Attendee Fundraising Toolkit

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in attending the 9th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference (the Conference), hosted by the National Farm to School Network (NFSN), on April 25-27, 2018 in Cincinnati, Ohio! We’re excited for you to join us.

We know it can be difficult to cover the costs of attending any conference. For that reason, we’ve created this toolkit to provide you with information and tips to support your efforts to offset the cost of attending the Conference.

Here is what you can find in this toolkit:

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After you’ve explored this toolkit, if you have additional questions, don’t hesitate to contact Lea Madry, NFSN Development Director, at lea@farmtoschool.org.
**Section A: Important Dates**

**December 18, 2017 – February 12, 2018**  
Scholarship Applications Accepted

**January 29, 2018**  
Early Bird Registration Opens and Hotel Special Rates Begin

**February 28, 2018**  
Scholarship Recipients Notified

**March 9, 2018**  
Early Bird Registration Closes

**April 9, 2018**  
Extended Registration Closes

**April 25-27, 2018**  
9th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference  
- April 25: Annual Meeting (internal invited partners only), Welcome Reception  
- April 26: Conference Educational Program  
- April 27: Field Trips and Short Courses

**Section B: Your Questions, Answered**

**Q1: What are the costs associated with attending the 9th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference?**

**A:** Costs are as follows:

- **Early Bird Registration**
  - Full Conference (including networking reception, educational program, and a field trip or short course): **$320**
  - Education Pass (including networking reception and educational program): **$250**
  - Field Trip or Short Course Only: **$90**

- **Extended Registration**
  - Full Conference (including networking reception, educational program, and a field trip or short course): **$370**
  - Education Pass (including networking reception and educational program): **$300**
  - Field Trip or Short Course Only: **$90**

- **Lodging:** Lodging ranges from $109 plus taxes to $179 plus taxes. Plan for 2-3 nights of lodging to cover your stay for the duration of the Conference.

- **Travel:** These costs vary depending on your location.
Q2: Can NFSN receive funds directly from my donor(s) for scholarship support?

A: Yes, NFSN can receive funds directly from donors for scholarship support. However, the donor MUST include the information below with their donation so that NFSN can track the donations received and match them with the intended recipient.

- Scholarship donation by check: Donors can send checks to “National Farm to School Network/Tides Center”. Donors must include a notation of “2018 Conference scholarship — scholarship recipient’s name and state — registration type” on each check.
- Scholarship donation online: Donors can make an online donation through the NFSN website. Donors must complete the “I want my donation to be dedicated” field with “conference scholarship — scholarship recipient name and state — registration type”.

Q3: How do I register for the Conference using donations?

A: If you have collected scholarship donations via checks made to NFSN/Tides Center:

- Register online, and in the participant additional information section answer the question regarding your donors.
- Then select the “Pay by Check” option during checkout.
- Mail your check(s) to NFSN, Attn: Conference Registration, P.M.B # 104, 8770 West Bryn Mawr Ave, Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60631-3515 OR you can mail a paper registration with payment checks. MAKE SURE YOUR CHECK ALSO HAS THE NAME OF THE REGISTRANT IN THE MEMO FOR EASY MATCHING WITH REGISTRATION.
- Note that if you choose “pay by check” in the registration system, yet no funds have been collected in your name, you will be required to pay your registration fee prior to attending the Conference.

If your scholarship donors have donated through NFSN’s website:

- Register online, and in the participant information section answer the question regarding your donors, and indicate that they paid online.
- Select the “An online donation” option. MAKE SURE YOUR DONORS WROTE THE REGISTRANT’S NAME IN THE DEDICATION SECTION OF THE ONLINE PAYMENT FOR EASY MATCHING WITH REGISTRATION.
- Note that if you choose “an online donation” in the registration system, yet no funds have been collected in your name, you will be required to pay your registration fee prior to attending the Conference.

If you are collecting scholarship donations directly and the payments are made out to you personally, you can pay by whichever method you prefer during registration.

Q4: How should I handle thanking my scholarship donors? Will NFSN take care of that?

A. The answer depends on whether the scholarship donations are being sent to you or NFSN.

If you are collecting scholarship donations directly and the payments are made out to you personally, then you are responsible for donor recognition and thank you notes.
If your scholarship donors have donated through NFSN’s website or by check that was made out to and sent to NFSN (see Q2 above for instructions), then NFSN will manage those funds and thank the donor.

Section C: Fundraising Appeals

The steps below are best practices for individual Conference scholarship fundraising appeals. We hope they’ll help you achieve your goal!

Step 1: Goal Setting

Start with identifying who you want to raise funds for, how much funding that will take, and when you want to have the funds secured.

Is your goal to raise funds to offset your registration and travel needs to get to the Conference, or for supporting scholarships for other individuals from your community? For a particular group of people (i.e., farmers from Iowa)? For another potential attendee that you know? Decide on your goal before you begin fundraising.

Step 2: Identify Potential Donors

Fundraising is much more successful when you contact people and groups who you know or who are in some way connected with you.

Below is a list of ideas to get you thinking about your connections who may want to support your fundraising efforts. Remember, support can come in the form of cash or check, but also in-kind by donating miles for a flight, for example. There are many ways that people on the list below can support you!

- Family members, friends, neighbors, employers, co-workers, and religious leaders
- Current and/or past employers, including those of parents, grandparents, and close relatives
- Customers, clients, and associates of your work or your family’s work
- Local civic organizations (Rotary Club, Lion’s Club, Elk’s Lodge, American Legion, etc.)
- Corporations and other organizations (local businesses, credit unions, hospitals, etc.; inquire at your local chamber of commerce or United Way for a list of organizations in your area)
- Friends, of immediate and extended family
- Be creative - who else can you think of?
- Don’t forget to reach out to your current key partners to explore existing funding opportunities. Many organizations have travel and registration fees already allocated in their budget, and sending individuals to the Conference is a great way to use those funds!

Step 3: Prepare for and Conduct Your Outreach
Keep these tips in mind for approaching a potential donor:

- Always speak to a “person,” even when you are approaching an organization. This person should be the decision-maker.
- For best results, make a personal visit rather than calling on the phone or sending a letter. A personal visit helps them hear what you’re saying and gives you a chance to address their questions or concerns.
- If they tell you that they need time to think about what you’ve requested, ask them when a good time to follow up in person, via phone, or via email would be. Then be sure to follow up when you say you will.
- Start TODAY! Some businesses need time to talk to supervisors or managers in order to fit your request into their budget. Sometimes they may need a month or more to receive permission for your request.
- Be ready to answer questions about the Conference and NFSN. Read about the National Farm to Cafeteria Conference and National Farm to School Network in advance and be prepared for those questions.
- Be polite and express your thanks even when you are turned away. Even if the answer is no right now, the individual or organization might be interested in supporting you in the future.

With those tips in mind, it’s time to prepare your outreach materials. There are many ways to fundraise, but the process often includes a personal visit, a follow-up letter, and a thank you letter. Start by writing a personal fundraising appeal letter (see sample appeal letter in Section E). Then, visit or speak with people or organizations that you are connected with and make a personalized appeal for financial support to attend the Conference. Take your personal letter, have information from NFSN and the Conference, and be ready to promote your cause.

Here are guidelines for what you should include in your fundraising letter/email:

- Include personal information about yourself: Why you want to attend the Conference, how attending will benefit you and your organization, and how you intend to share what you have learned with your community. If you’re raising funds for others to attend in your state or territory, it might be helpful to speak more broadly about the farm to cafeteria movement and how it benefits kids, farmers, and communities.
- Be specific about what you need. Outline the cost of the Conference. Give specific instructions about how they can contribute, (see Section B). It is also a good idea to include the deadline for registration (see Section A).
- Make the letter concise and to the point.
- If mailing the letter, include a smaller envelope addressed to make it easier for potential donors to respond. Write a personal note on the bottom of each letter, and put the name of the person you are writing to at the beginning of each letter.

**Step 4: Follow Up and Express Gratitude**

Send a follow-up letter/email soon after originally contacting a potential donor. In this message, you can thank the potential donor for his/her time and consideration and invite the potential donor to contact you with any questions.

Did a potential donor confirm that he or she plans to support you with a scholarship to attend the Conference? Congratulations! Here is how you can handle the ‘thank you’ process:
• If you are collecting scholarship donations directly and the payments are made out to you personally, then you are responsible for donor recognition and thank you notes. Be sure to send a thank you note promptly and reiterate how this support will help you.

• If your scholarship donors have donated through NFSN’s website or by check that was made out to and sent to NFSN (see Section B, Q2 for instructions), then NFSN will manage those funds and thank the donor. We recommend you send your own personal thank you as well.

