

2023 Farm Bill Platform Summary

Nourish Colorado



As a statewide nonprofit organization focused on increasing nutritious food access while supporting diversified agricultural producers, Nourish Colorado advocates for equitable and innovative food system policies. To advance this work for producers, food system workers, and consumers, Nourish Colorado has identified recommendations for the upcoming 2023 Farm Bill.

This Farm Bill Platform Summary provides recommendations for Congress to consider when writing the 2023 Farm Bill. Nourish Colorado envisions a farm bill that increases equitable access to nourishing food delivered through a just and resilient food system by strengthening the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), supporting equity in local food systems, enhancing nutrition programs for older adults, and using values-based procurement practices for public food purchases.

Each recommendation has been thoughtfully designed based on conversations with those most directly involved or impacted by these issues, partner organizations, agencies working in the field, and leading national advocates. The recommendations are each supported by background information, an explanation for why these recommendations are important, the identification of partners also interested in seeing this change, and relevant introduced legislation.

Overview of Recommendations:

- 1. Strengthen the Integrity of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
 - a. Advance Innovation and Sustainability in SNAP Incentive Initiatives
 - b. Increase the Reach and Impact of SNAP Benefits
- 2. Ensure Equity in Local and Regional Food Systems**
 - a. Strengthen Core Grant Programs
 - b. Improve Equitable Land and Water Access Initiatives
- 3. Increase the Reach of Nutrition Programs for Older Adults**
 - a. Enhance the Impact of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)
- 4. Strengthen Values-Based Procurement for Public Expenditures on Food**
 - a. Allow for a Stronger Farm to School Program
 - b. Create a USDA Produce Procurement Program

We thank Colorado's Congressional Delegation and staff for helping create a 2023 Farm Bill that benefits all communities, allows everyone to have affordable access to nutritious, fresh foods, and provides agricultural producers with the resources needed for a thriving, healthy future for all. We hope to collaborate with our Delegation and other interested partners in this work of reauthorizing the Farm Bill. If you have any questions or thoughts on Nourish Colorado's Farm Bill Platform, feel free to contact Wendy Peters Moschetti, Executive Director at Nourish Colorado, at wendy@nourishcolorado.org.



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1. Strengthen the Integrity of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Title IV: Nutrition Programs

a) Advance Innovation & Sustainability in SNAP Incentive Initiatives

- i) Increase mandatory GusNIP funding from \$250 million over five years to a minimum of \$200 million per year.
- ii) Reduce the required match for SNAP incentives to no more than 10%.
- iii) Codify statutory language that allows for flexible produce incentive earning and redemption.
- iv) Develop a new, separate tier of funding within GusNIP with a minimum grant amount of \$10 million.

b) Increase the Reach and Impact of SNAP Benefits

- i) Create processes to streamline SNAP access and increase SNAP outreach.
- ii) Increase SNAP benefit allotments to support healthy diets for SNAP shoppers.

2. Ensure Equity in Local and Regional Food Systems

Title X: Horticulture

a) Strengthen Core Grants Programs

- i) Increase the funding levels available across the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP).
- ii) Make LAMP programs more equitable and accessible.

b) Improve Equitable Land and Water Access Initiatives

- i) Ensure inclusive access to natural resource conservation and disaster programs.
- ii) Provide equitable land and capital access initiatives.

3. Increase the Reach of the Nutrition Programs for Older Adults

Title IV: Nutrition Programs

a) Enhance the Impact of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

- i) Increase SFMNP funding.
- ii) Modernize SFMNP to reach more eligible participants.
- iii) Ensure program funding is equitably distributed.

4. Strengthen Values-Based Procurement for Public Expenditures on Food

Title IV: Nutrition Programs

a) Allow for a Strong Farm to School Program

- i) Allow School Food Authorities (SFA's) to use local product specifications.

b) Create a USDA Produce Procurement Program

- i) Create a new, permanent values-based fresh produce procurement program in the USDA.
- ii) Expand criteria used in public procurement contracting.



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Title IV: Nutrition Programs

Strengthen the Integrity of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)



Background

The United States' largest anti-hunger program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is relied on by over 41 million people across the country to get the food they need to feed their family.ⁱ One of every eight people, or 13% of the total U.S. population, participates in SNAP.ⁱⁱ However, most SNAP participants do not receive enough money to buy food for an entire month, especially due to rising food costs resulting from the pandemic and recent inflation increases. The average daily SNAP benefit for an individual household member was \$4.22 in 2019 and \$6.96 in 2021 with pandemic increases.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Grant Program (GusNIP) was established in the 2018 Farm Bill and provides permanent funding to over 200 projects across 48 States, most Territories, and some Tribal Nations to offer SNAP incentives and produce prescriptions.^{iv} SNAP incentive programs increase benefits available for produce purchases by providing cash incentives to SNAP shoppers (through coupons, vouchers, or at the point of sale) when they use their EBT card at participating vendors or retailers. SNAP incentives are administered in a variety of ways across the country but have universally been found to decrease food insecurity and increase produce consumption.^v The GusNIP program is also reported to cause a substantial local economic impact, which supports stability and growth for community food systems.^{vi}

In Colorado, the GusNIP incentive program is implemented as Double Up Food Bucks and is offered at farmers markets, farms, small stores, and large retailers across the state.^{vii} The Colorado Double Up Food Bucks program is offered at 85 locations in almost 30 counties and provided \$1,101,494.24 in 2022.^{viii} Colorado the *Critical Services for Low Income Households* bill, HB 22-1380, allocating \$1 million to the Colorado Department of Human Services to build the technology that would enable EBT Integration, or the placement of SNAP incentives directly on to the SNAP shopper's EBT card.^{ix} EBT integration is intended to increase the reach and efficiency of the incentive program, as it would automate the incentive, decrease stigma, and ease administrative burden at retailers.

