

Introduction to FoodCorps

What Is FoodCorps?

Our mission: Together with communities, FoodCorps serves to connect kids to healthy food in school.

Our vision: We are creating a future in which all our nation's children—regardless of class, race, or geography—know what healthy food is, care where it comes from, and eat it every day.

Why Schools?

We know that healthy food is essential for kids. Good nutrition positively affects children's physical, social, and emotional health; their attendance at school; and their academic achievement. But millions of kids in the United States—especially children of color and children from low-income communities—face ongoing barriers to getting the nourishment they need:

- 9 out of 10 children don't eat enough vegetables.
- 6 out of 10 children don't eat enough fruit (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014).
- 1 out of 3 children—and 1 out of 2 children of color—are on track to develop diabetes in their lifetime (Narayan et al. 2003).

Schools have an opportunity to help close that nutrition gap. Today, over 50 million kids go to school in the United States. More than 30 million of those students eat school lunch, and more than 14 million eat school breakfast (United States Department of Agriculture 2018). By creating healthy food environments, schools can start all students on a healthy path to success.

What Is a Healthy School Food Environment?

A healthy school food environment has three things: hands-on learning, healthy school meals, and a schoolwide culture of health.

What Is Staying Power?

Staying power means that a healthy school food environment stays strong after FoodCorps leaves that school. Staying power is strongest when people from all parts of the school community work together to create a healthy food environment for students.

FoodCorps' Three Areas of Service

We partner with school communities and help create healthy school food environments with staying power. The FoodCorps program centers on three areas of service. Each area includes specific activities and practices to guide FoodCorps service members in their work with students and schools. Together, these practices create and sustain a healthy school food environment. It is important that service members engage the broader school community to build and sustain change through the three areas of service.

Each of the activities and practices below correspond to the FoodCorps' Healthy School Progress Report, which helps schools assess what they are already doing and understand future opportunities for creating a healthy school food environment.

Hands-On Learning

- A. Ongoing cooking, tasting, and garden-based lessons
- B. Field trips and farmer & chef visits
- C. School garden development & maintenance

Healthy School Meals

- D. Salad bar & meal line design
- E. Taste tests
- F. Cafeteria role modeling
- G. Local sourcing & recipe development
- H. Schoolwide healthy food promotion

Schoolwide Culture of Health

- I. Celebrations, events, rewards & snacks
- J. Family, staff & community education
- K. Making curriculum connections
- L. Healthy school food champion & team support
- M. School administration support
- N. Food service director/manager support
- O. Teacher support
- P. Parent support

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Throughout this guide, you will find tips and resources on how to serve in schools with a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This content includes the following:

- Getting to know your school community, its assets, and its goals
- Practicing culturally responsive teaching and classroom management
- Customizing lessons to climate, culture, and students' needs

Through your service using these and other approaches, you will be working to build an inclusive, meaningful experience for students, families, and school staff—and an equitable school food system for all children.

Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In pursuing our vision of connecting all children to healthy food, FoodCorps embraces equity, diversity, and inclusion as strategic and moral imperatives in our work. As an organization, we seek to overcome health disparities that take an unfair toll on children of color and children growing up in low-income households. We recognize and help our stakeholders name and understand the structural inequalities and the cycles of discrimination based on place, race, and class that both reinforce and are reinforced by the problem we are trying to solve. And we are convinced that for FoodCorps to be effective, we must not

replicate the inequality we see in society at large, but to the extent our resources allow, we must become a model for the change we seek. That's why we seek to:

We Set Strategy through an Equity Lens

FoodCorps does its work within the context of a food system in which people of color and low-income families are more likely to experience diet-related disease and have limited access to healthy foods. Our understanding of the correlation between race, socioeconomic status, and health outcomes for America's children guides our strategy as it relates to where we serve, who we select as service members, what partners we work with, and how we train and communicate with all members of the FoodCorps community. This perspective has shaped the FoodCorps program and will continue to inform how we grow and evolve, putting equity at the center of the change we seek and the path we take to achieve it.

We Foster Diversity on Our Team and Across Our Network

We are more innovative and responsive when our staff, board, service members, and partners represent a diversity of perspectives and life experiences and feel empowered to raise their voices, offer opinions, and be engaged. We invite individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, viewpoints, experiences, economic backgrounds, genders, and sexual identities and orientations to participate in and shape our program. By so doing, we ensure that our approach is relevant to and supported by the varied communities we serve. Further, we attract and maintain talented individuals in our network, creating alignment of understanding and purpose at all levels of FoodCorps.

We Ensure Sustained Impact through the Inclusion and Leadership of Local Voices

FoodCorps strives to make lasting change that endures beyond an individual service member's time with FoodCorps. To do that, we recognize that ownership of this important work must live not with our service members or our national organization

but with the school communities we partner with and serve. Accordingly, we invest time, resources, and focus in building partner and stakeholder networks and including the voices of those we serve in our decision-making process; we build and harness volunteer, parent, and neighborhood investment in our cause; we encourage local recruitment of service members; and we train leaders so that they remain engaged in this work post-FoodCorps, often in the same communities they served.

As a national network of partners and individuals, we are positioned well to create a platform for ongoing opportunities for dialogue and reflection on this topic. We take this seriously and are privileged to learn from the experiences of our peers and partners who have created a foundation for this conversation to take place. We acknowledge that this work is not easy, and our process will evolve as we continue to learn the best ways to create a more inclusive organization and to build an equitable school food system for all children.

