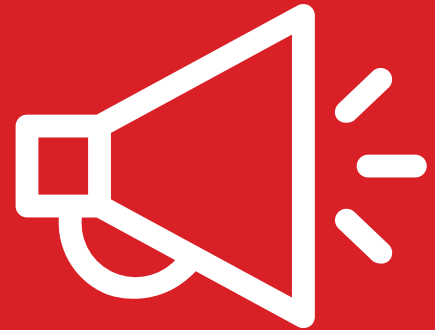




# TOOLKIT



**A curated resource guide for professionals working together to  
empower lifelong healthy eating patterns.**

# Introduction



Welcome to the [Let's Eat Healthy](#) community, where you play a pivotal role in advancing lifelong healthy eating patterns across California, with the aim of improving the well-being of children, families and communities.

Let's Eat Healthy, activated by Dairy Council of California, unites champions committed to fostering healthy eating patterns. The initiative is guided by a strategic framework that rallies experts in agriculture, community health, health care, academia, education and school foodservice to work together to empower healthier communities.

Explore the benefits and impacts of working together. When you engage with Let's Eat Healthy, you become part of a broader network of nutrition champions. The Let's Eat Healthy community gains access to the latest resources, technical advising, including Community of Practice webinars, grant funding opportunities and much more!

## About the Let's Eat Healthy Toolkit

The Let's Eat Healthy Toolkit offers a thoughtfully curated selection of credible and up-to-date resources, ensuring that you have access to trustworthy and relevant information and tools. The toolkit is structured around four steps, each contributing to the implementation of Let's Eat Healthy.



### Learn

Begin your journey here to get a comprehensive understanding of the initiative priorities.



### Educate

Provide opportunities for people to learn about sustainable nutrition and the critical role nutrition plays in supporting lifelong health.



### Advocate

Promote the LEH initiative with meaningful actions to support healthy living.



