



Producer Training: Session 2 Transcript

Video Transcript

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Aubree [00:00:00] Welcome, everyone to the second Montana Farm to school producer training featuring the farm to school Bringing the farm to school curriculum. I'm Aubree Roth and the Montana Farm to School coordinator and the co-director of Montana Team Nutrition Program, which is housed at Montana State University and works in collaboration with the Montana Office of Public Instruction. We hope that you find this comprehensive training helpful in preparing you to work with Montana schools. The bringing the farm to school curriculum that we're using for this training was developed by USDA, National Center for Appropriate Technology and National Farm to School Network. The Montana Farm to School Producer trainings are brought to you by Montana Team Nutrition Program at MSU and the Montana Office of Public Instruction in collaboration with the fantastic advisory team members that are shown on this slide. Many of these organizations are also part of the Montana Farm School leadership team, from which many of our statewide farm to school projects originate. Additionally, we will have numerous presenters from these and other organizations throughout this training. This training is funded by a USDA farm to school grant received by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, as well as by the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee. Montana Nutrition Montana Team Nutrition Program, Great Northern Development Corporation, National Farm to School Network and numerous in-kind services from our advisory team members and presenters. Thank you to these generous supporters for making this training possible. So before we dive into the content, I just want to cover a few meeting logistics to help you make the most of your training and hopefully make it go as smoothly as possible. So this training is held over three sessions, two virtual and one in-person. Each session covers different material, so it is expected that you attend each of the sessions. Please let me know if there's any conflicts that you're aware of or as they arise. The virtual sessions will be recorded and shared with all participants in case you need to watch one prior to the next session in case you can't make it. Please take care of yourselves during these trainings. The virtual sessions are 2 hours long, each with no scheduled breaks. So if you need to step away for a moment, please do what you need to do. We ask that you have the materials that you were mailed nearby along with a pen, so you can do the activities. Bring these along with you for the in-person session as well. If you did not receive your materials yet, you can access the materials online for this session. Everyone should receive their materials in

time for this session too. And Tammy was put in the chat box. The link to where you can get those materials if you didn't see that in the email. We encourage you to fully participate as much as you are able. We'll have activities and discussions and encourage you to be active in these opportunities for hands on learning and connecting with your peers. During these virtual sessions, please mute when you're not speaking to help avoid any background noise and I will mute anyone who seems like they're accidentally not muted. However, we encourage you to unmute whenever you have a question or comment and to participate. You can also use the chat box at any time. If you want to comment or if you have a question, if that works better for you, or if it's while someone else is speaking. As far as any other technical issues, please let me know if you have any problems and I'll do my best to help you as we move throughout the content. Tammy Wit is monitoring the chat box, so she's probably a quicker response than I am. If you have a quick question or an issue, I hope you will try on some new ideas and perspectives during these trainings as well as sharing your own experiences. We're all here to learn together and I really encourage you to ask questions. So I'm going to turn it over to Molly too, for an introduction of the course.

Molly [00:04:13] All right. Hi, everyone. Welcome again to the Bringing the Farm to School Local Producer training. I'm Molly Kirkham. I'm a Montana local food specialist at the National Center for Appropriate Technology. And then for the next few minutes, I'm going to introduce you to the training, provide some background on the project so you resources will be using and then give you a glimpse into what is to come. So the overall goal of this training is to assist all agricultural producers, including farmers, fishers, ranchers and food processors, in building their capacity to launch or expand efforts to market to schools. Through increase school sales. Producers can help grow farm to school activities and school communities across the nation. The training program objectives are to increase producers' knowledge and understanding of farm to school programs, increase participation in farm to school activities such as education and food production, and increase the amount of local foods that producers sell to schools. The first session will describe the various types of child nutrition programs and will discuss procurement processes. That's today. The second session will include the Food Safety and regulations for selling to schools. Cover the various channels in which you can sell to schools and end with a panel discussion. The third session will go more into the opportunities and best practices for selling to school districts, how to evaluate and develop products and tips for business and production planning. The day will also include a tour of Harden school Districts kitchen school lunch that features local foods and a virtual tour and discussion with living group farm. So well. We hope that you will help in the evaluation of this training. It will help us improve future trainings and look at the impact that they have. You were sent a pre survey link prior to the training. If you haven't completed it, please do so as soon as you can. The link will be dropped in the chat and then the post survey will be taken in person at the end of session three. And then lastly, the evaluators will follow up with you via email and like 6 to 12 months with a very short five-minute survey. All right. So if you registered prior to November 9th, like I said, you should have received your packet of materials in the mail. If you registered on or after November 9th, the raw materials will be mailed this week. And like she said, you should get them before the second training. You can also access the materials online at the producer training web page and we will provide the link in the chat. I think Tammy had already done that, but she might put it in again for you guys. The resources you received are the producer workbook, which is the image on the left besides the worksheets and business action planning guide that we will be using throughout the training. The workbook contains additional information and resources, so consider looking through it as we move through the modules. We also printed the producer worksheets. Those are shown in the middle of the slide and the school business action

planning guide that is shown on the right, so you can have them easily, easily accessible rather than flipping through that producer workbook, or if you just prefer to write on a separate sheet. And then just like I said, please bring your materials to each session of the training since we'll be referring to them continually. So some of the learning objectives of this training are for producers to gain an understanding of what farm to school is and how it can benefit their business. Identifying motivations for selling to schools and how their farm goals align. And then be introduced to action planning as a tool for meeting farm goals through school sales. Now that we've gone over a little bit about the training, I'm going to talk about what farm to school really is. And we will start with a video that talks about Montana's farm to school initiative and what farm to school is. I think Aubree's got that.

Video narrator [00:08:13] Farm to school is an umbrella term for projects or initiatives that connect children to local foods to improve their health. Support farmers, ranchers and food businesses and strengthen communities through the three core elements procurement, education and school gardens. Montana Farm to School is a collaborative effort to grow farm to school programming across the state, led by Montana Team Nutrition Program at Montana State University and Montana Office of Public Instruction. Farm to school is not a program you sign up to do. You implement the concept to meet the goals and match the resources of your school or community. There are many ways to implement farm to school, but the program generally works best when each of the three core elements are represented. Let's take a look at each of the three core elements. First, procurement. Procurement includes buying and serving local foods in school meals and snacks. Schools in Montana are sourcing local foods from all five food groups, from apples to beef and beyond. That includes food purchased from local farmers, ranchers and processors, as well as food that's been grown and raised at schools. Education. Education is the broadest of the core elements and can include food, nutrition and agriculture-based lessons. Farm to school education can take place anywhere from the classroom to cafeteria. Examples include farm field trips, preparing recipes with local foods or painting with dye made from beets. School gardens. School gardens and farms provide a unique way for students to gain hands on understanding of food and where it comes from. Growing and raising food with students is a great way to engage them in the process and get them excited about unfamiliar foods. This can include greenhouses, indoor gardening, raised beds, in-ground garden beds, orchards, farms and more. Montana Harvest of the month is one way to implement farm to school in the state. This is a free program that provides an easy-to-follow framework as well as promotional and educational resources to bring farm to school into your school. After school program, daycare or preschool each month participating Harvest of the Month sites focus on promoting one locally grown item such as lentils, by serving it in at least one meal or snack, offering taste tests, conducting educational activities and displaying or distributing harvest of the month materials. Farm to school in Montana is growing in the 2020 2021 school year, 58.6% of schools implemented farm to school in some capacity. That is a 3.8% increase from the 2018 2019 school year. Why does Montana farm to school matter? Farm to school not only connects kids with locally grown food and food and nutrition education, it also helps foster more resilient food systems by providing an institutional market for farmers and ranchers to sell their product. It also provides opportunities to build family and community engagement. Promoting locally grown and raised foods is one way to promote availability of fresh, healthy foods and support local economies. For more information, resources and trainings, visit the Montana Farm to School website and follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Molly [00:11:56] All right. So it was mentioned in the video, but I want to emphasize that farm to school is a concept, not a program you enroll in or sign up for. And it is made of

