

ACTION FOR HEALTHY KIDS

In partnership with



Let's Take ACTION to Improve School Meals!

Healthy Meals Incentives Grants for Small and/or Rural School Food Authorities Request for Applications

Grant Application Period: April 10, 2023 through May 26, 2023



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1. Grant Summary

1.1 Background

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) are Federally assisted meal programs that provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or no-cost meals to children each school day. School lunches and breakfasts provided through these programs (i.e., school meals) must meet Federal nutrition requirements, which are based upon the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGA).

In 2012, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated school meal requirements, including revising nutrition standards to reflect the most recent DGA at that time. This included: increasing fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; adjusting requirements for milk; reducing sodium; and setting calorie standards. Many schools successfully implemented the updated nutrition standards. Students' Healthy Eating Index scores – a measure of how closely diets reflect the DGA – increased, and research showed children received their healthiest meals of the day at school. However, legislative and administrative actions delayed full implementation of the requirements for milk, whole grains, and sodium. Further, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic caused major disruptions to the NSLP and SBP, while highlighting the critical role schools play in ensuring kids are well fed.

In February 2022, USDA published the [Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Final Rule](#). This new rule gives schools time to transition from COVID-19 pandemic operations toward more nutritious meals that align with the 2020–2025 DGA, before updated school meal patterns are established, which are currently proposed in the [Child Nutrition Programs: Revisions to Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (hereafter referred to as the “Proposed Rule”).

In 2022, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) established the [Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative](#) (HMI) to improve the nutritional quality of school meals through food systems transformation, School Food Authority (SFA) recognition, technical assistance, the generation and sharing of innovative ideas and tested practices, and grants. HMI activities are also expected to increase utilization and demand for nutritious agricultural commodities such as whole grains, vegetables, legumes, fruits, and food products that reflect various cultures.

On behalf of USDA FNS, Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) will develop and implement the following three key activities of the initiative:

The Healthy Meals Incentives Grants for Small and/or Rural SFAs will offer competitive grants of up to \$150,000 per SFA for small and/or rural SFAs experiencing challenges in the improvement of the nutritional quality of their school meals due to limited staffing, difficulty in accessing training, increased food costs due to limited purchasing power, lack of physical space, and outdated kitchen equipment.

Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards will celebrate SFAs that have made significant improvements to the nutritional quality of their school meals. The Recognition Awards will spotlight innovative practices, student and community engagement strategies, and strategies schools have used to provide meals that are consistent with the DGA.

Healthy Meals Summits will convene Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award recipients to be recognized, share best practices, and discuss strategies for sustaining their achievements into the future.

This Request for Applications (RFA) contains details on how to apply for the HMI Grants for small and/or rural SFAs, including eligibility requirements, the project plan and deadlines, reporting requirements, and other important information.

1.2 Key Objectives

These HMI grants are intended to help small and/or rural SFAs improve the nutritional quality of their school meals. Proposed grant activities should be clearly aligned with the below objectives:

1. Overcome the challenges that the SFA is experiencing in the improvement of the nutritional quality of their school meals due to limited staffing, difficulty in accessing training, increased food costs due to limited purchasing power, lack of physical space, and/or outdated kitchen equipment, among others.
2. Improve the nutritional quality of the SFA's school meals, support the areas of the Proposed Rule, and maintain consistency with the DGA by focusing grant activities on one or more of the following areas:
 - Reducing the amount of added sugars in School Breakfast Program (SBP) meals
 - Reducing the amount of sodium in National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meals
 - Engaging students in local menu planning efforts, taste testing, and nutrition education activities
 - Featuring local agricultural products
 - Increasing whole grain-rich menu items
 - Working collaboratively with students and the community to provide nutritious school meal menu options that reflect the cultures of the school's students
 - Incorporating scratch-prepared menu items into breakfast and lunch weekly meal plans
 - Implementing innovative practices in nutrition education
3. After using grant funds to make improvements to school meals such as those listed above, grant recipients are required to apply for one or more of the HMI Recognition Awards (see [Appendix D](#)) to demonstrate to their students and community that nutritious school meals are critically important to support child health and school achievement.
 - Recognition Award applications will open in the beginning of school year 2023-2024 and close June 30, 2025. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis over the two-year application period. Recognition awardees will receive stipends to attend one of two Healthy Meals Summits to celebrate and recognize their work and achievements (location and time of the summits are to be determined).

1.3 Funding Availability and Overview

Using a competitive process, USDA and AFHK anticipate awarding a total of \$30 million to over 200 small and/or rural SFAs (see Section 2.1 [Eligible Applicants](#)) that wish to improve their school meal programs.

An SFA may apply for a minimum of \$10,000 and a maximum of \$150,000. The period of performance for these grants will be from August 1, 2023 to September 30, 2025.

AFHK will work with their partners, Rocky Mountain Center for Health and Education (RMC Health) and the Chef Ann Foundation (CAF) to administer these grants. RMC Health is a national leader in professional development for school staff to create and sustain healthy schools. CAF is dedicated to empowering schools nationwide with the tools, training, resources, and funding they need to serve meals. Collectively, all three organizations will provide in-depth, individualized technical assistance to support and guide grantees in overcoming challenges and implementing key strategies to improve school meal quality, meet the HMI Recognition Awards criteria, and mitigate any potential roadblocks to success. Training and technical assistance topics include, but are not limited to menu planning, recipe development, kitchen workflow, food safety, food crediting, inventory management, equipment, labor and staffing, finance and budget development, procurement, commodity selection, contracts, and marketing plans.

Achievements, success stories, and lessons learned will be collected from grantees to document and communicate best practices and share with SFAs around the country to enable continued progress of improving the nutritional quality of school meals.

Besides improving the nutritional quality of school meals, community and student engagement is also an important aspect of the grant opportunity. SFAs are encouraged to include strategies for student engagement and community connections and activities such as taste tests, cooking demonstrations, social media campaigns, student cafeteria "ambassador" programs, student-led school meal surveys, or advisory councils. As a community connection, an SFA could also provide nutrition education to the parents/guardians of students that includes a discussion of reducing sodium and added sugars and increasing the whole grain content of school meals.

