

# School Nutrition Unit

## School Year 2024-25 Impact Report



# Letter from the Executive Director

Brehan Riley, MS, RD, SNS



Another incredible year to reflect on our important work to nourish young bodies and minds while working to end childhood hunger in this great state. Join me in celebrating all we have achieved together this past year.

This report shares how we're supporting the child nutrition community through training, strong partnerships and innovation. It also highlights where we're headed next as we continue to ensure children and teens have consistent access to healthy meals year round.

We stay grounded in your feedback and focused on what works best for sponsors, schools and communities. By listening, adapting and problem-solving together, we've continued to grow and strengthen key programs like Healthy School Meals for All, Direct Certification through Medicaid, Summer EBT and Farm to School. These efforts are helping more students access meals, reducing stigma and supporting healthier food environments.

Thank you to our dedicated team, sponsors and partners for your continued commitment to this work and for the creativity and collaboration you bring every day. Together, we're making sure Colorado's youth are nourished, supported and ready to learn.



## Vision

Nourish young bodies and minds. End childhood hunger

## Mission

We support the child nutrition community through innovation, training and partnerships to ensure all children and teens have access to healthy meals.

## Values

**Passion:** We are distinguished by our people who bring skill, experience and commitment to service.

**Customer Focused:** We build meaningful relationships, collaborate and empower.

**Growth:** We are committed to innovation, learning and continuous development.

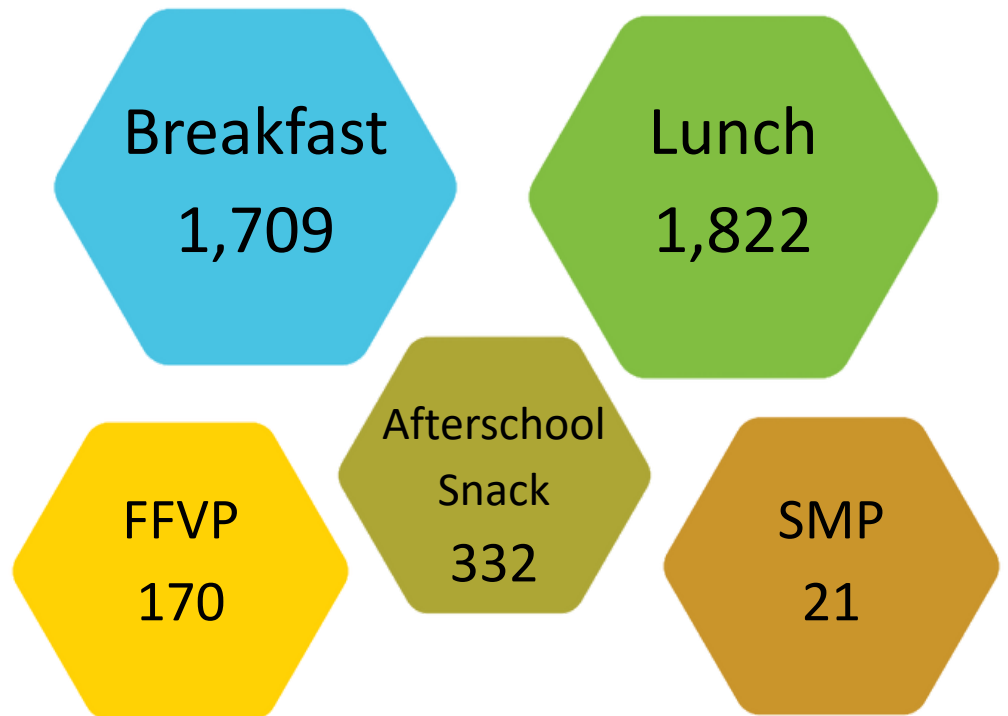
# Sponsors and Sites SY2024-25

Federal and State Programs

## National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs

**218** Sponsors

**1,837** Sites



## Summer Food Service Program

**82** Sponsors

**616** Sites

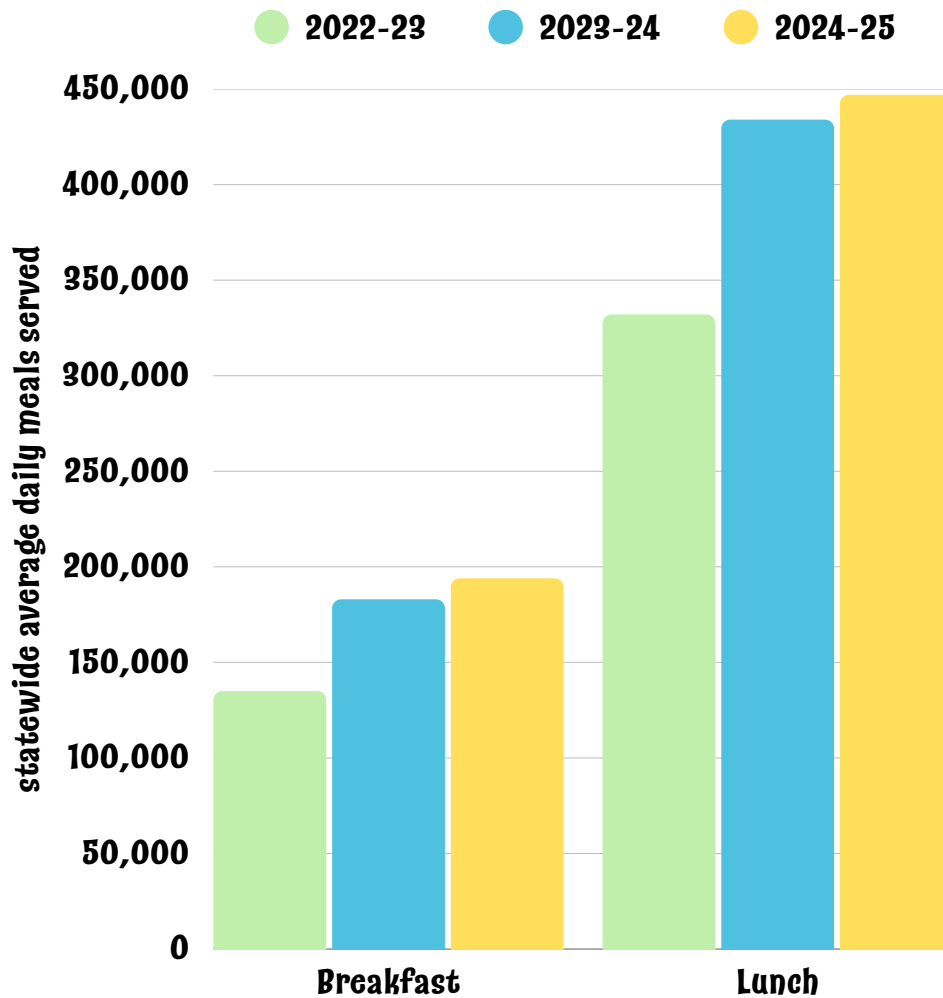


32 sponsors operating 73 sites participated in **Meal Service that allowed meals to be taken home** (non-congregate flexibility).

# Meals and Snacks Served

National School Lunch Program & National School Breakfast Program

School Year 2024-25 saw continued increases in breakfast and lunch participation:



## Breakfast

- Over 31.5 million meals served
- 194,000 breakfasts served daily
- 5% increase from SY2023-24

## Lunch

- Over 72.8 million meals served
- 447,000 lunches served daily
- 3% increase from SY2023-24

\*Note: Meal counts are subject to change due to claim adjustments/revisions.

