

How to Connect to
Institutional Buyers:
The Institution Buyer
Playbook
Part 2
How Institutions Buy
Food





Overview

How do schools and child feeding sites buy local food?

The National School Lunch Program is an entire system at work.

Meal requirements and rules – how do my products fit?

The benefits of selling to institutions.

Looking for customers. What do you say?

Understand how schools procure food.

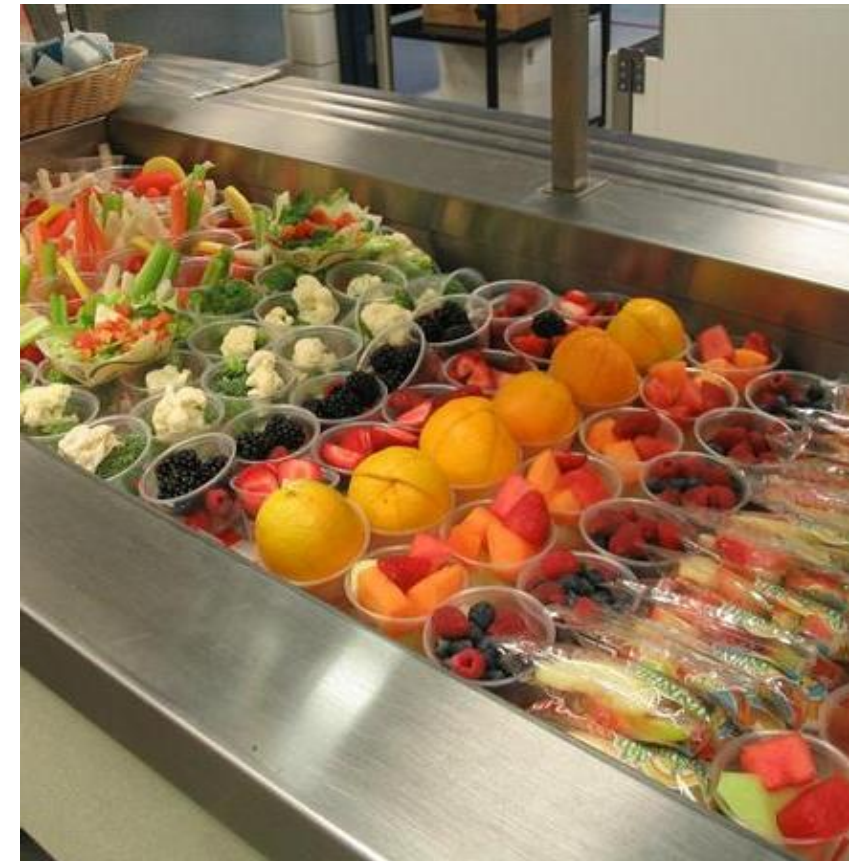
Schools purchase food under USDA, state, and county/city regulations.

These procurement rules include:

- Purchasing via one of three bidding processes.
 - Micro Purchase: used for **very small or unplanned purchases**. Purchases must be under **\$10,000 per year**. Requirements: all purchases must be reasonable in comparison to previous purchases or based on research.
 - Small Purchase: this is commonly called 3 bids and buy. Used for perishable purchases under \$250,000 per year, non-perishable purchases under \$25,000. The school must research available suppliers, write out bid specs and contact a minimum of 3 sellers.
 - Large Purchase: Purchases over \$250,000 per year. Formal bidding process must be developed and utilized.

Most schools require deliveries of purchases within scheduled time windows. Some sites may have further restrictions based on HACCP practices.

Schools utilize a standard billing cycle of net/60 or net/90 days. Considerations and adjustments can be made for smaller farmers by simply requesting an adjustment in the purchasing terms.



Palatine School District

Local Foods in Schools (LFS) Funding

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/School-Nutrition-Farm-to-School.aspx>



Want to know how much funding your district was allotted?

