

# Healthy School Meals

## Federal Lobbying Grants

More than 30 million children participate in the National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), and three quarters of the children in the school lunch program are from families with low income. Making improvements to school food is a key strategy to support every child's health. The COVID-19 pandemic is increasing national attention on the critical role that school meals have in feeding children in the United States.

Congress has the opportunity through the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR)—legislation taken up every five years that reauthorizes child nutrition programs such as the NSLP and SBP—to improve upon the school meals programs to better support nutrition and food insecurity. CSPI aims to ensure CNR provides healthy school meals for all students. To find out more information about our advocacy on CNR, please go to: <https://cspinet.org/2022-child-nutrition-reauthorization>.

CSPI is seeking applicants to advocate for key provisions in CNR and similar legislation as needed, such as the Build Back Better Act (BBBA), and annual appropriations that support school meal priorities. Grants will also support regulatory advocacy with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on school meals. The USDA has announced plans to update the school meal nutrition standards consistent with the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans by the end of 2022.

*Applications can be submitted for up to \$25,000 in direct costs\* for a duration of up to 12 months and can support non-lobbying and lobbying activities.*

To be considered for this opportunity, applications must address either of the following priority areas in CNR and similar legislative and regulatory activities, such as the BBBA, appropriations, or rulemaking by the USDA:

### **1. Protecting and strengthening the school food nutrition standards.**

- The pandemic has impacted the nutritional quality of school meals and greater support will be needed to help schools provide meals that meet strong nutrition standards. More specifically, Congress and the USDA need to strengthen sodium-reduction targets, establish an added sugars standard, and protect the whole grain-rich standard, and provide supports for schools to meet these standards

### **2. Providing healthy school meals for all (offering free meals to all students).**

- Offering free meals to all students eliminates the cost barrier for children whose families' income is near the cutoff line to receive free school meals. And having meals available to every student for free eliminates the stigma of being singled out for receiving school meal assistance. Congress must continue healthy school meals for all.

**Additional areas of advocacy that are strongly encouraged but not required to be considered include:**

1. **Increased reimbursement and technical assistance on nutrition standards:** Provide increased reimbursement to incentivize schools to meet stronger nutrition standards and provide robust USDA and state agency technical assistance.
2. **Seat time/mealtime requirements:** Require minimum seat time or meal period to ensure sufficient time to eat (e.g., 20 minutes in seat), and reasonably timed meal periods (e.g., lunch after 11am and before 2 pm).
3. **Eliminate synthetic food dyes and artificial sweeteners:** Require phasing out of synthetic food dyes and artificial sweeteners which are associated with adverse behavioral effects in children and pose cancer risk, respectively.
4. **Funding for kitchen equipment:** Provide kitchen equipment grants for upgrades, repairs, and maintenance.
5. **Summer meals:** Require all Summer Food Service Program meals meet standards consistent with those for breakfast and lunch served during the school year.

Applications are welcome to include additional priorities not listed.

**Grants may support both lobbying and non-lobbying expenditures. Examples of activities that are considered lobbying include:**

- Lobbying Representatives and/or Senators;
- Power mapping to determine grassroots allies (e.g., state or local officials, senior leaders in influential organizations, etc.) to weigh in with the Congressional member;
- Generating support through calls to action with social media, blogs, and action alerts;
- Recruiting grassroots to join lobbying meetings and have grassroots conduct separate lobbying meetings; and
- Building grassroots for specific calls to action of the Congressional member (e.g., letter-writing campaigns, action alerts, participating in virtual events with the Congressional member, etc.).

Applications are welcome to include additional lobbying activities not listed.

**Examples of activities that are considered non-lobbying activities include:**

- Developing and disseminating public comments and other materials in response to USDA rulemaking on school food nutrition standards;
- Engaging with state and local media (e.g., interviews, op-eds, letter to the editor, editorial memo, etc.);
- Training advocates and/or building local advocacy capacity;

- Story banking/collection of stories or any other creative materials developed on the importance of the issue; and
- Public or coalition meetings to educate and build support among other allies and neutralize opposition on the issue.

Applications are welcome to include additional non-lobbying activities not listed.

**CSPI will provide the following to grantees:**

- Provide resources such as talking points, fact sheets, model legislative language, advocacy toolkit;
- Coordinate strategy and provide technical assistance on advocacy with Congress;
- Join Hill visits and other relevant meetings as needed; and
- Conduct training, as needed, for how to do Congressional visits.

**The deadline for application submission is April 1, 2022.**

**Priority will be given to applicants from organizations based in or with an advocacy network in the following states:** Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Vermont.

For information on how to apply online, please visit our [website](#). More details about our grantmaking are also available in our 2022 Grant Applicant Guide. For any other questions you may have about this specific funding opportunity or our application process in general, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at [grants@cspinet.org](mailto:grants@cspinet.org).

*\* In recognition of the disproportionate impact of gaps in operational funding for smaller nonprofits, we have implemented a tiered Indirect Cost rate structure. Indirect costs will be added on top of submitted project budgets:*

- 12% indirect costs for grantees with annual budgets over \$5 million
- 15% indirect costs for grantees with annual budgets \$1 million up to \$5 million
- 20% indirect costs for grantees with annual budgets under \$1 million