• In either case, an additional thank you with pictures and stories following the Conference is another way to connect your donors to the Conference experience and hopefully make them long-term supporters. Be creative, as donors love videos and other multimedia.

Section D: Online Fundraising, Events, and Social Media

In addition to the individual scholarship fundraising appeals listed in Section C, online fundraising and events can also be a great way to raise money. Remember, the best practices in Section C about goal setting, identifying potential donors, following up, and expressing gratitude still apply!

Online Fundraising Campaigns

Online fundraising campaigns are very popular and common. They serve as an easy, social-media friendly (more on that, below) way to engage your network in your fundraising efforts. The options are endless when it comes to online fundraising campaigns, but below are a few ideas to get you started.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding websites allow individuals to make an online donation to an individual or organization. You can set a goal, track progress toward your goal, and have a central place for those who want to support you to donate. After your crowdfunding campaign ends, you’ll typically receive a check in the mail (be sure to read the fine print about the timing for receiving that check, being mindful of the registration deadlines in Section A). There are generally no up-front costs, and all fees are subtracted from the donations you receive (again, be sure to read the fine print and compare sites to make sure the website you’re using has reasonable fees).

Examples:

• GoFundMe
• Crowdrise (only available for fundraising on behalf of a 501(c)3 nonprofit)
• Barnraiser (a platform specific to crowdfunding projects related to food and healthy living; project-specific tool where fundraisers offer rewards to donors in exchange for contributions)

Online Fundraisers

There are many websites you can use for an online fundraiser, where individuals buy items and portion of the proceeds go to you or your organization. You can search online to find the fundraiser that works for you.
One option that is closely aligned with the farm to cafeteria movement is **FarmRaiser**. FarmRaiser is a healthy fundraising company that connects local farms and food artisans to organizations raising money for important causes. Instead of selling candy bars door to door, you can have a fundraiser organized around local, healthy food and that is conducted online. You create an online page that acts as a mobile market for the healthy, local product you choose to sell. Then, individuals can place orders for the healthy, local product you’re selling through your page. There are no up-front costs. At the end of the sale (you set the end date), you help distribute the local products to customers. FarmRaiser pays the supplier (e.g. farmer), subtracts fees, and sends you the remaining proceeds. Organizations keep a guaranteed 45% of every sale, with an average of 53%.

Another popular option is **Custom Ink Fundraising** (formerly, Booster). Do you remember selling t-shirts in the past? Perhaps it went like this: you order a variety of t-shirts, try to sell the t-shirts, collect an assortment of cash and checks from people after a lot of email/phone back and forth to coordinate picking up the money, ultimately run out of the sizes people want, and are stuck with extra t-shirts that you can’t sell. Custom Ink Fundraising completely modernizes the t-shirt fundraiser. You simply set up an online fundraising page, design your custom t-shirt (it can say what you want, include your organization logo, etc.), and decide how much markup you want to have on the actual cost of each t-shirt to determine how much you’ll earn from each t-shirt purchase. Then, individuals can place their t-shirt orders online through your fundraising page. You don’t have to collect payment or coordinate giving people their t-shirts – Custom Ink does all of that. There are no up-front costs. After the fundraiser ends (you set the end date), Custom Ink subtracts the cost of the t-shirts and fees, and then sends you the remaining proceeds.

**Events**

Organizing an event before or after the Conference is a great way to raise funds. Here are a few ideas for events that you could host:

- Host an event to share information about your goals for getting attendees to the Conference or hold the event after the Conference and share what you learned; ask for donations.
- Combine the above with a fundraising dinner in your dining room, school cafeteria, or community space; seek out donations from stores and farmers to cover event costs; ask for donations
- Clean out your closets (and your friends’ closets) and hold a garage sale
- Partner with a local chef to organize a fundraising dinner/evening
- There is no end to the kind of events you can put on (bake sale, house party/show, cake walk, car wash, cook-off, movie showing, raffle, auction, etc.), so get creative and search online for ideas

Remember that by hosting an event, you will not only raise funds for individuals to attend to the Conference but also awareness about your farm to cafeteria initiatives. The best events are aligned with your goal or your organization’s mission, so be sure to feature healthy, local food if you can.

