



# Lunch Trailblazer Award



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.

School Food Authorities (SFA) are eligible to apply for this Recognition Award if they participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in the contiguous United States, Hawaii, Alaska, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, or the United States Virgin Islands.

## Award Criteria

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

- 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.
- 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.

\*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.

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.

Learn more about the Healthy Meals Incentives  
Recognition Awards at:  
[www.healthymealsincentives.org](http://www.healthymealsincentives.org)

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## Required Documentation

Provide 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).

Please provide a description of each strategy selected including:

- How it was implemented;
- When the change occurred; and
- What the impact was on the sodium content of school lunch menus (e.g., the strategy reduced sodium in school lunch menus by X grams).

Submit lunch menu for one month that has been posted on the district website or other public location representing all grade groups, including sufficient detail for reviewers to assess the changes. Identify which items on the menu reflect the implemented strategies.

Provide a description of student engagement activities and/or culinary techniques to assist with reducing sodium in school meals including, details about the activities, number of participants, outcomes, school name, and grade level.

Applicants may submit optional photographs including two or three clear, high-resolution photos of the menu items and any relevant activities with release forms providing USDA with royalty free unlimited rights to the use and printing of the photographs and parental permission forms, when applicable. A high-resolution image is one that's at least 300 DPI, or "dots per inch."

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