

News Release

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Chef Ann Foundation Opens Applications for *Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship* to Cultivate New Generation of School Food Leaders

Applications open from August 28 – October 1, 2023

Boulder, CO – Today, [Chef Ann Foundation](#) (CAF) opened applications for the 2024 cohort of its [Healthy School Food Pathway \(HSFP\) Fellowship](#), a program designed to cultivate and empower the next generation of diverse school food leaders across the nation. Through the Fellowship, school food operators will learn how to lead successful, scratch-cook school food operations that holistically benefit students, staff, and the environment.

School food leaders who are interested in advancing their careers and driving school food reform across the country are encouraged to apply. Applications for the 2024 Fellowship will remain open until October 1, 2023. Fellows come from a broad range of roles, including area supervisors, assistant directors, chefs, culinary managers, food service directors, kitchen leads, program specialists, and nutritionists.

Over the program's 13 months, Fellows will obtain training, resources, and networking opportunities to develop the leadership skills needed to operate scratch-cook meal programs. Fellows will also learn how school food simultaneously is influenced by and affects the wider U.S. food system. Fellows will be equipped to drive school food reform from a systems perspective that takes into account health equity, food justice, environmental sustainability, and more.

The State of School Food

The School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program serve 15.5 million and 29.9 million children, respectively, at schools across the United States each day according to the [Food](#)

[Research & Action Center](#). Given its vast scale, school food shapes the health of our nation's children, food system, and workforce. Yet today, millions of students across the nation are provided highly processed, heat-and-serve meals. Shifting school food to prioritize healthy, scratch-cooked meals made from fresh, whole ingredients – and ensuring equitable access to these meals – can improve student health and academic performance, as well as the health of the planet.

“CAF's Fellowship program was designed to cultivate school food leaders who can inspire change and mentor their peers on incorporating more scratch cooking in school kitchens,” **said Mara Fleishman, CEO of Chef Ann Foundation**. “Importantly, the Fellowship exposes school food professionals to new perspectives and different ways of doing things through site visits and networking opportunities. Fellows are not only taking what they learn and translating it into real-world change in their home districts, they're learning how to advocate for the future of school food across the country.”

Fellows will participate in an intensive 55-week program designed for school food operators to complete alongside their full-time work. They'll join weekly live, virtual learning sessions and travel to school districts exemplifying successful scratch-cooking programs to build connections and gain exposure to new ideas. Through hands-on training, Fellows will further hone their skills with in-kitchen experience and learn how to train others in school food operations and scratch cooking.

Fellows will also become experts on a school food policy topic of their choice through collaborative research projects. Their experience will culminate in a capstone project that will benefit their home school district and ultimately cultivate transformative change within the national school food system. Equally as important as new knowledge and skills, Fellows will build their confidence, leadership capacity, and network of school food peers.

2023 Inaugural Healthy School Food Pathway Fellows: Where Are They Now?

This will be the second annual cohort for CAF's Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship. Launched in January of 2023, HSFP's inaugural cohort of Fellows is nearing the end of their learning journey, with graduation anticipated for January 2024. The 2023 cohort includes Fellows from Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Texas, Virginia, and the Northern Mariana Islands, and represents a wide range of school and district sizes as well as demographics.

Fellows recently developed capstone projects to demonstrate their growth as school food leaders, increase scratch cooking in their home districts, and effect school food change. With approval from their district and CAF, each Fellow received \$5,000 to implement their capstone project. These projects include transitioning to high-quality scratch-cooked items with training videos; engaging students in scratch cooking through farm-to-school tastings and education; reinstating salad bars and introducing scratch-made dressings; implementing nutrition software; decreasing individually wrapped items; sourcing local, scratch-made breads; procuring and preparing locally raised beef; piloting new recipes during summer to roll out successful dishes in the fall, and much more.

“I am immensely proud to be at the forefront of school food reform alongside this group of passionate individuals,” **said Tricia Kaselitz, Coordinator of Nutrition Services at Suffolk Public Schools and a member of the 2023 inaugural HSFP Fellowship cohort.** “Through the comprehensive support of CAF staff, our content leaders, and other Fellows, I am preparing for the second and final stage of my capstone project – our fall menu rollout. This summer, I successfully rolled out Phase 1: Scratch Summer, where I piloted new scratch recipes to Suffolk Public Schools Summer Academy students, focusing on diverse and locally sourced dishes representative of our diverse population. This fall, as the 2023-2024 school year commences, I will incorporate at least three recipes into our school’s menu. Thanks to the HSFP Fellowship, I will not only be able to successfully integrate nutritious, scratch-cooked options into our menus, but also train my colleagues on new equipment, and share techniques and knowledge, accelerating lasting change.”

The Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship is made possible by the generous support of our founding partners, Whole Kids Foundation and the state of California, with support from the California Workforce Development Board’s High Road Training Partnership.

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 \(formerly Twitter\)](#), and [LinkedIn](#).