Community-Driven Policy Campaign to Advance Health Equity through School Meals

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 30 million children participated in the National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), and three quarters of the children in the school lunch program were from families with low incomes. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 improved access to free school meals and improved their nutritional quality. Today, as schools recover from pandemic-related closures and challenges, communities have an opportunity to rethink school meals and envision a future where school nutrition programs better serve the health and well-being of students and represent the values of the community.

Our goal in deploying community-prioritized policy innovation grants is to spur innovation at the local and state level by funding school meals advocacy work led by the communities most affected by prospective policy change. These grants are intended to encourage community leadership, including building the capacity of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color-led organizations as they advance health, nutrition, and equity through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO), or Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Campaigns must be driven by the communities’ interests and needs and be co-created with those most impacted by changes to school meal policies.

We are seeking to fund local, state, Tribal, or U.S. territory policy campaigns to advance health equity through school meals. Policy campaigns may include, but are not limited to:

- Improving access to meals in and out of school;
- Improving the healthfulness of school foods;
- Exploring opportunities to enhance cultural competency and celebrating students’ diverse backgrounds in school meals;
- Minimizing stigma associated with participation in school meals;
- Connecting school meals advocacy with existing community-driven food justice efforts;
- Incorporating values-driven procurement in school meals;
- Assessing pay and labor inequities in school meals programs and exploring opportunities to improve employee retention and satisfaction;
- Providing sufficient time to eat and meals after recess;
- Studying reasons for gender differences in school meal participation and exploring opportunities to bridge the participation gap.

Applications can be submitted for up to $70,000 in direct costs* for a duration of up to 15 months and can support non-lobbying and lobbying activities.
Key Application Priorities:

- We are specifically interested in partnering with organizations that are led by and mission-oriented to improving conditions that affect the quality of life for Black, Indigenous, and/or Latine people.

- Work under these grants must center authentic community engagement in conceptualizing, designing, and implementing the policy campaign.

- We are open to funding campaigns that are at various stages of the policy process, including early-stage campaigns focused on community engagement (such as focus groups or key informant interviews), policy formulation and feedback, advocacy for policy passage, and/or policy implementation. For existing campaigns, applications should describe the community engagement process that has taken place to date and the ways in which the campaign goals and tactics are community driven and informed.

- This funding is focused on policy change; therefore we are unable to fund direct service programs, pilots, and capital projects.

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.

The deadline for Letter of Interest (LOI) submission is 11:59PM EST Sunday, June 12, 2022. All LOIs should be submitted through CSPI’s Online Grant Management System.

* 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 of $1 million up to $5 million
- 20% indirect costs for grantees with annual budgets under $1 million