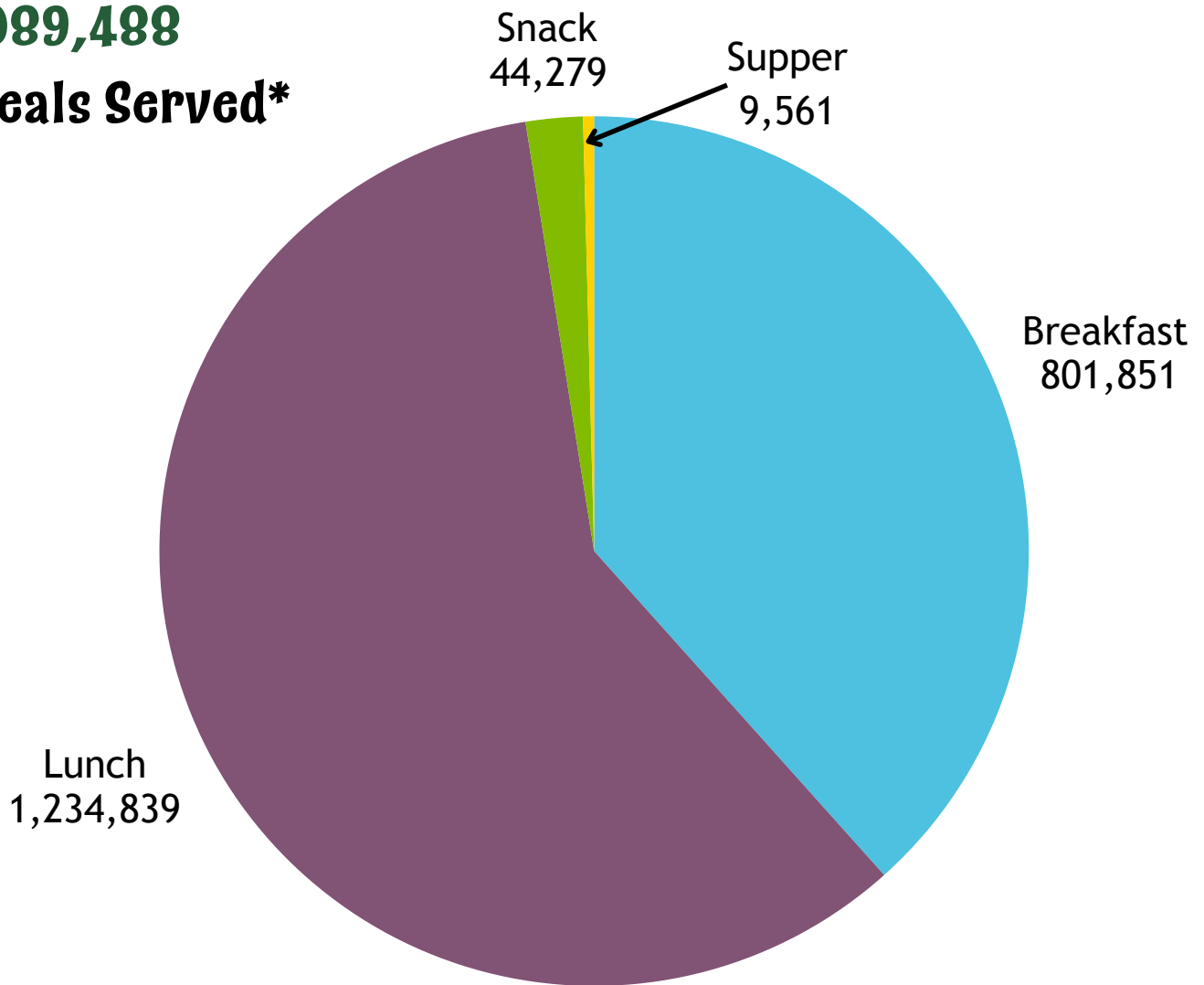
# Meals and Snacks Served

Summer Food Service Program

Total Meals for Summer 2025 (May - Aug 2025)

**2,089,488**

**Total Meals Served\***



**Sponsors served  
over 697,000 take  
home meals**



This represents an 18.5% increase from Summer 2024, providing more feeding options for young people in rural Colorado.

\*Note: Meal counts are subject to change due to claim adjustments/revisions.