those three core elements procurement, education in school gardens. So procurement is where local foods are purchased from a farmer food hub promoted and served in a cafeteria or as a snack or taste test education, where students participate in educational activities related to agriculture, food, health or nutrition, which may include in class or a school garden visit from a farmer or a classroom field trip to producers, farm or food business and then school gardens. School gardens are where students engage in hands on learning through gardening, providing additional material or additional opportunities for farmers to engage in mentorship, management of the garden or onsite education. And then I'll just mention this one more time. Although people often think there's one standard farm to school program, the reality is much more variable from the school is unique in every community, and we intend to make sure that this training can provide clear answers about farm to school as a potential opportunity for you and your business. There's not a specific farm to school certification or program to sign up for. And then Montana Harvest of the Month is the closest thing to that in our state Farm to school supports local and regional farmers while improving the health of children and communities. While core elements can be used to leverage one another, this training will primarily focus on the on the element which is most meaningful to producers, which is selling your products to school markets. So let's look at Montana's farm to school numbers from self-reported data collected by API for the school year 2020 to 2023. There are 134 school districts serving local foods, 79 school districts conducting farm to school educational activities, 64 school districts creating or tending to school gardens. And there are 91 K-through-12 harvest of the month sites which include schools, school districts and afterschool programs. And according to the 2019 USDA Farm to School Census, Montana schools spend a little under 10% of their food budgets on local food, which amounts to about 5000 per school per year spent on local. And then this carrot graphic on the left shows the percentages of sites participating in at least one farm to school activity during those years. So why might school districts be interested in getting locally produced foods into school meals? I'm interested to see what you all think. So I'd like to get some of your ideas of why you think school districts are interested in procuring local foods. And then we'll go over the reasons that we have. So you could just type in the chat if you have any ideas, and we'll maybe read them out. I'll give you a minute or so. And. That. So Matty says fresher options available when produce is in season. Totally Small carbon footprint. Definitely. It tastes fresh and more variety. It's definitely true. Tiffany says, keeping it local. Any availability has been an issue. I think COVID really made that obvious. Food safety, where your food comes from. Supporting local families, supporting agricultural producers in the area. Definitely. These are great. I'm going to read the reasons that we have listed and they might overlap a little bit with what you've already said, But we are supporting local farmers, businesses and local economies. Increasing school meal quality and overall school meal program participation increases the willingness of kids to try new foods, support school wellness policies and other administrative and school board priorities, reduces food waste in schools, addresses the increasing demand for local food in school meals from students, parents and the rest of the community. And then a lot of times it aligns with community priorities and advocacy efforts to strengthen local food systems. So other than just procuring local schools to celebrate local food and farmers in a variety of ways, they do cafeteria promotion campaigns like posters and point of sale signage such as this photo of harvest gardens, harvest of the month, promotion, I think winter squash. And then educational events like farmer in the classroom or field trips to local farms such as this photo of Philipsburg Elementary visiting and Katsu farm on the right with the mountains looking wonderful in the background and then on site, farmer's markets and community supported agriculture, special events like barn raisers, local food and harvest community dinners. Schools also celebrate local food by food and farmers by product and producer highlights in school menus and on school web pages and in their communications,

including school newsletters, social media and announcements. These images are of the Missoula YMCA showcasing timeless chickpeas and another snack brand on their menu and in their newsletter. That. So now that we've gone over what farm to school is and why schools are and why schools are interested, what are the benefits to producers? So farm to school can have a significant financial impact for producers, according to the National Farm to school networks. Benefits of farm to school Factsheet. There is an average of 5% increase in income from farm to school sales and can lead to an establishment of long-term revenue stream for individual producers. There is an increase in market diversification and economic growth opportunities for producers. Farm to school is helping to shape the next generation of eaters and buyers, and increased exposure to fresh and local foods can shape student food preferences and impact family purchasing patterns. Therefore, increasing demand for local products and direct producer to consumer relationships in the community. And we have also seen from preliminary research that it seems to be small to medium scale producers who need additional market channels to make their operations profitable that have the most bent to benefit from farm to school opportunities. Farm to school may benefit profitability either directly through increased sales by working with new school markets, an expansion of product offerings, or increased quantity or frequency indirectly through a diversified marketing strategy by marketing to students and families, through initiatives like CSAs, farm visits, barn raisers, or promotion, like highlighting school relationships by partnering with the community at farmers markets, in grocery stores and restaurants. You can build off farm to school successes to help grow your brand. From the school mainline with the values and business schools, you can be a part of nourishing kids. Your products help make school meals reflective of the community food culture and encourage kids to try new foods. You can be a key part of increasing access to fresh and local foods in your community, and you can help promote farming as both a career path for youth and lifestyle choice aligned with community values. You can increase the visibility of small to medium sized family farms and keep farmland in production. And we can keep farmers farming. You can manage risk through market diversification and consistent sales. I want to share a little bit of feedback from producers that have experience in selling to schools and how they've benefited in a variety of ways. One producer said that a school contract helped them leverage a USDA grant for cold storage. Another said participating in an ag ed program helps them find workers. One said working with the school's distributor connected them to more sales outlets, and another said that cafeteria-based promotion helped them increase sales at the farmers market because the students and parents recognized them and then wanted to support their operation. The School Business Action Plan and Guide is in the first appendix of your producer workbook on page 52. We recommend taking time to revisit this guide and complete the sections at the end of each module, even if do not take the time during the training sessions. So if you could turn to page 52, if you have your workbook in front of you, a lot of variables go into goal setting. This graphic shows how certain variables will shape your short- and long-term farm goals as they relate to school sales. These variables include personal and farm characteristics such as Do you feel confident with your production capabilities? How do you feel about risk? What are your lifestyle goals? Community variables like How far are you from your target market? Do you have access to community resources and capital? And are your transportation corridors difficult for accessing school markets? Production and marketing enhancements. Are you growing products that schools want? What investments in food safety or equipment, for example, need to happen to access school sales? And finally, which markets make sense based on all the other factors this training will be addressing many of the variables in this graphic and will help you come up with a plan to follow through with the goals you identify. We will give you time for reflection through group exercises, worksheets, and action planning. We'll be using the School Business Action Planning Guide in your producer workbook

throughout the training to ensure you have an action plan with at least 2 to 3 next steps to pursue once you leave this training. But first, what is action planning? An action plan is a tool used to support you in achieving short term and long-term goals of selling to schools. Consider these things when developing a business action plan for farm to school. Motivations to participate in or expand school markets, also known as your values and goals, short term and long-term goals for farm to school sales and the bottom line you need to achieve to cover expenses and earn a profit. The value you can provide to schools. Action steps for the next 6 to 12 months following this training and then resources, contacts and information you need to implement your plan. So what are smart goals? We want you to keep these in mind during your action planning and they stand for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. So make sure all your goals hit these marks when you're making them. Throughout this training program, you will be completing a business action plan that you can leave the training with. Each module will address barriers and we will support you in developing a plan that identifies the action steps needed to overcome them. At the end of this training, you will have the opportunity to revise in your find your plan once you have the whole picture of farm to school sales. So if you can't answer a question now, don't worry about it. You can always go back and change it. To start, let's take 5 minutes on if you could turn to page 54 of your workbook. Let's take 5 minutes for you guys to fill out the benefits of farm to school that interests you section, including the checklist and first question of the action Plan and guide in your producer workbook. And then, yeah, so give about 5 minutes to fill that out and then feel free to read the other questions and write anything down. If you have if you feel like you can fill those in already. Okay. Does anybody now want to share how their motivations for selling disclose align with their firm goals? You can just unmute and share. Or type in the chat.

