



News Release
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Chef Ann Foundation Signs a Cooperative Agreement with the USDA to Help Create a More Resilient, Equitable, and Nutritious School Food System

Part of USDA's Healthy Meals Incentives, these sub-grants are designed to increase K-12 schools' procurement of local, higher-quality food items and scratch cooking

Boulder, CO - [Chef Ann Foundation](https://www.chefannfoundation.org/) (CAF) has signed a cooperative agreement with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) as part of the [Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative](#). An allocation of \$7.8 million is provided to CAF as part of The School Food System Transformation Challenge. These funds will be used to build a sub-grant program to incentivize innovative partnerships between school districts, food producers, suppliers, distributors, and community partners to strengthen the availability and access to nutritious food products in K-12 school food.

"The pandemic shed light on the cracks in our food system, and school food teams have been burdened with supply chain issues. We need to help our schools and their regional food communities work together to empower local food production and distribution," said Mara Fleishman, CEO of Chef Ann Foundation.

In partnership with USDA FNS, CAF partnered with [Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition](#), [Kitchen Sync Strategies](#), and the [National Farm to School Network](#). These partners will ensure that the sub-grants will increase the offering of healthier food products in the K-12 school food marketplace; leverage innovative partnerships between School Food Authorities (SFA) and key stakeholders in their local food systems; expand SFA procurement capacity at the local and regional levels; and increase market opportunities for local growers and producers. The sub-grants will be developed with an eye towards cultivating equity, nourishing students, fostering a resilient supply chain, and creating scalable and sustainable change for SFAs across the country.

"Procurement, in particular, remains one of the most complex processes within school food service departments. SFAs are required to navigate sourcing ingredients that fulfill the mission of serving fresh, local foods while working within limited budgets, under-resourced producers, and strained supply chains," says Elliott Smith, co-founder of Kitchen Sync Strategies.

In order to effectively meet current standards, in addition to upcoming changes that align with the USDA Dietary Guidelines, school districts must be equipped with the network and resources necessary to achieve such requirements. Realistically, no SFA or individual business is capable of accomplishing such a complex universal goal without multiple strategic partnerships with other organizations, businesses, and agencies in their food economy. The sub-grants support the development of the hard and soft infrastructures needed to successfully increase access to nutritious and appealing foods for kids,

“USDA is taking a holistic approach to supporting school meal programs, which includes strengthening the food supply chain that supports them,” said Stacy Dean, deputy under secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services. “We’re hopeful that these grants will accelerate and expand innovation in the school food marketplace, so that schools – and ultimately our children – have better access to healthier food products.”

These initiatives are part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. The National Strategy provides a roadmap of actions the federal government will take to end hunger and reduce diet-related diseases by 2030 – all while reducing disparities. The National Strategy was released in conjunction with the first White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in over 50 years, hosted by President Biden in September 2022.

About Chef Ann Foundation

[Chef Ann Foundation](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working to ensure that school food professionals have the resources, funding and support they need to provide fresh, healthy, delicious, scratch cooked meals that support the health of children and our planet. To date, the organization has reached more than 14,000 schools and 3.4 million kids with healthy school programming. Learn more at chefannfoundation.org and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

About Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition

The [Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition](#) (GSCN) is a nonprofit research institute providing expertise in measurement and evaluation to help develop and enhance programs focused on healthy eating and active living, food security, and local food systems. With expertise in public health nutrition, GSCN is dedicated to building measurement strategies to assess the impact of innovative health-related programs, which advance health equity. GSCN was founded in 1973, is headquartered in Omaha, NE, and has 44 team members across 24 states.

About Kitchen Sync Strategies

The [Kitchen Sync Strategies Collaborative](#) (KSSC) is a team of consulting and brokerage companies that brings a combined 25+ years of farm-to-school and school food procurement experience. The members of KSSC- which include Kitchen Sync Strategies, Supply Change, and Shared Plate Strategies- have supported over 250 SFAs nationwide to procure food from socially disadvantaged producers and meaningfully impact the racial and economic equity in their region.

About National Farm to School Network

[National Farm to School Network](#) has a vision of a strong and just food system for all, and we seek deep transformation toward this vision through farm to school – the way kids eat, grow, and learn about food in schools and early care and education settings.

About USDA

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

About USDA Food and Nutrition Service

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service works to end hunger and improve food and [nutrition security](#) through a suite of more than [15 nutrition assistance programs](#), such as the school breakfast and lunch programs, WIC and SNAP. Together, these programs serve 1 in 4 Americans over the course of a year, promoting consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, and affordable food essential to optimal health and well-being. FNS also provides science-based nutrition recommendations through the co-development of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. FNS's report, "[Leveraging the White House Conference to Promote and Elevate Nutrition Security: The Role of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service](#)," highlights ways the agency will support the Biden-Harris Administration's [National Strategy](#), released in conjunction with the historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in September 2022. To learn more about FNS, visit www.fns.usda.gov and follow [@USDANutrition](#).