Why These Recommendations?

SNAP is our nation's most critical tool for promoting nutrition and food security for all. Collectively, the recommendations listed below will help bring SNAP benefits to more eligible individuals and families while empowering the program to better support local economies and expand access to nutritious foods. The suggested changes below will also ensure that federal dollars are used more efficiently in the SNAP program.

SNAP

Even before the pandemic, roughly half of households participating in SNAP reported that they were food insecure—or had a lack of consistent access to enough food to support an active, healthy lifestyle.^x Then the pandemic caused food insecurity to spike even higher, and still today rates remain higher than pre-pandemic figures.^{xi} As the pandemic-related SNAP benefit increases have demonstrated, an overall increase in SNAP benefit levels is possible and needed for our country. The outdated Thrifty Food Plan (the basis for determining SNAP benefit allotments) is no longer serving SNAP participants in the way it was originally designed, which was to provide a nutritionally adequate diet at a minimal cost.^{xii} SNAP benefit amounts should match what participants need to feed their families in today's world—and be equitably available to all those that need it. As proposed in the *Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021*, SNAP benefits could approach a more appropriate level by adopting the Low-Cost Food Plan as the basis for determining SNAP benefits.^{xiii} SNAP benefits should also be able to be used in a cost-effective, dignified manner, which requires removing some of the burdensome restrictions on SNAP, such as the ban on hot and prepared foods—as identified in the *SNAP PLUS Act of 2021*.^{xiv}



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Incentive Programs

Fruit and vegetable incentive programs, funded by GusNIP, help address the limitations of the SNAP benefit and help stretch household food dollars. These programs are also growing significantly across the country. Incentive spending at local food retailers generated an economic impact of approximately \$41 million in 2021, which demonstrates a 24% increase from 2020.^{xv} The USDA recently invested \$59 million to better support the growing incentive programs and encourage more families to eat healthy produce by reaching more grantee partners, including many first-time program applicants and underrepresented communities.^{xvi} While GusNIP began as a small pilot program, it has proved successful in many ways and is propelling local economies as well as affording more households choice and flexibility in their food spending. As these locally administered programs grow, each participating partner, state, Tribal Nation, or Territory grantee will need more federal GusNIP funding to support this demand for their incentive programs. By increasing the federal GusNIP grants available, each partner grantee can ensure that a greater number of SNAP participants are able to use their benefits to purchase even more nutritious foods for their households.

There are currently three main GusNIP grant tiers: produce prescriptions, small scale pilot planning grants, and mid- and large-scale grants.^{xvii} However, several programs across the country are poised to grow in ways that the current grants cannot support. For example, multiple states have already begun piloting what is called "EBT integration". These states will need higher funding levels for integrating this broad program that: allows for a higher efficiency rate, potentially reaches all eligible SNAP shoppers, and reduces the burden and stigma on SNAP shoppers because the incentive money will automatically be issued to their EBT card, instead of requiring them to bring in an old receipt or voucher. The GusNIP program will require a new tier of funding to support grantees who are ready to scale in ways where 90% of the grant funds would go directly to produce incentives by the end of the grant, allowing for a more efficient use of federal program dollars.

Currently, the GusNIP grant program requires a dollar-for-dollar match.^{xviii} Therefore, grantees receiving the grant must raise a dollar (in-kind or cash) for every federal grant dollar requested. This 100% match is too burdensome on grantees for both new or smaller grantees who may lack resources to raise such a match and for large-scale programs that would require raising millions of dollars in local match just to meet their potential demand. A smaller percentage match requirement would decrease barriers for new or smaller applicants and allow grantees to accept higher grant awards, which would allow states to grow their incentives programs.

Partners

Nourish Colorado partners closely with Fair Food Network, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and other GusNIP grantees for SNAP incentive innovation. Nourish Colorado will continue to work closely with Hunger Free Colorado and the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger and their national partners such as Food Research & Action Center to support and advocate for streamlined access to SNAP, increased support for SNAP outreach, and an overall focus on adequate SNAP benefits to support a healthy diet.

Recommendations

A. Advance Innovation and Sustainability in SNAP Incentive Initiatives

- i) [Increase mandatory GusNIP funding from \\$250 million over five years to a minimum of \\$200 million per year.](#)
- ii)
 - a) This allocation should be used for current program funding.
- iii) [Reduce the required match for SNAP incentives to no more than 10%.](#)



