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Memorandum
SFSP-2012-01

TO: Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Sponsors

FROM: Karen L. Vogel, SNS, RD, Nutrition Programs Professional 

RE: **Rural Development's Community Facilities Program**

To support Secretary Vilsack's and Deputy Secretary Merrigan's focus on rural development, this memorandum brings attention to the USDA's Rural Development Community Facilities (CF) program. The CF program provides loans and grants to assist in the development of essential community facilities in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population and offers a unique opportunity for non-profit organizations, public bodies, and tribal organizations to upgrade their community's child nutrition facilities and purchase equipment that could improve access to healthy, locally, or regionally grown products.

The CF low-interest loans and grants are available to public entities such as county and local governments, non-profit organizations, and tribal organizations. These funds can be used to construct, enlarge or improve community facilities that provide healthcare, education, public safety, and public services. Specific to the Child Nutrition Programs, the CF loan/grant funds could be used to improve public buildings like school food service facilities, Head Start centers, pre-schools, adult day care centers, child day care centers, and food preparation centers.

In the past, communities have used CF funds to renovate cafeterias and purchase food preparation and storage equipment. For example, a County Board of Education Food Service Division, that provides breakfast and lunch programs for public school students, used CF funds to improve a warehouse by adding refrigeration units for fresh fruits and vegetables, which allowed them to purchase larger quantities, expand choices, and increase the amount of locally grown food served in their schools. One school used a CF loan to expand their campus to include an organic vegetable garden and fruit orchards which provide fresh produce for the after school snack program. Another school purchased a convection food steamer to prepare locally grown vegetables with CF funds.

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The CF loans and grants are both competitively scored, however, according to Rural Development, grant funds are limited. Therefore, we encourage communities to consider the affordable low-interest, fixed-rate loans the CF program offers. Child Nutrition Programs operating in small, low-income communities may be eligible for a higher percentage of grant funding or loans.

Please work through your local USDA Rural Development office to learn more about how the CF Program can help them expand their access to and support local and regional foods. Further information about this opportunity can be found at the following website: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/HCF_CF.html.

KV/tk