

ILLINOIS FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK MIGHTY MINI VIDEO SERIES:

INNOVATIVE FUNDING FOR FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Slide One: INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome to our Mighty Mini Video on Innovative Funding for Farm to School, presented by the Illinois Farm to School Network. My name is Diane Chapeta. I am a former Wisconsin school nutrition director, and the current network coordinator for the Illinois Farm to School Network. While operating Farm to School programs in Wisconsin districts, I learned how to incorporate money making opportunities to balance costs and provide funds to improve our existing meal programs.

Because our programs had extra funds available, we were able to develop 100% scratch menus, add many local food options, educate our students, and train our kitchen staff to take on important tasks associated with building up our programs. Our staff developed new skillsets, which lead to major improvements in the menus and more opportunities to sell to our customers. By improving staff abilities through training on multiple levels our nutrition department employees developed a new-found pride in their work and took ownership of the programs. By year two, we were able to increase work hours and offer a more diverse list of job activities open to the staff.

I will be your host today as we explore the options available to inject added income into your budget, while adding local foods and food education to your school menus.

All of our Mighty Mini Videos are available on our website in a PDF format, as well a presentation format.



Slide Two: GROW YOUR INCOME

A balanced budget is an important, and absolute, aspect of school meal programs. Adding to, and improving your programs, can be cost prohibitive. How do you improve offerings on the tray with a mere \$1.10 per meal for raw food costs?

Did you know one of the primary reasons noted for non-participation in Farm to School is higher food costs? So, how do you pay more for better tasting, fresher foods, and balance an unforgiving, immovable budget?

Farm to School is a great way to provide nutrition education for your students while incorporating fresh, local foods into the program. Supporting your region is an opportunity, not a financial drain!

So...how do schools pay for their farm to school efforts?

What have successful districts discovered that others have not?

How can schools train and reorganize their staff when costs are so prohibitive?

How do they find money to do these things?

Hang on tight, and we'll show you how to develop innovative funding for your programs!

Slide Three: FIND YOUR NICHE- DEVELOP A FUNDING PROGRAM

Raising funds to support farm to school efforts are as diverse as the school districts managing them. We will present just a few of the options open to school districts to improve cash flow in meal programs.

Utilizing the strengths of kitchen staff, while recognizing the needs and wants of your school community, will lead to golden opportunities for fundraising.



What's the first rule of food service fundraising? If you know your staff, and know your school community, then planning fundraising that will enrich both can be easy.

Slide Four: DO YOU HAVE A KITCHEN? THEN YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITY!



If you have a full kitchen, then you have opportunity knocking at your door.

Do you have popular school food products for sale?

Which recipes and food products are you known for? What menu jams up the lunch line at the high school? Is there a homemade salad, or a chili, or a pasta dish that draws your customers in? Successful Farm to School fundraisers are developed based on the likes and wants of your school community. It's that simple! Great fundraising ideas begin with recognizing the tastes and trends of

your customers and their families. Does your community love spicy foods? How about homemade food products? Student and staff preferred sauces, pickled veggies, and specialty dishes can make great product fundraisers sold to parents, students or staff members. Look for that golden opportunity to sell!

How about an annual food event? A chili cook off, a fall or mid-winter grill out, or a local farm sourced dinner tied to a school play or school band performance can become a well-attended annual event. How about a student chef competition? Iron Chef Jr competitions engage the students, staff and school families. Showcasing student expertise and knowledge can be a powerful fundraising tool for your farm to school program.

Approach teaching staff who engage students in extracurricular activities. Form partnerships with these staff members to develop a fundraiser which will benefit students, staff and families.

Let's take another look at the services you offer in your school environment.

Lunchtime

Does your teaching staff purchase lunch in all your buildings? Are there huge gaps? Fill in those gaps with individual ala cart staff meal options, ordered via staff email the day before, and delivered to school buildings alongside student lunches or milk break items. Utilize your existing infrastructure to add in lunch sales where lunch sales are lacking. Engaging staff and providing an added option for lunch will promote your program and improve participation. Ala cart pricing will provide extra income while providing a service to the staff. Win/win.

After School Sales

Where do students go to buy after school snacks prior to team practice, club meetings and events? Are they running to the local convenience store or standing in line at the vending machines? Who's capturing those sales? Is it your department?

A well-positioned mobile cart stocked with grab and go items at your high school or middle school fills that need with healthy, tasty options. Wrapped subs, yogurt parfaits, fruit cups, whole fruits or humus and veggie packs are great options for students on the go.

Food to Go & In-House Food Options

Looking for those selling opportunities and service opportunities will open the door to extra sales to support your local purchasing efforts.

Got Soup? Do you make homemade soup during the school year? Then you have an opportunity to sell to staff and make their evenings a little easier. Frozen dinner options "to go" can be an opportunity for extra sales. Staff meetings can serve as a selling platform for coffee, cold beverages and munchies. Does the Spanish teacher celebrate Cinco de Mayo in the classroom? Would a special food or beverage work in the classroom on that day?

