Local Lunches: Planning for Local Produce in Portland Schools

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The Local Lunches Project is a product of Planning Workshop. Planning Workshop is the capstone course for Portland State University’s Master of Urban and Regional Planning program. Student teams develop consulting contracts with clients for planning services that address local and regional issues and the students’ personal and professional interests. Planning Workshop provides graduate students with professional planning experience in planning for constructive social and environmental change and requires students to consider the planner’s ethical responsibility to serve the public interest.
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The Local Lunches Project

In the 1990s, school districts across the country began to integrate fresh food grown by local producers into school meals and snacks. School food authorities and farmers have broadly defined this new movement, called “Farm to School,” as connecting schools and local and regional farmers. Farm to School programs benefit a community’s economy, improve student nutrition, and strengthen education curricula. Local Lunches seeks to initiate Farm to School efforts in Portland, Oregon, by identifying specific strategies that Portland’s school districts can use to incorporate more local produce in their school meals.

Problem Statement

The school districts located within the City of Portland currently do not have policies or programs that prioritize purchasing local or regional produce for school meals. Leaders of Farm to School programs across the country were interviewed to discover successful strategies for the Local Lunches initiative. Nutrition services directors at Portland school districts, regional farmers, distributors, state administrators, and other stakeholders were also interviewed to analyze challenges and opportunities for integrating local produce into school meals.

This chapter discusses the importance of integrating local food into school meals as well as the factors that may affect Farm to School efforts in Portland. Chapter 2 reports findings about how school districts, farmers, and distributors from across the country have successfully integrated local food into school meals. Chapter 3 describes the factors that may influence a Local Lunches program in Portland. Chapter 4 lists recommendations for integrating local produce into school meals in Portland.

Context

Incorporating local produce into school meal programs requires a multi-dimensional approach that addresses education, nutrition, and distribution. While each of these components is critical to the success of Farm to School programs, this report focuses primarily on the challenges and opportunities of distributing local produce to Portland schools from a planning perspective. See box for more on the connections between planning and food systems.

Why Are Farm to School Programs Important?

For Our Children

“Since a variety of fruits and vegetables can be purchased locally, this fits into our overall goal of providing nutritious, well-balanced meals to children.” Stanley C. Garnett, Director, Child Nutrition Division, United States Department of Agriculture

Farm to School programs benefit children by helping them develop healthy eating habits that emphasize fruits and vegetables as a critical...
Planning and Food Systems: Together at Last

Cities and counties charge urban and regional planners with comprehensively attending to the interconnections and coordination among facets of community life, often in order to address necessities of life like air, shelter, and water. Food also is among these necessities, yet the planning community has failed to adequately address planning issues related to the food system.

Food system planning is multi-disciplinary, involving issues of the environment, the economy, transportation, social equity, public health, and more. The food system is a cycle of food production, processing, distribution, wholesale and retail sales, consumption, and eventually food waste disposal, which ideally creates soil enriching compost for future food production.

Today’s industrialized food system is a complex set of interconnections that produce many hidden costs, including:
• Massive energy use in food production, processing, and transportation;
• Water pollution from farm runoff due to pesticide use;
• Health problems heightened by easy access to foods lacking in nutritional value; and
• The loss of small farms and the decline of some rural communities, due in part to food industry consolidation.

According to the American Planning Association (APA), planners consider many components of how communities function and grow, including transportation, land use, housing, economic development, and the environment. Our food system which links with many areas planners have long focused on - warrants more attention.

For Our Farms

Small and mid-sized farms are struggling to compete in an increasingly competitive agricultural economy. In 2002, 143,000 farm operations produced 75 percent of all agricultural output while it took 1.9 million farm operations to produce the remaining 25 percent of output (American Farm Bureau, November 14, 2005).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines farm sizes according to the annual gross income of the farm operation, classifying farms as follows:
• “Very small farms” sell less than $10,000 annually;
• “Small farms,” which include “very small farms,” sell up to $250,000 annually;
• “Large farms,” which include “very large farms,” sell more than $250,000 annually; and
• “Very large farms” sell more than $500,000 annually (United States Department of Agriculture, 2006).

Very large farms and very small farms have both grown in number and production, while the percentage of farms selling between $10,000 to component of a healthy, balanced diet. Statistics indicate that there is a growing crisis in the United States concerning child nutrition. Nationally, the percentage of obese children under age twenty almost tripled between 1979 and 1999 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). In 2001, 10 percent of Oregon eighth graders were overweight, a number that increased by two-thirds between 1999 and 2001 (Oregon Department of Human Services, February 26, 2002).

It is encouraging that schools across the country have been working to introduce students to fresh fruits and vegetables through local produce purchasing programs and education curricula that focuses on why fresh fruits and vegetables are important for nutrition. However, school meals do not prioritize local fresh fruits and vegetables, primarily because of a lack of established distribution networks between farms and schools.
$249,000 annually have decreased in size and production (United States Department of Agriculture, 2006). These statistics point to the growing concern for farms that fall into the mid-sized sales category, known as ‘Ag of the Middle.’ (Agriculture of the Middle Project, 2006). Evidence indicates that mid-sized Oregon farms are declining, mirroring the national trend (Works and Harvey, 2006).

Size, however, is not the only characteristic that determines whether a farmer is interested in selling produce to schools. Perhaps more important than the size of a farm is the market it serves. Farms that serve a wholesale market have very different infrastructures and capacities than farms that sell directly to consumers through farm stands and farmers markets. For example, farms that sell to wholesalers may be able to provide the large quantity that schools need. On the other hand, farmers that sell directly to consumers may be able to sell schools a variety of different types of produce.

For Our Food Security

Farmland used to surround and supply food to cities. Today, land use patterns have concentrated farming in a few areas while encouraging low density sprawl, and virtually eliminating the locally-based urban food supply. In the U.S., food distributors typically haul ‘fresh’ food items an average of 1,500 to 2,500 miles from farmer to consumer, 25 percent farther than in 1980 (Oklahoma Food Policy Council, 2003). This evolution of our national food system creates implications for food security.

Cultivating a local supply of food is important for Portland’s food security. The American Planning Association (APA) defines food security as ensuring that all citizens in our region have access to healthy, safe, and abundant food. Food security can start with public schools. Our public schools serve families with a range of incomes, and, for some children, the fruits and vegetables they eat at school may be their only access fresh produce.

Because We’re Portland

As the map on the next page illustrates, Oregon's Willamette Valley stretches along the fertile river basin of the Willamette River, which winds between the Coastal and Cascade mountain ranges. Fertile soil and a temperate climate make the Willamette Valley the heart of the state's agriculture production, providing the state with an abundant and diverse selection of produce and helping Oregon to lead the country, after California and Florida, in offering the greatest variety of agricultural products (Oregon Department of Agriculture, November 2005). The region also includes Washington State's Yakima Valley and Columbia River Basin, which produce a bulk of the state's fruit and vegetable crops.

Oregon has been able to maintain, for the most part, its lush landscape and rich agricultural land because of the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 100 in 1973. State Representative and rural dairy farmer Hector Macpherson and Governor Tom McCall originally conceived of SB 100 with the intention of preserving farmland. SB 100 led to Oregon's comprehensive land use planning system, which still uses urban growth boundaries to

The Willamette Valley

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preserve resource lands while planning for development.

Alas, land use protections alone will not support a strong farm economy on our rich agricultural lands. Markets must exist to support our farm economy. Today, Oregon farmers export over 80 percent of their products. The global market has squeezed local farmers by driving down prices for agricultural commodities. Protecting agricultural lands and our diverse supply of local food will require Portland to support alternative agriculture markets that bypass the global commodity market. Schools and other institutions are in a unique position that, as large buyers, they hold the market power needed to transform current forms of food distribution and cultivate a local food supply.

Despite Oregon’s export-oriented agricultural economy, a bustling local food market has taken root in Portland. Located just north of the Willamette Valley and home to over half a million residents, Portland enjoys the benefits of proximity. Residents help to preserve and support neighboring farmland by maintaining connections to the regional bounty through efforts to eat food grown in the Willamette Valley. Local restaurants, grocery stores, and farmers markets celebrate the region’s harvest. While these efforts enhance the local economy, reduce “food miles,” and support the preservation of agricultural land, many Portlanders enjoy fresh, local produce because it simply tastes better.

Portland Chef Greg Higgins is the owner of Higgins restaurant and a member of the Chef’s Collaborative, an organization that promotes local, sustainable food. Higgins obtains 80 percent of his restaurant’s food from local growers. Other restaurants are following Higgins’ lead. The Farmer-Chef Connection, an annual conference that brings chefs and farmers face to face, works to “restore the connection between those who grow our food and those who prepare it” (Ecotrust, n.d.)

Prioritizing local produce is not only a luxury for self-proclaimed Portland “foodies.” It is now the focus of government policies, programs, and research.

In 2003, Teri Pierson and Janet Hammer of Community Food Matters conducted research to examine the “barriers and opportunities to the use of regional and sustainable food products by local institutions” in Portland. This report provided a series of goals and objectives for large governmental and non-governmental institutions to increase local purchasing.

The following year, Multnomah County established a pilot program to increase the supply of local produce to the County’s correctional facilities. The county serves approximately 5,400 meals to inmates each day and is taking steps to expand awareness of the benefits of purchasing locally while building connections between regional farmers and institutional purchasers.

The City of Portland’s Office of Sustainable Development (OSD) works in collaboration with Multnomah County to provide staff support to the Food Policy Council (FPC), a partnership that aims to promote, support, and strengthen a healthy regional food system.
While OSD does not have direct decision making authority over school districts in the city of Portland, the agency’s role in the FPC makes it a critical ally in strengthening the local food system. City policies resulting from the work of the FPC have the potential to significantly influence local food production and distribution in the region.

Two FPC goals have direct implications for the local food movement. These include:

- Supporting an economically viable and environmentally and socially sustainable local food system.
- Enhancing the viability of regional farms by ensuring the stability of the agricultural land base and infrastructure and strengthening economic and social linkages between urban consumers and rural producers (Food Policy Council, n.d.).

What is “Local”?

