United States Department of Agriculture

Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs

Please note that this is a printer-friendly version of the guide. A full-color version can be found on USDA's Procuring Local Foods website

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The development of this guide was a true team effort. Christina Conell, a Program Analyst with the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (USDA's FNS) led the charge and pulled in members from across FNS to help develop and clarify content. Maggie Gosselin, Program Analyst, provided extensive help throughout the process. Maggie organized and simplified the language in this guide to make it as user-friendly as possible. Deborah Kane, National Director, also a key editor and contributor, provided helpful guidance to ensure that the guide is relevant to all schools.

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Purpose of the Guide

Across the country, an increasing number of child nutrition program operators are sourcing local foods and providing complementary educational activities that emphasize food, agriculture, and nutrition. While interest and enthusiasm for buying local foods has grown across the country, uncertainty about the rules for purchasing locally grown products persists.

School nutrition professionals are aware of a range of policies at the local, state and federal levels that apply to procurement, but navigating these rules correctly can be confusing and time consuming. Further sourcing local foods entails more than the procurement process and can require specialized knowledge about the local food marketplace that will inform a district's purchasing decisions. In this guide, we present the information and resources that districts need to purchase local products for the school cafeteria. This information includes menu planning basics, the fundamental principles of procurement, the many potential sources of local products, and the variety of mechanisms that can be used to procure these products.

This guide can be generally split into two sections: (1) what to do before a solicitation is issued and (2) how to craft a solicitation to target local products.

The first part of the guide introduces resources for defining local and finding local foods and menu planning, since deciding what to serve drives the procurement process. These sections will help districts explore local foods and determine how local foods fit into their menus.

The second part of the guide focuses on the details of crafting a solicitation to target local products. Fundamentals of procurement and the basic procurement methods (micro-purchase, informal, formal) are all covered in detail. Opportunities for targeting local products are highlighted throughout, and application of geographic preference is discussed extensively.

This resource is designed primarily for school food professionals operating a National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program. However the many lessons for identifying and procuring locally grown and produced food are be broadly applicable to operators of various federal child nutrition programs, such as the Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

State agencies, school food authorities (SFA), school districts, procurement agents, food service management companies (FSMCs), or purchasing cooperatives (co-ops) are all able to buy products for the child nutrition programs. Throughout this guide, we use the term "school" or "district" to refer to any entity that is purchasing food for use in child nutrition programs. *This includes providers of USDA's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). For specific guidance on targeting local food for these programs, please see pages* 89-94. Procurement rules, regulations, and recommended practices are consistent regardless of which type of entity is purchasing food for school meal programs.

The first version of this guide was released in April 2014 and this version has since been revised to include more examples and information about buying local.

The end of this document provides a myriad of resources for anyone seeking to procure local food. The online course, "State Agency Guidance on Procurement," available through the Institute for Child Nutrition's (ICN) website, provides a detailed explanation of the procurement regulations governing the school meal programs. For information on additional procurement resources, see *Appendix A: Procurement Resources* and *Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.* Please also see *Appendix F: Local Purchasing Step-by-Step* for a quick guide to purchasing local.

Defining and Finding Local Foods

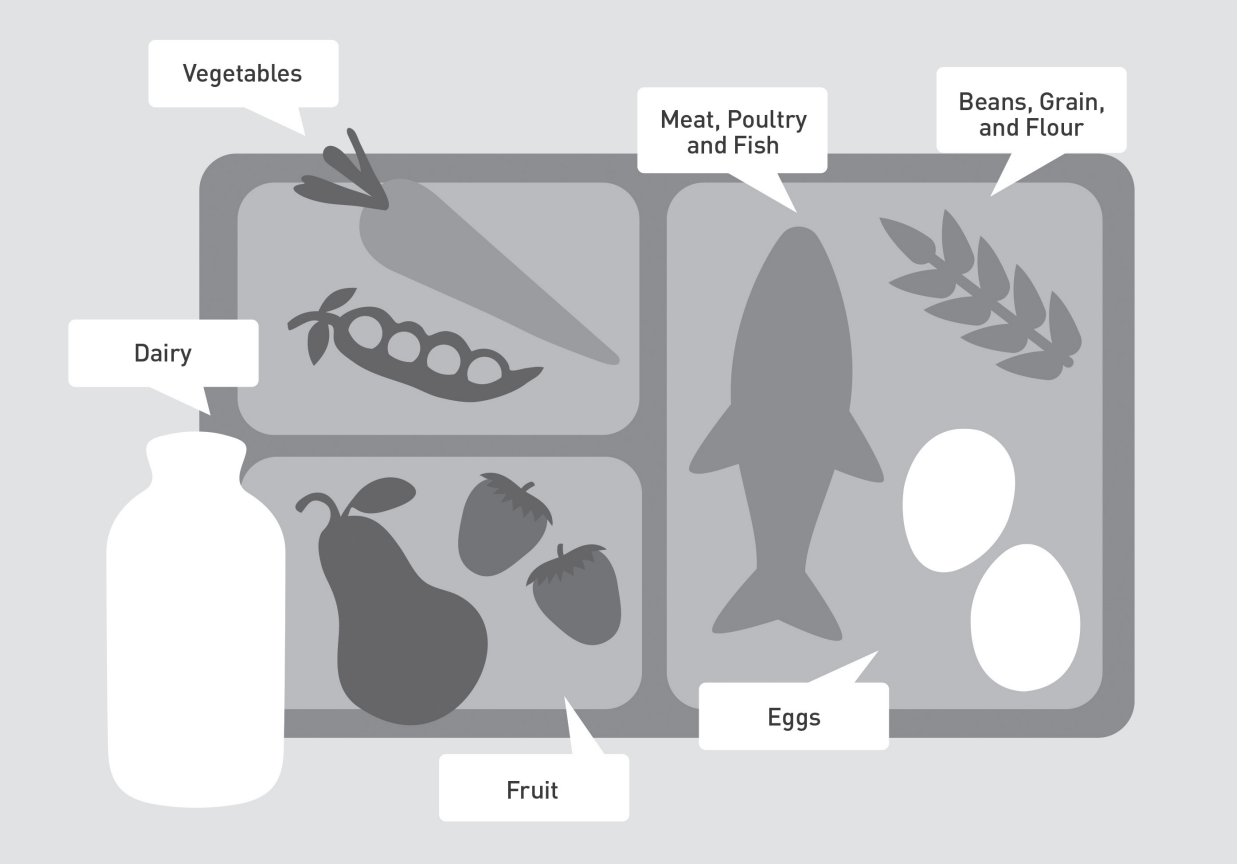
Local procurement options differ greatly across communities depending on district and school size, proximity to agricultural areas, growing season, and demographics. Thus, there are many pathways to buying local. This section explores how to define "local," identify what foods can be purchased locally, and determine which vendors can provide local foods.

Local What?

Local and regional foods can span the meal tray!

Local foods may include fruits, vegetables, beans, grains and flour, meat, poultry, fish, condiments, herbs, eggs, processed products, and dairy; these products can come from local farmers, ranchers, dairies, fishermen, food processors, and distributors of all sizes. For many school districts, fresh fruits and vegetables are a logical starting place for local procurement. Fresh fruits are especially easy because many can be served with little to no preparation beyond washing; however, the most comprehensive local buying programs incorporate local products in all of the food categories.

Many schools, for example, adjust existing recipes and menus to accommodate local products (e.g. replacing beef with local bison in Montana or barley with local rice in California). Some schools may look for local products to replace a similar product already being offered, such as a district in Pennsylvania replacing Washington grown apples with Pennsylvania produced apples. Schools will often develop entirely new recipes and menus based on products and food traditions specific to a particular region or locale.



Assessing Availability of Local Products

Finding what products are available locally and when they are in season is essential to purchasing local foods. Here are just a few ideas for exploring what local foods are produced in a school's area:

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AGENTS

Across the country is a network of Cooperative Extension agents or educators who are experts in many agricultural topics, including local food systems. Each state-level Cooperative Extension website lists contact information for agents within the state. Districts can find their local Extension office by using the National Institute for Food and Agriculture's website (nifa.usda.gov/extension).

USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

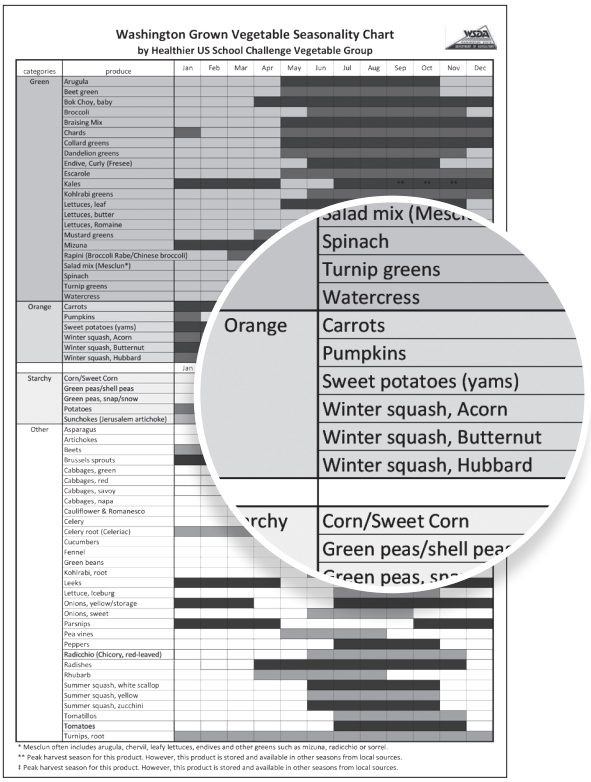
Every five years, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) surveys all U.S. farmers and maintains an online searchable database with detailed information about agricultural production in each state and county. Use the Census to get a sense of what types of crops, and what volumes, are being produced in an area of interest. To learn more, visit the Census of Agriculture website (www.agcensus.usda.gov).

THE FARM TO SCHOOL CENSUS

USDA surveyed more than 18,000 school districts across the country about their farm to school efforts, and local procurement in particular. Use the Farm to School Census to determine which nearby districts are purchasing local foods and what they are buying. For more information, visit the Farm to School Census website (www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/).

SEASONALITY CHARTS

Many state departments of agriculture or non-profit organizations produce visual representations of what foods are available locally and seasonally in a state or specific region. Some include just fruits and vegetables, while others include grains, dairy, meat, and other products as well.



Defining Local

WHO DEFINES LOCAL?

Defining local is one of the first steps in procuring local foods, as this definition will help districts understand market availability and enable them to write solicitations with those market conditions in mind. Each school district creates the definition for local that works for their particular needs and goals. While oftentimes schools will adopt definitions in use by state agencies, schools can define local however they see fit. There is no federal definition of local.

HOW TO DEFINE LOCAL

There are many options for defining "local," and definitions vary widely depending on the unique geography and climate where a school is located, and on the abundance of local food producers and manufacturers. Many schools define local as within a certain number of miles, within the county, or within the state. Alternatively, definitions might include more than one state (e.g., Georgia, Alabama, and Florida) or discrete parts of several states (e.g., specific counties in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho).

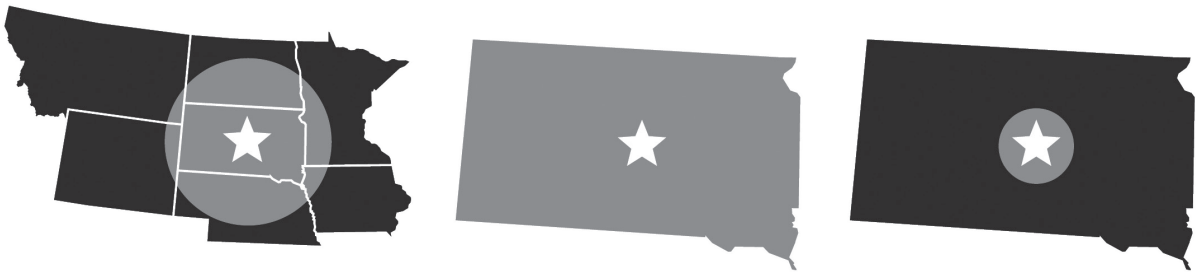
While a static definition of local will make it easier to tally local products, a more fluid approach may also work. The definition of local may change with the seasons, the type of product or special events. For example, a school might decide that because there are so many fruit and vegetable producers within its county, local fruits and vegetables must come from within county lines. However, if the county has only one dairy, then the definition of local is too restrictive and the definition for dairy products such as milk, cheese, and yogurt must be expanded to allow these products to come from additional sources, for example from anywhere in the state or region. Involving school nutrition staff, local growers, food distributors, and others in helping to define local ensures that the definition best meets the school's needs and encourages competition among vendors.

There is no federal definition of local.

FIGURE 1

Potential Definitions of Local for Pierre, South Dakota

The images below illustrate three possible definitions for local for a district in Pierre, South Dakota. The image on the left shows the district taking a regional approach to the definition of local, the center picture shows the district defining local as within the state and the final image shows the district using a smaller radius as its definition of local. The district may use one of these definitions for all of their purchases, or it might choose to use each of these definitions for different purchases or at different times of the year.



Definition A Definition B Definition

OTHER DEFINITIONS OF LOCAL IN VIRGINIA, CALIFORNIA AND OKLAHOMA

Page County Public Schools, in Virginia, defines local using three-tiers.

- Within the County
- Within the Region (within 90 miles of Luray, VA)
- Within the State

While a product that meets the first tier definition is preferred, a product that falls within any of the three tiers would be considered a local product.

Oakland Unified School District, in California, defines local within a 250 mile radius of Oakland.

Hinton Public Schools, n Oklahoma, defines local as within Oklahoma.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

A district's goals will help shape how the district defines local. See the Planning Toolkit on the USDA Farm to School Website (usda.gov/farmtoschool) for more information on creating a vision and setting goals.

Having specific goals for local purchasing efforts will help schools craft a definition for local that works in service to the district's goals. For example, is the school trying to support small producers? If so, the school might adopt a definition for local that includes limitations on farm size. Is the district trying to get as much local product into the school cafeteria as possible? The district might consider a fairly broad definition of local that includes surrounding states in the region. Are livestock products from local sources abundant in your region but local fruits and vegetables scarce? The school could consider different definitions of local for different product types. How a school defines local can frame who it purchases products from, how those products are grown and where the school's funds are going. A school's definition of local may evolve and change over time.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN DEFINING LOCAL

- What products do you want to source first, and where can you find them?
- What is the vision for your local buying program and what types of producers can support that vision?
- Is there state based legislation regarding local purchasing that you would like to be aligned with? Note that an SFA's definition of local may differ from the state's definition.
- Do you want to bring as much local product as possible onto the menu as quickly as possible?
- Do you want to couple local purchases with farm visits and educational activities with producers and suppliers?
- What products are you already sourcing from your nearby area?
- Does your distributor offer products from your state or region?

Sourcing Local Foods

While the phrase "buying local" might conjure images of a farmer delivering produce straight to the backdoor of a school cafeteria, local foods do not always travel straight from the field, pasture, or water to the school meal tray. Some schools buy directly from producers. Other schools rely on third-parties, such as distributors, to source, process, and deliver local foods. Local foods can be purchased directly from producers, through producer co-ops and food hubs, through distributors and FSMCs, from food processors, and even from school gardens. There are many models for providing local foods to school cafeterias. Keep in mind that the methods described below are not necessarily exclusive of one another, meaning a school may receive local products from its distributor and also buy local lettuce directly from a producer.

Before beginning the competitive procurement process it is important to ask if the district is interested in purchasing directly, from a producer or producer organization, or if it would prefer to buy food through an intermediary, such as a distributor or a food service management company that includes procurement services as well as management services. The answer to this question has implications on the types of local products available to the district, the infrastructure the schools have to receive and process the product, and how the solicitation will be crafted.

DIRECTLY FROM PRODUCERS

Some schools solicit bids to purchase foods directly from local farmers, ranchers, and/or fishermen, however, there are multiple procurement possibilities, even when competitively purchasing directly from the source. Some schools set up contracts with producers well in advance of the growing season, establishing a specific volume of product they intend to buy at a specific price. Since many school districts plan menus months in advance, the school is able to identify needed products and estimated quantities they will need and contract for these items to ensure the products will be available. Other schools solicit bids for products on a month-to-month basis depending on what is affordable and available.

With regard to receipt of product, some schools solicit bids that require farmers to deliver straight to schools or a central warehouse, while other schools choose to pick up products at the farm or from a farmer's market.