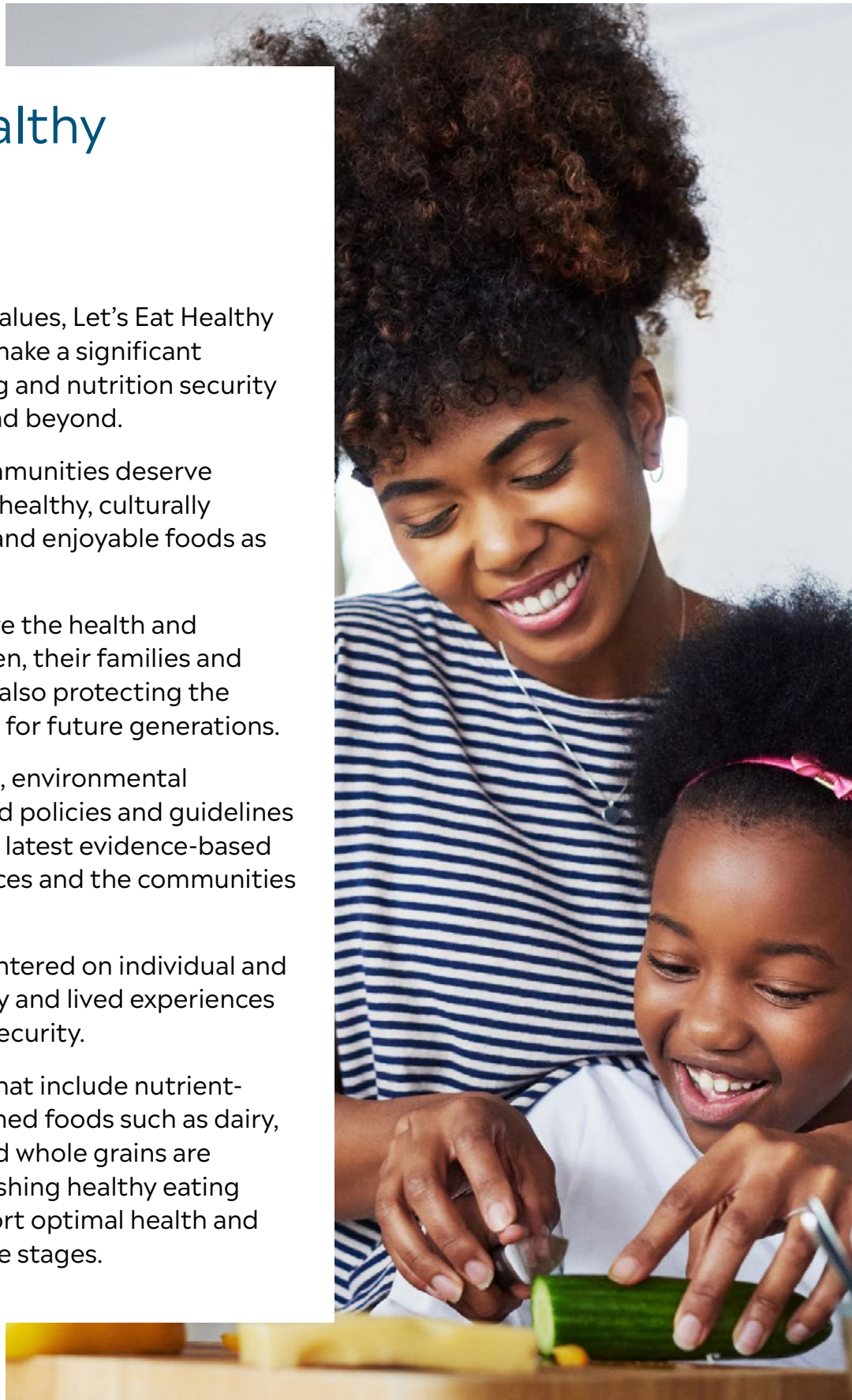
### Collaborate

Work together to achieve mutual goals.

# Let's Eat Healthy Values

United through shared values, Let's Eat Healthy champions like you can make a significant impact for healthy eating and nutrition security throughout California and beyond.

- 1** All children and communities deserve equitable access to healthy, culturally diverse, affordable and enjoyable foods as their human right.
- 2** Food systems ensure the health and well-being of children, their families and communities, while also protecting the health of the planet for future generations.
- 3** Nutrition education, environmental supports and related policies and guidelines are informed by the latest evidence-based research and practices and the communities we serve.
- 4** Healthy eating is centered on individual and community diversity and lived experiences to foster nutrition security.
- 5** High-quality diets that include nutrient-dense underconsumed foods such as dairy, vegetables, fruit and whole grains are essential for establishing healthy eating patterns that support optimal health and well-being across life stages.



# Let's Eat Healthy Toolkit

## Table of Contents



<b>Learn</b>	<b>5</b>
Goal 1: <b>Nutrition Security</b>	<b>6</b>
Goal 2: <b>Nutrition Education</b>	<b>8</b>
Goal 3: <b>Collaboration</b>	<b>10</b>



<b>Educate</b>	<b>12</b>
----------------	-----------



<b>Advocate</b>	<b>15</b>
-----------------	-----------



<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>18</b>
--------------------	-----------

Acknowledgements	21
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# Learn



**Start your Let's Eat Healthy journey by learning about the initiative and its goals.**

## Suggested Activities

- **Become familiar** with the [Let's Eat Healthy initiative](#).
- **Review** the [Let's Eat Healthy strategic framework](#).
- **Delve into** the three initiative goals:

**Goal 1: Nutrition Security.** Advance nutrition security among Californians, with a focus on children and their families.

**Goal 2: Nutrition Education.** Ensure nutrition education, nutrition education resources and nutrition promotion are evidence-based, age-appropriate, culturally inclusive and available to all.

**Goal 3: Collaboration.** Elevate the Let's Eat Healthy initiative within communities using partnerships to achieve collective action and impact supporting strategies to influence nutrition education, food literacy, dairy-inclusive agricultural literacy and food access.



**“Let's Eat Healthy Statewide Summit opened up a world of possibilities and connections. So glad to have been a part of today's event!”**

**Yadira Sanchez, Community Schools Director, North Valley Military Institute**



## Goal 1: Nutrition Security

Advance nutrition security among Californians with a focus on children and their families.

### DEFINITION



**Nutrition Security** is consistent access, availability and affordability of foods and beverages that promote well-being, prevent disease and, if needed, treat disease.<sup>1</sup>

### Spotlight on Nutrition Security

San Diego Unified School District engaged a multidepartment team plus community partners to coordinate supports and services to address food access and nutrition security for the school community. Herbert Hoover High School's food pantry is an example.

