



For Immediate Release

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**Lake Michigan School Food System Innovation Hub Launches
Grant Opportunity to Reimagine School Meals**

*Application opens on October 30; interested Wisconsin grant applicants
can now register for launch event*

The [Lake Michigan School Food System Innovation Hub](#) (Innovation Hub), announced today that it will open a new funding opportunity in the current grant cycle for collaborations of local food system leaders who want to ensure that school meals better reflect the Lake Michigan region's rich traditions and abundant harvests. Grant applications will open on October 30, and on November 4, the Innovation Hub will host a kick-off introductory webinar.

"We're looking forward to see people across Wisconsin—from farmers and food suppliers to school food service directors and community-based program leaders—come together to help the food that kids eat at school be more local, more nourishing, and more loved," said Tatiana Maida, Co-State Lead for Wisconsin, of Rising in Community. "Project teams from our first cohort of grantees are already expanding innovation throughout our state, and we can't wait for more teams to fuel more meaningful change," said Daithi Wolfe, Co-State Lead for Wisconsin, of Kids Forward.

In Wisconsin, almost half a million students eat school food every day. Following the previous two rounds of funding, the Innovation Hub will offer new grants up to \$100,000 to build pathways for local, nourishing food to reach more of the region's K–12 schools. The Innovation Hub seeks applicants who have fresh ideas to strengthen the local school food system and want to collaborate with community partners to bring those ideas to life. This round represents the final opportunity in the current funding cycle for organizations to apply for Spark Award funding.

"The Illinois Public Health Institute is proud to continue to support leaders in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin as they develop practical, locally driven solutions to improve school meal programs," said Crystal Pirtle Tyler, CEO of IPHI, which convenes the Lake Michigan School Food System Innovation Hub. "These projects will help strengthen our local agriculture, boost regional economies and ensure schools have access to food that reflects their preferences."

Grants will be available to teams that may be composed of farmers, food suppliers, food industry partners, schools and school districts, community-based program leaders and more.

The Lake Michigan School Food System Innovation Hub is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Administration–funded grant-making initiative that reimagines students’ meals. With support from the USDA Food and Nutrition Administration’s Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Initiative, the Innovation Hub offers funding, training and other assistance to partnerships that include farmers, food producers, suppliers, distributors, schools and organizations. The Innovation Hub invests in community-driven ideas of all sizes and scopes—from hyper-local projects to multistate collaborations—as long as projects direct more resources to students, schools and local economies. More information about eligibility requirements can be found at InnovateSchoolFood.org.

The Innovation Hub is hosting the 2026 Spark Award Launch Webinar: Understanding Our Spark Awards and How We Can Help to provide interested applicants with an overview of the grant opportunity and website, as well as to connect them with grant application support. The launch webinar will be held on Wednesday, November 4, 2026, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. CST. Registration is now open at this link: InnovateSchoolFood.org/grants.

Additionally, the state lead team, which includes Kids Forward, Rising in Community and healthTIDE, will be available to help guide prospective grantees through the application process, from idea generation to final submission. See available office hours with days and times here:

- Thursdays from 1-2pm CT: November 5, 12, 19, & December 3, 10, & 17. [Join office hours here](#), meeting ID: 854 056 7110, passcode: ZcX9VB. Contact Tatiana Maida with questions (tmaida@risingincommunity.com).
- Tuesdays from 1-2pm CT: November 3, 10, 17, 24 & December 1, 8, & 15. Contact Daithi Wolfe (dwolfe@kidsforward.org) for the meeting link.
- Wednesdays from 1-2pm CT: November 11 and December 2, 9 & 23. Contact Amy Meinen (healthtide.wisconsin@gmail.com) for the meeting link.

For more information, visit InnovateSchoolFood.org.

Register for the launch webinar at InnovateSchoolFood.org/grants.

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[healthTIDE](#) is a statewide network that supports connections and collective action in Wisconsin related to increasing opportunities for health, nutrition and physical activity.

[Kids Forward](#) is a statewide antiracist policy center that inspires action and advocates for children and families of color and those furthest from opportunity in Wisconsin. We envision a Wisconsin where every child thrives.

[Rising in Community](#) partners with leaders, organizations, and grassroots changemakers to transform systems from the inside out – through healing, collaboration, and shared power.

[Lake Michigan School Food System Innovation Hub](#) nurtures community-driven collaborations that reimagine students' meals. By working together, we're building pathways for local, nourishing food to reach more schools across Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin. We offer funding, training and other help to collectives of schools, school districts, organizations, farmers, producers, suppliers and distributors who are transforming our school food system to better serve our communities. We are [funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)'s Food and Nutrition Administration, as a part of the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative, and convened by the Illinois Public Health Institute. Organizations leading the initiative include Seven Generations Ahead (Illinois), Michigan State University's Center for Regional Food Systems (Michigan), NWI Food Council (Indiana), Kids Forward (Wisconsin), healthTIDE (Wisconsin) and Action for Healthy Kids.