



Introducing Community to Cafeteria: Engaging the Community to Elevate Your Child Nutrition Programs

September 15, 2026

1:30 PM - 2:00 PM

Professional Standards Learning Codes: 4110, 4120



Meet Your Host



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Welcome!



upLIFT was designed specifically for child nutrition professionals like you. It offers resources to help you LEARN about nutrition, get INSPIRED on meal choices for your participants, FEED students healthy meals, and TEACH others in your community about your programs.

You can look forward to helpful materials and monthly webinars featuring unique upLIFT content showcasing Arizona child nutrition professionals, and providing ongoing inspiration throughout the year. This will empower you to upLIFT your programs in your own unique way!

Overview

- 1. Introduction to the Community to Cafeteria Initiative**
- 2. Launching the Building Visibility Series**
- 3. Resources**

Introduction to the Community to Cafeteria Initiative

Community to Cafeteria: Engaging the Community to Elevate Your Child Nutrition Programs

Introducing the School Year 2026-2027 upLIFT Initiative!

This focused initiative is aimed to **increase participation** in Child Nutrition Programs while enhancing meal quality through strong **community engagement**. Food Service Directors will be empowered to implement targeted **marketing and outreach** strategies to promote school meals, improve student and family perceptions, and build meaningful partnerships with local organizations and businesses, and public health agencies. These efforts are **designed** to increase awareness, strengthen trust, and create a **shared investment** in student nutrition and wellness.

Community to Cafeteria: Engaging the Community to Elevate Your Child Nutrition Programs

What to Expect:



Monthly **webinars** discussing topics ranging from innovative menu design to taste testing and feedback!



Fact Sheets highlighting nutrition education skills.



Informational resources on **improving** community involvement!

Community to Cafeteria: Engaging the Community to Elevate Your Child Nutrition Programs

What is the Community to Cafeteria objective?

Community to Cafeteria aims to support projects that **influence program growth and sustainability**, such as expanding Farm to School efforts, incorporating more locally sourced foods, strengthening food safety knowledge and practices, and reviewing and enhancing Local Wellness Policies.

Schools will also **build capacity** in grant writing to secure additional resources. Together, these strategies will support high-quality, appealing meals and foster a connected, community-driven approach to child nutrition programs.

Why Community Engagement Matters

School nutrition programs are most successful when families, educators, administrators, local businesses, and community organizations understand the value they provide.

Benefits include:

- Increased breakfast and lunch participation
- Improved student nutrition and academic readiness
- Greater support for funding and staffing needs
- Enhanced trust with parents and caregivers
- More opportunities for partnerships and grants

Poll Question

Have you connected with your community via social media, media outlet, or partnership?

1. Yes.

2. No.

School Nutrition Programs Advisory Council Insight

Program Improvement and Expansion

We gathered information from **61** Arizona Local Education Agencies (LEAs), encompassing public schools, public charter schools, private schools, and more.

They provided valuable **insight** regarding challenges they encounter administering their school nutrition programs and shared important feedback **highlighting** the need for a focus on participation tactics and nutrition promotion materials .

Commentary from the Field

“Expanding CEP, fresh food initiatives, **promote** healthier eating”

“Kids **participation**, Nutrition Materials for teachers, and more **Promotion.**”



“scratch made breakfast ideas, **marketing or nutrition education in the cafeteria**, appreciation for school lunch employees”

Why Participation Matters

Student Outcomes

- Ensures regular availability of healthy meals.
- Boosts attention and learning abilities.
- Minimizes hunger pangs during class hours.
- Encourages involvement in school activities.
- Instills long-term healthy eating practices.
- Promotes a welcoming and inclusive environment among students.

School Outcomes

- Boosts reimbursement revenue
- Improve operational sustainability
- Expanded menu diversity

Why Participation Matters

Community Connection

- **Bolstering the Local Economy:** Can contribute to keeping money flowing within the local community resulting in job creation, increased investment in local businesses, and enhanced economic resilience.
- **Encouraging Social Connections:** Local food systems promote direct interactions between consumers and producers, cultivating a sense of trust and community.
- **Improving Food Security:** By backing local agriculture, communities can decrease their dependence on external food sources, bolstering their resilience against global supply chain disruptions.
- **Preserving Local Culture and Traditions:** Local food systems often embody the unique cultural heritage and culinary traditions of a region.

