

Farm to School Showcase Toolkit

A Guide for Connecting Local Food Suppliers with School Food Buyers at School Nutrition Trade Shows



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thanks

one What is a Farm to School Showcase?

A Farm to School Showcase is designed to highlight producers, processors, and distributors of local foods by creating a designated "Showcase" space for these vendors within a larger school nutrition trade show.

Oregon's Painted Hills Natural Beef and Stahlbush Island Farms shared a booth and strengthened the presence of local vendors at Oregon's School Nutrition Association conference.





The School Nutrition Association is a national, nonprofit professional organization representing more than 55,000 members who provide high-quality, low-cost meals to students across the country. Recognized as an authority on school nutrition, the School Nutrition Association (SNA) has been advancing the availability, quality, and acceptance of school nutrition programs as an integral part of education since 1946. The SNA has 52 state-based affiliates.¹

Every year, school food service directors and staff across the country attend a national SNA conference as well as statewide conferences hosted by SNA affiliates in their home states. These conferences provide educational opportunities on topics such as nutrition, food safety, and school meal trends. They also include trade shows at which food service directors, managers, and kitchen staff meet food brokers and are introduced to available products. While regulations prohibit sales that result in the exchange of merchandise or money from occurring at these shows, vendors are permitted to show, discuss, display, and sample their products or services. SNA trade

shows provide important opportunities for food producers to establish and maintain business connections with school food service staff. National food corporations often dominate these trade shows; smaller local and regional producers new to the school food market may be uncertain about the potential market opportunity and value of the connections they will make. This is especially true for farmers, ranchers, and fishermen who sell their products direct fresh or minimally processed. Booth cost, travel, and coordination efforts further discourage small and medium-sized producers with limited resources.

Hosting a Farm to School Showcase provides an opportunity to strengthen and incentivize the presence of local and regional vendors at SNA conferences. The goal of a Farm to School Showcase is to create a space (a Showcase) within a larger vendor trade show where local producers are highlighted. The Showcase helps build school food service attendees' interest, awareness, and knowledge of Farm to School and provides them with the opportunity to make real-time connections with local food producers.

“It was a great way to increase our visibility among school nutrition staff throughout the area.”

– Farm to School Showcase vendor

“I am so excited to include more local farm raised items. It is a positive for us to serve local meat and produce.”

– Farm to School Showcase attendee

The definition of “local” can be adjusted to fit the needs of your state (e.g., in tight knit regions, neighboring states may also be included in this definition). However, given that school food staff from across the state attend SNA conferences, we recommend not limiting the definition to anything smaller than your state boundaries for the Showcase. *See “Recruiting and Communicating with Local Vendors” (page 9) for more on who to include in your Showcase.*

¹ <http://snn.schoolnutrition.org/>

two Who Coordinates and How to Begin

For a full checklist and timeline for coordinating your Showcase, see **Get started** (page 20)

One organization or a small team of partners should “host” the Farm to School Showcase. Make sure there is a clearly defined point person for School Nutrition Association conference staff and for Farm to School Showcase vendors.

CHOOSING A HOST

1. An organization or team that is interested in seeking funding for the role of organizer, or whose work fits with the goals of the Showcase is ideal. The more time and resources that can be devoted to the Showcase, the better. Nonetheless, Showcases in the past have thrived on a variety of budgets, and a low-budget Showcase the first year can lay the groundwork for a more fully-funded Showcase in the future.

2. The best Showcase hosts are community partners that already work with school districts and/or local food producers, e.g., a non-profit that supports Farm to School programming, a farmer advocate organization or farmers market, or representatives from state departments of agriculture. It is better not to choose a producer as the main organizer, since producers need to focus on promoting their products.

3. At a minimum, the Showcase host should have an idea of how to secure modest funding for some Showcase materials. Uniform signage and an ad in the conference booklet are helpful promotional materials for the Showcase.

FIRST STEPS AS A HOST

1. Start planning early. Ideally Farm to School Showcase planning begins about six months in advance (although you can certainly pull one off in less time).

2. Find out where and when your state hosts its annual School Nutrition Association conference. Location is important: some vendors might be 30 minutes away, while others might be six hours!

3. Consider your budget. Key costs might include promotional materials, scholarships for vendors, and compensation for your time. See *Appendix A: Budget considerations when hosting a Showcase*, for more information.

4. Define your criteria for Showcase vendors. Make sure to take into account any impact your funding source may have on your criteria.

5. Contact the conference exhibit/trade show manager, ideally six months before the show. Tell them that you are interested in reserving a section of booths for regional producers, and ask if vendors are allowed to split booths (this is good to know in case some vendors can't afford an entire booth). Ask for the booths to be grouped together immediately by the entrance (a prime location) if possible.

TIP

To learn about possibilities for hosting educational Farm to School sessions during other parts of the conference, contact conference organizers (usually a different person than the trade show manager).