SFAs are encouraged to collaborate and work with Extension offices, farmers, non-profits, and local public health departments to strengthen their HMI Grant application. The SFA must be the applicant for this grant.

It is expected that grant projects serve diverse populations. To reflect this, bonus points will be offered for the following:

- The application identifies how the grant will intentionally serve diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.
- The application includes an intention to work with socially disadvantaged or emerging farmers and business owners, including plans for identifying and establishing relationships with socially disadvantaged or emerging farmers and business owners in the community.
- The SFA includes tribally controlled school(s) or school(s) operated under the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE).

1.4 Grant Timeline

Key dates and timeline considerations that the SFA must meet include the following:

April 10, 2023	Grant Application Portal opens at 12:00 PM Eastern Standard Time
May 26, 2023	Grant Application Portal closes; Applications are due no later than 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time
July 14, 2023 (estimated)	Grant awardees notified
July 27, 2023	Grant awardees participate in a Grant Kick-Off Event
August 1, 2023 - September 30, 2025	Grant Period of Performance (all grant funds must be expended by Sept 30, 2025)
August - October 2023	Grant awardees conduct a school meal program assessment
October 15, 2023	Grant awardees submit a Letter(s) of Intent on the Recognition Award(s) for which they intend to apply, including when they plan to apply (before the Recognition Awards application period closes on June 30, 2025)
September 30, 2025	Grant work must be completed and all grant funds expended

2. Eligible Applicants and Projects

2.1 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must be small and/or rural SFAs (see definitions below) participating in the NSLP and/or SBP in the contiguous United States, Hawaii, Alaska, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, or the United States Virgin Islands. (See [Appendix A](#) for definition of SFA).

Small SFA: SFA with an enrollment of less than or equal to 5,000 students.

Rural SFA: The majority of students within the SFA are enrolled in a rural school as defined by a locality code of 41, 42, or 43, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics online tool](#).

You must apply as an SFA for this grant; individual schools that are not an SFA are **not** eligible entities, though the applicant SFA can propose projects that focus on individual schools within the SFA.

2.2 Eligible Projects

The HMI Grants are intended to enable small and/or rural SFAs to overcome challenges and develop creative solutions to provide nutritious foods for the children they serve. Applicants must document how the grant funds will enable them to meet or exceed school nutrition standards in the Proposed Rule and overcome various challenges, due to limited staffing, difficulty in accessing training, increased food

costs due to limited purchasing power, lack of physical space, and/or outdated kitchen equipment, among others.

Activities and efforts proposed in SFA grant applications should be clearly aligned to the key objectives listed in [Section 1.2](#). Examples include nutrition education (including farm to school nutrition education), use of local agricultural products, development of culturally diverse school meal menu items, replacement of outdated kitchen equipment, staff development and training, and/or changes to address lack of physical space. Applicants are encouraged to integrate connections between the cafeteria, classroom, and community in their grant applications.

In addition, projects must:

- Not start until the grant contract is signed by all parties and has reached its start date
- Be completed by **September 30, 2025** (contracts may not be extended beyond this date)
- Be conducted only in schools participating in the NSLP/SBP
- Include an application for at least one HMI Recognition Award

3. Eligible and Ineligible Expenses

All proposed costs must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives. A cost is allocable if it can be allocated to a particular project activity or objective that benefits the grant. All funding requests must be in whole dollars only.

3.1 Eligible Grant Expenses

Funds may be used for:

- School food service capital equipment
- Small equipment and supplies
- Staffing and training
- Contractual services
- Food for school meal food samples and supplies for student taste-test events
- Nutrient analysis software
- Travel costs related to training needs
- Other direct costs specifically to assist in the provision of healthier school meals as described in the HMI Recognition Awards criteria (see [Appendix D](#))

Below are additional details regarding eligible expenses for capital equipment, small equipment, supplies, food, staffing, training and contractual services:

School Food Service Capital Equipment

Funds may be used for capital equipment expenses that directly support the applicant's school meal improvement efforts. Capital equipment is equipment having a useful life of more than one year and a cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. The cost of shipping and associated installation costs are also allowable costs.

Eligible capital equipment includes but is not limited to:

- Braising pans and soup kettles
- Classroom cooking carts
- Combi ovens, convection ovens, and range tops
- Commercial pasta machines
- Countertop commercial griddles
- Dough sheeters and bread rounders
- Floor stand mixers with attachments
- Hoop houses
- Meat slicers and bowl choppers
- Hot and cold serving lines
- Vertical cutter mixers
- Walk-in or reach-in freezers and coolers or refrigerators

Small Equipment and Supplies

Funds may be used to purchase small equipment and supplies that directly support the applicant's school meal improvement efforts. "Small equipment and supplies" mean all tangible property other than that described in the definition of capital equipment above. Small equipment and supplies include but is not limited to:

- Breakfast-to-go serving carts
- Classroom cooking cart supplies
- Gardening tools and supplies such as seedlings, stakes, and school garden learning supplies
- Immersion blenders
- Knives, knife sharpeners, and cutting boards
- Menu boards and chalkboard window markers
- Mixer attachments
- Mobile pan racks
- Nutrition education supplies
- Nutrition posters and signage and nutrition education materials
- Printing costs for nutrition posters and signage and nutrition education materials
- Processing equipment such as food processors and meatball conforming machines
- Salad bar supplies such as pans, tongs, and dressing dispensers
- Spice racks
- Stainless steel workstation tables
- Tabletop mixers
- Taste-testing supplies
- Vacuum sealers
- Whiteboards for kitchen production planning

Staffing, Training, and Contractual Services

Funds may be used for salary and benefits for staff directly supporting the project. Your budget must include these costs as separate line items, and the budget narrative should include detailed information about salary, benefits, and the amount of time that each staff member will be allocated to the project. Payment to contractors carrying out grant activities also is an allowable expense. Funds may also be used for training staff and contractor to learn information or skills needed to carry out the project.

