A photograph of a school cafeteria where several students are seated at a long wooden table, eating lunch. In the foreground, a young girl on the left is eating a red fruit, and a young boy on the right is looking towards the camera. The table is set with white paper cups, metal trays containing food like sandwiches, chips, and fruit, and lemons. The background shows other students and colorful bulletin boards on the wall.

# reWorking Lunch: A Cross-Sector Initiative for Healthy School Meals



An overview of reWorking Lunch's Work Streams



Together, FoodCorps and reWorking Lunch partners are working toward a vision for healthy food in school in which:

**All students—regardless of race, place, or class—enjoy quality food in school, free from stigma and barriers to access.**

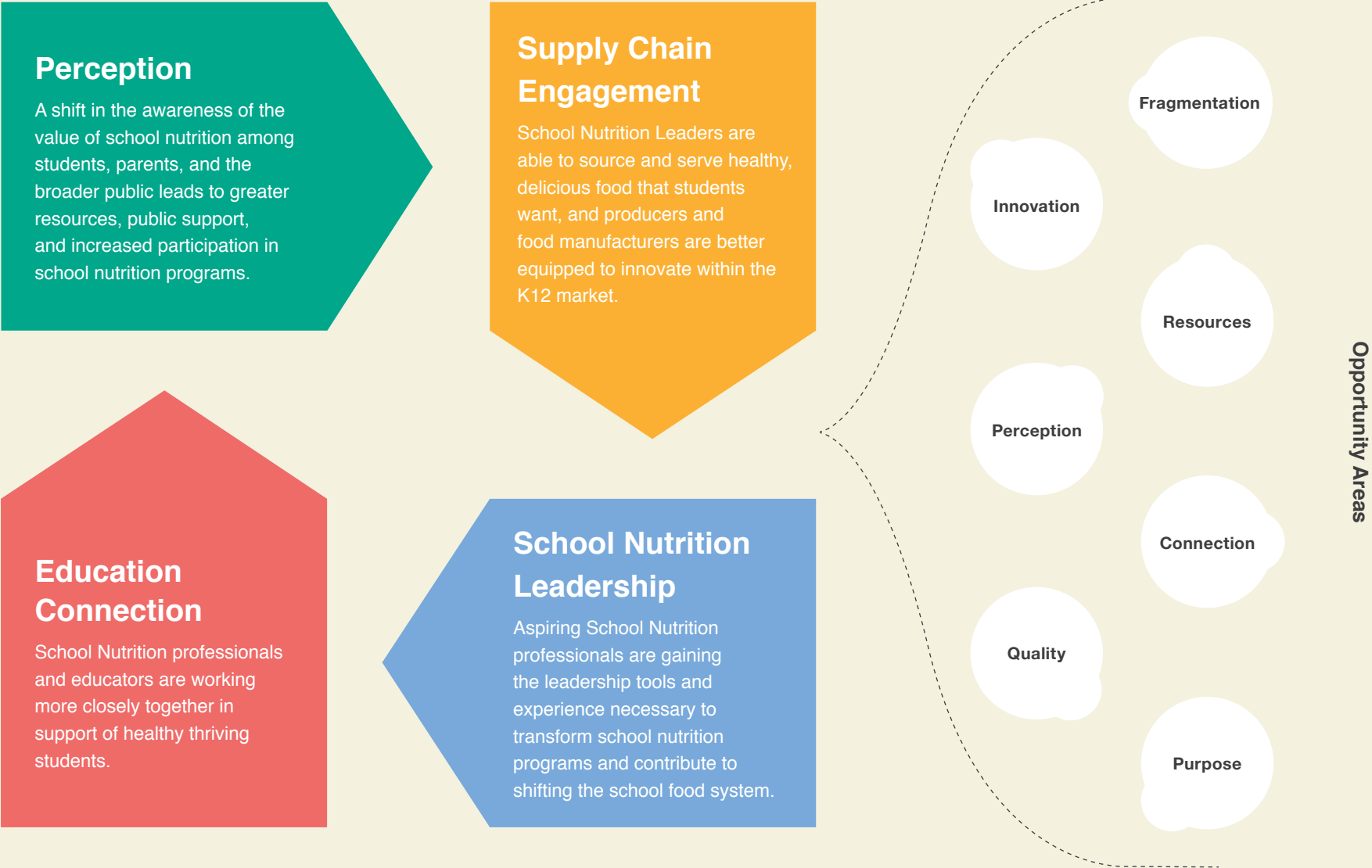
**The food is delicious, appealing, seasonally and culturally relevant, and made from whole, nourishing ingredients.**