THROUGH PRODUCE AUCTIONS

Produce auctions play an especially important role in rural areas and can be a great source for buying local produce and connecting with local farmers. Schools also are less likely to have problems getting the quantities of food they are seeking from a produce auction. The competitive bidding style helps keep prices reasonable without compromising product quality. Produce auctions can be a convenient, central meeting place to find and get in touch with local producers. In some areas, auctions are one of the only markets for local produce.

THROUGH PRODUCER CO-OPS AND FOOD HUBS

In some regions, producers have organized into cooperatives (co-ops), aggregating their products and combining their marketing efforts. Compared to a single producer, these groups are more likely able to fulfill large orders, deliver directly to schools, and provide some minimal processing. Some of

these efforts to pool products are known as food hubs. Some food hubs act in the same manner as a distributor, meaning schools are able to order multiple products directly from the hub, which may come from several different producers in the area. Buying from a co-op, regardless of how the collaboration is structured, may cut down on some of the administrative burdens of working directly with a different producer for every different kind of product.

FROM FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT COMPANIES

Some schools competitively procure and award contracts with outside companies, such as a food service management company (FSMC), to manage certain aspects of their food service operations. As with a school that manages its own meal service operations, the FSMC must follow federal, state and local procurement rules. FSMCs must meet the USDA meal patterns using the quality of foods described in the solicitation document and subsequent awarded contract. If a school wants to include terms for local products to be included in the awarded contract, it should include details about its preference for local products when soliciting bids or proposals from FSMCs. As with a school that manages its own food service, there are many regulations the FSMC must meet and many state agencies have specific guidelines and technical assistance available to help schools working with FSMCs.

THROUGH DISTRIBUTORS

Many schools competitively solicit bids or proposals from broad line distributors (also known as prime vendors) to procure local food in addition to other products and services for the school's food service operations. Working through distributors to bring local products into the cafeteria can sometimes be easier than sourcing foods directly from local suppliers. In fact, schools are often surprised to learn that their current distributors are already working with local producers.

FROM FOOD PROCESSORS

Schools may also opt to competitively solicit bids for processed items, or processed items that contain local ingredients, as part of its local buying efforts. Getting local foods from processors is a good option when kitchen storage capacity, food preparation equipment or staff time is limited in individual schools.

FROM SCHOOL GARDENS AND FARMS

USDA does not prohibit schools from using products grown in school gardens in school meals, snacks, and taste tests. While school gardens and farms rarely produce enough food to make up a large portion of school meals, fruits, vegetables, eggs, honey, and other products grown at the school can increase school meal acceptance, enhance the educational process, supplement meals, provide visual appeal on salad bars, and be an invaluable nutrition education tool. Schools may use funds from the non-profit food service account to competitively purchase seeds, fertilizer, rakes, watering cans and other items for the school garden, as long as the garden is used within the context of the program (e.g., served through a taste test or as part of a school meal). Produce from the garden can be donated, purchased through an intergovernmental agreement, or competitively procured. USDA encourages innovative ways for meeting the goals of the school meal programs and school gardens provide a proven way to change students attitudes towards fruits and vegetables.

Before operating a school garden or using garden-grown foods in school meals, schools should become familiar with all applicable local health and sanitation requirements. For more information, please see *Appendix A: Procurement Resources* for two guidance memos on school gardens.

Finding Local Products

There are a variety of resources available to help schools find local producers. Following are some ideas about where to look to become acquainted with vendors selling local products in your area.

ON-LINE TOOLS

A variety of on-line match maker tools help buyers find growers and vice versa. Currently, most of these on-line tools are regional in nature, supporting different parts of the country. Some of these tools offer real time information allowing you to see market prices and the range of products available in the moment. Others are more basic, providing a producer database and contact information. All of these tools have a slightly different business model and some have fees to use the site. Food-hub.org, GoTexan, and MarketMaker are examples of these types of online platforms.

STATE RESOURCES

State agencies are increasingly supporting efforts to buy local products. The National Association for State Departments of Agriculture has a listing of all state departments of agriculture and may be a good first step to connecting with personnel at the state level. Many state departments of agriculture have a listing of all the producers in the state. More and more state agencies are developing promotional programs that support the agriculture in their state.

The majority of states have dedicated farm to school coordinators housed in either the state department of agriculture or state department of education. State farm to school coordinators support a range of activities from connecting producers to schools, linking all the involved stakeholders in the state, and coordinating statewide or regional events around farm to school. All of these contacts can be found on the USDA Farm to School website (usda.gov/farmtoschool).

PRODUCER ASSOCIATIONS

Nearly every crop has a corresponding producer group that represents the interests of particular groups of producers. For instance, the US Rice Federation has a list of rice growers on its website and the Blueberry Council lists blueberry producers from across the country. If a district is interested in purchasing a particular type of product, it should consider getting in touch with the corresponding association as the producer groups will often have extensive seasonality information, marketing materials, and producer contacts.

USDA RESOURCES

USDA offers a variety of resources that can help schools find potential suppliers:

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has county offices all over the country. FSA's role is to support producers. To this end, they often host outreach events and maintain an extensive listserv of producers.

Cooperative Extension offers support at the state and county level and Extension offices have an interest in connecting local producers to local markets. As experts in the agricultural landscape and production in their county or state, Extension agents routinely conduct outreach with producers and are often the perfect connectors for buyers and growers.

The USDA Farm to School Census is a great tool to find out what neighboring districts are buying from local sources. The Census can help schools find districts with similar goals. The school can then connect with those schools to learn more about their supply.

Requests for Information

A Request for Information (RFI) is a tool schools can use to conduct market research, design bid documents, assess local availability, and decide what products to solicit locally. Usually, an RFI outlines the types of products the school is looking for and seeks information from potential suppliers.

An RFI is not used to procure products, but rather to gather market information about the availability of local products to inform future menus and competitive procurement activities. Schools or community partners may issue an RFI with a list of products and estimated volumes needed and ask for information about what products and how much volume suppliers can deliver.

Because this is not a procurement tool, a school can explicitly require information about local products in an RFI, such as stating that the school is seeking information strictly about products available within the state or 100 miles. For example, a school can't issue a solicitation for peaches grown within 100 miles, but it can send out an RFI for peaches grown within 100 miles. Responses from an RFI should yield a list of potential vendors. From this information, the school will learn about specific varieties of peaches grown within 100 miles and the school can write a solicitation for specific varieties of peaches, include a preference for those grown within 100 miles and ensure that local peach growers within 100 miles are aware of the opportunity. An RFI can help connect schools with local growers, ensure that schools are aware of local products and when they are available, structure the geographic preference section of their solicitations, budget accurately and plan for delivery and storage needs.

An RFI can be as simple as listing the products and quantities the school wants in a given period, and asking suppliers to respond with the product varieties and quantities they may be able to produce and a timeframe for potential delivery. More complex RFIs may ask producers to respond with an estimated price, food safety practices, detailed specifications, and delivery capacity, which will be useful when a competitive solicitation is developed and published. With good market information in hand, the school can use the information from an RFI to estimate the value of potential contracts, determine which procurement method would be appropriate, and determine if using geographic preference would be an effective way to achieve local procurement goals.

Example: School Food FOCUS

School Food FOCUS, a national collaborative of large school districts, issued an RFI on behalf of five large urban school districts in the Midwest. The RFI was a way for FOCUS to explore the potential to expand offerings of locally grown and processed fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables for school meal programs. The RFI clearly stated that any responses were non-binding and that the information collected would be used to identify local products which might be purchased in the future. While issuing an RFI may be beyond the capacity of a school district, this is a great example of how community partners can help districts determine what local products are available. For more details about the RFI issued by School Food FOCUS, see *Appendix D: Excerpt from School Food FOCUS RFI to Supply Locally Grown Fresh and Frozen Fruits and Vegetables.*

Example: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) issues an RFI each year to learn which local producers are available to meet their district's needs. MPS uses the RFI to gather information on producers and then works with its competitively procured distributor to purchase local products from vendors identified through the RFI. The RFI expresses the district's farm to school program's goals and distributes the RFI to growers in the area. In the RFI, MPS includes all of the district's requirements including information on liability insurance, traceability (farm name labeling), food safety, and the onboarding process required of all producers that provide produce to the district. Each producer that sells to MPS' distributor participates in an onboarding process, which includes a farm site visit, a food safety workshop, and an institutional sales workshop that covers product specifications, pack sizes, delivery and invoicing requirements. The detailed nature of the RFI gives producers all of the information they need to know about working with MPS and the RFI also helps the district ensure that their distributor is willing and able to source from reputable producers. The RFI includes detailed specifications, usage estimates, and prices that the district has previously paid for similar items.

