

# No Kid Hungry – Early Childhood: COVID Emergency Relief Grant Program

In March 2021, the No Kid Hungry Early Childhood Grant Opportunity provided \$3M funding to community-based organizations, early child care centers, and healthcare providers across the country to respond to the growing needs and emerging opportunities to provide healthy food to young children (0-5 years old) and families facing food insecurity.

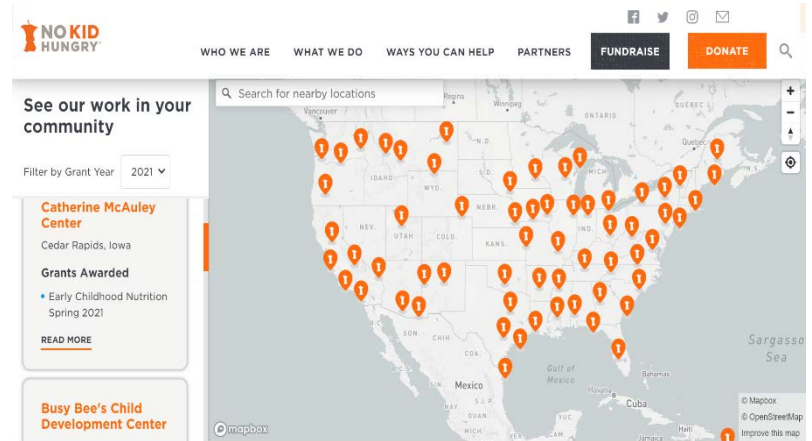
## BACKGROUND

At Share Our Strength, we strive to be bold and intentional about our mission and vision to center innovative and equitable solutions to end childhood hunger & poverty. In 2020, it was estimated that 1 in 6 kids (13 million) faced hunger in the United States. In addition to the impact of hunger – COVID19 exacerbated long-standing systemic health, social, and economic inequities, disproportionately impacting racial and ethnic minority groups.

As COVID began closing schools in March 2020, No Kid Hungry reacted quickly to ensure school aged children continued to have access to critical food resources. However, young children, not yet formally enrolled in school, who experienced barriers & challenges for many of these supports. Therefore, No Kid Hungry launched the Early Childhood COVID Emergency Relief Grant Program.

The grant program was designed to support on-the-ground organizations who:

- Support a variety of strategies to increase access to nutritious food and support young kids and families in the new operating environment created as a result of COVID19
- Committed to racial equity and supporting individuals and communities disproportionately impacted by COVID19, prioritizing organizations serving minority communities, including refugee & immigrant population, and tribal & indigenous communities.
- Center the voices of parents & caregivers by prioritizing community engagement and involving community members in the decision-making process and program development
- Have a strong and sustainable plan for maximizing participation in child nutrition programs and/or leveraging local partners to combat food insecurity
- Address both the immediate need for supporting children and their families and alleviating hunger, as well address long term sustainability of programming



To learn more about the NKH Early Childhood grantees visit the [No Kid Hungry Grant Impact Portal](#).

## GRANT OVERVIEW



Received an overwhelming response of over 2,000 applications – selected a total of **126 organizations**.



Grantees represented a total of **34 States** (and the District of Columbia) and 5 regions within the U.S. Refer to the No Kid Hungry Grant Impact Portal for more info.



No Kid Hungry distributed \$25K grants to all selected organizations totaling **\$3M in grant funds** to communities across the Nation.



**Diverse group of grantees** including childcare centers, healthcare institutions, community-based organizations, academic institutions, farming programs, government agencies (Local/State) etc.



80% of grantees focused grant project / programming on **prioritizing & serving communities of color** – 20% focused on serving immigrant & refugee children.



Seven organizations focused primarily on **addressing food insecurity in Tribal Communities**.



**TOTAL CHILDREN SERVED**

**145,349**



**TOTAL MEALS SERVED**

**2,083,638**

**FINDINGS**

**OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS**

Grantees from the healthcare sector used grant funds to support emergency food programs, implement food insecurity screenings and deliver nutritious food prescription boxes and formula. They also worked to increase enrollment in WIC services among patients who are determined to be eligible during obstetrics checks, labor and delivery encounters, and well-child check assessments.

Grantees from early child care centers used grant funds to support the distribution of fresh, healthy food baskets for children 0-5, expand outdoor garden and kitchen programs, launch a Mobile Food Trolley that serves low-income families, partner with local farmers to prepare weekend lunches for young children, implement summer backpack programs, and more.

Grantees from the nonprofit sector used grant funds to pilot a WIC food ordering system, provide education and support to families to access federal nutrition programs, increase case management capacity and assist newly-arrived refugee and immigrant families with children 0-5, create culturally responsive food kits, and more.

**COMMITMENT TO EQUITY**

In our commitment to racial equity, we challenged organizations to not only be able to meet the immediate needs in their respective communities, but to also implement innovative & equitable strategies at the intersection of food security and early childhood.