**It is sourced and served in ways that support local economies, protect lands and waters, treat animals humanely, and uphold the dignity and health of farmers, food workers, and students themselves.**

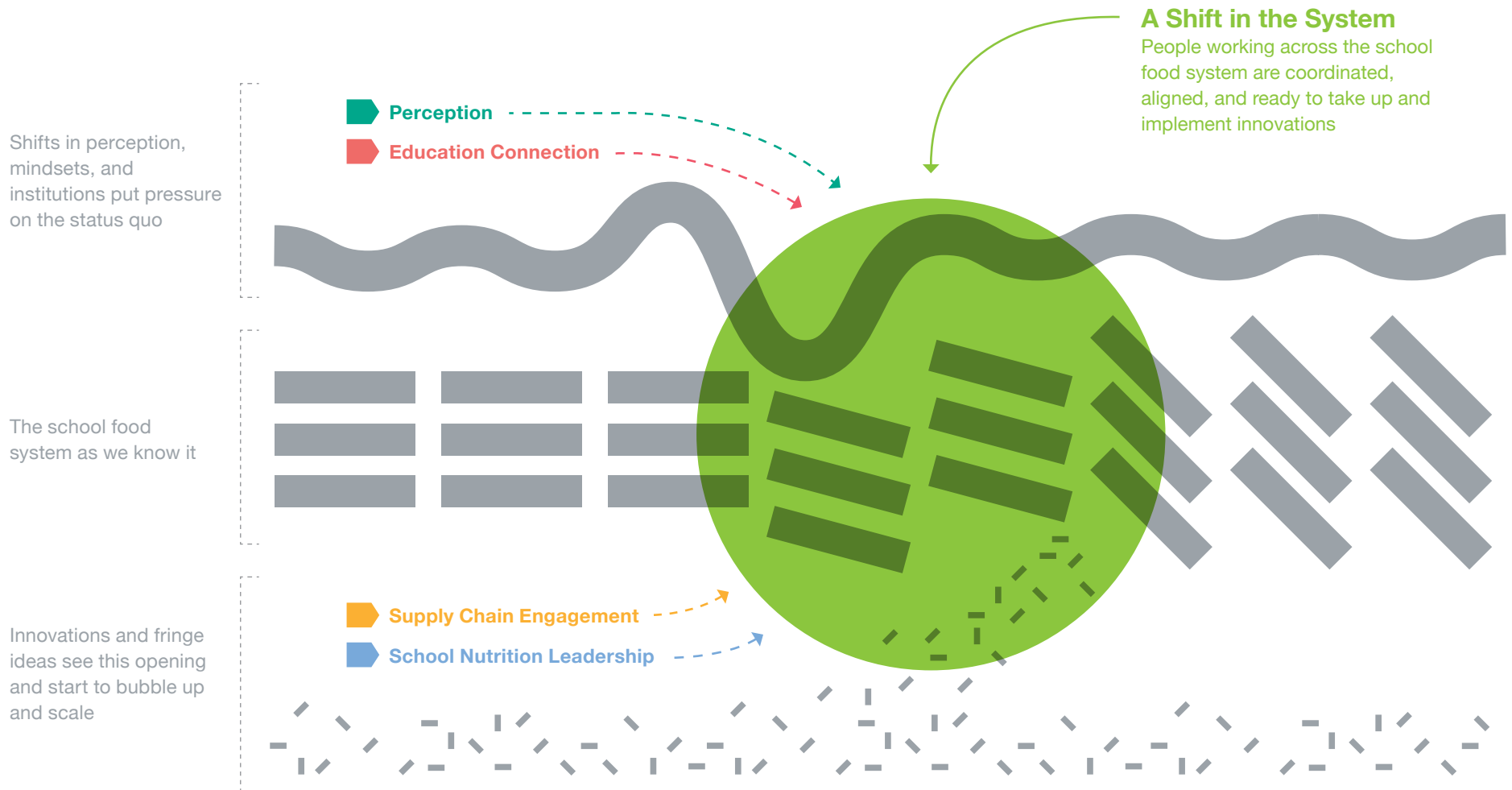


**Four distinct work streams will guide FoodCorps' and reWorking Lunch partners' actions over the next year and beyond.**

These four work streams were identified based on their ability to address challenges in the school food system, the breadth of work that's already happening in this sector and where we can fill gaps, and where reWorking Lunch partners are best placed to affect change.