Shauna Eagleton [00:23:44] I can share, one of our farm's main goals is to make fresh, quality, nutritious food available to everyone in our rural community. And the school is like the number one place that feeds people in our community being kids. So that's a huge goal for us that aligns pretty well. Awesome.

Molly [00:24:08] Thanks for sharing.

Tiff [00:24:15] For us quality of food and like what Shauna said, nutrition. And it starts with Kids and families.

Molly [00:24:27] Thanks everyone. I am now going to pass it over to Alison to talk about getting to know school markets.

Alli [00:24:36] Thanks, Molly. Hi, everyone. My name is Alison or Allie Bell. I'm a farm specialist at the USDA Food and Nutrition Service for the Mountain Plains Region, which is an eight-state region from mountains to the plains. And I feel really lucky to work with and learn from the awesome team you all have in Montana, Aubree and Molly and Tami and Pam. There's a lot of great people who really know what they're doing, so feel lucky to be here. I am going to be talking for the next 20 minutes. It's going to be a little bit jam-packed. So bear with me. And if you have questions, please put them in the chat. And myself or Aubree or Tammy will take a look at them and try and get back to you. But we're going to be going over child nutrition programs. So really, this is going to provide you with a high-level overview of the USDA child nutrition programs and why they're a market opportunity for you, kind of what the regulations and characteristics are of these child nutrition programs and how that influences their purchasing practices. And then following the section this session, you'll have a basic understanding of the diversity of ways that schools

prepare, prepare and serve food. And hopefully this information will provide a good foundation for you all, and it will build with more information in later modules. Right. So we are going to dive right in. You might have a couple of preconceived notions or maybe some ingrained stereotypes about what a school meal is or isn't. But school meals have really come a long way in recent years. And now that we've seen and heard from Mollie a little bit about what forms a school looks like in action, we're going to get to know our farm to school markets by exploring the child nutrition programs. So these transition programs can really drive demand for local products, because a lot of times there's a large volume of purchasing in a really steady market with the school being most of the year and then summer programming. And so it's a great opportunity for local producers. And following the section, you'll have an understanding of the diversity of USDA's child nutrition programs and why they might be a viable market opportunity for you all. All right. So, like I said, school meals have changed a lot over the years. And new policies that have been enacted and implemented in the last ten years require more in quantity and an increased variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy. And the school meals really are aiming to ensure access to safe and healthy foods for kiddos. And in a lot of programs, there's a really strong focus on tasty, healthy food that kids actually want to eat and fuels them for learning. The National School Lunch Program also originated not just as a way to provide food for children, but also to create this market for producers that had extra product. So many programs and purchasing practices still aimed to support and benefit agricultural producers like you all. There are other meals or nutrition programs just out of more than just the school lunch. And we'll talk about those later in this section. But together, all of the programs I'm about to talk about are known as the Child Nutrition Programs or CNP. And this is the government. So we've got a couple of acronyms in there. And the USDA, United States Department of Agriculture funds and administers these child nutrition programs. And the operators, which are those directors and local decision makers actually on the ground running, the programs are really focused on quality foods and connecting their kids with good food that will fuel them. And many are really interested and passionate about local high-quality products that are coming from community producers that are going to benefit, you know, those like you all side of the chad, those families in their area and their local producers. And farm to school is definitely a USDA recognized best practice that really helps enhance the quality. All right. So child nutrition programs. These are school meal programs and they do go beyond K through 12 lunches. And many of the child nutrition programs have different needs when it comes to food purchasing, which can mean different opportunities for you all. So some of our meal, our school meal programs include the National School Lunch Program, which is our largest program, and that provides lunch for students at K through 12 schools, which does include both public and nonprofit private schools and also some residential childcare institutions. And there's a variety of sizes of programs and ways of purchasing within the National School Lunch Program. You know, you've got your small communities that might just be serving a few kids per day to your larger districts, maybe Helena or Bozeman, that could be serving thousands of kids a day. We have our fresh fruit and vegetable program, and that program provides an additional serving of fresh fruit or vegetable snacks throughout the school day. But Justin Eligible elementary schools, the school breakfast program is usually operated schools that are also operating the national School Lunch program, but it serves breakfast. And then the afterschool snack program offers snacks to kids that are in eligible afterschool programming. So, again, all together, these are called our school meal programs because they're most often administered through schools. A couple other of the these are a couple other programs that make up our child nutrition programs. Erin and Brooke will be going over these later. I'm in in more detail later in the session, but I just wanted to touch on them so you know what they are. So there's the Child and Adult Care Food program, otherwise known as at risk after school that provides meals and

snacks to kids that are in early care settings. So preschools, childcare centers, family child care homes and afterschool programs. This program also does serve adults, as indicated in the name, but we're just focusing on our child nutrition programs right now. So we're going to talk about the adult aspect. And then there is also the Summer Food Service program, which ensures that children have access to healthy meals over summer break when school is not in session. All right, So. Altogether. These are school meal programs that we talk about serve millions of children every day and purchase billions of dollars of food annually. And so we're going to kind of see how that breaks down in Montana. The National School Lunch Hour and these sorry, these numbers are from the 2018 2019 school year. Prior to COVID, it just because with COVID things got a little wonky and the numbers were not quite normal. So this is going back to pre-COVID time. So in 2018, 2019, 258, public and private school districts participated in the National School Lunch Program in Montana, 20 million meals were served through this program and nearly \$50 million in reimbursement came into Montana from the federal government. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetables program also saw 2 million extra dollars of reimbursement coming into Montana. And I know that Molly touched on the USDA farm to school census, and these numbers are a little old, but from 2019, in 2019, nationally, \$1.3 billion were spent on local foods just in the 2018 2019 school year. So a lot of opportunity there. All right. We're going to take a moment to look at some of these key players. You know, Aubree said, you know, this was developed by the this train was developed by the USDA, which is a federal agency. And we're also talking about federal reimbursement and federal dollars spent. But really, the goal of this training is for you all to connect with your local school meal programs. We're just going to take a quick look at how everything's kind of interconnected. Just again, so you have that basis. So the funding for school meal programs like the ones we just talked about comes from the USDA, specifically through the Food and Nutrition Service or F.A. and USDA as determines meal patterns, nutrition requirements, and also sets the meal reimbursement rates, which will be discussed later. And these federal funds are then funneled through the state agencies, and that's a different state agency for every state. But in the case of Montana, it's the Montana Office of Public Instruction, and AP is responsible for the administration and oversight of the child nutrition programs. And they also provide program support and manage reimbursement for meals, serves in the School Food Authority. So the School Food Authority is the administering unit for the operation of the school meal programs actually in the community. So most often a school food authority is a school district. So they could be synonymous and those can be used interchangeably. We just say school food authority because not always the school district, but a lot of the time it is. And the School Food Authority will submit an application to the state administering agency. So Opie, to get approval to run a USDA child nutrition program in their community because SFA is our school districts then receive federal reimbursements for meals served and are responsible for running the child nutrition programing, which includes the purchasing of food and ensuring that the number of meals served are counted correctly and that all the eligibility criteria is met. And again today we want to focus on that local connection. So USDA and UPI are definitely important players, but really that School Food Authority is the key player for you all that we want you to focus on. So now that we know a little bit more about the diversity of school meal programs you can sell to, we want to start to consider what influences school meal purchasing. And this will hopefully allow you to start to think about what you actually produce or maybe what you could produce that meets the needs of the different programs that are being run in your community. So we'll discuss two really big major influences, a little bit more in depth, and those are the meal pattern and nutrition requirements which really determines the types of food that programs need to serve and what they're going to buy, and then also meal costs. What do schools spend on food, labor, etc. and what are they reimbursed? Those that meal pattern and nutritional requirements that first influence. We're gonna take a look now at what that

