



# School Food Program in Ontario

## Overcoming Barriers for Local Food Procurement



School food programs in Ontario, Canada face a complex landscape in procuring food. While there is growing discourse for incorporating locally sourced food into school meals, several challenges hinder the integration of school food programs. Understanding the primary barriers and identifying opportunities for improvement is vital for enhancing the nutritional quality of meals at school and fostering sustainable connections with local communities.

### Barriers of Procurement & Distribution Logistics



#### 1 Regulatory Hurdles



- Food safety regulations
- Labeling requirements
- Certification standards

#### 2 Budgetary Constraints



- Expensive for smaller-scale production
- Higher transportation costs

#### 3 Limited Supplier Networks



- Dependence on centralized systems
- Limited local suppliers

#### 4 Infrastructure & Storage



- Limited capacity for storing local perishable foods
- Absence of refrigeration or storage facilities
- Unavailable kitchen facilities

#### 5 Coordination & Communication



- Local producers, distributors & school food services lack coordination
- Limited communication between schools and local farms

#### 6 Preference & Menu Planning



- Inadequate food options for school program
- Absence of nutritional guidelines
- Lack of understanding student preferences

### Opportunities for School Food Program

#### 1 Local Food Procurement Policies



- Supportive framework for local food sourcing
- Policies prioritizing local producers
- Incentives for purchasing local products

#### 2 Farm-to-School Programs



- Directly connect local farmers
- Awareness of local food availability for community members
- Provide educational opportunities for students

#### 3 Food Hubs & Distribution Networks



- Establishing regional food hubs for efficient processing, storage & distribution
- Establishing efficiencies in transportation costs & logistics

#### 4 Collaborative Partnerships



- Collaborate with stakeholders
- Share resources for sustainable procurement & economics of scale

#### 5 Capacity Building & Training



- Empowering school staff for improved food service
- Educating staff & students

#### 6 Public Awareness & Engagement



- Increase awareness of the benefits of local food in school meals
- Engage parents, students & community with local food systems