“I liked being grouped in a like-minded, health-focused area.” – Farm to School Showcase vendor



VENDOR REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT

Make your plan for registration with the conference exhibit/trade show manager. It is important to keep this as simple as possible.

IF YOU HAVE FUNDING TO SPONSOR BOOTHS

1. Ask to register that amount of booths under your organization's name, and inform the trade show manager that you will be responsible for correspondence with the vendors that you recruit to fill the space.
2. Fill out the necessary paperwork and submit as soon as possible to reserve the booths for the Showcase.
3. Let the trade show manager know that you will pass on the list of vendors as soon as you've recruited those who will fill your booths.

TIP

Consider splitting booths between complementary (not competing) producers or organizations to stretch your funding even further.

"I appreciated...the willingness to engage with local companies. Thank you for the scholarship! It was a no-cost way to gain information about the process of selling to schools."

– Farm to School Showcase vendor

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE FUNDING TO SPONSOR BOOTHS

1. Ask the trade show manager to reserve your Farm to School Showcase spaces and then have individual vendors register through the manager. You will still do the recruitment, but not the booth coordination.
2. Check in with the manager to see how many producers have followed through with registration.
3. The trade show manager will only reserve booth spaces without payment for a limited amount of time. Booth prices often increase after a certain date. It's your job to remind Showcase vendors to register and pay for their booth as soon as they agree to participate.

You may wish to ask the trade show manager whether the Farm to School Showcase can be listed as an option on the formal trade show registration form. Eligible vendors who you haven't personally contacted about the Showcase have a chance to join the group (you'd need to outline some agreed upon criteria for who can participate in the Showcase on the form, e.g., "Only food producers from Virginia").

three Recruiting & Communicating with Local Vendors

Once the trade show manager has confirmed your Farm to School Showcase space, it's your job to fill it with great local producers! Remember that 'local' and 'regional' are defined by you.

"We actually were able to get a table for some ProStart students (culinary class in high school) and they served local carrots and roasted potato wedges that could be featured in the school menu. It was a GREAT way to have food service learn about the program, visualize use of local product, and sample it too!"

– Johanna Herron, Alaska Farm to School Program, Division of Agriculture,
Department of Natural Resources, Alaska State Lead for the National Farm to School Network



RECRUIT YOUR VENDORS

It's advisable to recruit producers of a variety of sizes and with a variety of products (e.g., local farmers, but also bakeries, dairies, and meat purveyors) as well as wholesalers or distributors that feature local products. It's also a good idea to have agriculture and/or nutrition-related non-profits, government programs, community groups, or student groups in the Showcase to provide information or materials related to the Showcase's mission.

The number of vendors at a showcase can vary, and depends on the space available. Anywhere from 15-25 vendors is a good goal to ensure wide representation from diverse producers and community partners. At a minimum, vendors should have an interest in creating or strengthening their connections in the school food market. Producers who have at least some prior experience selling to schools are ideal. Producers who have never worked with schools are encouraged to participate if their product fits general school purchas-

ing requirements, and especially if you have the resources to provide guidance on how to work with schools.

Your recruitment outreach should include:

- An explanation of the Farm to School Showcase and its goals
- Where and when the Showcase takes place
- Who is eligible to participate
- Why vendors would want to participate
- Cost to participate
- How to reserve a spot in the Showcase

*For ideas, see **Appendix B: Sample recruitment announcement for Showcase vendors***

Depending on the number of booths available, you may choose to contact vendors on an individual basis in order to ensure that there are enough spots for all interested participants. If you have extra space, or are having trouble filling your booths, you can start a broader recruitment process.

No matter how many vendors you recruit, make sure to designate one booth for Farm to School information. This booth can be staffed by you, the host, or by a community partner, but it is important that school food service staff have a place to go to learn more about the concept of Farm to School (see more about what to include at this booth under the “*Materials and Activities to Enhance the Showcase*” section). If they are not already involved, asking Farm to School coordinators from your state agencies² and your State Lead for the National Farm to School Network³ to help staff this booth are ways to engage key stakeholders at the Showcase.

² Find a list of Farm to School coordinators based at state departments of agriculture or education here: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/contacts.htm>

³ To find contact information for your State Lead, click on your state's page on the National Farm to School Network's website: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/>

Staff from FoodHub, a web-based tool for connecting farmers and wholesale buyers provided resources and information on how to search for and connect with local suppliers.



(left) Staff from the Washington State Department of Agriculture's Farm to School program hosted the information booth of this Farm to School Showcase. They left a computer open showcasing some of their own web-based resources and also hosted a trivia contest.

(right) Regional vendors Willamette Valley Fruit Co. and Shepherd's Grain filled their shared booth with signs, samples, and information.



COMMUNICATING WITH VENDORS BEFORE THE SHOW

Communication with vendors in advance is key to a successful Showcase. Vendors are busy, so it is important that each communication be clear and comprehensive. This is especially important if you have secured funding to pay for booths and offer vendor scholarships, because it means that you are the vendor's only connection to conference organizers.