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Strengthen the Integrity of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- iv) Codify statutory language that allows for flexible produce incentive earning and redemption.
 - a) Grant recipients should be allowed to choose whether, in their jurisdiction, SNAP shoppers can:
 - (1) earn incentives by purchasing produce that can then be used for buying any SNAP-eligible foods,
 - (2) earn incentives by purchasing SNAP-eligible foods that can then be used for buying produce, or
 - (3) earn incentives by purchasing produce that can then be used for buying produce.
 - v) Develop a new, separate tier of funding within GusNIP with a minimum grant amount of \$10 million.
 - a) This funding tier would be available for jurisdictions that are ready to scale up their produce incentive programs. As a scaled up GusNIP program, this tier would allow at least 90 cents of every project dollar to go directly to SNAP recipients as incentives.
 - b) This funding tier should not require a local match.
- B. Increase the Reach and Impact of SNAP Benefits**
- i) Create processes to streamline SNAP access and increase SNAP outreach.
 - a) Remove the ban on hot prepared foods, which places an additional burden on SNAP participants, including working families^{xix} and people living with disabilities.^{xx}
 - b) Boost benefits for older adults and people living with disabilities through a standard medical deduction.
 - ii) Increase SNAP benefit allotments to support healthy diets for SNAP shoppers.
 - a) Base the general benefit allotments on the Low-Cost Food Plan, instead of the Thrifty Food Plan.
 - b) Increase the minimum SNAP benefit, which is currently set at \$23 per month for 2023.^{xxi}

Relevant Legislation

- *Expanding SNAP Options Act of 2021*
 - Introduced bill, Senator Richard J. Durbin, Illinois.
 - S. 313, *Expanding SNAP Options Act of 2021*, Sen. Durbin, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/313/cosponsors?q={%22search%22:%22agriculture%22}&r=10&s=2&searchResultViewType=expanded>.
- *SNAP PLUS Act of 2021*
 - Introduced bill, Representative Bobby L. Rush, Illinois.
 - H.R. 6338, *SNAP PLUS Act of 2021*, Rep. Rush, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6338>.
- *Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021*
 - Introduced bills, Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand, New York; Representative Alma S. Adams, North Carolina.
 - S. 2192/H.R. 4077, *Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021*, Sen. Gillibrand and Rep. Adams, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2192>, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4077>.
- *Improving Access to Nutrition Act of 2021*
 - Introduced bill, Representative Barbara Lee, California.
 - H.R. 1753, *Improving Access to Nutrition Act of 2021*, Rep. Lee, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1753>.



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- ⁱ USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, SNAP Participation and Costs Summary, 9 December 2022, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNAPsummary-12.pdf>.
- ⁱⁱ Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State by State Fact sheets, 25 April 2022, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Colorado>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Id.*
- ^{iv} USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/hunger-food-security-programs/gus-schumacher-nutrition-incentive-program>.
- ^v Nutrition Incentive Hub, Improving Community Nutrition: GusNIP Year 2 Impact Findings Report Released, 18 January 2022, <https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/news-events/news/improving-community-nutrition-gusnip-year-2-impact-findings-report-released>.
- ^{vi} *Id.*
- ^{vii} Double Up Food Bucks Colorado, <https://doubleupcolorado.org/>.
- ^{viii} Double Up Colorado 2021 Evaluation: Impact of Farmers and Retailers, <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/zi1mc6ngzbijpaq0mmbe7/h?dl=0&preview=Final+2021+DUFB+Eval+-+3.+Impact+on+Farmers+%26+Retailers.docx&rlkey=yaaqpap2qzcavak3cbazwgzyf>.
- ^{ix} Colorado General Assembly, HB22-1380, Critical Services for Low Income Households, <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1380>.
- ^x Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, More Adequate SNAP Benefits Would Help Millions of Participants Better Afford Food, 15 July 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/more-adequate-snap-benefits-would-help-millions-of-participants-better>.
- ^{xi} *Id.*
- ^{xii} Food Research and Action Center, Replacing the Thrifty Food Plan in Order to Provide Adequate Allotments for SNAP Beneficiaries, December 2012, <https://frac.org/research/resource-library/replacing-thrifty-food-plan-order-provide-adequate-allotments-snap-beneficiaries>.
- ^{xiii} S. 2192/H.R. 4077, Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021, Sen. Gillibrand and Rep. Adams, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2192>, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4077>.
- ^{xiv} H.R. 6338, SNAP PLUS Act of 2021, Rep. Rush, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6338>.
- ^{xv} Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE), Year 2 Impact Findings, 2021, <https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/media/fjohmr2n/gusnip-ntae-impact-findings-year-2.pdf>.
- ^{xvi} USDA, Media, *USDA Invests More Than \$59 million to Improve Dietary Health and Nutrition Security*, Press Release No. 0252.22, 22 November 2022, <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2022/11/22/usda-invests-more-59m-improve-dietary-health-and-nutrition-security>.
- ^{xvii} USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Request for Application, GusNIP, 2020, <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/rfa/GusNIP-RFA-FY-2020.pdf>.
- ^{xviii} USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Request for Applications, GusNIP, 2022, https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-04/FY22-GusNIP-NIP-RFA-508_0.pdf.
- ^{xix} Food Research & Action Center, SNAP Plus Act of 2021 Would Improve Equitable SNAP Access by Permanently Ending the Hot Prepared Food Ban, 18 May 2022, <https://frac.org/blog/snap-plus-act-of-2021>.
- ^{xx} Food Research and Action Center, Recommitting to Disability Economic Justice in SNAP, 30 June 2022, <https://frac.org/blog/recommitting-to-disability-economic-justice-in-snap>.
- ^{xxi} USDA, SNAP FY 2023 Minimum Allotments, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/FY23-Minimum-Allotments.pdf>.



