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**INDIANA
DEPARTMENT of
EDUCATION**

**Mike Braun, Governor
Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education**

School Nutrition Programs

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

This weekly newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is dedicated to providing education, training, and technical assistance opportunities to school nutrition professionals, helping to ensure seamless operations for those participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Child Nutrition Programs. If you are the food service contact for your school or facility, please be certain that everyone on your team has access to this important information.

Tip of the Week

Monthly Edit Check Requirement

Before submitting a claim for reimbursement, a monthly edit check must be completed and kept on file. The edit check is used to verify that monthly meal claims are accurate. It should identify potential issues such as claiming more meals than the number of eligible students or submitting counts that exceed the attendance-adjusted allowable meals. Any claim that appears higher than expected must include documented justification each month.

Point of sale (POS) systems should flag issues automatically. If the POS does not, a manual review of the edit check is required. If the POS does not have a built-in edit check report, find IDOE's Edit Check form [here](#).

Important Updates

2026 National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Equipment Assistance Grant

Indiana has received \$443,185 from the USDA to award Equipment Assistance Grants to School Food Authorities (SFA). To be eligible, an SFA must participate in the NSLP. Each SFA may request funding for up to three pieces of equipment, with a maximum award of \$30,000. Applications will be accepted through Saturday, October 31, with announcement of awards by Friday, November 27. For more information, including the application, click [here](#).

Questions can be sent to SCNFinance@doe.in.gov. Please include "Sponsor Number/Equipment Grant" in the subject line.

Nutrition Hub in the Learning Lab

IDOE's learning management system has transitioned to the Nutrition Hub in the Learning Lab. The Nutrition Hub offers more than 30 webinars with up-to-date information to support your ongoing program training needs.

Accessing the Nutrition Hub requires a simple two-step process:

1. Create a [LearningLab](#) account.
2. Submit the [Nutrition Hub Access Request Form](#).

Please note: The same email address must be used for both steps to ensure setup.

Please allow up to 48 business hours for the access request form to be processed. Once access is granted, a notification will be sent. Accounts created prior to this week did not generate an email notification, but access can still be confirmed by logging into the Learning Lab. Need help navigating the Nutrition Hub? Click [here](#) to view the user guide.

Verification is Coming!

Sponsors that process applications for free and reduced meal benefits can find helpful tips to prepare for verification below:

- View the [2026-2027 Verification Method Report](#) to determine what type of verification must be completed. The method is determined based on the non-response rate reported on the Program (PY) 2025-2026 Verification Summary Report.
 - Sponsors with a 20% or higher non-responserate are required to conduct Standard (Error Prone) Verification – this means 3% of the total approved applications on file as of Thursday, October 1, must be pulled from the flagged pool of Error Prone applications.
 - Sponsors with a non-response rate under 20% can choose from any of the three methods available.
- Before Thursday, October 1, maximize your Direct Certification (DC) matches.
 - Conduct DC lookup on any categorical application – applications with a valid-looking case number or the foster box checked.
 - Upload a school roster of any student who hasn't already been direct certified.
 - Process any possible matches.
- Attend the following live webinars:
 - Verification in Action on Thursday, October 1, from 10 to 11 a.m. ET. Click [here](#) to register.
 - Verification in Action (repeat session) on Thursday, October 15, from 10 to 11 a.m. ET. Click [here](#) to register.
- Bookmark the [Verification webpage](#) to access notification letters, detailed instructions, and quick guides.

Data Exchange: October Data Certification Sign Off

Each year, IDOE requires schools to submit enrollment data for every student, including individual free and reduced eligibility through the Pupil Enrollment (PE) Report. The October Data Certification window will open on Thursday, October 1 (Census Day) and remain open until the end of day on Friday, October 9.

Schools should actively review and finalize all data submissions, ensuring that any errors, conflicts, exclusions, and warnings are resolved so data can be certified accurately. **Accurate and timely certification is essential, as this data feeds into a wide range of state and federal processes, ranging from funding to reporting purposes.**

These data points are critical and used by IDOE for purposes, including but not limited to:

- Calculating E-Rate discount
- Title I allocations

- Analysis and public reporting on demographic percentages of students' enrollment for each school
- Federal reporting
- Grant applications, awards, and monitoring (particularly where socio-economic status is a component)

School data managers can monitor their latest validations in the [Data Exchange Validation Portal](#) and compare currently validated data against last year's certified data in the [October Certification Dashboard](#).

