

RURAL NON-CONGREGATE MEALS INNOVATION AWARD

The Rural Non-Congregate Innovation Award recognizes sponsors that operated at least one SFSP or SSO SUN Meals To-Go or Non-Congregate Meal (NCM) site in 2026. Nominations should demonstrate how the sponsor leveraged NCM policy and regulations to implement innovative concepts and marketing strategies to reach families in underserved rural areas.

To apply for this award, please submit:

- **A slide presentation**, 3-5 slides, no more than 40 words per slide plus notes as needed. **These slides are your application!** Make sure you address all of the criteria from the rubric in your slides. Menu choices and the growth in non-congregate meals distributed will impact points awarded.
- Include **NCM site information**:
 - Total number of congregate, non-congregate (NCM), and non-congregate hybrid (NCMH)
 - Type of site(s): drive-through pick up, grab and go/walk up, home-delivery, mobile route
 - Locations and rationale for non-congregate sites; meals per package; distribution days per week; and number of summer weeks.
- **Menu choices**: Use of fresh, shelf-stable, and hot foods, as well as menu-cycle frequency.
- **Innovation**: How marketing, staff roles, community partnerships, site selection, mobile or home-delivery routes, unique locations, and other innovative strategies supported your non-congregate program.
- **Bonus: Supporting Documentation**. Include relevant materials such as news clips, social media posts, photos, testimonials, outreach materials, community or State Agency feedback, special events, and meal-site activities.

See the next page's rubric for point values and submission guidance.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS: Email your presentation and all attachments in one message to carolinahungerinitiative@unc.edu. Use the subject line: **"2026 Summer Nutrition Champion Awards – Your Sponsor/Stakeholder Name."** Label each file with the award title and sponsor/stakeholder name (e.g., **"Rural Non-Congregate Award – Apple County Schools"**). See the awards overview page for details.

All nominations should be submitted no later than Monday, November 30, 2026 by 5 PM.

Awardees will be recognized at the January 2027 SummerPalooza training summits and may be invited to give a brief presentation. Presentation details will be provided to awardees. Nominees will be evaluated by the Carolina Hunger Initiative. Questions? Email carolinahungerinitiative@unc.edu. Good luck!



Rural Non-Congregate Meals Innovation Award Rubric

Presentation Components (up to 6 points)	0 points (No examples)	1 point (One example)	2 points (Two or more examples)	Total Points
Innovative Strategies				
Marketing Strategies				
How did you meet the need of rural, underserved areas?				

Menu	1 point	1 point	1 point	Total Points (up to 3)
(Refer to sponsor's slides)	Included hot meals when possible	Included fresh fruits and vegetables	Menu cycle is at least 3 weeks	

Growth in NCM Participation from 2025 to 2026 (5 possible points) NCDPI will confirm this information	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points	5 points	Points
	1% to 50% growth	51% to 100% growth	101% to 150% growth	151% to 200% growth	200% or more growth	

Bonus: Supporting Documentation	0 points	1 point	2 points
Circle one	Sponsor does not provide any relevant supporting documentation	Sponsor provides one form of relevant supporting document	Sponsor provides two or more forms of relevant supporting documentation

Bonus: Community Partnerships (1 point)	
Describe how you partnered with other organizations to expand your reach and impact	Total points: out of 17