For example, one producer, the district identified through the RFI, who grows chemical-free butternut squash offers the district the whole crop, including seconds comprised of large, oddly shaped squash. The direct-to-consumer market demands only small and unblemished squashes, MPS purchases the whole crop through their distributor and has it shipped to their processor to be diced.

For more details about this RFI, see *Appendix E: Excerpt from Minneapolis Public Schools Request for Information – Farm to School Produce.*

Menu Planning

As with any procurement process, purchasing local products requires planning. Schools often start thinking about purchases and menu plans a year in advance. There are a variety of ways to integrate local products into menus and this section walks through a few different steps that schools can take to begin identifying places where local products may fit.

What's Already Local on Your Menu? And What Could Be Local?

The school meal menu is the driving force in the procurement process. School nutrition staff are tasked with the tricky job of creating a menu that meets the meal pattern and all nutrition requirements, appeals to students, and stays within a limited budget. Identifying where local foods fit is another piece of the puzzle.

Whether a school is experimenting with a new vegetable subgroup, offering leaner sources of meat, or testing a new whole grain, it can begin incorporating local foods with simple, easy changes like replacing non-local ingredients with local products.

Five Ways to Integrate Local Foods

1

Identify what is local on the current menu

Conduct a menu audit and find out what products the school is already purchasing locally.

2

Substitute ingredients

Explore what products are available locally and substitute a non-local item with one available locally.

3

Serve local products on the salad bar

The salad bar offers the perfect opportunity to serve fruits and vegetables. The offerings can easily be modified as seasons change.

4

Start a "harvest of the month" program

Consider showcasing one local ingredient every month or each season. Schools may serve the item just once or may prepare the food in several different ways throughout the month to highlight how it can be used.

5

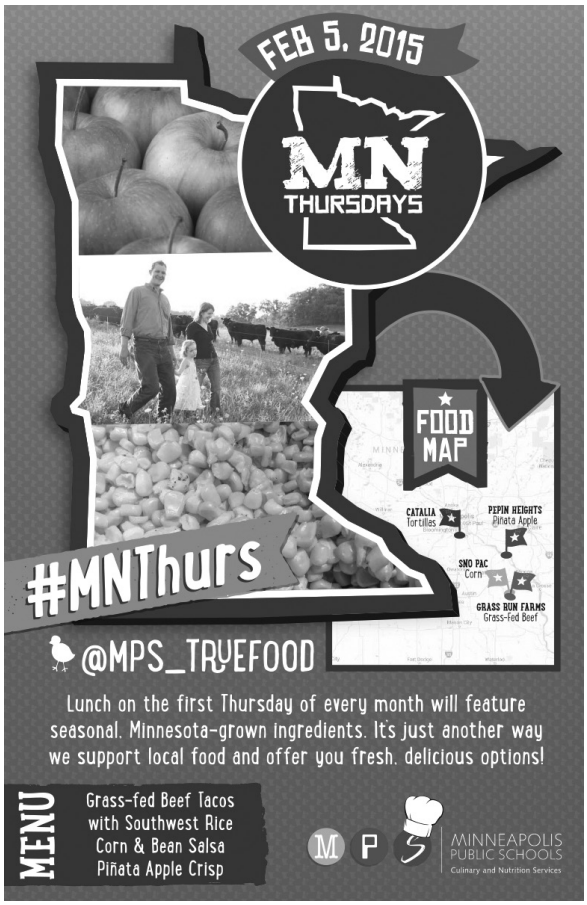
Develop new recipes

Create brand new menu items to highlight local foods.

CREATING MENUS

There are a variety of ways to plan menus, depending on several factors of the school food service operation. District size, location, availability of food deliveries, storage capacity, and student populations can all play into how breakfast and lunch is offered. Offering cycle menus, 2-6 week rotations that repeat throughout the school year, is one of the more common methods used by school food operators to plan meal service. There are many benefits to using cycle menus, including consistency in cost and quality. Standardized recipes offer many of the same benefits as cycle menus and are usually developed when the weekly cycles are being created. Increasingly, schools are choosing to create cycle menus by season in order to take advantage of local, seasonal produce. Like cycle menus, seasonal menus offer a weekly rotation, but the rotations change every 3-4 months to incorporate more seasonal favorites. Working with locally grown or produced food may spur innovation and encourage schools to tap into the variety of products that are available year round, rather than offering the same options September-June. Before revising a menu, it is important that a school conducts taste testing with students before adding new recipes.

For districts that are looking to develop or adapt a cycle menu, state agencies are often a good resource. Some states have developed cycle menus that meet the new meal pattern regulations and include local foods. For example, the Ohio Department of Education created a toolkit called Menus that Move, which includes five weekly menus for each season, along with 50 standardized recipes. In Wisconsin and Oklahoma, recipe books were developed for schools that utilized foods produced within the state. Reaching out to fellow school districts is another way to obtain resources and ideas. Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) in Minnesota has developed a comprehensive farm to school program that is fully integrated into their menu planning process. Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) in Minnesota has developed a comprehensive farm to school program that is fully integrated into their menu planning process. MPS' menu cycle, recipes, taste test, and Minnesota Thursdays marketing materials work together to make serving local foods part of the district's routine, while also educating students about nutrition and agriculture. See an example below of one of MPS' Minnesota Thursdays menus.



This image showcases one of Minneapolis Public Schools' Minnesota Thursday menus.

In many areas of the country, the height of harvest season happens when most schools are not in session. In most areas, there are at least a handful of local items that are available year-round. Examples of such items include milk and other dairy products, meat, poultry and grains. Before planning to procure local foods, schools should start by finding out what is grown locally, and then conduct a menu audit to determine which current foods on the menu are local or can be replaced with local items. Planning for menu changes should start by analyzing current and historical data to determine future needs.

Keep in mind, local can be added into all child nutrition programs including supper, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, summer feeding, and childcare programs. Sourcing local for meals served during the summer or outside of the regular school day is a great place to test new local products. Summer also offers an opportunity to build relationships with farmers and explore distribution strategies.

Example: Fayetteville, Arkansas

Fayetteville Public Schools (FPS) located in northwest Arkansas received a Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SSARE) grant in 2012 to work with local growers and procure local produce for the district's summer feeding program. This summer 'test' project kick-started the district's local procurement plan that expanded into the breakfast and lunch program during the 2013 school year. In just two years, FPS increased the amount of dollars spent on local foods by over 800%, from $8,972 in 2012 to $74,645 in 2014!