- Click on the Local Food for Schools (LFS) tab
- Select the SFAs That Are Not Signed for LFS file
- Find your district & the funding amount

NUTRITION

FARM TO CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS (F2CNP)

EVENTS & FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- [Click here to register for the Local Food for Schools \(LFS\) Overview, Updates and Q&A webinar – 2-3 p.m. Tuesday May 7](#)
- Open Enrollment for Local Foods for Schools (LFS) funding has ended. If you did not sign up for LFS, but are interested please reach out to ISBE staff at localfoods@isbe.net to inquire if funds are still available. We will do our best to accommodate requests to participate!
- Out of LFS funds? If you used all of your LFS funds but would like to request additional funds, [click here for guidance on how to request additional LFS funds](#).
- We Need Your Input! Please complete ISBE's Farm to School survey by clicking here. On average the survey takes less than 15 minutes to complete.
- Check out the Illinois Farm to School Network website for upcoming Events.

General Farm to School Information



Farm to Early Care



Food Safety



Procurement



For Producers (Farmers, Ranchers, Processors, and Distributors)



Local Food for Schools (LFS)



Websites/Links



Scratch Cooking



School Gardens



Success Stories





Steps to Request Additional Funds

Email ISBE your request for additional funds at localfoods@isbe.net

We ask that you request no more than you can use in 2-3 months time and then if you use that up, you can submit another request for another 2-3 months worth of funding.

Send us the amount you want & your RCDT #.

We will do our best to accommodate your request.

Do not make purchases until you receive an approval from our office.



What is a forward contract when applied to Farm to School?

“Forward contracting is a term for any contract established in advance of when the product is delivered. In reality, when you're selling to schools those negotiations and bids are likely well in advance of when they'll be delivered.

But what really differentiates a forward contract in relation to farm to school is that it's generally established before a crop is even put in the ground. Forward contracting with farm to school means that you're working with a farmer, a processor or a distributor to secure a product ahead of time. It allows farmers to adapt their harvest and planting schedules to meet buyers' needs well in advance.”

Abby Harper, MSU Farm to School

[Forward Contracting Webinar](#)

Where do your products fit in the school meal pattern?

Schools need to understand how their portion counts relate to your pack sizes to incorporate your foods into meals to meet USDA regulations and the required food components on the tray.

Lunch Meal Pattern			
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Meal Pattern	Amount of Food Per Week (minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups)	2.5 (0.5)	2.5 (0.5)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups)	3.75 (0.75)	3.75 (0.75)	5 (1)
Dark green	0.5	0.5	0.5
Red/Orange	0.75	0.75	1.25
Beans and peas (legumes)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Starchy	0.5	0.5	0.5
Other	0.5	0.5	0.75
Additional Veg to Reach Total	1	1	1.5
Grains (oz eq)	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid milk (cups)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal)	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (% of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (mg)	≤ 640	≤ 710	≤ 740
Trans fat	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate ZERO grams of trans fat per serving.		



CONSIDER..

School meals have become more a math equation than a home cooked meal.

It's no wonder that processed foods with full nutritional breakdowns have become the norm.

If you understand the basics of how a school meal is created, you can share how your food will be a good fit.

Benefits of selling to schools

- Provides steady, high-volume and low-volume outlets
- Diversifies your market channels
- Provides outlet for selling less than perfect produce
- Spreads farm recognition across community (including teachers, staff, & parents)
- Grows demand from the next generation

2024
AUGUST
LUNCH – Washington Monroe

MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY

EACH MEAL IS SERVED WITH ½ CUP OF FRUIT AND ½ PINT OF MILK (WHITE OR CHOCOLATE)
Menu items underlined are items made from scratch
Menu items with ** have ingredients that have been purchased from local farms

