

PLANNING AND OUTREACH GUIDE



AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS' TOOLKIT

Bringing the Farm to School



NATIONAL CENTER
FOR APPROPRIATE
TECHNOLOGY



NATIONAL
FARM to SCHOOL
NETWORK

Planning and Outreach Guide

ABOUT THE PLANNING AND OUTREACH GUIDE

Behind every successful training event is weeks' worth of planning, logistics, outreach and attention to detail that no one will notice when everything goes right. Planning and organizing the details of your training is just as important as being the presenter. It's important to leave plenty of time for these behind-the-scenes aspects of your training. Consider this Planning and Outreach Guide a starting place for thinking through the steps of pulling together your event. This guide is intended for use by facilitators who have attended a *Bringing the Farm to School: Regional Facilitator Workshop* and are planning a *Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training* for producers in their area.

HOW TO USE THE PLANNING AND OUTREACH GUIDE

The timelines, checklists, tools, templates, resources and tips throughout this guide are intended to help make planning for your local producer training easy and straightforward. You can follow this guide page by page, or look through to find exactly what you need. Click on [purple phrases](#) to jump to templates and resources within the document. Click on [blue hyperlinks](#) to download editable versions of the templates and access helpful resources. Want to do something a little different than what's recommend here? Go for it! You know your training and the producers you're working with best- so use what's helpful, adjust where needed, and leave behind anything that doesn't feel applicable. Treat this resource as a guide, not a rulebook.

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Event Planning, Logistics, and Outreach Checklist

This document is designed to help you organize your upcoming Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training. It will guide you step-by-step through the planning, logistics, and outreach activities needed to make your training a success. We recommend you use this checklist as a guide – not a rulebook – and to customize where needed to fit your training.

Note: This checklist refers to templates and resources to support your planning and outreach. Click on the [purple phrases](#) to jump to these resources throughout the document. Click on [blue hyperlinks](#) to download editable versions of templates and access additional resources.

SIX MONTHS TO A YEAR BEFORE THE EVENT*

- Review your own organizational capacity and mission:
 - Why does your agency or organization want to host this training? How does it fit with your mission and goals? Does this training align with current programs or grants? If yes, how could this training be incorporated into these initiatives?
 - Who is your organization’s target audience? How will they benefit from this training?
- Build your [training team](#) and develop a system to work together- see more in the *Facilitator's Guide*.
- Decide how many producers your training will be able to host and if you will limit to a specific kind of grower, e.g. specialty crop, livestock, fruit, etc. We recommend a maximum of 30 producers per training.
- Determine what time of year will be best to host the training. Does it align with off-season for producers? Does it align with grants and funding sources? What days of the week and times of day will work best for your trainees?
- [Develop a budget](#) and decide whether the training will require a fee.
- Secure funding and/or sponsors. See this list of [funding recommendations](#).

** Ideally, facilitators will host a local producer training within six months of participating in the Bringing the Farm to School: Regional Facilitator Workshops. If applying for a federal grant or national foundation funding, the time between the initial application and award can be a year or more. If looking at local funding sources, such as a small foundation or business, this timeline might be shorter.*

THREE TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE EVENT

- Secure a training facility / meeting room, or determine if your training should be offered virtually.
- Identify your target audience. Consider specific kinds of producers, e.g. vegetable growers, growers in your county, producers struggling financially, etc. And/or partner with a producer-connected organization (e.g. Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, Cooperative Extension) and draw on their existing network.

Choosing a Location

Is the location easy to find? Is it convenient for you and the participants? Does it have enough parking for everyone? Is the venue ADA Compliant, i.e. accessible to all regardless of physical ability?

Does the venue have access to outdoor space? Is it conveniently located close to food options, if you’re not providing meals or snacks?

Does the venue have adequate restroom facilities for participants of all abilities and gender identification?

Does the venue have A/V equipment, or will you need to bring your own?

Does the venue have internet connectivity? Some trainers may want to be “unplugged” for the day, but the standard now is to have Wi-Fi at training locations.

Hosting a virtual event? See our [tips and best practices for distance learning](#).

