

Locate and purchase local foods

The task of identifying local producers who can meet your needs may be challenging. Assistance with this task and other outreach may be available by contacting organizations listed in the “Additional Resources” section at the end of the toolkit. The following steps can simplify the process of finding and purchasing local product:

- 1) Identify potential product sources
- 2) Invite potential vendors to submit bids
- 3) Review information
- 4) Meet with vendor(s) to negotiate details



Madison student enjoys a snack from a local farm

Identify potential product sources

Each of the following product sources—school gardens, local producers, producer groups and distributors—is considered an ‘approved source’ for school meal programs. As discussed in the previous section, state regulations and food safety concerns need to be addressed with any potential vendor.

Also, keep in mind that schools can source and buy local foods together. This practice is called cooperative purchasing. This can create ordering efficiencies and potentially lower costs through increased buying power. See page 18 under the Incorporate Local Foods section for Wood County’s success story with their Harvest of the Month collaboration.

Local producers—While there is no one-stop shop where you can identify all the producers in your area, there is a range of resources and strategies you or someone else can use to create a list of potential vendors. This task offers an opportunity to bring in a volunteer, request assistance from your local University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension agent, or seek help from others familiar with local food in your area.

Here are some possible ways to locate farms and producer groups in your area:

Farmers’ markets and Community Supported Agriculture farms are great places to identify and directly contact potential vendors. Most markets have a manager who can help you identify growers selling the product you’re looking for. Information about farmers’ markets and CSA farms can be found at www.wifarmersmarkets.org and www.csacoalition.org.

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Farm Fresh Atlases provide listings of Wisconsin producers and farmers' markets by region. These are available in print as well as online, free of charge: www.farmfreshatlas.org.

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension has offices in each county that can help you locate producers in your area and possibly even provide you with a list. Contacts for your county can be found at www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/.

Local Harvest provides a searchable map identifying farms and markets in your area: www.localharvest.org.

The Institutional Food Market Coalition provides local food purchasing information for institutions, including schools, and provides listings of Wisconsin producers: www.ifmwi.org.

Food hubs, farmer cooperatives and produce auctions—These entities aggregate local product from small- and medium-sized producers in order to provide growers with access to larger scale markets such as food service operations. The USDA's working list of food hubs lists local food aggregators in Wisconsin and other states: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/foodhubs>.

Distributors—Many food distributors are increasing their Wisconsin-grown offerings, so ask your distributor what they have available. Let your distributor know the types of local products you would like to purchase from them in the future. When purchasing local foods through a distributor, remember to request information such as specific farm names and locations so you can promote the local farms along with the local food you serve.

Department of Defense Fresh Program (DoD Fresh)—All schools participating in the National School Lunch Program are eligible to order fresh produce through the federally operated DoD Fresh Program. This is an economical option for schools to utilize federal entitlement dollars to increase fresh produce



Ratatouille at Mt. Horeb school kitchen

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in their meal programs. The DoD Fresh Program is supportive of farm to school efforts and strives to provide locally and regionally grown products. For details of how to participate, along with ordering procedures and timelines, go to <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/usda/dod-fresh>. The **USDA fact sheet using DOD Fresh to purchase local produce** provides more information on how this program supports local purchasing.



USDA fact sheet: using DoD Fresh to purchase local produce

School Gardens—Food grown in a school garden or through a school’s agriculture education program can be donated and/or sold to the school nutrition program. If food is sold to the school nutrition program, it must be priced competitively. The **USDA school garden Q&A memo** addresses many common questions regarding the use of food from school gardens and how school nutrition programs can support school gardens.



USDA school garden Q & A memo

How much to buy?