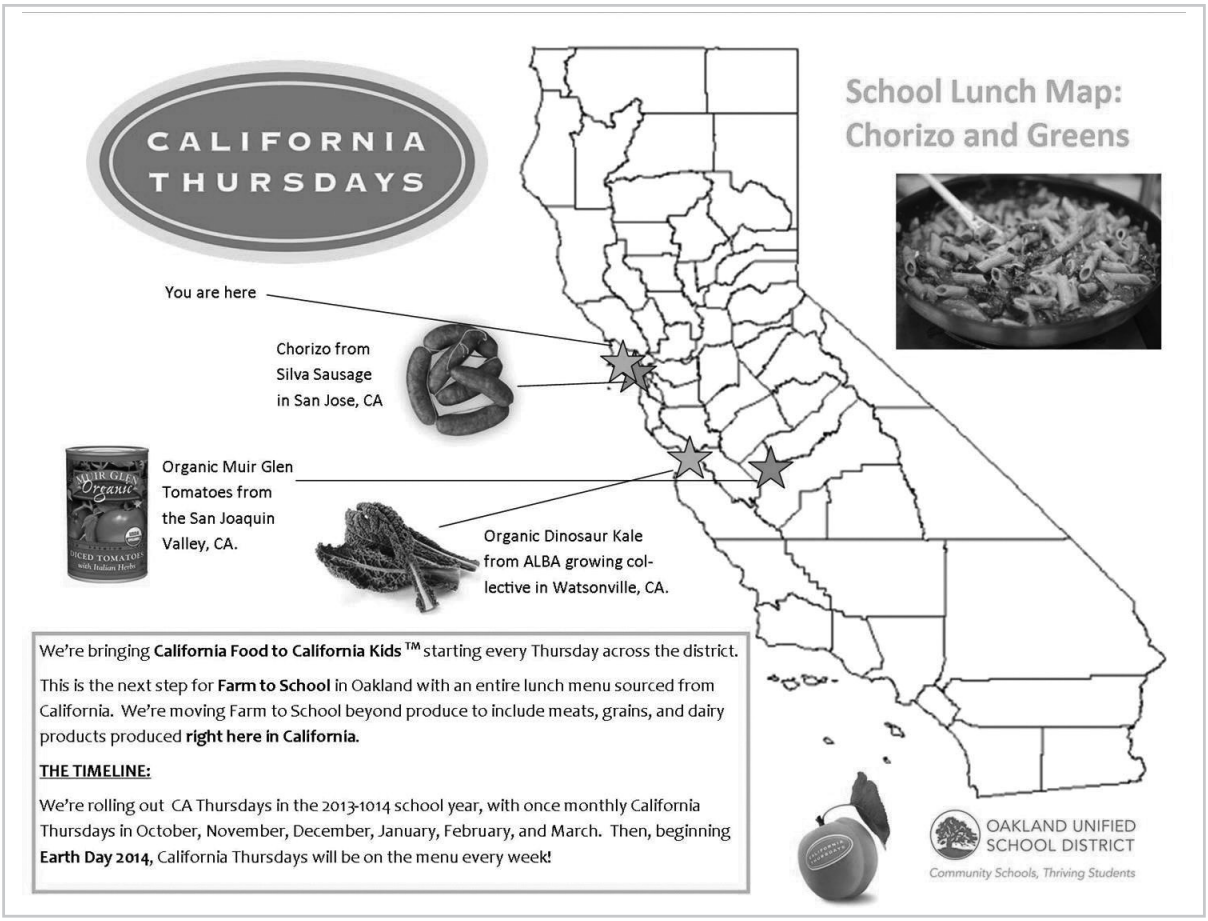
BUDGETING AND FORECASTING

Menu planning and forecasting drives the procurement process. Although forecasting is vital in all procurements, the menu analysis (average daily participation, take rate/leftovers) can be even more important when schools intend to purchase regionally produced items. Forecasting data may have a direct effect on a producer's yearly schedule. For instance, forecasts can help a local farmer estimate when and how many carrots to plant. Budgeting and forecasting is an important step in identifying how many students schools are feeding, the quantity of food schools will need to order, how much schools can spend on food and how much schools might be able to budget for local products.

Careful forecasting is critical to ensuring that schools have the right amount of food and remain on budget. Districts can also use production records from the previous year, or average daily participation records, to identify their average food cost and to project estimated quantities that will be needed. Identifying how much schools are currently spending on food components is a good starting point for developing next year's budget for food. Districts are often surprised that they are able to bring in local products close to the same cost or in some cases at an even lower cost than non-local products. The Food Buying Guide for School Meal Programs can assist schools in calculating the quantity of food schools need to purchase. See *Appendix C: Menu Planning Resources* for more menu planning resources.

PURCHASING AND INTEGRATING LOCAL FOODS

Before identifying which local items to add to the menu, find out if local items are already on the menu. For example, many districts already serve milk from local dairies because it is highly perishable and is often costly to ship. Likewise, if a school in California chooses to purchase avocados, chances are they will be from southern California. If a Florida school chooses to purchase oranges



This graphic illustrates a California Thursday menu from Oakland Unified School District.

in winter, the oranges will likely be from Florida. These examples are unique to California and Florida, but the same principle holds true for procuring products unique to any region. The point is that oftentimes, schools are buying local foods without even knowing it. Working with distributors to find out where food is coming from will allow schools to include these "unintentionally local" foods in the tally of local purchases. Making these connections can lead to important educational opportunities, too. For example, if a school realizes that its cheese is coming from a producer 20 miles away, the school might be able to invite the cheese maker to give a classroom talk or participate in another school event.

If schools identify local items they are already serving, it is an easy first step to start marketing those items by renaming recipes, or identifying the local source on the menu or in the cafeteria.

If a school finds that it is not currently serving any local products, the school may want to start by featuring a "harvest of the month" item. This can be accomplished by adding just one item to each monthly menu cycle from a local source. A school might substitute an item into an existing recipe used by the school such as local rice in a burrito bowl, or cheese from a local dairy on the pizza. Schools with well-established local buying programs often develop entirely new recipes and menus based on

local products and food traditions. For example, a school might develop recipe for "Rocky Mountain Pizza Pie" made with a local whole grain crust, or fish tacos with locally caught fish. Others use the summer months to preserve the local abundance.

The salad bar is another cost effective way schools might be able to offer a variety of canned, frozen, and fresh seasonal local fruits and vegetables. For example, Maplewood Richmond Heights in Missouri offers local applesauce that is processed through a local extension agency on their salad bar nearly every day. By allowing students the option to serve themselves and put foods directly on their tray, it saves staff time and program funds from having to pre-portion into disposal cups, allows students to make their own choices, and the variety of items being offered is appealing to parents and teachers.

To begin sourcing local products, schools often start by answering the questions:

- What is local in the area and when are these items in season?
- Which local foods will be most popular among students?
- Which local foods are already on our school menu?
- What is the school's budget for local products?
- Will the school develop new recipes to highlight new products or will it make simple swaps?

Example: Oakland, California

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has started tracking where all of their food products come from and has developed the map on the previous page that illustrates where the items for one school lunch are produced. OUSD, in partnership with the Center for Ecoliteracy, launched an initiative called California Thursdays, which has now expanded to several other districts across the state. Every Thursday, at all 85 OUSD schools, students are offered a meal entirely sourced from within the state of California. By using a variety of strategies, including working with their distributor, the district is able to offer locally produced chorizo, canned tomatoes and dinosaur kale all on one day. By finding out where these foods are produced and tracking local purchases with their distributor, OUSD is able to direct more of their funds into the state's economy, offer transparency of the supply chain and educate students about where their food comes from.

Example: Eugene, Oregon

The Eugene School District 4J competitively solicited for produce and awarded a contract to purchase the majority of its produce through Duck Produce located in Portland, Oregon. Though Eugene 4J uses other mechanisms to source local products, the district does not specifically request local products from this distributor. Depending on the season and the product, Duck often delivers Oregon-grown product to Eugene 4J with the district's typical produce order, without any specific request to do so. Duck identifies all Oregon-grown products on invoices. Just by ordering from their regular distributor, this district is purchasing local products, illustrating that buying local can be integrated into routine orders.

Example: Bozeman, Montana

At Bozeman Public Schools, students feast on Montana-produced potatoes and pasta. The school nutrition director decided to ask the distributor to label which products were produced in Montana. Soon the school was able to include potatoes and pasta in the district's locally grown tally.

ASSESSING AND ADJUSTING

Once the menu is planned and local foods are incorporated, it is important to make sure customers are happy with the foods in the cafeteria. A great method for assessing which food items kids like is to conduct a survey. Some districts have found it helpful to conduct a survey right in the lunch line. By handing out age appropriate score sheets in the lunch line, schools can assess student preferences to new and existing menu items. Schools might also consider allowing students the opportunity to rate new recipes or cooking methods so they feel included in the recipe planning process. Opportunities like afterschool programs, summer school, or forming student groups to evaluate new foods and recipes is a way to gather feedback from a smaller group of students outside of busier meal times.

Plate waste audits are another method to identify which foods kids are actually eating. Sometimes students need time to adjust to and be exposed to new foods, so do not be discouraged if students are not excited about the new foods right away. It is important to offer taste tests, get feedback and keep offering new items until the school finds the ways in which students enjoy them. For example, perhaps none of the students would touch steamed Brussels sprouts, but it turns out they love Brussels sprouts when they are oven roasted. The more involved students are in choosing the foods they see in the cafeteria, the more receptive they will be; students typically love opportunities to voice their opinion, and often have valuable insights to share!