The definition of “local” food varies widely, depending on the situation or organization. Some concepts define local as including area’s within a day’s drive or within the regional watershed. Others consider a narrower geographic scope, drawing a 150 to 300 mile radius around the city. Portland currently does not have a regional standard for a local food source. For the purpose of this report, local produce is defined as crops grown in Oregon and Washington. This definition provides clear geographic and political boundaries for our regional “foodshed,” even though local does not conform neatly to jurisdictional lines. One of the aims of a Farm to School program is to reduce the miles food travels; thus, programs should strive to include farmers close to the schools, not exclude farmers who happen to live on the wrong side of a state or other jurisdictional boundary.

Why Public Schools?

“Public schools serve the public interest by teaching the common values, democratic principles, and culture that undergird America as a unified, dynamic, and flourishing nation of diverse people. They also serve the public interest by providing parents and citizens, in general, with a variety of ways to have a voice in the direction of their community’s schools. . .” (Center for Public Education, n.d.)

Public schools have a unique opportunity to introduce fresh, local produce to children of all backgrounds. Public schools also operate within a unique policy context. Over 90 percent of public schools nationwide use National School Lunch Program (NSLP) funds to provide meals to their students. As the box on the next page explains, NSLP funding helps to offset the costs for both schools and students, and it requires schools to follow rules set by Congress and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Also, states often require school districts to follow additional, often stricter, regulations than those defined by the federal government.

Six public school districts are fully or partially located within the City of Portland’s boundaries. As the map above indicates, these six districts vary widely in geographic size and student population. Of these six school districts, five participate in NSLP. Rather than participate in NSLP, Riverdale School District contracts with and funds a private food service vendor. Currently, none of these school districts has established policies or programs that prioritize purchasing of local or regional produce for school meals.
In addition to federal and state regulations, each school district must comply with its own individual purchasing policies and requirements for purchasing food. For example, school districts may establish more restrictive competitive bidding requirements than those required by the federal and state governments. While these layers of policy can create challenges for the school nutritionists who manage food purchasing, each district has the potential to use a unique set of strategies based on its individual characteristics to integrate local produce into the meals it serves.

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

The federal United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers NSLP, the primary funding source of most school lunch programs in public or private nonprofit elementary, middle, and high schools. Congress made the program permanent in 1946. In return for the cash subsidies and commodity foods they receive from USDA, participating schools must meet certain rules. For example, the food schools serve must provide minimum amounts of protein, vitamins, minerals, and calories without providing over the maximum allowed amount of fat. Congress modeled the School Breakfast Program and Summer Food Service Program on NSLP.

The Local Lunches initiative builds on two prior efforts to rethink food in Portland’s public schools. In June 2005, a group of undergraduate students from Portland State University produced a report for the FPC called “The Spork Report: Increasing the Supply and Consumption of Local Foods in Portland Public Schools.” This document provided preliminary research about the feasibility of incorporating local produce in meals served by the Portland Public School District (PPS), Oregon’s largest school district. The report concluded that increasing local produce in the district would require a consistent supply of and demand for local products, emphasizing the critical role that policy recommendations would play in supporting sustainable food systems.

Also in 2005, PPS hired a chef and parent volunteer to pilot a scratch kitchen at southeast Portland’s Abernethy Elementary. The school now serves 50 made-from-scratch breakfasts and 200 made-from-scratch lunches each day. Although Linda Colwell, the parent and chef who spearheaded the effort, originally intended to purchase local produce and other items to use in the scratch kitchen, she later decided to work primarily with the district’s existing food vendors. As a result, the scratch kitchen did not prioritize local, fresh produce in its menu. However, Colwell has identified some local vendors who have donated ingredients to the scratch kitchen, including Grand Central Bakery and Hot Lips Pizza. Colwell and PPS will operate the scratch kitchen again during the 2006-07 school year. At that time, Colwell hopes to increase the amount of local food she uses in the kitchen.
Chapter 2
Local Food in School Meals

As the chart on the next page indicates, school districts, farmers, and distributors across the country have worked together to integrate local food into school meals. The following chapter identifies a number of these programs, some that have already cultivated success and others that are still growing. These examples from the South, Midwest, Northeast, and West illustrate how the Farm to School system can work for Portland. Please see Appendix A for more detail about each example.

The examples in this chapter were selected because they each focus primarily on the distribution of local produce to schools, rather than on garden education or improving student nutrition. As the examples illustrate, Farm to School programs share a few key factors:

- **Interested School Food Authority:** A school administrator who is interested in integrating local food into school meals.

- **Committed Farmers:** Farmers who want to farm for their communities. Often, these farmers are seeking an alternative to commodity farming.

- **Value-added Production:** Farmers and/or distributors who produce value-added, food-service-ready produce like chopped carrots and cubed potatoes.

- **Farmers’ Network:** A formal or informal network of farmers, farm advocacy groups, or government agencies that supports the relationship between farms and schools. This network can provide centralized billing so schools do not have to pay multiple farmers and place multiple orders.

- **Outside Financial Support:** Many of these Farm to School efforts are not yet self-supporting and require outside funding. Outside funding includes USDA or private grants for pilot projects, business planning, and capital investments.

- **Collaboration Among Decision Makers:** Schools, farmers, distributors, and federal, state, and local government agencies work together on Farm to School programs, benefiting their partners and their constituencies.

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![Farm to School Programs Map](Source: www.farmtoschool.org)
# Farm to School Programs Examined

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<th>Farm to School Programs</th>
<th>Interested School Food Authority</th>
<th>Committed Farmers</th>
<th>Value-Added Products</th>
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Washington's Department of Agriculture created the Small Farms and Direct Marketing Program, which is devoted to helping small farms find new institutional markets. The program offers farmers information about selling their products to restaurants, hospitals, schools, and other institutions. The program also has sponsored networking opportunities for farmers, chefs, food service directors, purchasing staff, and distributors, as well as hosted educational forums, conducted surveys, and published a resource guide. This program emphasizes the important role that marketing and outreach play in a Farm to School program. Because of the program, thirty-five school districts throughout Washington State have been successfully working with local farmers. The state's general fund currently supports the program. The creators of the Small Farms and Direct Marketing Program believe the program could be stronger if the state's Department of Education had the funds to collaborate with the Department of Agriculture.

**Olympia, Washington:**

**A Salad Bar Brings Organic Choices to Olympia’s Schools**

About two hours north of Portland, parents and teachers at Lincoln Elementary School in Olympia, Washington, wanted to change their school’s food. Using information published by Washington's Department of Agriculture, parents, school administrators, and farmers worked collaboratively to create a locally supplied salad bar. Lincoln Elementary School District in Olympia, Washington

**Who:** Olympia School District's nutrition services department; interested parents; small, organic farmers located in the county; and the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

**What:** Added a salad bar with organic and local produce in one elementary school. Expanded the program throughout the district.

**Funding:** Used no outside funding for the program. Cut out dessert, eliminated the contract with Domino's Pizza, and increased the price of lunch. The district uses DOD Fresh funds (see description) to purchase commodities but did not use these funds for the organic choices program.

**Challenges & Lessons Learned:** Convincing staff, farmers, and kids to embrace changes was difficult. Starting with one pilot program and then expanding the program to other schools worked well.

**Scale:** All 18 schools in the district.
piloted the program for the district and experienced huge success. The district now offers the Organic Choice salad bar, which contains fifty percent organic items, to all of its schools. Seven local farmers, who each make one delivery to the district’s centralized kitchen, supply the district with organic produce. In order to pay for the higher price of organic food, Olympia School District stopped serving desserts, dropped their contract with Domino’s Pizza, and increased the daily lunch price for students and faculty. Paul Flock, Olympia’s Food Service Director, continues to support the program because he is committed to keeping money in the local economy and serving nutritious food in the schools.

Northeastern Iowa: Farmers Organize to Feed Iowa Communities

In the northeastern corner of Iowa, a group of farmers organized due to concern about their community’s dependence on farms hundreds of miles away for produce and their own struggle to make ends meet as commodity farmers. Michael Nash, organizer of the 16-member farmer cooperative called GROWN (Goods Raised Only With Nature) Locally, views his role as farming for the nutritional and environmental health of his community. Nash points out that from the farmer’s perspective, Farm to School programs

GROWN (Goods Raised Only With Nature) Locally Farmer’s Cooperative in Northeastern Iowa

Who: About 16 farms organized as a cooperative to sell to institutions, including schools.

What: Farmer cooperative organized by farmers who want to diversify their markets

Funding: Small USDA grants have supported key projects and business development options. The cooperative is not yet profitable and most of the farmers have jobs outside the farm.

Challenges & Lessons Learned: Building a successful farmer cooperative takes time. Selling to many institutions instead of just schools can help a cooperative model succeed. Offering value-added products can be important if farmers want to sell to institutions.

Scale: All 4 schools in Decorah Community School District.

For decades, the Department of Defense (DOD) has purchased produce for military bases. In 1994, DOD began offering these services to other institutions, including native tribes, hospitals, prisons, and schools. DOD Fresh buys fruits and vegetables grown on farms within a state, and school nutrition personnel can use USDA Commodity Entitlement Funds to purchase from the program. DOD Fresh has partnered with state agriculture agencies and school food service personnel to establish Farm to School programs, offering logistical coordination and billing assistance to institutions and farmers (Kalb, nd).

This year, the DOD Fresh program will be restructuring, and it is not yet clear how these changes will impact operation. Available information indicates that regional DOD Fresh program offices, which coordinate purchases and provide assistance, will close by September 30, 2006. At that time, DOD will reorganize the regions and assign a private distributor that will have a single long-term produce contract with the region. This private distributor will replace the old regional offices. The new distributor will seek to source from small businesses, which must be able to ensure quality and consistency and serve existing customers in the region.

