

Farm to Summer Meal Site Campaign Toolkit

Editable Campaign Resources

- From the 2018 “Root for Radishes!” and 2019 “Snap for Snap Peas!” Iowa farm to summer campaigns – posters, banners, community newsletters, and associated images are available for reference.

Recommended Community Partnerships

- Based on the 2018 and 2019 Iowa farm to summer campaigns, diverse partnership recommendations for a strong campaign are offered.

Statewide Campaign Planning & Timeline

- Resources and recommendations for sequencing annual campaign activities for statewide organizers are explained.

For Sites: Campaign Planning & Timeline

- Resources and recommendations for sequencing annual campaign activities for community-based campaign hosts are explained.

Best Practices: Summer Meal Site Local Food Procurement

- Best practices for sourcing local food, finding technical assistance to support the procurement process, and considerations for purchasing different products are listed here, with examples from Iowa.

Iowa Farm to Summer Campaign is possible with support from these partners:



Recommended Community Partnerships

Whether you're directly organizing a summer meal site or serving as a community volunteer, partnerships are an important aspect to running a successful farm to summer campaign. As was reported in both the 2018 and 2019 Iowa Farm to Summer Campaign Evaluations, new partnerships have been a major outcome of participating in the campaigns, as site organizers look toward the broader community and innovative programming to enhance the summer meal site experience. The following list identifies recommended community partners and the roles they have served in across Iowa.

State Agencies

With a statewide audience, these partners can support promotion directly to schools, summer nutrition program coordinators, and program-funded educators. State Agencies may also serve as potential funders for annual mini-grants to local summer meal sites and campaign organizers.

Examples from Iowa

- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship: Farm to School, Specialty Crop Block Grant Programs
- Iowa Department of Education: Summer Food Service Program
- Iowa Department of Public Health: SNAP-Education, Pick A Better Snack

Extension and Outreach

County Extension offices often hold existing relationships and connections to local schools and other programs supporting youth and families throughout the summer months. Many Extension agents (ex: County Youth Coordinators and 4H Program Coordinators) are trained lead agricultural lessons with youth, serving as ideal partners for planning and leading local food education. Additionally, Extension agents often provide technical assistance for sourcing local food, a challenge identified by many participants in the Iowa Farm to Summer campaigns.

Examples from Iowa

- Iowa State University Extension and Outreach: Local Food Coordinators
- ISUEO: Human Sciences Specialists, Health and Nutrition
- ISUEO: Horticultural and Agricultural Educators

Local Farmers, Markets and Distributors

These folks are essential partners, for obvious reasons. Whether they're serving as a source for local food, visiting a summer meal site to support education, or hosting youth for summer field trips, farmers put the 'farm' in a farm to summer campaign. In the summer, local food is in abundance and more affordable than other times of the year. This timing makes for great opportunities to pilot new recipes, distribution systems, and partnerships with local growers.

Examples from Iowa

- Local Farmers Markets: Food for the summer meal site and associated programming can be purchased directly throughout the week or weekends from farmers at markets
- Food Hubs: Aggregators of food from many local farms, food hub coordinators make local procurement efficient and cost effective as they negotiate prices and manage delivery for both producers and buyers
- Partnerships with Individual Farmers: A great strategy for accessing a specialty crop, especially for smaller summer meal sites

Community and Nonprofit Partners

Service organizations, mission-based nonprofits and other community partners can provide valuable support for a wide-range of campaign needs. Programs like AmeriCorps offer opportunities to partner with skilled human resources who, based on their service area, may provide direct education during summer meal service or help coordinate the systems and resources that make the campaign happen. From planning and leading hands-on activities, coordinating supplies, creating marketing materials, canvassing neighborhoods, to finding local food, the talents of community partners are vast.

Examples from Iowa

- FoodCorps Iowa: Participated in campaign visioning and designed promotional graphics
- Eat Greater Des Moines: Led bike blender taste test activities at meal sites in Waukee, IA
- Produce in the Park: Hosted taste tests and scavenger hunts weekly at the farmers market in Atlantic, Iowa.

