



News Release

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Chef Ann Foundation Announces Recipients of Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools Grants

\$4.8 million in total awarded to eight groups of local partners

Boulder, CO – The [Chef Ann Foundation](#) announced today it has awarded grants totaling \$4.8 million to eight groups of local food system partners through its [Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools \(PLANTS\)](#) program, which was launched in October 2023.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service’s [Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative](#), PLANTS aims to strengthen partnerships among community-based school food system stakeholders to advance more resilient and equitable K–12 school food supply chains. PLANTS also seeks to expand scratch cooking, which enables schools to incorporate more local foods into menus while building healthier, more culturally inclusive meal programs.

“We received nearly 100 applications from a combined total of 360 organizations representing 123 schools and 38 states and U.S. territories,” said Chef Ann Foundation Executive Director of Programs Laura Smith. “It’s clear that many school districts across the country and their food system partners are eager to collaborate to improve the quality of the food they serve in ways that support their local communities.”

In addition to the funds awarded, grantees will receive three years of comprehensive technical assistance from the [Chef Ann Foundation](#), [Kitchen Sync Strategies Collaborative](#), and [National Farm to School Network](#), as well as project evaluation support from [Center for Nutrition Health and Impact](#).

“Each project that received an award represents an incredible array of learning opportunities, not only for the grant recipients but for local food systems everywhere,” said National Farm to School Network Senior Director of Program and Policy Sunny Baker. “What we learn from the PLANTS program will help schools and their communities enact lasting, systemic change that supports the health of kids and the planet.”

Grant recipient projects:

- **Anchorage Student Nutrition Food System Transformation (Alaska) – \$595,423**

Anchorage School District, Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Alaska Food Company, Copper River Seafood

This project seeks to increase local purchasing, scratch cooking, and culturally inclusive meals. Project partners will implement an innovative local seafood procurement strategy to help school meals reflect the unique geography and diversity of a district where over 100 languages are spoken. During the grant period, partners will upgrade cooking equipment to increase scratch cooking by up to 20%, and develop an efficient supply chain, procurement, and delivery plan to ensure 20% of ingredients used in school meals each month are locally grown. After piloting the model in three district schools, the project will expand to reach 80% of the student population by June of 2027. Approximately 46% of the 43,146 students in the district qualify for free or reduced-priced meals.

- **Sea-to-School for Student Health, Vibrant Communities, and a Thriving Seafood Economy (Maine) – \$599,999**

Gulf of Maine Research Institute, South Portland Public School District Food Service Department, Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association

This project seeks to establish a comprehensive sea-to-school program that addresses the need for healthier meals, supports local fisherfolk, and fosters community engagement. By leveraging the region’s most abundant animal protein, seafood, the project will strengthen the local supply chain and increase economic stability for up to 300 small fishing operations in the area. In doing so, students will have access to fresh, nutritious, and culturally relevant seafood in schools. Ultimately, this project aims to create meaningful best practices for seafood procurement and use in coastal communities across the U.S. The project will serve approximately 2,890 students, of which nearly 23% qualify for free or reduced-priced meals.

- **Detroit Farms Growing the Whole Child (Michigan) – \$600,000**

Detroit Public Schools Community District Office of School Nutrition, Keep Growing Detroit, Eastern Market Partnership, Detroit Black Community Food Sovereignty Network

This project seeks to strengthen the local food economy in Detroit by connecting schools with local farmers to bring more fresh produce to the cafeteria. Project partners will work with the district’s culinary arts and horticulture programs to provide real-world teaching opportunities and paid, on-the-job learning for students. The initiative will also create in-district food processing and manufacturing centers and increase on-site farm production. Beyond the school district, project partners will support capacity building of local farms to create school food purchasing pathways. The project will serve 53,000 students, 78% of which qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

- **New Roots Community Farm Project (West Virginia) – \$598,136**

New Roots Community Farm, Fayette County Schools, Sprouting Farms, West Virginia University’s Center for Resilient Communities

This project seeks to increase local supply chain resilience, increase scratch cooking operations in schools, and grow the agricultural economy of the New River Gorge and Southern West Virginia. Project partners will conduct an in-depth value chain assessment to identify strategies to increase local production capacity and empower partners to communicate demand, tailor market-based production assistance training, and streamline aggregation and distribution logistics. The project will serve 5,526 students, nearly 90% of which qualify for free or reduced meals.