Once you’ve decided which foods to purchase, you need to determine the volume required. You may know this already or have the information in your recipe. If not, the **servings to pounds calculator** created by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Farm to School Program can help you determine how much food to purchase. This calculator takes waste into account and determines your price per serving based on the cost of the food. The **USDA food buying guide for child nutrition programs** provides pounds to servings conversions for raw and cooked produce. The **pecks to pounds** tool from the Maryland Department of Agriculture converts commonly used farm measurements—such as bushels and crates—into approximate net weight for a variety of fruits and vegetables.



Heirloom tomato tasting

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Servings to pounds calculator



Food buying guide for child nutrition programs



Pecks to pounds

The procurement process

The procurement process is a set of procedures for purchasing goods or services. This process usually involves multiple steps to identify a needed product or service, draft specifications and a solicitation document, solicit pricing, and buy, receive and pay for the product. Depending on the method, procurement can require a few simple steps or many complex steps. Regardless, procurement processes are intended to ensure that open and fair competition is maintained throughout all business transactions.

Schools use either an *informal* or a *formal* procurement method when purchasing food from vendors. The informal procurement method may be used if the cost of the food falls under the small purchase threshold. This threshold for Wisconsin schools using USDA funds is \$150,000, although some school districts may set a lower threshold. The formal procurement method is required for any purchase with an estimated value equal to or greater than the small purchase threshold.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction provides an overview and **comparison of different procurement methods**. The majority of local food procurement by Wisconsin schools, purchases under \$150,000, fall under the category of Small Purchases and Micro-Purchases. Both of these processes can be straightforward and easy to track.

Once an informal or formal procurement method is selected, a required set of steps is followed to purchase the product. In order to ensure that open competition is maintained, federal and state regulations stress the need to obtain at least three quotes from different vendors before awarding the sale. In all procurement scenarios, remember the phrase “three bids and a buy,” meaning you must receive and document at least three quotes, either formal or informal. The **informal procurement method checklist**, included in the **three bids and a buy** tool, helps ensure all required steps are addressed.

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Tool

Comparison of procurement methods



Tool

Informal procurement method: three bids and a buy

Use the **solicitation tracking document** to communicate product specifications and explain the bid submission process.



Tool

Solicitation tracking document

Whether soliciting formal or informal bids, the following tools can help. Use the **sample vendor letter** to outline what you're looking for and explain the bid submission process. Use the **farm business questionnaire** to collect information from growers such as food safety procedures, ordering and delivery logistics and other details you will need. Growers can also be asked to communicate their products and prices on the **product availability and pricing form**.



Tool

Sample vendor letter



Tool

Farm business questionnaire



Tool

Product availability and pricing form

For more information on a formal bidding process for purchases over \$150,000, see the **Sealed Bid** and **Competitive Proposal** sections of the DPI Procurement Method website at <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/procurement/methods>.



New Richmond student tries new foods

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Geographic preference in procurement by schools

A process known as geographic preference was established in the 2008 Farm Bill through an amendment to the National School Lunch Act. Institutions receiving funds through the Child Nutrition Programs may apply a geographic preference when procuring unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products. Geographic preference is normally used with the formal procurement method or when a school is procuring the services of a prime vendor. For more information on how to apply geographic preference, go to <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/procurement/produce/geographic-preference>.

Meet with vendor(s) to negotiate details

When you have identified the vendor(s) with whom you would like to work, set up a meeting to negotiate details such as delivery schedule and invoicing. Use the **new vendor meeting checklist** to ensure you cover all important details.



New vendor meeting checklist

Clarify details such as packaging, price and delivery with vendors in writing. Use this **sample purchasing agreement** as a guide.



Sample purchasing agreement

Read the following success story on how Manitowoc County was able to develop strong relationships with local farmers for their farm to school program.



Wisconsin Farm to School Success Story: Ensuring Meaningful Participation in Farm to School

Fact Sheet: Using DoD Fresh to purchase local produce

The Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD Fresh) allows schools to use their [USDA Foods](#) entitlement dollars to buy fresh produce. The program, operated by DoD's [Defense Logistics Agency](#), began in school year (SY) 1994-1995 as a pilot in eight states. As of 2013, schools in 46 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam participate; schools are anticipated to receive more than \$100 million worth of produce through the program during SY 2012-2013.