actually means and what actually is required in those school meals. And so we're going to be talking in terms of meal components. You'll see they're at the top of your slide. There are five major meal components, milk grains, proteins, which is also called a meat or meat, alternative fruits and vegetables. In the National School Lunch Program, this photo there kind of shows on an LP tray. So for the lunch program, you need all five of those components. For the school breakfast program, you'll often see just three components milk, a grain or protein and a fruit or vegetable. And the fresh fruit and vegetable program, as the name implies, is fruits or vegetables. But that's just one serving. And again, only in elementary schools. And there are slight differences across the programs, but we're really, we're working with those five main meal components. And, you know, local foods can really span this whole tray. They can be in any or all of the meal components. So a lot of opportunity there. All right. So there is a little bit more of a breakdown within those school meal components. So definitely don't need to memorize all of this. Again, it's just so you can think about what you produce or what you could produce. And so the milk needs to be fat free or low-fat grains. 80 This is a kind of a complicated one, but 80% of the grain product serves in a week needs to be whole grain rich, which means that they are greater than 50% of whole grain and all other grain products need to be enriched. So if you're selling a grain product, it's really important to say, say what that percentage is and hopefully it's 50% or greater whole grain. That's really what those operators are looking for. To meet those requirements. And fruits is just a limited use. Really focusing on those whole fruits. Vegetables have a lot of subgroups. So there's and so the amount that school needs kind of depends on what the age of the kiddos that they're serving. But some examples for each of these five subgroups, dark green vegetables are into your bok choy, spinach, kale, chard, collards, broccoli and red orange are going to be like winter squash, carrots, red peppers, soup, potatoes, tomatoes, beans and peas would be black beans, black eyed peas, lentils, pinto beans, your starchy vegetables like cassava, corn, potatoes, plantains, Other. It's kind of a hodgepodge, but celery, zucchini, cauliflower, cucumbers, green beans and. And then we've got our need and the alternatives, which encompasses a lot of different foods as well meat, poultry, fish, cheese, yogurt, whole eggs, alternative protein products. Soy products. Tofu, peanut butter or other nuts and seed butters or whole seeds. And so a big variety of products, but a few key leverage points you'll see there on the screen to remember. Color and variety operators are really looking for a diversity of vegetable, especially those vegetables, to meet the meal pattern requirements and overcoming seasonal barriers. So you might have some cold weather crops or storage crops that can help meet vegetable subgroup, meal pattern requirements. And or maybe some of those meat dairy items or grains that can be used year-round. And then there are other nutrition standards in place like sodium saturated fat, trans fat and calories. So program operators most of the time are really looking for those whole less processed foods, and that can help them meet those nutrition standards. All right. So we're not going to really spend much time on this activity. I apologize, but this is something that I just want you thinking about throughout the presentation. But what are your products? You know, as we talk about with this, the meal pattern is what are the requirements? What are the things that you are producing? What are the things you are growing? Or what are our things that maybe you could start to incorporate? So just be thinking about that, maybe jotting some notes down. Feel free to put some things in the chat if you want, but just something to keep top of mind. All right. So cost of school meals. We know that this is a really ever-present thing that folks are thinking about and kind of one of those biggest perceived barriers to selling the school meal programs, you know, and really finding that price point that programs can both afford, but also benefits you as a producer. So let's look a little bit closer to see what our meal programs are working with. And so the numbers on this screen are from a school nutrition and meal cost that was released in 2019, which we do realize is a little bit old now, and especially with inflation, might not be 100% accurate, but

trends are still there. And so average cost of produce a school lunch in 2019 in Montana was \$4.31, which was a little higher than the average national or the national average of 381. Same for breakfast at 326 and Montana to 72 nationally. And then that break down, as you'll see in the pie chart, is 45% for food or 45% for labor and 10% for all remaining costs. So that comes out then to about a dollar 94 is spent on food at free school lunch and a dollar 47 for school breakfast. Let's see. So, you know, those child nutrition program operators and food service directors really have they do have flexibility in how they spend their dollars. So they might be willing to pay a little bit more for some local beef. But then, you know, they'll have to balance that by using some USDA foods or commodity foods. It's kind of balance out their budget. And so it's just about where that school's priorities lie and also the products that you might have locally. But again, a lot of school programs are really serving delicious meals that are already full of local foods on this budget. And the numbers can add up in schools and districts that have more students. And it does take time to build relationships with these operators and find out really about price point and those products that work for both of you. So communication and relationships that that is the good sauce right there. And then you'll just see at the bottom of the screen, we just you know, if you are near a bigger district or even one that's not that big, but still, you know, they're serving a lot of kids every day. And that that money, although it seems small, can add up. So. Keep that in mind. So we'll take a little bit closer look to at the funding structure and what schools are getting. So the food school authorities or the school districts are getting reimbursed for serving a complete or reimbursable meal. And a reimbursable meal has to include all of those meal components that we saw to meet the nutrition standards. The reimbursement is per student. So the more students that participate in the meal program, the higher the reimbursement to the school. So participation rates are really key and are really important to schools. They're always looking for ways to increase that participation and farm to school and local products are really great strategy to do that. And the reimbursements do change slightly from year to year and are always published in the Federal Register. And the level of reimbursement depends on student eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. This eligibility is dependent on family income and is determined in every school, every year for each student. And so they are on the left-hand side of the screen. Under federal funding, we have the 2020 to 2023 reimbursement rates posted for the lower 48 states and for the National School Lunch program that could range from \$0.77 to looks like \$4.35, so that the lower cost being for children that are paying for their meals and don't qualify for a free or reduced-price meal, that a higher price is for students that are eligible for free meals. And same for that school breakfast program, that lower price for students that are paying for their meals and the higher price for kiddos that qualify for free meals. This year there is an additional \$0.40 per lunch and \$0.15 per breakfast from the Keep Kids Fed Act. And just something to keep in mind. And then you'll see on the right-hand side there, there's a lot of different funding buckets. And so television programs have a couple different streams that they use to buy food. So we've got the federal meal reimbursement. You got paid meals are all a card items that they're selling in their program. If it's an elementary school, they might have the fresh fruit and vegetable grant. There are state funds and then those last two, the supply chain assistance funds, are local food for schools, Cooperative Agreement funds. Those are some new funding sources from the USDA for this year. They might not be around for a long time, but they are helping out this year. So again, there's a couple of different funding streams that schools have at their disposal to be buying food. So it is that share sale. So even within the different school meal programs, individual school food authorities and school districts are really different size, scale and their capacity to prepare foods. So this creates opportunity for you as a producer to really connect with that school meal program and size and scale of their program and market pathway to see what works best for you. So you've got a couple different ones close to you. So we're going to take a look just at a little

