

School Nutrition Update

December 11-15, 2023



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Program Operations Information

Count Down to 12/15 2023 Farm to School Census Deadline

With a **76.3% response rate**, North Carolina is currently **second in the Southeast Region** with the 2023 USDA Farm to School Census. **Help us reach #1 and 100%!** School Food Authorities (SFAs) have until **midnight December 15** to respond.



Please note the following:

- The USDA Farm to School Census is the only national survey that examines local food purchasing, school gardens, and agricultural education efforts in schools.
- **All SFAs should respond to the Census whether they participate in farm to school or not.**
- **Response to USDA data collection surveys is required by federal regulations and the Annual Agreement SFAs complete with the NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition.**
- **Look for the October 2 email from Decision Information Resources (DIR), Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com, or the snail mail letter from USDA and DIR with a unique link and PIN for your SFA to respond to the Census survey. If you cannot find the unique link and PIN to complete the Census survey, please let us know immediately.**
- You may share this link and PIN 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**. 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.

Complete Quarterly Supply Chain Assistance Report – Due 12/29

As a reminder, Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) Reports are to be completed *quarterly* by all School Food Authorities (SFA) that received SCA funds in 2022 and 2023. This is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirement and continues until all the SCA funds are exhausted. If you have any questions, contact your Area School Nutrition Consultant. The upcoming report is for October, November, and December 2023 and is due no later than **Friday, December 29, 2023**.

The reporting is short, simple, and done electronically, with only a few questions.

- Access the [survey](#) for completing the required quarterly report.
- Utilize [step by step guidance](#) complete the survey.
- Reference a [Q & A](#) on Supply Chain Assistance funds.

Please keep in mind the following:

- USDA requires that SCA funds be used exclusively for the purchase of domestic food products that are unprocessed or minimally processed.
- Fluid milk and other dairy foods such as cheese and yogurt and 100% juices count as minimally processed.
- Produce that is cut, pureed, frozen, canned, or dried is considered minimally processed.
- Baked goods, chicken nuggets, and pre-packaged sandwiches or meals are considered to be significantly processed or prepared and cannot be purchased using SCA funds.

Be on the Lookout for the 2024 Menu Templates

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition has developed menu templates for February through July 2024 for School and Summer Nutrition Programs to promote school and summer meals. The menu templates are available for elementary (family audience) and middle/high schools (student audience). The menu templates will be posted soon to the NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition [website](#).

As you review, share, and use the menu templates, please note the following:

- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794d) requires that electronic and information technology of Federal agencies and agencies that receive Federal funding is accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public. The updated/new menu templates have been designed to comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- The menu templates were created in Word to allow for ease of use for adding in local contact and menu information. You may choose to share the menu templates in Word or PDF format, or both, with your school community. If converting from Word to PDF, please use “Save as PDF” rather than “Print to PDF” to avoid accessibility issues.
- After you have added in your local contact and menu information and before you share the menu templates, please run an accessibility check using tools available within Word or Adobe software to make sure the menu templates are still compliant and will work with visual reader software. If you have access to visual reader software, you may wish to run an accessibility check using the software as well.
- The menu templates were created for two audiences – elementary for parents/families and middle/high for students.
- The menu templates are two pages in length – one page for your breakfast menu and one page for your lunch menu – to allow enough room to list all your available menu choices. If you can fit your breakfast and lunch menu choices within the blocks for each day, feel free to use only one page of the menu template and update the title at the top of the page accordingly.
- For your convenience, alternate text has been included for the image header, month table, and footer with NCDPI logo and nondiscrimination statement. Please do not remove the alt text.



If you use other templates to share your menu information, please check and ensure that the menus are Section 508 compliant. For more information regarding Section 508 compliance, please visit the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Office of Government-wide Policy (OGP) Section 508 [website](#). If you have questions

regarding the menu templates, please reach out to your Area Consultants or Tracey Bates, School Nutrition Promotion Specialist, tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov.

Sharing Appreciation for our #NCSchoolNutritionHeroes – Happy Holidays!

The holiday season offers us an opportunity to count our many blessings for which we are grateful. We appreciate and consider it an honor to serve students across our state every day, helping them to succeed in and out of the classroom. We are so grateful for our #NCSchoolNutritionHeroes who make a difference in the lives of students every day. And, we are thankful for our school and community partners. Thank you for all you do each day!



The School Nutrition Update will take a holiday break. The next planned issue will be January 8-12. If we have breaking news to share in between e-letter issues, we will send out a message through the NCDPI, School Nutrition listserv.

School Nutrition Spotlight

Recognizing Summer Nutrition Program Awardees!

New and potential Sponsors for Summer Nutrition Programs participated in SummerPalooza! 2024 summits in Hickory, Raleigh, and Greenville November 28-30, 2023, learning how to make summer meal sites the destination to be for kids and teens this coming summer. During the summits, the NCDPI, Summer Nutrition Program team recognized seven Summer Nutrition Programs for their efforts! N.C. Summer Nutrition Champion Awards recognize Sponsors who are implementing innovative and creative practices to expand their Summer Nutrition Programs. The Turnip the Beet award, sponsored by USDA, recognizes outstanding Summer Nutrition Program Sponsors who work hard to offer high quality meals that are appetizing, appealing, and nutritious.