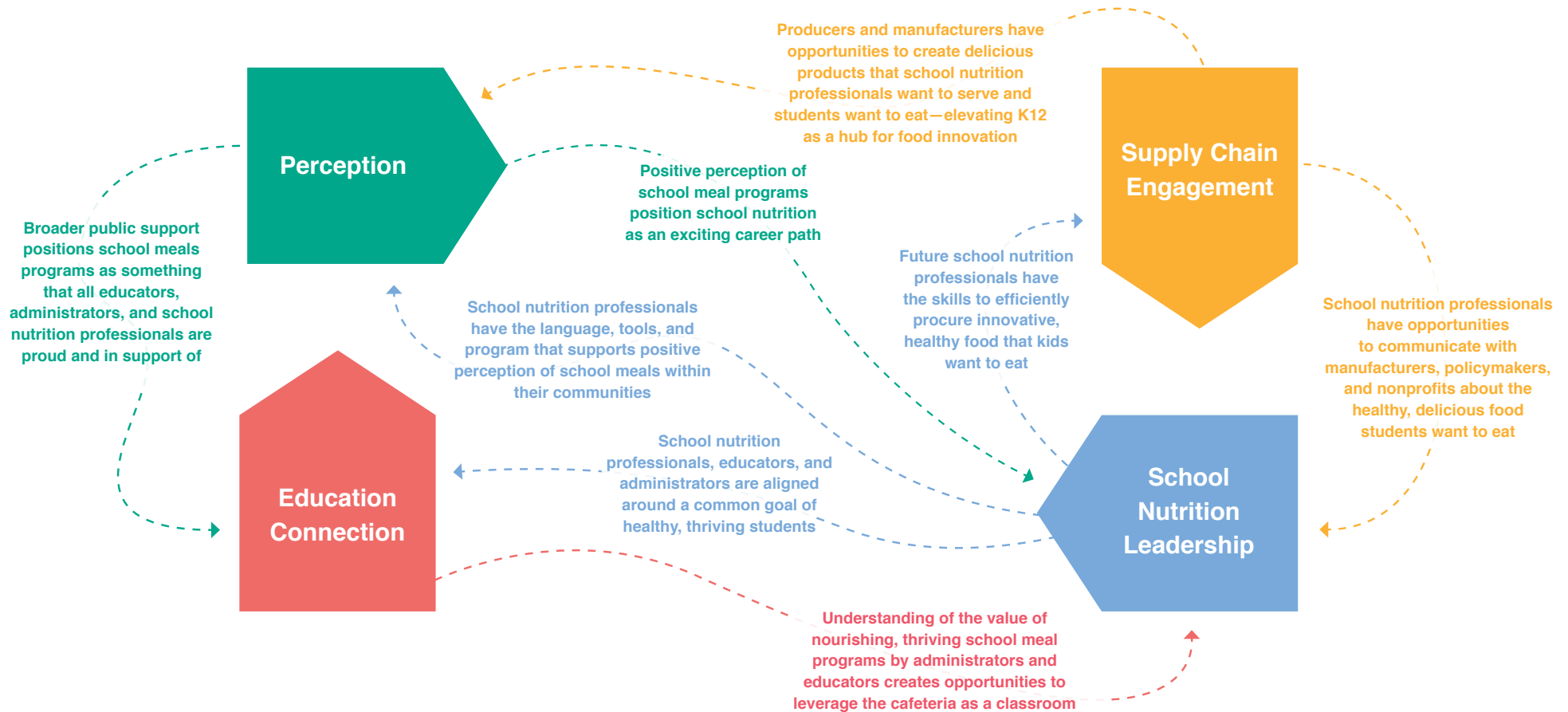
**Changing a system requires a variety of solutions and people, working at different altitudes, in order to shift relationships and patterns and reorient the system toward new goals.**



**No single person or organization or company can change a system alone, but together, we can orchestrate the right conditions for change.**

**There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to systems change. But a set of efforts, designed to align, intersect, and uplift one another, will. While each work stream takes on a different part of the school food system, they are also interconnected and designed to interact with one another.**

For example, a shift in relationships between school administrators and school nutrition leaders may trigger policy changes or resource flows within a district, or a more equitable, innovative supply chain may trigger a shift in perception about school meals. Many barriers stand in the way of our vision, so we need many complementary solutions to realize it.



