

# Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative

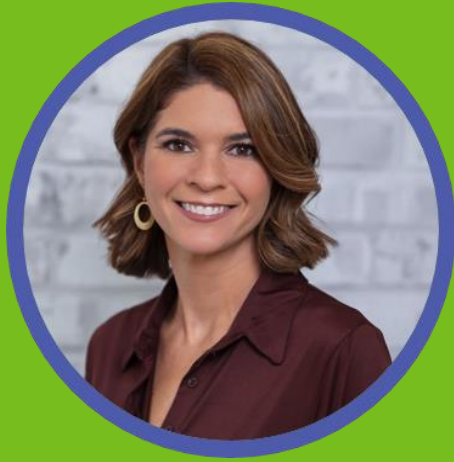
## Recognition Awards Informational Webinar





**Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)**

# Our Webinar Team



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# Agenda

- 1 Welcome and Introductions
- 2 Overview of Recognition Awards
- 3 How to Apply and Technical Assistance

- 4 Upcoming Opportunities
- 5 Closing



# Webinar Objectives

- 1 Identify categories for Recognition Awards
- 2 Identify how to apply for a Recognition Award
- 3 Identify how to receive technical assistance for applying for a Recognition Award
- 4 Identify what Recognition Award recipients will receive as part of the award

**We want to hear from you!**

Please respond in the chat:

What do you want to celebrate about your nutrition program?

# Recognition Awards Overview and Categories



# Overview of Recognition Awards

- Celebrate School Food Authorities (SFA) that have made improvements to the nutritional quality of their school meals
- Spotlight innovative school meal practices and strategies demonstrated by SFAs





# Streamlined Awards Application

- Updated criteria
- Reduced required documentation
- The Recognition Awards Application closes on June 30, 2025

**Easier and faster to apply  
and be recognized!**



# Trailblazer Awards

## Breakfast

 Breakfast Trailblazer

 Small and/or Rural SFA Breakfast Trailblazer

## Lunch

 Lunch Trailblazer

 Small and/or Rural SFA Lunch Trailblazer



# Breakfast Trailblazer Award



Breakfast  
Trailblazer



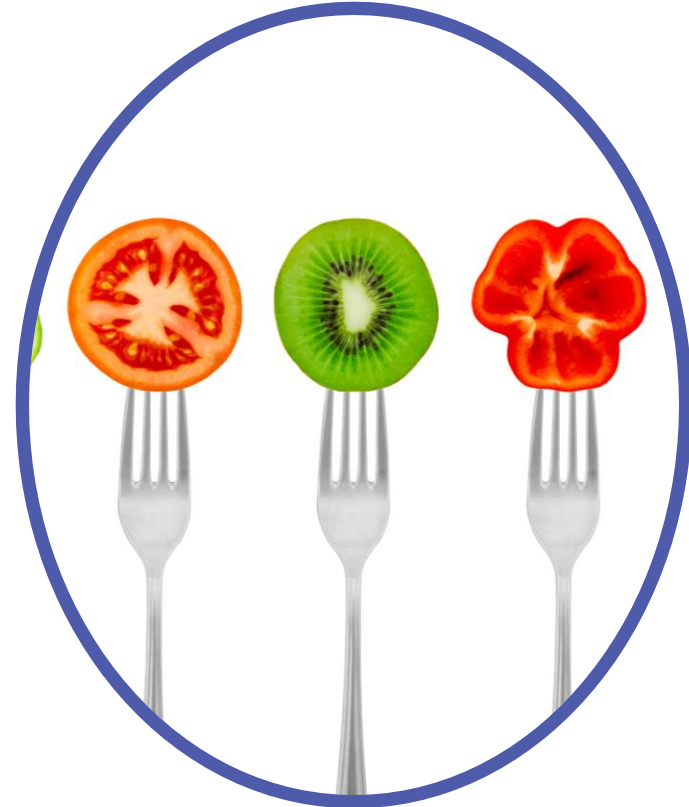
Small/Rural  
Breakfast  
Trailblazer

*School breakfast menu has limited added sugars*

## Criteria

Within the last 12 months

- Strategies to reduce added sugars
- Student engagement techniques  
(not required for small/rural SFAs)



# Breakfast Trailblazer Strategies



Breakfast  
Trailblazer



Small/Rural  
Breakfast  
Trailblazer

- Only unflavored milk
- Cereals contain less than or equal to 6 grams of added sugar
- Yogurts have less than or equal to 12 grams of added sugar
- No grain-based desserts
- Added sugars in weekly breakfast menus are less than 10 percent of the calories

# Lunch Trailblazer Award



Lunch  
Trailblazer



Small/Rural  
Lunch  
Trailblazer

*School lunches are lower in sodium*

## Criteria

Within the last 12 months:

- Strategies to reduce sodium
- Student engagement techniques  
(not required for small/rural SFAs)



# Lunch Trailblazer Strategies



Lunch  
Trailblazer



Small/Rural  
Lunch  
Trailblazer

- Incorporating fresh or frozen poultry, fish, pork, beef, and lean meat
- Serving fresh vegetables and/or frozen and canned vegetables with no salt
- Purchasing lower sodium forms of products from vendors
- Using natural flavor substitutes to reduce the amount of sodium
  - Garlic, citrus juice, salt-free seasoning, herbs, or spices

# Trailblazer Awards Required Documentation

- List of schools that implemented award criteria activities
- Written description of activities
- Copies of menu(s)
- Optional photos



# Innovative Practices Awards



Innovative School Lunch Makeover



Innovation in the Cultural Diversity of School Meals



Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals



Innovation in Nutrition Education







# Innovative School Lunch Makeover Award

*Improve the nutritional quality of a popular school lunch meal while maintaining student acceptance.*

## Criteria

Within the last 12 months:

- Reimbursable meal including all components
- Grains must be whole grain-rich grains
- Student engagement
- 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





# Cultural Diversity of School Meals

*School menu reflects the different cultures of students*

## **Criteria**

Within the last 12 months

- Offer at least one entrée and 2 sides that reflect cultures of students
- Provide culturally appropriate nutrition education





# Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals

*New menu items are prepared from scratch*

## **Criteria**

Within the last 12 months:

- Offer at least 3 new menu items (entrees and/or sides)
- Scratch-prepared menu items must be prepared from standardized recipes
- Scratch food production incorporates ingredients as close to their original state as possible
- Incorporate student engagement





# Innovation in Nutrition Education

*Nutrition education opportunities are available for students and parents/guardians*

## **Criteria**

Within the last 12 months, must meet 2 of the 5 criteria:

- Specific goals for nutrition education in the Local School Wellness Policy
- Provides nutrition education to parents/guardians
- Nutrition education activities incorporated in the school meals program
- Student engagement
- Local agriculture products



# Innovation Awards Required Documentation

- List of schools that implemented award criteria activities
- Written description of activities such as:
  - Student engagement
  - Collaboration with students and the community
  - Nutrition education provided, activities for parents, and student engagement
- Copies of menu(s)
- Nutritional information
- Standardized recipes
- Optional photographs



# Poll



# Awardees



- Clear Lake Community School District (Iowa)
- Sandy Valley Local School District (Ohio)



- Petersburg School District (Alaska)
- Regional School Unit 89 (Maine)

# How to Apply for an Award and Technical Assistance





# How to Apply



Grantees **Recognition Awards** ▾ Resources Summit ▾ News Subscribe

## Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards

<https://healthymealsincentives.org/>

# How to Apply



[Grantees](#) [Recognition Awards](#) [Resources](#) [Summit](#) [News](#) [Subscribe](#)



## Are you blazing new trails or using innovative strategies to improve school meals? Streamlined Application Now Available!

Embark on a journey with our streamlined Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards, designed to make the application process easier and faster. As part of a cooperative agreement to develop and implement the USDA Food and Nutrition Service's Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Initiative, Action for Healthy Kids is recognizing and celebrating School Food Authorities (SFA) who have made operational changes to improve the nutritional quality of their school meals, as well as SFAs who engage students and families in nutrition education and in the planning and preparation of nutritious school meals. For example, one SFA might have introduced a "Build Your Plate" station where students can customize their meals with a variety of nutritious options, while another might have organized cooking classes for students and parents to learn how to prepare healthy meals at home.

[APPLY NOW!](#)

# Login to the Portal to Apply



Welcome to myAFHK! This portal is your hub for all things related to your school's/district's health and well-being programs. Create an account, connect to your school/district, then implement programs!

Login

[Forgot password?](#)

[Not a member?](#)

# Login to the Portal to Apply



[Home](#)

[My School/District](#)

[Grants](#)

[Recognition Awards](#)

[Assessments](#)

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[FAQs](#)



## Welcome to the myAFHK Portal!

This portal is your hub for all things related to your school/district's health and wellness programs as well as the USDA Food and Nutrition Service's Healthy Meals Incentives Grant and Recognition Awards. Once you connect with your school/district, you will be able to assess your school-level best practices with the AFHK-modified version of the CDC'S School Health Index (SHI). When you complete the Action for Healthy Kids SHI, you will receive a report that summarizes your responses and provides concrete strategies to improve school health programs and practices. This portal will also allow you access to apply for AFHK grant opportunities and manage grant reporting requirements. Bookmark this page so you can return frequently as you work to ensure that every kid is healthy and ready to learn in your school/district.

