



Beef to School Coalition Call

Video Transcript

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AUBREE ROTH: All right, great. Well, it's really fantastic to see such interest on in beef to school and just furthering and expanding the efforts throughout the state. So, what I want to do for the rest of this meeting is just first go through some history of the coalition since many of you are probably unfamiliar with a lot of the work that has been done already and then go through some resources that we have available and also have time for discussion. And Jamie's going to share about some of the associated the other discussions that are happening regarding meat processing in our state. So And first off the Montana beef to school coalition was formed in 2014, really led by n cat and food core, and this was with an interest of promoting more schools serving local beef in their school meals, and so through that, for formation of the beef to school coalition, a grant was received a three year grant was received to expand that work, do some research on best practices, successful models, etc. And then of course, create and publish resources that would help others be able to be successful and beef to school in their communities. So, since that Grant has ended, and several people on this call, I'm participated in that in some capacity. And since that the coalition has been sort of absorbed under the umbrella of the Montana Farm to School leadership team, which I helped to support as the coordinator. And that team really helps to further Farm to School initiatives throughout the state through collaboration and communication between agencies and nonprofits throughout the state. I'm so in the past and the group We met in person at like once per year and then had maybe two to four phone meetings through the rest of the year to stay connected, learn about success stories, challenges, needs, etc. And since then we haven't had, I think, a meeting for about two years. And since we have taken it under the farm to school leadership umbrella, due to lack of resources, but we're really interested to see how we can move the coalition forward and meet the needs of people on this call and people throughout the state who are really interested in having local beef in school meals and the education components that surrounds that, as I said, I chair along with Gary, this coalition, which is one of the working groups of the leadership team.

And so, we're really looking to set goals and direction as well. We move forward. So, any questions about that history? I'm next going to show some resources. And I think that'll demonstrate the things that we've done. Or Joel or Tommy, do you have anything you wanted to add to that? Okay, I'm gonna share my screen. All right, so this is the Montana beef to school page. I hope this is showing up good enough and big enough for you guys to see this. But we do have a dedicated beef to school page on the Montana Farm to School website, which is hosted by MSU. And so, on this page, the main resource that we really dug through that grant was the moving forward together case study report. And so, this really explores several successful models of beef to school and really sees what the motivations for doing it, like how they were successful, what kind of partnerships were in place, what are some of like the pricing and products. So, this is definitely kind of a foundational read to be able to understand those best practices and models throughout the state. And then of course, we have additional resources. So, you can see here there's a whole list I'm not going to talk a lot about these, but I did want to point out some that are kind of the kind of building blocks here. So um, and I'm going to go through first the existing resources and then we recently published additional resources. So, the frequently asked questions about beef to school gives, as the name suggests pretty good answers to frequently asked questions. We also have the Getting Started with beef to school month guide. So that's an extension publication. So, another great resource that came originally from that Grant. And then we have the procurement templates. And this really helps schools specifically navigate the procurement regulations that apply to all procurements from napkins to apples to local beef. And so, this really hones that down into local beef. So, the terminologies they're there, as you can see with these, hoping my computer doesn't freak out by opening more documents, but it does give you a roadmap and then also some language that is, you know, editable and usable. So, it's a little bit easier process, get off the ground with that. So that's just an example of one of the existing resources that we have. And then of course, we have many of our presentations and trainings, either the slides or the recordings. In this archived section, and so, we did a lot of presentations during that grant and following that grant. So, this is really a good place to look for those. So those are the kind of foundational resources that we have for beef to school. And then just recently, we were able to sort of finalize a few that were sort of hanging out there just needed a few extra pieces to be wrapped up. And so, I'll point those out.

So, the Getting Started with beef to school flowchart. So this document really takes you through like, who you are, and what are the steps for just getting started with beef to school, some of those people to contact where you should go once you're like this is a great idea and I want to see it happen. So, we also publish the beef to school pitch kit. And that really helps Whoever is making the pitch of beef to school to a school board administrator access or community members, it really gives them some of the resources and brings together a lot of the resources that we have created. So that you can find them in one place and understand how to put those together and how to use them to make the case for beef to school in your community or school. We also have the promotion kit, which is very similar to that pitch kit to help promote beef to school efforts on the pricing guide. And so, this it does use data that's from 2018. For the prices, beef prices fluctuate all the time. Um, and so there's even if we took prices from a week ago, and you know, they're going to continue to change over time. So, there's these Prices while they are from 2018. It just shows that at that point in time, what kinds of things, what different types of beef prices look like and how those compare. So, it's not intended to be like, local beef of this kind is always more expensive or is always in this range. It's just a snapshot in time and sort of a comparison so you can get a better sense of how schools are looking at those prices. This protein guide is also a new resource and talks about balancing protein and how schools, school nutrition programs need to do that. And also blending different proteins and blending different proteins can really be helpful for budgets, and for incorporating more local

beef into schools. And then we have just checked my list here and then we have the beef to school video. So that was also Oh, it was right there, and the beef to school video. So that is an easy way to just learn more about beef to school and that grant programs. So, um, yes, so those are some of the new resources. I knew I blew through those pretty quickly. But just wanted to give you all a sense of some of the resources that we have available right now for supporting you all in your communities and within your organization. So, I'll stop here. And are there any questions about these resources, the work that's been done or be to school questions in general, you can unmute yourself and ask your question, or you can also type it into the chat box. And I do see I have a question about recording and I'll just repeat that. We will be recording this We'll put it on our training and events page. So, anyone who I have an email address for who's on this call, which I think is most of you that I will also send it out to you via email following the meeting. Any questions or comments?

JOEL SHUMAKER: Aubree, this is Joel, have you heard anything from any of the schools heading into this school year or how last school year wrapped up because the Coronavirus changes with respect to how they're procuring local beef?

AUBREE ROTH: Yes. And I will also maybe just call on a few unsuspecting school folks who are on this call to answer how this has affected how COVID has affected their local beef. So, Ginger, Do you want to share?

GINGER BUCHANAN: Sure. So again, I'm the food service director at Huntley Projects. For one reason, because the prices went up because it was harder to find processors. And my resource had a really hard time. So, I ended up having to buy more for I think I bought my last hamburger in March. And I just got more today. So that's how long it went without any books at all. I don't know if that answers your question, but you can sure Ask me anything you need.

AUBREE ROTH: Oh, that's great. Thank you, Ginger. And then Cathy, you have sort of a different situation with your donation model. But did you have anything you wanted to share or add?

CATHY CAMPBELL: No, we haven't had any problems because our's is 100% donated. So yeah, it hasn't affected us at all.

AUBREE ROTH: Are there any other school nutrition professionals or Aaron, have you heard anything from other schools about sourcing local beef? During this time? That's okay. Um, and I guess from what I have heard is, it's so different across the board, and how COVID has affected but of course, many schools are scrambling just to get food out. Especially during the school closures, they had a hard time, very rapidly switching to grab and go meals. And so that was of course a challenge as well as some Had no budget issues. So, if they're buying more like packaging and things like that, they're spending more for that and needed to cut somewhere else. And they also some schools were unable to use their USDA Foods because they needed those kinds of packaged things. So if they have like, I don't know why that sticks in my head as an example, but if they have cans of peaches from the USDA Foods, they can't, it's difficult to package those and get the mountain and grab and go you know, you like put peaches in little Ziploc baggies or I don't know. And so, the way that they offset their costs sometimes to be able to buy local food, foods and including beef. By using those USDA Foods, they weren't able to use those quite as much. So those are really like sitting in many of their pantries. Um, and then of course just like what do you put in a grab and go meal you know, a lot of people are doing like sandwiches or simple things. like that on and not able to utilize some things

like ground beef quite as much. And going into the school year, I guess we'll see right. Um, some schools have started, and some were starting very shortly. And it's all across the board of how they're going, what their school looks like if they're doing remote or if they're doing in person and then the meals too, if they're eating in the classroom, so they're doing more of a grab and go, I know ginger just got a bunch of grant funds and several different grants to be able to purchase some equipment that will help her be able to do more like hot meals rather than cold meals and be able to, you know, serve the kind of food that she was serving before while still serving in primarily in classrooms. That's a great question. Um, any other questions or comments?

BRENDA BRADY: This is Brenda Brady from when it we have all of our beef is donated. And so, we're in a similar situation to Choteau. And scheduling processing was a little bit trickier, just because that is so busy right now. But we were able to get that scheduled and we're actually asking for fewer donations this year because of what is still left from last year.

AUBREE ROTH: Thanks for sharing that Brenda. Well, that I will also say that I've received a lot of interest in beef a school on lately and so a lot of contacts a lot of people I think, realizing that having really vibrant and resilient community food systems is important especially in you know, pandemics and other emergencies. Sort of situations to have access to healthy foods and be able to be nimble on how that gets delivered and how people access that. So that has really, I've just received a lot of interest in beef to school over the last few months. And I think that's really exciting. And so, I know, maybe some of you have joined this call to learn more about regulations and things like that a lot of that information is included on our beef to school page in those different resources that I've pointed out. And this call is not intended to kind of go through all of that, but I'm always happy to do that. And so, if you do have questions, please let me know. But since there's no questions right now, I will move to the next part, which is really to get to have a discussion about what resources are needed, what would be helpful for you all to support beef to school efforts throughout our state. So, before I jump into some of my questions that I have for the group, I'll have alternative over to Jamie to update us on what the discussions around meat processing in Montana are.

JAMIE LOCKMAN: Hi, everyone. Um, so MOA has ended up taking on a role that grew out of some of our policy discussions and also recognizing the situation that some of our Rangers were in in that their phones were ringing off the hook, and probably still are for their beef and them not being able to meet that demand because of processing. And so, we initiated a call in June and it included some random Some meat processors, some economic development sort of folks. And the call is the discussions are basically laying out some of the basics of what the vulgate we're going to use the term hourglass thanks to my kind of cut from this last discussion of getting beef from the ranch to the consumer, to the families to the schools to whomever that may be. I will preface this right off even though we're the Montana organic Association these discussions are not necessarily organic based at all and they're open to everyone. I guess part of it is that you know, we're kind of niche and a little bit friends and we're kind of used to being for our ranchers to developing their own markets and a lot of them are directing my It's, you know, some have their group of folks that they sell their beef to and they don't really worry about developing additional markets, but recognizing the fact that our position on focusing on small scale, local decentralized, meat processing fills this unique role. Um, so then our next conversation in July included was ... Pioneer meats, or B Bar Ranch, excuse me, Empire meats. And we had policy folks on there we had representatives from our US delegation and some state government representatives. And, again, the demand for this conversation continued and this last meeting that we had earlier this week, was included Mike

Honeycutt as the lead speaker. Talking about the nuts and bolts of beef inspection and you know, what would be possible with the situation that we have in Montana with facilities and regulations and, and what the landscape is for that. So, you know, we will continue these conversations and see it more as an educational and networking role. The school has come up as you know, part of a solution. I don't necessarily think these calls are seeking solutions, but rather, like I said, educational and networking. So, anyone on this call is welcome to join us. Please reach out to me I did put my email address and my profile link on this call. And I welcome any questions you may have for me.

AUBREE ROTH: Thank you, Jamie. I'll just open it up for any questions for Jamie.

JAMIE LOCKMAN: Oh, well, I guess I just like to emphasize that, you know, these discussions educational based are not are open to everyone. And I think maybe augment the work that beauty school is doing, and we would love to have any of you join in and provide your insights into your work, whatever that may be.

AUBREE ROTH: Awesome, thanks. Um, so now I will just go through a few questions. And so, as I said before, Montana beef to school coalition, used to meet annually in person and then have meetings throughout the year on sort of a quarter or semiannual basis. And so, I want to get a sense of what would be helpful moving forward with Montana beef to school coalition, I'm given the current needs. And that can be anything from your own personal perspective of you know, you need X, Y, and Z to really understand beef to school or to really promote that in your community, or even on a larger frame of, you know, in within our system, we need to know these other things, or we need these supports in place to be able to be more successful. So, um, I guess, in general, what resources or information would be helpful to further beef to school so you can go ahead and unmute or if you would like you can also type that into the chat box.

ATTENDEE: Aubree, I have a question. From foresight when I approach the foresight schools, the elementary school principal said that they would probably they would be glad to donate a beef, the foresighted School Lunch Program, but she said we don't have a freezer. Now are there grants available for you right to get a freezer for the entire school so they could start to be?

AUBREE ROTH: That is a that's an excellent question. Um, there are grants. Aaron, do you want to unmute and talk about that lately, so the USDA offers an equipment grant every year to school schools in a competitive process that grant will be available and to apply for in October and the awardees will be receiving the grant in December. The equipment grant is up to \$5,000 with a minimum equipment purchase amount of \$1,000. So absolutely in some of the focuses For being awarded the grant or innovative ways to or just more local procurement of local items, so that would be a good grant to apply for and that will be on our Montana LPI website in October. So, look for that.

ATTENDEE: Thank you.

GINGER BUCHANAN: I have something to add to that if it's okay. So, I just got a grant to purchase an external freezer and that was through No Kid Hungry, so you may want to see if that is still open.

AUBREE ROTH: I know during the so ginger received applied for and received several grants during COVID. And so, I encourage like No Kid Hungry grants and things like that so I'd encourage on force

high school to look for even those even though it may not be COVID specific It may also help their efforts. And so yeah, definitely check for those grants and we can when we put the notes together, we can list out the resources and we can track down to see if that grant is still open. I don't remember if that one is or not Sarah, do you? Yeah. And throughout the year, there's also different funding sources that might be available. So, since those, you know, come and go and they're always changing and they, you know, deadlines all over the place, we put those on to the Montana Farm to School Facebook page. So that's a good place to look just periodically to see what kinds of grants are available. And then we also include them for as sort of an extra bonus for Montana harvest of the month registered sites, our monthly newsletter includes any relevant Farm to School type grants, as well, so that's another way of getting that information.

But we posted on our Facebook page like I said, thanks. Yep. And then I'm just checking the chat box here, there's a question of where to go to get started with the program. So, a good place to get started with learning about the regulations and the processes. And the different models are our school website. And so, I've put that link in the chat box. I'm sure it comes up when you Google Montana beef to school. And so that can that Frequently Asked Questions section is a really good place to start for that. Um, so that's an excellent question. I think just understanding the different models because as you can see from even this call, different schools may be purchasing local beef. They may be working with a processor to do that they may be working just with the rancher to do that, or they could be receiving donated animals or an order processing fees so it doesn't have to look one way and this the big A school program isn't something that the schools call up and get local beef from. So, they're doing that sourcing on their own. And they're figuring out what model works best for them in their community. So really understanding just those processes and the resources we have available is really the place to start. So, I have another comment in here connecting producers to school personnel would be a great would be great to share at meetings or through the coalition producers that would like to sell or donate at schools that would be able to accept or purchase. I agree, I think we should strengthen those connections, Caroline, and so any networking opportunities, I think we should build those into meetings. I will also say for folks who are interested for at the school level or the producer processor level is to really get on those farm to cafeteria that n cat farm to cafeteria database or the arrow abundant Montana database, those schools like to use those like to have a place where they can go to be able to find producers and processors. And so that just makes it really easy if you can get processors and producers on there and conversely the farm to cafeteria database does have an there's an institution side of it so you can see who's interested in purchasing which schools are interested in purchasing local food and or are already participating in Farm to School. So those are really the good ones to contact first.

TOMMY BASS: Sure. I wanted to comment briefly on back to the freezer deal and then also on something we gleaned from the Beaverhead case study. So, fundraising and asking for donations is like my nightmare of public service. But I think it stands within the community like, you know, if a chest freezer would expand your storage enough to, you know, make a reasonable beef purchase. You know, don't be afraid to go ask a local retailer if they could donate a unit or sell it at cost. And maybe that's a role for PTA or an advocate from, you know, your parent Association at the school. But you know, it may be an opportunity there particularly, it's just a little bit of extra dedicated frozen beef storage would make your program go. And then once again on this very local community level, I feel like in the Beaverhead case study which is published in one of those moving forward guide that a lot of just family Community word of mouth resulted in donated animals. One thing unique to that case study, you know, that your banks and insurance agents and local businesses that you know have bought for ah animals that terminal fair. You were sometimes turning around and donating

that animal to the school with a processing fee. So just sort of expanding that that network at that local level. And then when they were running low, just through word of mouth of families and grandkids in the school district. ranching families stepped up and said, Well, we don't want them to run out of local beef before May or June. And you know, just that very local level, who knows who and who's related to who networking. Least in that case study paid off but we hear similar things around the state.

AUBREE ROTH: Those are great points, Tommy. And yeah. And although I think it's easy to want to go for the grant route, because you just like fill out a form, it's very kind of impersonal. It's often more effective, especially if it's a, if it's an item or a thing, a very tangible thing to ask a business to donate that or to discount that. And they're often very willing to do that, especially for something like if it is like a large chest freezer would like to do it for the schools, and that's definitely a route to go. And I know Kathy, they use in Choteau. They use a donation model and that word of I think they use Word of mouth. Kathy, do you want to talk about how you have really let people know that your school is interested in local beef donations. She might still be in the car. So, um, I know I'm putting you guys on the spot, but I really want to spur discussion. So, it's not necessarily just me talking.

JAMIE LOCKMAN: So, I'm gonna jump in here too with another initiative that MOA has with AERO. We're calling it the Montana food providers project. And it also grew out of this discussion about local food resiliency. And it started with not having flour on our grocery store shelves, even though there's loads of flour that's milled here. It's just not typically within the grocery store system. So, we do have some grant funds available. And we don't really have a grant making process. So again, contact me directly. But, where we see a lot of folks being asked are farmers and ranchers being asked for donations. While there are plenty of COVID dollars out there that are supporting Montanans in need. We feel like our farmers and ranchers should be getting a fair value for their products and to value the food that they grow. And so, we do have some limited funds available. So, reach out to me.

AUBREE ROTH: Jamie, would you mind putting your email address in the chat box? I know it's in your name.

JAMIE LOCKMAN: I can put a link to the program as well.

AUBREE ROTH: That'd be great. Thank you.

BRENDA BRADY: This is Brenda from when it if I could share how we asked for donations if you would like. Okay. Um, we kind of started to the local stalkers Association, and just sent a letter out to local producers asking for donations. And had a great response with that. And I think added in those that maybe weren't on the stockers list that we could think of, and we've had six years of donations without having to circle back and ask people to donate again, using that, and we just kind of now we do almost a word of mouth. Request. There have been people that, you know, come to us now and say they want to be added to the list that they didn't, with initial request.

AUBREE ROTH: Wow, that's amazing. Six years of not having to go back. That's incredible.

BRENDA BRADY: Yes, it's been great. We know we're lucky. We have a very small community here and a high percentage of the community, our ranchers and so it that really helps us out.

CATHY CAMPBELL: This is Cathy Sorry, I'm driving, but I stopped now. We did the same thing, like Winnett, and I come from a big beef producing family. And we also reached out to our local county assessor's office, and we got our assessors role and we sent letters to everybody we knew, word of mouth, articles in the paper. And we have six years' worth of beef on our roles too. We have enough money for processing to probably for the next five years. We have people that just donate on a regular basis. And there's also a lot of grants out there.

AUBREE ROTH: Awesome. Do you know any of the grants in particular that you've seen or that you've had success with?

CATHY CAMPBELL: Well, Northwest Farm Credit Services has one we have a boat Brother Foundation's here in Teton County, the local banks, businesses, but the people in the town have been awesome. And then my family put on a great big fundraiser in January, it's on YouTube, everybody loves showed or something and that brought in hundred or 150 people to the theater and it was all donated to our program.

AUBREE ROTH: Awesome. And there are also other kind of fundraising creative fundraising solutions like Whitefish School District has been able to sell some of the higher quality cuts to like staff and other and parents and then used the rest of the animal to grind into burger which is what they use primarily is hamburger and, and patties. So, They've been able to, you know, raise funds to offset the increased costs if they have an increased cost with their local beef purchases. So, there's definitely ways of doing it. While as Jamie said, also making sure that farmers and ranchers and processors are receiving, you know, a fair price for their good to as well. So, I'm seeing that we have about five minutes left.

BRENDA BRADY: Another thing we did, we had the children of the school, write letters to the editor and explain how they could even tell the difference is when he when they hear from the children, how they are excited about the lunches, how they can taste the difference, that really makes a big impact on people.

AUBREE ROTH: I love that, that's so wonderful. And it is really a great way to get the word out but also let people know what the impact is and to demonstrate that there is an impact Any other questions or input I'd have a couple more little feedback things I'd love to get from you guys. So, there's a clear amount of interest. So, I'm what I'm going to do is, I'm going to try this polling to see if this will be a quick way to gather feedback. And so, you should see a poll here. So, I'm asking about, um, how often should we hold Montana beef to school coalition meetings, and to have these discussions to share the successes and things like that. So, I've got monthly four times a year two to three times per year and one time per year. If you're just on the phone, you're welcome to unmute yourself and give your opinion that way. Okay, it looks like most people are going for a two to three times per year.



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, FoodCorps Montana, and Montana Department of Agriculture. More information and resources are available at: www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemoth.

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