Staffing and training includes but is not limited to:

- Hiring a community member, teacher, subject matter expert, or chef (as an employee or contractor) who will directly support the project and:
 - source more value-added, minimally processed, and local agricultural products for school breakfast and lunch menus,
 - work with students to incorporate food justice, food sovereignty, youth empowerment, or other related food systems topics into school meal programming,
 - integrate agricultural education with career and technical preparation programs to encourage the next generation of agricultural producers,
 - develop promotional campaigns in support of HMI,
 - develop and implement integrated curriculum to reinforce food and nutrition-based learning throughout the school environment or on a local farm(s),
 - expand experiential learning opportunities, such as creating school gardens, developing school-based farmers markets, providing support to ag/food clubs, and/or increasing exposure to local farms and on-farm activities,
 - train school nutrition professionals on the use of cultural and/or traditional foods that are representative of the community, as part of school meals, encourage increased consumption of fruits and vegetables through promotional activities, taste tests, and other activities featuring local agricultural products.
- Training school nutrition staff on:
 - food safety-related to handling minimally processed, raw forms of food,
 - how to efficiently and effectively utilize kitchen equipment to incorporate new local ingredients or local menu items,
 - how to use the [USDA Food Buying Guide](#) and [USDA Recipe Standardization Process](#), and
 - basic culinary, production, cooking and serving skills.
- Incentivizing school nutrition staff to complete training on one of the areas supporting the Recognition Awards including, reducing added sugars, reducing sodium, increasing whole grains, conducting nutrition education, and/or offering culturally relevant meals
- Expanding programs utilizing local agricultural products beyond lunch and into the SBP
- Providing technical support from outside sources in the form of face-to-face trainings, consultations, webinars, etc.

Food

Funds may be used for food purchases for educational purposes, such as recipe testing, farm to school taste tests, or promotional use. Food costs related to conducting a taste test of a new local agricultural product are also deemed an appropriate use of funds. No more than 25 percent of the grant funds may be used for food purchases, and the purpose of the food must be clearly described and justified in the project narrative, budget, and budget narrative. The ultimate goal of funded projects should be for long-term changes that will make nutritious food products available on menus; therefore, purchasing food items should not be a primary use of grant funds. Grant funds may NOT be used to purchase meals or snacks for training or meeting attendees.

3.2 Ineligible Grant Expenses:

- Capital improvements or construction projects including any major improvement to facilities and infrastructure that would add to the permanent value of the school building. If the building was turned upside down, would the piece of equipment be held in place by a permanent connection, i.e., plumbing, or securely affixed? If yes, then it is tied to capital improvements and must be paid for by the SFA's general fund.
- Expenditures incurred prior to contract execution
- Advertising, public relations, entertainment, or amusement costs
- Donated or volunteer (in-kind) services (while these may be furnished to an applicant by professional and technical personnel, consultants, and other skilled and unskilled labor, the value of these services is not an eligible cost)
- Donations and in-kind contributions, including property and services, made by the applicant (regardless of the recipient)
- Fines, penalties, or other settlement expenses resulting from failure of the applicant to comply with federal, state, local, or Native American Tribal laws and regulations
- Indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not directly connected to the project)
- Fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, or similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists or political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, legal costs, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations

4. Procurement Requirements

All funded awardees will be required to abide by Federal, State, and Local procurement and bidding requirements for all purchases. Methods of procurement must be in accordance with the OMB Code of Federal Regulations Procurement Standards, [2 CFR Part 200: Subpart D](#).

5. Applying for the Grant

5.1 How to Submit an Application

- You must use the online application system on the HMI website - www.healthymealsincentives.org - to submit an application for the Healthy Meals Incentives Grant.
- Applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, May 26, 2023**, to be considered for funding.
 - Applying early is recommended to ensure time for technical assistance, if needed.
 - It is best practice to submit your application at least 48 hours before the deadline.
 - **Late applications will not be accepted.**
- AFHK is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems resulting in AFHK not receiving the application on time. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that AFHK receives the submission before the deadline.
- For help and technical assistance with the online application system:

- Email support@healthymealsincentives.org with “Healthy Meals Incentives Grants” in the subject line.

5.2 Required Components of the Application

- **SFA Information:** the applicant must provide contact details and general information about their SFA, including the total number of schools in the SFA and the number of schools that participate in the NSLP and SBP. The applicant’s eligibility as a small and/or rural SFA will be automatically pre-determined based on the data from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#). If it is determined that the SFA is not eligible, the applicant will receive an email alert.
- **Project Information (maximum 1500 characters):** the applicant must describe the challenges and obstacles the SFA has experienced, how the grant will help improve the nutritional quality of school meals, and how project activities will be sustained after the end of the period of performance. The applicant will also be asked if they will commit to applying to at least one Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award.
- **Key Personnel (maximum 1500 characters):** the applicant must provide information about the designated Project Coordinator for the grant including their qualifications and experience related to the activities of the grant. They should have experience in grant management, school nutrition operations and other skills that will ensure overall project success.
- **Project Design and Implementation:**
 - **Budget Table:** the HMI Grant application requires a budget table that includes expenses by category. Per unit and total costs for each item must be included. You will be able to enter this information into the online application and will not need to upload a separate document. See [Appendix B: Grant Application Budget Guidance](#) for an example of the budget table and detail needed to complete the budget in the online grant application.
 - **Project Plan Table:** the HMI Grant application requires a project plan and timeline detailing the tasks and responsible person(s) by quarter throughout the grant period. Major activities involved in the project plan and estimated date(s) of completion for each activity must be listed. Be sure to include the estimated date of when you will apply for the Healthy Meal Incentives Recognition Award(s). You will be able to enter this information into the online application and will not need to upload a separate document. See [Appendix C: Grant Application Project Plan Guidance](#) for an example of the details needed to complete the project plan in the online grant application.
- **Organizational Supports:** applicants must include at least one Letter of Support from the Project Coordinator’s supervisor indicating full support for the grant project and articulating how the grant project will contribute to cafeteria-classroom-community connections and nutritional improvements to the school meal programs.

Applicants must include a Letter of Support from their State Agency to confirm the SFA does not have any outstanding corrective actions and that any previous findings have been resolved.

Applicants also have the option to include at least two Letters of Support from project partner(s) who will work with the SFAs to support the grant project and speak to how the grant work will contribute to cafeteria-classroom-community connections and nutritional improvements to the applicant's school meal programs.

