



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



How State Agencies and Child Nutrition Partners Can Support Scratch Cooking in Schools

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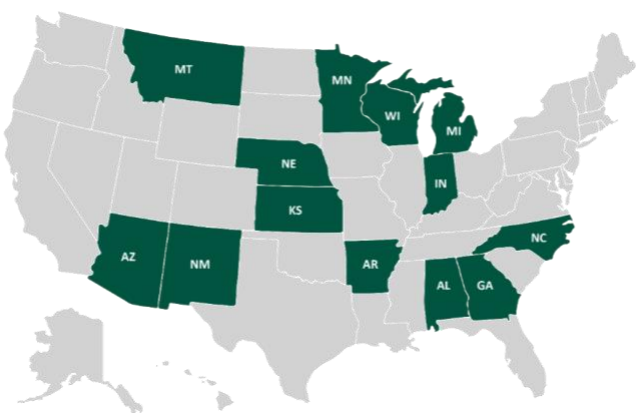
What's in this document

- Examples of how SFAs across the U.S. use scratch cooking to meet their program goals
- Opportunities for State agencies and child nutrition (CN) partners to support scratch cooking in specific operational areas: staffing and training, production and menu planning, regulations, local foods and USDA Foods, procurement, financials, and marketing and communications.

In school year 2024-25, 36 school food authorities (SFAs) participated in the USDA School Food Preparation Study, which explored how SFAs use scratch cooking and the challenges and opportunities of incorporating scratch cooking techniques in schools.

Researchers interviewed 36 SFA food service directors (FSDs) and 43 other staff (e.g., kitchen managers) across 13 states; visited 45 school kitchens; and reviewed SFA menus, recipes, and financial data. Participating SFAs ranged from small¹ rural districts with two kitchens to large urban² districts with over 200 kitchens.

This document shares key findings from the study that are relevant to State agencies (SAs) and child nutrition partners (CN partners) and identifies strategies to support schools in using more scratch cooking.



Why do SFAs use scratch?

SFAs in this study were increasing their use of scratch cooking. But scratch cooking itself isn’t necessarily the point; instead, it’s a strategy for advancing a range of other program goals:

SFA Program Goal	Value of Scratch
Offer the best quality product	SFAs use scratch when it produces a superior product.
Increase student participation	Offering scratch-cooked items may improve how parents and students perceive the program, which increases participation and program revenue.
Improve healthy eating habits	Scratch can help expose students to new flavors and build their connection to food.
Control ingredients	Some SFAs use scratch cooking to lessen the use of specific unwanted ingredients, like dyes, additives, and allergens.
Meet nutritional guidelines	Scratch helps some SFAs meet nutrient and meal pattern requirements, like reducing sodium.

What does scratch look like?

What “scratch cooking” means, and how it looks, is different in every SFA.

“[Scratch] is not one size fits all. The staff you have, the equipment, the time, it’s not like you can put a guidebook together. It’s individualized.” – FSD, large suburban SFA

¹This document uses four categories of SFA size based on the number of enrolled students: small (1-999), medium (1,000-4,999), large (5,000-24,999), very large (25,000+)

²This document uses a collapsed version of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Codes to identify urban, suburban, and rural school districts - <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Geographic/LocaleBoundaries>

For many, “scratch cooking” means cooking with all raw ingredients, processed in the kitchen, like baking bread from flour, water, and yeast, or making chili from raw meat and dried beans. But many SFAs in this study took a more practical view of scratch cooking. For these SFAs, scratch means recipes with more ingredients, more steps, and that take more time than preparing heat-and-serve, convenience items – even if they are not using all fresh, raw ingredients.

SFAs carefully consider a range of variables, including labor hours, available equipment, food costs, and student preferences when deciding how much scratch to include within each meal, day, and week. SFAs must also balance food preparation with other responsibilities like ordering and receiving products, serving, and cleaning. More labor-intensive items often are used side by side with convenience foods to address competing priorities.

Example school scratch recipe: Thai Curry Chicken/Chickpeas with Rice

Curry Sauce: Thaw queso and add measured spices. **Veggies:** Dice zucchini with continuous feeder, add pre-shredded carrots and bake. **Chicken:** Heat precooked diced chicken in oven and mix with curry sauce. **Chickpeas:** Bake canned chickpeas in oven with curry sauce. **Rice:** Cook in hotel pans in steamer. **Service:** Mix rice and curry on service line.



