

## ILLINOIS FARM-TO-SCHOOL COHORT OPPORTUNITY: FAQs

### HOW MUCH TIME IS REQUIRED FOR TRAINING?

There is both in-person and virtual training. We have allotted 4 onsite training days per school which will be a combination of hands-on and classroom training. Staff will also be enrolled in our Online Learning Platform, a comprehensive virtual training program that takes about 15 hours in total to complete. The virtual course consists of 75+ training modules plus 28 recipe videos, guiding learners throughout the change-management lifecycle of a scratch-cooking program transition. Staff will be expected to complete the entire course by December 2025.

### IS TRAINING DURING NORMAL WORK HOURS?

The majority of training can take place during normal work hours. We will collaborate with each school to schedule onsite visits for days that allow for hands-on, real-time kitchen training as well as designated time for classroom-style learning. Ideally, staff will be able to watch the training videos and complete coursework during their scheduled working hours. Each video is less than 10 minutes long and staff will have about one year to complete the course.

### WHAT IS CRITERIA FOR SELECTING SCHOOLS TO PARTICIPATE?

Schools must have an onsite kitchen and self-operating food service program. Priority will be given to rural schools that also serve limited-income communities. We will conduct meetings with interested schools to outline in detail the project requirements and schools will be selected based on their commitment to fully participating in the program. At a high level, project requirements include purchasing necessary equipment, data tracking and timely submission, participation in all training sessions, enrollment in and completion of the virtual training program, stakeholder buy-in, and eagerness to transform your food service operation to serve scratch-cooked meals using local and fresh ingredients. Strong leadership at all levels of the organization is essential to overcome the challenges of systems change.

### HOW IS THE PROJECT FUNDED?

We received USDA funding from the Innovation Collaborative Grant through the Lake Michigan School Food System Innovation Hub. These funds will cover the cost of the 2.5-year project implementation which includes trainings, coaching, resources, and select smallwares. We will also provide data training, tracking, and analysis throughout the project lifecycle to guide program decisions and areas of focus. Schools will be responsible for the cost of labor for any additional training hours, food for taste tests and recipe testing, and new equipment for use in scratch-cooking (estimated equipment cost is \$7,500 but is dependent on existing equipment at each site).

### MORE QUESTIONS?

Reach out to [greg@beyondgreenpartners.com](mailto:greg@beyondgreenpartners.com)