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Title X: Horticulture

Ensure Equity in Local and Regional Food Systems

Background

The 2018 Farm Bill created the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) by consolidating the Farmers Market Promotion Program, Local Food Promotion Program, and Value-Added Producer Grants, along with the newly created Regional Food System Partnership Program, and providing permanent, baseline funding for each program under the LAMP umbrella program.ⁱ

- The Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) “funds projects that develop, coordinate and expand direct producer-to-consumer markets to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products.”ⁱⁱ
- The Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) “funds projects that develop, coordinate and expand local and regional food business enterprises” that indirectly connect producers and consumers to “help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products.”ⁱⁱⁱ
- The Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program “helps agricultural producers enter value-added marketing or processing activities to create new products, expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income.”^{iv}
- The Regional Food System Partnership program “supports partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems...to strengthen the viability and resilience of regional food economies through collaboration and coordination.”^v

The 2023 Farm Bill can build upon this solid foundation, address significant inequities in how these programs have been allocated, and ensure equitable access to these programs moving forward. There are many other USDA programs that can be strengthened to increase equitable land access as well. “Access to land is the number one challenge facing the next generation of farmers in the United States.”^{vi} Without intergenerational wealth or land ownership, it is extremely difficult to find and afford agricultural land, either to lease long-term or buy. The ability to access financing is foundational to accessing secure land, but most federal sources of financing are unaffordable, uncompetitive, and unapplicable to farmers interested in building their farming skills rather than their net worth.^{vii} Land tenure requirements, practice standards, and cultural barriers can pose challenges to accessing USDA resource and conservation programs for Indigenous and farmworker communities. Small and diversified farms are often denied access to conservation programs because they cannot compete with large operations for available funding.^{viii} Additionally, the application and paperwork process required to access federal resources and programs are overly burdensome, difficult and time consuming to complete, and not culturally relevant to many potential applicants.^{ix}

Why These Recommendations?

Implementing these recommendations would allow already-existing USDA programs to be more efficient and impactful for those they are intended to benefit. The suggested changes would help ensure that these USDA resources are widely available and accessible to all farming operations and food system



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businesses—especially those that have been systemically excluded from accessing support while providing critical economic and health benefits to their communities.

LAMP provides innovative support for local actors in the food system and has demonstrated success in strengthening business models and opportunities. The USDA Economic Research Service found that “VAPG recipients were 89% less likely to fail 2 years after the grant than the group of similar nonrecipients” and that receiving a higher VAPG funding amount decreased the risk of the recipient failing.^x While LAMP programs do help support training, infrastructure and equipment updates, technical assistance, and community connection building, the programs are not equitably available and accessible to all producers and small businesses. Smaller-sized, lower-income, and underserved stakeholders may not be able to easily utilize the commercial processing or distribution resources made available and may struggle to manage or apply for burdensome federal grants. Similarly, high grantee matching requirements make it nearly impossible for smaller scale applicants to consider applying for the program. Without tailored and adequate efforts of providing outreach, support, and communication, the programs cannot reach all intended beneficiaries—and likely will fail to reach those who could benefit from the programs the most.

Land and capital access are deeply intertwined with all aspects of farmers’ success and are critical to the health and wellbeing of the environment, economy, and marginalized communities.^{xi} Land ownership provides the security that is needed for long-term investments that farmers must make in soil health, infrastructure, and irrigation, allows farmers to build a relationship with the land, and allows them to build financial equity.^{xii} There is currently a lack of integrated demographic data about Colorado farmers and farmworkers, however, based on the data available, ownership in Colorado’s agricultural industry is primarily dominated by older, white men. The 2017 Census of Agriculture^{xiii} conducted by the USDA indicates that approximately 97.7% of the 69,032 producers (owners) in Colorado identified as White; male principal producers outnumbered female principal producers by a ratio of almost 2:1 and approximately 80.5% of all Colorado producers are at least 45 years old.^{xiv} Land and resource access programs, especially those targeted for new and underserved farmers, need to be easy to apply for and manage. Federal policies can support incentives to transition farmland to the next generation of farmers and can advance pathways for farmworkers to become farm owners.

Partners

Nourish Colorado is actively working with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and other FMLFPP Grantees on recommendations for the LAMP program. Nourish Colorado is also actively supporting the natural resource (land and water) access recommendations put forth by the National Young Farmers Coalition.

Recommendations

A. Strengthen Core Grant Programs

- i) [Increase the funding levels available across the Local Agriculture Market Program \(LAMP\).](#)
 - a) Increase mandatory LAMP funding from \$50 million to \$75 million.



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- b) Increase LAMP appropriations from \$20 million to \$30 million per year.
- ii) Make LAMP programs more equitable and accessible.
 - a) Provide simplified “turnkey” grants for the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) with no matching requirement and simpler applications for grant requests under \$100,000.
 - b) Decrease grant match requirements to 10% for all FMLFPP applications and to 25% for all VAPG (Value-Added Producer Grants) applications.
 - c) Provide the USDA with authority and direction to prioritize geographic diversity and balance in funding when awarding grants.
 - d) Provide the USDA with authority and direction to set aside a certain percentage of FMLFPP and VAPG funds to BIPOC- and women-led organizations or businesses.