Chapter 2: Local Food in School Meals
are just institutional selling arrangements. If a farmer can sell to a school, he or she can sell to nursing homes, restaurants, churches, hospitals, and other institutions. GROWN Locally began to sell to institutions by talking to food service directors about what kind of produce they needed, in what quantity, and how often. When they better understood the needs of institutions, farmer members pooled resources, such as a refrigerated truck for transport and a wash and pack facility for value-added processing. GROWN Locally also created a website to handle institutional orders. The farmer cooperative has partnered with the food service director at Decorah Community Schools who uses GROWN Locally produce for salad bar and a la carte items in four schools—two elementary, one middle school, and one high school. The local items have been particularly popular among middle and high school students.

Madison, Wisconsin: A University and Farm Advocacy Group Join Efforts
Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch seeks to enhance Madison public schools’ meals by introducing fresh, nutritious, local, and sustainably-grown food to children, beginning in the city’s elementary schools. The program started when members of the Research, Education, Action, and Policy (REAP) group - who were also parents of children in the Madison School District - wanted school lunches to include local produce. The REAP members partnered with the University of Wisconsin’s Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, which focuses on sustainable food practices and agriculture, and secured a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant from the USDA. The SARE grant provides funds for a coordinator at the university to staff the Homegrown Lunch program. The program provides educational opportunities for children at three elementary schools to connect with farms, like field trips and food tasting, but has been less successful in integrating farm produce into the school’s meals. Neither the Madison School District central kitchen nor the elementary school kitchens have the capacity to process or store produce straight from farmers’ fields. A local natural food store has provided needed value-added processing and connections to local farmers. The program is in its fourth year and plans to begin a pilot program at a forth school.

Homegrown Lunch, Madison Wisconsin
Who: Farm advocacy group REAP Food Group, Madison School District, Local food producers, and the University of Wisconsin’s Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems.
What: A pilot program at three elementary schools that includes farm presentations and field trips.
Funding: Altering buying policies has allowed the district to use existing funds coupled with DOD Fresh dollars, and a USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant administered through the University of Wisconsin.
Challenges & Lessons Learned: Biggest challenges include providing value-added produce, changing the content of the school lunch, and organizing the farmers. The creation of buying policies that include the dedication of educational opportunities provided by the farmer has made existing funding easier to use.
Scale: Pilot program at 3 elementary schools.

Davis, California: A Farm Advocacy Group Focuses on Distribution
The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) is a nonprofit, membership based organization headquartered in Davis, California. CAFF focuses on creating distribution networks that school nutrition directors can use to purchase produce from local farms conveniently and within their budgets. For example, CAFF has worked with school nutrition directors to build purchasing schedules that take advantage of seasonal shifts in agricultural production. The organization also builds not-for-profit distribution centers designed to supply local schools with minimally-processed and minimally-transported produce. Although it
serves all interested schools, CAFF specifically seeks to increase access to fresh, local fruits and vegetables for schools that serve many low income students. CAFF organized farmers into Grower’s Collaborative, a limited liability corporation.

Grower’s Collaborative, Davis, California
Who: The Community Alliance with Family Farmer’s (CAFF), Grower’s Collaborative and various school districts, including Davis Unified, Compton Unified in Los Angeles, and Pajaro Unified in Santa Cruz County.
What: CAFF created a distribution network school nutrition directors can use to purchase their produce from local farms and take advantage of seasonal shifts in produce, beginning in Davis United School District now expanded to other districts.
Funding: USDA value-added and other small farm development grants, which require outside matching funds
Challenges & Lessons Learned: Distribution is the key. Organized farmers into a collaborative and partnered with other organizations with similar infrastructure needs. At first, it was difficult to maintain relationships between individual farms and schools. Organizational support was needed.
Scale: Grower’s Collaborative connects approximately 40 farmers with 40 districts

Bend-LaPine School District, Bend Oregon
Who: Bend-LaPine School District Nutrition Services Department, local farmers
What: Began to purchase local produce as part of the summer lunch program; expanded to entire district during part of the school year; planned expansion to year-round local purchasing.
Funding: Uses existing funds coupled with DOD dollars.
Challenges & Lessons Learned: Buy at a per unit price rather than a per pound price; the high quality and large size of fresh local produce means that the school district saves money when it buys on a per unit basis. Use existing connections with local farmers to purchase local produce.
Scale: Entire school district, over 13,000 students.

Katrina Wiest, Wellness Specialist for Bend-LaPine School District, also manages the Bend Farmers Market. Wiest took the school’s wholesale produce list to the farmers market and asked vendors if they could beat the prices. In many cases, they could, so Wiest began planning her menu according to what the farmers could supply. The program started in the summer of 2005 with the summer lunch program, which fed about 3,000 students. Bend now supplies up to 15,000 meals a day. At best, the local produce supplements rather than replaces the district’s needs. The district now purchases local vegetables through the end of December and local fruit through the middle of February. Farmer Jeff Rosenblad of Happy Harvest Farms indicated that he has invested heavily in infrastructure so that by fall 2006 he will be able to supply food to the district year round.
Connecticut State: Multi-Agency Collaboration Begets Financial Security

Connecticut’s Department of Agriculture has partnered with the state’s Department of Education, Department of Public Health, and Department of Environmental Protection to create a Farm to School program. By working together, these agencies have influenced the state legislature to allocate funds from Community Reinvestment Act 228. For every land record transaction completed by a city or county clerk, one dollar goes to the Farm to School program. Current participants include

- **Connecticut Department of Agriculture Farm to School Program**
  - **Who:** State of Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Department of Public Health, Department of Environmental Protection, and Department of Education
  - **What:** Works with school districts and individual schools, as well as farmers and wholesalers, to assist schools in buying local produce. Plan to expand into meats, eggs, and dairy products. Created CT Grown logo, which schools use to identify local produce.
  - **Funding:** Started with a Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) grant from USDA. Supported by the federal government’s Community Reinvestment Act.
  - **Challenges & Lessons Learned:** Distribution of fresh produce to schools has been the biggest challenge. DOD Fresh funds have not worked well in Connecticut because agriculture in the state is small in scale.
  - **Scale:** 41 school districts, 5 private schools, 39 farmers, and 6 wholesalers. Connecticut has 149 school districts.

41 school districts, 5 private schools, 39 farmers, and 6 wholesalers. The program has created networking opportunities for food service directors and farmers; launched the CT Grown logo; recruited participants; and assisted wholesalers and schools when creating distribution systems. Due to the program’s success, Connecticut plans to expand their efforts to include local meats, eggs, and dairy product in schools.

**Conclusion**

These Farm to School examples suggest strategies that could be used in implementing a farm to school program in Portland. The recommendation in this report draws on these Farm to School programs and the key factors that made them successful. For example, many of these programs have succeeded because stakeholders worked collaboratively, forming tight networks based on cooperation, compromise, and patience. The recommendations offered later in this report echo the importance of collaboration and stakeholder networks.
Schools, farmers, and distributors are the key to any Farm to School program. While school districts implement a Farm to School program through purchasing decisions, farmers and distributors form the chain that produces the food and gets it to the school. This section describes how schools, farmers and distributors currently operate in the Portland metropolitan area as well as the major opportunities and challenges to implementing Farm to School programs.

A Snapshot of Current Conditions

Schools

The five Portland school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) do not prioritize integrating local produce into meals. Nutrition services directors at these school districts reported that none had tried to purchase directly from local farmers. In addition, none of the schools comprehensively tracks how much of the produce served in the cafeteria is grown locally.

• Most school districts have not experimented with special programs that integrate local food into school meals on a regular or semi-regular basis. Schools have, however, offered one-time-only special programs. For example, Edwards Elementary School had a Chef’s in Residence week in June 2005. A local chef came to the school each day and cooked with the students, who then ate the food for lunch. The chefs emphasized local produce in the meals they prepared.

• School districts sometimes purchase local produce through their normal distributors. This is not a reflection of the school districts’ efforts but of the fact that local products are cheaper when they are in season. For example, Reynolds School District purchases some apples, potatoes, onions, mushrooms, asparagus, peppers, zucchini, green onions, radishes, spinach, leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce, green beans, herbs, and cabbage grown in Washington or Oregon. The Spork Report estimates that at least 11 percent of the produce Portland Public Schools purchases is grown locally (Adair et al., 2005).

• Anecdotal evidence indicates that schools in Portland have initiated Farm to School programs emphasizing garden education. For example, Buckman Elementary and Abernethy Elementary, both within the Portland Public School district, have established school gardens and incorporated garden education into their curriculum.

Farmers

• National agriculture trends indicate that large and very small farms are both increasing in number while mid-sized farms are declining in number. The percentage of America’s very large farms and very small farms has increased while the percentage of mid-sized farms has decreased in size and production (United States Department of Agriculture, 2006). See the box on the following page for more information about the agriculture economy and farm to school.

• The number and production of very small farms is increasing. USDA reports that very small farms accounted for 57 percent of all farms in 2003, up from 50 percent of all farms in 1989.
Traditionally, mid-sized farms served as important ecological and social stewards of the land in addition to producing food for consumption. The decrease of mid-sized farms jeopardizes strong stewardship of our land and communities. While the growth in small farms is encouraging, mid-sized farms produce much larger quantities and can link small and large farms into successful marketing networks (Kirschenmann, Stevenson, Buttel, Lyson & Duffy, 2005).

Roughly ninety percent of farms in Oregon and Washington are small farms. According the 2002 Agriculture Census, Oregon is home to over 40,000 farms, 94 percent of which were USDA defined small farms. Of Washington's 35,000 farms, 90 percent are small farms. Oregon exceeds Washington in its percentage of very small farms (69 versus 59 percent).

Oregon currently exports over eighty percent of its agriculture products to interstate and international markets. Interviews suggest that the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) and state legislators have been reluctant to initiate policies or programs promoting local markets out of concern for maintaining export markets. Fees from commodity farmers, who are primarily interested in finding new markets for their products, currently fund ODA. ODA is likely to find most new markets outside of Oregon; moreover, the local market could not use all the commodities currently produced.

No organization in the Portland metropolitan region currently supports farmers who want to sell local produce to schools. Farmers lack a unified voice. This makes it difficult to form the connections between schools and farms that are necessary for a successful Farm to School program. Existing farm organizations support farmers’ day to day operations, but do not focus on marketing directly to schools. One type of support organization is a farmer cooperative. Farmers can structure cooperatives in different ways and can have many goals.