Letters can be typed on letterhead, hand-written, or provided via email to the applicant. Letters will be uploaded as a part of the application process. Templates of letters can be found in the online grant application or on the HMI website – <http://www.healthymealsincentives.org>.

5.3 Tips for Submitting a Strong Application

- Develop the application using Word, so that it can be reviewed and edited prior to entering it into the online system
- Use plain, easily understood language
- Write for reviewers who are generally knowledgeable about the NSLP and SBP, but may not have a thorough or deep understanding of your SFA's community
- Answer all questions completely, within the character limits specified in the application
- Review [Section 6.1 Scoring Criteria](#) and ensure that the application addresses all scoring criteria
- Have several people (including people who have not seen the application before) review the application for spelling, grammar, and clarity before submitting

5.4 How to Submit Questions

For questions about grant eligibility or the application requirements:

- Email support@healthymealsincentives.org with “Healthy Meals Incentives Grants” in the subject line

AFHK will post responses to all program questions in the frequently asked questions section on the HMI website – <http://www.healthymealsincentives.org>.

6. Application Review Information

6.1 Scoring Criteria

Grant applications will be evaluated against the following criteria. Total possible points for scoring are 64 points, with up to 9 additional bonus points.

Project Narrative (15 points):

- The application clearly describes the applicant's purpose and goals for the grant and includes a plan to improve the nutritional quality of school meals. It should include a description of efforts to reduce added sugars, reduce sodium, and/or increase whole grain-rich products in school meals. The applicant should ensure that meals meet USDA nutritional standards and meal pattern requirements, and meet the criteria for at least one of the Recognition Awards (see [Appendix D](#)).

- The application demonstrates that the project will help overcome staffing, training, food purchasing, and/or supplies and equipment challenges, among others, and the ability to move toward the implementation of the Proposed Rule and improved nutritional quality of their school meals.
- The application includes a description of efforts to increase the use of local agricultural products.
- The application includes a description of efforts to integrate nutrition education and marketing as a part of the school meal experience.

Measurable Outcomes (6 points):

- The applicant demonstrates a clear plan for managing the project and their ability to assess the short- and medium-term outcomes of the project.
- The applicant includes a plan to sustain the project outcomes after the end of the performance period.

Student and Community Engagement (9 points):

- The applicant demonstrates a plan to create connections between the community, cafeteria, and classroom such as with taste tests, student surveys, cooking demonstrations, social media campaigns and/or advisory groups.
- The applicant demonstrates how activities are likely to build comprehensive school nutrition environments that maximize participation in school meal programs by aligning school food service and nutrition education strategies.
- Letters of Support:
 - The applicant must include at least one Letter of Support from the Project Coordinator's supervisor indicating full support for the grant project and articulating how the grant project will contribute to cafeteria-classroom-community connections and nutritional improvements to their school meal programs.
 - The applicant must include a Letter of Support from their State Agency to confirm the SFA does not have any outstanding corrective actions and that any previous findings have been resolved.
 - The applicant chooses to include up to two Letters of Support from project partner(s) who will work with the SFAs to support the grant project and speak to how the grant work will contribute to cafeteria-classroom-community connections in the applicant's nutritional improvements to their school meal programs.

Project Plan and Timeline (6 points):

- The application demonstrates that the applicant has researched and has plans for the implementation of all project activities for training, and/or sourcing and purchasing.
- The project plan demonstrates the applicant's ability to carry out the project.

Budget Table and Budget Narrative (15 points):

- The applicant demonstrates that all costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable to carry out the project's purpose and goals.
- The applicant clearly describes how costs within the budget categories were derived and identifies links between expenditures and specific project activities. This includes adequately demonstrating that any equipment purchases will directly support project activities.
- The applicant describes a plan for tracking expenditures and fulfilling reporting requirements for reimbursable expenses.

Quality of the Proposal (3 Points):

- The application is concise and uses plain, easily understood language.
- The applicant should answer all questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application.

Project Coordinator (10 Points):

- The application demonstrates that the Project coordinator has the necessary qualifications and experience to ensure completion of the project as described.
- The application includes a contingency plan in the event that the Project Coordinator leaves the project.

Bonus points (up to 9 additional points):

- The application identifies how the grant will intentionally serve diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.
- The applicant describes an intention to work with socially disadvantaged or emerging farmers and business owners, including plans for identifying and establishing relationships with socially disadvantaged or emerging farmers and business owners in the community.
- The SFA includes tribally controlled school(s) or school(s) operated under the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE).

6.2 Application Review Policies

Review Process

A review committee, composed of AFHK staff and external reviewers, will evaluate all eligible applications based on the scoring criteria in [Section 6.1](#). Reviewers may recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The review committee may use rural/urban classification, geographic distribution, provision of services to special populations, applicant's history as a past grantee, and applicant's capacity to perform the work when making decisions. AFHK will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

Conflicts of Interest – Review Panel

AFHK requires all review panel members to sign a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality form to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect the application review and evaluation process. Names of applicants, including States and tribal governments, that submit an application will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of the reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire process and will not be released to applicants.

Conflicts of Interest – Organizational

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to AFHK due to competing duties or loyalties.
- A grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is, or might be, otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicant or grantee will be notified, and actions may be pursued, including, but not limited to, disqualification from eligibility for the grant or termination of the grant contract.

7. Requirements for Grant Awardees

7.1 Grant Contract Agreement

Upon approval of an application and before beginning work, expending funds, and/or receiving reimbursements, the SFA must:

- Sign a grant contract agreement, within 14 days of receipt, indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks by September 30, 2025 (or earlier if indicated in the application) and authorizing AFHK to monitor the progress of the project.
- Complete a new grant recipient package, including an IRS W-9 form and information related to billing, payments, and contracts, within 30 days of receiving notice of the grant award.
- Attend the virtual Healthy Meals Incentives Grant Kick-Off Event, on July 27, 2023.

7.2 Requesting Funds

The HMI Grant is a reimbursement sub-grant in which grantees will be allowed to request one reimbursement per month for all outstanding expenses at the time of the reimbursement request. The reimbursement request will require details of actual expenditures by budget category, along with supporting documents for the reimbursements requested. Supporting documentation may include, but is not limited to, invoices, receipts, canceled checks, and purchase orders.