example to kind of illustrate this. You know, the different sizes of the school meal programs really determine the amount of products they require, and that can really vary. Right. So let's say that these two districts are interested in broccoli. You have a large K-through-12 district that's doing lunch. And for that for their lunch, they need a three fourths cup serving size of that broccoli, and they're serving 5000 meals. That means they need over 1500 pounds of broccoli. Compare that to a small K-through-12 district that's maybe just serving the broccoli for the fresh fruit and vegetable program as a snack. They need a half cup serving size for 500 snacks. They need £102. So 1500 versus 100 and is a really big difference. And that can play into what you as a producer can provide. So you can see a lot of these influences on volume requirements and the type of the child nutrition program, the age of the student served the mode of serving. So these are all things to keep in mind and explore as you're looking for schools to potentially strike up a relationship with. Again, this is just illustrating this point even further. Half of the Montana, half in Montana schools have 100 students or fewer. So that might be a really good opportunity for you to be able to supply one thing to that school or, you know, if they don't have those huge high needs and then you might be able to more easily serve them. But there's a lot of exploring that you can do where in the area that you live, along with looking at what other distributors are in the area or maybe what items are hard to get in the area. A lot of things to look at. All right. So we looked at the size of school, but also just as the size of the school or district is important in the types and quantities of food they buy, the food prep space that the school actually has available to them is also important to consider. You know, just like a farm, if you've seen one school meal program kitchen, you've seen one school meal program kitchen. So they're all different. The equipment, space storage, staffing, everything varies from program to program. So it might be kind of hard to see in these photos, but there's a real range of kitchens. Some have industrial kitchens that have capacity for scratch cooking and have a lot of machinery at their disposal. And some kitchens are just what we call heat and serve kitchens where pre-prepared food is reheated and then served to students. So some school meal programs don't have the equipment or the staff capacity to process fresh foods themselves. So these programs might need minimally processed products like cleaned, peeled, chopped or fully prepared products, depending on what their capacity is. So something else to keep in mind as you go about creating these relationships. And this is a video that we don't have time to watch too much today, but there is a kitchen to her. And I think Aubree or Tammy is going to put the link in the chat. And there are a couple other kitchen chores available on the producer training web page, so be sure to check those out. And then kind of just building a little bit more on what the school has available to them based on their size, scale, equipment, infrastructure, school meal programs have different production models. So these models will influence who you need to connect with or who you can connect with to get your product into the system. So some have on site preparation where meals are prepared on site and. This might be done by staff of the local schools, of the local school district, or it could be done by a food service management company and who they contract with to run their food school program. A central kitchen model. This is one large central kitchen or satellite production kitchen that prepares food and delivers the prepared meals to satellite locations. This model may be operated by, again, a local school food authority or contracted to a food service management company. And then blended meal sponsors a third-party meal suppliers contracted by the schools that authority to prepare and deliver meals. So again, more things to keep in mind as you go about creating those relationships and seeing what kind of meal or what kind of program you could potentially sell to. I know there's a lot of information. Thanks for sticking with me. I'm now going to turn it over to Pam, who's going to talk about local procurement in school meals.

Pam [00:51:26] Hi, I'm Pam Fruh. I work with Montana Office of Public Instruction, and my role here is to oversee the distribution of USDA Foods and the USDA DOD Fresh Produce program. And so I'm going to talk to you a little bit about sourcing local school foods for your meals. But first, I have to get my slides over here that I want because I don't. Go. Sorry. Oops. There we go. So in this section, you are going to learn the basic concepts associated with how school food authorities procure foods, including local foods. And this section will set the stage for a deeper dive into market pathways that we'll talk about in module two, and for the purpose of this section will be using the term school District and School Food Authority like we just did with Alleys section. They're interchangeable terms. And as a reminder, a local school food authority is typically usually a school district and then say, Here. So this slide, what is local? Local is defined by the school itself, by the school district itself. School food authorities and school districts define for themselves what local means. The definition of local is flexible some space, and they determine local definition based on what is available regionally and what their program goals are. In Montana, with our location on the border of Canada, we are we might be on the northern border there, but we are restricted to not be able to purchase local foods right across the border in Canada. All of our products need to be domestically sourced. We could, however, purchase things from North Dakota if that that would be a good definition of local. So why define local? There's different reasons. Schools want to align with their specific programs and to track their purchasing and create benchmarks. Defining local allows schools to use geographic preference for purchasing, and we'll talk about that later in this section. And it may also be used to ensure compliance with a particular state program. We don't really have any of those going on right now to talk about, but that is a possibility. A definition of local can also vary depending on the product and the time of the year and seasonal availability. And the USDA farm to school census that we talked about gives some examples of local definitions produced within a certain mile radius or produced within a county. Again, that is up to the school to decide they might choose a regional definition. And so keep in mind when we're thinking about this, that local can span the whole plate, that whole tray that Ali talked about. So don't think you don't narrow. You're thinking to just one product. It can be used in a lot of different ways. So the farm to school supply chain and we're kind of tired of hear about supply chain, but we're going to use the terminology anyway. Local procurement can look many different ways. For example, a school might produce directly from an agricultural producer, or maybe the producer sells through a food hub or a distributor, and the school is doing business with that food hub or that distributor. And each of these market channels shown on the slide has different benefits and potentially drawbacks that each school farmer and intermediary in that relationship needs to consider. So, for example, a direct relationship between a school and a farmer rancher can result in a strong communication and appreciation of the bond between the buyer and the grower. Fresh products delivered directly from the farm to the school have benefits. However, beyond a certain scale, this relationship might be challenging, so the school has to coordinate orders and invoices with multiple farmers where farm has to deliver to multiple school sites within a school district. Then you start to need more logistical capabilities for distributors. School food authorities have can drive demand and supply of local product by requesting and sourcing local products. This can work well, especially if the distributor is already working with the school district on other products for weekly delivers, weekly order, weekly orders and deliveries. However, many distributors have vendor requirements or volume minimums that might not make it possible for them to bring a local product. But again, it's all about communication and food hubs. We're seeing more and more of those and they can offer a happy medium in these relationships, but sometimes require a conversation on both sides about how to make things work, have source products and get them delivered. And then there's a pricing issue to talk about here, too. A school cannot pay restaurant prices, so they may need to work

with the food hubs and the other vendors in this equation to find. It's some cost savings ideas that'll make it possible for them to do business with local vendors in Montana. Some ways that we have actually sourced local foods in our state and some of the schools that you guys are have your kids in and are working with has participated in this. So the apples pictured there were grown in Montana and we were able to draw fresh vendor was able to source those for our program. So again that's a program using federal funds, distributors, regional distributors such as Valley Distributing and Quality Foods deliver to many of our schools. Again, more regional local retailers offer seasonal produce. Many schools are shopping there. We have our food hubs and our aggregators, such as the Western Montana Growers Network and the Northwest Food Hub Network that are doing business with schools and other institutions, school gardens and then USDA foods, which is something that we're working on making that more local and regional. So stay tuned. Depending on location, there may be well-developed procurement channels for schools to utilize when sourcing certain products. And there are also third-party marketing services to support local procurement. But not a lot of that in our in our area. So we will skip over the details on that one. The ways that schools incorporate local products, we talked about that lunch tray, but there's other things. I mean, there's breakfast, there's lunch, some schools do dinner, there's condiments. It can be an entree. It might be a spice, it might you might have your product featured on the salad bar. We have the Harvest of the Month program that is that is specifically tuned to our state. And a lot of schools are participating in that. We talked about the numbers earlier, the snack program, the fresh fruit and vegetables snack program. Ali touched on that and we'll go into that a little bit. Greater detail. Taste tests, educational activities, art projects, community meals, fundraisers. So get creative. When you're thinking about this. Some school districts might not be able to start right away with full blown large sales. But if you can do a taste test or a onetime event, that can be a way to to start to build that relationship and build the business. So we're going to talk more about all that later. But this is just kind of to give you an overview. And so now we have a just a quick activity we're going to do. It's going to involve you getting out your producer workbook and you'll just read to yourself on page 12. There's three different case studies there on page 12. And we decided to do just the first one, the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program as a market opportunity. Arizona Microgreens So just take a couple minutes to read through that and then I'm just going to show you a quick peek at the API website and where how this fresh fruit and vegetable program that we've been talking about, where you can actually see some real numbers associated with that. This is just the actual API website. The school nutrition program page is within within the main API under the umbrella. And this, this fresh fruit and vegetable program is the snack program that elementary schools are invited to participate in. So not every school is doing this. This is an exposure program for kids. This is the one where Ali gave the broccoli example. If you're doing the fresh fruit and vegetable program, you wouldn't need nearly as much broccoli probably as you would if you were going to play it for a giant lunch. So if you if you click on the list of qualifying FSP schools, this shows you who was invited to participate this year. So all of this data, again, we have these are federal funds. All of the data is public information. There's no secrets here. And this is a good thing. As a producer, you know, you might want to go look at Broadbus. Well, this brought us participating. Yes, maybe not. Maybe, maybe not. Every year they would be. It depends on how many of their students are qualified for free or reduced meals that year. But this is broken out by the federal fiscal year. And you can see that over the course of the year, what these schools have to spend. So this is real money. And they are reimbursed when they make a purchase. So they are looking to not serve the exact same thing every week and or every day. And they operate on different schedules. But this would be a place where you could go if you wanted to, to find out who might be a good customer for me and my kale or whatever you have. That's just a good example of one of the several child nutrition

programs that are a good entryway into school meals. Procurement. Fancy word for shopping. Procurement is the purchasing of goods and services. You do need to understand the basics of procurement so that you kind of know where you fit in the process. So this is the general steps that that schools are going to go through when they buy food. And every school must have a procurement policy. That's a requirement. Again, many of those are available online and it is some nationwide that's a requirement to participate in the National School Lunch program and understanding how school food authorities procure food will help you better determine how to how that how this process works is going to help you understand how to possibly enter the market if you choose to do that. It starts with the planning phase. What am I serving on my menu? What have I purchased previously? What kind of quantities do I need? Some. Many schools operate on what we call a cycle menu, so they might be looking at not only the October menu, but also the January menu and March menu all at once. And this is where you need to get to know your schools. Schools are not always required to advertise their procurement. It depends on how much money they're spending. And there's no blanket answer for what that dollar amount is across the state. It's determined locally by each school district. Schools may inquire with local and non-local vendors to understand what their options are for their purchasing. And in the case where a school does do a formal procurement, the contract would be at or would be awarded to the most responsive or responsible vendor that meets all the schools' requirements at the best price. Again, those are the largest, largest purchases. You're not going to see that very much in our state does happen. Not that often. Important we talked about we are not going to be shopping local in Canada. There is a buy American provision for schools in the National School Lunch Program. Schools are required to buy American grown and processed foods whenever possible, and generally purchasing local, locally produced food will help meet this requirement. Procurement must support free and open competition, ensuring that all vendors are on a level playing field. And schools cannot specify local as a requirement, but they can target that in other ways. So we'll talk about that a little bit more. And then vendors being responsive and responsible in how they respond to solicitations or price inquiries. They must you must meet all the elements of the school's request, and you must be able to meet all of that to deliver all those requirements. Other requirements federal, tribal, state and local regulations mainly applying to meat, dairy and eggs. Some of those entities might have regulations that influence procurement. The regulations may be more restrictive than federal procurement standards. So again, these are things that you'll find out when you when you visit with the school in Montana, the most and everywhere, the most restrictive regulation must be met. So if we're talking about spending thresholds, but if your school district has a procurement policy that says \$5,000 is the cutoff point for the for the school principal and to make the purchasing decision, then that's what the school does. It doesn't matter what the state and federal regulations are. The school goes by their school policy. So that's super, super important. Regulations related to small minority and women owned businesses can come into play. And then food safety is another consideration. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service does not mandate food safety requirements. Requirements around food safety differ from state to state and local school. Food authorities are going to coordinate that with their county health department. So in Montana, it's the county health department that is the has the ultimate say so in the health codes. This information is often included in the vendor requirements of the solicitation. But it. Can be present as a as a specification as well. So food safety planning, again, we're going to talk about that more in the final in the final session in session for these principles manifest in all sorts of rules and regulations that schools must follow. But knowing the general framework will help you prepare to meet the school needs. So procurement methods I kind of talked a little bit about this one. Schools use a variety of procurement methods, and the type of method applied is generally dependent on the dollar value of the

purchase. So most purchases in our in our state most of the time are going to be what we call a micro purchase. So there is a federal threshold for a micro purchase. But again, the most restrictive threshold applies. So the school district policy will take precedence over the state or the federal generic spending threshold. So this is what you want to talk to your potential customer about how are they making these purchasing decisions. A micro purchase is a non competitive. A solicitation is not required, but a micro purchase cannot limit competition. The purchases should be equitably distributed across qualified suppliers. Spreading your business around basically is the is what that is saying. So this might be a onetime order from a school food authority or a purchase agreement for multiple orders under that threshold amount. So here we used a \$10,000 we didn't on the slide. So just keeping in mind that that a micro purchase is informal and the food service director is going to does it doesn't have to post it or announce it, they can call around and get different prices. Then there's the in Yes. Yeah there's this as Tammy there's a quick question from Shanna. She was wondering if the annual threshold is that annual threshold per purchase. It it well, it's it's per purchase. So it doesn't, it doesn't accumulate over the school year. The main thing to remember with that is that you you do not it's not allowable to intentionally split up your order to keep under that threshold. It's it's designed to be. Yeah. You can't if you're going to buy if you're going to buy, you're going to buy beef for your menu next week, then you can't have some of it delivered on Monday and some of it delivered on Friday. So you have two different bills. It needs to be it needs to it's considered one purchase and I can give you more details on that later. Aside from this informal purchases, a lot of times we refer to that three bids in a buy call around, go on the Internet, go to different online sources or different form to school resources, work out wherever you shop, get three bids and you would. And then and then the school would would make their choice between those those three bids. And then there's a formal procurement. Again, I said, this isn't something that happens a lot. This is an invitation for bid. It's publicized. It is a lot. There's a lot more documentation there and it can be a fixed price or a cost reimbursable contract. Although this may seem complicated, the procurement process is an import is important to ensure full and open competition and that taxpayer dollars are used appropriately. So that's that's the why behind all these details and note often terminology when we discuss procurement in this session and the next you'll hear the term solicitation. Solicitation is associated with formal procurement. So when a public entity wants to buy a good or a service that is expected to exceed its small purchase threshold, it can't do three bids in a buy any more. Now you're going out for a formal solicitation. So that's a lot about it. Not super exciting topic, but it is important to know in the real world. Mostly schools are making micro purchases and again, that dollar amount is going to vary. \$5,000 is what we see a lot. So on the producer side, what are you looking for? Well, what your producers are thinking, I should find out if any schools in my service area need my product for their menu or an upcoming event. How do you do that? Look on the website. Find out what's on the menu. Do they participate in Harvest of the Month? Do they participate in that fresh fruit and vegetable program we just looked at on the website? What about special events, fundraisers? And then there's national events like National School, National School Breakfast Week. We just finished Farm to School Month. So some of these big events come with their own publicity at the national level, and that gets easily rolled down to local schools, reach out to the appropriate contact. It might take a few tries to find who that is, who does the purchasing. It's not always the cook. Sometimes, especially in our smaller schools. It might be the secretary, it's the business manager. It's they have different names for these people. Who who plans the menu and orders the food is what you want to find out. Once you find that person, it's just it it pays to really respect their time. I know. I read somewhere in the past in the notebook here. Don't show up unannounced. That does not work. They might be serving lunch or doing something. So, you know, once you find them, brainstorm on how you can work together.

