

Ready to approach your school about sourcing local food? Consider...

Do you have a clear motivation and goal?

There are so many reasons to bring local food to your cafeteria! Focusing on a few reasons and honing your message will help motivate others to join you – and can help narrow the focus of your goals to make them more attainable.

Some motivations to consider are:

- Offering fresher, higher quality or healthier foods to students
- Strengthening the local food system economy
- Educating students and community members about food and agriculture

Some ideas for realistic first steps are:

- Working with a particular local farmer to bring their product to the cafeteria
- Switching one food item that is already being served to a local source (eg beef, squash)
- Substituting a non-local item (like oranges) to one that is grown locally (apples)

Do you understand your school's food service operation?

Food service is a complicated business, and sourcing local food can be challenging. Understanding your school's food service operation can help you identify opportunities, and is a great way to ensure school decision makers know you're serious about local food.

Consider:

- Is your school food service self-operated, or outsourced to a third-party management company?
- How much food must be purchased through pre-existing contracts? With what companies are your school's contracts, and are any local producers selling to them?
- How often are food orders placed? What are payment procedures?
- Who has the authority to make decisions about food procurement? School administration, food service staff, staff from a contracted company?



Do you understand your cafeteria's capacity?

School cafeterias vary widely in where, how, and by whom meals are prepared. Schools also have varying flexibility when it comes to menus and meal options.

Consider:

- Does your school food service staff cook from scratch, heat and serve, use semi-prepared foods, or some combination of these methods?
- When are menus developed, and how often do menus change?
- Is food prepared at a central location for the district, or does each school have its own operation?

Do you have a strong team?

Working with others in your community who want local food in the cafeteria ensures a more inclusive process and outcome, and can provide extra motivation for decision-makers who can meet your needs. Finally, the investment of many community members makes for a long-lasting, effective local foods program.

Consider reaching out to:

- Local farmers and master gardeners,
- Parents, students, and teachers,
- Food service staff members and school administrators,
- Small food-business owners and food hub operators,
- Wellness committees and PTO/PTAs
- Your county Extension Office