Become a Food Supplier! Where does the home economics or foods teacher get their food supplies? Minimal mark ups will still provide a good deal for that teacher who's buying and hauling food from a grocery store. Easy ordering and pick up all in the same location!

What is your school's policy for providing food at events and during group rentals of school facilities? Can you push for an in-school exclusive to supply foods for these events, while supporting the lunch program?

Supporting the program that feeds your students is a no-brainer. Demonstrate to your Superintendent why your food service team should be a shoe-in for providing catering to school functions and outside groups, alike.

Do you have vending machines at school?

Vending doesn't have to be a dirty word! Who supplies these machines? Are these items healthy and affordable? Changing how vending is managed in a school setting can add income to food service. And, your wellness policies can be a great tool for change! Utilize those policies and open avenues for funding.

In a school environment, food is everywhere! Throwing your professional food service hat in the ring can provide much needed funding for your program.

Slide Five: LIMITED STAFFING? LIMITED FACILITIES? NO PROBLEM!

Perhaps, you rely on volunteers in the kitchen and in the cafeteria. Are your kitchen facilities limited? Then catering and supplying food for events may not be an option. What can you do to increase food service revenue?

Provide a local fundraiser opportunity! Are there local products in your area? Can you find a local coffee roaster? A honey producer? How about local maple syrup and a local pancake mix? Offering a local products fundraiser to groups in your school can connect your school family to local food entrepreneurs. And, selling local specialty products is a healthy alternative to cookie dough and candy sales. Interest in local food is at an all-time high. Embrace it! Host a local foods sampler night during a special event in your district. Invite those local food artisans to set up a table and share samples to promote your Local Food Local Fundraiser option. Embrace that interest in local foods and promote it in a new way.

Have you heard of a "market day" fundraising program? School food service has the ability to purchase food items unavailable, yet very attractive, to consumers through their prime vendor. Your school staff is often times an untapped market for food service products. Could you develop a market day style program for school staff? Talk to your primary vendor sales person about items that may be attractive if offered to your staff for purchase. Offering ten items for sale per month, set up on a simple email order form, as a "market buy" or "to market" program can help support your farm to school efforts, and be viewed as a benefit for staff members. Cryovac steaks and other individual frozen items, frozen soups, and those wonderful frozen doughs are all great options for a market day style sale. Invite staff to do their bulk food shopping every month right at school, and watch the profits roll in!

Selling foods in a market type of program, limited to staff only, increases ease and manageability of your fundraiser. This allows you to start off small and build on your success, while providing an attractive opportunity for staff members.

Slide Six: LOOK FOR PARTNERSHIPS

The more your farm to school program is seen, the more support you will gain.

Creating partnerships with institutions and organizations to promote personal health and good eating habits will increase your opportunity to be seen and to promote your program. Developing innovative partnerships to co-host or participate in food or health related events creates opportunities for education and will build added interest in your programs. Health Departments, hospitals and local community organizations are open to partnerships that promote public health. How can you use that connection to draw attention to your efforts? How can you turn that exposure into future fundraising?

Connecting with your local farmer's market creates another platform to grow support of your farm to school program. Hosting a table with garden or ag students to provide program information and to promote upcoming events is an easy way to get your word out.

Explore ways to partner with local organizations and local programs. By developing partnerships, you open the doors to future opportunities.



Slide Seven: LOOK FOR FUNDING SOURCES AND GRAB THOSE OPPORTUNITIES!



"Hey, Dad. I need some short-term, economic aid."

If you look for grant funding, you may be surprised at the options available. Need funders? The USDA, private funders such as Lunchbox, crowd funding platforms like Barnraiser, as well as many gardening and education grants are available and relatively easy to apply for.

Grants are available for farm to school development, gardens, kitchen equipment, salad bars, staff training, student food education and much more. Simply searching online using terms like farm to school grants, school garden grants or school food service grants will reveal many available funding sources open to k-12 schools.

Remember that partnership we encouraged you to create with a local health organization? Utilizing a community partnership with a local hospital or health department may be a lead-in for playing a part in a larger, community health grant!

In the grant world, the options are many, and opportunities are everywhere.

In order to use these extra funds to your best advantage, don't forget to develop a long-term plan in which you build your farm to school program. Include all the aspects you wish to incorporate into your program such as increased local procurement, scratch menus, special events, indoor or outdoor gardens and food education. Build partnerships within your district with teachers and with like-minded programs. That plan, and the added partners and support within your district, will increase your grant proposal acceptability. Once you have a well thought out plan, you can dip your toes in the grant pool with confidence!

Slide Eight: THANK YOU FOR WATCHING!

Thank you for watching this instalment of the Illinois Farm to School Networks' Mighty Mini Video series. If you have questions, please connect with us online at: <http://illinoisfarmtoschool.org/>

Have a fruitful day!

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