- ❑ Review the [training materials in the Facilitator's Guide](#) and select which modules you will use, based on your audience's needs and the amount of time allocated for your training.
- ❑ Contact potential guest speakers.
- ❑ Contact farmers who have experience selling to schools for potential farm visits. (If hosting a farm visit is something new to you, we recommend referencing "[Farmer Field Day Toolkit](#)" from SARE: Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.)
- ❑ Develop an outreach plan that will reach producers in places where they frequently receive news and information. Talk with agencies/organizations in your area that work with producers to get input on how to best reach and recruit your target audience. Consider:
 - Newspapers and radio stations,
 - Department of Agriculture and Extension,
 - Existing farmer conferences, trainings, associations or networking events,
 - Organizations/associations that work with or represent farmers, and
 - Direct outreach to individual farmers who could benefit from the training.

THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE EVENT

- ❑ Arrange for food.
- ❑ Update posters, postcards and other visual media with your event information.
- ❑ Create a [registration process](#).
- ❑ Once the registration form is complete, start recruiting participants:
 - Have an [event webpage](#) for participants to learn more,
 - Send out regular email blasts,
 - Send emails to the relevant listservs,
 - Post on a variety of social media platforms that your audiences uses, and
 - Create a Facebook event linked to the event webpage.

Understanding Different Media Outlets

Local and regional newspapers, agriculture-specific newspapers and newsletters – Look up reporters who specifically cover agriculture or get the contact information for the editor-in-chief. Send these specific people your press release and any news-worthy photographs they can use. NOTE: press releases to newspapers are generally two-week in advance of the event or registration deadline. [See a template press release](#).

Radio – Radio stations can air a 30-second spot for non-profit organizations called a Public Service Announcement (PSA). When picking which stations to reach out to, where do folks get their morning news? Will the station accept PSAs? [See a template PSA](#).

Email blasts (eblast) – Email is still one of the most important ways for folks to get information. Consider sending out three or more emails for the training, each slightly different. Focus on a short and catchy subject line and vibrant visuals. [See a template email blast](#).

Listsers – You can use the language that you're sending out with your eblasts for listsers, but make sure you're following the rules of the specific listserv. Try to find regional or occupation-specific listsers and cater the message to the audience. Ask your partner organizations what listsers they use.

Social media – Keep social media language short and to the point. If those involved are willing, tag specific individuals, e.g. "@John is leading the #farmtoschool training". Also, use eye-catching photos, videos, and graphics no matter the media. [See social media suggestions and tips](#).

Planning for Food & Drinks

We recommend that all trainings should have, at the bare minimum, drinks (water, coffee, tea) and snacks for the participants. Providing time for full meals is preferable. Meals are a chance for networking and for the participants to discuss and apply what they have learned in the classroom setting.

Highlight locally and sustainably grown food as often as possible. This is a chance to lead by example. One idea would be to provide a locally sourced "school lunch" like the meals that participants could potentially support with their products, or at least a simple meal featuring some of the local products that are common to the area.

- ❑ Reach out to local VIPs, e.g. policymakers, funders, school district decision-makers, as they can potentially be trainers or bring more attention to your training.
- ❑ If hosting a farm visit, decide upon and organize transportation to the farm.

TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE EVENT

- ❑ Confirm the venue and venue logistics.
- ❑ Finalize training schedule.
- ❑ Follow up with potential speakers and field trip contacts to confirm availability.
- ❑ Contact partner organizations for assistance in outreach. These should include organizations on your planning team. If not already represented, consider these as well:
 - University extension,
 - Grange Associations,
 - Farm Bureau and Farmers' Union,
 - Fruit and vegetable associations
 - Farmers market associations,
 - State department of agriculture,
 - Local food policy council,
 - Local farm to institution organizations, and
 - Local food hubs, food co-ops.
- ❑ Decide if the training will be recorded, livestreamed, photographed, or in any way captured. If any of these are used, include a photo release for training participants in the registration process.
- ❑ Reconnect with local VIPs to a) confirm attendance, b) re-invite them, or c) ask for an alternate.