# SFA Profile

1. Application Instructions 2. SFA Profile

## Application Instructions

### Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards Application for School Food Authorities

Review each award category, the criteria, and the documentation needed before submitting an application. Complete and review the application, gather and upload documentation, and submit the completed application. Applications may be submitted through **June 30, 2025**. You can visit the portal anytime to apply for individual awards. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and you can expect to receive a response within two months of submission.

#### Note the following before applying for an award:

- To qualify for an award, the required number of schools (indicated for each award criteria) within the School Food Authority (SFA) must meet all required criteria listed under the award category and submit all the required documentation.
- There are a total of eight Recognition Awards (see list below). You may apply for any number of the awards. Remember, an SFA may only receive recognition for each award once. So, once you receive recognition for an award, you may not reapply for the same award.

1. [Breakfast Trailblazer Award](#)
2. [Small and/or Rural School Food Authority Breakfast Trailblazer Award](#)
3. [Lunch Trailblazer Award](#)
4. [Small and/or Rural School Food Authority Lunch Trailblazer Award](#)
5. [Innovative School Lunch Makeover Award](#)
6. [Innovation in the Cultural Diversity of School Meals](#)
7. [Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals](#)
8. [Innovation in Nutrition Education](#)

- Applications should be completed by a School Nutrition Director or Foodservice Director.
- Your State agency must sign the [State Agency Confirmation Letter](#) before you submit your application but they are not required to review your application.

# SFA Profile Continued

1. Application Instructions 2. SFA Profile

## SFA Profile

### OMB Burden Statement

OMB Control Number: 0584-0685

Expiration Date: 06/30/2026

OMB BURDEN STATEMENT: The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is collecting this information to help recognize School Food Authorities (SFA) that meet the criteria of the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards. This is a voluntary collection and FNS will use the information to recognize SFAs for their significant improvements to the nutritional quality of school meals by exceeding the transitional school meal pattern requirements for sodium and whole grains and by taking steps to reduce added sugars. This collection does not request personally identifiable information that is subject to the privacy requirements outlined at 5 U.S.C. §552a(e)3 of the Privacy Act of 1974. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0685. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 900 minutes (15 hours) per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

### School Food Authority (SFA) Information

Please select your School Food Authority (SFA)\*

--select an item ▾

Are you a recipient of a Healthy Meals Incentives Grant?\*

Yes

No

# Recognition Awards Application



## State Agency Confirmation Letter

*This form will only need to be completed once regardless of the number of individual Recognition Awards you submit. Please note that your State Agency Confirmation Letter **MUST** be submitted before you can submit any of the individual awards.*

Your State agency must sign the [State Agency Confirmation Letter](#) before you submit your application but they are not required to review your application.

The State agency must confirm that the School Food Authority (SFA) does not have any outstanding corrective actions and that any previous findings have been resolved (except as a result of a public health emergency and situations resulting from hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods as well as other exceptional events). The State agency must also confirm that the SFA does not have any findings related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please upload your completed State Agency Confirmation Letter.

Add File...

Thank you for your submission!



## School Food Authority (SFA)

Please select your School Food Authority (SFA)\*

--select an item--

\*Required

Save Progress

# Recognition Awards Application

## Recognition Award Categories

Thank you for completing Step 1 of the Recognition Award application(s). You may now complete Steps 2 and 3 below. SFAs are eligible to apply for the Recognition Awards if they participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP) in the contiguous United States, Hawaii, Alaska, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, or the United States Virgin Islands.

### To Note:

- If the main point of contact has changed from the person who completed the SFA Profile, please reach out to [awards@healthymealsincentives.org](mailto:awards@healthymealsincentives.org) in order to receive assistance from an HMI Support team member to update the contact information
- There are two Recognition Awards for small and/or rural SFAs only. Therefore, you may not be eligible to apply to these awards. If your SFA is eligible, the award icon will be in color. If your SFA is ineligible, the award icon will be gray.
  - If you believe your SFA is eligible for an award that is gray, please reach out to [awards@healthymealsincentives.org](mailto:awards@healthymealsincentives.org) in order to receive assistance from an HMI Support team member to determine eligibility.
- Once an application has been started, the status of the application will appear under the icon.
  - **In Progress = Application is started but not yet complete. Edits can be made.**
  - **Submitted = Application is complete and submitted. Edits cannot be made.**
  - **In Review = Application is submitted and under review by the AFHK team.**
  - **Declined = Application was not approved by the AFHK team. Applicants may edit and resubmit their application for further review.**
  - **Awarded = Congratulations! Application has been approved.**



# Recognition Awards Application

## Lunch Trailblazer - Instructions

Small changes in your lunch menu can shake up big flavors and get you to your target. The Lunch Trailblazer has reduced sodium in school lunch and engages students in planning nutritious meals that are delicious.