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14 <u>Macaroni & Cheese</u> Hotdog <u>Strawberry Spinach Salad</u>	15 <u>**Chicken & Noodles</u> Peas Carrots	16 <u>**Hamburger</u> Tomato/Onion/Lettuce/Cheese/ Pickles <u>Potato Wedges</u>
19 <u>**Sloppy Joe</u> <u>**Coleslaw</u> Corn on the Cob	20 <u>**Chicken Quesadilla</u> Tortilla Chips Salsa/Sour cream Refried Beans	21 <u>Turkey Ham Sliders</u> Carrot/Celery Sticks <u>Ranch</u> Chips	22 <u>**Tater Tot Casserole</u> <u>**Dinner Roll</u> Roasted Garlic Broccoli	23 <u>**Chicken Parmesan</u> w/ pasta <u>Garlic Bread</u> Green Beans
26 <u>**Cheeseburger Macaroni</u> <u>**Cornbread</u> Carrots	27 Stuffed Aria Sausage Pizza Breadstick w/ <u>marinara</u> Salad w/ <u>ranch</u>	28 <u>**Chicken Strips</u> <u>French Fries</u> <u>Broccoli Salad</u>	29 <u>**Spaghetti w/ meat sauce</u> <u>Garlic Bread</u> Green Beans	30 <u>**Walking Taco</u> Tomato/lettuce Salsa/Sour cream <u>Mexican Corn</u>

Lincoln SD 27 August 2024 Menu

September				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2 No School Labor Day	3 B- Bacon H- Oven baked chicken* Green beans/applesauce* AC- Mac & cheese*	4 B- Wg toast* H- Sloppy Joe* Coleslaw*/raisins AC- Cheese burger*	5 B- Banana oatmeal cookies* H- Crunchy beef casserole* Brussel sprouts*/peaches* AC- Chicken fajita	6 B- Breakfast smoothie* H- Ham salad sandwich* Romaine salad*/Grapes* AC- Corn dog
9 B- Pancakes* & syrup H- Cheeseburger* on wg bun Street corn*/banana AC- Grilled cheese*	10 B- Cheesy potato casserole* H- BLT* Cucumbers*/orange smiles* AC- Italian sandwich*	11 B- French toast sticks* H- Meatloaf* Mashed potatoes*/cin. Apples AC- Swedish meatballs*	12 B- Granola* H- Pepperoni pizza* Cowboy caviar*/pears AC- Chicken strips*	13 B- Egg patty H- Cheesy beef sandwich* Peas*/fruit cocktail AC- Baked potato*
16 B- Scrambled eggs* H- Spaghetti* Carrots/applesauce* AC- Cheesy beef sandwich*	17 B- Breakfast burrito* H- Salisbury steak* Green beans/strawberries* AC- BBQ chicken*	18 B- Ham & egg cups* H- Grilled cheese* Romaine salad*/blueberries* AC- Taco salad*	19 B- Bacon, egg & cheese biscuit* H- Quesadilla* 3 bean salad*/pears AC- Pesto chicken pasta*	20 B- Bagel & cream cheese No Lunch 12 dismissal
23 B- Chocolate chip muffin* H- Chicken wrap* Romaine lettuce*/peaches* Cheese cup AC- Hotdog	24 B- Oatmeal bar* H- Taco nachos* Diced tomatoes*/blueberries* Cheese cup AC- buffalo chicken sandwich*	25 B- Breakfast quesadilla* H- Beef Stroganoff* Baked potato*/craisins AC- Chicken & noodles*	26 B- breakfast bagel pizza* H- Chicken strips* Corn/fruit salad* AC- Chicken sandwich	27 B- Sausage patty* H- Ham Lunchable* Broccoli/apple AC- Pasta primavera*
30 B- breakfast hash* H- Hamburger* on wg bun Baked beans*/fruit cocktail AC- Chicken Caesar pasta salad*			-All meals come with a fruit, vegetable and 1% white milk or fat free flavored milk. -Seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables will be served when available. -Menus subject to change without notice do to product availability. <i>This institution is an equal opportunity provider.</i>	- <u><i>if your child is on a special diet for allergy purposes, they may be given an alternate meal. Action plan must be sent from a doctor.</i></u> -AC is only served to Junior High, High School and staff. -Items with * indicate scratch or fresh from one of our local farmers.

As part of our Sangamon County Farm-to School Initiative we are proudly serving more locally-sourced foods, including poultry, beef, fruits and vegetables.