Summer Meal Site Sponsors

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) at the Federal level. State education agencies commonly administer the program at the state level, and partner with sponsors who manage food service programs on a local level. Sponsors- public or private schools, nonprofit organizations, camps, or local government bodies- are responsible for coordinating all financial and administrative duties and following FNS regulations. Partnerships with summer meal site sponsor staff are essential for local farm to summer campaigns, as they set service hours, purchase and prepare meals, coordinate volunteers, and hold relationships with meal site attendees.

Examples from Iowa

- Postville Community School District
- Clarinda Community School District
- Johnson Community School District

Statewide Campaign Planning & Timeline

The planning process and timeline for a farm to summer campaign varies based on partnerships and state context. The recommended seasonal planning timeline, outlined below, is intentionally broad and offers key opportunities for training, planning, promotion, and partnership development. Organized from the perspective of an agency or organization with statewide reach, this farm to summer campaign planning timeline operates year-round.

Defining the campaign theme, securing funds- for printing and mailing promotional materials and for sponsor mini-grants- and finalizing state partners should take place mid-winter, with guidance from the previous summer's evaluation if one took place. Opening the online application for sites to learn more and register to participate can take place alongside promotional launch and a meal sponsor training in late winter.

Spring and summer months are busy with coordinating and running campaigns from the state and local level. Well before school is out for the summer, the list of participating sites should be finalized, funded, and outfitted with promotional campaign materials. A spring webinar for sites can offer partnership and programming ideas. Consider hosting site visits to understand campaign successes and challenges. [Link to the 2019 "Snap for Snap Peas!" site visit overview here.](#)

When campaigns conclude in late summer, it is important to collect feedback from sites through an electronic survey and develop an evaluation report to share with partners, informing future campaign development. [Link to the 2019 "Snap for Snap Peas!" report here.](#)

Farm to Summer Campaign Planning Timeline



For Sites: Campaign Planning & Timeline

Summer meal sponsors who will host the campaign within their community begin planning and promoting their local campaign in late winter or early spring. Local partnerships- with food educators, local farmers and producers, school-based communications systems- should be defined well before the end of the school year.

Meal sponsors can consider opportunities to share pertinent meal site details with students and families in the form of electronic or printed communications. Information detailing the times, locations, campaign activities and focus of the summer meal program should be made know through schools using existing communication means. Questions to consider around hosting the campaign include the frequency of local food activities, means of promoting the campaign and broader meal program, funding for local food and additional supplies, and potential partnerships.

The graphic below offers an example of a summer meal program that hosted “Snap for Snap Pea!” activities once per week throughout the month of June. Several locations and lead organizers are included to exemplify the reach that a campaign can have within one community. The focus on local food is centered in the multiple examples of cooking and physical activities the lead organizers have planned. A community newsletter is shared weekly to bring attention to the hands-on lessons and activities hosted by the meal site.

DATE	DAY	SITE	RECIPE	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS	LEAD ORGANIZER	NOTES
June 8	Friday, 12pm	Sweet Pea Splash Pad	Snap Pea Bites with Lemon Dressing	Plant & Take Home Pea Seeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snap Pea Banner, Posters Local peas, gloves, cutting boards, plastic knives, lemon, oil pepper Soil, seeds, paper cups, markers 	Mr. Kale (Extension Educator)	Share community newsletter 1 week prior
June 15	Friday, 12pm	Legume Public Library	Snap Pea Salsa	Make Recipe Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snap Pea Banner, Posters Local peas, black beans, garlic, tomatoes, cilantro, pepper, tortilla chips, bowls, gloves Markers, notecards, stickers 	Ms. Pepper (Meal Site Manager)	Share community newsletter 1 week prior
June 22	Friday, 12pm	Sugar Snap Elementary	Roasted Garlic Snaps	Harvest & Scavenger Hunt in School Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snap Pea Banner, Posters Skillet, spatula, oil, local peas, minced garlic, lemon, gloves, cups, harvest basket Printed scavenger hunts, pens, stickers 	Food Dude (FoodCorps Service Member)	Share community newsletter 1 week prior
June 26	Tuesday, 12pm	Pea Sprout Park	Snap Pea Slaw	Snap Pea Relay Races	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snap Pea Banner, Posters Local peas, purple cabbage, lemon juice, oil, honey, fresh mint and basil, grater, bowl, mixing spoon, cups Rope, pool noodles 	Miss Mater (Parks and Rec Volunteer)	Share community newsletter 1 week prior