The school's food pantry is available for students and families to access a variety of nutrient-rich foods, including shelf-stable foods and fresh milk. A partnership with Let's Eat Healthy allowed the district to implement a school meal milk recovery program that reallocates unconsumed milk to the school food pantry.

Students can access the food pantry during school hours, and families may visit during open community hours. As a result of successfully meeting community needs by increasing access to a variety of nutritious foods such as milk, vegetables, fruits, whole grains and forms of protein, the district aims to onboard a new elementary school pantry next.



Photo provided by LASDA

“Ensuring all children have access to food is a high priority. Through collaboration with partners committed to improving the health of children and California communities, we can work to give children access to nutritious foods.”

**Dr. Richard Pan, Former California State Senator**



## Suggested Activities

- **Read** the blog [“Nutrition Security Is Vital to Supporting Healthier Children”](#) to learn the benefits of nutrition security.
- **View** the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#) national strategies to address nutrition and food insecurity.
- **Find** links to [16 federal nutrition assistance programs](#) that support families’ nutritional needs.
- **Review** information about charitable assistance programs from [Feeding America](#).
- **Learn** how [California Department of Education Food Pantries in Schools](#) expand nutrition security access points.
- **Read** the blog [“Nutrition Equity Supports Healthier People”](#) for an overview on nutrition equity.



## Goal 2: Nutrition Education

Ensure nutrition education, nutrition education resources and nutrition promotion are evidence-based, age-appropriate, culturally inclusive and available to all.

### DEFINITION

**Nutrition Education** is any combination of educational strategies, accompanied by environmental supports, designed to motivate and facilitate voluntary adoption of food choices and other food- and nutrition-related behaviors conducive to health and well-being. Nutrition education is delivered through multiple venues and involves activities at the individual, community and policy levels.<sup>2</sup>



### Spotlight on Nutrition Education

The award-winning *Let's Eat Healthy Together* broadcast series features Chef Monti Carlo engaging elementary schoolchildren in interactive nutrition education lessons. The 12-episode series on nutrition, agriculture, cooking, culture and the senses was a collaboration of Los Angeles Unified School District, Public Broadcasting Service affiliate KLCS and Dairy Council of California. It received 2023 Silver and Bronze Telly Awards. Telly Awards honor excellence in video and television across all screens.



For more information, and to watch episodes of the *Let's Eat Healthy Together* series, visit [HealthyEating.org/Together](https://HealthyEating.org/Together).



“The caliber of the work this season coming from creators such as Dairy Council of California and their partners truly has reflected the theme of breaking out and standing out.”

**Sabrina Dridje, Telly's Executive Director**





## Suggested Activities

- **Reference** the current [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) for national science-based nutrition recommendations.
- **Access** science-based [nutrition and wellness topics](#), including lifestyle wellness, sustainable nutrition, pregnancy and early childhood.
- **Use** the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior's [nutrition educator competencies](#) to promote and provide expertise in nutrition education.
- **Access** [California Health Education Standards](#) and the [Nutrition Education Resource Guide](#) on effective nutrition education.
- **Apply** [Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication](#) to nutrition education practices.



## Goal 3: Collaboration

Elevate the Let's Eat Healthy Initiative within communities using partnerships to achieve collective action and impact supporting strategies to influence nutrition education, food literacy, dairy-inclusive agricultural literacy and food access.

### DEFINITION



**Collaboration** is the process of two or more people, entities or organizations working together to complete a task or achieve a goal.<sup>3</sup>

### Spotlight on Collaboration

ImagineU Children's Museum is a nonprofit hands-on learning center in Visalia, California, that provides child-centered exhibits focused on agriculture, science and art. Featured is a dairy exhibit created through a partnership of [California Dairies Inc.](#), [California Milk Advisory Board](#) and [Dairy Council of California](#) that highlights dairy's important role in healthy eating patterns and sustainable agriculture. It shows how milk and dairy foods are produced, emphasizes safe animal welfare practices and spotlights dairy's recommended consumption for children in the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The standing exhibit, launched in 2021, will be on display for five years. This multi-organization collaboration aims to show the next generation of Californians the importance of dairy foods for health and sustainability, as well as dairy's part in California's robust agricultural industry.

Reflecting on the dairy exhibit, Katy Young, Executive Director at ImagineU, shared, "It's important for me that children know where their food is coming from. A lot of times we just go to the grocery store, show up and think it's just there and that's not the case. And living in the Central Valley we are surrounded by so many diverse products ... so it's important that as a museum, we're focusing on that."



For more information visit [www.imagineumuseum.org](http://www.imagineumuseum.org).



"I love this [Let's Eat Healthy] initiative. It's about transformation, it's about bringing people to collaborate around nutrition security, nutrition education."

**Secretary Karen Ross,  
California Department  
of Food and Agriculture**



## Suggested Activities

- **Explore** the principles of partnership with a [Collaboration Primer](#) showing the spectrum and factors for successful collaboration.
- **Read** the blog [“Working Together Is the Key to Healthy Communities”](#) for nutrition security partnership recommendations.
- **Consider** effective examples of California collaboratives as models:
  - **Learn** how [Smarter Lunchrooms Movement of California Collaborative](#) and [Smarter Mealtimes Movement of California](#) support PK-12 school and child care communities in transforming cafeteria and early childhood environments.
  - **Consider** how the [California Local School Wellness Policy Collaborative](#) brings together state leaders committed to improving student wellness and academic success.
  - **Read** about how the [California Farm to School Network](#) engages organizations and leaders across the state to advance farm to school efforts, share resources, connect and engage in peer learning.

# Educate



**Provide opportunities for people to learn about sustainable nutrition and the critical role nutrition plays in supporting lifelong health.**

## Spotlight on Teaching Nutrition

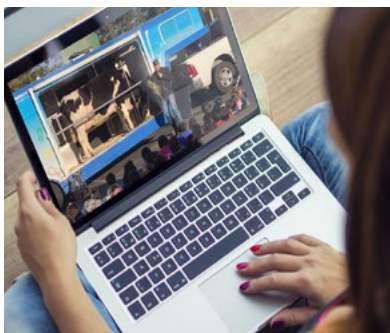
“Nutrition has always been an important part of my classroom curriculum because I believe lifelong health and success begins with nutrition education,” says Michaela Nealy, a former 1st grade educator in Stockton Unified School District.

Motivated by a visit from Dairy Council of California’s [Mobile Dairy Classroom](#), a dairy agriculture literacy program with whole-school assemblies that teach students where food comes from and how to make healthy eating choices, Nealy began using the [Let’s Eat Healthy](#) curriculum.

The curriculum was developed by nutrition and education experts and aligns to [Common Core State Standards](#), and uses a behavior-change model that gives students the knowledge needed to practice healthy choices. As a bonus, students learn and practice in real-life settings, make learning more fun.



To learn more about Mobile Dairy Classroom and schedule a school assembly in California or a virtual viewing party at no cost, visit [HealthyEating.org/MDC](https://HealthyEating.org/MDC).





### Suggested Activities

- **Stay up to date** with [Nutrition Trends](#) for health professionals and educators.
- **Share** science-based nutrition resources with target audiences:
  - **Use** [Let's Eat Healthy Tip Sheets](#) with turnkey activities to build on nutrition knowledge and reinforce healthy eating patterns.
  - **Relay** [California WIC nutrition and health content materials](#), which support families of young children.
  - **Share** the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [Toolkit for Health Professionals](#), which provides handouts to communicate nutrition guidance related to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- **Promote or conduct** nutrition campaigns using the [Let's Eat Healthy Planning Calendar](#) with campaign toolkits and resources.
- **Enhance** the integration of nutrition education in schools and communities:
  - **Explore** [Nutrition Education in California Schools](#) with California Department of Education.
  - **Read** the blog "[Nutrition Education Supports Social and Emotional Learning.](#)"
  - **Visit** California Department of Education's [Farm to School](#) web page for education materials and ways to collaborate.
- **Implement** nutrition education programs using science-based curricula and resources:
  - **Use** [Let's Eat Healthy Nutrition Education Curriculum](#) for grades K-12.
  - **Play** the [Let's Eat Healthy Together](#) broadcast series of 12 nutrition education episodes.
  - **Access** California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom [teaching resources](#) for grades K-12 focused on the California food system and agricultural products.
  - **Conduct** effective nutrition education for all ages with [USDA nutrition education resources](#).
  - **Share** USDA's hands-on [Summer Food, Summer Moves Resource Kit](#) for families, encouraging healthy eating and physical activity during the summer months.