Together, these work streams will leverage one another and will draw on reWorking Lunch's collective expertise, power, and hunger for change from stakeholders across the system, in order to **reorient it towards our vision for healthy food in school.**



# Education Connection

**Our working hypothesis:** If education sector leadership and school nutrition leadership at all levels can align around healthy food and joyful cafeteria experiences as fundamental to their educational mission, students will experience healthier and happier school mealtimes and be more ready to learn.



## The problem we're trying to solve

School mealtimes and student nutrition are not typically a top priority within the education experience. And education and school nutrition leadership typically operate in silos, making it difficult to align around a shared vision or set of priorities.

## What we'll work on this year

- Learning directly from education sector leadership, school nutrition leadership, and other experts to understand the landscapes within which they operate and where opportunities exist to align around a shared vision for healthy and joyful mealtime experiences.
- Facilitating brainstorm workshops where a diversity of education and school nutrition leaders identify strategies to achieve the ultimate work stream outcomes at all levels.

## Ultimate outcomes we're charting towards

- Creating a stronger connection between education and school nutrition leaders around a shared vision for healthy and joyful school mealtime experiences.
- Increasing education leaders' support for healthy and joyful mealtime experiences as a priority in school culture.
- Increasing school nutrition leaders' efficacy in successfully building relationships and collaboration with education colleagues, which will enable this shared vision.

## Who must be involved to support this change

### Education sector leadership at all levels

(e.g., school principals, superintendents, state education and national agency leadership)

### School nutrition leadership at all levels

(e.g. cafeteria managers, school nutrition directors, state and national school nutrition leadership)

### Stakeholders and partners at all levels

(school, district, state, and national) to implement strategies developed by education and school nutrition leadership

# Education Connection

**Project Plan:** We will be facilitating a national human-centered design project—an approach to problem-solving that centers key stakeholders in all aspects of the process—to design and implement strategies that align education and school nutrition sectors around a shared vision for healthy and joyful mealtime experiences.



## Our approach:

- **Phase I—Formative Learning/Design Research:** During fall/winter 2019–20, we will dive deeply into four areas of learning: (1) work/learning that has already taken place and is currently taking place around strengthening connection between education leadership and school nutrition leadership; (2) how other people and movements have successfully influenced the hearts and minds of individuals and entire sectors; (3) what else influences education leaders; and (4) what else influences school nutrition leaders.
- **Phase II—Ideation:** In summer 2020, after synthesizing Phase I learning, we will convene a diverse group of cross-sector education and school nutrition leaders for a multi-day design workshop, where they will brainstorm strategies to meet ultimate work stream outcomes.
- **Phase III—Implementation:** In fall 2020, work with partners through reWorking Lunch to plan for and implement a selection of strategies at multiple levels.

## Our call to activation:

- **Steering Committee Members:** 5–7 organizations from education and school nutrition sectors to help guide this work stream process between now and November 2020.
- **Connectors:** Leaders and organizations to speak with and learn from during Phase I, and will be looking for guidance from connectors around the country.
- **Knowledge and Experience Sharers:** Leaders and organizations we can speak with and learn from during Phase I.
- **Brainstormers:** A diversity of education sector and school nutrition leaders—at all levels—to participate in the summer 2020 design workshop and lead the development of strategies to meet work stream goals.
- **Strategy Implementers:** Once a variety of strategies are developed during the 2020 design workshop, we want to partner with organizations and individuals (in education, school nutrition, non-profit, and governmental sectors) to implement these strategies at multiple levels.

## Key questions we need to answer:

What combination of education and school nutrition leaders should we engage throughout this process to ensure that a true diversity of perspectives and experiences are considered at every stage?

What are the key leverage points in elevating school nutrition and cafeteria experiences as priorities in education and school culture?