What are the advantages of DoD Fresh?

- *Flexibility* – States can change DoD Fresh allocations on a monthly basis, which allows them to utilize USDA Foods entitlement dollars more effectively. USDA does not impose a cap on the amount of entitlement dollars or the amount of cash reimbursement funds that a state can allocate to DoD purchases.
- *Consistency* – DoD Fresh vendors update the catalog weekly, and depending on the state, schools can receive deliveries every week, making orders timely, fresh, and responsive to market fluctuations.
- *High quality* – DoD maintains high quality standards through Produce Quality Audits, encouraging vendors to follow Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP), and requiring that pre-cut and packaged produce is sourced from approved suppliers.
- *Variety* – DoD Fresh vendors offer as many as 50 different types of produce, available in multiple forms (whole, pre-cut, and a variety of pack sizes) and from multiple locales (local and non local items are routinely offered).
- *Easy ordering and funds tracking* – Schools place orders via the web-based [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Order/Receipt System](#) (FFAVORS). The prices listed in the FFAVORS catalog reflect the prices that schools will be billed for the product. FFAVORS tracks schools' entitlement fund balances and total order costs. DoD manages vendor payment and reconciliation.

Purchasing local foods through DoD Fresh

DoD vendors are encouraged to purchase local products, and about 15 to 20 percent of the produce DoD provides to schools is currently designated as local. Products are designated as local by the produce vendors and are marked with a local tag in the FFAVORS catalog. Currently, for most vendors, local denotes that the produce is sourced from within the state of service or adjacent states. In all cases, local or regionally sourced products must meet the quantity and quality requirements necessary for the contract and be priced competitively.

What should states and school districts do if they want to source local foods through DoD Fresh?



1. States and schools looking to purchase local foods through DoD Fresh should start by looking for products already marked as local in the FFAVORS catalog. States or schools can also contact their DoD Fresh produce vendor to find out which local products the vendor expects to carry throughout the year.
2. States or schools should determine what additional products they would like to buy locally and make those desires known to their DoD Fresh produce vendor.
3. Finally, states and schools should consider connecting their state departments of agriculture, or other farm to school contacts, with the DoD Fresh vendor in their area. These contacts may have suggestions for producers the vendor can source from, or may be able to provide information about what products schools want to see on their cafeteria trays.

How does it work?

The Defense Logistics Agency manages more than 45 contracts with produce vendors across the country who in turn contract with growers to supply their designated region. Approximately 85% of these produce vendors are small businesses. Each produce vendor lists its offerings using the online ordering system FFAVORS, where schools can view the catalog for the produce vendor in their area. DoD analyzes the product prices and the vendor updates the catalog on a weekly basis. In addition, most vendors send a weekly newsletter with product information.

Available Items:
(Items already in your shopping cart will not appear on this screen.)

Case Quantity	Item Code	Description	Case Contents	Case Price	Fund Source
<input type="text"/>	14P01	APPLE ANY TYPE USF/XF 100-113 1/40 LB CS *** LOCAL GROWN ***	40 LB	\$35.35	<input type="radio"/> State <input type="radio"/> Snack <input checked="" type="radio"/> Fed
<input type="text"/>	18B41	CAULIFLOWER MULTI-COLOR 6-8 CT 8 LB CS	8 LB	\$19.38	<input type="radio"/> State <input type="radio"/> Snack <input checked="" type="radio"/> Fed
<input type="text"/>	15N95	ORANGE CARA PINK 80 CT 1/35 LB	35 LB	\$29.87	<input type="radio"/> State <input type="radio"/> Snack <input checked="" type="radio"/> Fed
<input type="text"/>	15P16	POTATOE SWT LOCAL 40LBCS (CO-OP) *** LOCAL GROWN ***	40 LB	\$14.96	<input type="radio"/> State <input type="radio"/> Snack <input checked="" type="radio"/> Fed
<input type="text"/>	14P23	STARFRUIT 20-30 CT 1/8 LB CS	8 LB	\$26.31	<input type="radio"/> State <input type="radio"/> Snack <input checked="" type="radio"/> Fed

This screen shot from the FFAVORS catalog shows how foods grown locally are identified.

