



The High Cost of a Low Bid

Choosing a Partner On Price Alone Can Create Long-Term, Costly Issues in Your School Nutrition Program



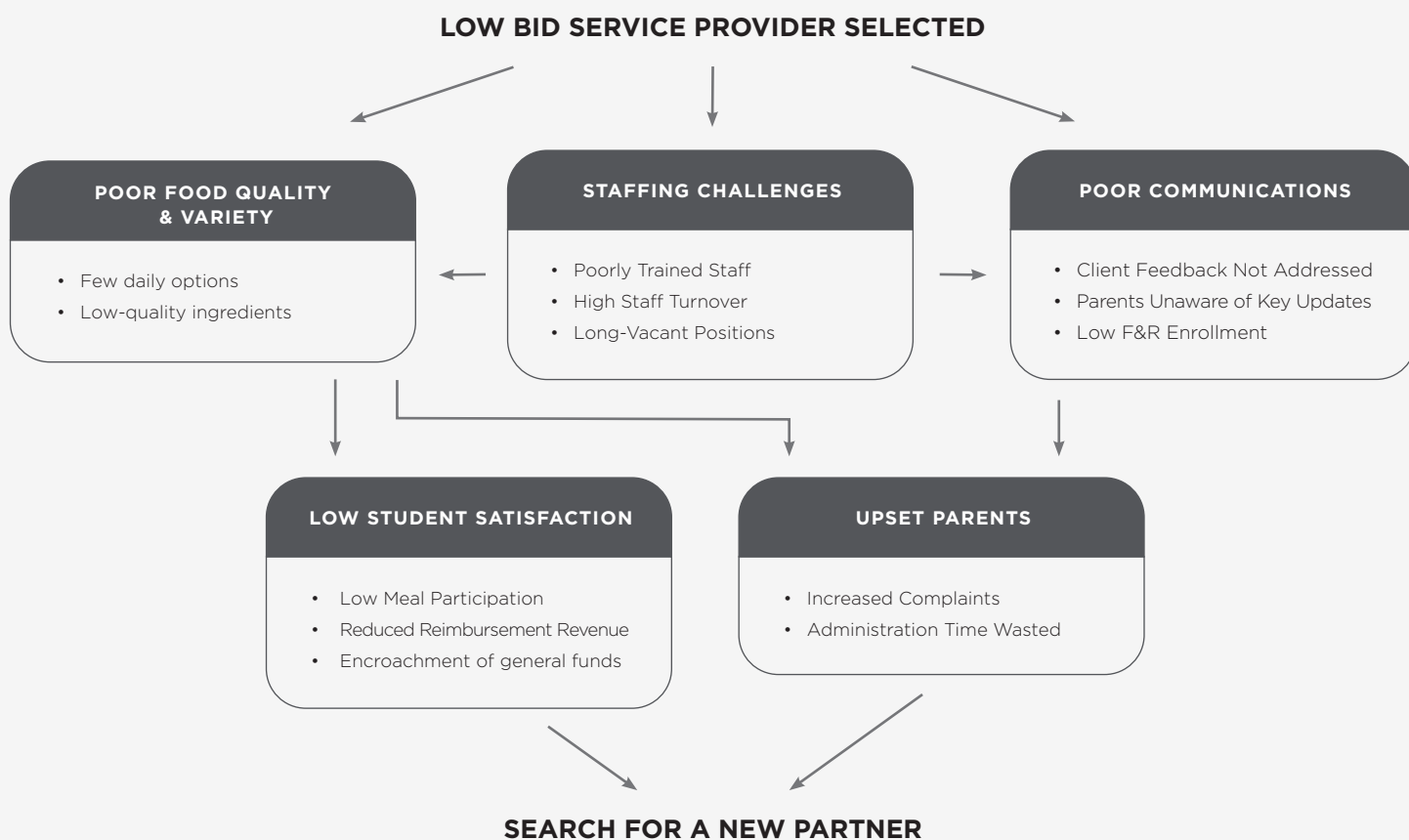


Too often, when K-12 school districts are searching for a nutrition service provider, they award the contract to the provider with the lowest bid without considering all factors. However, that option could be the costliest. The vendor may be priced low for a reason — namely, because they don't bring the highest quality services and products to the table. As a result, you may experience costly outcomes — such as hiring difficulties, high staff turnover, poor quality meals and low student participation.

While you may agree with this challenge, you also must convince your board. In this guide, we've provided justification for making a better school nutrition partner decision. We've outlined the hidden costs of a "low-cost" bid and provided insight on how a high-quality service provider can best manage your school nutrition program.

EXPOSING THE HIDDEN COSTS OF A LOW-BID SERVICE PROVIDER

This chart shows the cascade of outcomes when you choose a nutrition service provider based only on the lowest bid. Ultimately it leads to one outcome: once again searching for a new partner to replace a low-bid, low-quality service provider.





The 8 Hidden Costs of a Low-Cost Bid

When a low price guides your decision-making process at the expense of quality and long-term thinking, multiple areas of operation can be impacted. See the eight hidden costs of a low-cost bid and factor these potential consequences into your school district's service provider decision.

HIGH STAFF TURNOVER

In the current labor market, employees have more options than ever before. If they feel they are being underpaid — and therefore underappreciated — their loyalty to you will plummet and they will seek employment elsewhere. Your district is left with an ever-revolving team of workers who are likely unhappy on the job.

TIP: Understand that if you don't invest in quality staff members, they will leave.

LOW FOOD QUALITY

Too often when school districts are overly focused on costs, they allow the quality of both the ingredients they purchase and staff culinary skills to suffer. Low-quality meals will have an immediate and often long-lasting impact on student participation. In the end, the cost savings attitude can undermine the success of your nutrition program.

TIP: Know that poor quality meals will ensure your nutrition program is unsuccessful.

VACANT POSITIONS

One of the results of high staff turnover is that critical positions often remain unfilled for extended periods. When positions go unstaffed, this leads to two negative outcomes — current staff is spread too thin, or services need to be cut back. When people must perform more than should be required by their job title, they can experience burnout and low job morale. When services are cut back, the students suffer as their dining experience is diminished.

TIP: Know that all staffing issues lead to the same conclusion — poor quality service.

LACK OF PROPER STAFF TRAINING

Even if you can hire employees and pay them close to a fair-market wage, if they are not properly trained for their jobs, they will not perform optimally. This oversight can negatively impact the quality of service they provide to students and their job satisfaction. Lack of culinary training can also impact meal quality, reducing employee pride in their work. As a result, your staffing problems can still include high turnover and difficulty recruiting.

TIP: Quality staff training programs should include three vital phases — successful onboarding, on the job training and training for career advancement.

POOR MENU VARIETY

When it comes to daily meals at school, not only do students want meals that taste great, but also, they crave variety. School districts that bring selection to the table enjoy some of the most successful nutrition programs in the country. Students enjoy opportunities to experiment with international flavors and local, farm fresh food. By investing in greater meal variety, school districts can avoid low meal participation that would seriously harm their budgets.

TIP: *Understand that putting the same meals out on the line day after day will bore children and dampen participation and satisfaction.*

LITTLE OR NO COMMUNICATION

When students and their parents aren't clear on what the school nutrition program offers, they tend to overlook it. This is especially true if they've been disappointed in the past. A lack of communication is common with low-cost service providers. As a result, parents aren't informed about programs like free and reduced enrollment or new and creative meals and experiences. The lack of communication creates lost opportunities.

TIP: *Sharing information about your nutrition program via emails and social media encourages students to participate — and provide information in multiple languages when appropriate.*

LOW MEAL PARTICIPATION

Students can be picky eaters. And if they decide the quality of meals is poor, they will gladly skip out on participating in school meals. As students stop choosing school meals, nutrition program revenue suffers. As a result, districts that only focus on the lowest cost on paper can end up needing to pull money from the general fund to keep their nutrition programs operational.

TIP: *Expanding your topline meal service revenue with meals your students want to eat will positively impact your nutrition program's bottom line.*

LACK OF CREATIVE EXPERIENCES

Almost without exception, vendors that concentrate only on providing the lowest cost do not deliver dining experiences that excite students and encourage participation in the program. When districts make choices based primarily on cost alone, students miss out on exciting experiences like food trucks, grab-n-go markets, [chef culinary councils](#), student chef competitions, and hydroponic or aeroponic produce towers.

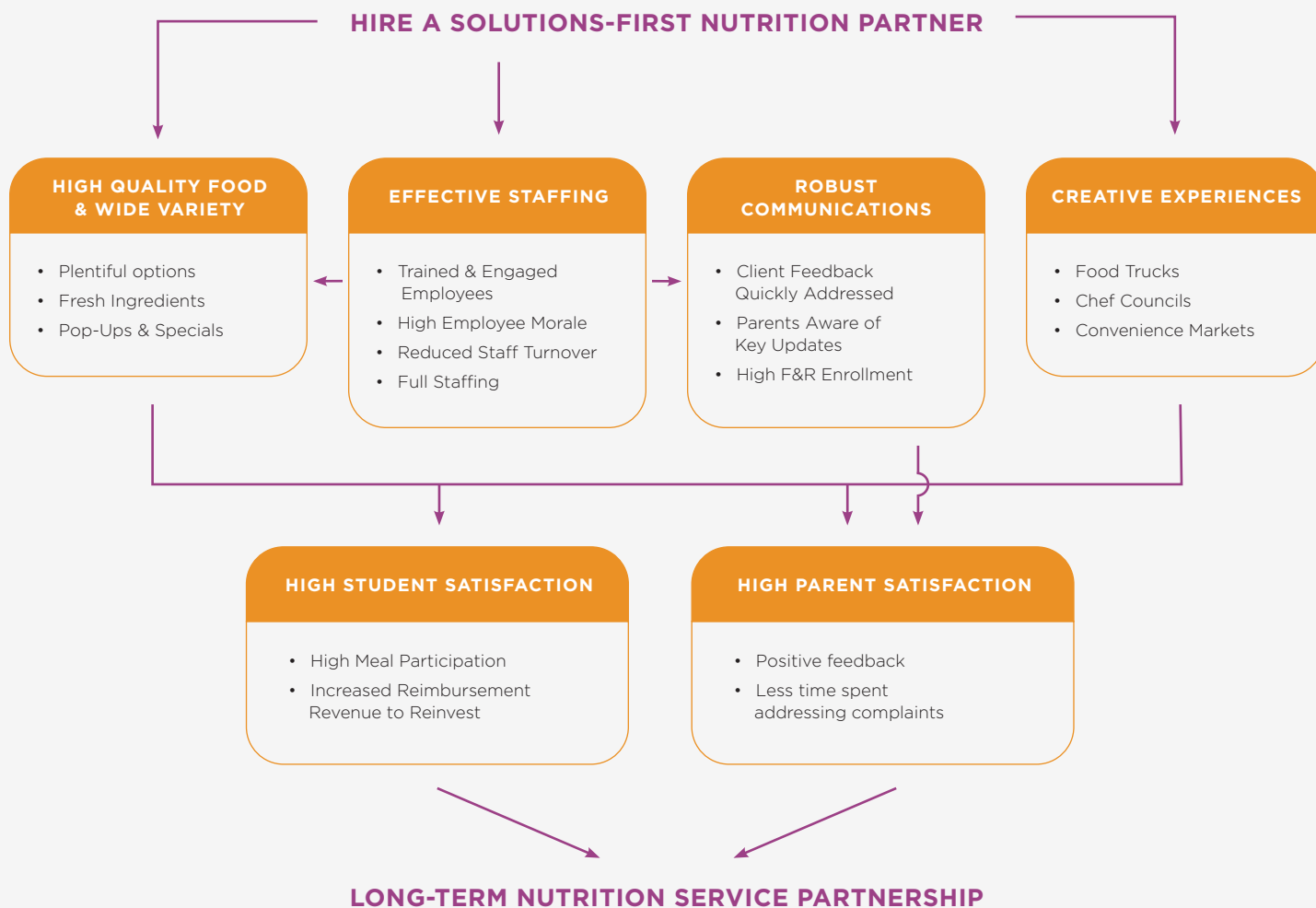
TIP: *Adding unique experiences to your nutrition program can not only excite students but also be economical.*



What Good Nutrition Services Look Like

High-quality school nutrition programs that generate higher student participation and increased revenue share many of the same characteristics — from food service workers who love their jobs, to delicious meals that power students' potential every day, to healthy fund balances. In other words, increased meal participation drives revenue that can then be reinvested back into improving the school nutrition program on multiple levels, from staff training to ingredient quality, to meal variety.

See what a good nutrition program could look like if your district chose a service provider able to provide the highest level of service to your schools.





THE RIGHT PARTNER

Provides Superior Outcomes

K-12 SCHOOL DISTRICTS must offer nutrition programs. But if they give the programs the short shrift, including ignoring long-term results in favor of the lowest cost on paper, the program and budget will suffer. Offering your students a great food experience begins with hiring the right nutrition service provider. They will work with your schools in positive and constructive ways that will delight your students, parents, workers, teachers and administrators.

An exceptional nutrition services partner will create a tailored program that generates both excitement and satisfaction for students, but also fiscal responsibility for the district. An ideal partner will balance costs with increased participation, resulting in a nutrition program that's financially healthier overall.

Learn how Aramark Student Nutrition

can create a nutrition program that overcomes challenges and delivers the highest quality at every level — from tasty meals to investing in staff to effective communication and more.

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