Barriers to Participation

- **Cultural Variations:** Diverse cultural backgrounds among students can lead to misunderstandings or feelings of exclusion. Creating an inclusive environment that honors and celebrates diversity can encourage participation from all students.
- **Communication Barriers:** Ineffective communication or a lack of information may hinder students' participation in school food programs. Using various communication channels and languages to convey information clearly and effectively can help close these gaps.
- **Financial Limitations:** Some students might hesitate to participate in school food programs due to associated costs. Creating clear communication to parents and guardians on free and reduced-price options can help increase participation.

Strategic Pillars

Core Focus Areas

Marketing & Outreach

Partnerships

Farm to School

Capacity Building

Strategies for Marketing & Outreach

Promotional Tactics

- ✓ Brand school meals
- ✓ Share success stories
- ✓ Visual Marketing
- ✓ Special Events

Student Centered Marketing

Students are powerful ambassadors.

- ✓ Student taste-test committees
- ✓ Student-created menu promotions
- ✓ School meal social media takeovers
- ✓ Student food photography contests

Strategies for Marketing & Outreach

Communication Channels

- ✓ District website
- ✓ Email campaigns
- ✓ Social Media
- ✓ Mobile apps

Strategies for Partnerships

Generate excitement from stakeholders to build support.

- ✓ Identify stakeholders
- ✓ Create shared goals
- ✓ Maintain communications and build connections with community groups.
- ✓ Connect with local farmers.

Strategies for Farm to School

Farm to School Activities

- Harvest of the Month programs
- School gardens
- Farmer classroom visits
- Student farm tours
- Local produce taste testing



Check out the Arizona Farm to School Network [webpage](#) for more information!

Strategies for Farm to School

Benefits of Farm to School

Farm to School helps students:

- Try new foods
- Learn where food comes from
- Connect nutrition with agriculture
- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption
- and more!

Strategies for Capacity Building

- ✓ Collaborate with organizations for assistance in grant writing, marketing solutions, and procurement.
- ✓ Take advantage of grants and awards that can enhance your visibility and build your reputation.
- ✓ Explore opportunities for additional recognition and support.

Help us in this effort!

Please share Your Exceptional Work with ADE HNS!

ADE HNS aims to **celebrate** your outstanding efforts, showcasing your dedication and increasing your reach. We want to narrate tales of:

- Excellent school meals
- Nutrition education
- Participation in the Farm Fresh Challenge
- Engaging students in taste tests
- And more! Anything you think helps promote this initiative!

We would also love to feature your stories and photos in our monthly upLIFT bulletin. **Please send your submissions to ashley.kennedy@azed.gov.**

Launching the Building Visibility Series

Building Visibility

Why this resource?

It is crafted to equip SFAs with the **knowledge** and **confidence** necessary for effective engagement, promoting a deeper understanding of the benefits and challenges linked to school nutrition programs.