See National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Farm Bill 2023 Platform.^{xv}

B. Improve Equitable Land and Water Access Initiatives

- i) Ensure inclusive access to natural resource conservation and disaster programs.
 - a) Improve access to USDA conservation programs (e.g., Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program) by increasing federal investment in the programs, streamlining the planning and application process both for small, diversified producers and for administration staff, and making the land tenure requirements more flexible.
 - b) Ensure that USDA programs and resources are culturally appropriate for and uphold well-established Indigenous practices in land and water management.
 - c) Support young and underserved farmers and farmworkers facing disasters by prioritizing social, economic, and environmental benefits in conservation programs, upfront payments for disaster relief, and protections for farmworkers by adopting a federal standard to protect workers from heat.
- ii) Provide equitable land and capital access initiatives.
 - a) Coordinate federal land access initiatives, such as implementing high-level oversight and leadership at the USDA to ensure there is coordination within the department and across the federal government so that all USDA staff are working together to facilitate equitable land access and transition.
 - b) Eliminate structural inequities to accessing and owning land by investing in: community-led projects that secure affordable land access, farmland protection that helps keep land at its agricultural value, and conservation easements that also include funding for long-term leasing and lease-to-own.
 - c) Expand access to credit, help farmers compete in the real estate market, and support farm transition, particularly by improving Farm Service Agency’s Direct Farm Ownership Loans to be less burdensome and more applicable to diverse operations.



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Ensure Equity in Local and Regional Food Systems



See National Young Farmer Coalition, *Building a Future with Farmers 2022: Results and Recommendations from the National Young Farmer Survey*.xvi

Relevant Legislation

- *Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2021*
 - Introduced bill, Senator Cory A. Booker, New Jersey.
 - S. 300, *Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2021*, Sen. Booker, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/300?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22agriculture%22%5D%7D&s=3&r=6>.
- *Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act of 2021*
 - Introduced bill, Senator Raphael G. Warnock, Georgia.
 - S. 278, *Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act of 2021*, Sen. Warnock, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/278?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22agriculture%22%5D%7D&s=3&r=7>

ⁱ USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Local Agriculture Market Program, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lamp>.

ⁱⁱ USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Farmers Market Promotion Program, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp>.

ⁱⁱⁱ USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Local Food Promotion Program, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp>.

^{iv} USDA, Rural Development, Value-Added Producer Grants, <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/value-added-producer-grants#overview>.

^v USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Regional Food System Partnerships, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/rfsp>.

^{vi} National Young Farmers Coalition, *Building a Future with Farmers 2022: Results and Recommendations from the National Young Farmers Survey, 2022*, <https://www.youngfarmers.org/22survey/>.

^{vii} *Id.*

^{viii} *Id.*

^{ix} *Id.*

^x USDA, Economic Research Service, *USDA's Value Added Producer Grant Program and Its Effect on Business Survival and Growth*, May 2018, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/88839/err-248.pdf?v=8743.2>.

^{xi} National Young Farmers Coalition, *Building a Future with Farmers 2022: Results and Recommendations from the National Young Farmers Survey, 2022*, <https://www.youngfarmers.org/22survey/>.

^{xii} *Id.*

^{xiii} USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *Census of Agriculture, 2017 Publications*, <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/index.php>.

^{xiv} USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2017 Census of Agriculture, State Data, Table 52: Selected Producer Characteristics*, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Colorado/st08_1_0052_0052.pdf.

^{xv} National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, *NSAC's 2023 Farm Bill Platform*, <https://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/2023-farm-bill-platform/>.

^{xvi} National Young Farmers Coalition, *Building a Future with Farmers 2022: Results and Recommendations from the National Young Farmers Survey, 2022*, <https://www.youngfarmers.org/22survey/>.



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Title IV: Nutrition Programs

Increase the Reach of Nutrition Programs for Older Adults



Background

Since 2001, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) has aimed to address the significantly low, older adult consumption rates of fresh produce by offering grants to states, territories, and tribal nations to provide low-income older adults with coupons to purchase produce at farms, farmers markets, and Community Supported Agriculture sites.ⁱ Eligible older adults may receive no less than \$20 and no more than \$50 dollars per year.ⁱⁱ The current mandatory funding for the program is just over \$20 million per year.ⁱⁱⁱ There has not been a funding increase for the SFMNP since 2008, even though at home food costs for a family of two (aged 51-70 years old) increased by an average of \$70 per month from 2008-2020.^{iv}

Colorado is currently only one of a few states that does not participate in SFMNP due to limited grant funding and high administrative costs. Some states that have been participating in the program for many years receive a disproportionate amount of funding. For example, in 2020, Alabama received \$1,565,389 for SFMNP while Florida only received \$122,464.^v

Why These Recommendations?

Collectively, these recommendations listed below, if implemented, would bring the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program to Colorado, equip the program to improve the nutrition security of a significant number of elders across the state and in rural and Tribal communities, bring more consistent income to local farmers, and provide states with enough resources to effectively manage the program. “Roughly 1 in 10 United States senior citizens (about 5,146,000) are forced to live well below the Federal poverty level, and the SFMNP is only able to reach about 725,000 due to inadequate funding.”^{vi} In Colorado, 9.3% of seniors are food insecure--putting Colorado at 9th in the nation for highest senior food insecurity rates.^{vii} Yet Colorado does not receive SFMNP funds. SFMNP provides more than just healthy food for elders and additional income for small food producers, it is also a powerful tool for reducing senior isolation. SFMNP encourages older adults to connect with farmers, see their neighbors, and interact with their communities.