Example tray with a mix of preparation techniques

Cheese Sandwich: Assembled and baked in oven from bread (pre-sliced) and cheese (pre-sliced). **Turkey Rice Soup:** Cooked in a tilt skillet from raw turkey (baked by staff), canned carrots, pre-diced celery, pre-diced onions, chicken stock, spices. **Salad Bar:** Assembled from bagged greens, whole baby carrots, cucumbers (sliced by staff) **Green Beans:** Warmed in combi oven from canned green beans and spices (added by staff). **Sliced Apples:** Sliced from whole using sectionizer and bagged with specialty equipment.



How can SAs and CN Partners Build a More Supportive Environment for Scratch Cooking?

Scratch cooking can improve the healthfulness of school meals,³ and SFAs are using scratch to meet their program goals. But there are numerous challenges to scratch cooking that SAs and CN partners can help SFAs overcome. This document presents key findings from the study that are particularly relevant for SAs and CN partners, organized by the following topic areas: 1) staffing and training; 2) production and menu planning; 3) knowledge and perceptions about regulations; 4) local food initiatives and USDA Foods; 5) procurement knowledge and infrastructure; 6) financial pressures; and 7) marketing and communication.

Each section provides relevant contextual findings, challenges, and effective strategies already in use, as well as opportunities for SAs and CN partners to offer support.

1. Staffing and training

SFAs reported that kitchen staff capacity is among the biggest influences on their food production. Some of the biggest challenges were the following:

- SFAs experienced large staff turnover during and since the COVID-19 pandemic, and many SFAs report having difficulty filling empty positions, which limits the food they can prepare.
- The State or local hiring system may also create barriers to hiring, such as application fees, mandated waiting periods before hiring, and paying employees only once per month.
- SFAs often struggle to offer competitive wages and schedules compared to local food service positions.

These barriers have resulted in less experienced kitchen staff and staff who are more comfortable using heat-and-serve techniques and may also struggle with reading and following recipes. Still, most staff are interested in and motivated to use scratch cooking as long as students eat the food they prepare.

"At first [staff] were very apprehensive. They were thinking, 'it's going to be too time consuming, too difficult.' But seeing the kids actually liking our products and taking it, [staff] have changed their mind about the scratch cooking." – Kitchen manager, large urban SFA

SFAs in this study found some training topics especially important for scratch cooking, particularly: production planning; reading recipes, including understanding culinary terms; and using equipment correctly to improve food quality. Regardless of the topic, SFAs expressed common preferences for effective and engaging training:

- In person, kitchen-based training: Staff want to see demonstrations and work on equipment that is similar to their own.
- Relevant to their roles: When staff are trained in skills that are relevant to their roles and responsibilities, they can begin applying them immediately.
- School kitchen experience: SFAs prefer trainers with kitchen and operations experience who can share examples from their work and commiserate with the realities of school kitchens.

³Behrens T. K., Liebert M. L., Peterson H. J., Smith J. F., Sutcliffe J. T., Day A., Mack J. (2018). *Changes in school food preparation methods result in healthier cafeteria lunches in elementary schools*. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 54(Suppl. 2), S139–S144.

- Other SFAs: SFAs appreciate learning directly from their peers, particularly related to regulations.
- Flexibility: SFAs want to learn how to leverage the flexibility within Federal regulations.

Opportunities for SAs and CN partners to support staffing and training

- ☐ Address staffing barriers that are due to hiring/personnel systems
- ☐ Facilitate in-person and on-line peer-to-peer learning networks among SFAs
- ☐ Develop training led by facilitators with school kitchen experience
- ☐ Develop training that highlights how to flexibly meet program requirements
- ☐ Provide monetary stipends to train staff in scratch cooking
- ☐ Cover trainer expenses, staff time, and other training needs (e.g., food costs)

2. Production and menu planning

Scratch recipes often involve more time and steps, and SFAs have to carefully plan how their staff will accomplish them. As observed in this study's site visits, SFAs doing a lot of scratch cooking demonstrated strong production planning skills,⁴ while FSDs who struggled to include more scratch didn't know where to start.

In several SFAs, on-site chefs or specialists from the restaurant or food industries worked with staff to improve production planning in school kitchens, by focusing on understanding and interpreting recipes, batch cooking, labor division and responsibilities in kitchens, equipment and supply usage, and workflows.