ONE MONTH BEFORE THE EVENT

- ❑ Send a [press release](#) to relevant newspapers emphasizing the registration deadline (e.g. closes in two weeks).
- ❑ Send an [eblast](#) about the closing registration.
- ❑ Continue posting to [social media](#) – consider "boosting" the posts, budget willing.
- ❑ Try to be interviewed on local radio to promote the event and the closing registration.
- ❑ Ensure that any new media announcements have updated or new information. Don't just send a copy of what you sent before.
- ❑ Monitor registration and close it if you reach capacity, or begin a waitlist.
- ❑ Consider personalized phone calls (and requests to partners to make personalized phone calls) to target producers who might be interested.
- ❑ For farm visits, arrange for portable toilets, shade canopies, water, and other accommodations, if necessary.
- ❑ Prepare evaluation packets - see details in the [Facilitator's Guide](#).
- ❑ Confirm the videographer, photographer and/or livestream technology, if necessary.
- ❑ Gather honorariums, thank you cards and/or simple gifts for any external speakers or field trip hosts.

Sending an Outreach Toolkit

If you're asking for help promoting your event, it helps to send the person you're asking some information to make their job easier. The easier it is for them, the more likely they are to help you advertise your event. Consider providing:

Visuals: send photos and [graphics sized for social media, posters, and postcards](#).

Copy: send words that they can use in social media length, newsletter length (100 words), long form (200+ words), as well as a [press release](#), and [PSA](#).

Hashtags: let them know what [hashtags](#) you'll be using.

Links to event webpages, Facebook Events, registration sites, etc.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT

- Close the registration form** and confirm final attendance details.
- Order any necessary teaching supplies, e.g. markers, flip chart paper, etc.
- Print out “Bringing the Farm to School: Agricultural Producers Workbook” for participants.
- Confirm food or order food.
- Confirm any local VIP attendees.
- Practice the training content.
- Send reminders to all presenters.

ONE WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT

- Send press release for newspaper reporters.
- Send reminder and schedule to participants and tell them what to bring.
- Print out [Certificate of Completion](#) - one for each participant.
- Print out [Name Badges](#) for participants, prepared beforehand.
- Ensure all materials are printed, and binders or folders are prepared.
- Create directional signage with the name of the event for parking, restrooms, registration, road directions, etc.
- If hosting a virtual training, complete a practice run with all presenters.
- Purchase any supplies necessary:
 - Bottled water and snacks, in a cooler,
 - Bug spray and sunscreen,
 - First aid kit, and
 - If necessary: booties, cleaner for shoes and/or hair nets for farm visits.
- Ensure any required funder – or other supporter, such as the venue host – recognition is taken care of.
- Prepare any "thank you" notes or gifts for speakers.



Budget Template

Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training - Budget Template	
Category	Cost
Venue	
Location Rental	
AV Equipment	
Tables / Chairs	
Misc. (Wi-Fi access, staffing, cleaning, etc.)	
	Subtotal
Supplies	
Signage	
Producer Workbooks	
Nametags	
Agendas	
Printing	
Misc. (pens, markets, flip charts, dots, etc.)	
	Subtotal
Food / Beverage	
Food (breakfast, lunch)	
Beverage (water, coffee, tea, etc.)	
Snack	
	Subtotal
Program	
Panelist Honorariums	
Incentives (gift cards, swag, etc.)	
	Subtotal
Site Visits	
Transportation (bus, van, etc.)	
Honorarium / Site Visit Donation	
Misc. (water, sunscreen, etc.)	
	Subtotal
Other	
	Subtotal
	Grand Total

[Download an editable Excel spreadsheet version of this template here.](#)

USDA Funding Resources to Support Your Training

USDA FARM TO SCHOOL GRANTS

On an annual basis, USDA's Farm to School Grants fund school districts, State and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers, and non-profit organizations in their efforts to increase local foods served through child nutrition programs, teach children about food and agriculture through garden and classroom education, and develop schools' and farmers' capacities to participate in farm to school.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/grants>

FARMERS MARKET AND LOCAL FOOD PROMOTION PROGRAM

The Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP), authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill under the Local Agriculture Marketing Program (LAMP), covers both the **Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)** and **Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)**. The FMPP is intended to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets while increasing domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp> The LFPP offers grant funds with a 25% match to support the development and expansion of local and regional food business enterprises to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets while increasing domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp>