Farmers interviewed do not perceive a market for their products in local schools. Since the majority of farms in Oregon and Washington are small, we interviewed three small-scale...
farmers and one medium sized farmer. These four farmers process their crops themselves. Interviews with school districts indicate that farmers’ perception that they cannot sell to schools is inaccurate. This perception highlights the lack of connections between schools and farms.

- Farmers appear to be interested in a Farm to School opportunity and highlighted their desire to participate in an educational component of a Farm to School effort. These farmers see their role as more than just food suppliers - they believe that schools can use their farms as a tool to teach children about where their food originates.

Distributors

- Distributors in Portland have started to accommodate the demand for more local and sustainable produce. As more clients pressure their distributors to prioritize local food, distributors are seeking out ways to make local connections. Many have called upon the Food Alliance to learn how to incorporate local and sustainable food into their product lines. Portland area produce distributors include Charlie’s Produce, Duck Delivery, Pacific Coast Fruit Company, Aloha Produce and Gatto & Sons. The box “Distributors: Essential Connectors” explains more about the role of the producer.

- Distributors who most often source locally cite service and quality as their highest priorities. Distributor representatives have different views about their companies’ competitive edges. Two distributors said their companies compete based on ‘quality,’ one distributor said ‘price,’ and two said ‘service.’ The notion of quality bears many meanings - organic, flavorful, fresh – and can be a determining factor in school food service bidding contracts.

- Distributing to school districts means that a company must compete based on price. A distributor must be price competitive to secure a contract with a school district. Price considerations are frequently the determining factor when deciding to use local sources. Distributors that focus on sustainable and organic products, such as Organically Grown Company (OGC), and are doing well in their market, will most likely not compete for school or institutional contracts.

- Despite a lack of point of origin information, most distributors use local sources when possible. Distributors report that it makes sense for them to buy local produce when it is in season since it is fresh and often cheaper. Local farmers have historically used Produce Row, located in Portland’s Central Eastside industrial district, as a convenient place to sell their products to distributors. Some of the distributors that are located in that district, such as Aloha and Gatto & Sons, maintain long-term relationships with local farmers that come to sell on Produce Row.
Company history and structure that reflect longstanding relationships with local farmers. Charlie’s Produce began twenty-eight years ago as an alliance between Willamette Valley and Yakima County farmers, and those relationships have expanded and strengthened over the years. OGC began as a cooperative of twelve local farms and expanded into a for-profit company specializing in local and sustainable organic produce.

Price

Schools and farmers indicated that the price of local food challenges efforts to integrate local food into school meals:

- School nutrition service directors indicated that price pressures influence many of their purchasing decisions because their departments cannot depend on other school funds to operate. Some districts may even expect the nutrition services department to support the school’s general budget. Differences in the price of one or two cents per item can make a huge difference in terms of these budget constraints because of the large number of meals schools serve daily. Moreover, NSLP requires price to be the primary consideration whenever a district purchases food.
- Farmers most often mentioned price to explain why they do not sell to schools. The small-scale farmers interviewed suggested that they might have a hard time competing with the price of non-local produce. Often, small-scale farms compete with larger producers by growing organic, premium products that the schools cannot afford.

Federal reimbursement rates under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) constrain the budgets of school nutrition services departments. USDA reimburses school districts just $2.32 for each lunch served to a child who qualifies for a free lunch, $1.92 for a reduced-price lunch, and $0.22 for a paid lunch. In addition, Oregon does not provide a small additional reimbursement for the school lunch program as many states do. For example, California reimburses schools an additional $0.13 for each free and reduced lunch (Reich, March 2005). Nebraska provides a supplemental $.05 for all breakfasts and lunches (Bolz & Hernandez, 2004).
local food creates an opportunity to do just this. In addition, purchasing local produce can help a school meet the USDA’s School Meals Initiative, which requires schools to serve a certain number of fruits and vegetables with each meal and to offer a variety of colors, textures, and choices that encourage students to eat more fruits and vegetables (Food and Nutrition Service, December 2005).

Seasonality

As the chart on the following page indicates, the harvest season in Oregon and Washington occurs from the second week of May to the first two weeks of October, thus coinciding minimally with the school year. Farmers harvest many crops during summer vacation, although some, like potatoes, asparagus, carrots, apples, salad greens, and winter pears, overlap with the months that school is in session. This growing cycle creates challenges for schools, farmers, and distributors who seek to integrate local food into school meals:

• Despite the potential to cut transportation costs and obtain the freshest produce possible, it is difficult for distributors to obtain a significant portion of their produce from local farmers during the school year.

• Farmers may have only a relatively small variety of fresh produce available in the winter and lack the infrastructure needed to process their crops and sell them later. The infrastructure investment required to convert to a year-round growing season is out of reach for many farmers.

• School menus do not account for fruits and vegetables seasonally available in Washington and Oregon. The Spork Report found that forty-nine percent of produce purchased by Portland Public Schools between April 19 and May 9, 2005, was non-local. Of the forty-nine percent non-local products, twenty-seven percent were seasonally available from a local source (Adair et al., 2005). This indicates that there is room for schools to adjust their menus to reflect seasonally available food.

Quality

Distributors suggested that quality presents a challenge to integrating local food into school meals. Small farmers in Washington and Oregon who do not normally cater to a wholesale market might find it a challenge to maintain a consistent supply of high quality products at the volume that school districts and institutions need. Unlike many farms in Oregon and Washington, farms in California tend to have the infrastructure needed to pre-cool their products, extending their shelf life in warm weather.

On the other hand, proponents of integrating local produce into school meals argued that local produce is fresher, tastes better, and has a higher nutritional value than produce transported to a school over long distances. Research indicates that fresh produce loses its nutritional value over time (Karaszkiewicz, 2005). School nutrition services directors said they always seek to serve the best quality food that they can afford, and

However, schools may be able to afford local produce. Jeff Rosenblad of Happy Harvest Farms supplies local produce to the Bend-LaPine School District from his farm at comparable prices to what the school district would pay a wholesaler. He is also able to provide more yield because he uses a per unit price structure. The farmers interviewed agreed that having the guaranteed sale of a contract with a school district – even at a lower price than they could make elsewhere – would be appealing.

The price difference between local and non-local produce is difficult to compute because of constantly changing market values. Transportation costs, in addition to other factors, influence market values. Purchasing local produce will cut transportation costs, which is particularly important because of the rising cost of fuel. The recent high gasoline costs have not affected current contracts for non-local produce because the food vendor typically does not have the authority to pass cost increases on to a school. However, if transportation costs continue to increase or remain at these historically high levels, future contract proposals from vendors that purchase primarily non-local food may reflect the increased costs.
Student Preferences

Student preferences create both challenges and opportunities for integrating local food into school meals. Shannon Stember, Assistant Nutrition Services Director at Portland Public Schools, said that serving students is the crucial third tenet of her job in the nutrition services department: serve quality food that the district can afford and that the kids will eat. Several parents reinforce the importance of student preferences, mentioning that their children only purchase school lunches when they like what is on the menu for the day.

The Center for Ecoliteracy’s Rethinking School Lunch Guide emphasizes the need to heighten the role of education in school lunch. The Rethinking School Lunch Guide argues that by combining a strong education curriculum with a menu that includes local produce, meals can become a time when students learn about food, nutrition, the local economy, and the environment. The Guide answers questions about whether kids will eat local – sometimes strange – vegetables and fruits by saying that when kids learn about or even grow the food themselves, they will understand and eat it.

The Rethinking School Lunch Guide also emphasizes the need to market healthy food to students in the same way that advertisers market unhealthy choices. Marilyn Briggs writes, “offering nutritious food by itself, even if it tastes good, may still not be enough. . . The media has the capacity to persuade children to make poor food choices . . . And when school gardens or cooking classes are also integrated into the curriculum, so that children grow or prepare the foods they eat, the food almost always becomes more attractive” (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2004).

Capacity

Very small farmers cited concerns that they could not produce the quantity of any one product that a school district would need. These farmers currently sell their produce through Community Shared
Agriculture (CSA) and farmers’ markets, which both require more variety and crop diversity than selling to a school district would require. Some also sell to area restaurants. Many very small-scale farms that already distribute to multiple markets do not have the capacity to sell to school districts, although it may be feasible for these farms to sell to one school. While these farmers expressed interest in selling to schools, they were quick to point out they are currently at production capacity. Many very small-scale farms could not survive solely selling to schools but could add schools to their list of clients. A middle-sized farm, especially one that is already selling wholesale, would be more apt to have the capacity to supply school districts.

**Processing**

Like other large institutions, schools often require value-added products, such as cut carrots or cubed potatoes. Value-added products are easier and more cost-effective for schools to use due to limited kitchen space and rising labor costs.

Food safety concerns have also led schools to use value-added produce rather than field produce. School nutrition services directors suggested that food safety is a top concern for them, which has driven their decisions over the past several years to stop using raw products - especially raw meat - in school kitchens. Although produce does not create the same potential health threats as raw meat, schools may have switched to value-added produce in part to avoid potential food safety problems.

These processing and food handling needs create challenges for integrating local produce into school meals because schools often lack the facilities needed to wash, cut, and chop fruits and vegetables themselves. Additionally, small farmers also lack processing capacity and cannot afford to pay someone else to process their harvest. Cost and certification make it difficult for farmers to acquire the infrastructure needed to lightly process their own crops.

Distributors also cite processing as a challenge to purchasing local produce. While some distributors, including Duck Delivery and Gatto & Sons, offer light processing services, many others do not. Sometimes it is easier and cheaper for distributor to obtain a product from a farmer who has already processed the crop.

**Sourcing**

As institutions implement local purchasing policies, distributors will have to expand their capacity to both label the sources of their products and
inform their customers of their product sourcing. Charlie’s Produce, for example, generates a weekly list of available produce, detailing their origin and any possible certification of the produce. While many distributors already using local sources when possible, they do not currently have the resources in place to inform their clients of product sources. For example, distributors do not regularly record the origin of the products they receive.

