



Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FINAL RULE

**CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS:
MEAL PATTERNS CONSISTENT
WITH THE 2020-2025 DIETARY
GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS**

**USDA Food and
Nutrition Service**

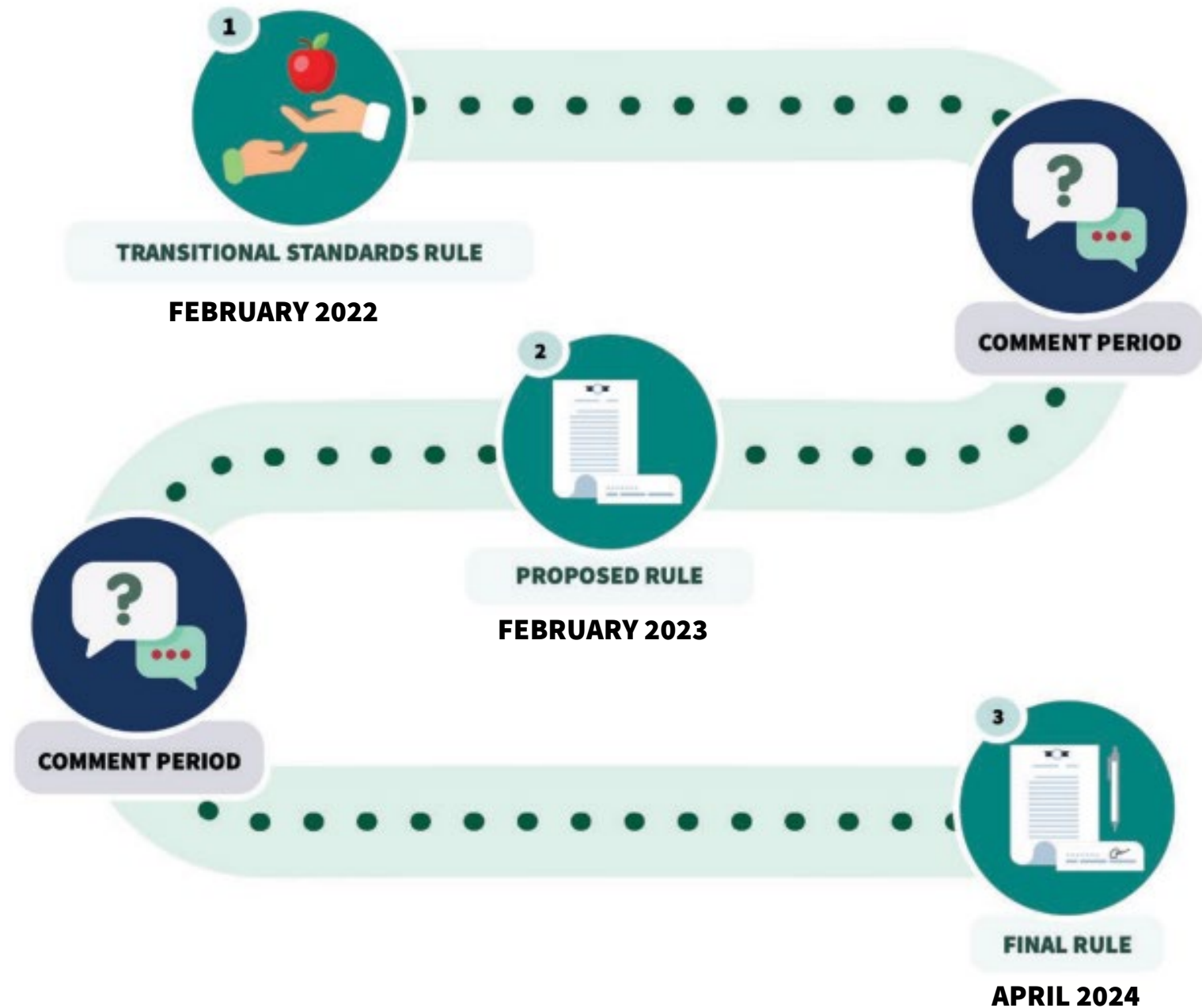
Child Nutrition
Programs

School Meals Policy
Division

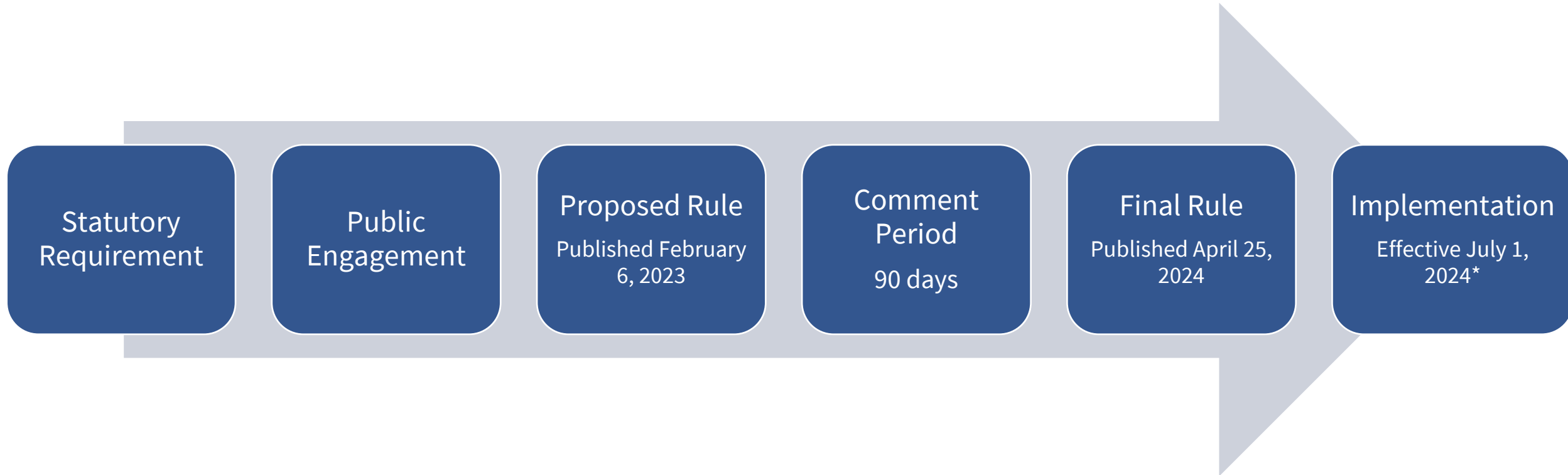
RULEMAKING OVERVIEW

Final Rule

MULTI-STEP APPROACH



RULEMAKING PROCESS



KEY FACTORS



Establish practical,
durable, long-term
standards



Make gradual
changes that set
program operators
up for success



Incorporate latest
nutrition science
and public input



Result in nutritious
meals that children
will enjoy

PUBLIC COMMENTS

136,000 Total
Comments
Received



DURABLE, ACHIEVABLE REQUIREMENTS



Public Requests

- ✓ Allow time for successful implementation
- ✓ Consider broader food environment
- ✓ Provide long-term certainty around meal requirements



USDA Response

- ✓ Gradually phase-in required changes
- ✓ Highlight sodium reduction in the food supply
- ✓ Consider lessons learned from prior rulemakings to provide a durable rule

NUTRITION STANDARDS

Final Rule



ADDED SUGARS

SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS (SBP & NSLP)

PRODUCT-BASED LIMITS

Must be implemented by July 1, 2025:

- **Breakfast cereals:** no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce
- **Yogurt:** no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces
- **Flavored milk:** no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces

WEEKLY LIMITS

Must be implemented by July 1, 2027:

- Limits added sugars to **less than 10% of calories per week** in the school lunch and breakfast programs
- Weekly limits will be in addition to product-based limits



ADDED SUGARS

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

- This final rule updates the **total sugars** limits for breakfast cereals and yogurts to **added sugars** limits.
- **Must be implemented by October 1, 2025:**
 - **Breakfast cereals:** no more than 6 grams of **added sugars** per dry ounce
 - **Yogurt:** no more than 12 grams of **added sugars** per 6 ounces



FLAVORED MILK



Maintains the current requirement:

- Schools may continue to offer fat-free and low-fat milk, flavored and unflavored, at school lunch and breakfast to K-12 student.
- Schools must continue to offer at least two varieties of milk, and unflavored milk must be offered at each meal service.
- The Special Milk Program and CACFP may continue to offer fat-free and low-fat milk, flavored and unflavored, to participants ages 6 and older.

