



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cleveland, Ohio

Cuyahoga County Board of Health's *Feed Our Future* Initiative Awarded Prestigious SCALES Grant

The Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH) announced today that its *Feed Our Future: Local Foods for Growing Minds* initiative has been selected as one of only nine recipients nationwide of the highly competitive SCALES grants. SCALES (Supporting Community Agriculture and Local Education Systems) is led by the Center for School and Community Partnerships at Boise State University, in partnership with LunchAssist, and is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. SCALES grants are designed to accelerate innovative models that strengthen school food systems, expand access to nutritious meals, and create lasting economic opportunities for local producers.

The three-year grant, which runs through June 2028, will expand CCBH's proven approach to farm-to-school procurement. With this award, CCBH and its partners will:

- Work with Food Works Group, a national consultant, to customize a value chain coordination model for Ohio schools.
- Fund staff within three food distribution companies to support local procurement and integration of local producers.
- Pilot new food products with Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Cincinnati Public Schools, the two largest urban school districts in Ohio.
- Advance storytelling and data-sharing efforts to highlight the impact of local food and producers in schools.

"What sets this project apart is the fact that three competitors in the school food marketplace have agreed to come to the table together," said **Alison Patrick, MPH, RD, LD, Supervisor of Health & Wellness at Cuyahoga County Board of Health**. "This collaboration is new for farm-to-school, and it gives us the chance to show how competition and innovation can coexist in a way that benefits both schools and communities."

"I am most excited about putting the decision-making power in the hands of schools," Patrick added. "By providing them with more options and clear information about where their food comes from, we can empower schools to make choices that align with their values and ultimately deliver better meals to students."

"We have worked in school food for years, but this grant gives us the resources to take innovation to the next level," said **Wendy Stuart, Founding Partner of Food Works Group**, a strategic partner in the project. "By embedding value chain coordination directly within distribution companies, Ohio has the chance to model what scalable, sustainable local food systems can look like for schools across the country."



Since its start in 2009, *Feed Our Future* has grown from a pilot in one school district to a regional farm-to-school framework serving more than 71 districts. The initiative has already funneled \$3.4 million into Ohio's food system, supporting small and medium-sized producers while ensuring that students have greater access to nutritious, locally sourced meals.

With the SCALES grant, CCBH and its partners, including Food Works Group, What Chefs Want, Sirna & Sons, Sanson Produce, Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Cincinnati Public Schools, and Muse Communications, will advance a comprehensive plan to test, scale, and sustain innovative local food procurement strategies across Ohio.