

# School Nutrition Update

November 27-December 1, 2023



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## Program Operations Information

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### *Respond to Verification Process Completion Survey SY 2023-24 – 11/30*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires State Agencies to determine whether School Food Authorities (SFAs) completed the Verification Process for the 2023-24 SY agreement period on or before November 15, 2023. [Respond](#) to the Verification Process Completion Survey by **11:59 pm on November 30** in order to indicate that the Verification Process was conducted within the required timeline. **NOTE:** Failure to respond to this survey will indicate that your SFA has NOT successfully completed the Verification Process by the November 15, 2023 deadline as required by Federal regulations.

This survey is not the Verification Collection Report. The Verification Collection Report is a different report that is submitted via the School Nutrition Technology System and is due by December 8, 2023. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact your Area Consultant or Jacquelyn McGowan, Compliance Specialist, [jacquelyn.mcgowan@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:jacquelyn.mcgowan@dpi.nc.gov).

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### *Be a Host for the 2024 N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute! – Reply by 12/1*

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition in conjunction with Chef Cyndie Story and the K-12 Team are thrilled to bring back the N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute for summer 2024! We will be offering six workshops across the state and are looking for public school units (PSUs) to serve as hosts for this three-day, hands-on workshop for School Nutrition managers.



We are looking for hosts for the following dates. (The first day is for setup only.)

- **June 24-28, 2024**
- **July 8-12, 2024**
- **July 22-26, 2024**
- **July 29-August 2, 2024**
- **August 5-9, 2024**

The benefits of being a host include:

- Convenient opportunity for training your School Nutrition managers (no travel/lodging costs),
- Easier chance to observe the workshop and the benefit to your School Nutrition managers,
- Reimbursement for costs for food and consumables related to conducting the workshop, and
- Potential positive media exposure for your School Nutrition Program.

Please reach out to Katrina Perry, Professional Development Consultant, [katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov), by **December 1** if your PSU is interested in serving as a host site for any of the dates listed above.

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## Help N.C. Reach #1 with the 2023 Farm to School Census Response

With a 65.1% response rate, North Carolina is currently one of the top five states with the 2023 USDA Farm to School Census. Help us reach #1 and 100%!



The USDA, Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program is conducting its fourth Farm to School Census, the only national survey that examines local food purchasing, school gardens, and agricultural education efforts in schools. School Food Authorities (SFAs) have until the end of **December 2023** to respond to the Census survey.

Look for the October 2 email from Decision Information Resources (DIR), [Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com](mailto:Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com), with a unique link for your SFA to respond to the Census survey. You may share this link with school and community partners, i.e., School Administrators, teachers, N.C. Cooperative Extension agents, etc., to assist in responding to the Census survey.

For questions about the 2023 Farm to School Census, please contact the project team by phone, 866-986-2230 (toll-free), from 9 AM to 9 PM ET, or by e-mail, [Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com](mailto:Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com). You may also reach out to your School Nutrition Area Consultants or N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Field Reps.

USDA offers [Farm to School Census Partner Resources](#) including an informational webinar, sample survey, preparation worksheet, Q & A, promotional artwork, and more. In addition, a recording of the October 24 [North Carolina Farm to School Census webinar](#) by USDA, NCDPI, NCDA&CS, N.C. Cooperative Extension, and the Farm to School Coalition of North Carolina is available.

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## School Nutrition Spotlight

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### Sharing Thanks – Surry County Schools

In the spirit of the season, Surry County Schools asked students and staff to share for whom they are thankful. Dobson Elementary 2nd grader, Kaylee Sweeney, is thankful for the great lunch ladies at DES. What a wonderful way to appreciate the special people who make a difference in our lives! If you would like to see more of the messages of appreciation from students and staff with Surry County Schools, check out the [SCS Facebook page](#).

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition is thankful for all our #NCSchoolNutritionHeroes across the state. Thank you for all you do each day to nourish students' bodies, minds, and souls!



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### Follow/Like Us on Social Media

Did you know you could find the NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition on social media? Follow or like our pages - @NCSchoolMeals and @Ray4NCKids on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

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## Share Your School Nutrition Photos

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition wants to highlight the appealing, wholesome, quality meals our School and Summer Nutrition Programs across the state offer to students. Share your beautiful photos of serving lines, complete school or summer meals, and nutrition education and promotion with us. Please send to Tracey Bates, NCDPI School Nutrition Promotion Specialist, at [tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov). Make sure to include the school and district or organization info so we can aim to credit the source. Be on the lookout for photos from across the state on social media.



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## Send in Articles or Topics of Interest for the School Nutrition Update E-letter

If you have a resource, grant, job opportunity, continuing education event, award announcement, shout out or other news item for the School Nutrition Update, **please send a brief ready-for-print article (250 words or less) to Tracey Bates, [tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov), by 12 pm on the WEDNESDAY** prior to when the SN Update is sent out the following week. Please include “SN Update” in the email subject line. If there are topics of interest you would also like to see included, please share as well. **Submissions received after the deadline**

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## Grant Opportunity

### Apply for the N.C. Innovative School Breakfast Programs Grant – Due 12/1

Governor Roy Cooper recently announced that \$1.4 million in federal funds will go to support North Carolina public schools in expanding School Breakfast Programs. The funding will provide grants of up to \$50,000 per School Nutrition Program to allow schools to better provide students with innovative school breakfast options, such as Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab-and-Go Breakfasts, or Second Chance Breakfasts when students have the option of eating breakfast during a break.