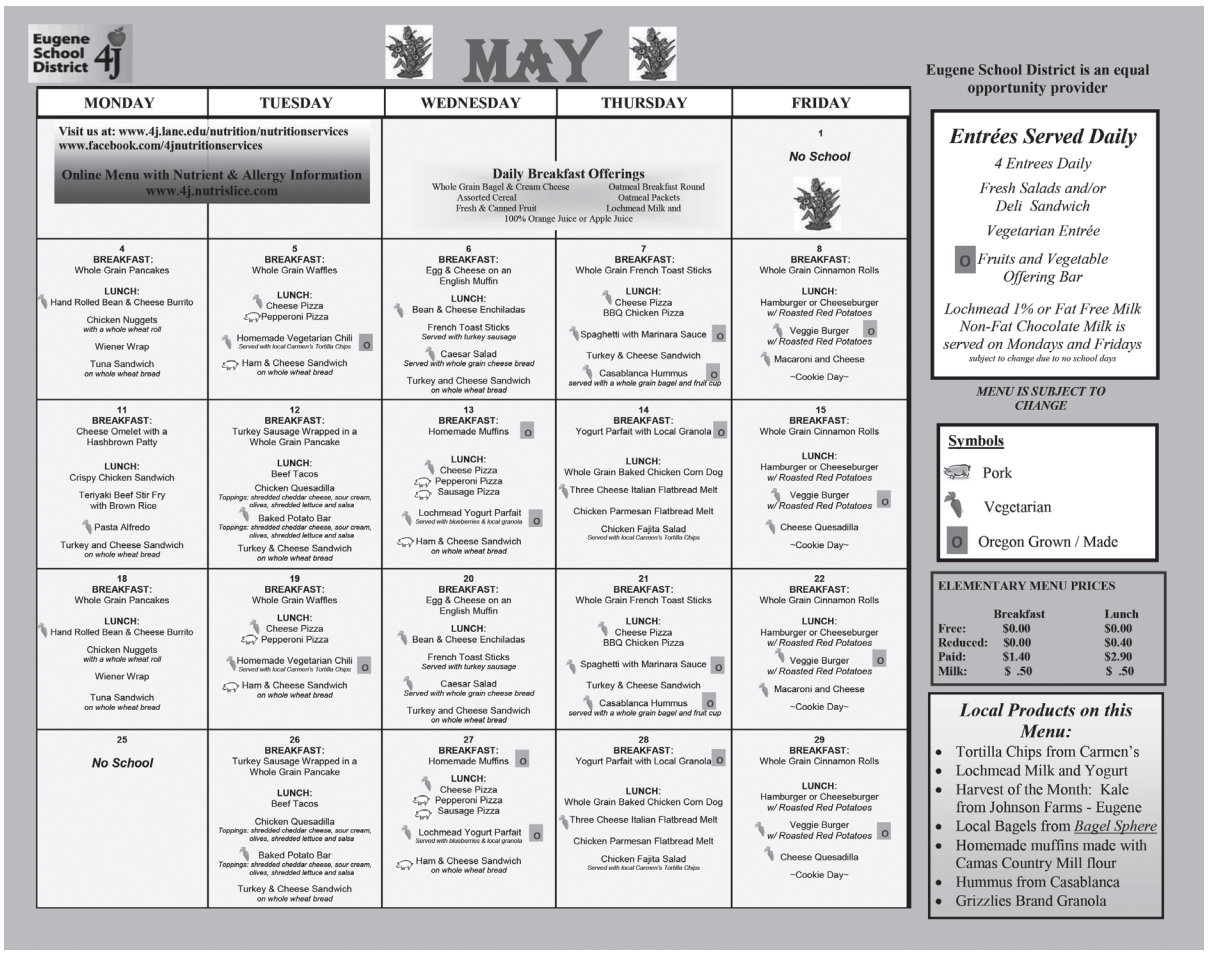
MARKETING AND PROMOTION

One relatively easy option for marketing local foods is to label any products on the menu that are local. Highlighting local products on menus will ensure that parents, staff and students know when local foods will be served. For example, the Eugene 4J School District menu on the next page prominently features what products the district procures locally on a regular basis, in addition to the school's local "harvest of the month" item, and indicates which products are local with an "O". Highlighting local purchases on the school menu is one of the best ways to showcase what is being served.

Districts can also create flyers, posters, table tents, window clings, farmer trading cards, and post pictures on the district website or on social media sites to promote local options.

Giving advanced warning when local products will be on the menu is another popular technique used by schools. Ask a teacher to introduce new foods during a nutrition class, or collaborate with an after school club or the school garden coordinator. Introducing the item a week before it will be on the menu offers an opportunity to get kids excited and expose them to new items before they are served on the lunch line.

There are numerous ways to market local foods. For more information about menu planning, see *Appendix C: Menu Planning Resources.*



Eugene School District 4J

MAY

Eugene School District is an equal opportunity provider

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Visit us at: www.4j.lane.edu/nutrition/nutritionservices www.facebook.com/4jnutritionservices Online Menu with Nutrient & Allergy Information www.4j.nutrislice.com		Daily Breakfast Offerings Whole Grain Bagel & Cream Cheese Assorted Cereal Fresh & Canned Fruit Oatmeal Breakfast Round Oatmeal Packets Lochmead Milk and 100% Orange Juice or Apple Juice		1 *No School*
4 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain Pancakes **LUNCH:** Hand Rolled Bean & Cheese Burrito Chicken Nuggets *with a whole wheat roll* Wiener Wrap Tuna Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	5 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain Waffles **LUNCH:** Cheese Pizza Pepperoni Pizza Homemade Vegetarian Chili *Served with local Carmen's Tortilla Chips* O Ham & Cheese Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	6 **BREAKFAST:** Egg & Cheese on an English Muffin **LUNCH:** Bean & Cheese Enchiladas French Toast Sticks *Served with turkey sausage* Caesar Salad *Served with whole grain cheese bread* Turkey and Cheese Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	7 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain French Toast Sticks **LUNCH:** Cheese Pizza BBQ Chicken Pizza Spaghetti with Marinara Sauce O Turkey & Cheese Sandwich Casablanca Hummus O *served with a whole grain bagel and fruit cup*	8 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain Cinnamon Rolls **LUNCH:** Hamburger or Cheeseburger *w/ Roasted Red Potatoes* Veggie Burger O *w/ Roasted Red Potatoes* Macaroni and Cheese ~Cookie Day~
11 **BREAKFAST:** Cheese Omelet with a Hashbrown Patty **LUNCH:** Crispy Chicken Sandwich Teriyaki Beef Stir Fry with Brown Rice Pasta Alfredo Turkey and Cheese Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	12 **BREAKFAST:** Turkey Sausage Wrapped in a Whole Grain Pancake **LUNCH:** Beef Tacos Chicken Quesadilla *Toppings: shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, olives, shredded lettuce and salsa* Baked Potato Bar *Toppings: shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, olives, shredded lettuce and salsa* Turkey & Cheese Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	13 **BREAKFAST:** Homemade Muffins O **LUNCH:** Cheese Pizza Pepperoni Pizza Sausage Pizza Lochmead Yogurt Parfait *Served with blueberries & local granola* O Ham & Cheese Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	14 **BREAKFAST:** Yogurt Parfait with Local Granola O **LUNCH:** Whole Grain Baked Chicken Corn Dog Three Cheese Italian Flatbread Melt Chicken Parmesan Flatbread Melt Chicken Fajita Salad *Served with local Carmen's Tortilla Chips*	15 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain Cinnamon Rolls **LUNCH:** Hamburger or Cheeseburger *w/ Roasted Red Potatoes* Veggie Burger O *w/ Roasted Red Potatoes* Cheese Quesadilla ~Cookie Day~
18 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain Pancakes **LUNCH:** Hand Rolled Bean & Cheese Burrito Chicken Nuggets *with a whole wheat roll* Wiener Wrap Tuna Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	19 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain Waffles **LUNCH:** Cheese Pizza Pepperoni Pizza Homemade Vegetarian Chili *Served with local Carmen's Tortilla Chips* O Ham & Cheese Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	20 **BREAKFAST:** Egg & Cheese on an English Muffin **LUNCH:** Bean & Cheese Enchiladas French Toast Sticks *Served with turkey sausage* Caesar Salad *Served with whole grain cheese bread* Turkey and Cheese Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	21 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain French Toast Sticks **LUNCH:** Cheese Pizza BBQ Chicken Pizza Spaghetti with Marinara Sauce O Turkey & Cheese Sandwich Casablanca Hummus O *served with a whole grain bagel and fruit cup*	22 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain Cinnamon Rolls **LUNCH:** Hamburger or Cheeseburger *w/ Roasted Red Potatoes* Veggie Burger O *w/ Roasted Red Potatoes* Macaroni and Cheese ~Cookie Day~
25 *No School*	26 **BREAKFAST:** Turkey Sausage Wrapped in a Whole Grain Pancake **LUNCH:** Beef Tacos Chicken Quesadilla *Toppings: shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, olives, shredded lettuce and salsa* Baked Potato Bar *Toppings: shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, olives, shredded lettuce and salsa* Turkey & Cheese Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	27 **BREAKFAST:** Homemade Muffins O **LUNCH:** Cheese Pizza Pepperoni Pizza Sausage Pizza Lochmead Yogurt Parfait *Served with blueberries & local granola* O Ham & Cheese Sandwich *on whole wheat bread*	28 **BREAKFAST:** Yogurt Parfait with Local Granola O **LUNCH:** Whole Grain Baked Chicken Corn Dog Three Cheese Italian Flatbread Melt Chicken Parmesan Flatbread Melt Chicken Fajita Salad *Served with local Carmen's Tortilla Chips*	29 **BREAKFAST:** Whole Grain Cinnamon Rolls **LUNCH:** Hamburger or Cheeseburger *w/ Roasted Red Potatoes* Veggie Burger O *w/ Roasted Red Potatoes* Cheese Quesadilla ~Cookie Day~