Pawnee CUSD 11 September Lunch Menu 2024

Assessing and connecting to potential customers

- How much time do you normally spend on a new, potential marketplace opportunity? If you take some time to assess what target schools and early care sites are serving and suss out their capabilities for prep and cooking of local food, you can locate buyers who may be more likely to purchase what you grow. Making it easier for a potential customer to understand what you have to offer and supplying options to help them connect their menus to your food is a great first step.
- Check if the school is registered for Local Food in Schools (LFS) funding [here](#). If not, share the funding opportunity with them.
- Take a quick look at the lunch menus on the district website. Do they have salad bars? Are they offering any homemade or scratch items? Bakery items? Are they involved in Farm to School programming?
- Be sure your farm or food hub is on the farmer/rancher/producer list at ISBE. You can fill out the survey [here](#). This list is available to all LFS schools searching for local foods.

FOOD SERVICES

- Menus
- Free/Reduced Meal Applications
- Payment - MyMealTime
- Come Work With Us
- Summer Information
- Illinois Harvest Of The Month
- Wellness And Stewardship

UPCOMING EVENTS

- AUG 21** Institute Day
ALL DAY EVENT
- AUG 22** Institute Day
ALL DAY EVENT
- AUG 23** Inservice Day- No Students
ALL DAY EVENT

[View all upcoming events](#)

Illinois Harvest of the Month

Illinois Harvest of the Month helps child feeding, garden and education sites grow or source, and celebrate seasonal, local food. Each month, registered participants highlight a different local item on their cafeteria menus or in their school gardens. This free program provides resources for education, menu planning, taste tests and best practices to sites across Illinois!

Illinois Harvest of the Month brings more money to local farmers, healthier food to the cafeteria, and educational opportunities for students about healthy eating reconnecting them to the food they eat.

Learn more at the Illinois Farm to School website.



- + April- Asparagus
- + March- Lettuces
- + February- Peas
- + January- Dairy
- + December- Carrots
- + November- Grain
- + October- Apples
- + September- Corn

River Trails SD 26 IL Harvest of the Month participation

What to share with a buyer

When contacting schools consider what information you need to share to interest the buyer. A cold sales call may not be your best avenue for first contact. Make an appointment with admin or a principal, and food service for an in-person meeting and share pertinent information:

- Your interest in supplying local foods in school meals- the possibilities of creating a relationship with a school district. Feeding area kids from your farm. Make it personal.
- How sourcing locally can benefit the district, the community and the kids. Food education impacts Wellness Policy work, deepens community connections, and connects to curriculum in the classroom.
- Share your Market Maker account or website links.
- Share a farm profile and product profiles.
- Ask the buyer what they might be interested in for their menus and taste tests. What do their customers like? What would hold their interest and help to educate them about healthy eating?



November Lunch. Menu.



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	<p>What is the Illinois Harvest of the Month? Each month, we will feature a different local item on the cafeteria menu. This month we are offering cabbage which is known as a dietary staple throughout the world!</p>	<p>1 4 Star Mac "N" Cheese Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>2 Hot Diggity Dog Creamy Coleslaw Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>3 Personal Pan Cheese Pizza Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>
<p>6 Cheese Stuffed Breadsticks w/ Dipping Sauce Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>7 Chicken Fajitas Brown Rice Peppers & Onions Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>8 Spaghetti & Meatballs Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>9 Baked Potato w/Creamy Cheese Sauce Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>10 Personal Pan Cheese Pizza Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>
<p>13 4 Star Mac "N" Cheese Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>14 Signature Calzones Super Steamed Veggies Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>15 Grilled Cheese Please! Apple Slaw Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>16 Turkey Nachos Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>17 Personal Pan Cheese Pizza Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>
<p>20 Chicken Nuggets Southern Sautee Cabbage Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>21 MMM Cheeseburgers Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>22 No School</p>	<p>23 No School</p> 	<p>24 No School</p>
<p>27 Crispy Chicken Sandwich Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>28 Cheese Quesadilla Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>29 Classic Sloppy Joe's Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>30 Hot Diggity Dog Super Steamed Veggies Just Picked Fruit Ice Cold Milk</p>	<p>Have your heard that we are a CEP District? Community Eligible Provision 8 schools offer FREE meals to all students! Free School Meals Rock!</p> 

Artificial Ingredients, Additives, Preservatives

High Fructose Corn Syrup

Fresh Foods, Mystery Meats

ALWAYS fresh NEVER frozen

4-Star School Lunch Provider!