What insights can we learn from other organizations already engaged in the work of connecting education and school nutrition leaders?

# Supply Chain Engagement

**Our working hypothesis:** If we can align demand by building the collective voice of school nutrition leaders, it will shift the supply of foods available to schools.



## The problem we're trying to solve

Schools buy food in a fragmented way due to uncoordinated purchasing across districts and lack of a shared vocabulary for healthy food, leading to inconsistent and unreliable market demand. Burdensome purchasing requirements and limited entry points in the current school food supply chain make it challenging for small and innovative vendors to sell to schools.

## What we'll work on this year

- Solutions created by school nutrition leaders, for school nutrition leaders to procure healthier foods that meet student demand

## Who must be involved to support this change

## Ultimate outcomes we're charting towards

- Increased accessibility and availability of delicious, wholesome, values-based food products to school nutrition departments
- Clarity around what schools want, what suppliers can provide, and where there are gaps in the marketplace
- Increased matchmaking between supply and demand at multiple scales, including a clearer pathway for smaller, local vendors to sell to schools

### School Nutrition Leaders

especially those from small and mid-sized districts

### Food Suppliers

looking to begin or increase their reach to public schools, including food hubs, farmer cooperatives, food manufacturers, distributors, and others

### Nonprofit Organizations

working to improve the quality of school meals



# Supply Chain Engagement

**Project Plan:** We'll be working on aggregating the demand of smaller and mid-sized school districts, translating that demand to industry and supplier partners, and supporting the needs of marginalized vendors who want to sell to schools.



## Our approach:

- **Phase I:** Clarify, align, and build demand among school nutrition leaders first, then widen our network to food manufacturers and distributors who want to engage on specific supply chain projects that will increase the availability of better foods to schools.
- **Phase II:** Explore opportunities for an accelerator program and supply chain innovations that will fill gaps in the school food marketplace identified through the demand-building process in Phase I.

## Our call to activation:

- For Phase I, we are looking for school nutrition professionals (directors, operations specialists, procurement managers, etc.) to join us, test our collective vision and the feasibility of solutions developed by the initial group of school nutrition leaders.
- In addition, if you are building buyer/seller relationships that support school district procurement, regional economies, values-based supply chains, cooperative purchasing, and/or innovation in school food products, we want to explore partnership with you.

## Key questions we need to answer:

What do we need to learn about school district demand aggregation that can inform the path forward for supply chain development moving forward? What successes are already happening that we can support and/or build upon?

Knowing that every operation is different, how do we design supply chain solutions that chart towards our vision for healthy food that all districts can implement?

How do we create more purchasing power among small, mid-sized, and geographically dispersed schools?

What does it take to sell to schools, and how can we create a more equitable system that supports small and emerging vendors in K12?

# School Nutrition Leadership

**Our working hypothesis:** If we work to enhance the leadership (not just technical) skills of school nutrition professionals through a multi-sector collaborative training program then visionary leaders will emerge in school nutrition.



## The problem we're trying to solve

While there are currently a number of visionary school nutrition leaders, the field lacks a formal leadership development track for up-and-coming professionals. As school nutrition leaders retire at a rapid rate, there is a need for coordinated effort to recruit and train the next generation of leaders.

## What we'll work on this year

Create a shared vision with leading school nutrition organizations, based on the unique strengths and capacities of each partner. Develop a recruitment strategy that prioritizes an inclusive and diverse group of candidates aspiring to become school nutrition leaders.

## Ultimate outcomes we're charting towards

Developing a comprehensive *School Nutrition Leadership Program*, that pairs up-and-coming professionals alongside expert School Nutrition Directors for 18 months of technical and leadership development training.

## Who must be involved to support this change

School Nutrition  
Leaders

Superintendents

Leading School  
Nutrition  
Organizations

State Agencies

USDA

# School Nutrition Leadership

**Project Plan:** Through mentorship- and cohort-based learning, the *School Nutrition Leadership Program* will develop a diverse pipeline of future school food leaders, in partnership with leading school nutrition organizations, school districts, and leaders across the field.



