initiatives to significantly expand meal access at existing sites through structural changes that will allow the site to serve more meals, such as expanding site service hours, adding meal types (such as snacks or suppers), adding weekend meals, extending service through the month of August, etc.
- Initiatives specifically designed to advance equity and inclusion in your community, as related to your Summer Eats program. Such as, but not limited to, formation of new community partnerships or hiring multilingual staff to increase engagement with communities not previously accessing the program, expenses related to translation or interpretation to provide access in multiple languages, surveying kids & families to develop and serve culturally relevant menu options, etc.
- Initiatives specifically focused on improving and expanding enrichment programming at open sites, including partnering with local community groups and services to provide/enhance programming.

Examples of use of grant funds within these priority areas:

- Using funds to increase the capacity/people power of your program to enable program growth, such as:
 - Stipend or hourly pay for new staff member(s) (or existing staff member(s) taking on more hours) to cover a new site, expand hours or service times at an existing site, extend site operation through August, etc.
 - Hire a multilingual intern/staff member from the community to promote your new or expanded non-traditional site in the community and recruit participants - canvass neighborhoods, run social media, organize summer events and/or enrichment programming, engage local businesses in giveaways, distribute signage, survey families to gather feedback, etc.
- Costs associated with implementing or expanding mobile programs - such as stipend for driver, cost of gas, Summer Eats branded vehicle wrap or magnets, equipment to keep meals hot/cold during mobile service, etc.
- Equipment to implement new/expanded sites, serve more kids at sites, increase efficiency, or increase meal quality, such as cold storage/transport equipment, hot-holding equipment for hot meals, produce processing/food prep equipment, etc.
- Costs associated with creating vibrant and engaging open sites like costs of partnering with local groups/hiring local individuals to provide enrichment programming, cost of durable games/ equipment to provide programming activities, etc.

Required Summer Eats Outreach Activities

Summer Eats programs at open sites are only successful if the community is aware of the program, feels welcome, and knows when and how they can participate. All 2026 awardees are expected to execute outreach and promotion and work with Project Bread's Child Nutrition Team to develop a robust plan for promoting Summer Eats within their community. Activities may include, but are not limited to: distributing Summer Eats branded materials, initiating/expanding a Summer Eats social media marketing campaign, partnering with local groups to spread awareness, etc. (Grant funds may be spent on efforts to build awareness of your new or expanded site(s), such as implementing a kickoff event, social media/digital advertising, postcard/flyer mailing to families, radio ads, bus/transit ads, etc.)

For summer 2026, all Massachusetts Summer Eats sites and sponsors will have access to a variety of outreach and promotional resources free-of-charge, provided by Project Bread in partnership with DESE.

[The order form for the 2026 Summer Eats materials is available here](#), and orders are due by March 13th. Materials such as the following are available:

- Large signage (lawn signs, sandwich boards, banners, tablecloths) in multiple languages.
- Engagement/swag materials such as: stickers, punch cards, sunglasses, staff T-shirts, small toys, etc.
- Posters, flyers, and bookmarks (in multiple languages).
*(Many social media and electronic resources (in multiple languages) are also available for sponsors to use - these will be available through Project Bread's website and not necessary to order through the order form)

The materials above will be provided at no cost. Applicants are encouraged to take advantage of these free materials rather than requesting funds for similar items. Applicants may include in their budget proposals any additional costs associated with proposed outreach (for example, costs of hiring an outreach intern to manage social media or distribute signage, costs of a paid advertising campaign, etc.).

As needed, Project Bread will provide design support for the development of non-standard co-branded materials (such as billboards and vehicle wraps) that incorporate both the Summer Eats branding and the sponsor logo/branding. (*Printing costs for non-standard materials should be included in the grant request or covered by the sponsor through other funds.*)

Criteria Used for Grant Review

All applications will be reviewed using the following criteria:

- Level of need within the community as described in the application and as demonstrated by community data, including percent of children eligible for free and reduced-price meals (using October 2025 data).
- Inclusion of the funding priorities listed above within the grant proposal.
- Strength of applicant's proposed plans for increasing participation in their Summer Eats Program.
- Applicant's demonstrated effort to provide fresh, culturally relevant, healthy food.
- Applicant's track record of accomplishments and ability to achieve measurable results, including timely completion of past Project Bread grant reports and requirements, if applicable.
- Applicant's commitment to provide services that support their clients' dignity and rights.

Application Process and Deadline

- [Apply here](#).
- All applications must be submitted by March 20, 2026. Complete and accurate application materials must be received by the deadline to be considered for funding.
- Applicants that have not recently or previously applied to Project Bread's Child Nutrition Grant Programs are strongly encouraged to apply.

Reporting and Program Requirements

- Completion of final grant report.
- Participation in Summer Eats program visit, if requested, from Project Bread Child Nutrition Team.
- Participation in regular check-in calls/correspondence with the Child Nutrition Team leading up to and throughout the summer.
- Submission of storytelling materials that showcase program impact, such as photographs and personal impact stories.

Contact Information

Please contact Project Bread's Child Nutrition Team at cnop@projectbread.org or at 617-239-2543 with any questions or if you have difficulty submitting your application.