MILK SUBSTITUTES

- There are no changes to the process to request fluid milk substitutes for non-disability reasons.
- This final rule updates the unit of measurement for vitamin A and D requirements for fluid milk substitutes in school meal programs and CACFP.
 - International units (IU) to micrograms (mcg)



WHOLE GRAINS



- Adds the current definition of “whole grain-rich” to regulations for the school meals programs and CACFP.
- Whole grain-rich is the term designated by FNS to indicate that the grain content of a product is between 50% and 100% whole grain with any remaining grains being enriched.

WHOLE GRAINS

Maintains the current requirement:

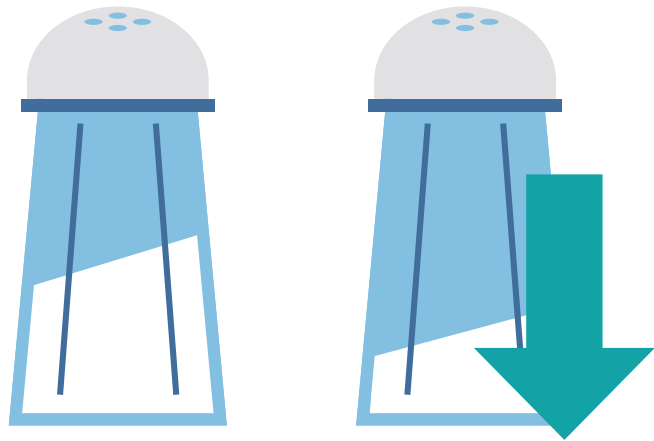
- At least 80% of the weekly grains offered in the school lunch and breakfast programs must be whole grain-rich, based on ounce equivalents.

Updates the definition of “entrée item” in the Smart Snack regulations:

- This change clarifies that both whole grain-rich and enriched grain entrées offered as part of a reimbursable school meal may qualify as an “entrée item” when sold as a “Smart Snack.”



SODIUM



- Schools will maintain current sodium limits through SY 2026-2027.
- By July 1, 2027, schools must implement a 15% reduction for lunch and a 10% reduction for breakfast from current sodium limits.

SODIUM LIMITS: SCHOOL LUNCH

- Schools will maintain Target 1A through June 30, 2027.
- By July 1, 2027, schools are required to implement a 15% sodium reduction at lunch.

AGE/GRADE GROUP	CURRENT LIMIT (TARGET 1A)	SODIUM LIMIT BY JULY 1, 2027
Grades K-5	≤ 1,110 mg	≤ 935 mg
Grades 6-8	≤ 1,225 mg	≤ 1,035 mg
Grades 9-12	≤ 1,280 mg	≤ 1,080 mg

SODIUM LIMITS: SCHOOL BREAKFAST

- Schools will maintain Target 1 through June 30, 2027.
- By July 1, 2027, schools are required to implement a 10% sodium reduction at breakfast.

AGE/GRADE GROUP	CURRENT LIMIT (TARGET 1)	SODIUM LIMIT BY JULY 1, 2027
Grades K-5	≤ 540 mg	≤ 485 mg
Grades 6-8	≤ 600 mg	≤ 535 mg
Grades 9-12	≤ 640 mg	≤ 570 mg