**Procurement Policies**

School districts perceive that procurement policies create challenges for purchasing local food for school meals. In reality, federal, state, and local procurement policies offer opportunities for school districts to integrate local produce into school meals. The box to the right explains why school districts must comply with these procurement policies.

Several procurement methods are available to schools, including competitive bidding, competitive proposals, and small purchase:

- Competitive bidding requires school districts to solicit bids publicly for a fixed-price contract. The school selects the bidder with the lowest price.
- Under the competitive proposal process, school districts send out a request for proposals (RFP) from a number of sources and publicize the request. Schools may select vendors based on quality and customer service factors; however, schools must ultimately use price as the main basis for selection. Selection factors can include opportunities for students to visit farms, or farmers to visit schools, as ways to build relationships between farms and schools.
- The small purchase procurement option is a relatively informal method of procurement that a school district can use for “small” purchases. Under the small purchase program, school districts do not need to publicize a bid or proposal. Nutrition services directors also indicated that while they might use the small purchase procurement method for emergency purchases, they still obtain verbal bids to ensure that they obtain the best price for the best product.
- These procurement methods allow schools to track the amount of local food they purchase and serve. Kristy Obbink, Nutrition Services Director at Portland Public Schools, said that the district is planning to develop

**Competitive Bidding and Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Until 1990, public agencies had to award contracts to the lowest bidder based on sealed bids. Public agencies could not pay more for quality or service. Since then, the federal government has loosened competitive bidding requirements to allow for RFPs that reflect quality and performance criteria rather than sealed price bids (Eakins, 2005).

Competitive bidding rules seek to ensure that all vendors have access to free and open competition when seeking contracts with public agencies. Free and open competition means that all suppliers are playing on a level playing field with the same opportunity to compete (Food and Nutrition Service, December 2005).

School districts usually issue several different proposals for different sets of products. For example, the district issues separate RFPs for produce, meat, bread, milk, dry goods, and commodity foods. School districts may make small, unplanned purchases throughout the school year if they realize they need more of a product.
Program Administration

School nutrition services directors and Oregon Department of Education Child Nutrition Program staff report that buying local food can create administrative burdens in often strained nutrition services departments. While federal, state, and local policies may allow districts to make smaller purchases under the small purchase or intermediate procurement methods, extra paperwork and time accompanies each extra purchase. In addition to burdens on schools, Farm to School programs can create administrative burdens for distributors and farmers, particularly during the beginning phase of the program.

Conclusion

School districts, farmers, and distributors all must address their own unique challenges when integrating local produce into its meals. The list provided in this chapter identifies many key challenges, as well as the opportunities integrating local produce can create for school districts, farmers, and distributors. The considerations above, as well as the examples of successful Farm to School programs described in Chapter 2, demonstrate that communities can overcome challenges and take advantage of the opportunities offered by Farm to School programs.
Chapter 4
Recommendations

This section describes our recommendations for strategies to increase the amount of local produce in meals served by school districts in Portland. These recommendations address the three goals of the Local Lunches initiative:

- To provide realistic strategies given cost constraints and the current system;
- To encourage collaborative action among stakeholders; and
- To create alternatives to the existing federal, state and local policy framework.

The following is a list of the stakeholders with potential interest in a program that prioritizes local produce in Portland’s schools. The primary stakeholders listed in the box will ultimately decide whether to implement a Local Lunch program, but the secondary stakeholders can provide critical support to prospective programs.

### Local Lunches Stakeholders

**Primary**
School Nutrition and/or Food Services Personnel, School Superintendents, Boards of Education, Parents, Students, Farmers and Distributors.

**Secondary**

Federal, State, and Local Policymakers: Elected Officials.

Many successful Farm to School programs started with one side dish item, such as a fruit cup, to introduce the idea of local food to students. North Carolina serves a local berry cup, and South Windsor School District in Connecticut created a baked potato bar.

Recommendation: Add local produce as one side dish item.

B. Design a Seasonally-Responsive Menu

As noted in Chapter 3, research suggests that current school menus rely heavily on non-local food. Menus that reflect the seasonal availability of produce lay essential groundwork for purchasing seasonal produce in the future.

Recommendation: Change school menus to better reflect the seasonal availability of produce.

C. Explore Value-Added Services

In order to sell directly to schools, farmers may need services that distributors would otherwise offer, such as light processing, storing, freezing, and packaging. Some farmers across the country have used a farmer cooperative model to access these needed services. By combining their resources, a group of farmers can acquire the processing and packaging facilities they need to serve schools.

Recommendation: Determine what farmers need by investigating current farmer organizations, such as the Oregon Fresh Market Growers Association, and exploring other ways farmers could access needed processing, storage, packaging, and freezing services.

D. Provide Point of Origin Information

In order for schools to keep track of the amount of local produce they serve, distributors need to provide information on the source of their produce. Providing point of origin information can often require many changes within a distribution company and cannot happen overnight. However, distributors are responding to customer demand and beginning to provide this information. While this information begins with the distributors, the schools need to do their part as well by labeling their products to help educate students about where their food comes from.

Recommendation: Encourage schools and distributors to work together to assemble information on the sources of the produce the school buys.
Farmers, distributors, and school food service directors need to understand each other’s constraints and capabilities. The three recommendations listed above and described below address the need to build relationships among Local Lunches stakeholders.

A. Create a Program or Organization to Support Local Lunches

No organization or program in the Portland metropolitan region focuses on integrating local produce into school meals. A public agency, nonprofit agency, or farmer organization can play a key role in building and maintaining relationships between farmers, distributors, and food service directors. Connecticut and Washington, for example, have dedicated programs to small farm direct marketing within their agriculture departments. California’s Grower’s Collaborative and Wisconsin’s Homegrown Lunch are nonprofits that have organized farmers, facilitating the school-farmer relationship. Many of these programs support farmers’ efforts to sell to other institutions as well.

Recommendation: Create a program or organization to support efforts of Portland schools to integrate local produce into their meals. Several types of organizations could sponsor a program, including an existing public, nonprofit, or private organization.

B. Support Networking Among Key Decision Makers

Farm to School guides identify several outreach activities that help build relationships beneficial to the creation of Farm to School programs, including resource guides, forums, and workshops. The box to the right provides an explanation of network and marketing tools used for outreach opportunities. These types of efforts have enabled farmers, distributors, and food service directors to form working relationships that have led to more local produce in school meals.

Recommendation: Sponsor events that encourage networking among key Farm to School decision makers. Develop a strategy for networking opportunities that meet the needs of a community using surveys and other research instruments.

C. Create a Collaborative Decision Making Process

Thriving Farm to School programs highlight collaboration among stakeholders as the key to their success. Implementing Farm to School programs in Portland will require collaborative decision making among active stakeholders. Collaboration is often the key to securing grants for farm to school efforts. For more information about funding opportunities see Appendix C.

Recommendation: Create a collaborative decision making process among stakeholders. Communities need to establish steps in this process to reflect their individual needs.
Networking and Marketing Tools

Surveys: Nonprofit and public agencies have used surveys to learn about the purchasing preferences of schools, the capacity of local farms, and to gauge interest in Farm to School programs. Organizations have primarily surveyed farmers, schools, and distributors.

Resource guides: Organizations have used resource guides to provide a variety of specific information about stakeholders who are interested in participating in a Farm to School program. Resource guides also offer tips for building these partnerships. For example, the Washington State Department of Agriculture developed a resource guide that contained strategies and incremental steps for implementing Farm to School programs. Portland Farm to School advocates could model a resource guide after the Chef’s Collaborative handbook, which connects local chefs and restaurants with local farmers.

Workshops and forums: Organizations have used workshops and forums to bring key decision makers together to discuss how a Farm to School program could work. For example, government agencies have sponsored special events that allow food service directors to visit their local farm. Educational workshops and speaker forums can also bring key decision makers together. The common thread among these types of activities is that organizations offer a common place for farmers, distributors, and food service directors to meet.
The current political and economic framework constrains the capacity of primary decision makers to implement Farm to School programs. The four recommendations listed in Table 3 and detailed below address these constraints.

A. Advocate for Increase in Reimbursement Rates

As noted in Chapter 3, federal reimbursement rates for meals served through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) are relatively low. In addition, Oregon does not provide a supplemental reimbursement for meals served through the program. Allocating state and federal funds to increase NSLP reimbursement rates would help schools integrate higher quality, nutritious food, including local fruits and vegetables, into meals.

Recommendation: Advocates should lobby Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to build the capacity of schools to serve nutritious local food by increasing the federal reimbursement rate for school lunches. Advocates should also encourage the Oregon Legislature to follow the lead of other states in supporting a healthy and nutritious school meal program by funding a small per-meal supplemental reimbursement.

B. Create a Farm Direct Marketing Program

The political climate in Oregon favors commodity farms, big business, and export agriculture rather than local and small-scale agriculture. In some states, such as Washington and Connecticut, agriculture departments have dedicated initiatives to creating new markets for small farms. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) supports a Farm Direct Nutrition Program that allows low-income families, seniors, and people with disabilities to purchase locally grown fresh produce from authorized farmers at farm stands and farmers markets. While important, this program does not address the comprehensive direct marketing needs of farms. A comprehensive direct marketing program at ODA would provide needed organizational support for Farm to School programs in Oregon.

Recommendation: Build on the state’s Farm Direct Nutrition Program by creating a farm direct marketing office at the state and local level. This office could focus on enhancing opportunities to sell directly to local consumers, including a Farm to School program.

C. Procurement Policies and Request For Proposals (RFPs)

Federal, state, and local procurement policies and RFPs create opportunities for schools to integrate local produce into their meals. To take advantage of these opportunities, school districts should seek to use RFPs rather than fixed price contracts when possible. Although price is the deciding factor when a school selects a vendor after soliciting RFPs, the school can and should use point methods that value quality and service.

In addition, individual districts establish procurement policies that influence their food contracts. School districts across the country have
changed these policies to prioritize purchasing local produce to the extent practicable within procurement rules. These procurement policies provide long term guidance to school districts as they renew their purchasing agreements with vendors.