You know, we looked at the numbers of how many schools want to participate in farm to school. They take a lot of pride in this on the school side. The school is saying, what? Here's my menus. Here's the how many servings I'm pretty sure I'm going to need. How am I going to get the food that I need? And especially now that is a more and more common question that maybe wasn't asked five years ago. But now with our supply chain stuff going, you might not get the deliveries that you necessarily could have counted on. So schools are looking for broader relationships. There's a slide here with the cycle of school food service purchases. The good thing is they happen all year long. There's no good, bad time. So don't you don't have to wait up till August to start. And then let's see, we there are some special funds that are available right now for schools to make purchases of unprocessed and minimally processed goods. They are not necessarily designated for local purchases, but it's a great way for schools to use those funds. So that's a great funding opportunity right now. And that is actually a whole separate topic. I'm not going to really try to go with that, but I can I hope I have some resources I can link in the chat for you guys and that's both of those. So that's really you know, these are really our specialty purchase programs right now. So my apologies on going over and I think now S.C..

Aubree [01:14:04] Hi, everyone. This is Aubree Roth. Throughout this training, we've been focusing on helping you build your capacity for selling to schools. However, there are other child nutrition programs that may be administered outside of K through 12 schools that offer additional market opportunities. These programs and the opportunities they present are discussed in greater detail in this section. So let's talk about beyond the lunchroom. Those additional child nutrition programs the programs will be digging into are the Child and Adult Care Food Program, also known as the CFP and the Summer Food Service Program. These programs share many similarities to the school meal programs that we have discussed, but also have some important distinctions, including location, where they take place often outside of schools when they take place often outside of the traditional school year. Who administers the programs, volume and product needs and importantly, who you as the producer would contact to make the sale? Let's start with a child and adult care food program. AFP provides meals and snacks for a number of different institutions child care centers, family day care homes, afterschool programs, emergency shelters, adult daycare facilities. For the purpose of this conversation, will be focusing on child care centers and family day care homes. Just like in other school meal programs, there is a flow of administration from federal to local. For CFP, the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service administers the program at the federal level. USDA, F.A. determines meal pattern and nutrition requirements reimbursement rates and provides funding for reimbursement. Federal funds are paid to state agencies who are responsible for administration and oversight of this CFP. Sometimes it's the state agency that administers other school meal programs, and sometimes it is a different agency. In Montana, the Montana Department of Health and Human Services administers the CFP, while Montana Office of Public Instruction administers the school nutrition programs. The state agency in this case, HHS, provides funds and oversight either to independent centers or sponsoring organizations. Sponsoring organizations provide administrative oversight, including monitoring, training, technical assistance to smaller centers and family child care homes. Sponsoring organizations can provide you access to the many centers and family day care homes they support. They may even help coordinate group purchasing or special events to help connect you to the centers and families. Later in this section, we'll show you how see CFP sponsors and participating sites in your area. Let's take a look at the Child and Adult Care Food Program by the numbers In 2019, see CFP served 4.8 million children each day at a cost of \$3.7 billion in federal spending each year. See, CFP reimbursement rates are slightly less but comparable to the National School

Lunch Program rates. When we look at what is being served to those children, each site meal has the same five meal components as the National School Lunch Program. Milk, grain, bread, protein, which is also called meat or meat alternative fruit and vegetable. Just like in school meal programs, all of these components could be local. There are a few differences in the CFP. There are slightly different nutrition requirements. Specifically, there are not vegetable color subgroups that we see in the National School Lunch Program. Importantly, there are much smaller servings. S.E. CFP serves younger children. For example, a serving size of vegetables for children in elementary would be three quarters of a cup for children ages five, three through five in child care. The serving size is a quarter cup. Finally, the use of local and seasonal foods in SI CFP meals is encouraged and considered at best practice for SI CFP by USDA. Local Foods enhances CFP operations by creating healthy environments, increasing quality of meals, and making every mealtime a learning opportunity for children. According to the 2018 National Farm Early Care and Education Survey, the most frequently reported sources for local food in child care sites were farmer's markets onsite or community gardens, individual producers, distributors, grocery stores and retail outlets because of their size and structure. See CFP. Participating sites may be more likely to purchase directly from a producer through a farmer's market or direct relationship than school districts. This creates a great opportunity for relationship development and opening up new markets with families. This is also a valuable market for smaller scale production or smaller product quantity. Now I'll turn it over to Erin.

Erin [01:19:19] Hi, I'm Erin Turner with the Montana Office of Public Instruction. I'm the Summer food service program manager. So let's talk about the summer food service program, which provides nutritious meals to children up to age 18. When school is out of session during the summer. Summer food service may take place at schools, but it may also take place at many other community locations, including schools, public libraries, community centers, churches, boys and girls clubs, YMCA day camps. And some communities have even hosted meals right at farmer's markets. The locations where meals are served are called sites. Sites don't just offer meals, but often offer educational activities and sometimes gardening opportunities as well. The administration of the Summer food Service program is similar to that of other child nutrition programs flowing from the federal agency. The United States Department of Agriculture. They provide funding to the state agency, which is the Montana Office of Public Instruction or OPI, and then OPI administers the program and trains summer sponsors and provides support for the summer meal sites. The USDA determines the meal pattern and nutrition requirements for the summer meals in determine reimbursement rates and provides funding for the reimbursement. Federal funds are paid to the state agencies are OPG or are then responsible for administering and providing oversight of the program, including paying the summer meals sponsors for the number of meals or number of reimbursable meals they provided to kids at their summer meal sites. Sponsoring organizations manage the summer food service program in communities, including locating and recruiting sites, training and supervising staff monitoring sites, and managing their reimbursement. Importantly, the sponsor is responsible for arranging for meals to be prepared or delivered. So a sponsor will be your primary contact to make a sale. Later in this section, we'll show you how to find a summer food service program sponsor and participating site in your area. Now let's look at the summer food service program by the numbers so far for summer of 2022, in Montana, over 660,000 meals have been served at 272 participating sites, with over two and a half million dollars in federal spending for the program. Summer food service program. Reimbursement rates are actually a bit higher. The reimbursement rates for other school or child nutrition programs because all meals are reimbursed at the same rate. No child has to pay for a summer food service program meal. So all meals are