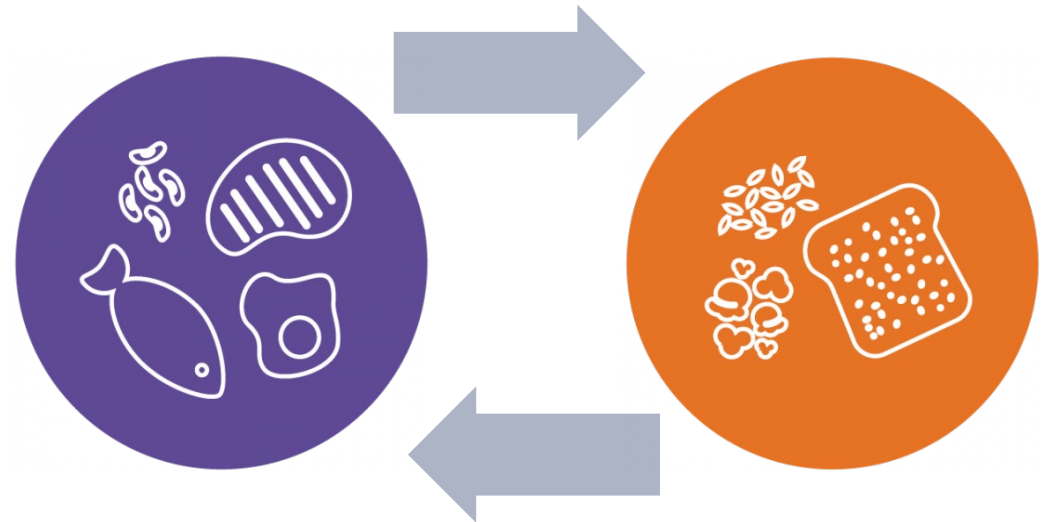
MENU PLANNING FLEXIBILITIES

Final Rule

GRAINS & MEATS/MEAT ALTERNATES

SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

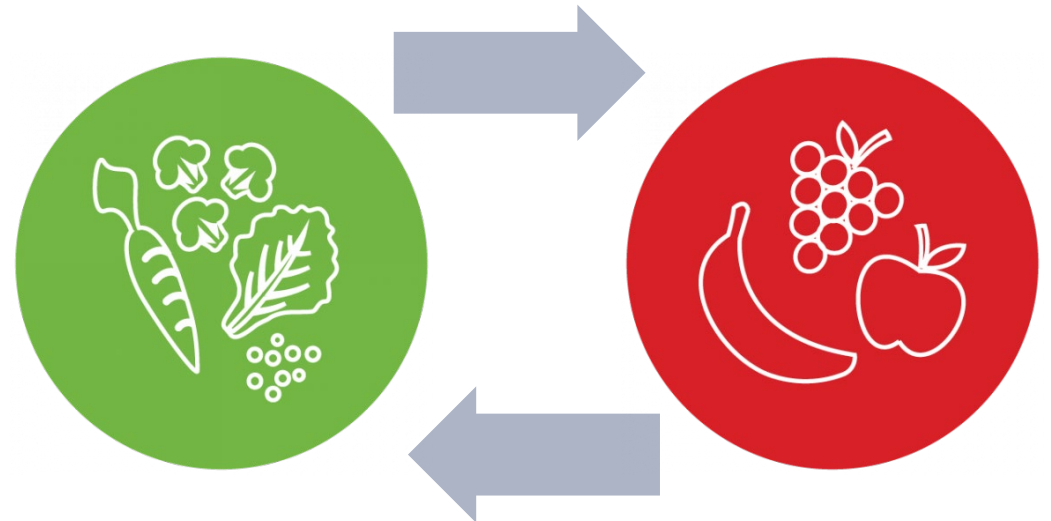
- Establishes a combined grains and meats/meat alternates meal component at K-12 breakfast.
- Removes the requirement for schools to offer 1.0 ounce equivalent of grains each day at breakfast.
- Schools may offer meats/meat alternates, grains, or a combination of both in meeting this combined component requirement.



SUBSTITUTING VEGETABLES FOR FRUIT SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Continues to allow schools to substitute vegetables for fruit in the SBP and simplifies the vegetable variety requirement.

- Schools choosing to offer vegetables at breakfast once a week can offer any vegetable, including a starchy vegetable.
- Schools choosing to offer vegetables at breakfast more than once a week must offer a variety of vegetables from at least two different subgroups.



SUPPORTING TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS FOODS

Substituting Vegetables for Grains in Tribal Communities

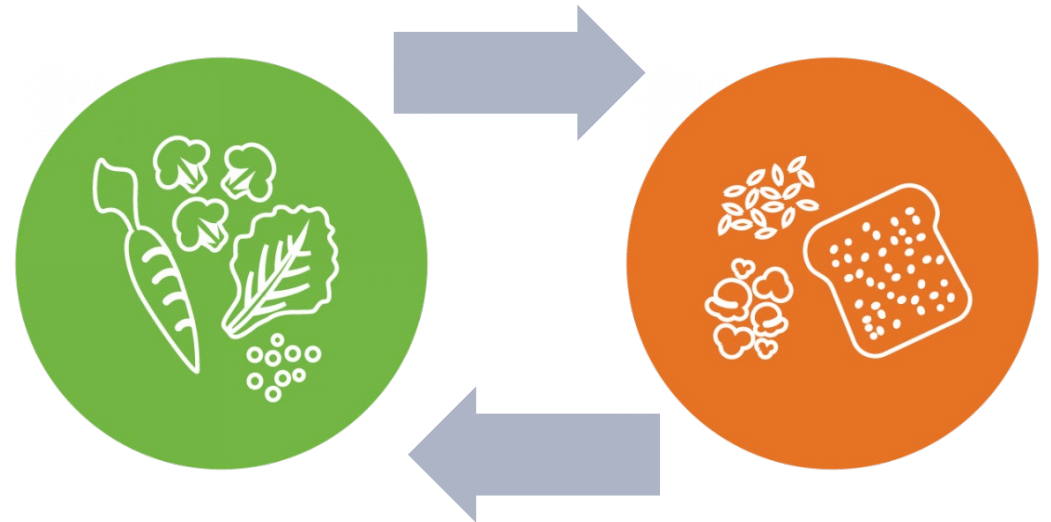
- Allows SFAs and schools that are tribally operated, operated by the Bureau of Indian Education, and that serve primarily American Indian or Alaska Native participants to serve vegetables to meet the grains requirement.
- Allows Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) institutions and facilities serving primarily American Indian or Alaska Native participants to substitute vegetables for grains or bread.