In certain circumstances a grantee will have the opportunity to request an advance on future reimbursable expenses that will be spent within the next 30 days. The request for an advance will be approved at the sole discretion of AFHK after viewing the advance request. The following are types of reimbursable expenses that may be considered for an advance:

- Deposits on a large capital equipment purchase
- Final payment on a large capital equipment purchase

The grantee will still be required to include supporting documents related to the advance request, such as purchase orders or contracts. The grantee will be required to report the advance on the next reimbursement request as a deduction.

7.3 Payments

The grantees' request for reimbursement will be reviewed within ten (10) days of receipt. The review process will include the verification that all items seeking reimbursement are part of the current project plan and budget, reimbursements are for allowable expenses, and all required supporting documents have been provided. When the reimbursement request has been reviewed and approved for reimbursement the payment to the SFA will be processed for payment on the next payment date. The payment date for this program will be weekly, on Friday. If Friday is a holiday, then the payment date will be the business day before the holiday. The SFA will have the opportunity to select if they would like to receive payment by check or electronic funds transfer. During the review process if the reviewer has questions about the supporting documents or the items being reimbursed, the reviewer will work with the SFA to resolve the issue. The process to resolve the questions could take more than the previously

stated ten (10) days, but payment will go out on the next payment date after the questions have been resolved.

7.4 Reporting

Grantees will be required to provide two types of reports during the grant period: financial reports and implementation progress reports. AFHK will provide templates for these reports to grantees when the period of performance begins.

- **Financial reports** will be due 30 days after the end of each Federal Fiscal quarter (i.e., October-December 2023 is due January 30, 2024). The quarterly financial report will summarize the total funds spent through the end of the quarter and compare that amount to the grant budget. If funds are being utilized more or less rapidly than would be expected given the project and budget, this should be discussed/justified.
- **Implementation progress reports** semi-annually, 30 days after each six-month period (i.e., July through December 2023 is due January 30, 2024) and should provide details on the status of the project work completed to date and reports on the changes in outcomes because of that work. These progress reports will be an opportunity for grant awardees to share their successes and challenges; and how they were addressed to help build a cadre of best practices to be shared in newsletters, conferences, and on social media sites.

Summary of Key Reporting Dates	
Date (subject to change)	Activity
July 14, 2023	Award notifications sent to SFAs
By July 27, 2023	Grantees sign contract agreement
July 27, 2023	Grantees participate in a virtual Healthy Meals Incentives Grant Kick-Off Event
August 1, 2023	Grantees begin work on grant tasks
October 30, 2023	Submit quarterly financial report
January 30, 2024	Grantees submit their midpoint implementation progress report and a quarterly financial report
April 30, 2024	Submit quarterly financial report
July 30, 2024	Grantees submit their end of year implementation progress report and quarterly financial report
October 30, 2024	Submit quarterly financial report
January 30, 2025	Grantees submit their midpoint implementation progress report and quarterly financial report
April 30, 2025	Submit quarterly financial report
July 30, 2025	Submit quarterly financial report

September 30, 2025	Grantees submit their final implementation progress report and final financial report, as well as a final reimbursement request
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7.5 Budget Adjustments

The grantee will be required to include a budget at the time they submit their application. AFHK realizes that the original budget may need to be adjusted during the grant period because of items identified through the self-assessment process or cost changes. The grantee will be able to move up to 20 percent of the total budget between the budget categories without prior approval from AFHK. If a grantee needs to move more than 20 percent of the total grant award between budget categories, approval from AFHK is required before the budget adjustment can be made.

7.6 Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Policy

The grantee must agree not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee must agree to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

8. Administrative Requirements

8.1 Audits of Project

Records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or any other party that is relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the cooperator, AFHK, and/or the granting agency (USDA) or their designee as appropriate. This requirement will last for four years from the grant agreement end date, receipt and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all Federal and program retention requirements under 2 CFR 200.334, whichever is later.

8.2 Privacy Notice and Data Classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant from AFHK. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.

8.3 Data Collection and Ownership:

Any data, electronic files, or webpages developed or created from this Initiative are the property of USDA FNS. At the end of the grant period, all materials, data, electronic files, or webpages will be the property of USDA FNS. AFHK will provide USDA FNS with appropriate releases for all photographs, images, and other materials as directed, giving USDA sole ownership with unlimited rights to the use of the materials, including the right to redistribute, use, and print items without restriction.

8.4. Regulations, Cost Principles, and Assurances

Applicants chosen for an award from this RFA must comply with the following:

Federal Regulations:

- 2 CFR Part 170: “Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information”
- 2 CFR Part 417: USDA “Non-procurement Debarment & Suspension”
- 2 CFR Part 418: USDA “New Restrictions on Lobbying”
- 2 CFR Part 421: USDA “Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”
- 41 USC Section 22 “Interest of Member of Congress”
- 7 CFR Part 15: “Nondiscrimination”

Cost Principles:

All requested costs must be allowable, allocable, necessary, reasonable, and in accordance with the OMB Code of Federal Regulations Cost Principles as follows:

- [2 CFR Part 200: Subpart E, Cost Principles](#)
- [2 CFR Part 400](#)

Assurances:

Civil Rights Compliance

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d-et seq.), USDA regulations at 7 CFR Part 15, Nondiscrimination, and Department of Justice regulations at 28 CFR Part 42, Nondiscrimination; Equal Employment Opportunity: Policies and Procedures
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.) and USDA regulations at 7 CFR Part 15a, Education Programs or Activities Receiving or Benefiting from Federal Financial Assistance
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.) and USDA regulations at 7 CFR Part 15a, Education Programs or Activities Receiving or Benefiting from Federal Financial Assistance, and Department of Justice regulations at 28 CFR Part 41, Implementation of Executive Order 12250, Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap In Federally Assisted Programs
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.) The Grantee assures that it will immediately take any measures necessary to effectuate the requirements in these laws, regulations, and directives. The Grantee gives this assurance in consideration of and for the purpose of obtaining the funds provided under this agreement.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment (Title I), state & local government services (Title II), places of public accommodation, and commercial facilities (Title III). (42 U.S.C. 12101-12213)

9. Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at: [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#) or from any USDA office by calling (866) 632-9992 or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:** Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

APPENDIX A - DEFINITIONS

Emerging Farmer

The term “emerging farmer” encompasses several historically underserved communities including women, veterans, persons with disabilities, Native Americans/Alaskan Natives, communities of color, young and beginning farmers, and LGBTQ+ farmers.