The current SFMNP funding formula does not align with state poverty rates, leading to a disproportionate and inequitable allocation of funds. The grant distribution method used to allocate funds should reflect the percentage of low-income seniors living in each jurisdiction. Innovative transportation solutions and additional technical assistance measures are needed to increase direct market access for geographically hard-to-reach communities, including rural and Tribal areas. Allowing for an increased percentage of program funds to be used for administrative costs in areas that require more creative planning and coordination would help ensure that more seniors and growers can successfully participate in this program.



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Increase the Reach of Nutrition Programs for Older Adults



Partners

Nourish Colorado actively works with the Farmers Market Coalition and other Senior FMNP participants to ensure these recommendations reflect current and most promising practices.

Recommendations

A. Enhance the Impact of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

- i) Increase SFMNP funding.
 - a) Increase mandatory program funding to \$50 million per year and provide program authority to increase annual appropriations as needed.
- ii) Modernize SFMNP to reach more eligible participants.
 - a) Allow states to use alternative/electronic redemption models, rather than only paper checks.
 - b) Increase program flexibility by providing increased administrative funding to all states and allowing up to 50% of distribution sources to be food hubs or other food aggregators.
- iii) Ensure program funding is equitably distributed.
 - a) Allocate program funding to states through an equitable formula that accounts for the percentage of older adults in each jurisdiction living at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.
 - b) Set aside committed funds for U.S. Territories and Tribal Nations.

Relevant Legislation

- *Farmers Market and Food Bank Local Revitalization Act of 2022*
 - Introduced bill, Representative Marcy Kaptur, Ohio.
 - H.R. 8707, *Farmers Market and Food Bank Local Revitalization Act of 2022*, Rep. Kaptur, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/8707?s=1&r=12>.

ⁱ USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, fact sheet, June 2021, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/fact-sheet-2021>.

ⁱⁱ *Id.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Id.*

^{iv} Introduced bill, H.R. 8707, *Farmers Market and Food Bank Local Revitalization Act of 2022*, Rep. Kaptur, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/8707?s=1&r=12>.

^v USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, SFMNP Profile Data, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/sfmnp-profile-data>.

^{vi} Introduced bill, H.R. 8707, *Farmers Market and Food Bank Local Revitalization Act of 2022*, Rep. Kaptur, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/8707?s=1&r=12>.

^{vii} Meals on Wheels America, Colorado Fact Sheet, 2019, https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/fact-sheets/2021/2021-state/colorado-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=bbdb23b_2.



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Strengthen Values-Based Procurement for Public Expenditures on Food



Background

While school food is typically addressed in Child Nutrition Reauthorization, there are still opportunities to strengthen farm to school initiatives through the Farm Bill. The 2008 Farm Bill made “geographic preference” an official policy to allow and encourage schools to prefer and purchase more unprocessed, local products for child nutrition programs.ⁱ However, this policy did not allow School Food Authorities (SFA’s) to use “local” as a product specification or guaranteed set-aside when procuring food.ⁱⁱ

Public procurement of food has not been directly addressed through the farm bill to date, but the *Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act* proposes a new USDA values-based procurement program to help develop strong food value chain connections, get fresh produce to those in need, and support underserved producers.ⁱⁱⁱ Many of this bill’s concepts could be incorporated into the 2023 Farm Bill.

The introduced bill is built upon learnings from the 2022 Farmers to Families Food Box Program, which provided significant access to nutritious foods for households experiencing acute rates of food insecurity due to the pandemic and demonstrated the USDA’s ability to direct funds to benefit small, local growers.^{iv} This program allowed the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to purchase up to \$6 billion in fresh produce, dairy, and meat products from producers and partner with national, regional, and local distributors to pack the products into family-sized boxes, then transport the boxes to food banks, community and faith-based organizations, and other non-profits serving Americans in need.^v

Other pandemic-response programs that demonstrate the USDA’s commitment to directing public dollars to advance certain values through purchases while increasing food security include the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA).^{vi} LFPA uses non-competitive cooperative agreements to provide up to \$900 million in funding for state, tribal, and territorial governments to purchase foods produced within the state or within 400 miles of the delivery destination to help support local, regional, and underserved producers.^{vii} The food is delivered to feeding programs, including food banks, schools, and organizations that reach underserved communities.^{viii} The funds are also important for developing economic opportunity and marketing connections for local and underserved producers.^{ix} The cooperative agreements work to meet community needs and improve food supply chain resiliency by supporting procurement of local, healthy foods unique to specific geographic areas.^x

Why These Recommendations?

If these recommendations are implemented, it would amplify the beneficial effects of public dollars spent on food by both increasing nutrition security for children and other vulnerable populations served by publicly funded meal programs and directing more money to local farmers who have been underserved by USDA investments and resources in the past.