Traditional Indigenous Foods

- Explains in regulation that traditional Indigenous foods may be served in school meals and encourages schools to serve traditional Indigenous foods.

SUBSTITUTING VEGETABLES FOR GRAINS IN GUAM AND HAWAII

Allows all Child Nutrition Program operators in Guam and Hawaii to substitute any creditable vegetable to meet the grains or breads component.



GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE OPTION EXPANSION

Allows program operators to use locally grown, locally raised, or locally caught as a procurement specification for unprocessed or minimally processed food items



AFTERSCHOOL SNACK SERVICE

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

Aligns the National School Lunch Program Afterschool Snack Service (“NSLP snacks”) meal patterns for K-12 children with the Child and Adult Care Food Program snack (“CACFP snacks”) meal patterns, as required by the National School Lunch Act.

Must include 2 of the 5 meal components:



Fruits



Vegetables



Grains



Meats/Meat
Alternates

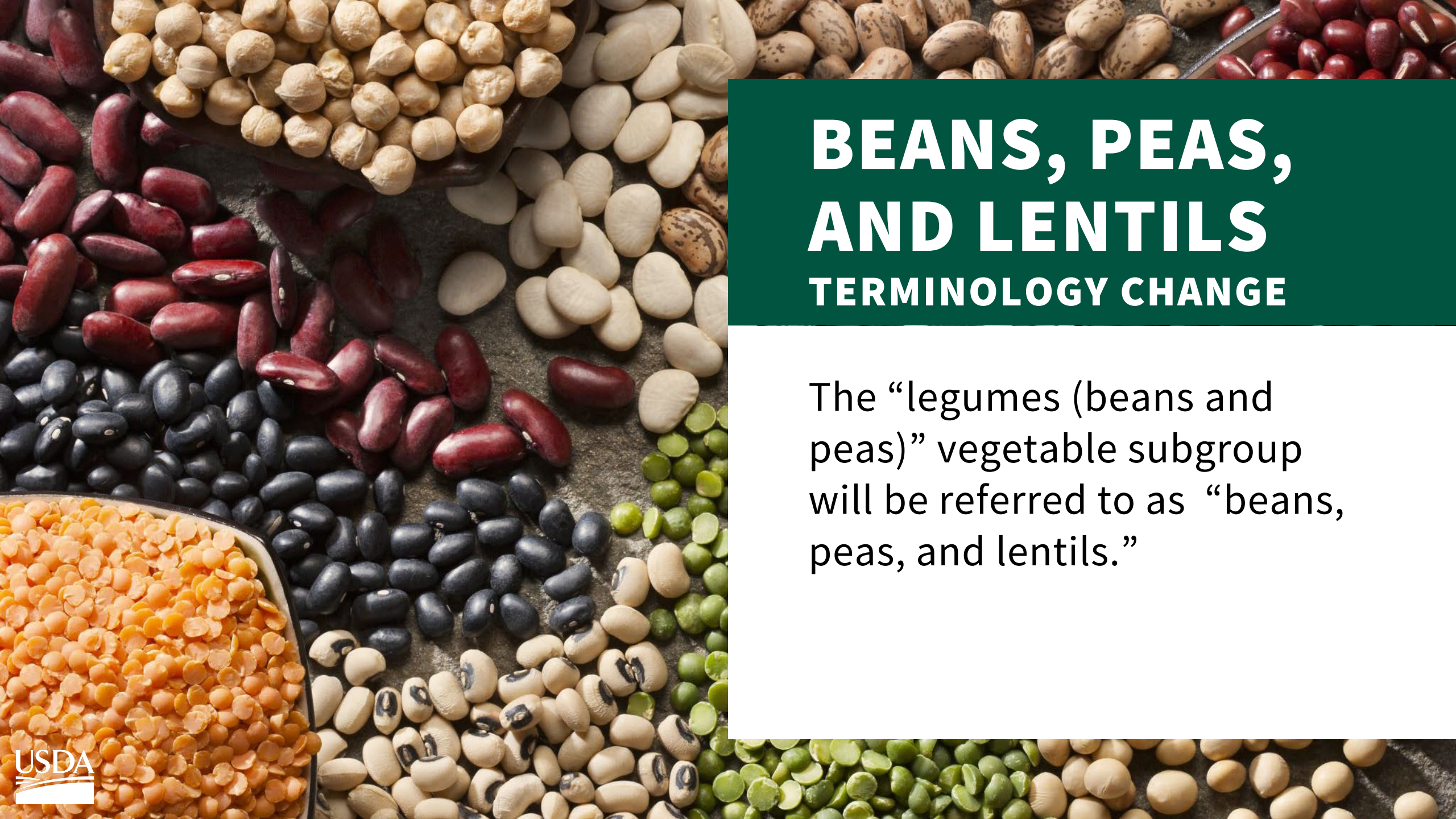


Milk

NUTS AND SEEDS



- Allows nuts and seeds to credit for the full meats/meat alternates component in all Child Nutrition Programs and meals.
- Removes the 50% limit for nuts and seeds at breakfast, lunch, and supper.

A top-down view of various legumes spread out on a dark surface. In the top left, there's a pile of light-colored, wrinkled lentils. To their right are white beans. Further right are speckled beans. In the top right corner, there are red kidney beans. The middle section is dominated by a large pile of red kidney beans. Below them are black beans. In the bottom left corner, there's a bowl filled with orange lentils. To the right of the black beans are green peas. At the bottom, there are more white beans and black beans.

BEANS, PEAS, AND LENTILS

TERMINOLOGY CHANGE

The “legumes (beans and peas)” vegetable subgroup will be referred to as “beans, peas, and lentils.”

BEANS, PEAS, AND LENTILS

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

- Allows schools to count beans, peas, and lentils offered as a meat/meat alternate at lunch towards the weekly beans, peas, and lentils subgroup requirement.
- Under this option, beans, peas, and lentils would only count toward one overall meal component: the vegetable meal component, or the meats/meat alternates meal component.