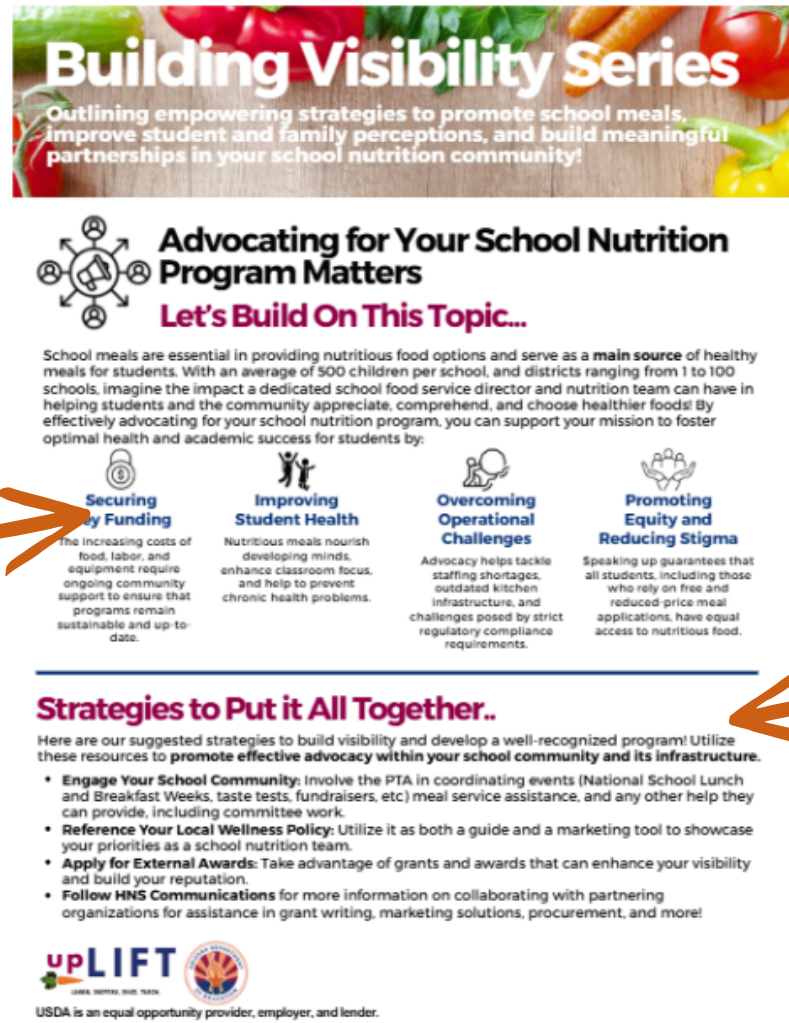
From menu planning and grant writing strategies to social media guidance, this resource has it all! The resource also includes tools for measuring success and fostering community partnerships. By enhancing communication and collaboration, it aims to create a supportive network that **champions** the well-being of students, ultimately leading to a healthier, more informed community.

Building Visibility

How to best use this resource?

- ✓ **Incorporate** the strategies into daily operations to streamline processes and save time.
- ✓ **Leverage** the communication and social media guidance to share successes, increase program visibility, and engage families and stakeholders.
- ✓ **Apply** the success measurement tools regularly to track progress, evaluate outcomes, and inform decision-making.
- ✓ **Share** the resource with your team to promote consistent messaging and strengthen collaboration across staff.
- ✓ **Use** the partnership-building strategies to connect with community organizations, school leaders, and local advocates.

Building Visibility



Building Visibility Series
Outlining empowering strategies to promote school meals, improve student and family perceptions, and build meaningful partnerships in your school nutrition community!

Advocating for Your School Nutrition Program Matters
Let's Build On This Topic...

School meals are essential in providing nutritious food options and serve as a **main source** of healthy meals for students. With an average of 500 children per school, and districts ranging from 1 to 100 schools, imagine the impact a dedicated school food service director and nutrition team can have in helping students and the community appreciate, comprehend, and choose healthier foods! By effectively advocating for your school nutrition program, you can support your mission to foster optimal health and academic success for students by:

- Securing Funding**
The increasing costs of food, labor, and equipment require ongoing community support to ensure that programs remain sustainable and up-to-date.
- Improving Student Health**
Nutritious meals nourish developing minds, enhance classroom focus, and help to prevent chronic health problems.
- Overcoming Operational Challenges**
Advocacy helps tackle staffing shortages, outdated kitchen infrastructure, and challenges posed by strict regulatory compliance requirements.
- Promoting Equity and Reducing Stigma**
Speaking up guarantees that all students, including those who rely on free and reduced price meal applications, have equal access to nutritious food.

Strategies to Put it All Together..
Here are our suggested strategies to build visibility and develop a well-recognized program! Utilize these resources to **promote effective advocacy within your school community and its infrastructure.**

- **Engage Your School Community:** Involve the PTA in coordinating events (National School Lunch and Breakfast Weeks, taste tests, fundraisers, etc) meal service assistance, and any other help they can provide, including committee work.
- **Reference Your Local Wellness Policy:** Utilize it as both a guide and a marketing tool to showcase your priorities as a school nutrition team.
- **Apply for External Awards:** Take advantage of grants and awards that can enhance your visibility and build your reputation.
- **Follow HNS Communications** for more information on collaborating with partnering organizations for assistance in grant writing, marketing solutions, procurement, and more!