Best Practices: Summer Meal Site Local Food Procurement

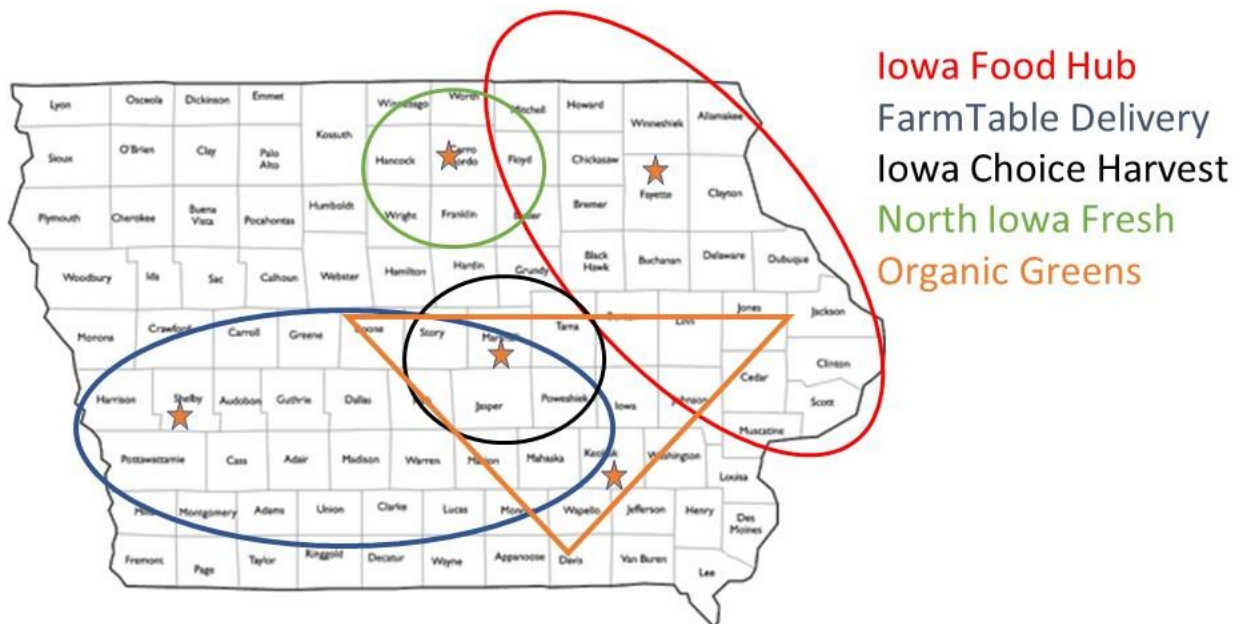
Sourcing local foods offers an opportunity to include high-quality, flavorful products into the meals being served through a summer meal site. As the context of the local food system and available resources are community-based and diverse, procurement plans vary across areas. The best practices listed below serve as considerations that may not be applicable in all communities; an additional best practices document developed by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship [can be accessed here](#).

Sourcing Local Food

A multitude of local food sources exist, including farmers, farmers markets, school gardens, food hubs, or grocery stores. In our 2019 evaluation of the “Snap for Snap Peas!” Iowa farm to summer campaign, we found that most participating summer meal sites sourced local food from grocery stores and individual farmers and served this local food once per week.

Example from Iowa: Food Hubs

USDA defines a food hub as, “a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.” Food hubs provide important services for small and mid-sized farmers by marketing local products, brokering volume sales, coordinating distribution logistics, and helping producers meet industry requirements in areas such as food safety and packaging. For summer meal site in Iowa, the [Iowa Food Hub Directory](#) is a useful resource for connecting with food hubs in several service areas.