Organizations implemented several strategies to support our commitment to equity in programming. See a few strategies below:

Used surveys to gather participant feedback, discover unmet needs, and adapt programs to address client concerns to promote equity.

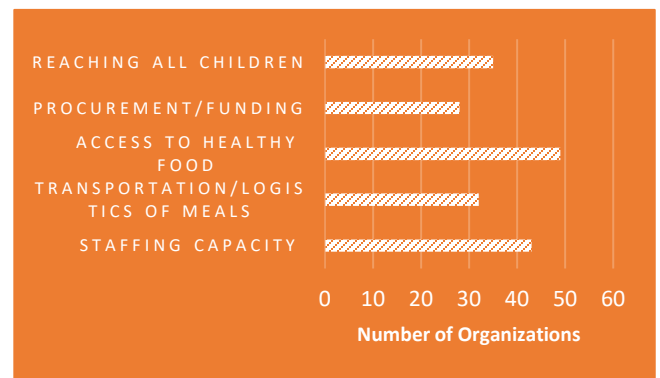
Implemented anti-racist practices, trainings, and development. Incorporated DEI action plans and trainings into programs.

Integrated bilingual or multilingual options for services and program materials.

Representation of community in hiring practices and organizational leadership.

**PROGRAM CHALLENGES**

As organizations continued to adapt to the impacts of COVID19, many programs experienced a shift in their overall approach & implementation. As a result, NKH conducted a survey report that allowed organizations to identify challenges & barriers to programming. This was a great opportunity for us to understand the program landscape but also think strategically about how to address these challenges. NKH Early Childhood Grantees identified program challenges as the following:



**EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING COHORT**

During the grant cycle, grantees expressed a desire to collaborate and learn from one another. In response, the Early Childhood Learning Cohort (ECLC) was created to build community, improve communication, promote collaboration, establish a professional development model, and create a framework for effective storytelling.

Key cohort activities included providing feedback and input to learning cohort discussions, sharing stories for grantee spotlight opportunities, creating a list serv of ECH grantees, receiving and contributing resources specific to early childhood initiatives, participating in webinars, and facilitating virtual networking events.

**PROGRAM SUCCESSES**

The No Kid Hungry Early Childhood grant opened our eyes to the many possibilities for solutions and innovative strategies to address nutrition security. Our grantees worked hard to address the gap in resources & services for young children age 0-5 across the Nation. See more about their work [HERE!!](#)

## TESTIMONIALS



"I saw a family last week in clinic – a single mom with four young kids. She marked that they sometimes run out of food on the hunger vital signs questions. When I offered food from our food bank she seemed hesitant to say yes. She got tearful when she explained how hard it is to stretch food out sometimes but she didn't want to take food from other people who need it. When I told her that we absolutely love giving food from our food bank and in fact I would love to go play grocery store with her young daughters. Mom joined us and watched her daughters each get a bag and "shop" for their own fruits and vegetables. We talked about how everything in our grocery store is good for their bodies. We all bonded and had a blast."

**Children's Hospital Foundation (Louisville, KY)**

"The NKH funds were critically important in helping our staff meet the ongoing and urgent food needs of our families. They proved particularly important during the WIC formula recall and supply chain food shortages. Both Covid-19 and the Similac formula recall presented challenges for participants while shopping due to limitations in supply. Having gift cards provided options for families while shopping to choose food items and brands that were available at the market they shopped. Quote from client: "I cannot begin to express how much WIC has helped my family. I am a stay-at-home mom with 3 kids and their father is a day laborer. Many of our bills are for food and baby formula. When the recall happened, I was stressed about being able to find formula. [The program] offered me a gift card so I could buy formula for my baby. Thanks to [the program] I have food and formula for my children."

**The Foundation of Delaware County (Media, PA)**

"In March 2020, Family Building Blocks quickly pivoted how we would deliver services and still meet family needs. Staff coordinated with local partners to erect a food delivery service that has been going non-stop since mid-March providing 300 food boxes per month to families. One of our incredible teammates shared a recent experience with us. "As I delivered a few of our boxes to families yesterday, all families called out a thank you and children waved from their windows. One child also shouted, 'TEACHER, I LOVE YOU!' This filled my cup and energized me. I am not so thankful for this virus hitting our community; however, I am thankful that we are not bound powerless to its grip and can continue to empower families and shine hope during this time of difficulty, thus creating a stronger community and team!" Our community TRULY is our strength."

**Family Building Blocks (Salem, OR)**

"Because of funds from NKH we were able to include speech therapy patients in the fruit/vegetable voucher program. The parents were encouraged to show their children the fresh produce. They provided the vocabulary as they explored the fruits and vegetables, to touch, smell and describe what they saw. Then the child could choose their favorites to take home and prepare for nutritious meals. It was a beneficial program and much appreciated by the families. As a home visitor, I looked forward to delivering the fruit and vegetable baskets to our families. They would often be waiting outside for the basket, to see the joy on their face was truly heartwarming."

**Presbyterian Healthcare Services (Albuquerque, NM)**