"Making sure that you have all the items you need for that day, making sure it's thawed, pulled early enough to have that product the way you need it – I think that planning is a huge part of the role these ladies play." – Kitchen supervisor, medium suburban SFA

Production planning strategies that support scratch cooking – observations from successful SFAs

- 1-2 weeks in advance: Staff review the recipes they will prepare; review the ingredients; and order product or coordinate with the buyers
- 1-2 days in advance: Staff measure/portion ingredients and place in cold or dry storage; move frozen product to cool storage to thaw; place products on trays in cold storage to prep for cooking
- School site meets daily or weekly to review their production planning schedules; figure out who is doing what and who might need help
- Posted visuals remind staff about key areas of production planning
- Cafeteria managers or team leads share what is working from site to site
- Staff have independence to refine their production planning and take ownership over their meals and program

SFAs also shared how standardized recipes could support efficient scratch cooking:

- There is need for more standardized recipes that are tailored to regional and State differences in student food preferences.

⁴ Production planning is the organizing and scheduling of food preparation tasks to ensure efficient and timely production of quality menu items.

- FSDs like recipes to include information about where ingredients were purchased from, such as product codes, USDA Foods, or local producers.
- Recipes should include details about equipment used in each step and other alternative equipment options.
- SFAs need more support and training on how to take scratch recipes from other sources and adapt them to meet meal pattern requirements.

Opportunities for SAs and CN partners to support production and menu planning

- ☐ Develop resources to provide SFAs the tools they need for production planning in their kitchens
- ☐ Improve access to chefs or industry specialists with strong backgrounds in production planning to help SFAs improve their workflow
- ☐ Offer tools, training, and technical assistance to support SFAs in developing standardized recipes that use scratch cooking techniques

3. Knowledge and perceptions about regulations

Some SFAs described certain dietary specifications and meal pattern requirements as barriers for scratch cooking, and others saw scratch cooking as a solution to meeting these requirements. Overall, the range of comments suggested that kitchen staff and some FSDs may not fully understand the regulations.

Sodium: SFAs shared a range of perceptions about the challenges of meeting sodium limits requirements.

- Some scratch menu items (e.g., soups) are hard to incorporate while meeting weekly sodium limits.
- Replacing salt with herbs and spices is helpful for maintaining strong flavors and taste that students will accept – but more costly.
- Some kitchen staff are under the assumption that they can't cook with any salt because FSDs have told them not to add salt to anything.
- SFAs in southern States are particularly concerned with meeting the sodium limits and serving menu items that meet student food preferences.

Other SFAs felt that scratch cooking is an excellent way to control sodium, reflecting a range of perspectives and understanding of the regulations.

“The most pressing reason [to do scratch] as it relates to compliance, just being able to control our ingredients as much as we can. The added sugar, the added sodium, the calories, the things that kind of outline the menus that we write.” – FSD, large suburban SFA

Whole Grain Products: SFAs struggle to find any whole grain products students enjoy. Some of these SFAs have tried making their own whole grain breads and rolls but have not always had success. SFAs want more student-approved scratch recipes using whole grains.

Training preferences: In order to overcome these challenges, SFAs shared clear preferences for how they want training about the policies they find challenging.

- Instead of hearing the regulations repeated, they would like to see specific examples of flexibility in meeting regulations.

- SFA staff prefer trainers with operational experience in schools and who have experience implementing regulations.
- SFAs also prefer in-person technical assistance to discuss their specific issues.

Opportunities for SAs and CN partners to support knowledge and perceptions about regulations

- ☐ Provide regional/State specific scratch recipes that meet regulations and account for student preferences
- ☐ Facilitate shared learning among SFAs, showing how SFAs are adjusting to nutrient and meal pattern requirements while incorporating scratch
- ☐ Develop technical assistance that focuses on how SFAs can make achievable adjustments to meet regulations
- ☐ Include peer-to-peer learning and mentoring in trainings, and train in person when possible

4. Local foods initiatives and USDA Foods

Local Foods: Local food purchases create a positive impact on the amount of scratch cooking SFAs use in their menus. SFAs are motivated to work with local vendors for the following reasons:

- Parents and the community value supporting the local economy.
- Local vendors often provide fresh produce, raw meat, and other unprocessed or minimally processed foods used for scratch cooking and fresh fruit and vegetable offerings.
- SFAs consistently reported that students can taste the difference with local products.



Student tray with taco featuring local beef.

“Asparagus is expensive. It’s grown here in [State]. Last year I was able to get 110 pounds from LFS funding. We serve [local] asparagus every year, and it has grown in popularity. Kids have asked for it.” – FSD, medium rural SFA

One of the barriers shared by many SFAs is that local ingredients can be more expensive, so the recent loss of Local Foods for School (LFS) funding is seen as detrimental. Also, not all growers have the time or knowledge to sell to schools, so finding vendors can be challenging. Several State agencies and non-profits provide support for SFAs to address the challenges of procuring local foods.

