

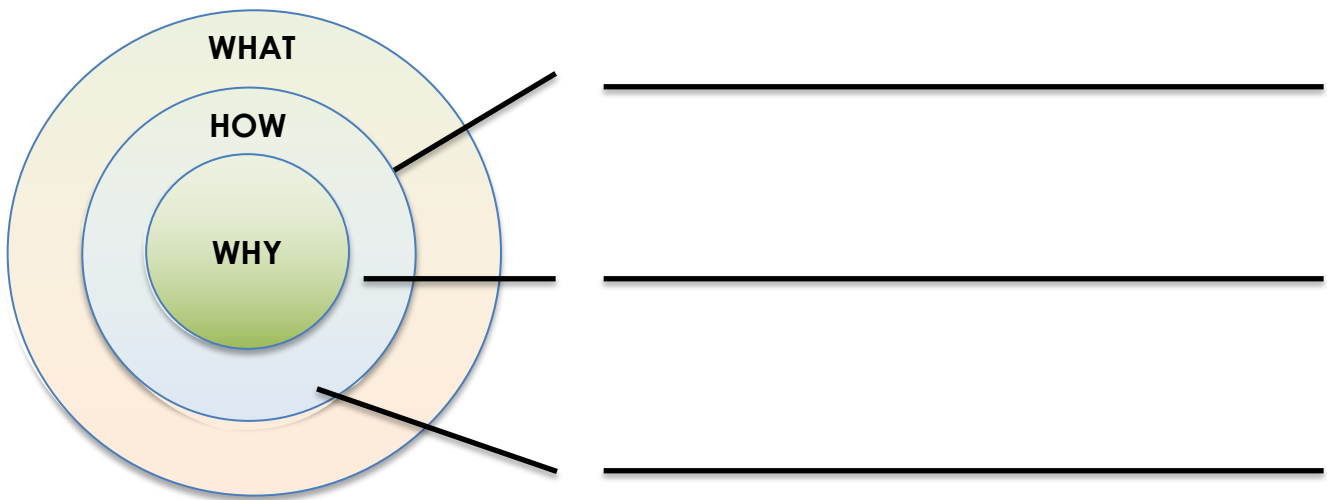


FARM TO SCHOOL INSTITUTE

Guide to Communications & Outreach Planning

Step 1: Know Yourself

Articulate the **Why, How & What**¹ of your Farm to School program.



Write an **Elevator Pitch** for your program – a short (50-100 word) description of what you believe, what you're doing, and why it matters.

¹ The “Golden Circles” approach and diagram were developed by Simon Sinek in *Start with Why*. Find his TED talk and read more at simonsinek.com.

Step 2: ID Goals and Actions

Start with a Farm to School program goal, and identify **communications goals** to support it.

Example FTS Goal: Increase student meal participation by 50%

Communications goals:

- Inform parents about free & reduced meal applications
- Educate parents about health benefits and local food options
- Persuade students to try samples

FTS Goal:

Communications Goals:

Identify your **call to action** – a specific thing you would like each audience to **do** after receiving your message and communications. Also think about the barriers and incentives for your audience to take each action, and make sure the action is reasonable.

- Sign up for email list
- Purchase school lunches
- Attend a cooking class
- Follow on social media
- Tell a friend
- Allocate funding
- Volunteer to help
- Read a story or blog post
- Try a new recipe

Finally, consider **barriers and incentives** to action. What will prevent people from accepting the call to action or hearing your message? What would encourage them?

Barriers:

Incentives:

Step 3: Identify Your Audiences & Networks

Brainstorm the different groups and demographics in your community (however you define it – school community, town, region, etc.). Then identify the specific audience(s) you need to reach in order to meet your goal. Note who they are and what they believe or know.

- **Audience:** Group or demographic that you are trying to reach (i.e. elementary students, PTO members, parents, city council)
- **Beliefs:** Your audiences' values or perceptions about Farm to School or related issues, which will influence your efforts to reach them.
- **Connector:** Person who can connect you to other people or groups. Either a "hub" (connects to many different networks, groups or people) or a "bridge" (link to disconnected groups) within the community.

Step 4: Develop Messages

Key messages are the main points that you want to convey through your communications activities. They represent a balance between what you want to say or convey and what will motivate or resonate with your particular audience. Even if your goal and call to action is the same for different audiences, your key messages may not be.

Example targeted messages for meal program participation:

- **Parents:** meal program will save you time and effort
- **Teachers:** meals are delicious and your participation will set an important example
- **Students:** it's cool to eat school lunch

Step 5: Identify the Best Communications Channels & Opportunities

Now that you know **what** you want to say, choose the communications channels that your audiences use and that will maximize reach, efficiency, and impact.

- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Local newspaper
- School news
- Signs & bulletin boards
- Table tents, placemats
- Posters & postcards
- Blogs & websites
- Tables at events
- Sidewalk chalk
- Listserves & forums
- T-shirts & stickers
- Pickup & dropoff times
- Community events
- Community centers (libraries, restaurants, gov)
- Contests & promotions
- Group meetings