

Review of the After School SNACKS Funding¹

By
Phillip E. Hoy²
&
Daniel F. Perkins

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² All correspondence for this report should be directed to Phil Hoy, YET State Project Coordinator, 423 Ag Admin Bldg, University Park, PA 16802, 814-863-7872, phoy@psu.edu

Introduction

The purpose of this review is to inform Extension Educators about After School SNACKS program so you can decide whether or not the program benefits outweigh the costs of seeking this funding. The After School SNACKS program provides reimbursements designed to encourage the use of nutritional snacks for children and youth (under age 18) participating in after school programs. This program is open to all after-school programs throughout Pennsylvania. The program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

Eligibility

Eligibility for this program is based on the need of the school district that the after-school program is serving. To be eligible, the school district has to have at least 50% of their students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program. PDE has the official numbers for each school district. Before putting a lot of time in the application process, call the PDE contact (Susan Masters at 800-331-0129) and check whether your school district is eligible.

Steps to Apply

Three steps are involved in order for an after-school program to qualify for this program. First, one has to complete an informational packet comprised of 10 different forms (approximately 6 hours to complete). These forms can be downloaded from the PA SNACKS website (<http://www.pears.ed.state.pa.us>). The informational packet asks for information about your after-school program, where the program is held, who's in charge, and whether you comply with civil rights and qualify for tax exempt status. Another form involves an agreement that must be signed. Because of this agreement Penn State Cooperative Extension county offices must go through Penn State Grants and Contracts Office when we submitted the materials on behalf of the YET after-school program, the grants office. You will need the following to submit to the Grants and Contracts Office: all 10 of the forms from the informational packet that and a copy of the grant guidelines that can be found at the USDA website (<http://www.pears.ed.state.pa.us>).

Second, the person in the role of the after-school coordinator must attend a pre-participation training held in Harrisburg. Trainings are held once a month and last from 8:30 a.m. till 3:00 p.m. An after-school coordinator needs to attend the pre-participation training to be eligible for the SNACKS program. If you have completed the informational packet, and the Grants Office has reviewed it then you can submit while attending the pre-participation training.

Third, you complete an application which is separate from the informational packet. After you have submitted the informational packet and attended the pre-participation training, you will only be given access to the application. PDE will review your informational packet, assign you a user id and password, and provide you with this information to access the online application. This application is four pages long (approximately one

hour to complete). Once the application is completed and reviewed, you can then participate in the SNACKS program.

Program Facts

The SNACKS program will reimburse you \$0.60 (this is the 2004 reimbursement amount, it goes up each year) per child per snack. However, there are specific guidelines for which types of snacks are reimbursable. Snacks must include two of the four food categories to be eligible (i.e., milk, grains and breads, vegetables and fruits, or meat/meat alternate). The guidelines also specify the quantities required for each type of food.

As part of the weekly paperwork needed for this program, menus must be created for the snacks in advance. These menus must be maintained on file for three years. You will be assigned a field staff person that will visit your site at least twice a year. They will check to ensure that your menus and receipts for snacks bought are in agreement.

You are also required to attend at least one training a year pertaining to nutrition or food safety. Record of this training must be on file for three years.

The PA SNACKS program uses an online reporting system for reimbursement. This system is called PEARS. You must enter your numbers each month in order to get reimbursed. There is a time limit for reporting. If you pass the time limit you cannot file for that month's reimbursement. It takes several weeks for the reimbursement checks to be sent.

Conclusion

Overall, this program can be a useful source of funding for snacks in an after-school program. However, given the amount of paperwork and reporting it may only be cost-effective if you serve a large number of children. For example, when looking at this funding for the YET program only two of our three schools were eligible. In addition, there are only 15-20 members at each school. We would only get approximately \$24.00 per week per site for snacks. We would be getting less than \$2,000.00 for the entire year with both sites combined. Therefore we decided that the costs of completing the weekly paperwork far outweighed the benefit of receiving funding. However, if you are serving 100 students twice a week, the amount of money you would get back each week is \$120.00 and this amount may outweigh the costs.

Contact Information

For more information about the SNACKS program go to:
<http://www.pears.ed.state.pa.us>.

The contact at PDE is Susan Masters, PA Department of Education Division of Food & Nutrition CACFP, 333 Market St., 4th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126, email - smasters@state.pa.us, phone - 800-331-0129.