If you have any questions or need support during the certification window, submit a ticket [here](#).

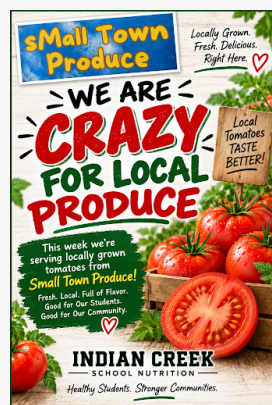
Farm to School

Looking for Ways to Participate in Farm to School?

The Indiana Grown for Schools and IDOE invites schools to take part in the following events and resources:

- Host an [Indiana Food Day](#) anytime! Many schools choose October as part of Farm to School Month celebrations. Registration and resources can be found [here](#).
- Celebrate apples with [Indiana Apple Crunch](#) where you can educate about apples, purchase local, and/or crunch into an apple together! More information on how to participate can be found [here](#).
- Featuring carrots or corn on the menu? Share a harvest of the month [flyer](#) to highlight fun facts about the foods being served to students.
- USDA DoD Fresh partner, What Chefs Want, developed marketing resources for Farm to School Month. Find flyers and social media posts [here](#).

Share what your school is doing to be included in an end of the month slideshow by emailing f2s@doe.in.gov.



Farm to School Highlights

Indian Creek Schools celebrated Food Day on Wednesday, September 16, and Tuesday, September 22, serving Creek Cattle burgers and tacos! Meals on both days were served with local, fresh tomatoes from small farms.

Warren Central Schools had a 100% Indiana Food Day on Wednesday, September 23, with locally made guacamole, tortillas, and salsa as well as locally raised or grown beef, lettuce, tomatoes, and watermelon. A map with all the companies and farms represented showed students and staff where their food was coming from.



Farm to School Month Office Hours

Join Office Hours on Wednesday, October 7, from 2:30-3:30 p.m. ET. The first half will be spent sharing ideas, examples, and tools to adapt to your school or early childhood program. The second half will be open for general technical assistance. Bring questions about procurement, classroom integration, event planning, food day celebrations, or any other Farm to School Month needs. Register [here](#).

USDA Foods

SFAs Food Distribution Accounts Still Pending Submission or Uncertified

There are several schools with food distribution accounts pending submission or uncertified. SFAs can follow the steps below to attain pending approval status.

- Login to [CNPweb](#) and navigate to FDP.
- Read the update and message screen, then scroll to the bottom and click "continue."
- Click "Program Year 2027" in the upper-right corner.
- Go to the applications tab and click the "Edit" link.
- Verify and/or update the address and contact information.
- Ensure that a 24-hour access phone number (such as a mobile phone number) is entered.
- Scroll down to box 29 in the verification section and place a checkmark in the box.
- Click the submit button, and your account should be pending approval.
- IDOE will approve your account if all requirements are met.

If you see the message:

"You do not currently have an NSLP information sheet for Program Year 2027 in a Pending Approval or Approved status. You must complete the enrollment process for the National School Lunch Program before your FDP information sheet can be certified and approved."

Your school still has required tasks to complete in the School Nutrition Program (SNP).

Here's a [refresher course](#) SFAs can watch on demand.

ProcessorLink Training to Indiana School Districts

[ProcessorLink](#) will offer virtual training for Indiana SFAs to familiarize Indiana school districts with key features and workflows. Participants will learn basic navigation, essential tasks, and best practices to ensure accurate and efficient use of the system. The training is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. ET. Join the webinar using [this link](#).

K12 Foodservice On Target Forecast Planner Virtual Training

For SFAs with processors that report pound and balance information through K12 Foodservice, IDOE is hosting a virtual training for Recipient Agencies (RAs) on Wednesday, October 21, from 10 to 11 a.m. ET. [K12Foodservice.com](https://www.k12foodservice.com) now offers a commodity planner that helps RAs identify needs, collaborate with partners, and track progress. The K12 On Target Planner provides real-time updates to improve entitlement use. Join the webinar using [this link](#).

Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Order Receipt System (FFAVORS) Access and Ordering

If your school's representative has not completed the [eAuthentication](#) process, and Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) has not set up a FFAVORS account for the user and/or point of contact. The steps below must be completed before any orders can be placed.

1. Have your designated school representative complete the eAuthentication process.
 2. After eAuthentication is finished, DLA will create a FFAVORS profile account for the user or point of contact.
 3. Wait for confirmation that the FFAVORS login has been created.
 4. Once both steps are complete, you may begin placing orders.
-

DoD Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program: Enter Receipts

Schools must enter receipts in FFAVORS **within two calendar days** of delivery to avoid account suspension and ensure that vendors are paid. Schools should monitor and use DoD Fresh funds in FFAVORS to prevent sweeping or loss of funds. Funds must be used in full by June 30, 2027 and will not rollover.

USDA Foods Cancellations for School Year (SY) 2026-2027

- 100256 Frozen Strawberry Cups (January-September 2026)
 - 100258 Frozen Apple Slices
 - 110721 Sweet Potato Fries
 - 110921 Frozen Chicken Fillet, Unbreaded
-

Did You Know?

RAs can determine how to divert their Planned Assistance Level (PAL) and pounds to processors following a data-driven process. This process helps SFAs maximize entitlement, avoid waste, and stay compliant.

- Check your PAL in CNPweb (SY 2027). In the future, PrimeroEdge will be used.
 - Forecast needs using historical data: menus, claims, previous orders, and production records.
 - Submit your selections in the required annual USDA Foods catalogs.
 - Track USDA Foods inventory and use proper rotation methods.
 - Ensure all processors are properly procured.
-

USDA Foods Recipe Resources

Looking for recipes to use your USDA Foods? Check out these resources:

- [Nutrition.gov](https://www.nutrition.gov)
- [Smart Swaps Recipes](#)
- [Wild Blueberry Recipes](#)
- [Recipes for Healthy Kids](#)
- [Recipes for Schools - Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#)
- [Team Nutrition Recipes](#)

Procurement

Responsive and Responsible Vendors

Responsive Vendors

These vendors *follow the rules of the solicitation*. A vendor is considered responsive when they:

- Submit all required documents on time.
- Follow the instructions exactly as written.
- Provide complete, accurate, and eligible product information.
- Meet every mandatory requirement listed in the solicitation.

Responsible Vendors

These vendors are *capable of performing the work and meeting expectations*. A responsible vendor must:

- Have the financial and organizational capacity to deliver.
- Show a positive performance history and reliability.
- Demonstrate technical ability to supply the products requested.
- Deliver consistently, on schedule, and according to specifications.
- Meet all regulatory, licensing, and insurance requirements.

Simply put, responsive vendors *follow the instructions* and responsible vendors *do the job well and consistently*.

For more details on procurement topics, see the [Procurement Information Sheet](#). Questions about procurement? Click [here](#) or contact the [SCN Procurement mailbox](#) for assistance.

Training and Webinar Opportunities

Financial Management: A Course for School Nutrition Directors

This fall, in partnership with the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN), IDOE will offer two in-person sessions of Financial Management, a full-day course designed for school nutrition directors and business managers. This training provides practical tools, hands-on activities, and guidance to strengthen financial practices and support informed decision making within school nutrition programs.

Training Dates and Locations:

- Tuesday, October 27, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET at Kokomo Schools, Kokomo, IN
- Tuesday, November 17, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET at Bedford North Lawrence Schools, Bedford, IN

Click [here](#) to register.

Culinary Skills for A+ School Meals: Fall 2026 Virtual Training Series

Join for free, interactive sessions featuring live chef demonstrations, practical recipes, efficient techniques, and nutritional insights. Each class earns one training hour and includes exciting giveaways!

Enhance your culinary skills and learn tips and tricks from school nutrition pros. Classes are held Thursdays, from 2 to 3 p.m. ET. For more details, click [here](#) to register.