VENDORS WILL NEED TO KNOW

- What the showcase is and who their point person will be on the day of the event
- What cost, if any, they owe (this may be between the vendor and the trade show manager, or it may be between you and the vendor)
- Where and when the Showcase takes place
- What times they can come to set up their booth in advance of the show
- Size of booth, as well as what's included (electrical outlet, tables, trash can, etc.)
- Where they can park, unload, and load
- What they should bring (banner/sign, samples, fliers/handouts)
- Important guidelines or regulations (e.g., vendors are generally permitted to sample their foods but not to sell them)
- What the conference theme is, in case they would like to participate
- Names of other Showcase vendors, and name of booth partner if they will be splitting a booth

- Tips on talking to school food service staff and questions they may want to ask
- Information on how to sell to schools, what schools need to know, and what makes a good school food vendor (on time, reliable, professional invoicing, communicative, etc).

See **Appendix C: Sample informational email for vendors**

It can also be helpful for you, the host, to know which of your vendors have already worked with schools (and if so, which districts), what products they offer, and anything notable about vendors that might be relevant to school food buyers (products that have a Child Nutrition Label, special certifications such as organic or Good Agricultural Practices [GAP], size of vendor/capacity, etc.) Creating a **Farm to School Trivia Game** can be helpful in gathering these noteworthy vendor facts, and then passing the information on to school food service staff (see *“Materials and Activities to Enhance the Showcase”*, page 14 for more information on creating a trivia game).

four Promotion

BEFORE THE SHOWCASE

It is helpful for conference participants to be familiar with the phrase “Farm to School Showcase” before the trade show occurs. Ask the show manager if information about the Showcase can be included in any of the following:

- In the exhibition/trade show program booklet (or as an insert into the program)
- In emails to conference participants before the show (ask the trade show manager if they are able to provide you with the conference attendee list a few weeks prior to the show so that you can send an e-mail out to registered food service staff)
- On your state’s School Nutrition Association website (where they promote the annual conference)
- In a press release, sent out to all conference attendees

The more times “Farm to School Showcase” appears in conference literature, the better!

DURING THE SHOWCASE

It’s just as important to promote the Farm to School Showcase during the show as it is before the show. Many conference participants have been to lots of trade shows, so it’s your job to make sure they know that the Farm to School Showcase is a wonderful new attraction! Even though many vendors will bring their own signs and banners, it is worth printing consistent signage to place at each vendor’s booth to help tie the Showcase together and ensure that it is visibly coordinated. When it comes to Showcase signage, focus on:

- **Visibility:** Make sure colors and fonts are readable at a distance
- **Simplicity and Consistency:** Use a common logo or picture, the title “Farm to School Showcase,” and the name of the vendor. Be clear and concise. Uniformity will make your Showcase branding easily identifiable.

- **Location:** Larger signs hanging behind and above booths are generally more effective than smaller stand-up signs. This also frees up the table top for promotional materials, samples, etc. Ask the trade show manager if booths will have curtain backdrops or other structural elements from which vendors can hang a sign above and behind the booth. (Don’t forget to bring pins, hooks, or other materials to hang signs!

Some suggestions for promotions:

- A standing sign at the entrance to the Showcase
- A large banner over your Farm to School information booth
- Signs for each of your vendors
- An ad in the conference booklet
- Announcements over the loud speaker (inquire with trade show manager)

Farm to School Showcase hosts welcomed guests at the entrance of the trade show with a large sign. Team uniforms were inspired by the conference theme, “Teaming Up for School Nutrition.





Pick up a game card, visit our vendors to learn about their great products, and get your questions answered.

Drop your card off at the Team Farm to School booth for a chance to win one of these great prizes:

- 2 GB Ipod Shuffle
- Amazon Kindle
- One of two Made-in-Oregon gift baskets
- A gift basket from Painted Hills Natural Beef
- A cheeseboard from Pear Bureau NW

This year's Farm to School Showcase made possible by a generous grant from



OUR PARTNERS



five Materials and Activities to Enhance the Showcase

The 2011 Oregon School Nutrition Association Conference theme was “School Food on the Red Carpet.” Farm to School Showcase host Joan Rivers fit right in with the conference theme.



The Oregon Department of Education staffed a Showcase booth in order to share materials developed to promote Farm to School in Oregon.



CONFERENCE THEME

SNA conferences often have fun themes that you can build on to enhance your Showcase and make it stand out. Costumes and props for you and your vendors and a Showcase slogan related to the theme can be effective ways to draw attention to your area of the trade show.

SAMPLES AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Many booths at SNA vendor trade shows offer free samples of their products, and you should encourage your Farm to School vendors to do the same. Selling at SNA conferences is generally prohibited—check with the trade show manager and make sure to let your vendors know this information as well.