- Rising Star Award
 - Boys & Girls Club of the Coastal Plain
- Going the Distance Innovation Award
 - Boys & Girls Club of Wake County
 - Cumberland County Schools
 - TCK Providence, Inc.
- Farm to Summer Award
 - Franklin County Schools
 - Gaston County Schools
- Turnip the Beet Award
 - Beaufort County Schools



The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Coastal Plain was recognized with the Rising Star Award for their educational enrichment programming, such as “Teen Chef” and creation of edible fruit art snacks, to encourage healthy habits using a

hands-on approach to learning. Their networking with other community groups expanded the programs they could offer and provided engaging opportunities for their eleven meal sites throughout the summer.

Three Summer Nutrition Programs received Going the Distance in Innovation Awards. The Boys and Girls Clubs of Wake County provided over twenty-five different programs to children to encourage healthy eating including their Healthy Habits curriculum, culinary lessons, gardening, and physical activity. Cumberland County Schools utilized mobile vans, wrapped with colorful graphics, to provide meals to multiple meal sites over the summer. The vans also brought books and non-perishable foods through partnerships with community organizations in the county. TCK Providence, Inc. operated a new summer meal site in 2023, New Arrivals Institute (NAI). NAI provided a multitude of programs for families new to the country and, in doing so, saw an increase in the number of meals served at the site between June and August. Overall, NAI served over three hundred meals to children over seven weeks.

Franklin County Schools and Gaston County Schools received Farm to Summer Awards. Franklin County Schools collaborated with multiple community partners to offer a “Dairy Farming Day” event so children could learn all about dairy. From milking a lifelike-appearing cow to games, donning sticker milk moustaches, and making smoothies and butter, Dairy Farming Day educated students in a fun, unique way. The Gaston County School Nutrition Department’s GAP-certified school garden has quickly grown in size to become a small farm of 0.6 acres. Through Summer Nutrition Programs, children were able to eat farm produce grown specifically for them. The program harvested seven hundred fifty pounds of cucumbers and forty pounds of cherry tomatoes.

North Carolina recognizes Turnip the Beet Award nominees prior to the official USDA award-level recognition. Beaufort County Schools was recognized for their efforts to provide student-favorite meals with fresh and North Carolina-grown items and collaborate with community partners like the Literacy Council and volunteers to offer educational enrichment opportunities for kids and teens.

The Summer Nutrition Team thanks all who submitted award applications and congratulates the awardees. All Summer Nutrition Program Sponsors are encouraged to [learn more about the awards](#) and submit award applications next year.

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.

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. 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.



Davidson County Schools

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, 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 will be saved for the next issue.**

Job Opportunity

Work with Guilford County Schools – 2 Position Openings

Guilford County Schools is seeking applicants for two open positions with School Nutrition Services (SNS) - Finance Manager and Staffing Coordinator. The Finance Manager performs and maintains the School Nutrition budget, forecasts, ensures the expense to revenue reporting are appropriately captured and coded on the general ledger, and maintains timely expenditure reports for all active School Nutrition accounts. The Staffing Coordinator performs technical, administrative, and managerial work to provide leadership for staffing and other human resource activities of the School Nutrition Services Department. [Learn more and apply.](#)

Grant Opportunity

Apply for a USDA Farm to School Grant – Due 1/12

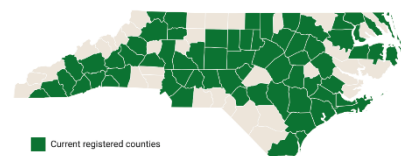
The USDA, Farm to School Program is excited to announce the official release of the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Farm to School Grant Program Request for Applications (RFA). USDA will award up to \$12 million in competitive grants to eligible entities through the grant program this fiscal year. Each grant will help implement farm to school programming that increases access to local food in eligible schools, connects children with agriculture for better health, and inspires youth to consider careers in agriculture. The RFA includes five tracks - Implementation, State Agency, and three Turnkey grants - to support a variety of projects and implementation stages. A wide variety of entities are eligible to compete for funding through this grant opportunity: schools and other institutions operating the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and/or Summer Food Service Program; State agencies; local agencies; Indian Tribal Organizations; small- to medium-sized agricultural producers or groups of small- to medium-sized agricultural producers; and non-profit organizations. The application closing date is **January 12**. [Learn more and apply.](#)

Nutrition Education & Promotion

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!

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.

Continuing Education

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](#).

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)

Workshop times are as follows:

- Day 1 - 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
- Day 2 - 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

Check-in starts 30 minutes prior to the start time each day. Participants are responsible for all travel expenses including breakfast, beverages, snacks, lodging, and mileage. Lunch and one snack will be provided each day.

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.

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).

Important Dates

Date	Action Step
November 30	Deadline to respond to Verification Process Completion Survey SY 2023-24
December 8	Final Day to complete the Verification Collection Report in the SNTS
December 10	File Claims
December 15	Deadline to complete Civil Rights Compliance Worksheets (SFAs)
December 15	Deadline to complete USDA Farm to School Census
January 5	Deadline for teams to submit an application, recipe, and permission forms for the 2024 N.C. Jr. Chef Competition
January 12	Deadline to apply for a USDA Farm to School Grant

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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.

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