SECTION 2501 PROGRAM

The Section 2501 program, also known as the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers, provides grants to organizations that develop outreach programs and provide technical assistance to underserved farmers. <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/socially-disadvantaged-farmers-and-ranchers>

BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This program provides grants to organizations for education, mentoring, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers. <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/beginning-farmer-and-rancher-development-program-bfrdp>

SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The purpose of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as "fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture)." <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgbp>

COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS GRANT PROGRAM

The purpose of the Community Food Projects is to create community-based food projects with objectives, activities and outcomes that are in alignment with Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program primary goals. <https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/community-food-projects-cfp-competitive-grants-program>

Find more information about USDA grants and programs that can support local food systems activities here: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/GrantsAndLoans.pdf>

USDA Funding Resources in Action – Examples

USDA FARM TO SCHOOL GRANTS

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets – FY 2016

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets identified and worked with local growers to facilitate market-readiness trainings that encompassed step-by-step preparation on how to connect with schools, as well as providing guidance for producers looking to shift from other markets to school and institutional sales.

Project Outcome: The project delivered market readiness training to fifteen producers, more than double the initial goal of seven; connected two GAP trained farms with participating schools districts, in excess of its goal of one GAP trained farm; and connected twelve producers to food safety trainings through Cornell University/Produce Safety Alliance, well beyond the goal of five set at the beginning of the project. Learn more at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/grant-awards>



SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT

North Coast Opportunities via subgrant from California Department of Food and Agriculture – FY 2014

The California Department of Food and Agriculture partnered with North Coast Opportunities, Inc. to increase and institutionalize the use of locally-produced specialty crops in 15 schools in Lake County school districts.

Project Outcome: Trainings for specialty crop producers focused on food safety, working with institutions, and production planning. In 2015, farmers toured the wholesale market in San Francisco, then at an all-day workshop learned about GAP (good agricultural practices) and selling wholesale. In 2016, specialty crop producers participated in an all-day workshop on “Wholesale Success: A Farmer’s Guide to Food Safety, Selling, Postharvest Handling, and Packing Produce,” which was co-sponsored by the University of California Hopland Research and Extension. In 2017, another conference for farmers was held with workshops on keeping crop records, composting techniques, drought resistant crops, value added wholesale; which brought together specialty crop producers and institutional buyers that helped to form relationships and expand the market reach for Lake County farmers. In total, about 15 Lake County specialty crop producers attended these workshops.

By building on a 2013 SCBG Program grant funding the development of a food hub, a 220% growth in the number of specialty crop producers with the capacity to sell to the institutional market was attributed to this project. The number of vendors involved in the project who sold through the food hub increased from ten at the beginning of the project to 32 farmers by the end. Learn more at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/CA14FinalReport.pdf>

Continued on next page.

USDA Funding Resources in Action – Examples, Continued

BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER DEVELOPMENT GRANT

ECO City Farms (Maryland) – FY 2016

ECO City Farms test-drove a replicable curriculum and methodology and over three years trained 54 new and aspiring farmers, 88% of whom fit the USDA classification of "socially or economically disadvantaged." ECO worked to transform these novices into confident and competent urban farmers. The educational approach included extensive practical hands-on experiences, one-on-one mentoring/training, farm visits, and a comprehensive culturally-appropriate curriculum incorporating the crop production, farm management, business, and marketing knowledge needed for graduates to roll up their sleeves and farm.

Project Outcome: ECO's project consisted of all the elements required to become a successful sustainable urban farmer. Training included intensive beginning and advanced classroom training on a wide range of relevant farming and business topics; Certification of successful completion of the intensive classroom training by Prince George's Community College and ECO City Farms; Extensive hands-on experiential training in actual farm work; Witnessing farming in all seasons and at a variety of scales; Training in the use of a variety of farm implements and construction tools; Experience of processing and marketing of crops grown; Supportive cohort and a network of local farmers and mentors; and Opportunity for employment at ECO City Farms with an experienced farmer close at hand and salary.

