Listening Sessions Toolkit

About the School Meals for All Campaign

It’s our experience that equity-informed policy should be grounded in the experiences of those who are most impacted by a policy, and those who have the most at stake in its change. We also have much to learn from the experiences of other states and communities who are pioneering and experimenting. By beginning a campaign with a focused and intentional process of community listening and policy research – which happen simultaneously, interact with, and inform each other – our policy solutions are more likely to work well for the Oregonians who have the most at stake in the School Meals for All Campaign. Community listening sessions, focus groups, surveys, and policy research results will be incorporated into a policy briefing for the coalition.

Listening sessions are being held by coalition members through June 2024. Charlie Krouse (charlie@oregonhunger.org) is available to support organizations that wish to hold a listening session with their members or community in a variety of ways, including:

- Providing additional resources and written updates
- Talking through facilitation plans
- Facilitating listening sessions (in-person or virtual)

Objectives of listening sessions:

- **Gather feedback**, insights, and suggestions from communities to build a campaign and policy platform that meets the needs of stakeholders and centers the needs of children and families most affected by the proposed changes.
- **Build our lists** of Oregonians who have an interest in school meals so that we can provide them with opportunities to engage with the policy campaign.
Keys for a Successful Listening Session

- Listening Sessions should end with at least two takeaways:
  - Notes from the discussion, preferably with direct quotes, and,
  - A list of participants and their contact information for you or the campaign to follow up with.
    - Option: participants can directly sign up for campaign emails by signing the School Meals for All pledge
- Adapt the agenda and discussion prompts as needed based on the specific context and goals of your listening session.
- Assess the needs of participants:
  - Ensure access to translated materials and a translator for events.
  - Consider venue and space accessibility. Resource from UMass.
- Move from big to small:
  - Start by gaining understanding of the overall concerns and hopes of participants related to school meals
  - Then move to more specific questions to make sure you understand the nuance of the issues that the group wants to prioritize

Participants can include:

- Parents/Guardians, Students, Teachers/Educators, School Administrators, School Nutrition Staff, Nutritionists/Dieticians, Community Members
- Please record the role or audience of the listening session

Materials Needed:

- Meeting space
- Presentation slides
  - Sample from OSNA Conference, 2024
- Note taker
- Refreshments

Sample Agenda #1, Online or In-Person (2 hrs)
• **Introduction (10 minutes)**
  - Welcome and introduction
  - Explanation of the purpose of the listening session.
  - Overview of the agenda and ground rules for participation.

• **Background Information (10 minutes)**
  - Brief presentation or overview of SMFA goals, why we’re conducting listening sessions.
  - Highlight any recent changes or initiatives related to school meals, provide background on SMFA.

• **Sharing Experiences (30 minutes)**
  - Open the floor for participants to share their current experiences with school meals.
  - Encourage parents, students, and teachers to provide feedback on the quality, variety, accessibility, and nutritional value of meals.
  - Prompt questions:
    - What has been your experience with school meals in Oregon?
    - How does the current cost of school meals impact you and your family?
    - What aspects of the current meal program do you appreciate?
    - In what areas do you think improvements can be made in school meals?

• **Identifying Challenges (20 minutes)**
  - Facilitate a discussion on the challenges or barriers faced in SMFA implementation, key needs.
    - What are key concerns around implementing SMFA in your school?
    - What key issues do you want to see addressed in SMFA?
      - Meal times
      - Equitably paying kitchen staff
      - Kitchen improvements / needs.
• Food waste.
  ○ Encourage participants to suggest potential solutions to these challenges.

• Ideation and Brainstorming (20 minutes)
  ○ Break into smaller groups (if applicable) to brainstorm ideas for enhancing the school meal program.
  ○ Provide prompts to guide discussions, such as:
    ■ How can we address food quality issues / ensure by expanding SMFA, we’re increasing the food quality.
    ■ What strategies can be implemented to address mealtimes / key student needs?
    ■ Other key issues brought up in discussion.

• Feedback and Recommendations (15 minutes)
  ○ Reconvene as a whole group and invite each group to share their key ideas and recommendations.
  ○ Summarize the main points and themes that emerged during the discussion.

• Next Steps and Closing (10 minutes)
  ○ Discuss potential next steps for implementing the suggestions and feedback gathered.
  ○ Thank participants for their valuable contributions and commitment to improving school meals.
  ○ Provide information on how participants can stay involved or contribute further.
    ■ Signing up for communication from the campaign (consider a QR code for participants to use)
    ■ Youth Advisory Committee
    ■ Coalition
    ■ Amplify community leaders to host smaller listening sessions.
Sample Agenda #2 (1 hr)

This session can be held online or in person using butcher paper or a jamboard, respectively. The questions can be changed to focus in on more specific policy outcomes as needed.

- **Prep:**
  - 4 posters with questions on the wall (or jamboard)
    - What challenges do you anticipate/experience in implementing a universal meal program. What is needed to address them?
    - What opportunities are you anticipating/finding in moving towards a universal meal program?
    - What are your dreams?
    - How do you want to participate in the campaign? What do you need to do that?
  - Dots for participants to vote (or stickers, if online)

- **Introduction (5 minutes)**
  - Welcome and introduction
  - Explanation of the purpose of the listening session.
  - Overview of the agenda and ground rules for participation.

- **Background Information (10 minutes)**
  - Brief presentation or overview of SMFA goals, why we’re conducting listening sessions.
  - Highlight any recent changes or initiatives related to school meals, provide background on SMFA.

- **Gallery Walk (30 minutes)**
  - Directions:
    - There are big questions on the butcher paper
    - Grab Sticky notes and dots
Write all ideas on sticky notes, put them on the butcher paper
Ues dots to vote for things you agree with
We’ll come back when we have 10-15 mins left to talk through what we found

• Share Out and Debrief (10 minutes)
  ○ Facilitate a discussion on the challenges or barriers faced in SMFA implementation, key needs.
    ■ What are key concerns around implementing SMFA in your school?
    ■ What key issues do you want to see addressed in SMFA?
      ● Meal times
      ● Equitably paying kitchen staff
      ● Kitchen improvements / needs.
      ● Food waste.
  ○ Encourage participants to suggest potential solutions to these challenges.

• Next Steps and Closing (5 minutes)
  ○ Discuss potential next steps for implementing the suggestions and feedback gathered.
  ○ Thank participants for their valuable contributions and commitment to improving school meals.
  ○ Provide information on how participants can stay involved or contribute further.
    ■ Signing up for communication from the campaign (consider a QR code for participants to use)
    ■ Amplify community leaders to host smaller listening sessions.

Follow-Up:
☐ Compile notes and feedback gathered during the session. Email notes, pictures, and contact information to Charlie Krouse (charlie@oregonhunger.org)
☐ Share back a summary report with participants and stakeholders.
☐ Share the coalition’s Local Advocacy Toolkit with participants
☐ If applicable: Develop an action plan based on the recommendations and suggestions provided.
☐ Schedule follow-up meetings or updates to keep participants informed about progress.