Recommendation: To the extent practicable within federal and state procurement rules, school districts should prioritize local purchasing in RFPs by valuing quality and service in addition to price. School districts also should make a long term commitment to purchasing local produce by establishing procurement policies that state that they purchase local produce to the maximum extent practicable within procurement rules.

D. Nutrition Education

While nutrition and education were not the focus of this research, it is impossible to separate nutrition education from successful efforts to integrate local food into school meals. Research shows that educating kids about local fruits and vegetables is a critical tool for encouraging them to eat local produce.

Currently, nutrition services departments in Portland school districts have limited or no influence over a school’s educational curriculum. Nutrition services staff could work with principals, teachers, parents, and advocates to build an education curriculum that complements a district’s efforts to purchase locally grown food. Unfortunately, current school administrative cultures tend to divide nutrition services departments from education departments in schools.

Recommendation: Incorporate nutrition education into an effort to integrate local food into Portland’s schools. Federal and state policymakers should design programs that encourage - and fund - nutrition services personnel to collaborate with principals and teachers.

Acronyms

DOD- Department of Defense
CAFF- Community Alliance with Family Farmers
CFNP- Community Food & Nutrition Program
CFP- Community Food Projects
CSA- Community Shared Agriculture
FSMIP- Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program
FPC- Food Policy Council
GROWN Locally- Goods Raised Only With Nature
HHS- Department of Human Health & Services
NSLP-National School Lunch Program
OCS- Office of Community Services
OGC- Organically Grown Company
ODA- Oregon Department of Agriculture
ODE- Oregon Department of Education
OSD- Office of Sustainable Development
PPS- Portland Public Schools
REAP- Research, Education, Action & Policy
RFP- Request for Proposals
SARE - Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education
SB- Senate Bill
USDA- United States Department of Agriculture
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Keto, Roy. Sales Manager, Charlie’s Produce.

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Miedema, Tracy. Stahlbush Island Farms.

Molloy, Eamon. Parent and Hillsdale Farmers Market Manager.


Obbink, Kristy. Director, Nutrition Services Department, Portland Public Schools.

Opp, Joan. Food Service Supervisor, Parkrose School District.
Paine, Michael. Gaining Ground Farm.

Powers, Chris. Office Manager, Aloha Produce.

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Rosenblad, Jeff. Happy Harvest Farm.

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Shonk, Dave. Troutdale Farm.

Simantel, Marcus, Food Policy Council

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Wilmoth, Ken. Supervisory Produce Specialist. Department of Defense Fresh Program.

Wubben, Doug. University of Wisconsin’s Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems.

Homegrown Lunch (Madison, Wisconsin).


Local Lunch Resources
Farm to School

The following is a list of websites and online documents the Local Lunches team found helpful:

Farm to School Examples

Community Alliance with Family Farms
www.caff.org

Connecticut State
www.ct.gov/doag/cwp/view.asp?a=2225&q=299424

Fresno Metro Ministry
www.fresnometmin.org/cvf2s/index.html

GROWN Locally
www.grownlocally.com

Selling to Institutions: An Iowa Farmer’s Guide
www.iowafoodpolicy.org/ifcpublications.htm

Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch
www.reapfoodgroup.org/farmtoschool

Washington State Department of Agriculture
www.agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/

Farm to School Inforamtion & Guidance

Bringing Small Farms and Schools Together
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/

Center for Ecoliteracy—Rethinking School Lunch
www.ecoliteracy.org

Center for Food & Justice
http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/

Farm to School: “Eat Smart—Farm Fresh”
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/

Food Routes: Educational Materials for Fresh, Local, Seasonal andRegional
www.foodroutes.org

From Farm to School: Improving Small Farm Viability and School Meals
www.cfap.org/afs_temp3cfm?topicID-245

Leopold Center
www.leopold.iastate.edu

Local Food Connections: From Farms to Schools
www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1853A.pdf
Appendix A
Expanded Farm to School Examples

Washington Department of Agriculture’s Small Farms and Direct Marketing Project

Washington’s Small Farms and Direct Marketing Project began with an internship opportunity that allowed Kelli Sanger to explore new markets for farmers. After Sanger’s initial research, the department applied for a Risk Management grant from the USDA and the project began in 2001. Today, Washington’s general fund supports the project.

The Small Farms and Direct Marketing Project has held forums, published a resource guide for farmers, and conducted farmer surveys. Their program seeks to help farmers make connections to sell their products. The program is now part of a larger program focused on connecting small farms to restaurants, institutions, and other retail locations.

Farmers and schools in Washington State have started to work together. Due to the popularity of school gardens and tight school budgets, food service directors want more variety, but they find it hard to work directly with farmers.

Sanger says that the ability to get a unified message across the table is crucial. She has been in this position for four years and has successfully spread the word about direct marketing opportunities for farmers. Now, Sanger reports that people come to her for information, and she has been flexible enough to get into the buyers’ and sellers’ worlds. Most importantly, Sanger reports that Washington’s program has excelled in building capacity among advocates. Involving all sides of the community, including farmers and food service directors, is critical for a community to find a local instigator.

A major obstacle has been that that the Department of Education and School Food has not been able to participate. Time and funding concerns have overloaded both the Education and Agriculture departments. The state has not used the DOD funds because they require the Department of Education’s cooperation.

Sanger suggests that agencies with a stake in child nutrition need to collaborate in order to make change happen. To make connections with suppliers, interested parties should go to the industry fairs and highlight the benefits and obstacles and spread the word about how successful other programs have been.

Olympia School District

The Olympia School District in Washington established its Farm to School program, which includes serving organic and local produce in a salad bar at each school, in response to several things. The school district was concerned about the growing trend of child obesity and lack of proper nutrition and fitness among children. Because the federal government had increased the reimbursement rate for school lunches, which increased the budget available for the school to fund local and organic food choices, the school board was able to look at the menu to identify ways for improvement.

At the same time a group of parents and teachers at Lincoln Elementary called for more nutritious offerings, including organic food, at their school. Washington’s Department of Agriculture had sent out information about Farm to School programs that identified steps for implementation and the district chose to start with a pilot program at Lincoln Elementary, where it added a salad bar with organic choices. Fifty percent of the items on the salad bar were organic. The media publicized the organic choice salad bar and other schools learned that Lincoln had this option. Today, all eighteen schools offer the Organic Choice salad bar.

The district started by purchasing from one farmer but now purchases...
from seven farmers that supply all eighteen schools. The farmers have organized around the program. In seven to ten years, the farmers may be able to supply all of the volume the district needs. The district found that most farmers already had established markets of CSAs, co-ops, and farmer’s markets and were easily able to incorporate the school district into their distribution system. The district has a central kitchen and receives its orders once a week.

The school district found that it had to give the farmers advance notice to get produce out of the ground in time for delivery; when the district worked with distributors it could order potatoes one afternoon and get 1,000 pounds the next morning. The district needs to refine its system in order to work directly with the farmers. In response the farmers have started planting specific crops that look better and taste better according to student standards. One farmer the school worked with switched from bitter greens to leafier greens that are more appealing to the children.

The food service director at the district, Paul Flock, strongly supports buying local food. He saw that most of the revenue spent on lunches was leaving the region and state. By working on a local level with farmers, he believes school districts can have more productive price negotiations. One farmer approached Flock when gas prices began to rise with concern about the need to raise the price of his goods to reflect the change in gas. They worked out a price that was reasonable for both the farmer and the school district.

The district uses no outside funding for the program. It cut out dessert, eliminated its contract with Domino’s Pizza, and raised the price of lunch for students and faculty. It also shifted its resources. Right now, the district spends $100,000 on produce. Fifty percent of the school’s produce is organic and ten percent is local. Flock’s goal is to purchase fifty percent of its produce from local growers.

Every school district in Washington State gets some money from the Department of Defense (DOD) to purchase commodities. Olympia School District receives $125,000 from DOD. The district can use $25,000 of this amount for produce as long as the produce is U.S. grown.

The biggest obstacle the district has faced in implementing its program is the fear of the unknown. Once the farmers were on board, the district could purchase from them just like any other vendor. At first, the staff was reluctant to support the program because it required changes. Students complained when the school first introduced organic produce because it looks different than the conventional produce that was previously sold in schools, which led the staff to want to switch back. The district decided to wait and found out that it was just a matter of time until the kids got used to it and loved the food.

Flock worried about how to manage the costs associated with the new program. Organic greens cost $4.00 per pound while iceberg lettuce costs $0.99 per pound. He found that the more expensive food is worth the price because it offered more nutritional value.

Flock thought the program would create concerns about food safety, but their worries turned out to be irrelevant. The farmers were already addressing food safety issues in order to be able to sell their products in other markets. The district was also concerned about distribution, which turned out not to be problem because the farmers deliver to the school.

The district has had overwhelming support from its community. The key to this support was to start the program by having one school with very involved people and then expand the program to other schools. Within one year of when the program started, all elementary schools in the district had the Organic Choice salad bar. Within two years, all secondary schools offered the salad bar. All eighteen schools in the district offer the salad bar today.
GROWN Locally Farmer’s Cooperative

GROWN (Goods Raised Only with Nature) Locally is a cooperative of about 16 members and a CSA located among farming communities in the northeastern corner of Iowa. Its mission is to “foster the diversification and success of farms by supplying fresh, local, naturally-grown food products to the food service industry.” GROWN Locally members believe in feeding their communities; the farmers directly serve families and institutions, benefiting both. Michael Nash, a farmer who organized the cooperative, believes that for institutional selling to work, farmers must be confident in their product and food service directors must genuinely want to provide good food. Farm to School programs, Nash points out, are institutional selling arrangements from the farmer’s perspective. If a farmer can sell to a school, he or she can sell to nursing homes, restaurants, churches, hospitals, and other kinds of institutions. Nash believes that the only way for farmers to understand how to work with institutions is to talk to them to find out how they like to order, how they want the product delivered, when they want it, and how often they want it. GROWN Locally operates like a distributor. Nash believes they have created a replicable model. GROWN Locally began in 1998 out of concerns among a group of local farmers about the food system. These farmers were concerned about statistics showing the following:

- The average food item in the U.S. travels 1,300 miles before someone eats it;
- Only 3 percent of the farms in the U.S. supply 75 percent of the nation’s food; and
- Farmers located in the San Joaquin Valley in California produce 90 percent of all fresh vegetables consumed in the U.S.