The Carolina Hunger Initiative (CHI) and the North Carolina Alliance for Health have been tasked with distributing the Innovative School Breakfast Program Grant funding. Priority will be given to schools that are newly participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Applications are due on **Friday, December 1**. CHI and the N.C. Alliance for Health held an informational webinar about the grant on November 9. [View the webinar, learn more, and apply.](#)

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### Support Kids Gardening – Apply for the 2024 Youth Garden Grant – Due 12/15

Since 1982, the KidsGardening’s Youth Garden Grant has supported school and youth educational garden projects that enhance the quality of life for youth and their communities. In early 2024, fifty organizations will be awarded \$500 in funding and a collection of gardening supplies for their youth garden program. Among the fifty winners, ten programs will also receive a specialty award package: five from their friends at Crescent Garden and five from their friends at Garden Tower. The selection of winners is prioritized based on demonstrated need and program impact. The deadline to apply is **December 15**. [Learn more and apply.](#)

## ***Learn About and Apply for the School Food Systems Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants***

Applications are now open for the School Food Systems Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants, which are part of the USDA, Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative. These grants will transform the K-12 school food marketplace by increasing collaboration between school districts, food producers, suppliers, distributors, and/or community partners. Students can expect to see improvements in the quality of food on their plates, thanks to these new efforts. The USDA, Food and Nutrition Service encourages all eligible applicants to consider applying for one or both grant opportunities:

- **Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools (PLANTS):** Led by Chef Ann Foundation, these projects will support regional efforts to expand scratch-cooked meal programs, increase equity, foster a resilient supply chain, and create scalable and sustainable change for school districts across the country. Chef Ann Foundation's PLANTS was awarded \$7.8 million and will provide sub-grants of \$500,000-\$600,000 to each of eight awardees. These grants will increase opportunities for regional small- and mid-scale producers, aggregators, and processors to become part of the K-12 school food market. Applications close on **January 22, 2024**.
  - [Register](#) and participate in an informational webinar on **November 29, 2023, 12 pm ET**.
- **Supporting Community Agriculture and Local Education Systems (Project SCALES):** Led by the Center for School and Community Partnerships at Boise State University, these projects will increase the procurement of locally sourced foods by developing innovative partnerships between schools and producers, growers, and processors. In addition, schools will be supported in the preparation of the foods and promoting them to students. Project SCALES was awarded \$16.1 million and will provide two cohorts with sub-grants of up to \$150,000 each (70 total). Applications for the first cohort will close on **January 26, 2024**. Applications for the second cohort will open in 2025.
  - Two informational webinars will be held regarding this grant opportunity. Register for the webinar on [December 6, 2023 \(English\), 2 pm ET](#) or [December 13, 2023 \(Spanish\), 2 pm ET](#).

Eligible organizations are encouraged to check the [USDA, Healthy Meals Incentives website](#) to learn more about the School Food Systems Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants. For updates, sign up for the bi-monthly newsletter at the bottom right of the [USDA, Team Nutrition website](#).

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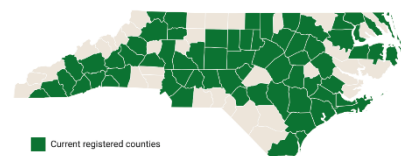
## **Nutrition Education & Promotion**

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## Make Your #NCCrunch Activities Count!

Did you serve North Carolina-grown fruits and vegetables or offer any educational activities for kids and adults to taste and learn about NC-grown fruits and vegetables during October? If so, make sure your efforts count toward the 2023 [#NCCrunch](#) in celebrating Farm to School and Early Care and Education Month. Our goal is to reach all 100 counties and 500,000 kids and adults. So far, 2023 data show that we reached 172,309 kids and adults at 1,060 sites in 63 counties plus the Qualla Boundary.

### NC Crunch 2023 Participation



If you participated in the #NCCrunch and did not complete the sign-up or did not know how many potential sites or participants you could reach when you completed the sign-up, then please complete the [2023 #NCCrunch sign-up](#) by **December 15**. Completing the sign-up is easy and takes 5 minutes or less. Help us know if the 2023 #NCCrunch was heard across the state!

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## Promote the N.C. Jr. Chef Competition

High school students can work with their teachers and local School Nutrition Programs to create school lunch entrée recipes that adhere to National School Lunch Program standards, feature at least two North Carolina-grown ingredients and one USDA Foods item, and appeal to students. The first place N.C. Jr. Chef team advances to the Southeast Jr. Chef Competition. Student members of the top three teams at the state and regional level win scholarships. See below for the 2024 N.C. Jr. Chef Competition key dates and action steps. For competition information and materials, visit the NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition [website](#). To learn more, listen to the [recording of an informational webinar](#) held November 8 (Password: NcJrchef23).