Local Agricultural Products

The definition of “local agricultural products” can depend on geographic, social, governmental, physical, or economic parameters; seasonality; and/or other factors. Local procurement options differ greatly across communities depending on district and school size; proximity to agricultural areas; growing season; and demographics. USDA expects that State agencies will have varying definitions of “local agricultural products” that align with their particular needs and goals. The intent of schools utilizing local agricultural products is to serve more locally produced foods in school cafeterias, improve student nutrition, provide nutrition education opportunities, and support local and regional farmers, ranchers, and fishers. Local agricultural products can be meats, seafood, fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds, dairy foods, or legumes.

School Food Authority

A “School Food Authority” is the governing body which is responsible for the administration of one or more schools; and has the legal authority to operate the Program therein (i.e., National School Lunch Program) or be otherwise approved by USDA FNS to operate the Program.

Small Business

A small business is generally defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration as a business that is a for-profit business of any legal structure, independently owned and operated, not nationally dominant in its field, and physically located and operated in the U.S. or its territories.

Socially Disadvantaged Producer

A “Socially Disadvantaged Producer” is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Unprocessed or Minimally-Processed

The following processing methods are allowable and produce a product that is considered unprocessed or minimally-processed: cooling; refrigerating; freezing; size adjustment made by peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting, chopping, shucking, and/or grinding; forming ground products into patties without any additives or fillers; drying/dehydration; washing; packaging (such as placing eggs in cartons), vacuum packing and bagging (such as placing vegetables in bags or combining two or more types of vegetables or fruits in a single package); the addition of ascorbic acid or other preservatives to prevent oxidation of produce; butchering livestock and poultry; and cleaning fish.

APPENDIX B - GRANT APPLICATION BUDGET GUIDANCE

A screenshot of the budget portion for the Healthy Meals Incentives grant application can be found below. It will be helpful for you to have the following information ready to enter during the application process. All funding requests must be in whole dollars only. Please only complete the line items in the budget table that pertain directly to your specific project needs.

In the “Description” section of the table, please include the following details:

- Capital Equipment (useful life of more than one year and a cost of \$5,000 or more per unit)
 - Equipment description for each piece of equipment, including make and model, and the cost per unit
 - Indicate if this new equipment is for your operation
 - Indicate if this is replacement equipment; if so, how old is the existing equipment
- Small Equipment and Supplies (all other equipment and supplies)
 - Include a detailed list of supplies requested, including the cost per unit, the number to be purchased, and the total cost for each item
- Staffing (to be used to address operational challenges)
 - Include total wages on one line
 - Include taxes and benefits on one line
 - Include amount of time to be contributed to the project (hours or %FTE)
- Training (to be used to pay for staff development)
 - Include the wages of the staff attending the training
 - Include the taxes and benefits of the staff attending the training
 - Include the fees paid to a consultant or trainer to perform the training
 - Include any costs associated with conducting the training such as room rental, training supplies, etc.
- Food
 - Enter your total anticipated number of taste test events and anticipated food costs per event and a description of the taste test
- Nutrition Software
 - Enter the total cost of software licensing
- Contractual Services
 - Enter the purpose of the contract, the number of hours the contractor will work on the grant, and the total contract cost
- Other
 - Enter project costs that do not fit into the above categories
 - Provide details (similar to the categories above) of the item(s) you are requesting

BUDGET TABLE IN GRANT APPLICATION

Project Budget

Use the fields below to describe how the grant project will be implemented including the appropriate use of grant funds. For example, funds may be used for staffing, contractual services, training, equipment, nutrient analysis software, travel, and other direct costs. All budget line items must be allowable costs as defined in the RFA and 2 CFR 200 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E>).

Proposed costs must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives. All funding requests must be in whole dollars only. Please only complete the line items that pertain directly to your specific project needs.

	Amount	Description
Capital Equipment (equipment greater than \$5,000)	0.00	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Small Equipment & Supplies (equipment less than \$5,000)	0.00	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Staffing	0.00	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Training	0.00	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Food - sampling, recipe testing, nutrition education, farm-to-school activities	0.00	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Nutrition Software	0.00	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Contractual Services	0.00	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Other (Include all other project items that do not meet the requirements of the above categories in this section)	0.00	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Total Amount to School Support	0.00	

SAMPLE BUDGET TABLE

	Amount	Description
Capital Equipment (Equipment greater than \$5,000)	\$ 7,138.00	1 6 ft Beverage Air rolling refrigerated salad bar at \$7,138 for new high school salad bar
Supplies	\$ 25,244.00	8 sets of professional knife sets @ \$330 each, 8 commercial cutting board food prep tables @ \$375 each, 16 Vollrath 9-piece mixing bowl sets @ \$84 each, 50 Vollrath salad bar tongs @ \$3 each 4 Braisers @ \$1100 each, 4 Table Top Griddles at \$575 each, 4 Hubert grab and go hallway carts for breakfast and healthy after school snack programs @ \$2190 each, \$2350 for 54" Avantco reach in refrigerator to store extra fresh fruit and vegetables need for new HS salad bar
Staffing	\$ 94,968.00	4 staff (one per school) at 1080 hours each (180 6-hour days) to add scratch cooking to lunch menu at \$19.25 an hour with benefits plus 1 staff person at 720 hours or 4 hours a day for 180 days to work the new HS salad bar at \$17.00 with benefits
Training	\$ 2,262.00	1 6-hour training for 12 staff not included in the staffing budget above on scratch cooking daily. Trainer is \$750. Staffing costs for training is \$1512 based on 72 total hours at avg hourly rate of \$21 (including benefits)
Food - sampling, recipe testing, nutrition education, farm-to-school activities	\$ 1,800.00	Ingredients for 5 taste tests of culturally diverse foods that will be used in the new culturally diverse meals created as part of this grant. Cost per taste test per school is \$90 for a total of \$1800 (5 taste tests for 4 schools at \$90 each)
Nutrition Software	\$ 3,000.00	\$1500 a year for 2 years of software
Contractual Service	\$ 1,000.00	Professional chef to create 5 different culturally diverse meals to be added to the regular lunch menu that meet all USDA School Meal guidelines
Other	\$ -	
Total Amount to School Support	\$ 135,412.00	

APPENDIX C – GRANT APPLICATION PROJECT PLAN GUIDANCE

The Healthy Meals Incentives grant application includes a table to list major activities involved in the SFA’s project plan, estimated date(s) of completion for each activity, and key personnel responsible for each activity. The below table provides examples of the details needed to complete the project plan.

