

Child Nutrition Initiative



The Child Nutrition Initiative (CNI) was an education campaign supported by a New Venture Fund donor collaborative. The Initiative advanced efforts to improve children’s health and nutrition by successfully advocating for reauthorization of the federal Child Nutrition Act.

Effective Advocacy, Better Food, Healthier Kids

More than 16 million American children live in “food insecure” homes, where the source of their next meal is frequently uncertain. At the same time, the United States faces a growing epidemic of childhood obesity. CNI’s mission was to combat these trends by advocating for the 2010 congressional reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, which funds both the federal school lunch and school breakfast programs. Among households with school-age children, 62 percent participate in the school lunch program and 54 percent participate in the school breakfast program. So the ability to expand and improve federal policy in this area represented a key opportunity to impact children’s health. CNI brought together a group of interested parties, including the California Endowment and other private donors, who created an educational platform to

raise awareness about child nutrition and obesity concerns and convey the issue’s urgency to Congress. CNI was a nimble funding and organizational vehicle that managed paid media in key states and congressional districts and executed an outreach effort that included delivering symbolic empty lunch trays to all 535 members of Congress.

CNI on the Ground

Leveraging collective philanthropic resources, grantee networks, research and expertise, the Child Nutrition Initiative advocated to improve the health and eating habits of millions of American children by:

- Employing direct media on the child nutrition issue in targeted states and districts.
- Building grassroots support for passage of the Child Nutrition Act.
- Expanding public awareness of child nutrition issues.
- Boosting congressional champions who support Child Nutrition Act expansion and improvements.

New Venture Fund and CNI

The 2010 reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act marked a rare opportunity to improve nutrition options for America's children. By housing the Child Nutrition Initiative (CNI), the New Venture Fund (NVF) provided an effective vehicle for donors interested in collaborating to bring attention to child nutrition issues and to expand and improve federal policy.

Donor Collaboratives

Through CNI, NVF enabled a group of leading foundations to work together, leverage their resources, and mount an effective education and advocacy effort, influencing the national conversation around these issues in real time.

Project Incubation

By launching CNI as one of its projects, NVF minimized startup obstacles and enabled quick ramp-up. Donors could immediately make tax-deductible donations to CNI as a project of a 501(c)(3) public charity.

Operations Support

NVF provided monthly financial reports, ongoing accounting services, contract support and grants management to CNI. It hired vendors, managed subcontractors and oversaw federal and state nonprofit tax requirements. Taking advantage of NVF's back-office support enabled CNI to focus more human and financial resources on the initiative itself.

Strategic Advisory Services from Arabella Advisors

CNI also benefited from NVF's close relationship with strategic philanthropy experts at Arabella Advisors. Arabella provided strategic program oversight, including coordinating with donors on events, facilitating discussions around campaign tactics and strategies, leading outreach to key advocates and engaging grantee networks, and acting as a liaison between the USDA and campaign partners.

About New Venture Fund

The New Venture Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides professional services to institutions and individuals seeking to foster change through strategic philanthropy and innovative projects. NVF offers domestic and international re-granting services, administers pooled donor funds, and provides full fiscal sponsorship and operational support for innovative nonprofit projects, helping clients realize their visions of a better world in the most time- and cost-efficient ways possible.

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- Donor Collaboratives
- Project Incubation
- Operations Support

- Grant Execution
- Global Grants
- Strategic Advisory Services
(from Arabella Advisors)

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