Trainees reported significantly increasing their knowledge in urban farming, successful growing techniques, and marketing and financial management skills. More than half of the farmers that graduated from the program began farming and/or related food production enterprises after the program. Learn more at: <http://bfrdp.farmanswers.org/ProjectReport?ID=43f03561-a59a-48d6-8807-b171425f9b2c>



Registration Guidelines

To help you track and plan for who will be attending your Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training, you will need to establish a registration process. This process can be organized in a number of ways; you will be able to determine best what makes the most sense for your target audience. See below several ideas of registration processes you can use, as well as questions to consider asking registrants to help you prepare for your training.

REGISTRATION PROCESS OPTIONS

Pick one or combine options to serve your registrants' needs.

Online Form – There are many options available for easily creating online registration forms, and for this training, you shouldn't need anything fancy. Online forms work well for broad sharing, ensuring required questions are answered, and for collecting registration details quickly. They may not be the best option if many people in your target audience are averse to technology or have limited internet access.

Email – Pick an email address that is regularly checked and that is accessible to the primary event organizer. This may be a specific individual's email address, or it may be a general office email address (e.g. info@yourorgname.com). Be sure to ask people to include the required information in the body of their email (see suggestions of these questions below). Or, be prepared to respond to emails to ask for additional details from registrants, as needed.

By Telephone – Be sure to provide a phone number that is monitored during regular business hours and that has a voicemail systems for messages outside of regular business hours. Create a document to use in real-time as you receive phone calls, so registration information can be tracked all in one place.

Postal Mail – Creating a printed paper registration form may be a good option if postal mail is the best form of communication and response with your target audience. Consider including a pre-stamped envelope to make returns easy. A paper registration form may also be handy if you plan to recruit participants at other in-person events you are attending.

QUESTIONS TO ASK REGISTRANTS

Here are some basic questions you'll likely want to ask registrants when they sign up for your training. You are welcome to customize this list, as you need. Remember that participants will be asked to complete a survey about their farm businesses and experience with farm to school as part of the pre-training evaluation, done in-person at your training.

First Name, Last Name

Contact information – email, mailing address, phone

Dietary needs & other accommodations

Gender self-identification

General experience with farm to school:

- I have no experience with farm to school.
- I am familiar with farm to school, but have not been involved.
- I am currently involved with farm to school, but still learning.
- I would consider myself very experienced in farm to school.

Photo Release / Permission. If needed, see an example template [here](#).

Open ended question: What would you like to gain from this training experience?

Template Press Release

For Immediate Release—[MONTH, DAY, YEAR]

Media contact:

[NAME]

[EMAIL]

[PHONE]

‘Bringing the Farm to School’ Producer Training Focuses on Increasing Local Food Sales

[TOWN/CITY NAME] – Farmers, ranchers and local food processors can learn strategies for growing and selling their products to school districts at the Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training [DATE] in [TOWN/CITY NAME], hosted by [ORGANIZATION NAME].

“When area farmers sell their products to schools, everyone wins,” said [NAME OF TRAINER, ORGANIZER, OR HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIAL]. “Farmers have a reliable market, dollars get recirculated in the community, and, most importantly, students get to enjoy local, fresh, nutritious, and delicious food.”

The training will be held at [LOCATION] from [START TIME] to [END TIME]. To register, [REGISTRATION INFORMATION]. Producers that attend this training will:

- Learn about accessing school markets and growing products for schools.
- Hear from producers that have successfully navigated school markets.
- Gain new knowledge and resources for integrating school markets into your business plan.
- Meet local peers and experts, and have questions answered.
- [IF HOSTING SITE VISITS] See school markets and farms through site visits.

Schools offer a strong market opportunity for local producers. More than 30 million students enjoy meals at school through the National School Lunch Program each day, and according to a USDA Farm to School Census (Census), schools across the country purchased more than \$789 million in local foods during the 2013-2014 school year, and that total has continued to increase. At the national level, 42 percent of school districts that responded to the Census are participating in farm to school activities, and another 16 percent – more than 2,000 districts – plan to start in the future.