Each meal includes rBST-free skim or 1% milk.













In accordance with Federal law and United States Department of Agriculture Policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, and disability. Menu may be subject to change. Notice will be given as soon as possible.

Wheeling CUSD 21 November Menu
Harvest of the Month: Cabbage



Farm to School Farmer/Food Hub/Seller Profile

SELLER INFORMATION

Farm/Business Name: _____

Contact Info- Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Email: _____

Primary Address:

Is delivery available? ____Yes ____No

What is the range of delivery offered?

Wholesale Experience: ____Yes ____No

FOOD SAFETY INFORMATION PROVIDED

Proof of Farm Food Safety Plan: ____Yes ____No

Current Year Water Test Results: ____Yes ____No

FSMA Certificate: ____Yes ____No

Other Certifications:

Cold Delivery Offered: ____Yes ____No

Create a farm profile as a tool to sell

- Provides basic information about the farm/food hub directly to your customer.
- Shares your food safety information, certifications and process.
- Allows you to share what you grow and your seasonal calendar.
- Gives you an advantage by sharing a description of your farm/food hub and allows you to advertise availability to share education at school events and on-farm field trips, events, and tours.
- Gets your name in front of institutional buyers! Creates an automatic profile to add to IL MarketMaker and other sites.



A close-up photograph of a basket filled with fresh, orange carrots with their green tops still attached. The carrots are piled together, and the basket is lined with a white mesh fabric. The background is slightly blurred, showing more carrots in a similar basket.

Build product profiles for schools

School food service managers truly appreciate tools that help them to utilize locally purchased foods easily.

If you look at your products through a school meal lens you can develop profiles to encourage buyers to add products to the salad bar, to the tray as a veggie, fruit or protein, or as an ingredient or topper to an already familiar entrée.

Product profile example



Eggs In a Basket Farm Product Profile

PRODUCT INFO

Product Name: Large Brown Shell Egg, pasture raised, USDA Inspected

Seasonal Availability: From: Sept 1st To: May 31st

Flavor Profile: Dark yellow/orange yolks full of earthy and bright flavors

Suggested Uses:

Add farm fresh eggs to bakery items like muffins and cinnamon rolls, quick breads and cornbread. Hard boil for easy grab and go breakfast meals. Whip in a deep mixing bowl to add incredible volume to recipes.

How to Store:

Our eggs are USDA certified and pre-washed. Eggs should be kept at 40* F.

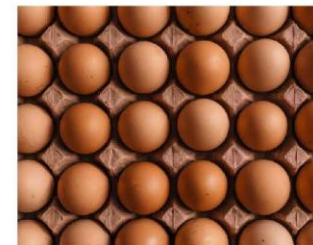
Recipe Share/Website Recipe Portal:

www.eggsinabasket.net

Featured recipes: Egg Strada, Monday Farm Scramble, Seasonal Quick Bread

Contact Info:

Donna at: eggsinabasket@gmail.com (312) 730-1234



A close-up photograph of several watermelons with characteristic green and white stripes, arranged in a cluster. The lighting is bright, highlighting the texture of the rinds.

Buyer requirements

- A copy of the most recent water test (within one calendar year)
- A copy, or proof of their product liability insurance policy.
 - What is the set limit on product liability coverage?
- Proof of a food safety plan in place at the farm and any additional current certifications such as GAP, FSMA, or Organic Certification
- Proof should be a food safety plan with the farm's information listed (district manager should make a copy of documents for the file)
 - Proof must be recent, within the current growing season or the past growing season if requested during the off season.