Be sure to set a fundraising goal for your event. One challenge with events is making sure that your revenue from the event is greater than the costs of holding the event. You’ll want to set a budget to map out all the costs and how much revenue you need to earn in order to have revenue leftover to actually put toward the Conference. The easiest way to do this is to have someone host the event for you or agree to cover the costs. For example, a supporter or friend could host a dinner party for you or your organization at his/her home or office and all the costs for food and drink. That way, any donations or registration fees would go directly to you or your organization to use for the Conference.
Leveraging Social Media

Whether you conduct an individual scholarship fundraising appeal, set up a crowdfunding campaign, or participate in an online fundraiser, social media is a key tool to promote what you’re doing and get your network involved to support you.

You can use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, and other social media platforms to support your fundraising. Consider:

- Drafting a short post or tweet explaining why attending the Conference will be impactful for you and asking your network to support your fundraising efforts to offset Conference costs (you could use some of the text from your fundraising appeal letter as a starting point)
- Using the platform to update your network on your fundraising goal and how close you are to reaching that goal
- Sharing the impact of your Farm to Cafeteria work (add photos and links) and add a request that those reading help you expand that impact by donating
- During the Conference, posting or tweeting what you are doing and learning at the event
- Tagging donors in posts or tweets to thank them for their donations (and, offline, ask those donors to share or retweet and encourage those in their network to also donate)
- Posting a countdown to the Conference (3 months away, 100 days away, 7 weeks away, etc.) and use each countdown post as a way to share one tidbit of what you’ll be able to bring back to your community after attending the Conference; ask those reading the post to contribute so that learning will be possible

For a few sample social media posts to help you get started, see Section E.

Section E: Templates and Samples

This section contains the following templates and samples:

- Sample appeal letter (see Section C, Step 3 for information about how to use it)
- Sample social media posts (see Section D for information about how to leverage social media)
- Sample manager letter requesting approval to attend the Conference

SAMPLE APPEAL LETTER

[Insert date]

[Insert potential sponsor name]

[Insert potential sponsor address line 1]

[Insert potential sponsor address line 2]
Dear [Insert potential sponsor name]:

The 9th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference (the Conference), April 25-27, 2018 in Cincinnati, Ohio, will convene a diverse group of stakeholders from across the farm to cafeteria movement working to source local food for institutional cafeterias and foster a culture of food and agricultural literacy across America. We are expecting over 1,000 attendees at the Conference, which is the premiere event for all those involved in sourcing local and sustainable food for schools, hospitals, and other institutions, as well as those involved in health and nutrition policy and practice. The Conference grows in size and energy each year and we are inviting you to support it!

**What is the farm to cafeteria movement?**
The term “farm to cafeteria” encompasses all efforts to bring healthy, locally sourced food and nutrition and agriculture education opportunities to institutional cafeteria settings. This includes but is not limited to public and private early care and education, pre-K-12 schools, universities, childcare centers, hospitals, and prisons.

**Why is farm to cafeteria needed?**
Cafeterias in schools, universities, prisons, hospitals, and childcare centers serve more than 40 million Americans every day during the school year, placing the farm to cafeteria movement at the forefront of the fight to end obesity and strengthen local food systems. Think of it this way: A single school district often feeds more people in a day than all of a city’s restaurants combined. The National Farm to Cafeteria Conference is the only national gathering of stakeholders from across the farm to cafeteria movement, making it the premiere opportunity to learn, network and move forward together with likeminded leaders from across the country!

**What are the objectives of the Conference?**
During the Conference, attendees will have the opportunity to learn about initiatives and innovations involving pre-school, K-12, childcare facilities, hospitals, colleges, and prisons. Prospects for professional development will abound with 36 workshops and numerous short courses, as well as “field trips” to see local farm to cafeteria activities in action. The Conference will help build and strengthen leaders nationally and locally, who will then bring information and expertise back to their communities to nourish people and the economy.

**What’s happening locally?**
[Insert language here specific to your program and location, and needs - for example the number of students or farmers engaged, pounds of local product purchased, policy efforts. Really highlight your farm to cafeteria wins!]