Examples of policies, grants, and partnerships to support local foods

Policy - Michigan’s “10 Cents A Meal”	SFAs receive a \$.10 reimbursement per meal when they purchase and use Michigan-grown minimally processed fruits, vegetables, or dried beans. The additional reimbursement for each meal allows SFAs to purchase higher quality produce.
Grant - Minnesota’s “Full Tray Grant”	The Minnesota State Department of Agriculture offers grants to fund SFA farm-to-school programs and develop SFA local foods procurement processes. The grants allow SFAs to develop relationships with local growers and purchase fresh produce from them.
Partnership - Common Market Southeast	Common Market Southeast is a regional food hub that connects small and family-owned farms to a range of food service clients, including schools. One SFA in this study used LFS funds to purchase raw meats and fresh produce from the Common Market, which the students perceive as higher quality. Common Market also provides some promotional materials to market the local products.

USDA Foods: Many SFAs rely on lowering the cost per meal through USDA Foods in Schools (USDA Foods), either by using direct delivery items or diverting items for processing. SFAs reported the most helpful USDA Foods for use in scratch cooking were chicken (e.g., diced and fajita), cheeses, canned beans, and precut vegetables. Some SFAs shared they would prefer more local producers participating in these entitlement programs to meet the preference of their communities for local food.

Example of using USDA Foods to lower plate cost while including scratch preparation

Peruvian Chicken: Baked from chicken drumstick (frozen, USDA Foods) and Peruvian chicken marinade (made from raw ingredients). **Pineapple:** Cut from whole. **Sweet Potatoes:** Warmed in combi oven from canned sweet potatoes (USDA Foods) and spices (added by staff). **Salad Bar:** Assembled from bagged greens, pre-shredded carrots, cucumbers (sliced by hand), red onions (sliced by hand). **Garlic Lime Rice:** Cooked in combi oven from dry brown rice, lime juice, and garlic powder.



In some States, SFAs shared challenges with USDA Foods that impacted the quality of foods, freshness, and shelf-life. SFAs said this was caused by the quality of the processing, handling of food items, holding during transportation, and delivery schedules.

“You don’t ever know when [USDA Foods is] coming, how much is coming. So last year we got an entire semi of broccoli on May 20th, so I had a freezer full of broccoli and nowhere to store it, and no kids, you know, no summer programs.” – FSD, medium rural SFA

Opportunities for SAs and CN partners to support Local Foods and USDA Foods

- ☐ Help local farmers and producers understand how to sell to schools
- ☐ Support local producers to participate as vendors in USDA Foods
- ☐ Share how specific USDA Foods can be used to lower the plate cost in scratch recipes
- ☐ Offer monetary incentives for schools to purchase from local vendors
- ☐ Use suggestions for procurement [next section] to support local purchasing by SFAs

5. Procurement knowledge and infrastructure

Many SFAs experience challenges with the procurement processes that inhibit the purchase of foods used in scratch cooking. When SFAs are unable to navigate procurement requirements or find vendors that meet their needs, they lose potential sources of raw ingredients used in scratch cooking.

SFA-reported challenges with procurement

Micro-purchases	- Time and effort needed relative to a small amount of money, especially for smaller SFAs without dedicated procurement staff - Concern about using a micro-purchase and then wanting more product later in the year, as the combined total might then exceed the micro-purchase limit
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SFA-reported challenges with procurement (continued)

Vendor responses	• Not enough vendor responses to solicitations when trying to procure new products or find better prices • Vendors not returning calls or emails and refusing to meet with small SFAs
Procurement requirements	• Lengthy and confusing requirements disproportionately impact small SFAs as well as small farmers and vendors who don't have the time, knowledge, or capacity to sell to schools • In States with less State procurement support, smaller SFAs face more challenges in understanding how to follow laws and work with vendors

Some State agencies are already providing support to address these challenges through strong procurement policies, programs, grants, and work groups that help SFAs to purchase foods more easily for scratch cooking. States most commonly supported SFAs by:

- Facilitating group buying power among smaller and medium-sized SFAs, allowing them to negotiate and include more items and delivery locations in their bids.
- Encouraging SFAs to share menus and recipes using specific products available in the State.
- Offering training, technical assistance, and shared learning to improve SFAs' procurement knowledge.

