

Frequently Asked Questions [FAQs]: The KidsCan ECE Food for Kids Programme

The KidsCan logo is located in the top right corner of the page. It consists of the word "KidsCan" in a bold, sans-serif font. "Kids" is in blue and "Can" is in red. The logo is set against a white circular background.

The Programme - General

What is the ECE Food for Kids Programme?

The KidsCan ECE Food for Kids Programme is a free food programme providing fresh and nutritious kai for tamariki, aged 2 -5 years, attending eligible early childhood education (ECE) centres and Kōhanga Reo across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Programme Eligibility

Who is eligible to participate?

The government identified eligible centres and kōhanga reo using the new ECE Equity Index. They compiled a list and shared it with KidsCan.

Will all tamariki at an eligible centres or kōhanga reo be able to access the food?

Food will be available for all the children aged 2-5 years old.

Why is this food programme only for 2-5 years olds?

Tamariki younger than two have dietary needs that are outside the scope of what this programme can safely provide at this time.

What if our centre or kōhanga reo already has a food programme?

The programme is opt-in, meaning a centre can choose not to participate. All eligible centres that choose to participate will be required to agree they will not charge parents for food for the duration of the programme and sign a partnership agreement adhering to the programme requirements. Receiving food through this programme may free up resources for other priorities, such as learning resources, clothing, or lowering fees.

Programme Timeline and Funding

When will the programme start and how long will it be offered for?

The programme will start in early 2025 and conclude in December 2026. KidsCan will welcome new centres onto the programme in staggered waves. We will work with each centre to determine the best time to be onboarded (i.e., to join). We endeavour to welcome all centres and kōhanga reo within the first 4 – 6 months of 2025.

What happens in December 2026?

It is important to note that the current programme is funded until the end of 2026. Decisions on additional funding will be made by the Government in 2026 and communicated to KidsCan. KidsCan will share any updates, or relevant information, with the centres and kōhanga reo as this becomes available.

The Food

What type of food(s) is provided through this programme?

The ECE Food for Kids programme includes weekly or fortnightly delivery of fresh and nutritious ingredients, so easy-to-prepare lunches can be put together.

This includes a range of ready-to-heat (e.g., lasagne with vegetables), low-preparation hot meals (e.g., chicken chop suey, and cauliflower mac 'n cheese), and fresh sandwiches (e.g., egg sandwiches and cheese toasties with beans), as well as fruit and yoghurt.

Will the meals be nutritious?

The meals will be nutritious and balanced - recipes focus on delivering substantial and varied options that include a healthy mix of proteins, carbohydrates, and vegetables. All recipes (meals) in this programme were developed in collaboration with the Heart Foundation.

Will dietary needs be catered to?

The programme has a focus on meeting the diverse dietary needs of the tamariki in the programme, including recipes that provide vegetarian, dairy-free, halal and some culturally tailored options. ECEs will be able to select options that cater to the different dietary needs of their tamariki.

Who will make the food?

All ingredients for each meal will be delivered to your centre or kōhanga reo (see the Ordering and Delivery section for more information on the delivery process/schedule). It will be the responsibility of centre and kōhanga reo staff to prepare and serve the meals.

How will we know what to make?

KidsCan will provide all participating centres and kōhanga reo with a digital recipe book. The book will contain a comprehensive set of instructions for preparing each meal. The book will also have helpful tips and tricks for preparing food safely. Note: All staff who prepare and serve food are expected to complete the online Food Safety module, created by KidsCan. A link to the video will be shared with each participating centre during the onboarding phase.

What is the time commitment for the centres?

The preparation and cooking time varies from 15 minutes to 1 hour depending on the recipe selected. The meal options are designed to require minimal preparation and handling, making them particularly suitable for centres with limited staff capacity.

For instance, Frozen Lasagne with Vegetables is a quick-to-prepare dish that only requires reheating. Similarly, Egg Fried Rice with eggs, mixed vegetables, brown rice and soy sauce is ready to serve in minutes.

What if we don't have the space (kitchen), equipment or staff required to prepare the food?

The funding for this programme covers the cost of all food products and delivery. It does not cover the cost of staffing, nor the equipment required to prepare, cook, and serve the food. If your centre and kōhanga reo does not have the personnel or equipment required, please contact KidsCan to discuss your situation – Email: ecefoodforkids@kidscan.org.nz

Food Ordering and Delivery

How do we order our meals?

All centres and kōhanga reo will order food (lunch meals, fruit and yoghurt) using the KidsCan online ordering portal. You will be given your own unique log-in details for the portal, once you have completed the onboarding process.

All meals are ordered on an 8-week cycle. You will choose one meal option per day (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday). These options will then repeat for the full 8 weeks (i.e., for the full menu cycle). At the end of the cycle, you can log back into the portal and place a new order for the next eight-week menu cycle.

Orders are based on the number of 2-5-year-olds attending daily. KidsCan provide guidance on portion sizes in accordance with nutritional guideline standards.

How often will food get delivered?

Deliveries are usually weekly. For some rural or isolated centres, deliveries may be fortnightly or every three weeks. Deliveries will be made to the centre and kōhanga reo directly. All deliveries must be received by a staff member. Food cannot be left unattended under any circumstances.

Where does the food come from?

All food will be provided by an external food supply partner. If you have any issues with the food provided (e.g., the delivery does not arrive at the expected time, items are missing or broken, there are concerns about food safety/contamination, etc.), we will ask that you contact the supplier directly. Contact details for the supplier will be shared during the onboarding process. For queries related to the recipes themselves, please contact KidsCan: ecefoodforkids@kidscan.org.nz; 09 478 1525.

Food Waste and Surplus Product

How will waste and surplus be measured?

We ask that you minimise food waste by preparing quantities that align with your attendance each day. If you do have extra food, please determine whether it can be safely stored and re-heated. If the food items have been served to tamariki, partially consumed, and/or exposed to the air for a lengthy period of time, please dispose of the items in a secure bin (with a lid). For more information on safe food practices, please watch the KidsCan Food Safety training module. A link to this video will be shared with you during the onboarding process.

Additional Products

Will shoes, raincoats, and health supplies also be provided by KidsCan?

The ECE Food for Kids Programme includes food products and food delivery only. At this stage, we are unable to offer gumboots, shoes, socks, and raincoats to centres and kōhanga reo who are enrolled in this programme.