1. **Start small.** If a school is new to local food—shoot for 2-3 measureable goals. For example, source all of your fresh apples locally from August to December. Or, host local food lunches once a month.

2. **Measuring success.** What will success look like? Is it a purchasing goal like 20% local? Is it a dollar threshold? Is it a designated number of local food lunches? Make sure the food service provider is supportive of the goals.

3. **Define Local.** Determine your definition of local to start identifying potential suppliers. In general, a larger radius is needed to source larger quantities of product. Many schools will identify a radius of 100-150 miles.

4. **Identify local products you would like to serve.** Schools should identify the foods they would like to serve and quantities needed per month. Identify potential farmers for those products. Have discussions with potential suppliers about availability. In our experience, contracts may not be needed. A farmer will hold back product for a buyer if it is reserved. In the current system, food service is used to calling two-days before a delivery for a product. This method does not work with local food unless a standing order or pre-arrangements have been made.

5. **Communicate expectations.** Food service should communicate their expectations and pack sizes up front so farmers know the product needs to be packed to a certain size and delivered on a certain day. The buyers should also be open to feedback from growers as some pack sizes and varieties are not suitable products to grow in Iowa.

6. **Look for price-competitive products.** Some products may not be competitive on price with conventional markets (potatoes, salad mix)—so it is better to go with products that can be produced at a similar price to conventional prices. This takes away the “local food is too expensive” argument. We have identified 15 foods that work well in our farm to school project. [http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/uploads/PDF_File_32452981.pdf](http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/uploads/PDF_File_32452981.pdf). Higher priced items are also good options to grow in school or school gardens. Substitute seconds (No. 2) for products that will be chopped or processed.