How produce is ordered

In most states, individual schools place orders directly via the FFAVORS catalog for their area. In some states, districts place orders with input from each school. Minnesota, for example, uses both models: some districts enter orders on behalf of all schools in the district, while other districts have the individual recipient enter orders. In a few states, state administrators take into account student preferences and enter orders on behalf of schools.

How produce is delivered

In some states, such as Michigan and New Jersey, deliveries are made to central warehouses. In other states, like Florida and Virginia, deliveries are made directly to schools or districts. Some states use both models in different areas of the state. Massachusetts even has produce delivered to a central kitchen for distribution to Boston Public Schools. Delivery models affect the amount of time that DoD Fresh purchases take to reach schools.

How is the program funded?

Within the FFAVORS system, schools can choose from three funding sources:

- *USDA Foods Entitlement Dollars* – The 2008 Farm Bill required that at least \$50 million in commodity entitlement funds be used each year to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables for distribution to schools and service institutions through the DoD Fresh program. Since there is no cap, USDA accommodates all requests for additional entitlement allocations to DoD Fresh throughout the school year.
- *Cash Reimbursements* – School lunch operators have the authority to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables directly from DoD Fresh with both special and general assistance funds.
- *Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Funds* – The **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)** provides children in eligible elementary schools with the highest free and reduced price National School Lunch Program participation a variety of free fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the school day. Schools can use FFVP funds to order produce through the DoD Fresh program to serve in the FFVP. The FFAVORS catalog lists this fund source as “snack.”



Learn more

The Defense Logistics Agency website provides background information about DoD and links to each vendor’s contract.

<http://www.troopsupport.dla.mil/subs/produce/school/index.asp>

Patricia Scott; patricia.scott@dla.mil; 215-737-3601

The Food and Nutrition Service website provides contact information for farm to school personnel in your area, and a helpful history of the DoD Fresh program.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/dod/default.htm>

Christina Conell; christina.conell@fns.usda.gov; 703-305-2743

For more information about the USDA Farm to School Program, and to sign up for our e-letter, please visit www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s. Questions? Email us at farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov.

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**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Food and
Nutrition
Service

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria, VA
22302-1500

MEMO CODE: SP 32-2009

DATE: July 29, 2009

SUBJECT: School Garden Q&As

TO: Regional Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

Recently, we have received several questions regarding the operation of a school garden. Attached are questions and answers to address this issue. As in the past, please share this information with your school food authorities.

Original Signed

CYNTHIA LONG
Director
Child Nutrition Programs

Enclosure

1. Q: Can the school food service use funds from the nonprofit school food service account to purchase seeds for a school garden?

A: Yes, with the understanding that the garden is used within the context of the program, i.e. selling the food or providing food in the classroom as part of an educational lesson.

2. Q: Can the school food service use funds from the nonprofit school food service account to purchase items for the school garden such as fertilizer, watering cans, rakes, etc.?

A: Yes, as long as the items are used for the purpose of starting and maintaining the garden.

3. Q: Can a school sell food grown in their school garden that was funded using the nonprofit school food service account?

A: Yes, as long as the revenue from the sale of the food accrues back to the nonprofit school food service account. Schools can serve the produce as part of a reimbursable meal or sell it a la carte, to parents, to PTA members, at a roadside stand, etc.

4. Q: Are there health/safety issues involved with school gardens?

A: Yes. SFAs need to familiarize themselves with the Federal, State, and local requirements regarding health and sanitation issues.