### Please select your School Food Authority (SFA)

SFA Name\*

--select an item--

### Application Guidelines

- **Documentation:** Award criteria requires supplemental documentation to be uploaded (on the next page) to verify adherence to the award requirements. Each file upload field has a maximum file size of 25MB and can support up to 10 individual files. Please combine your supporting documentation where possible.
- **State Agency Confirmation Letter:** Prior to submitting the Recognition Award application, the State Agency Confirmation Letter from Step 2 of the application process must be submitted. Recognition Award applications may be edited and saved without the letter yet submitted, but the "Submit" button for the application will not be available until the letter has been submitted. Once this is complete, the Recognition Award may be submitted as well.
- **School Sites:** 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.

\* - These items are required.

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# Recognition Awards Application

## Lunch Trailblazer - Application

Within the past 12 months, the SFA has reduced sodium in school lunch.

1. At least half (≥50 percent) of the schools within the SFA that participate in the NSLP must meet the criteria, and all grade levels must be represented.

Upload a list detailing names and corresponding grade levels for each school in the district participating in the National School Lunch Program (indicating which schools were used to qualify for the award).\*

Add File...

2. Within the past 12 months, the SFA has changed their reimbursable school lunch menus to reduce sodium, using at least **TWO** strategies.

The following list includes example strategies that the SFA can use to reduce sodium in their lunch menus (additional strategies can also be used):

- Fresh or frozen poultry, fish, pork, beef, and lean meat (with no saline or salt solution added) are incorporated to reduce the offerings of cured, salted, smoked, and other processed meats.
- Vegetables are fresh, frozen, or canned with no salt added.
- Lower sodium forms of products from vendors are purchased. For tips, check out the *Institute of Child Nutrition's Sodium Swaps: Utilizing Product Substitutions* available at the [Shaking It Up](#) website.
- Natural flavor substitutes are used 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.

Please provide a description of each strategy selected including:

- How it was implemented;

# Recognition Awards Application

## Application Verification and Submission

### School Nutrition Director Attestation

Please read the following statement and sign below if you agree:

Action for Healthy Kids reserves the right to verify all information on the application and reject applications that are incomplete or otherwise fail to provide factual information.

I have reviewed this application and attest to the accuracy of the information provided. Our School Food Authority agrees to cooperate with USDA and Action for Healthy Kids upon request to publicize our efforts.

Signature \*

Date \*

# Recognition Awards Application

## Step 3: Recognition Award applications

Select icon to access application.

### Trailblazer Award Series



Submitted

[Download Form](#)

#### Breakfast Trailblazer

School breakfast can be the foundation to student success. The Breakfast Trailblazer fuels a student's day by providing a nutritious breakfast with limited added sugars and engages students in planning breakfast menus that are fun and enjoyable. [Download Award Criteria](#)



#### Small and/or Rural SFA Breakfast Trailblazer

School breakfast can be the foundation to student success. The Small and/or Rural SFA Breakfast Trailblazer fuels a student's day by



Not Started

### Innovation Award Series

#### Innovative School Lunch Makeover

Innovative School Lunch Makeover recognizes improvement in the nutritional quality of a school lunch meal while maintaining student acceptance. [Download Award Criteria](#)



Not Started

#### Innovation in the Cultural Diversity of School Meals

Innovation in the Cultural Diversity of School Meals recognizes nutritious school meal menu options that reflect the different

# My SFA received an award! What does it include?



- Recognition Awardee Toolkit
- Stipend for travel expenses to attend a Healthy Meals Summit
- National and local recognition and media opportunities
- A list of celebratory ideas for recognizing the school nutrition team

# Technical Assistance



- Email [awards@healthymealsincentives.org](mailto:awards@healthymealsincentives.org)
- Upcoming Opportunities for Support

# Upcoming Opportunities



# Quarterly Recognition Awards Informational Webinars

- May 8, 2024, 2:30 – 3:30 pm ET
- August 28, 2024, 2 – 3 pm ET
- December 3, 2024, 3 –4 pm ET





# Recorded Presentations – Coming Soon!

- Short, recorded presentations that include:
  - Eligibility information
  - Award criteria
  - Required documentation
  - How to apply for the specific award

<https://healthymealsincentives.org/recognition-awards/>



# Questions



# Can Food Service Management Companies submit a Recognition Awards application on behalf of an SFA they are contracted with?

Food Service Management Companies can assist an SFA with their Recognition Awards application; however, they cannot submit an application for an SFA.



# Is this webinar recorded, and will it be shared?

Yes!



# How will I know if my SFA receives an award?

Awardees will receive a congratulations email.

If your SFA's application needs revisions to meet the award criteria, you will receive an email that will include technical assistance.



# Thank you!



## Reminders:

- Register for May 8 Recognition Awards Informational Webinar
- Reach out to [awards@healthymealsincentives.org](mailto:awards@healthymealsincentives.org) to receive technical assistance
- Survey