General Farm to School information should be available at an information booth, even if you are not able to staff the booth the entire time. Materials might include:

- Information about Farm to School activities and resources in your state
- Farm to School materials that have been developed specifically for your state
- Information about national organizations and projects related to Farm to School, including:
 - National Farm to School Network (farmtoschool.org)
 - USDA Farm to School (www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/)
 - FoodCorps (foodcorps.org/)
- Farm to School stickers and other fun handouts

This Farm to School trivia card encouraged school food staff to visit five Showcase booths to learn more.

TEAM FARM 2 SCHOOL TRIVIA GAME

Join Team Farm to School and win an Amazon Kindle, iPod shuffle, or one of several delicious gift baskets!

Get the questions below answered at booths in the Farm to School Showcase area. Answer all the questions, then drop off your completed card at the Team Farm to School Booth for a chance to win!

1. What are the four varieties of popped wheat berries sold by **Wheat Springs Bakery**?

Answer: _____

2. Name at least one product that **Miller Packing** packages for schools?

Answer: _____

3. **Carman Ranch** created Zumwalt Prairie Beef especially for school lunch programs—where does the name come from?

Answer: _____

4. **Question:** How many pounds of apples do **Thomas Orchards** sell to schools each year?

Answer: _____

5. True or False: **Springbank Farm** offers pesticide-free blueberries, all-fruit (no sugar added) blueberry jam, and low-sugar blueberry jam typically all year long.

Answer: _____

Contact Information:

Name: _____

School District: _____

Title: _____

E-mail/Phone: _____



FARM TO SCHOOL TRIVIA GAME AND PRIZES

Creating a Farm to School trivia game with a prize drawing is a good way to engage school buyers and vendors in meaningful conversation. Here's how:

In advance of the Showcase, ask your vendors to provide one trivia question based on what they most want school buyers to know about their organization or product. Questions can be based on:

- What they sell to schools
- How long they've been working with schools
- Specific certifications or farming practices
- Value-added products
- Any resources they have available for schools (especially relevant for non-profits or community partner vendors)

“The trivia card game was a fun way to have attendees interact with multiple vendors.”

– Farm to School Showcase vendor

Each trivia question should include the vendor's name in the question itself so that conference attendees know which booth to visit to get the answer. Questions should be relatively simple and easy to answer. Conference attendees will have limited time to visit vendors at the trade show. The point is not to test their knowledge, but to help them learn about and make quick connections with the Showcase vendors.

Once you, the host, have compiled these questions, create a trivia card with brief instructions and no more than five questions per card. Assuming your showcase has more than five vendors, you will need to create multiple versions of the trivia card. On the day of the Showcase, you or a volunteer will hand out the trivia cards to school food service staff at the event, who will then visit different booths seeking answers. Trivia cards are an easy way to ensure that conference attendees have direct conversations with at least five of your vendors.

Prizes serve as good motivation for school staff to complete your trivia game and interact with vendors. Vendors and community partners are often willing to donate gift baskets filled with products or other prizes, or you can purchase small electronics or other items if your budget allows. The more conference attendees that submit completed trivia cards, the better! Completed cards provide helpful data regarding how many school food service staff engaged with your vendors.

Food Service staff submitted trivia cards (page 16) in the hopes of winning prizes such as local food gift baskets and an Amazon Kindle.



SIX Documenting and Evaluating your Showcase

CAPTURE THE SHOWCASE!

Don't forget to snap photos of Showcase vendors in action. These are useful for future recruitment and promotional material and help tell the story of the event.

If you have extra hands and the skills/equipment necessary, consider taking some video footage of the event. With some editing work, short videos are great promotional material. You can engage school food staff, producers, and stakeholders alike with highlights featuring great local food in schools!

FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Within a week of completing the show, send out a request for feedback from your Showcase participants. If you had funding to host the Showcase, make sure to include your funding deliverables as a part of the evaluation. For examples, see *Appendix D: Surveys for post-conference evaluation*. A small raffle prize can offer added incentive for those you're attempting to survey in order to increase response rate. If you intend to host again (or to pass the hosting torch to a partner organization), this feedback will be important in shaping and improving future Showcases for your state.

Once your evaluation is complete, it's a good idea to compile your results into a short document summarizing the event (*see Appendix E: Sample Showcase write-up*). This report can then be easily distributed to funders, conference organizers, the trade show manager, and others.

"For me the Showcase was the best part of the conference."

– Farm to School Showcase attendee

These photos help to tell the Showcase story for future vendors, funders, and partners.



seven **Get Started!**

A timeline and checklist for planning your Farm to School Showcase

Get started! At least 6 months ahead of time (p. 6)

- Find out when and where your state will host its annual conference
 - Conference dates: _____
 - Exhibit/trade show date: _____
 - Location: _____
- Decide who will “host” your Farm to School Showcase: _____
- Plan your Showcase budget (see Appendix A for budget considerations)
- Secure funds as necessary, (interested hosts have permission to use any text from this toolkit that may be useful in seeking Showcase funding).

Contact the conference exhibit/trade show manager: At least 6 months ahead of time (p. 6-7)

- Tell the manager that you are interested in reserving a section of booths, grouped together, by entrance if possible
- Make a plan with the trade show manager for registering your Showcase vendors
 - If you have funding to sponsor booths...
 - If you do not have funding to sponsor booths...
- Optional:**
- Ask if the Farm to School Showcase can be listed as an option for vendors on the formal trade show registration form

Recruit local vendors: 1.5-2 months in advance (p. 9)

- Create a list of potential vendors for your Showcase
- Connect with community partners to see if they would be interested in participating
- Email and follow up by phone with potential vendors on an individual basis, (see Appendix B: Sample Recruitment Announcement for Showcase vendors, for ideas.)
- If needed, conduct broader outreach to statewide and regional networks to fill booths
- Decide who will staff an information booth about Farm to School

Promote the Showcase before the show: 6-8 weeks in advance (p. 12)

- Ask the trade show manager if information about the Farm to School Showcase can be included in the program booklet, in emails to conference participants, or on your state’s School Nutrition Association website
- Create an ad for the program booklet

Communicate with vendors before the show: 3-6 weeks in advance, with reminders 1-2 weeks in advance

Vendors need to know...

- See p. 11 or Appendix C: Sample informational email for vendors, for a list of suggested information to send to vendors

You might want to know...

- See p. 11 for the information that you might want to know about your vendors

Prepare to promote the Showcase at the show: 3-6 weeks in advance (p. 12-15)

- Consider if you'd like to coordinate your Showcase with the conference theme
- Print, at minimum, consistent 8 ½" x 11" signs for each showcase vendor
- Create and print a large banner for your Farm to School information booth
- Create a standing sign for the entrance to the Showcase
- Prepare general Farm to School materials for the information booth

Create a trivia game: 3-6 weeks in advance (p. 16-17)

- Solicit trivia questions from vendors
- Secure trivia prizes
- Create trivia cards
- Ask trade show manager how many conference attendees are expected; print enough trivia cards for all expected attendees

Prep for the day of: 1 week in advance

- Create a list of all materials needed for the Showcase
- Pack materials (don't forget a camera!)

Day of the Showcase:

- Arrive early to check-in, set up the Farm to School booth, help vendors with set up
- Ask the trade show manager how to make announcements on the loud speaker
- During the trade show open hours, have one person staff the Farm to School booth while at least one other floats around distributing trivia cards, talking to school food service staff, answering questions, etc.
- Periodically make announcements over the loud speaker about the Farm to School Showcase and trivia contest
- Half an hour before the end of the show select trivia contest winner(s) and announce over loud speaker
- At the end of the trade show check-in with vendors to ask about their experiences

Evaluate the Showcase: 1-2 weeks after the show

- Create surveys for school food service and vendors to evaluate your Showcase (see Appendix D: Surveys for post-conference evaluation, for examples)
- Secure small raffle prize as survey incentive
- Send request for feedback to school food service staff
- Send request for feedback to vendors
- Compile results into short write-up of event
- Distribute write-up to funders, conference organizers, trade show manager, and any others that provided support
- Celebrate! And start thinking about next year's Showcase...

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Budget considerations when hosting a Showcase

Appendix B: Sample recruitment announcement for Showcase vendors

Appendix C: Sample informational email for vendors

Appendix D: Surveys for post-conference evaluation

Appendix E: Sample Showcase write-up

Appendix A

Budget considerations when hosting a Showcase

Price out the following considerations in order to determine the budget you'll need:

Staff time

- At least one person will need to devote approximately 40-60 hours to organizing the Showcase.

Booth scholarships

- This is optional; booths generally cost \$600 – 700 each, and providing financial support can make participation more attainable for smaller vendors. If you provide scholarships, consider splitting the booths between two complementary vendors to make the money stretch further.

Signage

- At a minimum, plan to print 8.5x11 signs for your vendors so that Showcase participants are clearly denoted. Also consider printing a large banner sign for the host booth and/or a standing sign that can be placed at the entrance to the Showcase.

Promotional costs

- You may want to place an ad for the Showcase in your School Nutrition Association's newsletter and/or in the conference program booklet.

Printing and other supplies

- You may wish to print trivia cards or farm to school fact sheets, or purchase elements that tie into the conference theme to help decorate your vendor's booths. If you conduct a trivia game as part of the Showcase, purchasing trivia prizes is a helpful way to increase participation.

Don't forget: Ask about discounted rates and donations whenever possible. For example, non-profit hosts or vendors may be able to get a discounted booth rate or free internet hook-up at the show. Vendors may be willing to donate gift baskets as prizes for a trivia game.

Appendix B

Sample recruitment announcement for Showcase vendors

This sample is based on a recruitment announcement for the 2011 Washington School Nutrition Association Conference:

July 25-27th 2011 Washington School Nutrition Association (WSNA) Conference: New Feature – Farm to School Showcase at the Exhibit Show July 26th!

The Washington School Nutrition Association (washingtonsna.org), in collaboration with FoodHub, the Puget Sound Food Network, the Washington State Department of Agriculture's Farm to School Program, and the Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network is pleased to announce a new feature to their annual exhibit show July 26th, 2011:

Farm to School Showcase: A special event space reserved for regional food producers and processors!

- Purpose: highlight and celebrate regional producers in the exhibit's entrance row
- Concept: support regional food producers and processors and the great products they produce for schools by bringing them together in one row
- Theme: The theme for this year's trade show is: "Celebrate! Our 50th Annual State Conference" – let's celebrate 50 years with WSNA and a new era for farm to school and great regional foods!!
- To support these regional producers, like-minded governmental and non-profit agencies will also be in this row, including:
 - FoodHub and Ecotrust Farm to School
 - Puget Sound Food Network
 - WSDA Farm to School Program
 - Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network

What: The WSNA is an annual meeting and tradeshow for school food buyers in Washington. There will be approximately 500 members of WSNA and SNA in attendance from Washington and surrounding states, including nutrition service directors and key food purchasers for Washington school districts. This is a great time to set the tone for supporting local purchasing during the school year and make market introductions.

Where, when: The exhibit show will be held at the Clark County Event Center on Tuesday, July 26, 2011, from 9:30 am until 2:30 pm. Set up is Monday July 25th 1-5pm.

Who: All Oregon, Washington and Idaho producers are invited to participate and be showcased as local/regional foods, but we will have limited space to feature only about 20 in the main entrance row.

Why: Imagine being the welcoming faces as 400 school food service (including directors and key buyers) enter the exhibition hall. The passage of recent federal legislation has created more opportunities than ever for local food producers. If you are looking to engage in, or deepen, your connections to the growing school food market, this is the one event not to miss!

How to reserve a spot:

- Prices for 10x10 vendor booths are \$750 before May 15th
 - Non-profit rate is \$150
 - Smaller producers may inquire about options for sharing a booth: ssobell@ecotrust.org
- Fill out the Exhibitor's Prospectus (attached) – registration form can be found on page 7 → or access it online here: <http://www.washingtonsna.org/links/2011ExhibitsProspectus.pdf>
- RSVP as soon as possible to secure a spot in the Farm to School Showcase by returning your form according to the instructions on the form and writing in the words “Farm to School Showcase” where you select your booth number (we will fill the first row – booths 500-527 on the map)
- More information can be found here: http://www.washingtonsna.org/exhibitor_information.htm

Deadline for inclusion in the Farm to School Showcase is May 15th, 2011.

Questions? Contact Stacey Sobell, Farm to School Program Manager and FoodHub School Food Services Specialist at ssobell@ecotrust.org | 503-467-0751.

Appendix C

Sample informational email for vendors and partners

This sample is based on an informational email sent to 2012 Oregon School Nutrition Association Showcase vendors.

We're so excited that you'll be joining us as part of the Farm to School Showcase at the Oregon School Nutrition Association (OSNA) Conference on Saturday, March 10th at the Salem Conference Center. This document contains all the details about the Showcase, so please read carefully!

1. The Farm to School Showcase is part of the OSNA trade show that will be held at the Salem Conference Center. Parking is complimentary in the underground garage. Use this address: 201 Liberty St. SE, Salem 97301. You can also access a map and driving directions here: <http://salemconferencecenter.org/about-the-center/maps-and-directions>.
2. **The event will be from 10:30am-1:00pm on Saturday, March 10th. You will want to be set up and ready to go right at 10:30am;** only school food directors and purchasing agents are allowed in during the first hour, after which the show will be open to all school food service personnel. **Please come early enough to set up (we recommend no later than 9am), or set up in advance on Friday, March 9th, anytime between 1-5:30pm.** Plan to move out between 2-6pm March 10th.
3. **Your hosts:** Ecotrust is co-hosting this event, along with our partners at the Oregon Departments of Agriculture and Education (Harvest for Schools Campaign). There will be 3 Ecotrust staff at the event – Stacey Sobell, Megan Foucht, and Katy Pelissier (see our photos at the end of this document for reference). We will be identifiable at the event by our FoodHub shirts and our red headbands and wristbands.
4. **Who is in the Showcase?** For a full list of vendors participating in the Showcase, please see the list at the end of this document. Please be aware that a few of the vendors in the Showcase who would not otherwise have joined us, have received scholarships to help fund their participation with generous support from the Spirit Mountain Community Fund (also helping to fund the Showcase signage and our time to help coordinate the event).
5. **About the Join Team Farm to School Theme:** The Farm to School showcase (a subset of the larger trade show) will include a total of 17 booths with 29 vendors (a combination of paid vendors, vendors with scholarships, and supporting organizations such as Ecotrust Farm to School and the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Farm to School program), including yourself. The Conference theme is "Teaming Up for School Nutrition" and we have decided that our own version of that theme will be "Join Team Farm to School!" We'll have lots of signage for the area, and will be featuring a trivia contest with prizes for conference attendees. The trivia will feature questions about the Farm to School vendors in order to steer buyers towards your booth and start conversations. We'll also have Join Team Farm to School stickers for you (and for those who enter the contest) and some red wristbands to help identify you as part of the team. Check out the ad we placed in the program booklet that's pasted at the end of this document.
6. Please let us know if you have any questions about the Farm to School Showcase. Again, we're very excited that you're attending!

Consider sharing photos of your Showcase hosts, a list of Showcase vendors, and a copy of any advertisements to vendors prior to the show.

Your Farm to School Showcase Hosts:



Left: Stacey Sobell, Ecotrust Farm to School Manager



Katy Pelissier

Right: Megan Foucht, Ecotrust and FoodHub Membership Coordinator Ecotrust Farm to School Asst.

Vendors and Partners Participating in the 2012 Farm to School Showcase

- Camas Country Mill
- Carman Ranch
- Chez Gourmet
- Duck Delivery
- Ecotrust
- Fairlight Bakery
- Food Services of America
- FoodHub
- Froozer
- Heritage Specialty Foods
- La Esperanza Farm (Adelante Mujeres)
- Miller Packing and Sweet Escape Cranberries
- Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom
- Oregon Beef Council
- Oregon Cattleman's Association
- Oregon Department of Agriculture's Farm to School Program
- Oregon Department of Education's Oregon Harvest for School Campaign
- Oregon Fruit Company
- Organically Grown Company
- Oregon Trawl Commission
- Painted Hills Beef
- Pear Bureau Northwest
- Shepherd's Grain
- Springbank Farm

- Stahlbush Island Farms
- Stallford Seed Farms
- Thomas Orchards
- Truitt Brothers
- Willamette Valley Fruit Company
- Wheat Springs Bakery

Farm to School Showcase Ad in the Program Booklet



Pick up a game card, visit our vendors to learn about their great products, and get your questions answered.

Drop your card off at the Team Farm to School booth for a chance to win one of these great prizes:

- 2 GB Ipod Shuffle
- One of two Made-in-Oregon gift baskets
- Amazon Kindle
- A gift basket from Painted Hills Natural Beef
- A cheeseboard from Pear Bureau NW

This year's Farm to School Showcase made possible by a generous grant from



OUR PARTNERS



Appendix D

Surveys for post-conference evaluation

These surveys were used following the Farm to School Showcase at the 2012 Oregon School Nutrition Association Conference, to evaluate the utility of the Showcase for both conference attendees and Showcase vendors. The surveys were created in the website Survey Monkey, and links to the surveys were sent out via email to conference attendees and Showcase vendors one week after the trade show. A reminder was sent out two weeks after the trade show, and the survey closed two and a half weeks after the trade show. Survey recipients were notified that one respondent would be selected at random to win an iPod shuffle for completing the survey, which helped to increase response rates.

SURVEY FOR FOOD SERVICE PERSONNEL

Thank you so much for participating in the Farm to School Showcase at the Oregon School Nutrition Association Conference on Saturday, March 10th.

We want to hear your feedback about how useful you found the event. This survey will take no more than five minutes to complete, and will help us to better understand the needs of vendors for future showcases.

Providing your contact information is optional. Your information will not be distributed, and individual responses will be kept anonymous. If you choose to enter your contact information, you will be eligible to win an iPod shuffle.

1. Please estimate, based on your experiences at the conference: How many significant new connections with regional food producers, processors, or distributors did you make as a result of the Farm to School Showcase?
 - 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5-10
 - 10+
2. As a result of the Farm to School Showcase, how much did you increase your knowledge and awareness of healthy, regional food products, Farm to School, and regional agriculture?
 - Significant increase
 - Some increase
 - Slight increase
 - No increase
 - Not sure
3. Do you have a specific anecdote or story from the conference about a connection you made? If so, we'd love to hear about it! Please share here:

Appendix D

Continued

SURVEY FOR SHOWCASE VENDORS

Thank you so much for participating in the Farm to School Showcase at the Oregon School Nutrition Association Conference on Saturday, March 10th.

We want to hear your feedback about how useful you found the event. This survey will take no more than five minutes to complete, and will help us to better understand the needs of vendors for future showcases.

Providing your contact information is optional. Your information will not be distributed, and individual responses will be kept anonymous. If you choose to enter your contact information, you will be eligible to win an iPod shuffle.