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LIVING BETTER, ONE YEAR.
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Monthly
Topic

Deep Dive
with Facts

Talking Points

Resources

What are Macronutrients?

There are three main macronutrients that make up the building blocks of your diet. Learn more about each of these nutrients found in all sources of food!

Macro = Large
Macronutrients are the three essential nutrients required in significant quantities daily for optimal health. Fat, Protein, and Carbohydrates are present in various food sources, with each providing a specific percentage of our caloric intake. These nutrients serve as the primary sources of energy for our bodies, powering all daily functions.

Fat (9 calories per gram):

- Fat contains more calories per gram than any other macronutrient
- Fat is essential for cell and nerve development
- Both animal and plant sources of fat can be part of a healthy diet

Protein (4 calories per gram):

- Protein is used for bone, muscle, and tissue regeneration
- Protein helps you feel full longer
- Include a variety of proteins in your diet to get all of the amino acids your body needs

Carbohydrate (4 calories per gram):

- Essential fuel for the brain and muscle
- Simple carbohydrates are broken down by the body quickly to use for energy and should be limited (i.e. baked goods, enriched grains, soda, juice, candy)
- Complex carbohydrates are broken down more slowly and are more nutrient dense

Plant sources

- Olive oil, canola oil, avocado, seeds, nuts and nut butters

Animal sources

- Egg yolks, salmon, trout, sardines

Plant-based proteins

- Soy, lentils, beans, chia seeds, nuts and nut butters

Animal-based proteins

- Poultry, beef, pork, fish, shellfish, milk, cheese, yogurt

Complex carbohydrates

- Beans, legumes, oatmeal, whole grain bread, fruits and vegetables

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Nutrition Knowledge Fact Sheet

Building Visibility Series

Outlining empowering strategies to promote school meals, improve student and family perceptions, and build meaningful partnerships in your school nutrition community!

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Building Visibility Series

<https://www.azed.gov/hns/nslp/uplift/>

Reminder!

Community to Cafeteria!

ADE is eager to showcase your hard work serving up appealing, innovative, and nutritious meals and connecting with your community! Reach out to Ashley.Kennedy@azed.gov with your stories, photos, examples, or anything that excites you!



Looking Ahead

Join us next month!

upLIFT Webinar - Connecting with Local Farms & Farm to School

October 20, 2026

1:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Discover innovative ways to bridge the gap between local farms and educational institutions in our upcoming upLIFT Webinar. This engaging session will feature insights from Pinnacle Prevention and ADE's newly appointed Farm to School Coordinator. Learn about successful strategies, hear inspiring stories from the field, and explore how these initiatives can benefit your community. Whether you're an educator, farmer, or simply passionate about sustainable food systems, this webinar promises to offer valuable perspectives and actionable ideas to help integrate farm-fresh produce into school cafeterias, enriching both students' diets and education.



Thank you!

Any questions?
Please type them into the Q&A now.

If you are attending the live webinar, you will receive an email once attendance has been completed. Once you have received this email, your training certificate will be available in Arizona Professional Learning Development (APLD).

If you are watching the recorded webinar, you can access the survey link and certificate of completion at the end of the webinar slides.



Congratulations!

You have completed the **Introducing Community to Cafeteria: Engaging the Community to Elevate Your Child Nutrition Programs**

To request a certificate, please go to the next slide.

In order to count this training toward your Professional Standards training hours, the training content must align with your job duties.

Information to include when documenting this training for Professional Standards:

- **Training Title:** Recorded Webinar: Introducing Community to Cafeteria: Engaging the Community to Elevate Your Child Nutrition Programs
- **Length:** 0.5 hour
- **Learning Codes:** 4110, 4120

Please Note:

- Attendees must document the amount of training hours indicated regardless of the amount of time it takes to complete it.

Congratulations!

Requesting a Training Certificate

Please click on the link below to complete a brief survey about this webinar. Once the survey is complete, you will be able to print your certificate of completion from Survey Monkey.

*This will not appear in your Event Management System (EMS) Account.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/upliftrecordedwebinar>

The information below is for your reference when completing the survey:

- **Training Title:** Recorded Webinar: Introducing Community to Cafeteria: Engaging the Community to Elevate Your Child Nutrition Programs

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