



Food and
Nutrition
Service

Park Office
Center

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria
VA 22302

DATE: January 29, 2018

MEMO CODE: SP 08-2018

SUBJECT: Invitation to attend State Agency Gathering: Leading and Leveraging Farm to School Success

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

Dear Child Nutrition State Agency Directors:

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is pleased to announce the first gathering of State agency staff working on community food systems issues. The *State Agency Gathering: Leading and Leveraging Farm to School Success* is for any State agency staff that currently work on farm to school efforts and/or are looking to start engaging in farm to school. Staff from agencies that administer the Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs), along with State-level staff from other agencies, such as departments of agriculture or health, are encouraged to attend. The meeting will be held **April 24-25, 2018** in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The *State Agency Gathering: Leading and Leveraging Farm to School Success* will bring together State agencies, key FNS staff, and farm to school experts from across the nation. The purpose of the gathering is to facilitate peer learning among State agencies, promote farm to school best practices, and provide coordinators with administrative support. The meeting will cover topics like:

- Developing partnerships across different State agencies;
- Procuring local foods;
- Communicating with school nutrition directors and producers; and,
- Creating State-level farm to school plans, collecting data, and evaluating progress.

Who should attend?

The training content is suitable for both staff working on Child Nutrition Programs and those engaged in promoting local agriculture. We encourage each State agency administering CNPs to consider sending staff and connecting with other State agencies that support farm to school efforts to encourage their participation in the training. States are encouraged to send staff that are dedicated farm to school coordinators, as well as those for whom community food systems may be a portion of their responsibilities.

Schedule and Location

The event is scheduled for one full day **beginning at 8:30 am on Tuesday, April 24, 2018**, and an optional half-day on **Wednesday, April 25, 2018**. To ease travel and financial burdens, as well as promote attendance at both events, USDA is hosting this gathering immediately prior to the National Farm to School Network's Farm to Cafeteria Conference. State agencies are encouraged to attend both events. State agencies that are core or supporting partners of the National Farm to School Network are expected to attend the Network's strategic planning meeting on Wednesday, April 25, 2018. State agencies who are not Network partners are invited to attend a half-day local foods procurement training, led by USDA, on Wednesday, April 25. All training sessions will be held at the Hilton Netherlands Plaza, 35 W 5th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. We have reserved a block of rooms.

To register for the gathering, please use this link:

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

To make a hotel reservation, please use this link: <https://aws.passkey.com/go/SAGAPRIL2018>

Funding for Travel Costs

Travel to the training is an allowable and appropriate use of State Administrative Expense funds. Please remember that Federal funds provided to State agencies for administration of the CNPs are not to be subject to State budget restrictions or limitations, including travel restrictions. If limited funding will prohibit your attendance and you can demonstrate a financial hardship, there may be funding available to support travel. Please contact Erin Hysom (erin.hysom@fns.usda.gov) for more information.

You may direct questions concerning the *State Agency Gathering: Leading and Leveraging Farm to School Success* to Erin Hysom (erin.hysom@fns.usda.gov). We encourage your participation and look forward to seeing our State agency partners in April!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cynthia Long
Deputy Administrator
Child Nutrition Programs

Attachment

DRAFT AGENDA

Day 1 - Tuesday, April 24, 2018

- 8:30 – 9:00 Welcome
- State agencies (SAs) role in farm to school
 - Working across SAs to integrate farm to school
 - Economic impact of farm to school on local communities
 - Acceptance of meal patterns & effect on program participation
- 9:00 – 10:30 Learn the Language – How State Agencies are Improving Communication between Districts and Producers
- Emphasizes SA role in facilitating communication between districts and producers
 - Discover how SAs are helping to build relationships between districts and producers
 - Lessons learned, tips, and best practices for effective communication
- 10:30 – 10:45 Break
- 10:45 – 12:00 Engaging Producers, Distributors, & DoD Fresh Vendors – SA & Producer Panel
- How SAs are working with producers, distributors, & DoD Fresh vendors to increase local food options & enhance tracking/reporting systems
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00 – 2:00 Building State Coalitions
- Learn from SAs who have robust networks of public-private partnerships to advance farm to school within their state
- 2:00 – 3:30 Planning and Evaluating Success
- Learn how to develop state-level strategic plans to advance farm to school efforts
 - Discover how SAs are evaluating progress and success
- 3:30 – 3:45 Break
- 3:45 – 4:45 Concurrent Peer Sharing Sessions
- Supporting beginner farm to school practitioners
 - Funding farm to school efforts
 - Engaging producers/districts in local procurement
- 4:45 – 5:30 Closing Session: Regional Showcase
- 5:30 – 7:30 Networking Event (optional)

DRAFT
Day 2ⁱ - Wednesday, April 25, 2018

8:30 – 9:00 Welcome and Review

9:00 – 11:00 Local Foods Procurement Training

- Begin by learning the basics of procurement regulations and ways districts can target local products through the procurement process
- Dive deeper into procurement by exploring the various procurement methods and focusing on special topics, such as writing forward contracts and working with co-ops and food hubs

11:00 – 11:15 Break

11:15 – 12:00 Closing

ⁱ Day 2 coincides with the National Farm to School Network's (NFSN) annual meeting for core and supporting partners. State agency representatives who are NFSN partners are expected to attend the annual meeting.