OR

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food ^a Per Week (minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ^b	2½ (½)	2½ (½)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^b	3¾ (¾)	3¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark Green ^c	½	½	½
Red/Orange ^c	¾	¾	1¼
Beans, Peas, and Lentils ^c	½	½	½
Starchy ^c	½	½	½
Other ^{c,d}	½	½	¾
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total ^e	1	1	1½
Grains (oz eq) ^f	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq) ^g	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid Milk (cups) ^h	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)

COMPETITIVE FOODS: BEAN DIP EXEMPTION

- Adds bean dip to the list of foods exempt from the total fat standard in the Smart Snacks in School regulations.
- Exemption applies to products marketed as hummus, as well as bean dips made from any variety of beans, peas, or lentils.
- Bean dip would continue to be subject to the saturated fat standard, as well as all other Smart Snacks in School requirements.



2024 CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT

FLAVORED MILK AND SODIUM REQUIREMENTS

- Final rule is consistent with the Appropriations Act.

CREDITING VEGETABLES AT BREAKFAST

- **Final Rule:** Requires schools choosing to substitute vegetables for fruits at breakfast on two or more days per school week must offer vegetables from at least two different subgroups.
- **Appropriations Act:** Schools may offer any vegetables in place of fruit at breakfast, with no subgroup requirements for school year 2024-2025.

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Final Rule

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

- Allows State agencies to approve the hire of directors in medium and large local educational agencies who do not hold a degree.
- Directors hired under this exemption must have:
 - ✓ 10+ years of school nutrition program experience

AND

 - ✓ A high school diploma or GED



MEAL MODIFICATIONS

Explains in regulation that State licensed healthcare professionals and registered dietitians may submit medical statements in the school meal programs and CACFP.



ADDITIONAL CHANGES

CLARIFICATION ON POTABLE WATER REQUIREMENTS

- Adds the word “plain” to the potable water regulations to clarify this requirement.