5. Q: Can the school food service purchase produce from another school organization that is maintaining and managing the garden, such as Future Farmers of America (FFA)?

A: Yes, the school food service may purchase produce from a garden run by a school organization such as FFA, which is an agricultural education program for students.

6. Q: Can funds received through the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program (FFVP) be used to purchase seeds/tools/equipment for a school garden?

A: No. FFVP funds may not be used for the purchase of any materials for school gardens.

7. Q: What if there is excess produce from the garden left over at the end of the school year?

A: The school should first see if the excess food can be used to benefit another program such as the SFSP. If that is not possible, they could try selling the food (as always, the profit must accrue back to the nonprofit school food service account) or donate it in accordance with State and local health/safety regulations.

PROCUREMENT TRACKING FORM

Here is an example of a tracking form to track solicitation documents sent out to vendors that requested or received it, submitted an offer, and track vendors that declined to respond to the solicitation.

School Name:				
Procurement Title/Number:				
Date solicitations document was issued:				
Date awarded contact will begin:				
Name of vendor:				
Address:				
Vendor Contact Person:				
Phone Number:				
Email:				
Date solicitation document was sent:				
Attended Pre-Bid Conference (Required?)(Yes/No):				
Due Date for Submission of Offers:				
Date offer was received:				
Date solicitation document was declined:				
Reason for Declination:				
Evaluation Results:				
Contract Awarded to:				
Date contract was awarded:				
Date offerors were sent notices of non-award and award:				
Additional Notes:				
Additional procurement and contract records are on file and available upon request. Recordkeeping requirements; Retention of all required records for three years after school makes final payments and all other pending matters are closed.				

Translation Chart

“Pecks to Pounds”

Commodity	Unit	Approximate Net Weight		
		U.S. Pounds	Metric Kilograms	
Apples	bushel	48	21.8	
	loose pack	38-42	17.2-19.1	
	tray pack	40-45	18.1-19.1	
	cell pack	37-41	16.8-18.6	
Asparagus	crate	30	13.6	
Beans	bushel	56-60	25.4-27.2	
Blackberries	12, 1/2-pint basket	6	2.7	
Broccoli	wirebound crate	20-25	9.1-11.3	
Brussel sprouts	ctn, loose pack	25	11.3	
Butter	block	55,68	25,30.9	
Cabbage	open mesh bag	50	22.7	
	flat crate (1 3/4 bu)	50-60	22.7-27.2	
	ctn, place pack	53	24	
Cantaloupes	crate	40	18.1	
Carrots	film plastic bags, mesh sacks, and cartons holding 48 1lb. film bags	55	24.9	
	Cauliflower	WGA crate	50-60	22.7-27.2
	Celery	crate	60	27.2
Cherries	lug	20	9.1	
Corn	wirebound crate	50	22.7	
	ctn, packed 5oz ears	50	22.7	
	Cucumbers	bushel	48	21.8
Eggplant	bushel	33	15	
Eggs	average size, case, 30 doz.	47	21.3	
Garlic	ctn of 12 cubes or 12 film bag pkgs, 12 cloves each	10	4.5	
	Grapes	Eastern, 12-qt basket	20	9.1
		Western, lug	28	12.7
	Western, 4-basket crate	20	9.1	
Honey	gallon	11.84	5.4	
Honeydew melons	2/3 ctn	28-32	12.7-14.5	
Kale	ctn or crate	25	11.3	
Lettuce	carton packed, 24	43-52	19.5-23.6	
Lettuce, greenhouse	24-qt basket	10	4.5	
Milk	gallon	8.6	3.9	
Onions	dry, sack	50	22.7	
	green, bunched, ctn 12-doz.	10-16	4.5-7.3	

Translation Chart, Cont. “Pecks to Pounds”