Take advantage of upcoming opportunities and resources

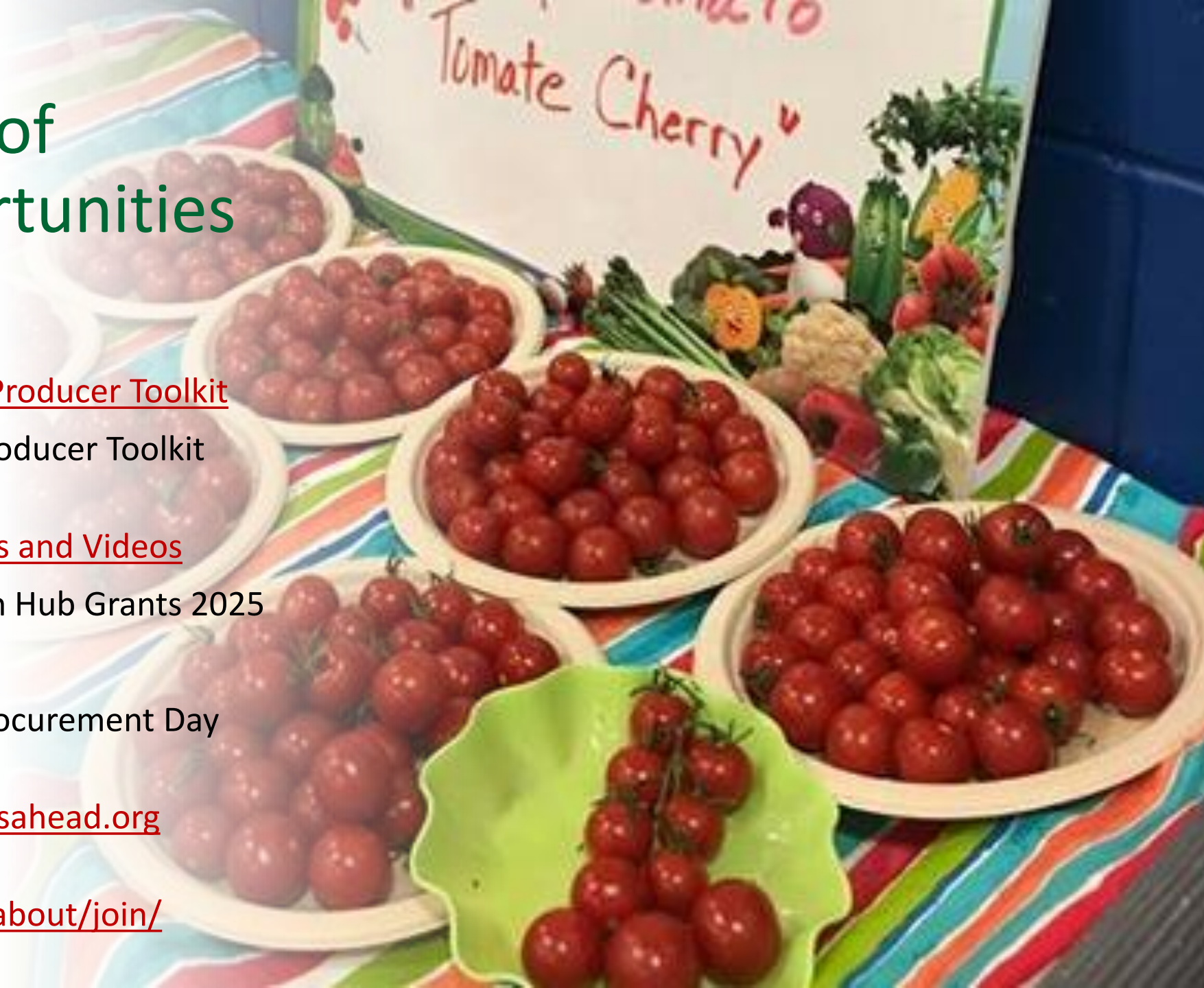
- IL Farm to School [Farmer and Producer Toolkit](#)
- Bringing the Farm to School Producer Toolkit [Resources for Producers](#)
- Case Study Videos [Case Studies and Videos](#)
- School Food System Innovation Hub Grants 2025

<https://innovateschoolfood.org/>

- Host a Farm to School Local Procurement Day Event

farmtoschool@sevengenerationsahead.org

- Sign up for our newsletter:
<https://illinoisfarmtoschool.org/about/join/>



Thank you!
Contact us:

farmtoschool@sevengenerationsahead.org