[FOR ADDED IMPACT, REPLACE OR ADD TO THIS NATIONAL DATA WITH LOCAL DATA FROM YOUR STATE (<https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/>)]

[INSERT ADDITIONAL QUOTES FROM ORGANIZERS, OR WORK WITH YOUR DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO GET A QUOTE FROM THE COMMISSIONER OR ANOTHER HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIAL.]

The development of this training was funded at least in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the National Center for Appropriate Technology in partnership with the National Farm to School Network.

###

[ATTACH PHOTOGRAPHS FOR YOUR MEDIA OUTLET TO USE.]

[Download an editable Word version of this template here.](#)

Template PSA

*Many radio stations offer non-profits a chance to run **public service announcements (PSA)** on their station, free of charge. Even if this isn't something you can do, sending a PSA and a press release their way could be a way to let them know what is going on and to get yourself an on-air interview. Sometimes, they will want to you record the PSA yourself. Other times, they might read it live into their own microphones. Reach out to your local radio stations for more information.*

PSA: Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training

(0:45-1:00 length)

Farmers [REPLACE OR ADD “ranchers”, “growers”, “fishers” OR OTHER SPECIFIC FOOD PRODUCERS BASED ON YOUR LOCALE], forget about bringing an apple to the teacher. Bring your tomatoes, corn, lettuce or beef to the school cafeteria instead!

[YOUR ORGANISATION]’s upcoming Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training is an interactive workshop that will teach you proven methods to expand your farm’s business by selling products to schools.

The training is hosted by [YOUR ORGANIZATION AND ANY OTHER CO-HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS].

While you benefit from ways to grow your farm business, students in your area will enjoy fresh, nutritious, local food in their school cafeteria! It’s an A-plus idea!

[INSERT DETAILS ABOUT THE TRAINING, TIME, LOCATION AND WHERE FARMERS CAN GO TO REGISTER.]

[Download an editable Word version of this template here.](#)

Template Email Blast

Email is still the best way to reach folks, despite the prevalence of social media, and still has a higher return on investment. We don't recommend that you avoid social media, but we also don't recommend that you invest your time and energy solely into social media. Sending out an email blast can be one of the most effective ways to inform people about your training. The following template can be helpful in crafting your blast.

Subject Line: Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training Explores School Market Opportunities

Farmers, ranchers and local food processors can learn strategies for selling products to school districts at the Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [INSERT DATE] in [TOWN OR CITY NAME]. The workshop will be held at [VENUE] from [START TIME] to [END TIME]. [INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT COST OF TRAINING]. Registration is required.

[DON'T FORGET TO ADD PHOTOS AND IMAGES TO MAKE THE EMAIL MORE INTERESTING.]

To register, click here [REGISTRATION INFORMATION].

Producers that attend this training will:

- Learn about accessing school markets and growing products for schools.
- Hear from producers that have successfully navigated school markets.
- Gain new knowledge and resources for integrating school markets into your business plan.
- Meet local peers and experts, and have questions answered.
- [IF HOSTING SITE VISITS] See school markets and farms through site visits.

Register at: [REGISTRATION INFORMATION]

For more information [CONTACT INFORMATION].

Please share this opportunity widely and forward to anyone you know who may be interested in participating.

The development of this training was funded at least in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the National Center for Appropriate Technology and partner the National Farm to School Network.

[Download an editable Word version of this template here.](#)

Social Media Suggestions & Tips

Use these suggested posts on any social media that your organization is active to help get the word out about your Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training. Adding specific training information – such as dates, registration link, and name of your organization – to these posts will make for more effective outreach and promotion.

