



FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICT AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM MENTOR PROJECT *Case Study*



OVERVIEW:

As a follow up to the release of the 2017 “The Afterschool Meals Program: A Guidepost to Success for School Districts,” Florida Impact to End Hunger (FITEH) initiated the *Florida School District Afterschool Meals Program Mentor Project*. The goal of the project was to increase the number of school districts applying for and implementing the Afterschool Meals Program (AMP). FITEH staff successfully paired 4 “Mentor” districts with 4 “Mentee” districts and facilitated dialogue and information exchange via phone calls and emails for a span of 5 months.

MENTOR PAIRS:

Mentor: **Palm Beach County** → Mentee: **Martin County**

Mentor: **Highlands County** → Mentee: **Polk County**

Mentor: **Alachua County** → Mentee: **DeSoto County**

Mentor: **Hillsborough** → Mentee: **Santa Rosa County**

BACKGROUND:

In 2017, Florida Impact staff completed a comprehensive study of all Florida's school districts and their involvement and participation in the AMP. Each district was categorized into small, medium, and large according to size and other data points were pulled for each. Using September 2017 AMP data, districts were then grouped based on whether or not they were an AMP sponsor and the number of sites within the county. As a result, all 67 school districts in Florida were categorized as either Top Performers, Low Performers, or Non-Performers. At the beginning of school year 2018-2019, Florida Impact staff (CEO and COO) used this data to conduct outreach to gauge interest in the project. After several months of recruitment via emails and phone calls, FI gained commitment from four "mentor" districts and four "mentee" districts.

PROCESS:

Staff scheduled out three monthly calls to provide the mentees a regular opportunity to discuss their questions and concerns with their mentor district. The first call involved introductions and an overview of basics associated with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Afterschool Meals Program (AMP) administered through the Florida Department of Health (DOH).

These initial calls were more structured to ensure that common concerns were addressed. Additional calls were allowed for more opened discussion between the two districts. This allowed the mentee to gain the most benefit from the call. At the end of each call, staff reiterated a brief list of goals and objectives for completion prior to the subsequent call to ensure that all participants were on the same page. When necessary, mentors and Florida Impact staff provided additional support to address issues between calls. Some of the most beneficial calls involved more than just the food and nutrition directors, who may sometimes be removed from the day-to-day process.

Therefore, multiple food and nutrition staff representatives were invited to join the calls.

RESULTS:

- **Alachua/DeSoto:** DeSoto County has successfully implemented afterschool suppers in all schools, and is considering expansion to one additional, non-district site.
- **Hillsborough/Santa Rosa:** Santa Rosa County has submitted their application to the Department of Health for review, and is hoping to implement the program in at least one school prior to the end of the school year. This elementary school has already been identified, and school staff and administration are already onboard with the proposal. If possible, a high school has also been identified for implementation this year. Remaining schools will be brought onboard during the 2019-2020 school year.
- **Palm Beach/Martin:** Martin County is going through the approval process internally with the school district. Principals and nutrition staff are on-board and they are currently seeking approval from the superintendent and the school board. The target date for application submission is May 2019
- **Highlands/Polk:** Polk County is currently awaiting notification of a grant award from Share Our Strength and will make further decisions on AMP based on the grant.

In addition to the original 4 mentee/mentor pairs, Gadsden County caught wind of our project and requested assistance with their pending AMP application. Florida Impact staff set up a call between Gadsden County and another high performing district, Pasco County. At this time, Gadsden has submitted their application to the Florida Department of Health, and has developed a strategy for both replacing NSLP snack sites with AMP suppers, and expanding AMP suppers to additional sites.

