



News Release

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Chef Ann Foundation Launches New Grant Program Seeking to Build Equitable and Sustainable School Food Supply Chains

Application period opens November 27th

Boulder, CO – The [Chef Ann Foundation](#) (CAF) is now accepting proposals for its new grant program [Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools \(PLANTS\)](#). Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service’s [Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative](#), PLANTS aims to strengthen relationships among community-based food system stakeholders to advance more resilient, equitable, and sustainable K-12 school food supply chains and healthier school meal programs. PLANTS also seeks to expand scratch cooking in schools, which enables schools to source produce, meat, and other ingredients from local food producers.

“Partnership is at the heart of the PLANTS program,” CAF Executive Director of Programs Laura Smith said. “Building school food supply chains rooted in shared values – like ensuring school meals are made with the highest quality ingredients or supporting locally owned and operated food businesses – necessitates strong collaboration among community food system partners who can directly impact school meal programs.”

CAF will award between \$500,000 and \$600,000 grants to eight projects, totaling up to \$4.8 million in funding allocated toward modeling community-based approaches to school food procurement. Grantees are not required to match funding.

Awardees will also receive in-depth technical assistance as well as tools, training, and resources from [CAF](#), [Kitchen Sync Strategies Collaborative](#), [Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition](#), and [National Farm to School Network](#).

“Our team is excited to draw from our deep experience in school food value chain coordination and work side-by-side with grantees to help ensure their project goals are met,” Kitchen Sync Strategies Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer Elliott Smith said. “We believe the community partnerships PLANTS will be fostering are critical to building healthier, more resilient school food systems that directly support small- and medium-scale farms and food businesses.”

Proposed projects should seek to accomplish the following objectives:

- **Build and strengthen relationships among community-based food system stakeholders**, such as school food professionals, local farmers, distributors, aggregators, parents, students, and other organizations and populations who are impacted by school food supply chains
- **Improve school food supply chain coordination** to support the shared values and environmental, economic, and regulatory needs of local farmers and other food producers as well as K-12 schools
- **Increase awareness of and access to K-12 markets** among small, mid-scale, and historically underserved food producers, aggregators, and processors
- **Expand scratch cooking operations in K-12 schools** to provide more nourishing, high quality, and culturally inclusive meals to students, as well as incorporate more local and sustainably produced ingredients
- **Establish best practices** for improving K-12 school food systems that are scalable and can be adopted by other schools and community stakeholders

Projects must be collaboratively administered by at least three partners located within 250 miles of a designated lead partner. Each group of partners must include at least one School Food Authority. Additional partners may include food producers, processors, manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors; cooperative extensions; local government agencies; and community-based food organizations.

The PLANTS grant application period opens on November 27, 2023 and extends through January 22, 2024. You can learn more about this grant opportunity and apply [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.

[**Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition**](#) 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.