PENNSYLVANIA FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK

2026 - 2030

STRATEGIC PLAN

Since 2017, the Pennsylvania Farm to School Network (PFSN) has collaborated to advance farm to school opportunities across the state. Building on the success of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, PFSN launched its next phase of strategic planning to guide the Network's work over the next five years. Throughout 2025 and 2026, PFSN members participated in a comprehensive, participatory strategic planning process guided by Green Mountain Evaluation and the Strategic Plan Steering Committee.

This collaborative process gathered input to inform the strategic plan via virtual meetings and discussions with approximately 50 participants, a strategic planning survey completed by approximately 120 network members, and a youth survey completed by more than 200 students. Participants represented all PFSN sectors, including youth, parents, community members, farmers, food producers, food aggregators and processors, school food service personnel, K-12 education, early childhood education (ECE), nonprofit, and government partners.

The Pennsylvania Farm to School Network is coordinated and staffed by The Food Trust, which provides support for the Network and leads statewide initiatives that advance farm to school in Pennsylvania. Over the next five years (2026-2030), this strategic plan will guide the collective efforts of PFSN members and partners. Some priorities will be advanced through initiatives implemented by The Food Trust, others through direct Network activities or partner-led efforts, and many through shared implementation. Across all of these efforts, PFSN's unique role is to serve as a statewide collaborative that convenes members and partners, amplifies partner-led work, and strengthens connections and collaboration across Pennsylvania's farm to school community.

PENNSYLVANIA FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK

VISION AND MISSION

Vision

Every child in Pennsylvania is meaningfully connected to and nourished by thriving and resilient community food systems.

Mission

Leverage and build upon our collective resources and shared vision to cultivate farm to school and farm to early care and education (ECE) initiatives that:

- create opportunities for all children across the state to grow, learn about and enjoy eating Pennsylvania foods;
- increase market opportunities for Pennsylvania producers;
- connect growers, food systems partners, schools, ECE sites, and community members around food.

Goal 1 SUPPORT CONNECTIONS AND COORDINATION ACROSS THE NETWORK

Expand regional and cross-sector connections among schools, ECEs, producers, and partners.

- Create or maintain directories to facilitate connections between food producers and schools/ECEs interested in local purchasing, food education, field trips, guest speaking, or school garden support.
- Facilitate producer/school/ECE matchmaking, including regional and virtual matchmaking opportunities.
- Support regional networks, convenings, or champions to strengthen local relationships and make PFSN more accessible across the state.

Support peer learning and member engagement across the Network.

- Continue and expand sector-specific connection circles or similar spaces to support peer learning, relationship-building, and shared problem-solving (e.g., for farmers/food producers, school food service staff, educators, ECE providers).
- Build or expand on online spaces for sharing resources, opportunities, implementation questions and challenges, and lessons learned.
- Provide clearer communication about how members can engage with and utilize the Network to advance farm to school efforts in their own communities.

Strengthen alignment with related statewide and regional efforts.

- Continue and expand partnerships with organizations working in agriculture, education, public health, food access, workforce development, youth leadership, school gardens, and community food systems.
- Coordinate farm to school priorities with existing initiatives, agencies, working groups, and partner organizations to align efforts, avoid duplication, and amplify partner-led resources and opportunities.

Goal 2 BUILD AWARENESS, ADVOCACY, AND POLICY SUPPORT

Build public understanding and support for farm to school among decision makers, families, and communities.

- Raise awareness among school and district leaders, administrators, food service teams, early childhood providers, families, farmers, food producers, and policymakers about the benefits of farm-to-school and how it supports healthy kids and strong communities.
- Build stronger parent, student, and community advocacy for local food, school gardens, agriculture education, and farm to school efforts.
- Use coordinated communications, social media, newsletters, partner outreach, Farm to School Month, and storytelling campaigns to promote farm to school across Pennsylvania.

Use data and stories to demonstrate farm to school reach, impact, and opportunities.

- Gather and share data related to farm to school participation, local food purchasing, economic impact, student outcomes, food access, and community benefits.
- Incorporate student, farmer, school, ECE, family, and community perspectives into communications, evaluation, and advocacy materials.

Advance a unified farm to school policy and funding agenda.

- Build advocacy capacity across the Network by providing relevant updates, resources, talking points, and opportunities for members and partners to engage with policymakers.
- Support passage and implementation of a Local Food Purchasing Incentive (LFPI) policy or similar statewide policies and funding mechanisms that expand local procurement and farm to school participation across K-12 and ECE.

Goal 3 INCREASE SCHOOL, ECE, PRODUCER, AND WORKFORCE CAPACITY

Build school and ECE capacity for local procurement and farm to school implementation.

- Provide resources and support professional development for food service staff, teachers, ECE providers, garden educators, coordinators, farmers, food producers, and community partners (e.g., PA Farm to School Institute, Wholesaling to Institutions Workshop, Project PA Culinary Sessions).
- Examine policies, equipment needs, delivery logistics, and other infrastructure barriers that affect schools' and ECEs' ability to prepare and serve local foods.
- Support schools and ECEs in identifying, purchasing, preparing, serving, and promoting local foods.
- Promote implementation of nutrition, food, and agriculture education through farm to school activities such as classroom lessons, cafeteria activities, taste tests, farmer visits, farm field trips, school garden activities, and hands-on cooking or food preparation.

Support farmers and food producers in accessing school and ECE markets.

- Provide or promote training and technical assistance opportunities to help producers sell to schools and ECEs.
- Identify and promote processing, aggregation, and distribution options that help farmers provide and sell school-ready products.
- Support procurement models that allow farms of different sizes to participate, including small-volume purchasing, cooperative purchasing, and aggregation partnerships.

Strengthen farm to school staffing, coordination, and funding supports.

- Advocate for and support dedicated farm to school coordinator positions, regional coordinator models, communities of practice, and peer mentorship opportunities.
- Address workforce shortages by supporting volunteer engagement and shared staffing models, and developing youth employment, internship, or course-credit opportunities connected to school gardens, local farms, food service, culinary programs, and food systems work.
- Support schools, ECE, farmers/food producers, and aggregators in identifying and applying for grants and other funding opportunities.

Goal 4 STRENGTHEN ACCESS, REPRESENTATION, AND STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACHES

Advance equity, access, and inclusion across farm to school efforts.

- Expand equitable access to farm to school across low-income, rural, urban, and other under-resourced communities, including promoting culturally relevant foods and nutrition education that reflects the communities served by schools and ECEs.
- Support strategies to combat food insecurity, such as sending surplus school garden harvest home, partnering with food pantries or community gardens, and aligning with universal school meal advocacy.
- Engage underrepresented groups in PFSN leadership, planning, workgroups, and decision-making roles.
- Support farm to school participation among small, urban, beginning, and diverse farmers and food producers, while promoting procurement and aggregation strategies that expand participation beyond larger farms with existing wholesale infrastructure.

Elevate student voice and food systems career exploration.

- Use student voice to shape Network priorities, farm to school programming, communications, and advocacy.
- Support opportunities for students to explore future interests and careers in agriculture, gardening, culinary arts, nutrition, food production, sustainability, and food systems.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, visit pafarmtoschool.org. To connect with the Pennsylvania Farm to School Network, please contact The Food Trust via email: pafarmtoschool@thefoodtrust.org.

The FOOD TRUST