

BEEF TO SCHOOL PITCH KIT



Montana Beef to School Coalition

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INTRODUCTION

The Beef to School Pitch Kit provides you with templates and examples to help you begin your beef to school efforts. This resource was developed by the Montana Beef to School Project, a three-year collaborative project between beef producers, processors, schools, researchers at Montana State University, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana Department of Agriculture, and various community partners. This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number SW 15-028 through the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number 140867026. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.

For more information

Visit online at: <http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/beeftoschool.html>

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Why Beef to School?

Beef to school poses a unique opportunity for Montana, a national leader in bringing local beef to our schools. Did you know that Montana is home to more than twice the number cattle than residents living in our state? Montana has just over 1 million residents, 2.5 million cattle, approximately 20 state and federally inspected processors, and about 145,000 students across 821 schools. With cow-calf operations weighing in as the second largest agricultural commodity in Montana, it makes sense for schools and other institutions to purchase and serve beef that is raised and finished in Montana. Montana schools and students can benefit from delicious high-quality Montana and educational opportunities, while supporting local producers, processors, and economies.

What is Beef to School?

The Montana Beef to School Coalition's goal is to increase the use of local beef in Montana schools. The long-term goal of beef to school is improving Montana beef producers' and meat processors' business viability and sustainability, while increasing the availability and consumption of local beef in Montana's schools and communities. This Pitch Kit includes resources that were developed by the Montana Beef to School Project, a three-year collaborative project between beef producers, processors, schools, researchers at Montana State University, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana Department of Agriculture, and various community partners.

What are the Benefits to Beef to School?

"When kids turn on to fresh food, they don't want to go back. So, when you start feeding them well, they know the difference. We're going to continue to

provide fresh and local. It's the best way to eat. We're creating a lifelong eating habit." – Somers Lakeside School District

"It's better beef. Seriously it's that simple. Bottom line. It's better quality. I know where it comes from. I know the people that own the ranch. I've seen how great their operation is. (...) And it tastes better than any other beef in my opinion." – Livingston School District

"The most important part is building relationships with producers and processors and being flexible and solutions oriented. There will always be reasons not to move forward to do something, but if it is a priority, there will almost always be solutions as well." – Kalispell School District

Beef to school (B2S) efforts can increase the sustainability and viability of local and regional food systems. In Montana, and across the country, producers and consumers report a host of social, environmental, and economic benefits from local procurement efforts that link local beef producers and processors with schools in their communities and the region.

The B2S Coalition's research has identified a variety of motivations and beliefs about B2S programs. The key motivations for implementing a B2S program identified in surveys and interviews of Montana B2S stakeholders include community, economy, literacy, quality, and transparency.

Community

Community members generally support B2S efforts and appreciate when schools make the effort to serve local beef. Further, businesses, organizations, ranchers, and processors are often happy to help schools source and educate about local beef going as far as donating funding, animals, or processing fees to ensure beef from the surrounding community is featured in school meals.

Economy

Using local beef keeps money and resources circulating in the community. A B2S program enhances communities by drawing more direct lines between producers, processors, students, and families. Further, school foodservice programs can provide a stable market opportunity for local ranchers and processors selling beef, including culled cattle. Local businesses donating beef may use donations as a tax-deductible donation.



"Start small... I wouldn't jump in thinking that you're going to replace every single one of your beef products on your menu, like this month... Just kind of evolve into it," – Jay Stagg, Whitefish School District

Literacy

Educating students, school staff, and communities about Montana beef provides opportunities to develop connections between Montana’s landscape, culture, and food.

Quality

Local beef is perceived as a higher quality product than non-local beef based on the taste, freshness, and the less amount of water that cooks off during preparation due to the dry aging process used by many processing facilities in Montana.

Transparency

Food miles are reduced by purchasing from local vendors, thus minimizing the need for transportation, packaging, and other inputs. The shortened supply chain may provide students, school staff, and community members with a better visualization of the kind of feeds and inputs used during production, processing, and meal preparation. For example, many local cattle are fed and finished on locally available feeds like barley, wheat, alfalfa, oats, and grass as opposed to imported feeds from out of state.