Organizing the cooperative was simple. Nash just asked fellow farmers if they were interested in combining resources and entering institutional markets. The farmers who met in Nash’s barn wanted to diversify their markets. Some of the farmers had never grown vegetables before. Instead, they had been strictly commodity farmers growing corn and soybeans for export. When they looked for an alternative to commodity farming, they could not find any models. They found that state and federal agencies were more interested in commodity farming and exports rather than changing agricultural practices.

When GROWN Locally talked with food service directors, the directors expressed a desire to serve memorable food. An example would be potato salad, which food service directors need cubed potatoes to make. GROWN Locally won a USDA grant that supported the production of specialty products, and they used this grant to create value-added products. Now, the cooperative has a processing facility. For the first year, the cooperative has operated the facility twice a week, allowing them to deliver the cut potatoes the next day. The cooperative would like to start freezing produce, also. The potato salad has been a hit with the fresher potatoes, which is important to nursing homes and hospitals that compete based on service.

Nash points out that cooperative farming appeals to farmers who want an alternative. New growers join the cooperative because GROWN Locally offers a support system. Converting production methods to meet institutions’ needs requires investments, and the cooperative helps with this transition. To supply value-added produce, the farmers must wash, pack, and transport the food in a refrigerated truck. The farmers in the cooperative have pooled their resources to meet these needs. They also learned they needed to try to grow more in the fall and spring.

GROWN Locally received a USDA SARE (Sustainable Agriculture...
Research and Education) producer grant to explore options that assist their customers with ordering. With the grant, they created a website where institutional customers can order. The same website allows families to sign up for CSA shares. The website now allows families to order various amounts of specific produce. Thirty-five to 40 percent of GROWN Locally’s sales to families are custom orders. The cooperative anticipates serving 250 families this year. The cooperative is not yet profitable, and most farmers have an outside job.

**Homegrown Lunch, Madison, Wisconsin**

The goals of Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch are to enhance Madison public schools’ meal programs by introducing fresh, nutritious, local and sustainably grown food to children, beginning in the city’s elementary schools. The program provides an opportunity for children to reconnect with their natural world while helping to establish a new market for local farmers and processors. Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch is a joint project of the REAP Food Group, a farm advocacy organization, in collaboration with Madison educators, school food service staff, and local food producers.

The program is in its fourth year and focuses on the Madison School District. Currently, three elementary schools are participating with plans to begin a pilot program at a secondary school. The program includes fresh food tasting, farm presentations and field trips. Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch originated as an effort of the REAP food group. Some of the REAP members were parents with children in the Madison School District who wanted school lunches to be supplied by local produce. They started with pilot meals but at first found it difficult to change the school lunch. They have been more successful with the educational aspects of the program, such as teaching children about the benefits of local food.

Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch took advantage of many different ways to connect with local farms, but this also has been one of the biggest challenges of the program. The University of Wisconsin’s Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, which focuses on sustainable food practices and agriculture, is a partner in the program. Through their farm-to-college program they had developed relationships with farmers that Homegrown Lunch was able to tap into. Trips to local natural food stores and co-op’s also have proven to be a useful way to identify willing farmers, and they have been lucky to connect with CSAs and other farms that are not interested in wholesaling.

The Madison School District utilizes a central kitchen to supply all 47 schools. At first, finding a certified kitchen to process food was a challenge and a necessity. Since the district does not have many processing capabilities in the central kitchen, they have collaborated with a local natural food store to use their processing facilities.

The schools involved in this program have been able to use existing funding sources. They have been able to establish buying policies and request unique products, and change the way they evaluate proposals to include criteria like whether the farmer can come and provide an educational program, such as a harvest time event. Over half of the criteria still focus on price, but asking for educational opportunities has created opportunities for the school to integrate local foods. This type of policy is driven by the school district unless state policies exist. The district also has been able to use DOD Fresh dollars. Some schools have moved a portion of their federal dollars into the program to purchase from certified local farms.

A Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant from USDA, which has been administered by the University of Wisconsin, fund the program and staff position at the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems.
Grower’s Collaborative, Davis, California

As a farmer-run organization, The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), a membership based, non-profit organization headquartered in Davis, California, focuses on creating distribution networks that school nutrition directors can use to purchase their produce from local farms conveniently and within budget. The alliance aims to make the purchase of more fruits and vegetables a sustainable economic choice for financially strapped school districts. CAFF organized farmers into Grower’s Collaborative, a non-profit, which has recently become an LLC and will soon carry needed liability insurance of $2 million.

CAFF’s Farm to School program, which started in Davis Unified School District, works with school nutrition directors to build purchasing schedules that take advantage of seasonal shifts in produce. It also builds not-for-profit distribution centers specifically to supply local schools by finding cost-effective ways to bring fresh food into the cafeteria with minimal processing and minimal transport. The program has partnered with other organizations that have similar infrastructure needs, such as food banks and community gardens, to share storage space and cut overhead costs. CAFF contracts out their processing needs to local processors, which are plentiful in California. It was more cost-effective for the program to outsource the processing than to try to gain the infrastructure and expertise needed.

The main objectives of CAFF’s Farm to School program are:

- Increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables for low-income school districts (typically above 65% of students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals),
- Reduce the ‘food miles’ of food served in California cafeterias by using locally-grown food, and
- Serve a wider variety and greater quantity of fresh fruits and vegetables in California cafeterias.

Most of the districts in which this program operates have marginalized, low-income students and a disproportionately high percentage of minority students. However, CAFF will serve any and all schools that are ready to get more fruits and vegetables into their cafeterias.

CAFF has received a USDA Value-added grant, from the royal development program. Anya Fernald, CAFF organizer, feels they have been able to get these grants because they are an advocacy group with a 26 year history of representing small farmers. The value added grant allows funding for business planning efforts for one year up to $100k, and for implementation and capital costs for one year up to $100k, all requiring matching funds from outside sources. They have also applied for USDA SARE grant funding. Growers Collaborative is now self-sustaining and connects approximately 40 farms with 40 school districts. Outside funding sources have come from California Food and Fiber Futures, California Nutrition Network, Orfalea Family Foundation, and Ventura County Farm Bureau, to name a few.

CAFF found that distribution networks were the missing piece and have operated as a distributor, forming Growers Collaborative, LLC, a separate entity that will carry liability insurance to cover participating farmers. They are expanding their model to Sacramento and Santa Cruz and have a commitment from Bon Appetite, another distributor, to purchase a minimum of 20% of their produce from Grower’s Collaborative, which will help provide a dependable revenue stream.

CAFF’s approach to school nutrition directors has been for incremental change, by first suggesting replacing produce on salad bars. They have been successful by not trying to revolutionize school lunch but trying approaches that require minimal intervention from schools that works within their budgets.
Bend-LaPine School District

Bend schools have integrated local produce into school meals and are starting to put local range beef and lamb into the meals. The programs mesh with the schools’ gardening and recycling programs and with the school’s desire to confront the crisis in child nutrition.

The program started in the summer of 2005 with the summer lunch program, which fed about 3,000 students. Bend now supplies up to 15,000 meals a day during the school year. At best, the local produce can only supplement, not supply their entire demand. While it started with adding local food in the summer, they now have local veggies through the end of December and local fruit through the middle of February. Farmer Jeff Rosenblad of Happy Harvest Farms indicated that by the 2006-07 school year he would be able to supply food to the school district year round. He has invested heavily in infrastructure that will make this possible.

Katrina Wiest, the Wellness Specialist for the school district, already had connections with farmers through her position as manager of the Bend farmers market. Using her wholesale produce list, she went to the farmer’s market vendors and asked if they could beat the wholesale prices. In many cases, they were able to and she began planning her menu according to what was available. Delivery was scheduled for the same days as the farmers market, allowing the farmers to make one trip.

While Bend School District uses DOD dollars coupled with existing funds, the small number of vendors able to take DOD funds has challenged the district. The district spent about $100,000 on produce last year; DOD supported about 35% of that purchase. Often, schools can buy local food at a per unit price rather than per pound, increasing the amount of food the school has to use. This is particularly true if the local product is of very high quality and is large.

Connecticut

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture works with 41 school districts, 5 schools, 39 farmers, and 6 wholesalers. The department has helped schools integrate locally-grown produce into school meals and has plans to expand into local meats, eggs, and dairy products. The department works collaboratively with Connecticut’s Departments of Public Health, Education, and Environmental Protection. In addition to this multi-agency support, the program has the full support of the state legislature.

Rick Macsuga, from the Department of Agriculture, believes that buying local is important because it keeps money in the local economy. Macsuga believes the department is helping farmers that might not be able to survive without this new market. The program allows farmers the opportunity to connect with new customers. It has also developed the CT Grown logo found on price cards in the lunch line.

Wholesalers have started to seek out Farm to School programs they can participate in by contacting the Department of Agriculture. The department has been able to create distribution networks with these wholesalers. School food service directors have also approached the Department of Agriculture because it has reached out with information about Farm to School programs. The department brings together school nutrition directors and farmers to help create networks for new markets. For example, the department has sponsored events that bring the food service directors out to the farm to feed them lunch on site while teaching them about how the farm runs.

Macsuga notes that all school systems are different and that one plan will not work for all schools. He recommends that states seeking to launch efforts should try to be conscious of the needs of wholesalers and food
service directors. Ultimately, if a nutrition services department wants to implement a Farm to School program, it will be able to. In Connecticut, the program’s wholesalers started to request more farmers to work with, building the program’s capacity.

Connecticut's biggest challenge has been how schools purchase products. Macsuga indicates that the programs work because schools can buy direct from farms and farmers get a better price for their product. The product is cheaper and higher quality. On the other hand, the program has been limited in what items the schools can purchase. For example, very few local farmers grow carrots because they can’t compete with farmers on the west coast and in Canada.