**How can I sponsor a Conference attendee?**
Help send a strong delegation of farm to cafeteria leaders from [insert your location] to the Conference to bring back real solutions! [I/We] need your support to cover registration and travel costs to facilitate participation at the Conference. [I/We] are seeking $[____] to cover the cost of [insert what this will cover — see Section A of the Attendee Fundraising Toolkit for a cost breakdown that you can use to calculate how much you’re asking for] for one [update if more than one] attendee. Early bird registration closes on March 9, 2018, so I request your confirmation of support by [insert date before March 9].
To confirm your support of sending local farm to cafeteria leaders to the Conference, please make your check out to “National Farm to School Network/Tides Center” or donate online at www.farmtoschool.org/donate. With your check or online donation, please denote “Conference scholarship — scholarship recipient’s name and state — registration type” in the memo/dedication.

Thank you for supporting the farm to cafeteria movement through your donation!

Sincerely,

[Insert your name]
[Insert your organization name, if applicable]
[Insert your email address and phone number, or include your business card with the letter]

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS
This section contains the following templates and samples:

Twitter (remember: 280 character limit): I’m raising money to attend #Farm2Caf18, hosted by @FarmtoSchool, in April. Will you help me reach my fundraising goal of $[insert] by donating $10? Every donation counts! Donate here: [insert link to fundraising page]

Twitter (remember: 280 character limit): I’m headed to #Farm2Caf18, hosted by @FarmtoSchool, in April so I can learn from leaders in the field & bring my knowledge back to [insert your location]. Will you chip in $10 to offset travel/registration costs? [insert link to fundraising page]

LinkedIn: Friends and colleagues – Many of you know that I’m passionate about improving food systems and love the work I do to advance this important cause every day at [insert your organization’s name]. I’m excited to share that I’ll be attending the 9th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference, April 25-27, 2018 in Cincinnati, Ohio to learn from leaders from every US state and territory in the farm to cafeteria movement. The National Farm to Cafeteria Conference is the only national gathering of stakeholders from across the farm to cafeteria movement, making it the premiere opportunity to learn, network and move forward together with likeminded leaders from across the country! I’ve launched a fundraising campaign with the goal of raising $____ to offset registration and travel costs. Please consider supporting me and the farm to cafeteria movement by making a small contribution. Every bit counts, and even a donation as small as $10 would help. More information can be found through the link below. Thank you for your support!
(Be sure to insert the link to your fundraising page and make sure the preview shows on your post.)

Facebook: Friends, I need your help! As you know, I’m deeply passionate about improving food systems and I love that I get to advance food systems work in my role at [insert your organization’s name]. I have a big professional development opportunity coming up: The National Farm to Cafeteria Conference! It’s the biggest (and only!) gathering of people from across the movement for learning, networking, and professional development. I really want to want attend so that I can learn from the best, share my insight, and bring lots of resources and ideas back to [insert location]. Here’s where you come in: I’m collecting donations to offset my travel and...
registration costs for the Conference, and I’m asking all of my friends to consider donating $10, $100, or any amount you can spare to help. It might sound like a small amount of money, but it will actually add up to a lot and really help me manage costs for attending, so please consider donating! The link below contains details and donation information. Thanks so much!
(Be sure to insert the link to your fundraising page and make sure the preview shows on your post. Be sure to tag the National Farm to School Network’s Facebook Page in your post!)

**SAMPLE MANAGER LETTER**

[Insert date]

Dear [insert manager name]:

As part of my continued investment in professional development, I am seeking your approval to attend the 9th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference (the Conference), hosted by the National Farm to School Network. The Conference will take place April 25-27, 2018 in Cincinnati, Ohio. This is the premiere event for all those involved in sourcing local and sustainable food for schools, hospitals, and other institutions, as well as those involved in health and nutrition policy and practice. The Conference brings together a diverse group of over 1,000 stakeholders from across the farm to cafeteria movement.

For the reasons outlined below, I believe attending the Conference will be both a valuable professional development opportunity for me and a beneficial opportunity for our organization gain insight and new ideas based on what’s working for similar organizations across the country.

**What is the farm to cafeteria movement?**
The term “farm to cafeteria” encompasses all efforts to bring healthy, locally sourced food and nutrition and agriculture education opportunities to institutional cafeteria settings. This includes but is not limited to public and private early care and education, pre-K-12 schools, universities, childcare centers, hospitals, and prisons.

**Why is farm to cafeteria needed?**
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numerous short courses, as well as “field trips” to see local farm to cafeteria activities in action. The Conference will help build and strengthen leaders nationally and locally, who will then bring information and expertise back to their communities to nourish people and the economy.

Thank you for considering this professional development opportunity for me and learning opportunity for our organization.

Sincerely,

[Insert your name]