GETTING STARTED WITH BEEF TO SCHOOL

For School Nutrition Professionals

As a school nutrition professional, you are working hard to feed children nutritious food within a tight budget. By using and featuring local beef, you can increase participation and acceptance of meals while supporting your community. There are many ways to incorporate local beef into your school meals. One way is to simply substitute your local beef into any recipe that calls for conventional beef. Schools highlighted in this project use local beef for stew, taco, spaghetti sauce, hamburger, and meatball recipes.

A first step in procuring local beef is knowing the regulations. Any meat served in Montana’s child nutrition programs must be processed in either an official Montana Department of Livestock-inspected (state-inspected) or a USDA-inspected (federally inspected) facility. If that meat is bought or sold across state lines, it must be processed in a federally inspected facility. Animals slaughtered and processed in a “custom exempt” plant may not be sold; that meat is for consumption by the owner(s) of the animal, which cannot include schools. However, retail meat establishments can further process state- or federally inspected product for sale to schools. Less than 25% of their sales can be to hotels, restaurants, and institutions limited to \$76,500 of their total sales. Further, retail facilities have additional regulations limiting ingredients in processed products (e.g., they cannot add fillers like soy to



“We started out small with a few boxes of burgers. Did it seem worth it? I don’t know. We talked about the value of beef to school in the beginning. What it’s grown into now, it is worth it!” – Jeremy Plummer, Lower Valley Processing

hamburger patties). You can find meat producers and processors by using the following directories:

- [State-Inspected Facilities Directory](#)
- [Federally-Inspected Facilities Directory](#)
- [NCAT's Farm to Cafeteria Producer Database](#)

Second, use the [B2S Decision Tree](#) to decide which procurement method to use for purchasing local beef for your school. It will direct you in choosing the appropriate B2S Procurement Template – either an [Informal Request for Quotes](#) or [Formal Request for Proposals](#).

For Producers and Processors

With over 80,000 school lunches served every day during the school year in Montana, schools can provide a consistent, stable market for your beef. A first step of selling to schools is knowing the regulations. See the second paragraph in the “For School Nutrition Professionals” section above.

Second, you need to know your product availability, pricing, and ability to meet the school’s requirements for delivery, packaging, etc. See page 12 of the [Montana Farm to Cafeteria Manual](#) for additional information regarding meeting institutional requirements.

Once you have your information ready, contact the school nutrition director (or head cook) and/or the superintendent to discuss their interest in purchasing local beef. Be prepared with samples, product and price sheets, and information about your ranch or processing facility. Ask questions about their requirements and desires for beef products. If you are able, offering to do cafeteria taste tests, field trips, or classroom visits, might interest the school for the educational opportunity. Find schools that are already implementing farm to school or participating in Montana Harvest of the Month on [NCAT's Farm to Cafeteria Institution Map](#). Use the [Office of Public Instruction's School Directory](#) to locate contact information for any school. Help school nutrition professionals find you by adding your business information to [NCAT's Farm to Cafeteria Producer Map](#).

For Educators, Students, Parents, Administrators, School Boards, and Community Members

Educators, students, parents, administrators, school boards, and community members are an important piece of the B2S puzzle. As a first step, contact the school’s nutrition program director, also known as foodservice director or head cook, and ask if local beef is served. If they are, thank them for their fantastic work! If they aren’t, encourage the school food service director to start a B2S program. Suggest using [NCAT's Farm to Cafeteria Producer database](#) to find producers interested in working with schools. Provide or review the resources listed below on this handout. For additional questions and support, provide them with the contact information for Montana Beef to School: beef2school@gmail.com.

SUSTAINING A BEEF TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Establishing a B2S program can be a challenge. Outlined below are some key recommendations for starting and sustaining a B2S program.

- **Start Small**
School nutrition program directors strongly recommend starting small by choosing just one day out of the school year or one dish to feature local beef and building up to serving monthly or weekly local beef meals.
- **Meet Basic Needs**
Schools and processors should discuss and determine equipment needs to process the raw beef product into more efficient forms for the school foodservice (e.g., hamburger patties or beef crumbles). Producers and processors are required to adhere to food safety protocols established by the school, local ordinances, state policy, and federal policy. Schools must train employees to handle and cook a safe and desirable beef product and have enough storage to source quantities of beef for high volume prices.
- **Capacity**
According to estimates, producers and processors have the capacity to increase B2S partnerships with schools. Many schools have the desire to purchase local beef but are limited by costs and may need help finding creative solutions to make local beef fit within their budget.
- **Policy**
Maintaining and increasing the number of state and federally inspected processing facilities in Montana is paramount to continuing B2S efforts. Increasing the federal reimbursement rate for school meals and/or allowing schools to use USDA Foods allocation for local purchases would ease the challenges schools face when attempting to purchase local beef.