# Meals and Snacks Served

## Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides a variety of free, fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to children at eligible elementary schools. This program expands the variety of fruits and vegetables children experience, increases their consumption of fruits and vegetables and expands their knowledge of a variety of fruits and vegetables.

**33 sponsors and 171 sites operated FFVP in School Year 2024-25**



**Over  
\$3.5 million**  
Funding to  
Districts

**3+**

Average Number of Days per week  
FFVP was offered to students.

# School Nutrition Program Updates

## Healthy School Meals for All

In the second year of HSMA implementation, 194 eligible sponsors operating Child Nutrition Programs opted in to the program for a total of 1,815 sites. Statewide, school meal participation continued to grow, with breakfast participation rising 5% on top of the 37% increase in SY2023-24. Lunch participation increased 3% over the 30% increase seen in the previous school year.

High participation in HSMA meant program reimbursements were roughly \$46 million higher than originally anticipated for the first year of program implementation. The legislature opted to make the following changes to the program for School year 2024-25 to help balance program revenue and expenses.



- Paused grant and technical assistance programs
- Extended the Local Food Program pilot to 2024-25 School Year
- Created a Technical Advisory Group that provided options for future legislation to balance program revenues and expenses
- Created a policy to increase collection of household income applications
- No change to meal reimbursements for 2024-25 School Year
- Required sponsors to implement CDE's recommended operating model for provisional programs:

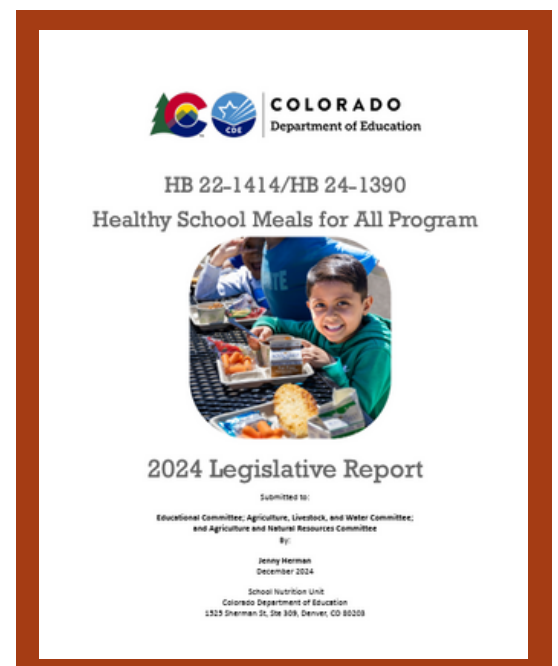
### Provisional Program Operations

- Community Eligibility: 78%
- Normal operations: 22%
- Provision 2: <1%

## 2024 Legislative Report on Healthy School Meals for All

The Technical Advisory Committee was asked to identify ways to maximize federal reimbursements, reduce program costs, create model revenue scenarios, and provide options for balancing program revenues & expenses. In December 2024, CDE submitted a legislative report summarizing the work completed.

## [Read the 2024 Legislative Report](#)



# School Nutrition Program Updates

## Administrative Reviews & Technical Assistance Visits

Administrative reviews and technical assistance visits ensure program compliance, support program operations and provide guidance to strengthen meal programs.

45

Administrative Reviews completed

54

Technical Assistance visits completed

27

Summer Food Service Program Reviews completed



## Summer EBT

100%

Districts participated in data collection

**SUMMER EBT**  
is back for 2025!

Summer EBT is a program that helps families buy food during the summer months.  
Eligible students will receive \$120 to purchase groceries with funds placed on an EBT card.

Your student may be eligible if...

- They attend a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and qualify based on household income
- The student's family receives SNAP or Colorado Works
- They receive Medicaid AND qualifies based on household income using the NSLP income guidelines
- They are in foster care, a migrant, or experiencing homelessness

Scan or visit  
[cdhs.colorado.gov/summer-ebt](https://cdhs.colorado.gov/summer-ebt)  
to learn more!

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

COLORADO Office of Economic Security  
COLORADO Department of Education

In November 2023, state legislation passed to create the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer Program that provides food benefits to students from qualifying households during summer months. Beginning Summer 2024, this permanent, annual summer program went into effect providing \$120 per eligible student on an EBT card to purchase groceries. CDE School Nutrition works with the lead agency, Colorado Department of Human Services, to provide training and technical assistance to schools and districts in their data collection to determine student eligibility. In the second year of implementation, 100% of districts provided the necessary data to ensure eligible students had additional access to nutritious foods during the summer months when they are not in school.

The Colorado Department of Human Services estimates between \$30 - \$35 million in benefits were distributed across the state in Summer 2025.

# School Nutrition Program Updates

## 2023 USDA Farm to School Census Results Released in February 2025

With 87% of Colorado sponsors participating, the census serves to document local procurement and agriculture education across the state. Colorado achieved tremendous growth since the last census in 2019.

Farm to School activities were present in 79% of Colorado SFA's. Sixty-eight percent of SFA's are serving local foods with the top five sourced products being milk, beef, apples, lettuce, and peaches. Fifty-nine percent of SFA's conduct agriculture education and/or maintain school gardens, the highest of any state in our region. Furthermore, many SFA's are performing at every level with Boulder Valley, Salida, and Calhan excelling in all activity categories. Farm to School has grown rapidly with over half of SFA's beginning activities in the last 3 years.



[View  
Colorado's  
Census  
Results](#)

## Farm to School Road Mapping

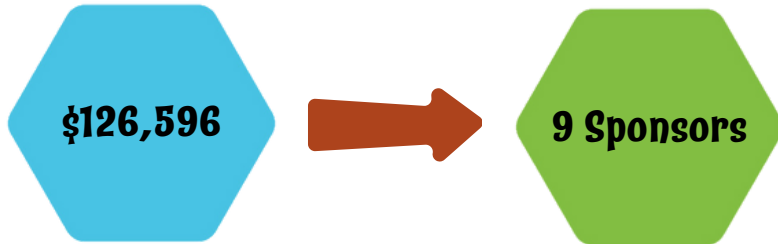
School Nutrition conducted multiple listening sessions across the state to gather information from over 80 districts on challenges related to implementing farm to school activities. This feedback was synthesized into four challenges:

- Colorado districts see buying local as outside of their normal procurement processes.
- Colorado districts are often perceived not as a committed buyer and, therefore, a risky market for producers.
- Colorado school administrations do not see clear rewards of farm to school and therefore staff, equipment and processes are lacking.
- Colorado districts prioritize efficiency and convenience over value and quality of local due to varying district constraints.

Brainstorming solutions sessions were then conducted across Colorado to gather insights on how to address the state's largest local procurement challenges. The overall is to arrive at consensus on solutions that will drive the greatest change for farm to school initiatives and will culminate in a road map that lays out specific strategies for sponsors to excel in local procurement.

# Funding to Districts

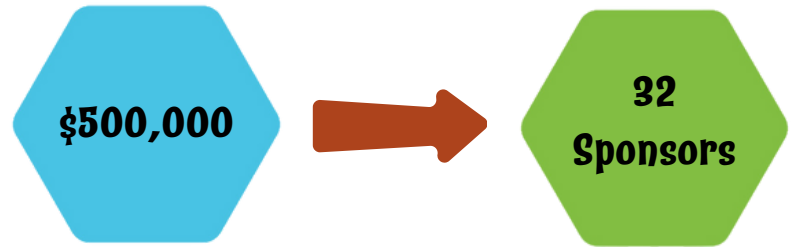
## USDA Equipment Grant



CDE School Nutrition administered the USDA Equipment Assistance Grant, which allows school food authorities to apply for funds to purchase new equipment, replace old equipment or renovate existing equipment. These funds support sponsors in providing healthier meals, enhancing food safety and establishing, maintaining or expanding the School Breakfast Program.