Commodity	Unit	Approximate Net Weight	
		U.S. Pounds	Metric Kilograms
Peaches	bushel	48	21.8
	2 layer ctn or lug	22	10
	3/4-bu, ctn crate	38	17.2
Pears	bushel	50	22.7
Peas	unshelled, bushel	28-30	12.7-13.6
Peppers	bushel	25-30	11.3-13.6
Plums	ctn or lug	28	12.7
	1/2-bu basket	30	13.6
Potatoes	bushel	60	27.2
	barrel	165	74.8
	box	50	22.7
Raspberries	1/2-pt baskets	6	2.7
Spinach	bushel	18-20	8.2-9.1
Strawberries	24-qt crate	36	16.3
	12-qt crate		
Sweet potatoes	bushel	55	24.9
	crate	50	22.7
Tomatoes	crate	60	22.7
	lug box	32	14.5
	2-layer flat	21	9.5
Tomatoes, greenhouse	12-qt basket	20	9.1
Turnips	without tops, mesh sack	50	22.7
	bunched, crate	70-80	31.8-36.3
Watermelons	melons of average or medium size	25	11.3

Buyer-Grower Meeting

January 29, 2009



Hosted by the Maryland Department of Agriculture
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401



Product Availability and Pricing

Farm/Business name:

Contact name:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Place order via (phone/fax/email):

Place an order by (date/day of week):

Item	Pack	Price	Comments
<i>Example 1: Spinach</i>	<i>10 lbs.</i>	<i>\$ 4.00 / lb.</i>	<i>leaf cut, washed</i>
<i>Example 2: Apples</i>	<i>120-135 ct.</i>	<i>\$ 28/case</i>	<i>mixed variety</i>
		\$	
		\$	
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		\$	
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		\$	
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		\$	



Wisconsin Farm to School – Linking the Land to the Lunchroom

New Vendor Meeting Checklist

BEFORE

- ✓ Complete the School Nutrition Director Survey and either provide to new vendor prior to the meeting or bring to the meeting.

DURING

- ✓ Review the producer and school nutrition director surveys together
- ✓ Discuss and negotiate the important details:
 - Estimated volume of product to be delivered
 - Ordering process (including best way to contact one another)
 - Delivery schedule including time of day, frequency, location
 - Packing requirements: Standard box, grade, loose pack, bulk, etc...
 - Post-harvest handling practices: Is the produce pre-cooled? How clean should the product be?
 - Cost per unit, payment terms, payment process
 - Names, phone numbers and emails of contact people for ordering and billing
- ✓ If they are willing and able, invite them to participate in a tasting event or attend lunch on a day when their product is being served.

AFTER

- ✓ Follow up with new vendors
 - Provide feedback on their product and service—both positive and negative
 - Directly address any issues regarding product or service
- ✓ Consider exploring ways to work together to promote new foods to students



Wisconsin Farm to School success stories

Manitowoc County: Ensuring meaningful farmer participation in farm to school



December, 2015

Farmer involvement is an essential component of comprehensive farm to school programs. Core farm to school concepts such as *local, fresh, healthy* and *community* come alive for students through interactions with the farmers who grow the food found on the cafeteria tray. The greater school community, from food service staff to administrators, can also better appreciate the abundance of reasons to support local agriculture after personally interacting with and learning from agricultural producers.

In their quest to build a sustainable farm to school program in Manitowoc County, Cath Pape and Patricia Sampe knew that growers needed a prominent seat at the table. Pape is the grant coordinator for the local coalition Healthiest Manitowoc County. Sampe is a public health nurse that has been working on farm to school initiatives for half a decade. Together, they recognized that direct local food procurement, producer visits to classrooms, farm field trips and Harvest of the Month activities are all rooted in rich relationships with local farmers. But building farmer-school connections isn't always easy. Pape and Sampe set out to identify challenges producers may face when working with schools. They prioritized two goals to help ensure a smooth and fruitful relationship between the two partners.

The first priority was to develop a common language between producers and school-based nutrition professionals, since each occupation faces unique operational constraints and employs a vocabulary specific to their field. The second major goal was to establish a diverse local market for producers so that farm to school activity would be supported by a high demand for local food in the community, making local sales a viable opportunity for area producers.

