



FARMER/PRODUCER GUIDE

for finding school buyers

Interested in selling to schools? Here are some tips to assist you in initiating connections and fostering relationships with your potential buyers.



IDENTIFY THE BUYER

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

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DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Find their website and 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

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INITIATE THE CONVERSATION

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

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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 step
- Provide **Good Food Finder** (<https://www.goodfoodfinderaz.com/farm-to-school>) directory link.

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RESOURCES:
GOOD FOOD FINDER
[AZED.GOV](https://www.goodfoodfinderaz.com)



TIPS AND TRICKS for successful outreach

When reaching out to schools, remember these key points to establish a successful connection:



BEST TIMES TO REACH OUT

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

Time of Day: Away from lunch and breakfast “service hours” when they are preparing and serving meals

FAMILIARIZE WITH THE PROCESS

Potential barriers to purchasing local food:

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

Create a list of inquiries to gain insight into their program. Food Services Departments manage separate budgets from the school budgets, granting them the authority to make purchasing decisions with their buying power. It is crucial to adhere to appropriate procurement protocols.



MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

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?”**

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- "Hello, I am with [Your Farm/Ranch]. I'm wondering if you'd be interested in buying local products if we can provide a convenient option for you."
- "Hi there, we have a variety of locally grown products available. Would you like more information?"
- "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?"
- "Hello, we operate as a food hub supporting local producers and offer delivery services to your location!"



RESOURCES:
[GOOD FOOD FINDER](#)
[AZED.GOV](#)