# SNP Memo #2022-2023-72


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: June 09, 2023

TO: Directors, Supervisors, and Contact Persons Addressed

FROM: Sandra C. Curwood, PhD, RDN, ***Sandy***

## SUBJECT: 2023 Virginia Food for Virginia Kids Cohort Call for Applications

The Virginia Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition Programs (VDOE-SNP) is accepting applications from school food authorities (SFAs) for the school year (SY) 2023–2024 Virginia Food for Virginia Kids (VFVK) Cohort. The [online application form](https://virginiadoe.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7ZYd1iDTlQkszt4) must be completed by Friday, June 30, 2023.

## Overview

The VDOE-SNP VFVK initiative builds the capacity and commitment of Virginia school divisions to increase scratch cooking and serve more fresh, seasonal, and culturally inclusive meals. VFVK directly supports SFAs while weaving in workforce development initiatives to bolster the school nutrition workforce. The VDOE-SNP is recruiting the second cohort of SFAs interested in operational change in scratch cooking, local food procurement, and culturally inclusive meal offerings.

The SY 2023–2024 VFVK Cohort will be comprised of eight SFAs across the Commonwealth interested in, and dedicated to, school meal transformation. Ideally, the VDOE-SNP will select one SFA from each of the eight Superintendent’s regions. This unique, pioneering opportunity combines strategic planning, hands-on training, and in-person technical assistance. The VDOE-SNP contracted the Chef Ann Foundation (CAF) to provide opportunities and resources to enhance school food operations. The VFVK Cohort SFAs will:

* Complete an operational assessment to identify opportunities for growth. The assessments will be provided to the SFA to be used as a learning tool. The operational assessment will look at five key areas, which include food, finance, facilities, human resources, and marketing.
* Develop a strategic plan through group calls, a two-day visit with the SFA, and individualized follow-up meetings.
* Complete provided trainings in the areas of scratch cooking, local food procurement, and culturally inclusive meal offerings. Workshops may also include financial management and other trainings.
* Participate in discussions on school meal topics, such as barriers and opportunities for change.
* Attend one or more in-person leadership gatherings for discussions related to improving school meals throughout the Commonwealth.
* Attend one or more conferences geared towards scratch cooking, such as ScratchWorks.
* Participate in the monitoring and evaluation activities.

The VFVK Cohort activities align with VDOE-SNP workforce development initiatives and trainings to ensure every Virginia student has equitable access to good, healthy food at school. This is an exciting opportunity to work with other stakeholders and with the CAF team, which has guided over 13,500 schools through their transition to whole-ingredient scratch cooking.

## Application Process

The VDOE-SNP is accepting applications for the SY 2023–2024 VFVK Cohort. Applications should be submitted via the [online application form](https://virginiadoe.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7ZYd1iDTlQkszt4) by Friday, June 30, 2023. Criteria for SFA participation include:

* SFA must be a self-operated food service program.
* SFA must be committed to operational change within the school meals program to increase scratch cooking, local food procurement, and culturally inclusive meals.
* SFA must have support from division leadership to implement operational change.

SFAs do not need experience in these fields to participate in the SY 2023–2024 VFVK Cohort:

* Scratch cooking includes food preparation using whole ingredients such as raw proteins, fresh produce, and/or intact whole grains.
* Local food procurement includes the purchasing of food items grown and/or raised within a specific geographic radius defined by the SFA.
* Culturally inclusive meal offerings include menu items that reflect the cultural demographics of the school community.

An SFA’s commitment to implement operational change will be prioritized over its experience in the areas of scratch cooking, local procurement, and inclusion of culturally inclusive meal offerings.

The VDOE-SNP will review applications based on the criteria above. The VDOE-SNP will select eight divisions, ideally one from each superintendent’s region, to participate in the SY 2023–2024 VFVK Cohort. Following the application process, more detailed information will be provided to the selected SFAs. VFVK Cohort activities will begin at the start of SY 2023–2024.

## For More Information

For more information, please contact Bee Thorp, VDOE-SNP Lead Farm to School Specialist, via email at Brittany.Thorp@doe.virginia.gov.

SCC/BHT/cc