



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield

Program Title: From Farm To Market To Student

Program Category: Community, Economic Development & Land Use

CONTACT INFORMATION

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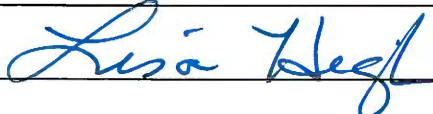
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Lisa High

Title: Chesterfield Co Public Schools Deputy Superintendent

Signature: 

Executive Summary:

In the summer of 2023, Casey Dickinson, Assistant Director of Chesterfield County Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services (CFNS), launched an innovative collaboration with the Chesterfield County Farmers Market to enhance the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Partnering with Christine Allen, the Farmers Market Coordinator, Dickinson saw an opportunity to combine local agriculture with essential nutrition services. This successful initiative continued into the 2024 Chesterfield Farmers Market, further strengthening the partnership and expanding its reach.

The SFSP provides meals to children during the summer break, a crucial time when schools are not in session. By serving lunches at the Chesterfield Farmers Market, the initiative incorporated fresh, locally sourced ingredients, significantly enhancing the nutritional quality of meals. This program also supported local farmers and provided educational opportunities for children to learn about food origins and agriculture.

The collaboration emphasized farm-to-school practices and scratch cooking, allowing children to explore new culinary experiences. The outdoor setting fostered community involvement, showcasing CFNS's commitment to innovation and the welfare of local families. This partnership strengthened the SFSP by incorporating sustainable practices, benefiting both the children served and the broader community, while promoting healthier eating habits and a deeper understanding of food systems.

Problem or need addressed by the program:

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides nutritious meals to children from low-income families during the summer when schools are closed. Many children rely on school meals during the academic year, and without this support, they may face food insecurity.

Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, SFSP offers free meals to children 18 and under at approved sites. In Chesterfield County, where over 50% of the population qualifies for free or reduced-price meals, the program is essential in addressing food insecurity. It ensures children continue to receive healthy, balanced meals throughout the summer, meeting a critical community need and supporting overall child health and well-being.

Program Description:

Launched in the summer of 2023, the Chesterfield Farmers Market Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) aimed to provide free, nutritious meals to children and families during the summer months when schools were closed. The program's inaugural year was a great success, reaching numerous families in Chesterfield County and beyond, offering vital support to those facing food insecurity. Building on this success, the program expanded in 2024, serving an even larger number of families and fostering greater community engagement. From June 5 to August 14, 2024, families visited the Chesterfield Farmers Market at 6701 Mimms Loop, Chesterfield, VA 23832, located within the Chesterfield County government complex. This summer initiative provided free meals and educational activities, reaching a broader audience and reinforcing its role as a vital community resource. The program saw consistent attendance, with an average of 160 meals served each week. Through expanded outreach, the program was able to serve families throughout Chesterfield County and surrounding areas, promoting a regional approach to food security and nutrition.

The inaugural year of the Chesterfield Farmers Market Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in 2023 laid a strong foundation by successfully integrating locally sourced meals, promoting healthy eating, and fostering community involvement. Families enjoyed nutritious meals from local farms alongside educational activities focused on nutrition. Positive feedback and increased attendance underscored the program's impact and the critical need within the community. Building on this momentum, the program expanded in 2024 with greater collaboration with regional partners, enhanced outreach to neighboring counties, and a focus on improving accessibility for families beyond Chesterfield. CFNS and community partners introduced new menus, formed additional local and educational partnerships, and increased the program's capacity, ensuring more families could benefit from its valuable resources.

In 2024, the program built upon the success of 2023 by increasing the number of local farms involved, ensuring the meals offered a diverse range of produce and proteins from across the region. Examples include: Shenandoah Valley Organic (Harrisonburg, VA) providing certified humane chicken; Moseby's Waterloo (Dinwiddie, VA) supplying chicken and eggs; BroadFork Farms (Moseley, VA) contributing naturally grown organic vegetables; Becerra Produce Farm (Hague, VA) offering potatoes, tomatoes, and zucchini; The Unadulterated Baker (Aylett, VA) baking fresh Hawaiian Rolls; Agriberry Produce (Hanover, VA) providing a variety of fresh fruits; and Richlands Dairy Farm (Blackstone, VA) supplying fresh milk.

Additionally, the local non-profit C-Fit Community sponsored the acceptance of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits through Fresh Match, playing a crucial role in making fresh, healthy food accessible to families, including those from neighboring counties.

The expanded SNAP outreach ensured that the program was not limited to Chesterfield, but reached families across a broader region.

In 2024, the program received a generous \$1,000 spot grant from C-Fit Community to fund meals for parents and guardians. This funding allowed parents to share meals with their children, fostering a shared mealtime experience that reinforced healthy eating habits. By modeling balanced nutrition, families helped establish lifelong skills, supporting both short-term relief from food insecurity and long-term wellness. These initiatives not only introduced children and families to local agriculture but also provided simple meal preparation and nutrition education. Additionally, families were able to use their SNAP benefits to purchase the same fresh ingredients from the market, further strengthening the connection between healthy eating and community resources.