1. Please estimate, based on your experiences at the conference: How many significant new connections with school food service providers did you make as a result of the Farm to School Showcase?
 - 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5-10
 - 10+

2. Please estimate, based on your experiences at the conference: How many new connections did you make with other vendors also participating in the Farm to School showcase?
 - 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5+

3. How helpful was the Farm to School Showcase in increasing your knowledge and awareness of how to sell to schools?
 - Extremely helpful
 - Very helpful
 - Moderately helpful
 - Slightly helpful
 - Not at all helpful
 - Not sure

4. As a vendor, what did you find most useful about the Farm to School Showcase this year?

5. Do you have a specific anecdote or story from the conference about a connection you made, either with a school food buyer or another vendor? If so, we'd love to hear about it! Please share here:

6. Would you find it useful for the Farm to School Showcase to return to OSNA next year?

7. Would you be interested in participating in another Farm to School Showcase at the 2013 OSNA?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Yes, but with some changes (please specify):
 - Maybe (please let us know what would enable you to participate):

8. Please share any other feedback (positive or negative) that you have about the Farm to School Showcase to help us shape similar events in the future (feedback could address: trivia card game, preconference communication, signage at the event, support at the event, etc.):

9. (Optional) Please enter your contact info below if you would like to be eligible for the iPod shuffle survey prize drawing:
 - Name
 - Farm/Company name:
 - Email:
 - Phone number:

Thank you!

Your hosts, Stacey, Katy, and Megan

For any questions about the Showcase or support with Farm to School or FoodHub, you can contact us at:

ssobell@ecotrust.org

kpelissier@ecotrust.org

megan@food-hub.org

Appendix E

Sample Showcase write-up

Below is a write-up that was created following the 2012 Oregon School Nutrition Association Farm to School Showcase. Create something similar following your own Showcase, to share your successes with colleagues and other partners.

2012 OSNA POST-CONFERENCE EVALUATION

Summary of results:

The 2012 Oregon School Nutrition Association Farm to School Showcase was a great success. Out of 123 total vendors at the food and equipment show, 30 were in a specially marked area reserved for regional food producers and partners: the Farm to School Showcase. Thanks to Spirit Mountain Community Fund, 17 of these vendors received scholarships to attend the conference at no cost to them. These scholarships allowed smaller producers who otherwise would not be able to afford the conference to attend and connect with 302 school food service buyers and staff from around the state.

The Farm to School Showcase featured a trivia game as a means of engaging school food buyers and vendors. Each vendor submitted a trivia question, all of which were compiled on trivia cards in advance. Food service staff were then required to go visit different vendors in order to answer the trivia questions, with prizes adding incentive to this process. Trivia questions acted as conversation-starters between food service staff and vendors. Ecotrust's showcase hosts handed out 222 surveys, and had a 23% return rate, collecting 52 completed surveys before the prize winners were drawn.

Following the conference, school food service staff and Farm to School Showcase vendors were asked to fill out separate online surveys in order to assess their experience at the showcase and gain feedback for future improvements. Surveys were completed by 24 school food service personnel and by 16 out of 25 possible showcase vendors. Both groups were asked to report how many significant new connections they made at the conference. The majority of food service staff, 73%, reported making at least two significant new connections with regional producers, processors, and distributors, and the strong majority of regional vendors, 87%, reported making at least three significant connections with school districts. Of that 87%, 43% reported making 5-10 connections, far exceeding our expectations.

An unanticipated benefit of the conference was that vendors networked amongst themselves as well. A cannery in Salem, Oregon, was excited to connect with a bean and grain farmer in Eugene, Oregon, writing that "we possibly found a new Food Alliance-certified garbanzo bean producer (very exciting!)." The farmer was also enthusiastic about this new relationship, reporting to one of our showcase hosts that he was excited at the potential of having a processor to can his garbanzo beans. Connections between vendors such as this one resulted in the showcase being an especially valuable event for vendors, 43% of whom reported making three or more new connections with other vendors.

Vendors and food service staff also found the showcase informative, as both parties continue learning how to work with each other. Among food service staff, 65% reported at least some increase in knowledge and awareness of healthy, regional food products and Farm to School, while 87% of vendors reported that the showcase was at least moderately helpful for learning more about working with schools. One hundred percent of food service staff and showcase vendors surveyed responded that it would be useful for the showcase to return next year, with scholarships being key for several vendors.

Some feedback from our vendors and from conference attendees:

- “I did not realize that there were farms in Wallowa that were offering foods.”
- “I am so excited to include more local farm-raised items, it is a positive for us to serve local meat and produce.”
- “For me the Showcase was the best part of the conference.”
- “I learned a lot about the priorities and challenges the schools face in sourcing products and what works for them.”
- “It was a great way to increase our visibility among school nutrition staff throughout the area, and we used it as a way to advocate for buying locally from Oregon farms in general, not just as a promotion of our program.”
- “I liked being grouped in a like-minded, health-focused area.”
- “It was a great venue to make face-to-face connections with some of the directors who we have called and/or emailed, but have never met in person.”
- “This was an extremely well organized event. I appreciated the help from your team and the willingness to engage with local companies. Thank you for the scholarship! It was a no-cost way to gain information about the process of selling to schools”
- “Ecotrust and FoodHub’s branding, support, and organization was phenomenal, as usual. Your staff’s fun-loving attitudes and can-do spirit really help to make the Farm to School Showcase a success. I think the trivia card game was a fun way to have attendees interact with multiple vendors”
- “Excellent communication, excellent organization. We were the most fun part of the show!”

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Ecotrust Food & Farms Friends:

