

News Release

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Elevate Your School District's Scratch Cooking: Apply Now to Chef Ann Foundation's Get Schools Cooking Program

Initiative helps K-12 schools transition from serving students heat-and-serve meals to fresher, healthier scratch-cooked meals

Boulder, CO – School districts interested in transitioning their meal programs from a heat-and-serve to a scratch-cooking operational model can now [apply](#) to participate in the sixth [Get Schools Cooking](#) cohort. The program is administered by the [Chef Ann Foundation](#), a national nonprofit dedicated to supporting scratch cooking in schools. The deadline for districts to apply is September 30, 2024.

Today, most school meal programs rely on serving students convenient yet often highly processed and less healthy heat-and-serve meals. When schools make changes that allow them to prepare meals from scratch using fresh, whole ingredients, they can serve students healthier, more flavorful meals that help kids focus better in class and cultivate positive eating habits for life. Scratch cooking has other benefits too: it allows schools to purchase raw ingredients from local farms; reduce food and packaging waste; and provide staff with opportunities to gain new skills.

However, there are many obstacles that can make it challenging for schools to cook from scratch. This might include outdated facilities, a lack of cooking equipment, food service staff possessing limited culinary skills, funding constraints, and more. The Get Schools Cooking program assesses school districts' meal programs – including its menu, finances, facilities, staff, and marketing efforts – and identifies opportunities to move toward scratch cooking.

“Since Get Schools Cooking launched in 2016, the program has helped 27 districts in 21 states collectively serve more scratch-cooked school meals to an estimated 180,000 students,” said Chef Ann Foundation Executive Director of Operations Lori Nelson. “These districts are well poised to

continue increasing the amount of scratch cooking they do long after their Get Schools Cooking cohort concludes.”

The Chef Ann Foundation’s school food experts work closely with Get Schools Cooking participants over three years. After an initial meal program assessment, participating districts receive strategic planning guidance and technical assistance from Chef Ann Foundation staff who have deep, first-hand experience operating scratch cooking school meal programs. Districts are also given the opportunity to apply for a one-time systems assistance grant, valued at up to \$35,000, designed to support their school food goals.

“The partnership with the Chef Ann Foundation supporting a fresh, locally focused school nutrition program has been critical in influencing the work we do with scratch cooking,” said Jacob Gallogly, a current Get Schools Cooking participant and food service manager for the West River Education District in Townshend, Vermont. “With all of the tools to standardize recipe development for scratch, we can ensure that the same nutritious meal is consistently produced across the district every day.”

School districts can learn more about Get Schools Cooking and apply [here](#).

Get Schools Cooking is open to school districts across the country thanks to generous funding support from [Whole Kids](#), [The Rachael Ray Foundation](#), [Waverley Street Foundation](#), and other donors.

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 on our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).