Entrées Served Daily

4 Entrees Daily

Fresh Salads and/or Deli Sandwich

Vegetarian Entrée

O *Fruits and Vegetable Offering Bar*

Lochmead 1% or Fat Free Milk Non-Fat Chocolate Milk is served on Mondays and Fridays

subject to change due to no school days

MENU IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Symbols

Pork

Vegetarian

O Oregon Grown / Made

ELEMENTARY MENU PRICES

	Breakfast	Lunch
Free:	$0.00	$0.00
Reduced:	$0.00	$0.40
Paid:	$1.40	$2.90
Milk:	$ .50	$ .50

Local Products on this Menu:

- Tortilla Chips from Carmen's
- Lochmead Milk and Yogurt
- Harvest of the Month: Kale from Johnson Farms - Eugene
- Local Bagels from *Bagel Sphere*
- Homemade muffins made with Camas Country Mill flour
- Hummus from Casablanca
- Grizzlies Brand Granola

This menu from Eugene 4J School District illustrates that marketing local products can be as simple as marking them on monthly menus.

Procurement Principles and Regulations

"Procurement" means buying goods and services. Procurement rules ensure that program benefits are received by eligible schools and children, and that taxpayer dollars are used effectively and efficiently, with no waste or abuse. Regulations require that all purchases made by schools, whether funded wholly or in part with child nutrition program funds, comply with all federal, state and local procurement requirements. It is important to understand that federal rules do have a purpose and while they may seem rigid, they do allow for some flexibility and innovation to ensure that schools are receiving goods and services that meet the school's needs at the best price. This section details relevant procurement principles and regulations.

Five Steps in the Procurement Process

Child Nutrition program operators should also continuously refer to the following **five basic steps i**n the procurement process:

1. **Planning**. This includes a needs assessment, forecasting and budgeting. The school should be able to answer the following questions:
    - What goods or services do you need?
    - Are these goods or services available for purchase and if so, are they available locally?
    - Will you need delivery or will you pick them up?
    - When and where do you need them?
    - How much do you need?
2. **Drafting specifications**. This documentation will include all the details such as descriptions, requirements, and specifications for those goods or services.
3. **Advertising a solicitation**. Once drafted, provide this information to potential vendors (farmers, vendors, distributors, or other businesses) who might be able to fulfill your needs as described.
4. **Award a contract**. Award to the most competitive offeror(s) who is able to meet your needs and provide the goods and services as described.
5. **Manage the contract**. Once awarded, continue to manage the contract to ensure that everything is provided according to your specifications and contract terms.

When making procurement decisions, SFAs and other child nutrition program operators should always keep in mind the following four fundamental principles, which will be covered in depth in the following pages:

1. The Buy American provision
2. State and local regulations
3. Full and open competition
4. Responsible and responsive vendors

FEDERAL PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS

Having a strong understanding of these federal regulations is key to being able to procure goods and services for various child nutrition programs with confidence that SFAs are in compliance and, equally important, that they are getting the best products at the best prices.

Part 200 of Title 2 of the U.S. Code of Regulations titled, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards[1] , lays out the basic procurement requirements that SFAs and sponsors administering the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program must comply with for the procurement of food, and other goods and services, when using federal funds. Program-specific rules can be found in the federal regulations governing each federal nutrition program.

In accordance with the regulations, schools must assess whether any expenditure being paid for from the non-profit food service account is allowable, meaning is it necessary, reasonable and allocable. SFAs must ensure that the expense supports or improves the child nutrition programs. *Assessing*

[1] "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 200, replaced the provisions outlined in the "Uniform Administrative Requirements for State and Local Governments," Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 3016 and "Uniform Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Non-profits, Institutions of Higher Education, and Hospitals," "Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 3019 as December 26, 2014. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

Proposed Nutrition Education Costs in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (SP 07-2015), provides a list of questions to consider when determining if a cost is reasonable, necessary and allocable.

Farm to school and school garden expenses may be allowable costs to be incurred by the non-profit school food service account, however the expenditures must support or improve the Child Nutrition Programs. See *Farm to School and School Garden Expenses* (SP06-2015) for more information on cost allowability.

BUY AMERICAN PROVISION

The Buy American provision[2] requires schools to purchase domestically grown and processed foods to the maximum extent practicable. Domestic products are defined as agricultural commodities that are produced in the United States. Domestically processed foods are defined as those food products that are processed in the United States using at least 51 percent domestic agricultural commodities. Schools should include a Buy American clause in all product specifications, solicitations, purchase orders, and any other procurement documents to ensure contractors are aware of this requirement. For example, schools can simply write:

"By submitting and signing this proposal/bid, the bidder acknowledges and certifies that his/her company complies with the Buy American provision that the food delivered is of domestic origin or the product is substantially produced in the United States. For these purposes, substantially means over 51 percent of the processed food is from American-produced products. If the bidder is unable to certify compliance with the Buy American provision, the bidder shall state this in his/her response and provide an explanation as to why it cannot certify compliance."

Two situations may warrant a waiver to permit purchases of foreign food products:

1. The product is not produced or manufactured in the U.S. in sufficient and reasonably available quantities of a satisfactory quality; bananas are a good example.
2. Competitive bids reveal that a U.S. product costs significantly more than a foreign product.

For additional information, review *Procurement Questions Relevant to the Buy American Provision* (SP14-2012).

[2] "William F. Goodling Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998" (PL 105-336, Section 104(d) 31 October 1998).

State and Local Procurement Policies

Each level of government, from school boards to the U.S. Congress, can make regulations and policies about the use of school meal funds, the procurement process and contracting requirements, and the goals and practices for using locally grown foods. These laws and policies provide the framework by which all school districts procure food.

State and local rules may be more restrictive than federal policies, or may provide specific support (including funding) for local sourcing. For example, some districts require that schools only purchase from Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified farms; others may require vendors hold a certain amount of liability or worker's compensation insurance. Schools must follow all applicable federal, state and local procurement rules. Table 2 illustrates the different levels of policy that govern the child nutrition programs.

LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR STATE AND LOCAL POLICIES.

- Is your state's small-purchase threshold less than the federal threshold of $150,000? What about your local small-purchase threshold?
- Does your state or local government have legislation promoting local purchases?
- Does your state or local government require vendors to carry liability insurance? If so, how much?
- Does your state allow request for proposals (RFP) and/or invitation for bids (IFB)?
- Are there other state- or local-specific guidelines?