CONCLUSION:

After the initial challenge of finding mentor and mentee districts willing to participate, the primary challenge in arranging the mentor relationship was scheduling, especially for the first call. This became significantly easier once a level of rapport was established between the two districts. While scheduled calls were initially necessary to cover a significant breadth of topics and questions, moving forward it seems that less structured interactions would be more beneficial. In this way, mentee district staff can easily call or email mentor district staff with quick questions or concerns, rather than waiting for a monthly check in, for example. That said, some form of semi-regular check in could still be beneficial to help ensure the program is moving along overall. Florida Impact will maintain this role of regularly checking in for the remainder of the school year.

One additional barrier came from the mentor side of the partnership. Some districts have been participating in the AMP for many years, perhaps even before the arrival of the current food and

nutrition team. Because of this, some staff are quite removed from the application and implementation process, and were unable to recall details.

Overall, this project was very successful. The mentor pairings fostered new partnerships between districts which will hopefully expand even beyond afterschool meals, leading to collaboration and support around other topics, such as summer meals or CEP, for example. By pairing experienced districts with interested districts, we have been able to overcome significant barriers and expand afterschool meals into areas previously unserved.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. Florida Impact staff worked to create the "School District Toolbox" to be a resource for all Florida's school districts. The Toolbox can be found at www.floridaafterschoolmeals.org and contains the following sections:
 - *Best Practices for School Food Authorities*
 - *Streamlined Process for School Food Authorities*
 - *Implementing AMP in School Districts*
2. The **AMP School District Mentor Project Call Outline** was created as a resource for both Florida Impact staff as well as other organizations to use when implementing a similar project. Please see this document attached below.

FLORIDA IMPACT AMP SCHOOL DISTRICT MENTOR PROJECT

Call Outline

PRIOR TO CALL:

- Research into the mentee's current AMP status (Has the district applied? Has the program started? How many schools has the program been implemented in? What afterschool programs are on-campus?)
- Research into the mentor's current AMP program (How long has it been established? How many meals/students/sites are being served?)
- Try to assess everyone's objectives and prepare relevant questions to help stimulate conversation.
- Prepare best practice information to contribute to the conversation. This can be distributed prior to the call for everyone to become familiar with/ask questions about.

DURING CALL:

- Begin with brief introduction to facilitator, Florida Impact, the AMP program, and the mentorship program (goals, outcomes).
- Allow all participants on the call to introduce themselves.
- Emphasize at the beginning of the call that this is an open dialog.
- Ask mentor district to provide a history of their AMP program and the current landscape of the program.
- Ask mentee to join in by explaining where they are with the AMP program (or application process), with a focus on any challenges which have emerged or been recently overcome, and what their next steps/objectives are.
- Follow-up with any specific questions about the program, especially if there is information which could not be found in the pre-call research.
- Ensure that all challenges brought up are discussed and, if possible, resolutions suggested.
- If the conversation continues, allow and encourage the mentee to ask whatever questions they have for the mentor. When applicable, facilitator should contribute relevant information, especially related to best practices from other districts.
- Key topics for discussion:

- School board / Superintendent approval.
 - What initial barriers have you encountered? Have you overcome these barriers?
 - Who are the key stakeholders to bring onboard? Who were your strongest advocates or opposition?/Who do you have onboard?
 - How long did the streamlined application process take? How long did the actual implementation process take?
 - Marketing: did you use any specific forms/promotional materials to get the word out? Can you share these with us?
 - How many schools did you start with? How did you select these specific schools?/How many schools would you like to start with?
 - What kind of meals did you initially serve? What meals are you now serving? (hot/cold, snack/supper)
 - Have there been any unexpected barriers or benefits since beginning the program?
 - Other advice?
- Prior to ending the call, try to establish goals or objectives for the next meeting.
 - Meeting with superintendent, presenting to school board, adding a certain number of sites, reaching out to/gaining buy-in from a certain number of stakeholders, etc.

AFTER CALL:

Follow up as soon as possible thanking the participants. Include any relevant documents or information requested in the call. Include brief notes from the call. Remind all participants of objectives to meet prior to the next call. Use this opportunity to schedule the next call or other follow-up.