



# Turnip the Beet: High Quality Meals in the Summer Meal Programs

## Award Overview

### General Information

#### What is it?

The **Turnip the Beet Award**, by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), recognizes outstanding Summer Meal Program sponsors across the nation who work hard to offer high quality meals that are appetizing, appealing, and nutritious during the summer months. The award is open to all sponsors. There are three award levels available: Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

#### Why is it important?

Offering high quality meals during the summer is important for a number of reasons. Summer sites have the opportunity to positively impact children's healthy development by offering nutritious meals and encouraging children to develop healthy habits at a young age. In addition, kids vote with their feet in the summer! Offering meals that children enjoy can help sustain and increase participation. It's a win-win, so let's *turnip the beet* on meal quality in the Summer Meal Programs!

#### Who is eligible to apply?

All Summer Meal Program sponsors, including Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Seamless Summer Option (SSO) sponsors, may be eligible for a **Turnip the Beet Award**. Nominated sponsors must be in compliance with all SFSP or NSLP/SSO regulations, as applicable. Meeting the award criteria and winning an award does not replace SFSP or NSLP/SSO requirements. Nominated sponsors are required to be in good standing with the SFSP or NSLP/SSO. This means the sponsor had no major findings and program violations, or completed and implemented all corrective actions from the last compliance review, was not found seriously deficient in the past two years (at the time of the nomination), and has never been terminated from the Summer Meal Programs.

#### How are sponsors nominated?

Sponsors may submit a self-nomination or be nominated by another party. The sponsor or other party must fill out the *2016 Turnip the Beet Nomination Form* and submit a one month menu to their Summer Meals State Agency contact (see below for participating State Agencies' contact information). Menus should describe whether vegetables and fruit are fresh, frozen, canned or dried, as well as identify whole grain-rich and local food items. If a menu includes whole grain-rich items, sponsors must submit supporting documentation, such as an ingredient list, product formulation statement or recipe, to verify the items are whole grain-rich as defined by the NSLP. Sponsors may choose to submit other supporting

documents to further demonstrate the quality of their meals, such as news clips about the program, photos, testimonials, or invoices of local food purchases.

State Agencies establish their own due dates for **Turnip the Beet** nominations (form, menu, and supporting documents) to be submitted. Sponsors should contact their Summer Meals State Agency to learn when their nomination is due. State agencies must then review and forward all nominations to their Regional Office by Friday, January 6, 2017. State agencies are encouraged to submit nominations prior to this date, as feasible. FNS will notify the winners in writing in Winter 2017.

### **What are the prizes?**

- **Bronze, Silver, and Gold winners:** featured in USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Summer Newsletter and receive a certificate.
- **Silver and Gold winners:** featured on U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) blog.
- **Gold Award winners:** identified as a **Turnip the Beet** winners on FNS's Summer Site Finder (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks>).

### **What resources are available to help sponsors improve the quality of the meals they serve?**

FNS has an abundance of resources available for sponsors to help make the summer meals they serve more appetizing, appealing and nutritious. To start, sponsors can check out the "Nutrition Guidance for Sponsors" (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/NutritionGuide.pdf>), which includes best practices and tips for serving high quality meals, as well as how to incorporate local foods and sample cycle menus. Additionally, USDA's "Offering Healthy Summer Meals That Kids Enjoy" (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-healthy-summer-meals>), available in English and Spanish, is a colorful 4-page resource with practical ideas for small changes that Summer sponsors can implement at their sites to improve the nutritional quality of meals served and make foods more appealing to children and teens.

Summer sponsors should also watch FNS' "Serving High Quality Meals in Summer Meal Programs" webcast (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/serving-high-quality-meal-summer-meal-programs>). It features strategies for working with vendors and how to use Team Nutrition Resources to improve meal quality. For even more resources, including planning healthy summer meals and serving meals family style, sponsors can check out the Summer Meals Toolkit page (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-toolkit>).

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Nominations that clearly illustrate how the meals are appetizing, appealing and nutritious will receive the highest consideration. Sponsors must provide a short summary (Narrative) describing how the meals served at their Summer sites are high quality, including 1) how the meals are culturally appropriate and 2) age-appropriate for the population being served; 3) whether tastes tests or another tool is used to

introduce and gather feedback on new foods and menu items; 4) how healthy foods are marketed (such as fun descriptors used in menus and signage, placement of healthy foods in the service area, and other Smarter Lunchroom strategies); and 5) any food and nutrition-based activity that aligns with the meal served. Sponsors that use Team Nutrition resources at their Summer sites will receive bonus points. Specific details will be given greater value than generalities.

In addition, nominations for **Turnip the Beet Awards** will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Seasonal and locally produced foods are served as part of the reimbursable meal.

**Bonus:** Local foods are identified and promoted through the menu, posters, newsletters, or other forms of communication.

- The menu is at least a 2 week cycle menu with entrees repeating 2 times or less per month.

**Bonus:** Menu includes some hot food items.

- The menu includes a variety of colors and textures.

- Different vegetables and fruits are served throughout the week.

**Bonus:** At least 75% of vegetable and fruit servings are fresh.

- At least half of the grains served are whole grain-rich.

- Sweet grains (e.g. cookies, cakes, brownies, fruit turnovers, doughnuts, toaster pastries, or sweet rolls) are served only 2 times per week.

**Bonus:** Sweet grains are not served.

- Only low-fat (1%) or fat-free dairy products (including milk, yogurt, and cheese) are served. If 1 year old children attend the Summer site, they are served whole milk.

- If flavored milk is served, it is fat-free.

- Water is available at no cost.

## Scoring

Nominations are scored based on the following:

(6-10 points = Bronze award; 11-20 points = Silver award; 21-30 points = Gold award)

- **Narrative (0-13 points):** Sponsors can receive up to 2 points per topic (culturally appropriate meals; age appropriate meals; taste tests or other similar tools; marketing of healthy foods; food and nutrition based activities) addressed in the Narrative, and will receive 3 bonus points when they demonstrate their use of Team Nutrition resources at Summer sites.

- **Additional Criterion (0-17 points):** Sponsors can receive 1 point per criterion met and 2 points per bonus criteria.

## Questions?

Any questions regarding the **Turnip the Beet Awards** should be directed to your Summer Meals State Agency or Regional Office, as appropriate.