



FARM TO CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS PLANNING GUIDE

The Farm to Child Nutrition Planning Guide directs you through questions to consider when starting or growing a farm to school, farm to child care, or farm to summer program. This planning guide should be used as a supplemental tool to the Farm to School Planning Toolkit. This guide can be updated annually to ensure you are working towards your long-term goals. It follows the same steps as the Farm to School Planning Toolkit, but in a more concise and action-oriented manner. The document includes guiding questions, a planning template, and a sample of a completed planning guide. When setting goals, make sure they are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound). Every summer, child care, and school program is unique, so use this planning guide to move forward in a way that meets your needs! For more information, visit www.usda.gov/farmtoschool.

Building Your Team

Building a team is a critical first step in the planning process and essential to the long-term success of your program. It's an opportunity to create allies, bring in knowledge and expertise beyond what exists within your core group, recruit some "boots on the ground" for planning and implementing your program, and establish a sustainable funding plan.

- What are the names, titles, and roles of people who have already committed to being a part of your farm to school team? Do you have representation from across the farm to school supply chain?
- Outside of the team, what people or groups will you look to for guidance and advice?
- What specific people or categories of people would you like to have on your farm to school team or advisory committee? What are your expectations of these people?
- What is your team structure? Do you have a lead coordinator? What is his or her role?
- How often will your team meet? What will be expected of team members at and between meetings?

Establishing a Vision

Think about your long-term hopes for your farm to school program; establish goals and objectives for the near-term; survey the federal, state, and local program and policy environment; and explore existing resources that will help set a thoughtful path towards realizing your long-term vision.

- What is behind your decision to establish a farm to school program? Why does your community value a community food systems approach?
- What benefits will a farm to school program bring to your students, school, district, or community?
- What is your long-term vision for a thriving program?

Defining Local

Before you start purchasing local foods or determining which local foods you are already serving, you must define local, determine what foods are grown, harvested, raised, caught, and processed in the region and when those foods are available. Understanding why local foods are important, as well as the availability of these foods, will help you create a definition that allows you to tap into the bounty of the local food economy without limiting competition.

- Why are local foods important to you?
- What foods are grown, harvested, raised, caught, and/or processed near you? When are these foods available?
- Based on your response, what is your program's definition of local? Does your school already have a definition of local? Does it align with your values and vision? Does it allow you access to enough local food options to accomplish your goals?

Buying Local Foods

Once you have defined local and determined what local foods are available, it's time to start purchasing them! When local foods are procured using federal funds, the purchases must be in accordance with regulations. There are many ways to purchase locally, and correctly!

- How does your program currently procure foods, both local and non-local? Who decides how and what foods are purchased for the program?
- What types of local food do you currently, or plan to, purchase? Do you track the amount of local product purchased?
- Through which child nutrition programs do you plan to serve local foods?
- What sources of local foods might work for your program?
- Would you bring in local foods through existing channels, or will new methods need to be established?

School Gardening

School gardens are a great way to engage students and they provide interactive enrichment activities that promote the use of local foods. When students participate in garden education, they are more likely to try fresh fruits and vegetables in the lunchroom!

- What steps have you taken to plan, create, or expand a garden program at your school or district?
- What are your goals for your school gardening program?
- How will the gardens be used and by whom?
- How invested are administrators, parents, food and nutrition services, maintenance staff, teachers, and students in the idea of a new or expanded garden program? How will you get their buy-in and the practical support you need from them?
- Who will take care of the various aspects of the garden, such as coordinating volunteers, summer garden maintenance, curriculum integration, weeding, and garden education?

Education & Curriculum Integration

Local food systems, agriculture, and nutrition education can be woven in to subjects like math, science, English, and history. Doing so can reinforce farm to school programming in the school garden and cafeteria.

- In what ways is your program already educating students about food, agriculture, and nutrition through hands-on activities, field trips, demonstrations, and classroom education?
- How will you integrate food, agriculture, and nutrition education to students in the classroom? Whose support or approval would you need to integrate farm to school principles into the curriculum, and what does that process look like?

Promoting & Marketing Your Program

Clearly communicating your goals, achievements, and needs is key to getting buy-in and financial and in-kind support for your farm to school program. Plus, marketing your program can be a creative and fun way to engage partners!