PROMOTING BEEF TO SCHOOL

Promoting B2S efforts is a great way to increase parent and community support of the school, and particularly, the school meals program. Use multiple outlets for sharing your B2S story, such as:

- Check out our [B2S Promotion Kit](#), a resource which provides customizable announcements and social media posts for you to promote B2S at your school.
- Include the local beef vendor's name and information on school menus, bulletin boards, and/or school announcements. Be sure to clearly mark on the menu when local beef is being served.
- Contact local news media to run a story about the school's successful B2S efforts or their desire to start a program. Some schools have placed ads in the paper seeking donations from local ranchers or seeking ranchers or processors to purchase beef from.
- Invite parents and community members to eat school meals when local beef is served or offer a special meal. Read about [Manhattan Christian School's special lunch](#) open to parents, grandparents, and community members.

- Use social media to announcement B2S meals or events. Ask that the rancher and/or processor also promote the B2S partnership on their social media accounts or website.
- If your school participates in [Montana Harvest of the Month](#), use the posters and other promotional materials to showcase the local beef being served.

RESOURCES

Do you have the right tools to beef up your program?

Basics

[Beef to School Video](#) – Learn about B2S basics and successful models with this video.

[Beef to School Basics](#) – This brief document gives a snapshot of how to get started with B2S. This is a good handout to use when giving a presentation or when meeting to explore B2S partnerships.

[Getting Started with Beef to School](#) – This MontGuide highlights current models, explains challenges, and provides solutions and recommendations for getting local beef into school nutrition programs.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#) – This document provides answers and resources for the most asked B2S questions.

[Moooooving Forward Together: Strategies for Montana Beef to School](#) – This case study report examines several successful Montana B2S partnerships and provides motivations, strategies, and tips for success.

Finding, Buying/Selling, Serving Local Beef

[Cost of Local Beef](#) – This resource describes the factors that determine beef pricing and provides a cost comparison.

[Protein in School Meals Comparison](#) – This guide describes the school nutrition program protein requirements, costs, and considerations.

[NCAT Farm to Cafeteria Producer Database](#) – Schools can use this map and list to find local producers. Producers, processors, and food businesses can add their information to this database so schools can locate them.

[NCAT Farm to Cafeteria Institution Database](#) – Producers can use this map and list to find schools and other institutions that are already participating in farm to school and Montana Harvest of the Month. Schools can use this map to find other schools in their area that have been successful.

[State Inspected Processing Facilities](#) – Click “State Inspected Plants” in the site’s navigation to get the latest state inspected facilities list.

[Federally Inspected Processing Facilities](#) – Use this list to find USDA federally inspected meat processing facilities.

[Beef to School Decision Tree](#) – Use this guide to select a procurement method for purchasing local beef using either an Informal Request for Quotes or Formal Request for Proposals.

[Beef to School Informal Procurement Template](#) – Use this template for creating a Request for Quotes following the **informal** procurement procedures. See the Beef to School Decision Tree to determine which template is right for you.

[Beef to School Formal Procurement Template](#) – Use this template for creating a Request for Proposals following the **formal** procurement procedures. See the Beef to School Decision Tree to determine which template is right for you.

Promotion and Education

[Beef to School Promotion Kit](#) – This document provides draft announcements and social media posts for you to modify and use. The content was created for you to send to students, staff, community members, and others to educate about your growing B2S program.

[Montana Harvest of the Month](#) – This program showcases a different Montana grown or raised food each month in K-12 schools and afterschool programs, Summer Food Service Programs, early care and education sites, healthcare facilities, and business and community partners. Beef is one of the featured foods and is a perfect way for schools to start serving local beef. Participating sites receive posters, handouts, recipes, lessons, and many other resources.

[Montana Farm to School Education Resources](#) – There are many lessons plans available that incorporate concepts of raising and eating beef. This site provides a place to start with links to other curricula databases.

[Keep Beef to School Moooving!](#) – Share your ideas, stories, photos, or resources with us for our social media sites. Follow B2S progress on social media:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/montanafarmtoschool>
- Instagram: [@MTFarmtoSchool](#)