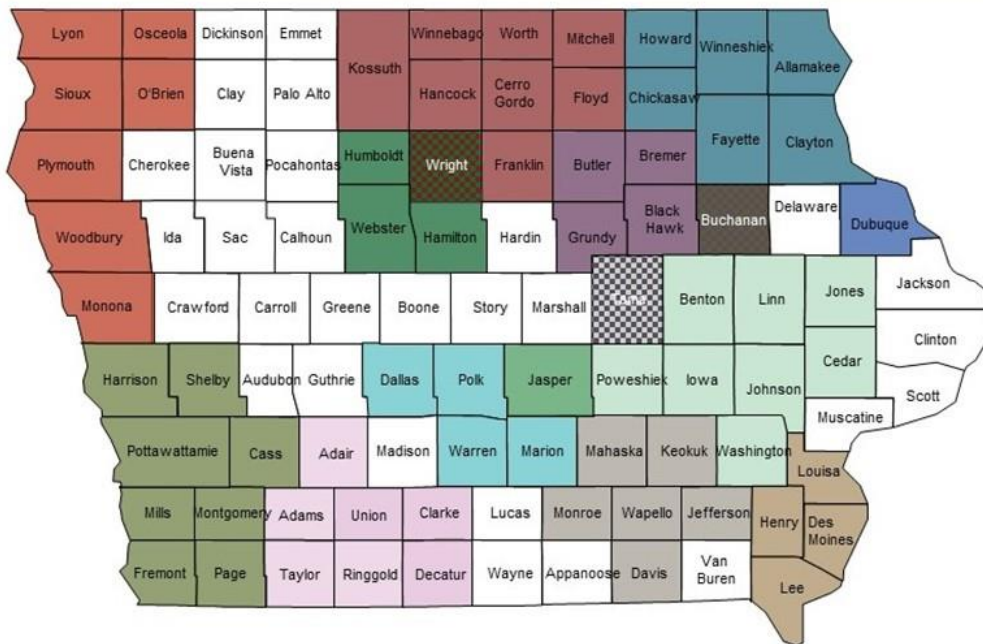
Technical Assistance

A thriving farm to summer program can require extra effort, a challenge as staff time at local meal sites is often limited. Consider technical assistance resources for finding local food to efficiently procure the freshest, affordable local products for meals and tasting activities. A web search for farmers market listings, county Extension offices, local food directories, or other local food-focused organizations and programs can reveal potential connections and valuable procurement resources.

Example from Iowa: Local Food Coordinators

Regionally organized across the state, Iowa's Local Food Coordinators work for varying organizations and offer expertise around regional local food systems. Coordinators can research and share information about farmers and producers, specific products, and local markets. To explore the map and connect with a Local Food Coordinator in Iowa, [visit this webpage](#).

Local Food Coordinators



Product Considerations

It is essential to be aware of what is in season, preparation time and average cost of products when considering local food to purchase and feature in a summer meal site campaign. Growing local food on-site as a demonstration and learning opportunity for participating youth is an interactive way to showcase a particular product and will encourage youth to try it. Always remember that time builds traction. Offering programs yearly will result in the highest participation, deeper partnerships, and the development of local learning and best practices.

Example from Iowa: Fruit and Vegetable Harvest Calendar

Summer meal site operation times vary across locations but typically operate throughout the months of June and July. Using a harvest calendar, such as this example from IDALS, can clarify product availability and help inform menu or tasting development at a meal site. In Iowa, radishes, snap peas, cucumbers, broccoli, carrots, and lettuces are accessible throughout the months on June and July.

Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Harvest Calendar						
Produce	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
Apples						
Apricots						
Asparagus						
Beans						
Blueberries						
Broccoli						
Cabbage						
Cantaloupe						
Carrots						
Cauliflower						
Cherries						
Cucumbers						
Eggplant						
Grapes						
Kohlrabi						
Leeks						
Lettuce						
Okra						
Onions						
Peaches						
Pears						
Peppers						
Plums						
Potatoes						
Pumpkins						
Radishes						
Raspberries						
Rhubarb						
Rutabaga						
Spinach						
Squash						
Strawberries						
Sweet Corn						
Sweet Potato						
Tomatoes						
Turnips						
Watermelons						
Zucchini						

Funds for IDALS Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Harvest Calendar were provided by a USDA Specialty Crops Grant

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Source: Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS)