

School Food FOCUS

Transforming Food Options for Children in Urban Schools

Issue #3
August 13, 2008

Greetings from the School Food FOCUS team at Liquori and Associates! We know it's the dog days of summer, but things continue to move forward on a number of important fronts. Over the coming weeks we will be filling you in on various FOCUS endeavors, and the people leading them. Today, we are following up with some draft documents and resources for your review, and also asking you to ...

SAVE THESE DATES: October 30th—November 1st

We will gather School Food FOCUS stakeholders and implementing agencies for a roll-up-your sleeves planning meeting. As ongoing works in progress, many of the program components of School Food FOCUS are now being discussed and defined. We look forward to getting input from a broader circle of stakeholders on everything from vision to desired yearly outcomes, from specific activities to inclusive, accountable processes. We hope you will plan to join us—please let us know if you will. Meeting details are still in the works, and we'll send out further information on venue and agenda in September.

FOCUS POLICY WORKING GROUP

In late July, we introduced you to our Policy Advisory, Thomas Forster, and invited you to contact us if you're interested in participating in the School Food FOCUS Policy Working Group. We have already heard from a couple of folks—thank you—and welcome more responses to kathy@liquoriandassociates.com. This week, as promised, we're sending along some draft Child Nutrition policy-related documents for your reference and comments. Attached you will find:

1. DRAFT diagram of networks and organizations working on Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR)
2. DRAFT chart of networks and organizations to accompany the above diagram
3. DRAFT 1-page overview of Child Nutrition policy opportunities

Please note that all of these documents are very much in draft form, and we invite your comments. We're also aware that it could be quite useful to develop additional diagrams to help us all see how various pieces and players in the public policy arena come together. If you have suggestions, questions or materials to share, please let us know!

RESOURCES

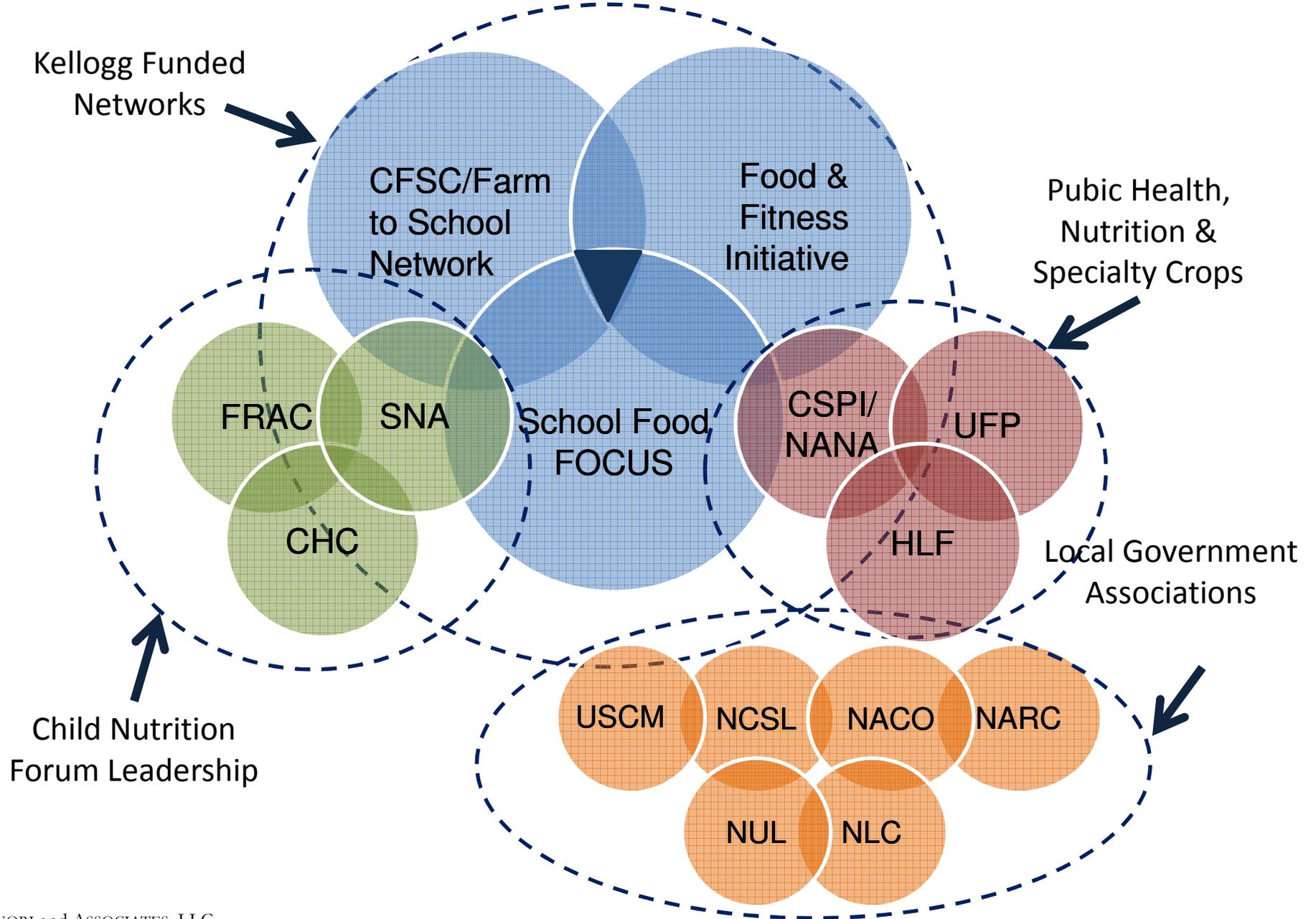
The National School Lunch Program: Background, Trends, and Issues

This report, released by the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), provides background information on the National School Lunch Program and addresses steps being taken to meet program challenges, including tradeoffs between nutritional quality of foods served, costs, and participation, as well as program access and program integrity issues.

