



# CONNECTING WITH SCHOOL BUYERS

DO YOU WANT TO SELL TO SCHOOLS? HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED MAKING CONNECTIONS AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR POTENTIAL BUYERS.

## STEP 01 IDENTIFY THE DECISION MAKERS

- Identify the buyer. Common titles for the person responsible for food purchasing include:

-  Nutrition or Food Services Director (FSD)
-  Head Cook or Cook

- Find contact information on a school's website or by calling the main number
- CDE SNU website: contains school food authority contact list: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/nutrition/school-nutrition-data> - look for lime green box "view school nutrition participating sponsors report"

## GROW AWARENESS

Potential barriers to purchasing local food:

- Uncertainty around the process
- Lack of refrigeration or storage
- Experience preparing fresh products

Make a list of questions to learn more about their program

Food Services Departments operate their own budgets apart from the school budgets. They have buying power and the ability to make decisions.

## BEST TIMES TO OUTREACH SCHOOLS

- Time of Year: Schools sometimes plan their menus a year in advance. Last minute opportunities to purchase products may be a welcome opportunity too
- Time of Week: Monday – Friday (Note: Many rural districts are closed on Fridays)
- Time of Day: Away from lunch and breakfast "service hours" when they are preparing and serving meals

## STEP 02 DO YOUR HOMEWORK

- Find their website
- Find the school menus
- Gather insights about their program and types of menu items
- Identify what they may already do that is worth celebrating
- Determine what you have or grow that they already utilize



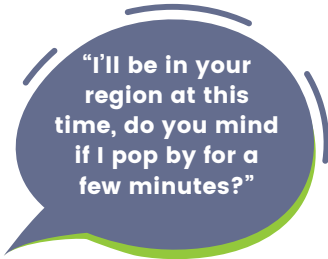
STEP

03

INITIATE THE CONVERSATION

You may only get five minutes!

- Initiate a conversation through email, phone call or even a text
- Consider how to get from the Secretary/Front Desk person to the FSD/Head Cook



- Once you connect, get to know your customer, their first name and something about them to begin building a connection



CONVERSATIONAL OPENERS

- "My kids attend your school."
- "Our farm/ranch is located [X] miles from the school."
- "We are a local food business and we sell tamales. I see you offer them on your menu."
- "Hello, I'm from [Your Farm/Ranch], and I'm curious if you are interested in purchasing local products if there is a way to make it easy for you?"
- "Hello, I noticed you use carrots in your lunch program. I have locally grown carrots. Would you be interested in learning more?"
- "Hello, I was wondering if I could come by and meet you to discuss whether purchasing from our farm/ranch would support your program goals?"
- "Hi, we are a food hub supporting our local producers and can deliver to you!"



TIPS FOR FIRST INTERACTIONS

Your first interaction is about:

1. Figuring out what they need
2. Finding out information that is more personal
3. Leaving the conversation with some homework
4. Coming back with some answers to their questions

Get them to think about their "dream space." Consider asking- "what are 3 items you haven't been able to purchase and would like to get?"



STEP CLOSING THE CONVERSATION

04 AND FOLLOW UP

- Express appreciation for their time at the beginning and end of the conversation
- If there seems to be a mutually beneficial opportunity, ask to schedule a meeting
- Send a follow-up email to confirm next steps
- Refer back to Getting Started with Farm to School for next steps:
  - Farmer / Rancher / Food Hub