Twitter

Register Now! [ORG NAME] is hosting the Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [DATE] at [LOCATION] to help producers learn about selling their product to schools. Learn more and register by [DATE]: [REGISTRATION LINK]

Want to learn about expanding your ag business to reach school markets? [ORG NAME] is hosting the Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [DATE] and [LOCATION]. Learn more and register at [REGISTRATION LINK]

Could sales of local food to schools be a nice addition to your farm's business plan? Find out at the Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [DATE] and [LOCATION]. Learn more and register at [REGISTRATION LINK]

Schools across the country buy \$10 Billion each year in food for school meals. Could this market be right for you? Find out at the Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [DATE] and [LOCATION]. Learn more and register at [REGISTRATION LINK]

Heard about the farm to school concept, but not really sure how to "dig in"? The Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [DATE] at [LOCATION] can help you learn about selling your products to schools. Learn more and register at [REGISTRATION LINK]

Generating Buzz With A #Hashtag

Hashtags help identify and connect your social media posts to specific topics and conversations and can help expand your outreach efforts. Some frequently used hashtags to use for your Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training could be #farmtoschool, #schoolfood, #agriculture, #farming and #localfood. Your organization or state may also have frequently used hashtags for farmer-related content (e.g. #PAPreferred,) that you might use. Any word or phrase can be used as a hashtag, so you could also create a unique hashtag for your training and encourage participants to use it in real-time to share what they're learning. Hashtags are most effective on Twitter and Instagram.

Facebook

Training Opportunity: Learn about expanding your ag business to reach school markets. [ORG NAME] is hosting the Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [DATE] and [LOCATION]. Hear from local experts about accessing school markets, growing products for schools, and more. Learn more and register at [REGISTRATION LINK].

Curious about expanding your business to reach school markets? Join us on [DATE] at [LOCATION] for a Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training to gain new knowledge and resources to help you connect to the school market. Learn more and register at [REGISTRATION LINK].

Continued on next page.

Social Media Suggestions & Tips, Continued

Instagram

Calling all farmers & agricultural producers! Are you interested in learning about expanding your business to reach schools? [ORG NAME] is hosting a Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [DATE] at [LOCATION] where you can learn from local experts about accessing school markets, growing products for schools, and more. Learn more and register by [PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION].

LinkedIn

Schools across the US purchase more than \$800 million in local food products for school meals every year – and that number is growing. Learn about expanding your ag business to reach schools at [ORG NAME]'s Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [DATE] at [LOCATION]. Hear from local experts about accessing school markets, growing products for schools, and more. Register at [REGISTRATION LINK].

Reach More People with @Tagging

Tagging individuals and organizations connected with your training is a surefire way to assure that they see your post. Be sure to tag (@_____) anyone that can help get the word out. If those involved are willing, tag specific individuals, e.g. “@John is leading the #farmtoschool training”. Remember, tagging organizations is a great way to signal that you’d like them to share your post. Tagging is relevant across all social media, especially Facebook.

Social Media Graphics

Use images or graphics along with your social media posts to increase interest and engagement. Best practice for all social media types it to use an image with your post. Below are several ready-to-use graphics, but creating your own graphics with images specific to your location or region (e.g. a rancher) may help attract more attention. Note that every social media channel uses a different dimension for images. Right click on these images to save, or [click here to download](#).

Twitter (1024 x 512)



Instagram (1080 x 1080)



Facebook (940 x 788)



LinkedIn (700 x 400)



Sample Poster

Bringing the Farm to School:

LOCAL PRODUCER TRAINING

Schools offer a strong market opportunity for agricultural producers.

With more than 30 million students enjoying school meals through the National School Lunch Program each day, schools provide a large, stable, and long-term market option. Districts across the country are working with agriculture producers to include local foods in school meals.

Join this training to learn how to take advantage of these farm to school market opportunities:

- Learn about accessing school markets, the procurement process, and growing products for a school market.
- Hear from producers who have successfully navigated farm to school markets.
- Gain new knowledge and resources for expanding your business to take advantage of school market opportunities.
- Meet local experts and have your questions answered.



Date and Time: Month Day1 – Day 2, X:XX am – X:XX pm

Location: Location Name | Address

Host Organization: Hosted by Organization Name

Registration Info: Learn more at URL or call Phone Number

Question? Contact Information

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Sample Postcard

Bringing the Farm to School:

LOCAL PRODUCER TRAINING

You're Invited! Join our training to learn how to grow and sell your products to local schools.



FARM TO SCHOOL PRODUCER TRAINING

When: Month Day1 – Day2, Year
X:XX am – X:XX pm

Where: Location Name

This training is hosted by:
Organization Name

Learn more and register at:
Website URL
Contact Name, (XXX) XXX-XXXX

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Editing Checklist

Before releasing your outreach and marketing materials into the world, take the extra time to give it a good proofread. Better yet, bring your coworkers and friends over and ask them to proofread your materials for you as well. A misspelled word, a dead hyperlink, or an incorrect date can set the wrong tone for your training.

Recommended Resources

Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*

Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*

- Ensure that any "call to action" is clear and easily understood.
- Check for proper spelling and grammar.
- Confirm that the document clearly makes the main point to the reader within the first few sentences.
- Verify that the document starts with the main point and then provides more information as opposed to laying out the whole story before coming to the main point.
- Match gender pronouns to the referred person's preference.
- Confirm that the tone of the document matches the audience.
- Remove any passive sentences.
- Ensure the factual accuracy of the document.
- Confirm accuracy of all dates, times, locations, and individuals named.
- Test all hyperlinks.
- For online products, e.g. blog posts, ensure that the language use is optimized for search engines.
- For online products, match tags and hashtags to their general online use.
- Be sure to include any "boilerplate" necessary: the default few sentences about the organizations and individuals involved that traditionally comes at the end of the document.
- Be sure there's always a link, email or phone number where the reader can get more information.

Template Event Webpage

Creating an online event webpage supports overall outreach efforts for your Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training by helping potential attendees learn more about your event and find registration information. Below is a general outline of things you should include on your event webpage. You can build this webpage within your agency or organization's website, or as a standalone event website (e.g. Eventbrite).

GENERAL EVENT OVERVIEW

Start your webpage with basic information about your Local Producer Training. Here's a sample blurb you can customize and use:

Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training

DATE(S) + TIME(S) | LOCATION

Farmers, ranchers and local food processors can learn strategies for selling products to school districts at the Bringing the Farm to School: Local Producer Training on [INSERT DATE] in [TOWN OR CITY NAME]. The workshop will be held at [VENUE] from [START TIME] to [END TIME]. It is hosted by [HOST ORGANIZATION NAME(S)].

Producers that attend this training will:

- Learn about accessing school markets and growing products for schools.
- Hear from producers that have successfully navigated school markets.
- Gain new knowledge and resources for integrating school markets into your business plan.
- Meet local peers and experts, and have questions answered.
- [IF HOSTING SITE VISITS] See school markets and farms through site visits.

[INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT COST OF TRAINING]. Registration is required.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Insert information about your registration process- see the [Registration Guidelines](#) for different registration process options.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Include information about how you can be contacted with questions or for additional information. Include an email address, phone number and/or mailing address.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

If you find that you are receiving many similar questions, you may want to add a "Frequently Asked Questions" section to your webpage. Examples of these types of questions may include: "Is there a registration fee?", "What if I cannot attend the full training?", and "Do I need to prepare anything before attending this training?"

SEO Checklist

SEO or Search Engine Optimization refers to the search engines that crawl through the internet to pull up what folks are looking for. This short checklist is a very brief introduction into the modern art of making sure that your online information is easy for your audience to find.

Every time you enter a search term into Google, Bing, Yahoo, or a variety of other search engines, these services send bots throughout the internet, reading webpages, to pull back the pages that best match the search term. This matters in outreach and marketing because we want to assure that your online information gets pulled to the top of the list.

As the internet evolves, search engine algorithms evolve as well. Even if you are perfectly optimized in January, the algorithms may have changed by June. That said, much of the writing techniques for SEO aid the general clarity and readability of your work.

- Using an online publishing software, assign a key phrase to your document.
- Ideally, include the key phrase in the URL, the title, the introduction, and a few times throughout the document. For example, if the key phrase is “farm to school training”:
 - URL: www.myorg.com/farmentoschooltraining/
 - Title: My Org to host Farm to School Training
 - Introduction: On Feb 10-11, My Org will host a Farm to School Training for producers looking to...
- Try to write a minimum of 300 words on the web page, blog post, newsletter, etc.
- Include a variety of hyperlinks to both a) other pages on your website and b) other websites.
- Include headers of various levels (title, header 1, header 2) and bulleted lists to break up any walls of text.



AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS' TOOLKIT

Bringing the Farm to School



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