Farm to school programs provide a range of positive outcomes for economic development, public health, education, environment, and equitable community engagement.^{xi} Farm to school enriches the connections



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students and their families have with fresh, healthy food and supports local food producers while instilling nutrition and agricultural education at schools.^{xii} Every dollar spent on local food generates up to an additional \$2.16 in economic activity, which means school districts hold an immense amount of development potential considering their purchasing power.^{xiii} The USDA's 2019 Colorado Farm to School Census found that \$5.1 million, 7% of the state's total food budget, was spent on local foods in the 2018-2019 school year and that 59% of SFA's participatedo School.^{xiv} During the 2021-2022 school year, Year 1 of Colorado's Farm to School Program (the Local Food Program), participating providers spent three times more on local food than the allotted \$415,089 program dollars.^{xv} In spending that year's Local Food Program money, providers purchased products from over 150 different Colorado producers, farmers, distributors, and food aggregators; forty-two of these vendors were primary producers of the products, or farms themselves.^{xvi}

Farm to school programs could be made stronger and simpler by allowing "locally grown," "locally raised," or "locally caught" as an optional product specification in SFA procurement bids or requests; as proposed in the *Kids Eat Local Act*.^{xvii} The local product specification option would allow SFA's to specify "locally grown," "locally raised," or "locally caught" in their procurement language and then make the award to the lowest bidder who can meet that product specification.^{xviii} This change in SFA procurement guidelines would make it easier for schools to source local food and farm products for their meal programs, unlike the current "geographic preference" option which is found to be burdensome and confusing to implement.^{xix}

Similar to farm to school purchasing, integrating more values-based procurement into all public food purchases is an excellent tool for supporting local food supply chains, small producers, community health, and food security. By using purchasing power to value equitable and sustainable operations instead of always prioritizing the lowest prices on the market, values-based procurement can help ensure long-term growth and stability while building strong economic foundations by fairly supporting all actors in the food value chain. The Farmers to Families Food Box Program was able to strengthen relationships and foster new connections between producers, distributors, food banks, community organizations, and other nonprofits that provide food assistance to individuals by facilitating local food purchasing arrangements that prioritized small, local producers.^{xx}

The Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) is a nationally recognized metric-based system that encourages institutions to direct their buying power towards five core values: local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and nutrition.^{xxi} "Over the past six years, institutions enrolled in the GFPP have nearly doubled their annual spending on foods supporting diverse, family and cooperative owned, small and mid-sized agricultural and food processing operations within the local area or region."^{xxii} Participating institutions have also collectively increased their purchase of whole and minimally processed foods by about 5% to date and are on target to increase their rates by 25% more over the next five years.^{xxiii} This values-based procurement program can serve as a model for implementing new federal values-based procurement guidelines.



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Partners

Nourish Colorado works closely with the National Farm to School Network and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition on these recommendations to advance farm to school and public produce procurement guided by values that benefit multiple stakeholders.

Recommendations

A. Allow for a Stronger Farm to School Program

- i) Allow School Food Authorities (SFA's) to use local product specifications.
 - a) Revise the *Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act* ([42 U.S.C. 1758\(j\)](#)) to explicitly allow SFA's to use its' definition of "local" as a product specification, rather than only allowing for a "geographic preference," in its' procurement of unprocessed agricultural products, to provide clarity for SFA's on procurement rules and help SFA's procure more products from local producers.

B. Create a USDA Produce Procurement Program

- i) Create a new, permanent values-based fresh produce procurement program in the USDA.
 - a) Make funding available to connect farmers, food hubs and distributors, and other producer entities to food banks and other emergency food distribution agencies, such as youth-serving organizations, Tribal Nations, schools, and older adult care facilities.
 - b) This program should be authorized for \$100 million per year in mandatory funding.
- ii) Expand criteria used in public procurement contracting.
 - a) Public procurement contracting should be authorized to use criteria other than 'lowest cost' in contract bidding and selection processes, to encourage publicly procured foods to include a wider variety of high-quality and culturally relevant produce.
 - b) Values should include factors such as: local or regional geographic proximity, supporting smallholder and beginning farmers, and purchasing from BIPOC-, veteran-, and women-owned farms.

See National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Farm Bill 2023 Platform.^{xxiv}

Relevant Legislation

- *Kids Eat Local Act of 2021*
 - Introduced bill, Senator Sherrod Brown, Ohio.
 - S. 1401, *Kids Eat Local Act of 2021*, Sen. Brown, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1401/all-info>.
- *Farm to School Act of 2021*
 - Introduced bill, Delegate Stacey E. Plaskett, Virgin Islands.
 - H.R. 1768, *Farm to School Act of 2021*, Del. Plaskett, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1768/cosponsors?searchResultViewType=expanded>.
- *Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act of 2021*
 - Introduced bill, Representative Rosa L. DeLauro, Connecticut.



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- H.R. 5309, *Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act of 2021*, Rep. DeLauro, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5309/text?r=74&s=1>.

ⁱ USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Final Rule: Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs, 22 April 2011, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-042211>.

ⁱⁱ USDA, Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs, 64, Aug. 2015, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/nutrition/procurementlocalfoodsforcnp>.

ⁱⁱⁱ H.R. 5309, *Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act of 2021*, Rep. DeLauro, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5309/text?r=74&s=1>.

^{iv} USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA Farmers to Families Food Box, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/farmers-to-families-food-box>.

^v *Id.*

^{vi} USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/lfpacap>.

^{vii} USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/lfpacap>.

^{viii} *Id.*

^{ix} *Id.*

^x *Id.*

^{xi} National Farm to School Network, The Benefits of Farm to School, May 2020, https://assets.website-files.com/5c469df2395cd53c3d913b2d/611027419232d281ad2f51ff_BenefitsFactSheet.pdf.

^{xii} *Id.*

^{xiii} National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and National Farm to School Network, Kids Eat Local Act, <http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Kids-Eat-Local-6.13.19.pdf>.

^{xiv} USDA, 2019 Farm to School Census, Colorado, 2019, <https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/census-results/states/co>.