Weekly menus for the 2024 program were designed to reflect diverse regional tastes while maintaining a focus on wholesome, nutritious meals. All offerings adhered to SFSP regulations, prioritizing minimally processed foods to ensure balanced nutrition. The menu featured a variety of delicious options, including:

- Beef Meatball Banh Mi Sub with Pickled Cucumber, Radishes, Carrots, Blackberries, and Milk
- Firecracker Chicken Drumsticks with Red, White, and Blue Fruit Salad, Roasted Potato Salad, Dinner Rolls, and Milk
- Cajun Mega Meatballs with Cornbread, Dilly Green Beans, Blackberry Salad, and Milk
- Tandoori Chicken Wings with Zucchini & Corn Salad, Spiced Flatbread, Fruit, and Milk

- Street Cart Chicken with Cilantro Lime Rice, Elote Corn, Peach with Honey and Cinnamon, and Milk

In 2024, CFNS strengthened its collaboration with the Chesterfield Farmers Market and expanded partnerships with local and regional organizations. These partnerships were instrumental in providing educational resources and helping families understand the importance of nutrition and healthy eating. Organizations such as the Virginia Beef Council, The Dairy Alliance with Farmview Creamery, the Virginia Egg Board, and Virginia Family Dentistry generously donated their time and expertise to educate families. Local organizations, such as Chesterfield Library Services, played a key role by offering educational activities, including story time sessions and farm and food-related books. The Chesterfield Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners taught children about bees, while Chesterfield Fire and EMS provided fire safety lessons. These community-driven efforts enhanced the experience for children and families, making the program not only inclusive for Chesterfield residents but also beneficial for families from surrounding areas.

To engage children and families, CFNS continued its nutrition-based activities while introducing new educational components. Special guests, along with nutrition flyers created by a Work-Based Learning student, provided families with valuable information on the benefits of balanced eating, emphasizing the use of locally sourced ingredients each week.

Responding to Economic Downturn:

As Chesterfield County navigates a shifting economic landscape, families continue to feel the strain of rising food costs, inflation, and reduced federal nutrition benefits. In response, CFNS

has strengthened its summer feeding by expanding the Farmers Market Feeding Site, ensuring that more children and families have access to fresh, nutritious meals when school is out.

Like many communities across Virginia, Chesterfield County has seen an increase in food insecurity, particularly among low- and middle-income families. According to recent reports, grocery prices in Virginia have risen by nearly 20% over the past two years, making it harder for families to afford healthy food. At the same time, many households have lost access to pandemic-era nutrition benefits, such as expanded SNAP emergency allotments. Families are turning to food pantries and assistance programs, underscoring the growing need for accessible meal programs like the SFSP.

Beyond feeding children and families, the Farmers Market Feeding Site serves as a hub for community support, connecting families with fresh produce, nutrition education, and local resources. By addressing both immediate food needs and long-term food security, CFNS is working to create a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food system, even in the face of economic challenges.

Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:

This initiative not only combats food insecurity but also strengthens DEI efforts by prioritizing accessibility, cultural responsiveness, and community engagement. CFNS believes every child deserves a seat at the table, regardless of income, background, or ability. Eligibility for the SFSP requires the site to be located in an area with over 50% free and reduced-price eligibility. Our feeding site operates in a community-focused, family-friendly setting, creating an inclusive

space where children and families feel welcome. We also provide multilingual outreach materials to ensure all families are aware of this resource.

Our meals feature locally sourced produce and culturally relevant recipes, allowing children to experience familiar flavors while being introduced to new, nutrient-rich options. By partnering with Virginia farmers, we not only support the local economy but also highlight the diverse agricultural traditions of our region.

Beyond feeding children, our Farmers Market Feeding Site empowers local farmers, food producers, and school nutrition professionals. Our partnerships with small farms and food hubs enable us to serve high-quality meals while educating families about sustainable agriculture and healthy eating. This initiative also creates additional seasonal job opportunities, contributing to a more diverse and skilled school nutrition workforce. SFSP and farm-school efforts, the Chesterfield Farmers Market Feeding Site is more than a meal program: it's a community-driven solution to food insecurity that fosters health, equity, and economic resilience.

Program Cost:

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is a federally funded initiative managed by the United States Department of Agriculture. Each meal is reimbursed at approximately \$5, with the goal of keeping food and product costs below that amount per meal. We have typically met this goal by preparing meals from scratch. The primary objective of the SFSP is to ensure that children from low-income families have access to nutritious meals during the summer months when schools are closed. The program offers free meals to children aged 18 and under at approved sites. Given that the Chesterfield Farmers Market is located in an area where over

50% of the population qualifies for free and reduced-price meals, this initiative plays a crucial role in addressing food insecurity in the community.

Results/Success of the Program:

The 2024 Summer Food Service Program has been a driving force in providing families with access to nutritious meals while deepening their understanding of the importance of healthy eating. With expanded local farm partnerships, increased outreach efforts, and the introduction of engaging educational activities, CFNS has made significant strides in addressing food insecurity and promoting good nutrition across Chesterfield County and beyond. As the program continues to evolve, its impact on the region's families will only grow, leaving a lasting legacy of community engagement, nutrition education, and enhanced access to fresh, healthy food.