- Thursday, October 1: Harvest to Lunchroom for Indiana Food Day
- Thursday, October 8: Prep Like a Pro: Knife Skills for School Kitchens
- Thursday, October 15: Slice, Dice & Serve: Vegetable Cutting Skills for School Meals
- Thursday, October 22: Mastering Fruit Prep: Cutting Techniques for K12 Foodservice
- Thursday, October 29: Making the Most of USDA Foods in School Kitchens
- Thursday, November 5: Stirring Up Success: Soups Kids Will Love

Questions? Contact [Cathy Powers](#) for additional information.

Upcoming Webinars

Check out the upcoming webinar list [here](#), as new events are added regularly. If there is a specific topic you would like to see covered, let us know by filling out [this form](#)!

Farm to School

IDOE, in partnership with the Indiana Grown for Schools Network, hosts and shares several webinars and events to support school nutrition programs. Stay up to date on the upcoming events page [here](#).

- [Farm to School Office Hours](#)- Wednesday, November 18, from 4 to 5 p.m. ET

Reminders

Open Comment Period for USDA Direct Final Rule: Simplified Geographic Preference Procurement in Child Nutrition Programs

USDA published a direct final rule last week that clarifies existing guidance about how Child Nutrition Program operators may apply geographic preferences when purchasing local agricultural products. The open comment deadline is Friday, October 9. Click [here](#) to submit a comment. The rule is set to take effect on Monday, November 9. For more information and to read the rule, click [here](#).

Indirect Cost Reminder

This is a reminder that indirect costs must be charged within 90 days of Tuesday, June 30, to the Nonprofit School Food Service Account (NSFSA). Indirect cost for SY 2025-2026 must be calculated and charged by Monday, September 28. Indirect costs may not be charged retroactively for a previous school year. Public schools may only charge indirect costs to the NSFSA with an approved indirect cost rate. The 2026 approved indirect cost rates used for SY 2025-2026 can be found [here](#). The 2027 approved indirect cost rates used for SY 2026-2027 can be found [here](#).

Non-public sponsors that do not report their financial information to IDOE's Office of School Finance may use the 15% de minimis rate. Sponsors must submit the indirect cost calculation and proof of transfer on the Annual Financial Report (AFR). The indirect cost calculation is as follows:

Indirect Cost = Total Allowable Direct Expenses - (Food Cost + Equipment more than 10K) x Indirect Cost Rate

For questions regarding indirect costs, please contact SCNFinance@doe.in.gov, including your sponsor number in the subject line.

Introducing Food Distribution Program (FDP) Fundamentals Webinar Series

IDOE is pleased to announce the launch of a new Food Distribution webinar series developed to enhance USDA Foods knowledge and deliver essential updates, training, and best practices for SFAs. Click [here](#) for session descriptions and details.

Nutrition Nugget

World School Milk Day

Today, Wednesday, September 30, is World School Milk Day, but the nutrition benefits of milk are recognized all year long in schools. Milk contains 13 essential nutrients children need from their food; and it also provides hydration. Milk supports many parts and functions in the body, from bones to the immune system to muscles, and so much more.

Updates from Our Partners

Revamping the Cafeteria Tray

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has announced a \$32.5 million initiative to help schools replace highly processed foods with nutrient-dense, real food. The Developing Evidence for Programs to Ensure Nutrition for Development (DEPEND) project, led by [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(AHRQ\)](#) and [National Institute of Health \(NIH\)](#), will offer grants ranging from \$75,000 to \$2.5 million to support innovative approaches in areas such as food purchasing, workforce and food production, student demand, and operational improvements. Applications can be found [here](#).

Upcoming Dates



Date	Event

Date	Event
Thursday, October 1	October Data Certification Sign Off Opens
Thursday, October 1	Verification Opens
Friday, October 9	October Data Certification Sign Off Ends
Friday, October 9	Public Comment Deadline
Thursday, October 15	Initial Due Date for September Claim
Friday, October 30	Final Due Date for August Claim
Sunday, November 15	Verification Ends
Monday, November 30	Final Due Date for September Claim



Additional Resources

[School Nutrition Programs Calendar](#)
[IDOE's Nutrition Webpage](#)
[CNPweb](#)

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