Wisconsin - Cooperative Education Services Agency (CESA) Purchasing Consortium and Wisconsin School Nutrition Purchasing Cooperative (WiSNP) Co-op

The majority of Wisconsin small and medium sized SFAs participate in the State-led purchasing consortium and cooperative for most of their food purchases. SFAs use these groups to discuss the foods purchased and how they are using these products in scratch recipes.

Alabama – statewide bid

Alabama has a statewide bid and works with two distributors, one that predominantly serves the northern part of the State and the other the southern part. Foods on the bid have specified product numbers that SFAs include in their recipes. When SFAs share recipes with other SFAs in the State, it is easy for them to identify ingredients in the recipe on the statewide bids.

North Carolina Farm to School Program

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture runs its Farm to School Program and facilitates purchases of local foods for schools. The State agency issues bids with local producers, schools place orders, and the State agency coordinates deliveries to SFAs by delivering to schools, produce suppliers, warehouses, etc.

Opportunities for SAs and CN partners to support procurement knowledge and infrastructure

- ☐ Provide more face-to-face networking opportunities for SFAs to connect with local farmers and producers
- ☐ Offer training, technical assistance, and shared learning around procurement, especially for small SFAs and vendors
- ☐ Create lists of potential vendors for SFAs
- ☐ Establish statewide purchasing cooperatives
- ☐ Share successful State policies with other SAs and CN partners

6. Financial pressures

SFAs are self-operating businesses within their school district, with distinct revenues and expenses that dictate program operations. A challenging and uncertain budgeting environment threatens to pressure FSDs toward more heat-and-serve meals, even as many SFAs are increasing their use of scratch cooking.

- Food and labor costs are rising. Most SFAs are already minimally staffed, so the need to keep operational costs down usually leads to lower spending on food and more heat-and-serve menu items.
- In this study, meal revenues (i.e., federal reimbursements, paid meals, and a la carte sales) covered an average of only 81 percent of SFA expenses, forcing SFAs to find other funding sources (see below).

Many SFAs shared that when their budget is tight, they offer more heat-and-serve items, as these offer an easy way to control food costs, and they have limited options to reduce costs in other areas. Without adequate funding, SFAs cannot invest in the hiring, training, equipment and other costs that may be associated with doing more scratch cooking.

Universal Free Meals: SFAs with a district-wide Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)⁵ or in States with universal free meals reported more predictable budgets. SFAs shared that universal meals have led to increased participation, less meal debt, and less time needed for processing meal benefit applications (i.e., administrative burden). As a result, SFAs have extra time and money to invest in equipment, staffing, menu planning, and food purchases (e.g., herbs, raw local produce).

"From a financial standpoint, to be CEP is such a blessing. We have great participation, and CEP has a lot to do with that. Because of CEP and because of our participation, we have the revenue to be able to buy the equipment and do the things we want to do." – FSD, large rural SFA

During interviews, SFA staff were all asked what one thing they would change to help improve their program. Nearly all SFA staff from various parts of the country, from rural to urban, low to high free/reduced price lunch percentages, from communities across the political spectrum, responded with some version of "free meals for all."

Grants and donations: While grants (e.g., Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program, Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative) are extremely helpful, many small SFAs do not have the capacity to apply for funding because they are consumed by the day-to-day work of running the meal program. They would like more support with finding and applying for grants. Also, some SFAs shared that the difficulty of applying to, managing, and reporting on grants was not worth the small amount of money they received. Donations are helpful to cover students' school meal debt or food; some schools receive in-kind donations from farms (e.g., beef produce).

"When am I going to find time to write grants? I'm sure we'd be a candidate. I'd be so interested. When you're in the weeds every day, it's hard." – FSD, medium suburban SFA

Entrepreneurial skills: Several FSDs demonstrated creative problem solving and entrepreneurial thinking to generate revenue while building a positive image of their program and scratch cooking in the community.

⁵ The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. CEP allows the nation's highest poverty schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. More on CEP: <https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/cep>

Examples of problem solving and entrepreneurial thinking to generate revenue

Expanding revenue sources: One FSD invested in a large-scale baking operation, capable of producing over 1,200 rolls or cinnamon rolls a day from raw ingredients. The SFA caters to churches and the Chamber of Commerce and runs a Christmas community bake sale. They use their profits to fund school meals.



Professional networking, marketing, and catering to increase revenue: One FSD regularly attends meetings and develops catering clients through the local chamber of commerce and reaches out to farmers and producers in the area to assess availability of local products. In addition, the SFA tests new recipes by giving free samples to district staff, allowing SFA staff to practice new recipes while raising awareness of the program with key stakeholders. The SFA also caters for PTA events so that it can market its products to potential customers.