While some schools are able to use DOD funds, they do not work well in Connecticut, due to it being a small agricultural state, and this program does not use them. Instead, funding comes from the state’s general fund through the Community Reinvestment Act 228. Also, the state won a Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) grant from USDA that has helped fund the program.
Appendix B
Oregon Law Regarding Procurement

Oregon law establishes three tiers of procurement procedures, although local school districts may have stricter requirements than the state.

Under Oregon law:

- School districts may use small purchase procurement methods when total annual purchases from a single company are under $5,000.
- School districts may use an intermediate procurement method for purchases between $5,000 and $150,000. For the intermediate procurement method, school districts must request three informal price quotes or RFPs and select the proposal that “best serves the interests of the contracting agency.”
- For purchases over $75,000, the proposals must be written rather than verbal. For purchases over $150,000, districts must use formal competitive bidding or RFP procedures.

School districts may not intentionally divide purchases in order to comply with these thresholds.

Procurement rules prohibit school districts from using in-state or local geographic preferences, failing to adequately advertise or solicit prices, or allowing conflicts of interests to occur. These requirements mean that school districts must follow rules to purchase local produce, but they also create opportunities for schools to purchase local food from farmers and from their normal food distributors. For example, the small purchase procurement method allows school districts flexibility when they make very small food purchases, and the RFP method allows school districts to consider quality in addition to price when they purchase food.
We have identified several major funding sources for various stakeholders interested in establishing Local Lunches program.

**Federal Grants:**

**USDA Risk Management Grant: Value-added Program**

*Brief description of program:* The Rural Business-Cooperative Service of the USDA offers grants to help independent producers access infrastructure needed for value-added activities. Farmers have used these grants to create food-service-ready produce for schools. Applicants must provide matching funds at least equal to the grant amount.

*Who can apply:* The grant is available to independent producers, producer owned corporations or partnerships, and cooperatives.

*What types of projects have been funded:* Grants may be used for planning activities and for working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products and for farm-based renewable energy. The aforementioned groups can use these grants for business planning and implementation, such as paying for the legal expenses needed to organize a corporation, but cannot use grants to purchase equipment.

*When can you apply:* Annually

*Ranges of grants:* up to $300,000


**USDA Community Foods Project Competitive Grants Program**

*Brief description of the program:* The Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program provides the major funding source for community-based food and agriculture projects in the U.S. Approximately $5 million in funds will be available in 2006.

*Who can apply:* These grants are intended to help eligible private nonprofit entities that need a one-time infusion of federal assistance to establish and carry out multipurpose community food projects.

*What types of projects have been funded:* Projects that help meet the food needs of low-income people; increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues.

*When can you apply:* Annually

*Ranges of Grants:* Projects are funded from $10,000-$300,000 and from 1 to 3 years.

(*Contact information:* [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/food/in_focus/hunger_if_competitive.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/food/in_focus/hunger_if_competitive.html)

**USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Grant**

*Brief descriptions:* SARE is a USDA competitive grants program supporting agricultural projects that increase knowledge about practices that are profitable, environmentally sound, and good for people and communities.
They offer grants for professional development, producers, on-farm research and research and education. Graduate students, community development practitioners, and agricultural educators conducting on-site research at farms can apply for grants in some SARE regions.

**Who can apply:** USDA awards grants to researchers, agricultural educators, farmers, ranchers, and students in the United States. What types of projects have been funded: Research and education grants fund projects that usually involve scientists, producers, and others in an interdisciplinary approach. Professional Development Grants spread the knowledge about sustainable concepts and practices; these projects educate Cooperative Extension Service staff and other agricultural professionals. Producer grants typically run between and support producer research, marketing and demonstration projects that share the results with other farmers and ranchers.

**When can you apply:** Various annual deadlines depending on specific grant.

**Ranges of grants:** Professional Development Grants $1,000 and $15,000 Research and Education Grants usually range from $30,000 to $150,000

**Contact Information:** [http://www.sare.org/grants/index.htm](http://www.sare.org/grants/index.htm)

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**USDA Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)**

**Brief description:** The Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) provides matching funds to State Departments of Agriculture and other appropriate State agencies to assist in exploring new market opportunities for food and agricultural products, and to encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the marketing system.

**Who can apply:** State Departments of Agriculture and other appropriate State agencies.

**What types of projects have been funded:** Proposals may deal with barriers, challenges or opportunities manifesting at any stage of the marketing chain including direct, wholesale, and retail. Proposals may involve small, medium or large-scale agricultural entities but should potentially benefit multiple producers or agribusinesses. Proprietary proposals that benefit one business or individual will not be considered.

**When can you apply:** Annually

**Ranges of grants:** Average grant is $50,000

**Contact Information:** [http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/fs mip.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/fs mip.htm)

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**National Institute of Health, School-based Interventions to Prevent Obesity**

**Brief description:** This grant program encourages academic institutions and school systems to partner together to develop and implement controlled, school-based intervention strategies designed to reduce the prevalence of obesity in childhood. This initiative also encourages grantees to evaluate the effectiveness of their approach.

**Who can apply:** For profit organizations other than small businesses; State governments; Private institutions of higher education; County
governments; Public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities; Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education; City or township governments; Independent school districts; Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education; Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized); Small businesses; Public and State controlled institutions of higher education; Special district governments; and Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)

**What types of projects have been funded:** (1) Curriculum changes designed to improve knowledge of healthy food choices and active lifestyles, and behavioral modification programs designed to attain healthy diets and active lifestyles. Specifically, this initiative encourages academic institutions and school systems to work together to develop and implement behavioral interventions designed to increase children's physical activity and/or decrease the amount of time that children devote to sedentary activities, such as watching television or playing computer games. Such interventions might involve curriculum changes coupled with periods of increased physical activity, before, during or after school. Interventions also might be designed to induce and maintain long-term behavioral change regarding eating habits, food choices, exercise habits, and lifestyle. (2) Evaluations of various controlled dietary interventions would also be responsive to this program announcement, for example, changes in school food service programs for school breakfast and/or school lunch. Intervention programs designed for parents who prepare their children's lunches would also be responsive.

**When can you apply:** Multiple recipient dates.

**Ranges of grants:** Applications requesting up to $250,000 per year in direct costs must be submitted in a modular grant format. The modular grant format simplifies the preparation of the budget in these applications by limiting the level of budgetary detail. Applicants request direct costs in $25,000 modules.


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**The Office of Community Services (OCS) within the Administration for Children and Families housed in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Community Services Block Grant Discretionary Awards—Community Food and Nutrition**

**Brief description:** To provide for community-based, local, statewide and national programs which: (1) Coordinate existing private and public food assistance resources to better serve low-income populations, whenever such coordination is determined to be inadequate; (2) assist low-income communities to identify potential sponsors of child nutrition programs and initiate new programs in underserved or unserved areas; and (3) develop innovative approaches at the State and local level to meet the nutritional needs of low-income individuals.

HHS provides this funding under the Discretionary Grants for the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP). HHS released the last grant in April 2004, although the department set the last deadline for June 2004. CFNP's main objective is to link low-income people to food and nutrition programs. The OCS views CFNP as a capacity-building program rather than a food delivery program.

**Who can apply:** (1) Formula Grants: Formula grants are awarded to
Community Services Block Grant recipients in each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

(2) Direct Grants: The Secretary of Health and Human Services is authorized to make direct grants to State and local public and private nonprofit agencies with a demonstrated ability to successfully develop and implement nutrition-related program activities.

**What types of projects have been funded:** (1) States receive Community Food and Nutrition funds for Statewide Community Food and Nutrition initiatives, which must be sub-granted to eligible agencies. (2) Federal funds are competitively-awarded to eligible agencies for statewide and local program activities which address one or more of the above objectives and also include outreach and public education efforts designed to inform low-income individuals and displaced workers of the nutrition services available to them under the various federally-assisted nutrition programs. Of the amounts appropriated, 60 percent is for allotment by statutory formula to eligible agencies for statewide programs, and 40 percent is available for competitive awards to eligible agencies for local and statewide programs. (3) Projects must result in direct benefits targeted toward low-income individuals as defined in the most recent “Annual Update of Poverty Income Guidelines,” published in the Federal Register. (4) Projects are normally funded for 1 year and each project will have an expiration date; however, at the Director’s discretion, competitively awarded grants may support projects for shorter or longer periods, i.e., up to 17 months. (5) States may not use their formula grant supplement for State-level administrative costs.

**When can you apply:** (1) Formula Grants: None is applicable for formula grants. Grants are awarded anytime during the fiscal year in which the recipient submits his or her application. (2) Direct Grants: Applications must be submitted within the time frame published in the Program Announcement.

**Ranges of grants:** (1) Formula Grants: $715 to $363,440; $182,078; (2) Direct Grants: $50,000.

**Contact Information:** [http://www.federalgrantswire.com/community_services_block_grant_discretionary_awards/community_food_and_nutrition.html](http://www.federalgrantswire.com/community_services_block_grant_discretionary_awards/community_food_and_nutrition.html)

**Private Foundations:**

**W.K. Kellogg Foundation**

**Brief description:** The Food Systems and Rural Development program at the Kellogg Foundation fills a programming niche identified by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s 2005 Annual Report and a few other major foundations. Rural development grants support comprehensive, collaborative, and integrative efforts of people, organizations, and institutions. Together, these grants seek to create social and economic opportunities that lead to healthy rural communities and improvements in the lives of rural residents.

**Who can apply:** Any 501 (c) 3 or 509 (a) organization

**What types of projects have been funded:** Food system grants focus on catalyzing efforts that lead to a safe, wholesome food supply for this and future generations while ensuring that food production and food-related business systems are economically viable, environmentally sensitive, sustainable for the long-term, and socially responsible. Rural development grants support comprehensive, collaborative, and integrative efforts of people, organizations, and institutions. Together, these grants seek to create social and economic opportunities that lead to healthy rural communities and improvements in the lives of rural residents.
**When can you apply:** Ongoing deadline

**Ranges of grants:** They have not established (nor do they track) maximum or minimum dollar amounts, but rather look at the amount needed for each specific project based on scope of work and expected outcomes.

**Contact Information:** [http://www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?LanguageID=0](http://www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?LanguageID=0)