Each week during the summer, the CFNS meal site was alive with activity, as the CFNS team set up tents, picnic tables, and chairs to ensure families could enjoy their meals comfortably. A prominent banner highlighted the farm-to-school process, while the serving table displayed the day's menu and accompanying nutrition flyers. Colorful posters featured the "Local Growers and Education Partners of the Week," honoring the regional producers and educational organizations that made the meals possible. Yard signs were placed around the area to increase visibility and attract more families to the program, further expanding its reach. The feedback from the community was overwhelmingly positive, with many families expressing a strong desire for similar nutritious options in school cafeterias. This led to meaningful discussions about the National School Lunch Program and its potential benefits for students across the region.

Program Results:

- **2023 Results:** 7 meal services, 475 meals served, 100 lbs. of beef, 100 lbs. of produce, 80 eggs, 10 gallons of milk, 10 scratch recipes tested.
- **2024 Results:** 9 meal services, 1,408 meals served, 375 lbs. of meat, 660 lbs. of produce, 60 gallons of milk, 200 locally baked rolls, 10 cups of honey, 26 scratch recipes tested.

In addition to these results, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) featured a video showcasing the program, now posted on their Farm to School website. This resource is helping raise awareness and provide valuable guidance to other divisions looking to replicate this initiative. You can view the video and learn more about the program's impact in the Supplemental Materials section.

Worthiness of Award:

Building on the success of 2023, the Chesterfield Farmers Market SFSP expanded in 2024, reaching more families and forming key partnerships. With enhanced outreach and a continued focus on healthy, locally sourced meals, the program strengthened its impact on food security and nutrition education, serving both Chesterfield and surrounding areas. The 2024 program incorporated more local farms, which provided fresh produce, dairy, and proteins, ensuring that meals were both nutritious and community-driven.

Additionally, educational enrichment activities were introduced, teaching children and families about the importance of healthy eating, food sourcing, and agricultural practices. The program's

Chesterfield County, VA

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increased collaboration with local non-profits, schools, and community organizations further expanded its reach, making it accessible to more families in need.

The continued success of the program highlights the growing demand for healthy, affordable meals and nutrition education. Its expansion serves as a model for other communities, and as the program evolves, it will continue to strengthen its role in addressing food insecurity and promoting healthier lifestyles for families across the region.

Supplemental Materials:

- Chesterfield Farmers Market Video and Farm to School to Market Presentation:

[Farmer's Market Video SY24.mp4](#)

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1bLGWjDr8EWLiQCLdqWj74ucljFif1lfelAQb3xY9A8I/edit?usp=sharing>

- Virginia Department of Education School and Community Programs Video

[Summer Meals at the Farmers Market](#)

- Chesterfield Food and Nutrition Services 2023 Turnip the Beet Sponsor Gold



From Farm To Market To Student
(Community, Economic Development & Land Use Category)



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News Release

For Immediate Release

July 23, 2024

Contact

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2024 VSBA Food for Thought Competition Winners Announced *Winners Recognized at the VSBA Conference on Education*

Charlottesville, VA – Five school divisions have received top honors in the 2024 Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) Food for Thought Competition, while three additional divisions received honorary mentions. These recognitions were announced earlier today at the VSBA Conference on Education held in Short Pump.

Established in 2012, the VSBA Food for Thought Competition aims to educate, engage, and empower school leaders in addressing childhood hunger and ensuring healthier, more nutritious school meals for all students in Virginia. This year marks the 12th anniversary of the awards, which were proudly sponsored by the Virginia Lottery.

The competition featured three categories: Healthy School Meals, Meal Access to Fight Hunger, and Wellness and Physical Activity. The school divisions recognized for their outstanding contributions in these areas are:

Healthy School Meals

Winner (Below 10,000 Student Population) – Alleghany Highlands Public Schools
Winner (Above 10,001 Student Population) – Virginia Beach City Public Schools
Honorable Mention – Hampton City Public Schools

Meal Access to Fight Hunger

Winner (Below 10,000 Student Population) – Henry County Public Schools
Winner (Above 10,001 Student Population) – Chesterfield County Public Schools
Honorable Mention – Louisa County Public Schools
Honorable Mention – Stafford County Public Schools

Wellness and Physical Activity

Winner (Above 10,001 Student Population) – Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools

About the Virginia School Boards Association

The Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through advocacy, training, and services. The Association offers conferences, information, training, and counseling designed to meet the needs of the Commonwealth's educational leaders.

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www.vsba.org | 434-295-8722 | 800-446-8722

Title of the Program: “Summer Sizzle: Elevating the Summer food Service Program with Fresh, Local Fare and Community engagement”

Summer Food Service Program @ Chesterfield Farmers Market
Highlighting Local Beef and National Dairy Month | June 5, 2024



Summer Food Service Program @ Chesterfield Farmers Market
Highlighting Local Beef and Virginia Family Dentistry | June 12, 2024



Summer Food Service Program @ Chesterfield Farmers Market
Highlighting Local Raspberries, Intern & Program Highlights | August 14, 2024