SYNTHETIC *TRANS* FAT

- Removes dietary specification for *trans* fat.

TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS

- These changes are not substantive but are intended to make regulations more user-friendly and easier to understand.

BUY AMERICAN



LIMITED CIRCUMSTANCES FOR NON-DOMESTIC FOOD PURCHASES:

- The product is listed on the Federal Acquisitions Regulations (FAR) Nonavailable articles list and/or is not produced or manufactured in the U.S. in sufficient and reasonably available quantities of a satisfactory quality; or
- Competitive bids reveal the costs of a U.S. product are significantly higher than the non-domestic product

GRADUALLY PHASES IN A 5% CAP ON NON-DOMESTIC FOOD PURCHASES:

- Beginning in SY 2025-26, the non-domestic food purchases cap will be 10%
- Beginning in SY 2028-29, the non-domestic food purchases cap will be 8%
- Beginning in 2031-32, the non-domestic food purchases cap will be 5%
- State agencies will have discretion to allow an accommodation for temporary relief from this requirement.



BUY AMERICAN

- Exception Documentation and Reporting Requirements
- Procurement Procedures
- Definition of “Substantially”
- Clarification of Requirements for Harvested Farmed and Wild Caught Fish

USDA SUPPORT FOR CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Final Rule

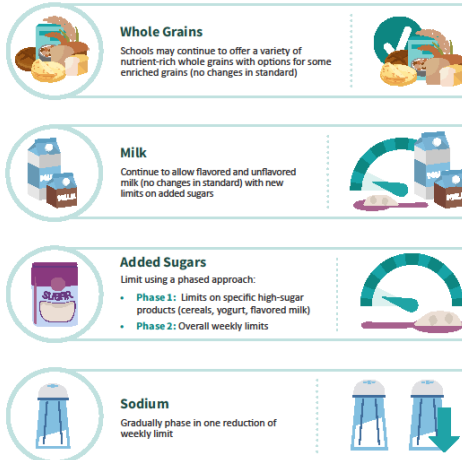


FINAL RULE RESOURCES

FINAL RULE FOR SCHOOL MEAL STANDARDS

Updated School Meal Standards: working towards a common goal of healthy children and helping them reach their full potential.
School meals are the main source of nutrition for millions of children every school day. USDA is ensuring these are even more nourishing, while keeping them appealing to kids.

Key Provisions

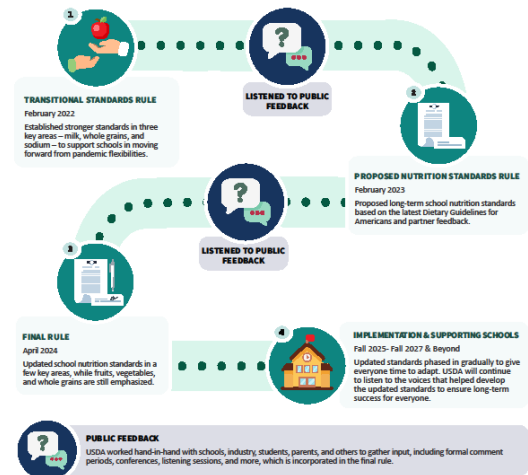


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HOW WE GOT HERE: SCHOOL NUTRITION STANDARDS FINAL RULE

School nutrition professionals continue to make school meals the healthiest meals children eat in a day! To take school meals to the next level, USDA is updating the school nutrition standards after considering recommendations from the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans and listening to a diverse range of voices with experience in child nutrition and health.

USDA took a multi-step approach in supporting schools to give kids the best chance at a healthy future.



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April 2024

Nutrition Standards

Click on the icons below for more information on the proposed nutrition standards provisions.



[Added Sugars](#)



[Milk](#)



[Sodium](#)



[Whole Grains](#)

Videos



HEALTHY MEALS INCENTIVES

Improving the nutritional quality of school meals with innovative ideas, best practices, training and food systems transformation.



Grants for Small/Rural
SFAs



Recognition Awards



School Food System
Transformation
Challenge Sub-Grants



Healthy Meals
Summits



TEAM NUTRITION TRAINING GRANT

FY 2024 • MEAL PATTERN MODERNIZATION AND MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Eligibility: State agencies that administer the National School Lunch Program

Grant Goals: To build capacity to implement the Final Rule

Grant Tracks:

- Track 1: Meal Patterns Implementation Update
- Track 2: Mentoring and Retention Approaches for School Nutrition Professionals





EQUIPMENT ASSISTANCE GRANTS

In FY 2024, FNS received \$10 million for National School Lunch Equipment Assistance Grants!



