FROM CARROTS TO CURRICULUM:
IMPLEMENTING LOCAL FOOD IN ALLEGANY COUNTY

SECOND ITERATION
GRANT FUNDING
2020-2022

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FROM CARROTS TO CURRICULUM: AN OVERVIEW

In 2018, Cornell Cooperative Extension received a Farm to School Grant through the NYS Department of Ag. & Markets to conduct a two year program targeted at helping the county’s districts procure more local products. Their project, entitled From Carrots to Curriculum: Implementing Farm to School in Allegany County, was refunded in 2020 for a second two-year iteration of their project.

BACKGROUND

- The original project was funded by the Dept. of Ag and Markets in the 2017 grant cycle and began March of 2018. The initial goal with the 12 school districts in the county was to determine their current local procurement, and increase that number by 7-15%. The Project Coordinator has recruited over 30 regional farms who are interested in selling their produce to schools. In 2018-2019, they had success with two districts exceeding the 30% threshold put forth by the NYS Dept. of Education in school year-18-19.
- Now that relationships with schools are developed and local food procurement is beginning to increase dramatically, the Coordinator will spend their time on topics did not get adequate attention during the first funding cycle.

PROGRAM GOALS

- This project aims to increase in volume and of NYS farm products procured by schools for inclusion in school meal programs for all 12 districts from 18-22% to over 30% NYS procurement. The variety of NYS products will be increased to include more fresh produce as well as frozen.
- This project will expand outreach to 10-15 additional farmers (40-60% increase), and positively impact students by introducing them to new recipes, ingredients, and taste testing opportunities will create new educational as well as culinary experiences for students.

PROPOSED PROJECT TASKS

- Continue to increase local procurement for Allegany County Schools through the Farm to School Coordinator.
- Recipe Development: Collaborate with neighboring county cafeteria managers and Farm to School Coordinators to develop a local specific recipe guide. There are many “farm to school” recipes available, but the districts see existing recipes available as too labor intensive, and include ingredients that are cost prohibitive and disliked by students.
- Equipment: Purchase additional processing equipment tailored to each school’s needs for additional in-house fresh food scratch cooking. Examples of the equipment include smoothie blenders, salad spinners, potato peelers, and food processors.
- Proper Procurement Assistance: The Farm to School Coordinator, with help and training from NYSED, will help the county’s managers ensure their local food purchases are in compliance with state and federal regulations. This is a topic that was new to both the Farm to School Coordinator, to cafeteria managers, and to business administrators in the first iteration of this project. They were used to the same purchasing methods and did not realize how intensive and formal the bidding process is in order to be compliance.
- Advertising to Community and School: Create synchronized campaigns to promote Farm to School activities.
- Aggregation / Processing Partnership: Work with participating districts to further build on their coordinated local buying program and processing partnership with the Allegany County Jail.
- Culinary Specialist: Contract a consultant who will visit each cafeteria, observe the staff, and teach knife skills to assist with local food processing in district kitchens.