

News Release

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Contact

Jessica Christopher

jessicachristopher@curatorpr.com

610-945-8615 (PT)

Chef Ann Foundation Opens Applications for Get Schools Cooking Program

Schools nationwide can apply to transition from heat-and-serve to fresh, scratch-cooked meals.

Boulder, CO – The Chef Ann Foundation is now accepting applications for the seventh cohort of its [Get Schools Cooking](#) program. This three-year initiative helps school districts transition from serving students highly processed heat-and-serve meals to fresh, scratch-made meals. Through this program, districts receive expert assessment, hands-on technical assistance, and strategic planning support to drive long-term, systemic change.

Today, [more than 60%](#) of a typical child's diet is made up of ultraprocessed food. Most schools want to serve kids fresh, healthy meals cooked from scratch, but many still depend on processed items to handle the speed and volume required for large-scale operations. Programs often face challenges such as limited budgets, undertrained staff, and outdated kitchens. Get Schools Cooking uses a holistic approach, tailoring support to each district's unique needs to improve operations and create a more sustainable model. This process involves an exhaustive operational assessment to identify opportunities for expanding scratch-cooking capacity.

"Get Schools Cooking allows us to take a deep dive into a program's operations, focusing on our five key areas of food, finance, facilities, human resources, and marketing to drive lasting systems-change," said Chef Ann Foundation Managing Director of East Coast Operations, Brandy Dreibelbis. "We view scratch cooking as a continuum and meet districts where they are to help them advance their menu and strengthen their scratch-made programs."

Since 2016, Chef Ann Foundation's Get Schools Cooking program has supported 27 districts across

21 states, helping over 180,000 children receive fresher, healthier meals. This cohort is made possible thanks to generous support from the program's partners, including Whole Foods Market Foundation and the Rachael Ray Foundation.

"Working with the Chef Ann Foundation through their Get Schools Cooking program, we have been able to completely transform our program," said Alexandra Epstein-Solfield, a former Get Schools Cooking participant and Child Nutrition Director at Ellensburg School District in Ellensburg, Washington. "We've been able to bring our staff along on the journey, and the transformation in their minds has been incredible. We went from primarily heat-and-serve cooking to now primarily scratch cooking, using a lot of local foods."

Eligible applicants include school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program, run a self-operated food service, and have both a commitment to scratch cooking and active support from their administration. **Schools must [apply](#) by September 30, 2026.**

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, delicious, scratch-cooked meals that support the health of children and our planet. To date, the organization has reached more than 19,000 schools and 5.9 million kids in all 50 states with healthy school food programming.