reimbursed at the free rate. However, sites that prepare their own food versus purchasing prepared meals from a vendor are located in rural areas, receive slightly higher reimbursement, as you can see here, listed for the current reimbursement rates. Reimbursement rates for breakfast are up to \$2.60, up to \$4.56 for lunch and up to a dollar seven for a snack. The Summer food Service program provides a little more flexibility in the meal pattern by combining the fruit and vegetable categories. So there are just four meal components. Which are milk, vegetables and fruits, grains and breads, meat and meat alternatives. And just like other child nutrition programs, all of these components can be local. Some food service program sponsors may purchase local foods from a variety of sources, including direct from producers, distributors, food hubs, farmer's markets, community supported agriculture, or via food service management companies. The Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food service program present some unique opportunities for you as a producer. Both programs come in a broad range of sizes and volume needs. There is ample opportunity to find a child and adult care food program or summer food service program that fits your level of production. For example, a small child and adult care food program site serving young children may need very small volumes or are a good fit for a small producer. Some summer food service program sponsors prepare food for a large number of sites, which would be an opportunity for a larger volume sales operation through the summer. Child and adult Care food program programs often run year round, including in the summer and summer. Food service programs, of course, run during the summer when your production may be at its peak. Flexibility and modes of purchasing. While these programs still have to comply with federal procurement regulations, they may have more flexibility in how they purchase based on their size. Family and community engagement, child care sites and summer food service program sites offer opportunities to connect with families, which could expand into another market opportunity and increase your visibility in the community. So if connecting with us CFP and Summer Food service program seems like a pathway of interest, take some time to explore participating sites in your area. Many schools also operate the A.P. and summer food service programs. So you may start by connecting with schools in your area. You can also visit these links here to locate. CFP programs or summer food service programs in your area to start making a connection for selling your products. Thank you.

Aubree [01:24:55] Turning it over to Molly.

Molly [01:24:58] Okay, now that we've gone through the first session we're going to do a little true and false activity. So I'm going to read a statement and it'll be shown on a slide. And if you could just put in a chat, a T or an F for true or false. If I am not a fruit and vegetable producer, I cannot sell my products to child nutrition programs. True or false? T. Or F. Local foods can ban the plate from fruits and vegetables to meat, milk, dairy and grains. The only way to get my products to children is through school lunch. True or false? But there are a wide variety of child nutrition programs in addition to the National School Lunch Program, including school breakfast program, fresh fruit and vegetable program, and the Child and Adult Care Food program. Local food can be served for meals, including breakfast, lunch and dinner, snacks, tasters, special events and classroom activities. Schools might be particularly interested in the sweet potatoes I grow because they are required to serve red or orange vegetables. True or false? You guys are doing great. True. Schools are required to serve a certain amount of red and orange vegetables each week. Sweet potatoes, peppers, carrots, winter squash and more can help them fulfill this requirement. There is no way that schools can afford to purchase my products with their spending limitations. Of course, this one is false. Although the reimbursement rates for school meals may be limited, school food authorities have flexibility to spend more on some local foods while balancing their budget using less expensive products in other

places. Different school food authorities and different child nutrition programs require different volumes of product. OC true the size and type of program age of children served. Mode of serving all influence the volume of product needed. This variation means it is possible to find a program that fits your production size and scale. The United States Department of Agriculture dictates food safety requirements for schools. That is false. Food safety requirements are established at the state or food service authority level. Okay. I think we're going to move on to some action planning.

Alli [01:27:38] All right. We sure are. Thanks, Molly. And that was fun. Looks like all of this information is seeping in. That's great to see. Or to open our workbooks to page 56 now. And on page 56, you'll see this chart that's up on the screen right now that we're going to use to do a little bit of reflection. And so this chart has some space for a short term strategy, some recommended action steps and an action timeline. In that short term strategy, you can think about what maybe is a smart goal or two that you might want to work towards in the next year or so in order to advance your learning or maybe get resources, reach out to a school, grow something new, or produce something new based on the topics that we've talked about today. So in think on that and then what would be an action step that you can take with, you know, next week, in the next couple of weeks after leaving, leaving this training to get you closer to that smart goal. And then the final column you can use to document who will do what or who will support you, maybe write down any deadlines, things like that. So we're going to take maybe the next three ish minutes to think on this and write a few notes down. So if you've got your workbook again, that's page 56. If you don't have the workbook yet, if you can just jot that down, I mean, you get it, you can fill it in. All right. Do we have anyone who would like to share maybe a smart goal that they are going to be working towards over the next couple weeks or months? It looks like we've got something in the chat. Thank you, Matty. In the Flathead Valley, there's a very wide range of school sizes, so one of my short term strategies is to learn about all the different school sizes and see which ones align with our farm size. My action steps include simply reaching out to these schools once I learn about their sizes that could be reaching out to friends. I have four teachers who can connect me with administration or just going straight to the top. Thanks, Matty. That's awesome.

Shauna Eagleton [01:29:59] I will share. I was going to try and plan another first of the month activity. I just did one for carrots, so maybe trying to plan one for January and. So my action plan would be reaching out to the schools to help get some help to prepare the activity and recruit help this time. And then also, I'm doing my crop planning now for for the next season. So seeing what I can do with my crop plan to more specifically target like their salad bar of the fresh fruit and vegetable like snack programs.

Alli [01:30:40] All of those are great ideas. Thank you so much for sharing. Great. Well, I hope that you all are you can continue to work on this. You know where it is now? In your workbooks. And with that, I'm going to pass it back off to Aubree.

Aubree [01:30:56] Awesome. Thank you. Hope we got through a lot of information today, so I hope it's soaking in all that great on the quiz. So I think you're really getting the information. So before I go over the logistics, are there any questions? So this slide is a bit of a teaser of what we'll cover in the future modules, and we're sort of throwing around modules and sessions. They're not the same thing, but it doesn't really matter. The modules are divided into modules in your workbooks and then our classes, our training is divided into three sessions. So those modules are sort of divided into the different sessions. So if you've been getting confused there that's the terminology. So thinking about some of the questions that are on this slide can help you prepare for the content

that's to come. What products am I already growing that might be of interest to schools? Based on the descriptions in this section, what size a program do I have the capacity to grow for and maybe what type of program? Can I offer fresh, whole, unprocessed product or minimally processed product? What relevant market channels am I already selling through direct food hubs or distributors? And what are my existing food safety protocols and documentation. The content in the following modules will help you dive deeper into these questions and consider how to build on your current production infrastructure and market channels. So looking ahead to our next sessions session, two will be held virtually on Tuesday, November 29th. So we're skipping a week here and the connection information wasn't in the email you received. Session three is our in-person session, and that will be from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Hardin. It will be at Hardin Middle School. Please plan to arrive no later than 820. So since we'll start talking right at 830 so you can arrive any time between eight and 820. So that's all we have today. I'd just like to thank all of today's presenters for taking the time to share their expertise with us, to prepare this training and to be available for any questions. So if you would like to reach out to them, their contact information is here and I'll just ask them if they can pop their information in the chat box as well. And I'd be happy to follow up with you and answer any questions. I hope you all have a fabulous evening and please reach out, especially if you have any questions for our next session. But we'll see you next on November 29th. Take care.