## Over the next year we will:

- Work with leading school nutrition organizations to create a shared vision and collaborative approach for school nutrition leadership development
- Develop core competencies for the *School Nutrition Leadership Program*
- Identify existing training resources and partners
- Engage innovative School Nutrition Directors to serve as mentors
- Recruit professionals into the *School Nutrition Leadership Program* who are representative of the communities they serve

## Our call to activation:

- **Leading school nutrition organizations** to create a shared vision for school nutrition leadership development, based on mutually beneficial strengths and capacity
- **School Nutrition Directors** who are interested in becoming mentors for the *School Nutrition Leadership Program* and buy-in from **school administrators** to support leadership program participants
- **Partner organizations** who are committed to providing equitable resources and professional development to aspiring school nutrition leaders

## Key questions we need to answer:

How might leading school nutrition organizations rally around a shared vision for school nutrition leadership?

How can partner organizations leverage individual strengths to build capacity toward a shared vision of school nutrition leadership?

What recruitment strategy is most effective in attracting professionals who are representative of the communities they serve?

How might organizations come together to promote leadership opportunities to current and future school nutrition professionals under a collective message/voice?



# Perception

**Our working hypothesis:** If we can spread awareness of the value of school nutrition, and move it up the priority list for the broader public, it will lead to greater resources, public support, policy change, and participation in meal programs.



## The problem we're trying to solve

The stigma and negative perception of school food and the cafeteria experience among students, parents, and the broader community discourages student participation, politicizes schools meals, and holds the program back from advancing as a whole.

## Ultimate outcomes we're charting towards

Across America, school meals are celebrated and seen as a hub for creativity, social justice, child health, environmental sustainability, business innovation, and a source of national pride.

## What we'll work on this year

Shifting the broader public narrative of what school food is and what it could be by:

- Elevating stories of innovation and change happening in the field of school nutrition and through reWorking Lunch work streams in particular, and;
- Building the backbone for a large-scale, collaborative public awareness campaign.

## Who must be involved to support this change

**Positive Storytellers from Across the Field of School Nutrition, Food Systems, Education, and Health** especially those with a platform and a following they're eager to leverage

**Students, Parents, and Educators** who can speak to the impact school meals have had on them personally and in their school communities

**School Nutrition Leaders** who are eager to position school nutrition as an exciting career path for future generations

**Producers and Manufacturers** with inspiring stories to tell about their efforts to create a more equitable, sustainable school food supply chain

**Policymakers and Government Administrators** who want to leverage their platform to champion a shifting national rhetoric

# Perception

**Project Plan:** We will design and begin to execute a collaborative marketing strategy, with the goal of sharing inspiring, positive stories from across the field. Simultaneously, we'll coordinate with partners to develop a strategy for a broad scale, collaborative, storytelling campaign, with the goal of formally launching in 2021.



## Our approach:

### Phase I: Awareness Building (Oct 2019 and ongoing)

- Map current storytelling initiatives in the school food sector and identify opportunities for collaboration and alignment.
- By early 2020, develop a media plan to disseminate stories of success and innovation in school nutrition, leveraging voices from across the school food system.
- By spring 2020, begin to execute on that plan—coordinate with partners across the field to share content focused how systems change happens, alongside stories of success in school nutrition.

### Phase II: Campaign Design (March 2020 and ongoing)

- By spring 2020, identify partners with technical expertise (PR, research, marketing, campaign development) who can support the development of a broad scale awareness campaign.
- By spring 2020, bring on a partner who can research successful campaigns we can learn from, and existing campaigns in others sectors we can partner with.
- By fall 2020, develop the campaign strategy: identify goals, target audience(s), call to action, national and grassroots messaging, and costs.

## Our call to activation:

- **Marketing Creatives and Campaign Strategists** with strengths in storytelling, marketing, and campaign development
- **Researchers** who can take the lead in researching successful campaigns and current storytelling efforts
- **Bold, Creative Storytellers** from inside and outside the field of school nutrition, who have positive stories to tell and are eager to leverage their voices, platforms, and create content that can drive change
- **Amplifiers** with a platform, following, and resources to amplify our message

## Key questions we need to answer:

Which audiences are important to target? Whose voices are important to lift up and whose are stronger behind the scenes?

What's the right balance between a national campaign, a state-by-state approach, or grassroots strategies?

How will we know that our efforts are changing mindsets? What are some meaningful benchmarks we can identify?

How can we ensure our storytelling efforts are shaped by those most affected by the system?

# Where We Go From Here