## Local Food Program

The Local Food Program funds schools and districts to buy Colorado-grown, raised, and processed foods for Child Nutrition Programs. In School Year 2024-25, 87% of purchases were raw or minimally processed, and 13% were value-added products like tortillas and bread. The most purchased Colorado produce included apples, tomatoes, peaches, salad greens, melons and potatoes. Sponsors also sourced Colorado raised or processed raw animal proteins such as beef, chicken, bison and pork. Additionally, spent more funding on Colorado grown quinoa than any other grain product.



Over 70% of sponsors (twenty three total) reported spending additional funding on local foods, even after their funding for the LFP was exhausted. It is estimated that over \$2,614,000 was spent by the 32 sponsors on local products throughout the 2024-25 school year, despite the LFP award amount of only \$500,000. This shows a commitment by sponsors to increase meal quality while supporting the local economy. Utilizing an estimator tool created by Colorado economists, the **total estimated impact of LFP funding on the Colorado economy is \$853,816.00.**



# School Nutrition Training & Outreach

## Training

School Nutrition provides training opportunities in a variety of ways - live webinars, on demand, and in person. School Nutrition offered multiple professional development sessions during the 2023-24 school year.

### Live Webinars & In Person Trainings

7 regional Trainings

19 webinars

1,420 participants

98% of Sponsors Very Satisfied or Satisfied

### Self Paced Online Training

264 New Moodle Users

21 Training Courses

## Onboarding New Food Service Directors

School Nutrition offers a robust training process to support new directors including 1:1 tailored training sessions, an online self-paced course and online resources to provide easy access to registration, newsletters, key deadlines and events. New directors are also connected to peer and their ACSN representatives to ensure they have the tools to be successful!

[New Director Webpage](#)

## Communication & Outreach

School Nutrition communicates important information and updates to sponsors and other stakeholders in a variety of ways. Two primary means of communication and outreach are The Dish, a bi-weekly e-newsletter, and the School Nutrition website. The Dish provides sponsors with upcoming deadlines, training opportunities and new resources for child nutrition operations.

Sponsors have access to multiple outreach toolkits for School and Summer meals, Healthy School Meals for All, Wellness and Recruitment. Downloadable outreach materials, available on the website, include menu and postcard templates, social media posts, web banners, communication guides, flyers, recruitment videos and posters.

# School Nutrition Support Network

## Connect With Your Point of Contact

Our team is here to support sponsors implement innovative and compliant programs. Each sponsor is paired with a dedicated point of contact which creates a consistent connection for questions, problem-solving and ongoing technical assistance. Sponsors can find their assigned POC and contact details on the [contact us webpage](#).

## Meet Your Advisory Council Members

The Advisory Council for School Nutrition (ACSN) plays an important role in supporting the School Nutrition Unit by offering insight and guidance on child nutrition programs. Council members also act as go-to resources for sponsors in their regions across the state. We truly appreciate their ongoing partnership and commitment.

### Metro:

Jennifer Peifer, Douglas County RE1

Erika Edwards, Jefferson County R-1

### North Central:

Danielle Bock, Greeley 6

Katie Cossette, St. Vrain Valley

### Northeast:

Steffiney Quick, Byers 32J

Traci Berg, Holyoke RE-1J

### Northwest:

Chris Delsordo, Eagle County

### Pikes Peak:

Dana Elkins-Greene, Pueblo City 60

Monica Deines-Henderson, El Paso County 49

Stacey Baker, Lewis-Palmer 38

### Southeast:

Kathy Vigil, Trinidad 1

### Southwest:

Gwyn Smith, Alamosa Re-11J

### West Central:

Nicole Ahern, Delta County 50

### Non-Public, Charters, RCCIs, Facility Schools:

Britton Knickerbocker, Charter Choice Collaborative

Ilene Agustin, Colorado Charter School Institute



**The School Nutrition Team thanks you for your continued partnership to provide nutritious meals to students that provide the foundation for them to grow, learn and thrive.**

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1. mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. fax:

(833) 256-1655 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. email:

program.intake@usda.gov.

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