- **Offer** professional development opportunities:
  - **See** California Department of Education’s [Child Nutrition Programs Course Catalog](#) of online training materials.
  - **Find** [Institute of Child Nutrition](#) materials for school food professionals, including opportunities for face-to-face, online and self-paced training plus the Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition.
  - **Watch** [California Local School Wellness Policy Collaborative webinars](#) highlighting research, policy, systems, environmental changes and promising practices to inspire school communities’ wellness policies.

# Advocate



**Promote the Let's Eat Healthy Initiative with meaningful actions to support healthy living.**

## Spotlight on Advocacy

Dr. Thao Vo is a pediatric medical doctor in Westminster, California, at the [VM Clinic](#). She advocates healthy eating for her patients and says she *“enjoys working closely with families to make sure that children grow up to be happy and healthy adults.”*

The VM Clinic partnered with Dairy Council of California to coordinate training for the medical clinic’s staff on nutrition guidelines and tips to reinforce healthy eating. The VM staff attending the training reviewed a variety of science-based nutrition resources from [HealthyEating.org](#), accessing educational videos and tailored nutrition booklets for the diverse and growing families they serve. The professional development training and resources are valued by Dr. Vo and VM Clinic staff, ensuring the educational messaging shared with patients on nutrition is research-based and consistent with current dietary guidelines.





### Suggested Activities

- **Promote** programs that support nutrition education and nutrition security:
  - **Check out** [Team Nutrition School Lunch Materials](#) and [School Breakfast Materials](#) web pages for school meal promotion tools.
  - **Promote** the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for schools using the [No Kid Hungry: SNAP Outreach in Schools Toolkit](#).
  - **Share** federal and state food access programs using [LEH food access materials and resources](#).
  - **Encourage** health providers with [Nutrition Rx Tear Pads](#) to recommend prescriptions for healthy eating.
- **Assess** the nutrition environment with these suggested tools:
  - **Use** the [Comprehensive Framework for Addressing the School Nutrition Environment and Services](#) for the critical elements of a school nutrition environment.
  - **Download** No Kid Hungry’s [Promising Practices for Starting and Maintaining a School Food Pantry](#), which includes a food pantry checklist.
  - **Explore** the [Preschools SHINE Program](#) assessment tool by California Department of Social Services for early care and education sites.
  - **Read** [The USDA Farm to School Planning Toolkit](#), which has an assessment tool and resources.
  - **Inspire** school communities with [California Local School Wellness Policy Collaborative resources](#) to activate wellness policies.
- **Align** advocacy efforts with national and state recommendations:
  - **Read** the blog [“Let’s Take Action to Improve Nutrition Security”](#) on the White House National Strategy.
  - **View** California Department of Food and Agriculture’s [AgVision Framework](#) for profitably producing sustainable food with a focus on better health and well-being for Californians.
  - **Learn** recommendations for strengthening farm to school systems in [Planting the Seed: Farm to School Roadmap for Success](#).





- **Work to strengthen** nutrition policies, standards and guidelines:
  - **Visit** the [Publications and Resources](#) web page of Nourish California for nutrition advocacy tools.
  - **Explore** School Nutrition Association’s [advocacy resources](#) on federal and state legislation and policies impacting child nutrition programs.
  - **View** the infograph [School Nutrition Policies and Practices Can Support the Social and Emotional Climate and Learning](#).
  - **Use** National Farm to School Network’s resources on [Advocating for Farm to School: How to Host Site Visits](#).

# Collaborate



**Work together to achieve mutual goals and amplify stories of success.**

## Spotlight on Collaboration

San Luis Coastal Unified School District's Food Service Department hosted its first ever culinary arts classes as part of a 2022 summer experience. The program was free for all district students and included transportation and meals, which helped remove participation barriers. The culinary classes emphasized garden and culinary education through experiential learning, including an interactive lesson and tasting experience to build the connection between nutritious school food and local agriculture.

Through shared values, the Food Service Department joined LEH to improve nutrition and agriculture literacy. Dairy Council of California provided nutrition education materials and ingredients for the dairy-inclusive recipes, as well as blenders, aprons and other small equipment for the classes. They used a dairy-themed [Taste and Teach](#) activity developed in partnership with [California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom](#) to activate June Is Dairy Month.