THE PATRICK LEAHY FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

- Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant
- State Farm to School Formula Grant
 - State-level technical assistance and resources
- Farm to School Regional Specialists
- Fact Sheets, Guides, and More!



SCHOOL FOOD PROCUREMENT

WE LISTENED! WE ARE TAKING ACTION!

Stakeholders across NSLP/SBP struggle with today's school meal procurement practices

SFAs, SAs, producers, processors, and distributors have shared their challenges with USDA and recommended trainings, tools, and improvements to the process.

USDA is Taking Action!

Cooperative Agreement

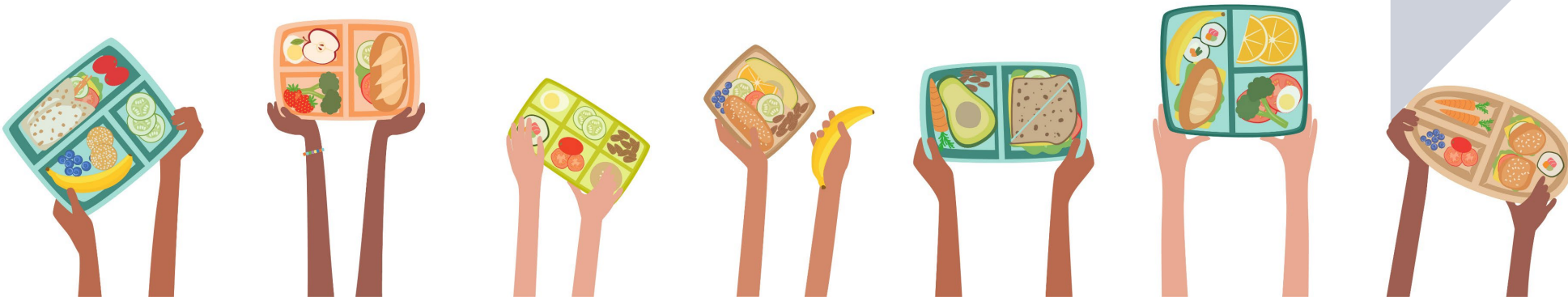


Project Focus:

- Redesigning the procurement process
- Developing a process to build better partnerships with suppliers
- Reinventing how the school meal marketplace does business

Three Phases:

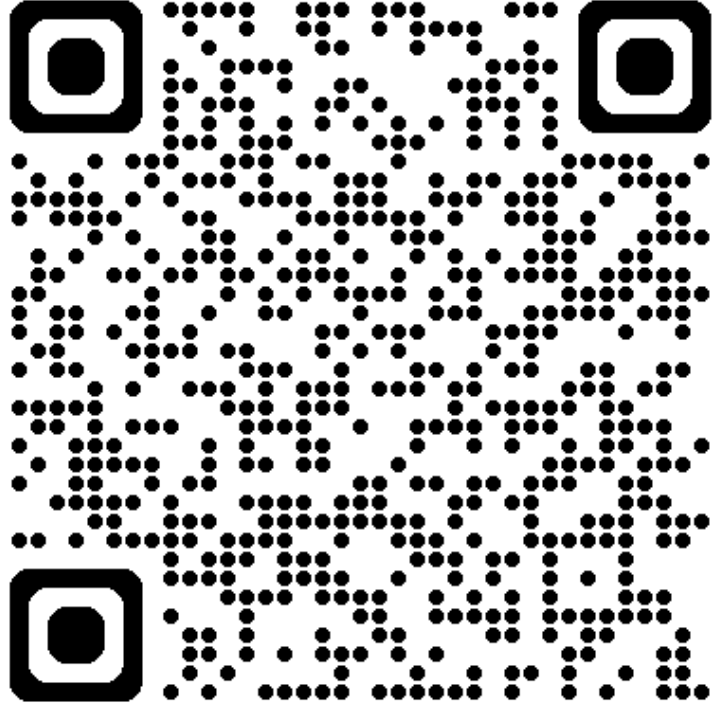
- 1) Investigative
- 2) Development
- 3) Piloting Change



INSTITUTE OF CHILD NUTRITION

The Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) is the only federally funded national center dedicated to applied research, education and training, and technical assistance for child nutrition programs.





THANK YOU!

Check out the website for
resources and more information.