Leveraging partnerships and maximizing revenue: One FSD works closely with the culinary department at a high school to develop catering opportunities and support staff in preparing produce:

“All of our fresh produce, we receive it, we roll it over to culinary. They cut everything for us in all these fun, different shapes. She’s got about 80 to 100 [students] because four or five classes are helping us. Now those students are actually coming into the kitchen and working side by side with our staff to alleviate some stress on the staff. So, they feel like they’re getting more done because they have that support.” – Chef, large urban SFA

Opportunities for SAs and CN partners to alleviate financial pressure

- ☐ Educate boards of education, business leaders, and policy makers about the connection between universal free meals, predictable revenue, and high-quality meals for students
- ☐ Provide leadership and business training to support FSDs in developing unique business models focused on networking/partnerships and expanding revenue
- ☐ Reduce the application and reporting burden for grants and other funding opportunities, and offer grant amounts that align with SFA size and needs
- ☐ Provide technical assistance and grant support for smaller SFAs to apply for and manage funding opportunities

7. Marketing and communication

“If I’m going to be a marketer, I’m going to have to give up something. If I’m going to hire a marketing firm, I’m going to have to put that in my budget.” – FSD, Medium dense rural SFA

SFAs believe that marketing the scratch cooking they do can help build a more positive image of their program and increase participation, since parents and other community members value scratch. While SFAs do some marketing to parents, students, school staff, and the community, they often lack the time, expertise, and money to invest in marketing – and they have a deep desire to do more.

SFAs shared three major attitudinal and knowledge barriers that impact their programs:

- **Parent misconceptions:** SFAs have limited engagement with parents, and many parents don't understand the work that goes into making school meals. Parent understanding of school meals is primarily based on menus and media coverage, and they aren't aware of scratch items.
- **Menus undersell food preparation:** Most online menus undersell the effort and the food preparation behind menu items. Users may have to click five to six times to find menu details, and few menus use descriptors like "scratch" and "local," or flavor-forward descriptors like "Southwest" or "sweet and spicy." Also, menus use vague terms like "choice of fruit," which do not indicate the multiple options and extent of variety (see images below).
- **Negative perceptions from school leaders:** Some teachers and administrators speak negatively about school meals based on limited knowledge, assumptions, or experiences from other SFAs.

The menu says, "Fresh Fruit Variety 1/2 cup" or "Fresh Veggie Variety ½ cup"

Students see a colorful, rotating combination of options including produce from local farmers.



The menu says, "Sloppy Joe"

Students get a roll baked from raw ingredients topped with beef supplied by a rancher one town over.



The menu says, "Salad Entrée, Variety"

Students get fresh, colorful salads prepared daily.



Successful student marketing strategies: SFAs shared how State agencies and other CN partners have successfully supported marketing and communication to students around taste testing, nutrition education, and posters and other print materials along the service line to students.

Examples of successful strategies to market

AmeriCorps Members

One SFA uses AmeriCorps volunteers to support student marketing and outreach

"We're really engaging kids on local food promotion this year. I have an AmeriCorps member this year from the State. They're fantastic. And then you can kind of take that load off and put it on somebody else." – FSD, medium rural SFA

Examples of successful strategies to market (continued)

Industry Partners	Manufacturers and distributors can provide posters with a high production value to market ingredients or products to students <i>“The industry wants to provide resources to school districts and operations, and they have the skill, they have the culinary expertise in most instances, they have the time to be creative. They have access to marketing.”</i> – FSD, large suburban SFA
Other State Partners	SFAs partner with a lot of State partners on farm to school efforts that help promote menu items and foods <i>“Recently we’ve gotten a lot of posters through the 10 Cents a Meal program and through Cultivate for Michigan and stuff, and they’re very vibrant posters that have a little bit of information on the bottom of it.”</i> – FSD, medium rural SFA

Opportunities for SAs and CN partners to support marketing and communication

- ☐ Advocate for or support the development and usage of more visual menu programs to promote school meals to parents
- ☐ Design sharable menu templates emphasizing food preparation, quality, and variety, and use flavor-forward descriptors in templates to help SFAs describe their foods
- ☐ Provide support, in the form of templates, image banks, or technical assistance for developing newsletters, posters, and social media posts promoting scratch items
- ☐ Support a broader campaign promoting elements of school meals that will resonate with parents and communities, such as scratch cooking and using products from local vendors

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