The lesson plan helped students frame the pairing of dairy with vegetables and fruits in the context of daily eating patterns using a variety of factors, including taste, tradition and nutrition. Partnering to offer this education program also supported the district's students to learn dairy's role in healthy eating patterns; MyPlate and the five food groups; ways to enhance nutrition and taste by pairing dairy with vegetables, fruits and whole grains; and dairy's contribution to California agriculture.





### Suggested Activities

- **Learn** from collaborations and share your success stories through conferences, webinars, newsletters, social media and other forums:
  - **Read** the blog [Nutrition Education Changes Lives](#) to see how an educator improved student nutrition security with nutrition education.
  - **Explore** [The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement California Success Stories](#), which showcases 16 stories from California Department of Education.
  - **See** California Department of Public Health's [Stories from the Field](#) on improving nutrition security.
- **Recognize** champions and other leaders in your community:
  - **Recognize** a champion through the [Let's Eat Healthy Leadership Award](#) and celebrate California leaders making a positive difference through nutrition.
  - **Apply** for scholarships and awards of the [California School Nutrition Association](#) for child nutrition leaders.
  - **Become** a nutrition [Champion for Change](#) with California Department of Public Health and CalFresh Healthy Living.
  - **Nominate** a Hunger Hero with [No Kid Hungry California](#) for making a significant difference in addressing child hunger.
- **Select** a collaborative project to amplify LEH and assess the potential for partnerships using the [Partnership Assessment Tool for Health](#).
- **Nurture** your partnerships using guidance from these resources:
  - **View** the Center for Wellness and Nutrition's [Community Engagement Toolkit](#) for public health leaders, community liaisons and coalitions.
  - **Read** the California Department of Public Health's [Partnering With California's Early Care and Education Community to Prevent Childhood Obesity](#) for early childhood collaborations.
- **Start or enhance** an ambassador network:
  - **Read** [Integrating the Promotores Model to Strengthen Community Partnerships](#) by Center for the Study of Social Policy and First Five LA for an example of a grassroots approach to building community leadership in providing services.



- **Use** the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement of California's [The Technical Advising Professional Toolkit](#) to implement a Smarter Lunchrooms program using an ambassador model.
- **Champion** a mealtime program with [Smarter Mealtimes](#), a handbook from the Smarter Mealtimes Movement National Office, for childcare providers.
- **Apply** for funding and grants to support your programs:
  - **Apply** to [Action for Healthy Kids](#) for nutrition-related grants.
  - **Search** the [California Department of Education](#) web page for support for child nutrition programs.
  - **View** [California Department of Food and Agriculture Office of Farm to Fork California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program](#).
  - **Visit** the [Let's Eat Healthy Community Grants](#) web page to learn about past recipients and current funding opportunities.

# Acknowledgments

The Let's Eat Healthy Toolkit was designed, edited and published by Dairy Council of California in 2023.

## Background on Let's Eat Healthy

The Let's Eat Healthy strategic framework was collaboratively developed through input from a diverse range of agencies that participated in the [Well-Nourished, Brighter Futures Initiative Stakeholder Convening](#), led by Dairy Council of California. Participants included esteemed leaders from state and local governments, nonprofit organizations and academia. Their invaluable contributions encompassed insights and feedback on complex nutrition- and health-related challenges that profoundly impact the well-being of children's health.

The call to action, as delineated in the [Initiative Launch Stakeholder Convening Report](#), champions the cause of nutrition equity. It aligns with the commitment and priorities of the Let's Eat Healthy initiative, which are aimed at enhancing access to evidence-based nutrition education and agricultural programs and advocating for robust food programs and policies that facilitate access to nourishing foods.

In May 2023, Let's Eat Healthy convened its inaugural statewide summit, bringing together supporters to showcase achievements through activation of the Let's Eat Healthy framework. The summit served as a platform to amplify the voices and community impact fostered by partnerships, rooted in shared values and a common cause of empowering healthier communities. Through networking opportunities and structured roundtable discussions, summit participants offered valuable insights on ways to strengthen collaboration across the areas of Let's Eat Healthy. This invaluable input played a pivotal role in the development of actionable steps and compilation of resources in this toolkit. The diverse cohort of champions from agriculture, education, academia, government and community organizations exemplified the collective potential to share expertise, resources and capacity.

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