- **Local GREENS (Growing Resilient Equitable Ecosystem for Nutrition in Schools)**

- **Muskegon County (Michigan) – \$597,683**

Muskegon Area Intermediate School District, Montague Area Public Schools, Food Agriculture Research and Manufacturing Accelerator, Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities

This project seeks to leverage an agriculturally diverse area that includes over 6,000 farms and build a robust local food supply chain; launch two new production kitchens; improve student health; and inspire youth leaders. Muskegon County school districts will work together to increase local food procurement by 50%, engage more than 20 historically underserved farmers, and increase scratch-cooked meals by 50%. The project will serve 16

school districts and 27,505 students, with nearly 62% qualifying for free and reduced-price meals.

- **Increasing School Nutrition Quality in Central and Eastern Washington through Local Food Value Chain Coordination and Scratch Cooking Assistance – \$598,538**

NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101, LINC Foods, Mission West Community Development Partners, Valley School District, CasaCano Farms

This project seeks to build upon existing efforts to increase scratch cooking in schools and strengthen relationships between local producers, food hubs, processors, and school districts in central and eastern Washington. Working with school districts to determine their needs, the project partners will collaborate to increase the availability of healthy, value-added products from food manufacturers in the local food supply chain. The project will reach 44,328 PK-12 students in 48 underserved school districts. Forty of the districts are in rural environments, and half are facing high poverty levels, with an average of nearly 60% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals across the districts.

- **Building an Equitable, Resilient Regional Supply Chain for K-12 Schools in New England – \$600,000**

CommonWealth Kitchen, MA Farm to School, Boston Public School, Portland Public Schools

This initiative seeks to improve the local food supply chain, develop healthy foods that appeal to diverse student communities, and secure contracts for local food businesses owned by people of color. CommonWealth Kitchen's small-batch food manufacturing allows vendors to create custom, value-added products and gives communities access to locally sourced, plant-forward meal options. The project will serve two school districts in New England including Boston Public Schools (54,000 students across 125 schools, of which 100% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch) and Portland Public Schools (6,600 students across 16 schools, of which nearly 50% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch).

- **Iowa Farm to School Training Collaborative: Building Resilience and Capacity for the Future of Farm to School in Iowa – \$599,652**

Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Council Bluffs Community School District, Iowa St. University Extension and Outreach, Farm Table Delivery

This project seeks to address the needs of Iowa's local food and educational systems by developing and hosting a farm-to-school training cohort; increasing local food availability through a processing pilot designed to innovate new products for use in schools; and increasing culinary training in scratch cooking. The project will reach 35 southwest rural Iowa school districts and approximately 15,000 students. It will also engage seven Iowa food hubs and 135 local farmers, including historically underserved food producers; and directly serve Council Bluffs Community School District with 8,428 students across 16 schools, of which 89% qualify for free or reduced-priced meals.

Learn more about the Chef Ann Foundation's PLANTS program [here](#).

[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.

[USDA Food and Nutrition Service](#)'s mission is to increase food security and reduce hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthy diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.

[Kitchen Sync Strategies Collaborative](#) is focused on bridging the many actors needed to make local food, farm-to-school, and values-based procurement something that is seamless and sustainable for School Food Authorities, producers, and intermediaries alike.

[Center for Nutrition Health and Impact](#) is a nonprofit research institute that provides partnership and expertise in measurement and evaluation to help develop, enhance, and expand programs promoting healthy eating and active living, food and nutrition security, and local food systems.

[National Farm to School Network](#) works across the U.S. as an information, advocacy, and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing and food and agriculture education into school systems and early care and education environments.