Through A Glass Narrowly: Media Coverage of the Child Nutrition Act and Related Issues

This report, by FrameWorks Institute, analyzes the stories told in the media during the 2004 Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act and over the past year; examines how the Child Nutrition Act is presented in print media; identifies the main messengers; and provides suggestions for producing more effective approaches to the media in the future. More FrameWorks Institute resources can be found at www.wkkfchildrensforum.org.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act
School Food FOCUS & Partner Networks



Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act

School Food FOCUS Partner Networks Chart¹
Kellogg Funded Networks
School Food FOCUS
CFSC/Farm to School Network
Food and Fitness Initiative
Child Nutrition Forum Leadership
Food Research Action Center (FRAC)
School Nutrition Association (SNA)
Congressional Hunger Center (CHC)
Public Health, Nutrition and Specialty Crop Advocates
National Association for Nutrition and Activity (NANA)
United Fresh Produce (UFP)
Healthy Local Food (HLF) informal team which formed during the recent Farm Bill led as part of the Farm and Food Policy Project/Diversity Initiative (funded by WKKF)
Local Govt. Associations
US Conference of Mayors (USCM)
National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL)
National Urban League (NUL)
National Association of County Governments (NACO)
National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)
National League of Cities (NLC)

¹ This list of organizations and associative networks related to child nutrition policy is general and therefore undoubtedly leaves out many organizations. These networks do play important roles in the legislative process for Child Nutrition Programs. They are depicted in the accompanying diagram and are a beginning “minimum” list of groups and networks that Kellogg funded networks interested in Child Nutrition Programs have begun to work and will continue to work even more closely with as the CNR process intensifies.

Overview of CNR Opportunities and Partners for School Food FOCUS

Prepared by Thomas Forster, FOCUS Policy Advisor
August 2008

Opportunities: Over the next 2-3 years (2008-2010), Farm Bill implementation and Child Nutrition Reauthorization will present a unique set of policy opportunities for the positive reform of school food programs, greater nutritional value of school meals, and increased regional procurement. Representatives of the larger-scale school food reforms underway in U.S. cities and states could be in an excellent position to take advantage of the national attention focused on these two major pieces of federal legislation. They could support the advocacy efforts of allied networks, strengthen the voice, and further the specific goals of large urban school districts. Such a united front combining informed outreach, skillful organizing and coordinated advocacy efforts could have a substantial, even transformative, influence on policy and programmatic decisions made by the public agencies and policymakers responsible for child nutrition programs such as School Lunch, Breakfast and Summer Food Programs, Child Care and Adult Feeding Program, and others.

Foundation: The groundwork for positive change has been laid. Studies conducted by USDA and other institutions have documented the critical need for more nutrient dense foods in child nutrition programs. Research, pilot projects and innovative policies all point to the potential positive impact of scaling up new supply chain relationships to large urban school food districts. A recent result of these developments, together with the increasing public understanding of escalating food-related children's health issues such as diabetes and obesity, is that there is no longer any real opposition to improving food quality in child nutrition programs. The primary national debate now is how to increase nutritionally higher quality, fresh, and processed foods in school cafeterias affordably, given the tremendous administrative and financial restrictions that burden food service professionals across the country. Preliminary work has also been done among urban school food service directors who participated in the 2007 School Meals Institutes in Atlanta and Austin and indicated a desire to work together not just on changing their food purchasing and preparation practices but also on shifting public policies to support better nutrition.

Core partners and networks: FOCUS will undoubtedly join other primary coalitions advocating for higher reimbursement rates, such as the Child Nutrition Forum (CNF), the National Farm to School Network, and the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA), and certain food industry interests, such as United Fresh Produce. These working alliances of networks are presented in an accompanying diagram. While there are many different interests among these networks, there are also important common priorities. It is these common priorities that will be a foundation for our policy work. In addition to the organizations and networks that have worked closely together in past reauthorizations of Child Nutrition Programs, there are associations of local governments that can also have an impact on the outcome of CNR. Municipal and state government associations such as the US Council of Mayors, the National Council of State Governments, and the National Conference of State Legislatures, all supported provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill* that are supportive of flexible procurement for school food districts. These networks and others are also included in the diagram mentioned above.

Next Steps: Development of policy priorities through and with the full support of FOCUS stakeholders and partner groups, and vetted with wider Food & Fitness collaborations, will begin in September 2008. A FOCUS policy working group will form and bring interested partners up to date on CNR timing, priorities of other networks, and begin to formalize FOCUS priorities based on past and current discussions of how federal policy changes can improve the school food environment for urban school districts. Please contact Kathy Lawrence, kathy@liquoriandassociates.com if you wish to be added to the list.

**A concise summary of advocacy lessons learned in recent years, particularly in advocacy efforts on the 2008 Farm Bill, is being developed and will be circulated to School Food FOCUS stakeholders for reference and input before the start of regular policy working group meetings.*