Focused on these goals, the farm to school team set out to unite producers with school partners. Pape and Sampe began the process of relationship building by coordinating a meet and greet event for Manitowoc County producers and food service staff. The Farm to School Mixer, which was supported by Transform Wisconsin grant funding, was held on a brisk evening in November, when farm work had slowed down and school food service had settled in to the routine of the school year. The event, which was attended by over 40 growers and food service staff, began with a formal introduction to farm to school. The evening was then opened up for informal conversation and networking, yielding at least one purchasing agreement: the Manitowoc Public School District contracted with Heritage Orchards for deliveries of 20 cases of apples a week, October through February, for over 5,100 students.

Once the Farm to School Mixer successfully established an entry point for producers in school food procurement, Pape's and Sampe's focus shifted to



... [We] planned a second meet and greet event “to build relationships within the schools—by connecting the schools with the producers and allowing it to be just between them.

– Cath Pape, Grant Coordinator, Healthiest Manitowoc County





The Manitowoc Farm to School Mixer, held at a local YMCA, brought farmers and food service staff together to foster partnerships for farm to school.

strengthening producer relationships with the rest of the school community. With encouragement from the farm to school team, teachers invited farmers to visit their classrooms to talk about the history and details of their farm operations. Producers hosted farm tours for students through class field trips. One farmer, Nancy Kellner of Kellner's Back Acre Garden, taught a full academic year's worth of Harvest of the Month lessons to students in the after school program at Manitowoc Public School's Jefferson Elementary. Through the support of Transform Wisconsin grant funding, Kellner was able provide products from her farm as the featured Harvest of the Month fruit or vegetable.

Just one year after holding the first meet and greet event for producers and food service directors, a number of robust producer-school relationships had formed. To involve even more local producers, as well as school administration and staff, Sampe and Pape planned a second meet and greet event. The purpose of this second mixer was "to build relationships within the schools—by connecting the schools with the producers and allowing it to be just between them. Relationship building is so key to making anything happen," says Pape. This gathering, known as the "CHEW," was held on another November evening and included an entirely locally sourced dinner. Many of the attending producers donated meat, vegetables and fruit for the meal and the Two Rivers Public Schools Food Service Director, Paula Erickson, prepared the supper with her staff.

Producers, food service staff and school district administrators were assigned to seats that mixed the professions. The Heritage Orchards and Manitowoc Public Schools apple procurement story was presented as a model for how simple it can be to purchase local produce. In addition, all of the producers at the event introduced themselves, their mission and history of their respective farms. At least two new procurement connections were formed as a direct result of CHEW.

Also stemming from CHEW was an effort to increase the community presence of local farmers through a Meet Your Local Farmer evening event designed to feature farmers and their products, not unlike a farmers' market. This event far exceeded all goals and expectations, with over 200 attendees and the 17 local vendors who attended reporting excellent sales. The producers, whose transportation costs to the event were covered by grant-funded fuel cards, were amazed at the community enthusiasm for local products. Growers immediately asked to make this a weekly or monthly event in the winter months. Pape remarks that "to be able to provide public relations for these farms has really been the key for producers to work with us," for it has provided an interconnected and robust local food market for farmers.

Farmers in Manitowoc County are now firmly seated at the farm to school table. Sales to local schools and producer-school activities now fill the space that was once occupied by communications barriers between farm and school partners. Furthermore, there is a strong community desire to reconnect with local food. Area businesses are showing a preference for purchasing meals from restaurants that locally source their produce, a local hospital welcomes a farmer to sell at a small on-site market for hospital employees, and an assisted living facility is looking for ways to involve their community in the local food movement. By increasing market opportunities for producers and fostering a strong appreciation for local agriculture, Manitowoc County is working hard to achieve a robust and resilient community food system that includes farm to school.