### 2024 NC Jr. Chef Competition (NCJCC) Timeline:

- **January 5, 2024** – Teams submit the online Submission Form, Application (Excel or Google Sheet), Recipe Photo and a signed NCJCC Permission and Release Form for each student team member. The Application includes team information, recipe ingredients and instructions, nutrient analysis, and cost analysis.
- **January 22, 2024** – Based on a review of applications and recipes, up to eight finalist teams will be selected to compete in the NCJCC cook-off phase. Teams will be notified regarding finalist selections.
- **February 19, 2024** – NCJCC finalist teams will submit their final application with recipe, nutrient analysis, cost analysis, recipe photo, time management plan, and an unedited recipe preparation video.
- **March 11 or 12, 2024** – NCJCC teams participate in live virtual interviews with panel of evaluators.
- **March 13, 2024** – NCJCC results will be announced via press release and social media. A virtual ceremony will be held to recognize all finalist teams and announce the results.
- **April 25, 2024** – The NCJCC first place team submits their application, recipe, recipe photo, permission forms, and media releases for the Southeast Jr. Chef Competition.
- **May 9-10, 2024** – State teams compete at the Southeast Jr. Chef Competition at Nashville State Community College in Tennessee.

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## Continuing Education

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### ***Understanding and Applying Sound Procurement Practices – 2/21-23***

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition is pleased to offer the School Nutrition Leadership Academy course, *Procurement University for School Nutrition Programs: Understanding and Applying Sound Procurement Practices*, **February 21-23, 2024**, at the Unity Church of the Triangle (5570 Munford Road, Raleigh). The workshop will be held during the following times:

- **February 21, 2024** - 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm
- **February 22, 2024** - 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
- **February 23, 2024** - 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Procuring goods and services for the School Nutrition Program is a detailed, complex, and precise process. Possessing a strong understanding of the procurement regulations and procedures is key to an accountable and successful procurement system, while offering the confidence of getting the highest quality products and services at the best prices. This course will provide instruction and afford the participant a learning experience for understanding the Federal and State procurement process and regulations guiding the SFA's procurement activities.

Lunch will be provided on the second day. Participants are responsible for all other travel, lodging, and meal costs associated with attending this workshop. Space is limited, and advance registration is required. Kindly [register](#) only if you can commit to attending all three days of the workshop. Contact Katrina Perry, Professional Development Consultant, at [katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov), with any questions.

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### ***Register for the 2024 N.C. Child Hunger Leaders Conference – 2/27***

Plan to participate in the 2024 N.C. Child Hunger Leaders Conference, an annual day of celebration and inspiration for anyone invested in making sure kids have access to healthy food. The one-day event is presented by the Carolina Hunger Initiative and will take place **February 27, 2024** at The Friday Conference Center in Chapel Hill. Attendees will have a chance to connect with other child hunger leaders from across the state, learn about new strategies and success stories, and leave reenergized to continue the fight against child hunger. [Learn more and register](#).

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### ***Plan to Participate – March N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute Administrator Showcases***

[Register](#) to participate in a N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute Administrator Showcase! The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition will be offering two opportunities across the state to participate in this unique event. Each event will take place over two consecutive days. Please plan to attend **only one** showcase event.

- **March 18-19, 2024** - Bob Martin Eastern Agricultural Center (Williamston)
- **March 21-22, 2024** - Masonic Center of Winston Salem (Winston-Salem)

While the N.C. K-12 Culinary Institutes were for your School Nutrition Managers, this event is for you and your central office staff (Supervisors, Menu Planners/Dietitians, and Training Specialists). Please join Chef Cyndie

Story and the K-12 Team from Culinary Solutions as they discuss the N.C. K-12 Culinary Institutes your School Nutrition Managers attended this summer, demonstrate new school meal recipes and quick-scratch techniques, and share helpful resources to assist you with incorporating the skills and recipes from the Institutes into your School Nutrition Program. You will even have the opportunity to taste-test some of the recipes! For questions or more information, reach out to Katrina Perry, Professional Development Consultant, [katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov).

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### Access Virtual Training Opportunities

The Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) has compiled [resources to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus](#). Online food safety/HACCP training is available on the NCDPI, School Nutrition [website](#) and the ICN [website](#). Additional continuing education resources are available on the School Nutrition [website](#) from NCDPI, ICN, the School Nutrition Association and other agencies and organizations. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics offers [continuing professional education resources](#) for Registered Dietitians/Nutritionists (RDNs) and Dietetic Technicians, Registered (DTRs).

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## Important Dates

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Date	Action Step
<b>November 30</b>	Deadline to respond to Verification Process Completion Survey SY 2023-24
<b>December 8</b>	Final Day to complete the Verification Collection Report in the SNTS
<b>December 10</b>	File Claims
<b>December 15</b>	Deadline to complete Civil Rights Compliance Worksheets (SFAs)
<b>December 31</b>	Deadline to complete USDA Farm to School Census

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained [online](#), 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;
- (2) (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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