Producer Checklist

The Oklahoma Farm to School Program wants to make selling food to Oklahoma's Child Nutrition Programs easy and help facilitate a partnership between producers and schools.

- [ ] **BECOME AN APPROVED PRODUCER**

  All producers are required to complete the Local Food Procurement Assistance Program Application through the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF) website to become an approved vendor. Completing this application helps ensure compliance with all state and federal regulations.

- [ ] **CHOOSE A SCHOOL THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS**

  Start by researching schools or daycares in your local area. To help producers identify current local food-purchasing practices in schools and districts within their area, check out the Participating Schools Map and the Getting to Know Your Local School Market Worksheet on the OK Farm to School Website.

- [ ] **START SMALL**

  Decide on realistic sales volumes and a delivery schedule that will fit your life. When choosing a school, it's important to factor in the distance you are willing to travel.

- [ ] **WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT YOU OFFER**

  Producers should have an updated Farm Bio and a Product Availability and Pricing Sheet that can be sent to schools to ensure school buyers have the latest information to make purchasing decisions. Digital templates can be downloaded at the OK Farm to School website.

- [ ] **HOW TO SELL TO SCHOOLS: FOUR PATHS**

  Schools purchase local products through different channels, such as buying directly from farmers, picking up orders at farmers' markets, using distributors, or participating in the USDA DoD Fresh program. Be sure to explore the four paths before contacting a school.

- [ ] **SCHEDULING A MEETING WITH A SCHOOL**

  Set up an appointment with a School Food Service Director. This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss the solicitation process, clarify questions, and for producers to share what they can offer, such as crop availability and volume. Try to send them your Product Price and Availability and Farm Bio before your meeting.

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ACCESSING SCHOOL DISTRICT SOLICITATIONS

Solicitations are how school districts communicate about what products they're looking for, when they need them, how much they need, and any requirements they have for potential vendors. There are several types of solicitations used by school districts seeking to purchase local products. Informal solicitations do not require public posting. These can be conducted through direct outreach to producers with new or existing relationships with the school district. Formal solicitations require school districts to publicly announce and advertise Requests for Proposals (RFP) or Invitations for Bid (IFB). These can be found on school district websites.

WHAT TO BRING TO A SCHOOL MEETING

- Product Price and Availability Sheet
- Farm Bio Worksheet
- Sample products if possible
- Invoice sheet or documentation for submitting payments
- Seasonality chart
- Pictures of farm/products
- Any insurance documentation and any farm food safety plans or certifications (GAP).

DURING A SCHOOL MEETING

Come prepared to talk about your farm and products. Present what you can offer the School Food Service Director and how your products will meet their needs.

Discuss the details:

- What product(s) is the school looking for? Are they willing to try something new?
- What volume of product are they looking for?
- Does the pricing work for all parties?
- What is their ordering process?
- Delivery schedule (time of day, frequency, location)
- Do the items need to be washed or packaged in a certain way?
- What does the billing and payment process look like?
- How and who will you communicate with for orders?
- What are the schools invoicing and billing procedures?
- Does the school a have formal ordering processes/ procurement timelines?

AFTER A SCHOOL METTING

Follow up with the School Food Service Director by giving them a call or email. Keep the conversation and sales going by sending an updated Product Price and Availability Sheet leting them know what's in season and available. Invite nutrition staff to your farmers' market booth or offer a farm tour.