- How does your school currently communicate to students, teachers, administrators, food producers, parents, the media, and the community?
- What are the primary messages you want to send to each constituent group?

Evaluating Your Efforts

Laying the framework to evaluate your efforts is an important part of planning. Evaluation findings can help you learn what works; identify ways to improve your program; and demonstrate your success to funders, parents, administrators, and others.

- How will you measure how effective and efficient your activities and processes are?
- What outcomes are you trying to measure? Will you assess the impacts of your program on students, teachers, parents, and/or food services?



Sample Farm to Child Nutrition Programs Planning Guide

Here is a sample template of how a school district might use this Planning Guide.

BUILDING YOUR TEAM

Lead(s)	Roles & Responsibilities
<i>Que Zene, District FNS Director</i>	<i>Menu Development & Food Purchasing</i>
<i>Tom Hydro, High School Science Teacher</i>	<i>Curriculum Development; Administrative Liaison</i>
<i>Susan Soil, Parent/Wellness Committee Member</i>	<i>Garden Coordinator & Community Outreach</i>
Members	
<i>Stew D. Pot, High School Cafeteria Manager</i>	<i>Menu Audit; Food Promotion; Cafeteria Connection</i>
<i>Jackson Strong, Health Teacher</i>	<i>Curriculum Development; Teacher Outreach</i>
<i>Brooke N. Volved, Parent/Wellness Committee Member</i>	<i>Garden Volunteer Coordinator & Fundraising</i>
<i>Tren Dee, High School Senior Class President</i>	<i>Student Engagement</i>
Advisors	
<i>N. Spect Dor, County Health Department Food & Safety Specialist</i>	
<i>Lilly Bloom, Cooperative Extension Master Gardener</i>	
<i>Sonny Daze, Local Farmer</i>	

ESTABLISHING A VISION

Suburban High School aims to be the pillar of Mid-Sized Town, where students and families engage in health and wellness initiatives, and the entire community actively supports one another's health, wealth, and success.

DEFINING LOCAL

Suburban High School is starting their Farm to School Program. Our initial focus is local produce. Our intent is to source products from the school garden. A secondary definition includes produce grown within the state.

GOALS

Buying Local Foods	School Gardening	Education and Curriculum Integration
<p>6 Months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the number of state farmers growing produce & assess their interest in selling to schools Review USDA F2S Census to see which nearby schools are buying local; contact FNS Contact Dept of Ag to obtain farmer list; begin contacting farmers Conduct a menu audit and begin tracking local purchases 	<p>8 Months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Principal & Advisors to identify garden location, size, intent, & food safety protocols Work with FNS Department to determine potential foods grown & food safety protocols Get soil tested Draft list of needed resources & price estimates Develop fundraising strategy 	<p>12 Months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research available high school garden curriculum & determine alignment with State curriculum standards Assess interest from 10th grade science teachers Secure buy-in from administrators Develop curriculum training plan

PROMOTING AND MARKETING YOUR PROGRAM

Current promotion efforts will focus on raising funds to support the garden project. Susan & Brooke will draft a parent/community fundraising plan. Tren, Tom, & Jackson ask art classes to create fundraising posters & engage the technology classes to develop a social media strategy. FNS will taste-test potential garden products with students.

EVALUATING YOUR EFFORTS

- Buying Local – # of farmers willing to sell to school; # of meals that can include local, garden-grown & state-grown, \$ spent on local food purchases; lbs of local food purchased; % of total food budget diverted locally*
- Gardening – % of garden budget achieved through fundraising efforts; \$ raised; equipment donated; lbs of food produced*
- Education – # of teachers trained on selected curriculum; # of teachers implementing curriculum; # of students reached*

Farm to Child Nutrition Programs Planning Guide

Use the guiding questions and following template to assist you in planning your farm to school program.

BUILDING YOUR TEAM

Lead(s)	Roles & Responsibilities
Members	
Advisors	

ESTABLISHING A VISION

DEFINING LOCAL

GOALS

Buying Local Foods	School Gardening	Education and Curriculum Integration

PROMOTING AND MARKETING YOUR PROGRAM

EVALUATING YOUR EFFORTS