	Major Activities	Assigned to
August 1 – December 31, 2023	Example: 1. Identify new recipes using local ingredients. Review menu to identify needs. Review local purchasing opportunities. 2. Identify new equipment needed to prepare new menu options and evaluate kitchen workflow.	School Nutrition Director/Manager and School Cooks
January 1 – March 31, 2024	Example: 1. Purchase new equipment. Receive product specs from manufacturer. Meet with district facilities team to understand installation needs. 2. Develop bid process for capital equipment purchase. Review bids and identify supplier.	School Nutrition Director/Manager
April 1 – June 30, 2024	Example: 1. Install new equipment. Collaborate with the facilities team to install new equipment per warranty details. Test new equipment function. 2. Train staff in new equipment use. Develop Standard Operating Procedures. Secure training from supplier/manufacturer/facilities team for staff.	School Nutrition Director, Facilities Director
July 1 – September 30, 2024	Example 1. Test new recipes. Test and retest new recipes using local ingredients to ensure meal quality and standardization. 2. Increase staff familiarity with equipment use and receive TA from Chef Ann Foundation and/or RMC Health. 3. Conduct student taste-testing events.	School Nutrition Director

APPENDIX D – HMI RECOGNITION AWARDS AND CRITERIA

BREAKFAST TRAILBLAZER AWARD

The SFA reduces the use of added sugars at school breakfast and uses more than one meal service model (e.g., Breakfast in the Classroom, cafeteria, breakfast kiosks).

Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The SFA has changed their school breakfast menus to meet at least four of the following criteria:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Only unflavored milk is offered.2. Breakfast cereals, if offered, contain ≤ 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.3. Yogurts, if offered, contain ≤ 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces.4. No grain-based desserts are offered, as defined by superscripts 3, 4, or 5 in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Program’s Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs5. No high-intensity sweeteners (e.g., artificial sweeteners, non-nutritive sweeteners) are used to replace added sugars.• Meals meet all other meal pattern requirements, including weekly specifications for calories, sodium, and saturated fat.• At least half (≥50 percent) of the schools within the SFA* that participate in the School Breakfast Program must meet the criteria and at least one of the schools must implement the breakfast using an alternative meal service delivery model.• Breakfasts for all grade levels in the schools must meet the criteria. Both elementary and secondary school grade levels must be represented in the sample of schools meeting award criteria.• The SFA has used student engagement techniques (taste tests, student surveys, cooking demonstrations, or advisory groups) and/or culinary techniques (using herbs and spices, offering flavor stations, etc.) to ensure school meals are enjoyed by students. Student engagement may occur at any time during the school day. <p>*If your SFA only has one school site, you may submit documentation for just that site. If your SFA has three school sites, you must submit documentation for at least 2 sites to meet the 50 percent requirement.</p>

SMALL OR RURAL SFA BREAKFAST TRAILBLAZER AWARD

The small and/or rural SFA has a choice of criteria from which they can choose to demonstrate that they are reducing added sugars and sodium at school breakfasts.

Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The SFA has an enrollment of less than or equal to 5,000 students; OR the majority of students within the SFA are enrolled in a rural school as defined by a locality code of 41, 42, or 43 according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) online tool.• All (100 percent) of the schools within the SFA participate in the School Breakfast Program.• Within the past 12 months, the SFA has changed their school breakfast menus to meet at least four of the following criteria.<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All breakfast cereals contain ≤ 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce (only applies if offered).2. All yogurts contain ≤ 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (only applies if offered).3. No more than 2-ounce equivalents of grain-based desserts, as defined by superscripts 4 or 5 in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Program's Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs, are offered per week. Grain-based desserts defined by superscript 3 are not offered.4. At least ½ cup of dark green and/or ½ cup red/orange vegetables are offered throughout the week.5. All milk offered is unflavored.6. Breakfast-style sandwiches not on biscuits contain no more than 500 mg of sodium per 100 grams (~3.5 ounces) of sandwich. Breakfast-style sandwiches provided on biscuits contain no more than 710 mg of sodium per 100 grams (~3.5 ounces) of sandwich (criteria are based on FDA Food Categories and Voluntary Targets).7. Within the past 12 months, the SFA and/or a partner organization working in collaboration with the SFA has conducted at least two school breakfast nutrition education activities (e.g., taste-test event, social media campaign) for students. Activities can be district wide.

LUNCH TRAILBLAZER AWARD

The SFA provides reimbursable school lunches that are 10 percent lower in sodium than current meal pattern requirements and enjoyed by students.

Criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">At least half (≥ 50 percent) of the schools within the SFA* that participate in the National School Lunch Program provide school lunches that meet the Healthy Meals Incentives weekly sodium limits for the meals:	
Age/Grade Group	Healthy Meals Incentives Average Weekly Sodium Limits for School Lunches
K-5	$\leq 1,000$ mg
6-8	$\leq 1,105$ mg
9-12	$\leq 1,150$ mg
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meals for all grade levels in the schools must meet the criteria. Both elementary and secondary school grade levels must be represented in the sample of schools meeting award criteria.The SFA has used student engagement techniques (e.g., taste tests, student surveys, cooking demonstrations, or advisory groups) and/or culinary techniques (e.g., using herbs and spices or offering flavor stations) to ensure school meals are enjoyed by students. Student engagement may occur at any time during the school day.	
<p>*If your SFA only has one school site, you may submit documentation for just that site. If your SFA has three school sites, you must submit documentation for at least 2 sites to meet the 50 percent requirement.</p>	

SMALL OR RURAL SFA LUNCH TRAILBLAZER AWARD

The small and/or rural SFA has a choice of criteria from which they can choose to demonstrate that they are offering school lunches that are lower in sodium than current meal pattern requirements and enjoyed by students.

Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The SFA has an enrollment of less than or equal to 5,000 students; OR the majority of students within the SFA are enrolled in a rural school as defined by a locality code of 41, 42, or 43 according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) online tool.• All (100 percent) of the schools within the SFA participate in the National School Lunch Program.• Within the past 12 months, the SFA has changed their school lunch menus to meet at least four of the following criteria.<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lunch menus include fresh or frozen poultry, fish, pork, and lean meat (with no saline or salt solution added), rather than cured, salted, smoked, and other processed meats.2. Vegetables must be fresh and/or frozen and canned vegetables with no salt or sauce added.3. Fruits must be fresh and/or frozen and canned fruits with no added sugars.4. The SFA chooses lower sodium forms of products from vendors. For tips, check out <i>the Institute of Child Nutrition's Sodium Swaps: Utilizing Product Substitutions</i> available at the Shaking It Up website.5. The SFA uses alternatives to replace or reduce the amount of sodium in main dishes and/or sides, such as garlic, citrus juice, salt-free seasonings, herbs, or spices.6. Eighty percent of grains are whole grain-rich as defined by the Grain Requirements for School Meals.7. No grain-based desserts are offered, as defined by superscripts 3, 4, or 5 in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Program's Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs.8. All milk offered is unflavored milk.9. The SFA engages students in the development of school lunch menus, such as through student cafeteria "ambassador" programs, student-led school meal surveys, or advisory councils.10. Within the past 12 months, the SFA and/or a community partner has conducted at least two school lunch nutrition education activities (e.g., taste-test event, farm to school activities, social media campaign) for students. Activities can be district wide.

INNOVATIVE SCHOOL LUNCH MAKEOVER AWARD

The SFA improves the nutritional quality of a popular school lunch meal for at least one grade group, while maintaining student acceptance of the meal. The makeover meal meets all meal pattern requirements.

Criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The makeover meal meets the Healthy Meals Incentives sodium limits for the meal:	
Age/Grade Group	Healthy Meals Incentives Sodium Limits
K-5	≤1,000 mg
6-8	≤1,105 mg
9-12	≤1,150 mg
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The makeover meal includes only whole grain-rich grains, as defined by the Grain Requirements for School Meals, and no grain-based desserts.The menu features a local agricultural product meal component. When the meal is served, the local agricultural product is procured locally when available.The SFA engages students in the development and marketing of the makeover meal.The makeover meal is implemented in at least one school, for at least one grade group, within the SFA that participates in the NSLP and offered as part of school meal service at least three different times during the 12 months prior to award submission.	

INNOVATION IN THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF SCHOOL MEALS

The SFA offers nutritious school meal menu options that reflect the different cultures of students at the school.

Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">At least one school within the SFA has collaborated with students and/or the community to offer nutritious school meal menu options (at least one entrée and two sides) that reflect the cultures of students at the school, while meeting weekly meal pattern requirements. As part of this collaboration, the school provides culturally appropriate education for all students and their families on the new menu offerings and their cultural significance.Menus must have been used and nutrition education must have been provided within the past 12 months, and collaboration must be ongoing in support of these efforts. However, the menu development and start of the collaboration could have been earlier.

INNOVATION IN THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOL MEALS

The SFA implements the meal service of at least **three** menu items (entrées or sides) prepared from scratch using a local agricultural product or USDA Food in at least one school.

Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Within the past 12 months, the SFA implemented the meal service of at least three new menu items (entrées or sides) prepared from scratch using a local agricultural product or USDA food. The new menu items must have been offered as part of school meal service in at least one school.• The scratch-prepared menu items must be prepared from recipes developed in accordance with the USDA recipe standardization process, provide the minimum creditable amount of at least one meal component, and fit into weekly meal pattern requirements. The recipe may be from a source other than the award applicant (e.g., a USDA Standardized Recipe from the Child Nutrition Recipe Box).• Semi-homemade or speed-scratch menu items, condiments, salad dressings, grain-based desserts, sauces, etc. are not qualifying menu items for purposes of this award.• Scratch food production incorporates ingredients as close to their original state as possible. Pre-packaged tortillas, pizza dough, rolls, buns, and breads, including proof and bake breads and sandwich bread, dry pasta, canned beans, fajita chicken meat, beef crumbles, unseasoned cooked meat, chicken, fish, individually quick frozen (IQF) fruits/vegetables, and unseasoned canned fruits/vegetables are acceptable ingredients in menu items prepared from scratch for this award.• If the menu items contain grains, the grains must be whole grain-rich, as defined by the Grain Requirements for School Meals.• The SFA engages students in the marketing of the new menu items.

INNOVATION IN NUTRITION EDUCATION

The SFA ensures nutrition education is offered at schools.

Criteria
<p>The SFA ensures nutrition education is offered at schools by completing the following activities AND chooses one of the three activities listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The SFA’s Local School Wellness Policy (LWP) includes specific goals for nutrition education at elementary, middle, and high school grade levels. The Local School Wellness Implementation Plan for the school year includes specific nutrition education activities at elementary, middle, and high school grade levels.• At elementary, middle, and high school levels, the SFA provides nutrition education to the parents/guardians of students that includes a discussion of the sodium, added sugars and whole grain content of school meals. This may be one presentation, such as at back-to-school night.• Local agricultural products are highlighted on the school menu and/or in school cafeterias, in all schools within the SFA, when served. <p>Within the past 12 months, the SFA implemented at least one of the following nutrition education activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The SFA’s Local School Wellness Policy Coordinator or other designated nutrition education coordinator ensures school nutrition education activities are coordinated with school nutrition services (school meals) and any farm to school activities.2. All schools within the SFA display nutrition education posters and signage promoting healthy food and beverage choices wherever food and drinks are sold to students on the school campus, during the school day.3. Students are engaged in the development and delivery of school nutrition promotions and campaigns, such as through student cafeteria "ambassador" programs, student-led school meal surveys or advisory councils, and taste-testing events.