^{xv} Colorado Department of Education, School Nutrition, HB-1132 Local Food Purchasing Program: 2022 Legislative Report, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdedepcom/localfoodpurchasingreport>.

^{xvi} *Id.*

^{xvii} S. 1401, Kids Eat Local Act of 2021, Sen. Brown, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1401/all-info>.

^{xviii} National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and National Farm to School Network, Kids Eat Local Act, <http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Kids-Eat-Local-6.13.19.pdf>.

^{xix} *Id.*

^{xx} Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic and National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, An Evaluation of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, February 2021, <https://chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/F2F-Food-Box-Report-Online-Final1.pdf>.

^{xxi} Center for Good Food Purchasing, Good Food Purchasing Program, Intro Brochure, 2016, <https://gfpp.app.box.com/s/wpdtfnegqwz2o3lhboaikqz2svp9qt56>.

^{xxii} Center for Good Food Purchasing, Success, Measuring Impact, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/lfpacap>.

^{xxiii} *Id.*

^{xxiv} National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, NSAC's 2023 Farm Bill Platform, <https://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/2023-farm-bill-platform/>.



Mission

Nourish Colorado is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that strengthens connections with and between farms, ranches, and communities so that all Coloradans have equitable access to fresh, nutritious foods. We achieve our mission by engaging in policy advocacy for systemic change, managing innovative programs, and developing community partnerships and grassroots networks to rebalance the food system and create healthy food environments.

Vision

We believe food is a fundamental human right which is the 'North Star' for our work and the change we seek in Colorado. Nourish envisions Colorado communities where fresh and local foods enrich the lives of all.

Values

Our values drive every aspect of our work—how we work with community, how we seek partnerships, how we function as a staff and board, and how we approach systemic change. Nourish values: Connections · Equity · Adaptability · Solutions · Systems Change · Transparency · Sharing Power

Partners in this Work

We cannot do this work alone, nor do we seek to do it alone. Nourish's partnerships with the community, providers, agricultural producers, distributors, local/state/national partners, and local/state/federal policymakers allow us to operationalize our values.

Services Provided

Our work falls into three areas—institutions, incentives, and policy. We manage a number of statewide initiatives for institutions and incentives, and often act as an incubator for implementing initiatives that are slowly integrated more and more into local and state agency work. Our areas of work include:

Healthy Food in Institutions:

- Culinary Training
- Local Food Program

Healthy Food Incentives:

- Double Up Food Bucks
- WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- WIC and Older Adult Produce Box Program

Healthy Food Policy Advocacy:

- State
- Federal
- Coalition Building

Additional Needs for Services Provided:

- Data and Information
- Program Awareness and Expansion



Amber Clemetson, Strategic Initiatives Manager

Amber manages Nourish's strategic plan and communications, supports development, and oversees the integration of teams and partners to help Nourish's work reach and connect with more people across Colorado.

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Becca Gredone, Legal Analyst

Becca conducts legal and policy research, participates in statewide policy coalitions, NSAC committee meetings and Farm Bill coalition meetings, and provides administrative legal analysis to support the Nourish team's policy priorities.

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Caitlin Stuart, Community Engagement & Navigator Manager

Caitlin develops outreach and engagement strategies for Nourish initiatives, coordinates outreach logistics, manages Navigators, and develops new ways to expand Double Up and other incentives by engaging new partners.

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Daysi Sweaney, Director of Healthy Food Incentives

Daysi ensures the strategic implementation of strategies related to Healthy Food Incentives, co-leads the execution of healthy food incentive priority policies, and supervises the incentives team.

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Devin Porch, Director of Business & Operations

Devin oversees business functions and office operations, including finance and human resources, as well as manages business planning, organizational structure, and facilities.

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Jesse Hulling, Project Specialist

Jesse is responsible for organizational and special project management, development and partnership support, communications support, event and meeting coordination, office operations, IT support and vendor management.

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Jessica Wright, Director of Healthy Food in Institutions

Chef Jessica leads the coordination and implementation of local procurement and culinary technical assistance and training for institutions and growers across Colorado as well as drives institutional procurement policy priorities.

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Laurel Smith, Value Chain Coordinator

Laurel advances the healthy food incentives programs and ensures Double Up partners can find, store, and offer Colorado-grown produce consistently.

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Lonni Byrd, Double Up Food Bucks Manager

Lonni manages the Double Up Food Bucks program and logistics, maintains and grows partner relationships, ensures the program meets all reporting and grant requirements, trains and provides technical support to implementation partners.

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Rakia Ranney, Nutrition Programs Specialist

Rakia leads coordination and communication for the WIC and Older Adult Produce Box Program, and ensures consistent communication, common data collection, data sharing, and partnership across all incentive programs.

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Rebecca Robbins, Local Food Program Specialist

Rebecca collaborates with institutional partners and manages the implementation of the Local Food Program which provides training and technical support to participating K12 Districts and their local agricultural producers.

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Taylor Frederick, Culinary Specialist

Chef Taylor supports institutional procurement programs with trainings designed to enhance their meal programs and food service operations by designing and implementing on-site technical assistance, trainings, and in-depth workshops.

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Wendy Peters Moschetti, Executive Director

Wendy leads the development and implementation of Nourish's vision and strategies, oversees fundraising goals, manages policy direction and implementation, and works closely with the Board to ensure a sustainable, mission-focused organization.

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