TABLE 2

Federal, State and Local Procurement Policy

FEDERAL

Policy

- United States Congress
- Directs the activities of USDA and other Government departments in relation to the National School Lunch Program and other Child Nutrition Programs, such as School Breakfast Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Allocates funding for the NSLP and other child nutrition programs

Implementation

- USDA – FNS
- Administers the National School Lunch Program and other child nutrition programs at the federal level and provides cash subsidies and USDA Foods to school districts and independent schools
- Sets procurement process requirements for use of NSLP and other child nutrition program funds

STATE

Policy

- State Legislature
- Sets the procurement process requirements for all state entities, including school districts
- Incorporates into law in state code

Implementation

- State Department of _____
- Administers the NSLP and other child nutrition programs at the state level
- Monitors child nutrition program implementation

LOCAL

Policy

- School Districts
- Adopt policies to guide food and nutrition services practice at district level
- Develop wellness policies at school level
- May allocate funding from district funds for food or farm to school projects

Implementation

- School Districts
- Implement NSLP and other child nutrition programs, including procurement and contracting relating to school food
- May provide meals directly or contract with a meal provider

Adapted from *A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food*, developed by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Accessed April 2013. www.wafarmtoschool.org/Content/Documents/SchoolGuideFLowResGuideNoResources-1.pdf.

FULL AND OPEN COMPETITION

The most important principle of a sound procurement is competition. The regulations[3] use the term "full and open competition," which essentially means all potential suppliers are on a level playing field. Competition is essential in ensuring schools are able to purchase high quality goods and services at the lowest possible price. In a competitive environment, sellers may accept a smaller margin of return on a given sale rather than make no sale at all. Schools may receive more goods or services at a lower price than in a non-competitive environment. Additionally in a competitive environment, businesses seek to differentiate themselves in terms of quality and innovation. Every purchase offers an opportunity to consider new and/or higher quality products and services.

In order to ensure full and open competition, schools cannot:

- place unreasonable requirements on firms in order for them to qualify to do business (e.g., a school cannot require that a vendor have at least 100 people on staff);
- require unnecessary experience or excessive bonding (e.g., a school cannot require that vendors have at least 50 years' experience serving schools);
- award contracts to or order from one vendor without competition;
- have organizational conflicts of interest (e.g., a school cannot award a contract to a school board member, employee or family member, etc.);
- specify only a brand name product instead of allowing an equal product to be offered;
- make any arbitrary decisions in the procurement process (e.g., a school cannot grant a contract because it liked one company's branding);
- write bid specifications that are too narrow and limit competition;
- allow potential contractors to write or otherwise influence bid specifications;
- provide insufficient time for vendors to submit bids; or,
- use local as a product specification.

In short, schools must do everything possible to avoid restricting competition. The goal is to have as many suppliers as possible (with a recommended minimum of three) respond to every solicitation.

The following are examples of reasonable terms and conditions that a school might include in a bid solicitation:

- Respondents must meet the minimum requirements for liability insurance and worker's compensation coverage as stated in this document;
- Respondents shall provide documentation with sufficient evidence of at least five years' experience;
- District reserves the right to require a performance bond upon award; or
- Responses are due within four weeks from notification e.g., public notification such as new papers ad or direct notification such as phone call, in person, or email.

USING LOCAL AS A SPECIFICATION IS NOT ALLOWED

With the current regulations and guidance, using local as a product specification is seen as limiting competition. Many have misinterpreted the geographic preference rule as allowing schools to use local as a specification, however the language included in the Final Rule, *Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs,* indicates that local cannot be used as a specification.

[3] "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 200.319. 2015 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

The preamble of the Final Rule states, "A geographic preference is not a procurement set-aside for vendors located in the specified geographic area, guaranteeing them a certain level or percentage of business. In addition, including a geographic preference in a solicitation document does not preclude a vendor from outside the specified geographic area from competing for, and possibly being awarded, the contract subject to the geographic preference."[4] Additionally, FNS issued *Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As* (SP18-2011) explaining that "the exclusion of all non-locally grown agricultural products is not a preference but rather a requirement of bidding and therefore is overly restrictive."[5]

RESPONSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE VENDORS

In order to win a contract, vendors must be considered both responsive and responsible.[6]

To be considered "responsive," vendors must conform to all of the school's stated terms and conditions. For example, if a school issues a solicitation for apples and the vendor responds with a bid for peaches, the vendor is not responsive. Likewise, if a school specifies that it needs delivery to five sites and the vendor can only service two of the five sites, the vendor is not responsive. Respondents that require a minimum ship quantity or dollar value that is not defined in the solicitation document may be deemed nonresponsive. Respondents requiring prepayment may also be considered nonresponsive.

To be considered "responsible," vendors must be capable of performing successfully under the terms and conditions of the contract. For example, if a school requires that responders provide evidence of past success meeting delivery times and upon calling the responder's references learns that the vendor has a poor track record regarding on-time deliveries, the vendor would not be considered responsible. Similarly, schools can use reputation as a factor when evaluating responsible vendors. The school may call other schools that have used the vendor to verify reputation.

A supplier who is responsible and submits a responsive offer is one that clearly complies with the solicitation's terms and conditions, and that possesses, at the time of contract award, the experience, facilities, reputation, financial resources, and other factors necessary to successfully fulfill the terms of the contract. While price is an important factor, other elements must also be considered when making an award. Schools must ensure they are working with a reputable vendor and receiving a useful product. Regardless of which procurement method is used, awards must always be made only to vendors that are both responsive and responsible.

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[4] "Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs," Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 210.21 (g)(2). 2013 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

[5] Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As (SP18-2011), www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP18-2011_os.pdf

[6] "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 200.320. 2015 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

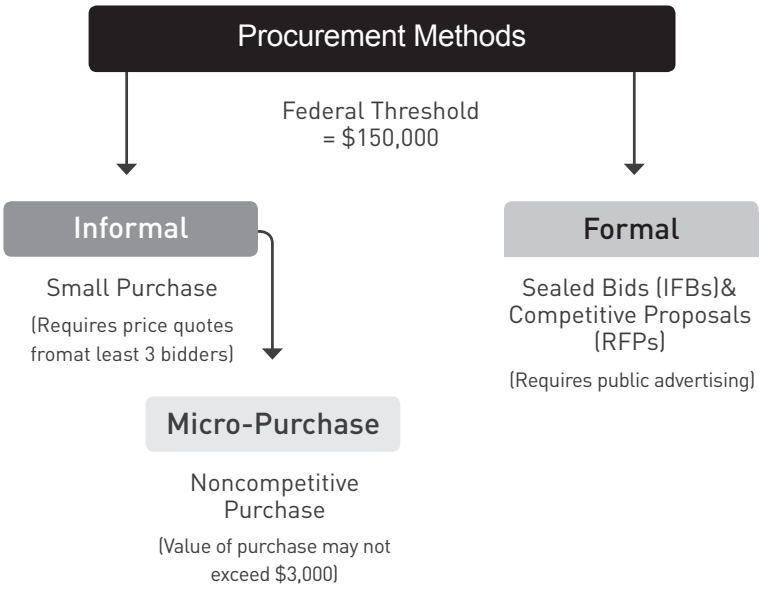
Micro-Purchase, Informal and Formal Procurement Methods

Under federal rules, the "simplified acquisition" or "small-purchase" threshold determines whether procurement procedures must be conducted informally or formally.[7] This is a key distinction when purchasing food for the child nutrition programs. This section outlines the three primary procurement methods.

[7] "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 200.320. 2015 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

FIGURE 3

Informal and Formal Procurement



The current federal small-purchase threshold is $150,000. This means that schools must use the formal procedures to procure anything that costs more than $150,000. Any more lenient (e.g., higher) small-purchase thresholds set at the state or local level do not apply to the expenditure of federal funds. States or localities may set lower small-purchase thresholds, and many do.

If a state or local threshold is more restrictive, it always trumps the federal threshold. Small-purchase thresholds vary widely across states and localities. For example, Delaware's threshold is $20,000, while California adjusts its threshold every year; in 2015, California's threshold was $86,000. Local governments and school districts may set even more restrictive thresholds. If a school district's small-purchase threshold is $10,000, then purchases greater than this amount must be procured using formal methods while all purchases under $10,000 may be made using the informal purchasing method.

When preparing a solicitation, a school must first consider the terms of the procurement and the estimated value of the purchase; this will determine whether the procurement should be solicited informally or formally or if the purchase falls below the micro-purchase threshold set at $3,000.

TABLE 3

Example of Hierarchy of Small-Purchase Thresholds; Schools Must Use the Lowest

Level	Amount
Federal small-purchase threshold	**$150,000**
State small-purchase threshold	**$40,000**
Local small-purchase threshold	**$7,000**

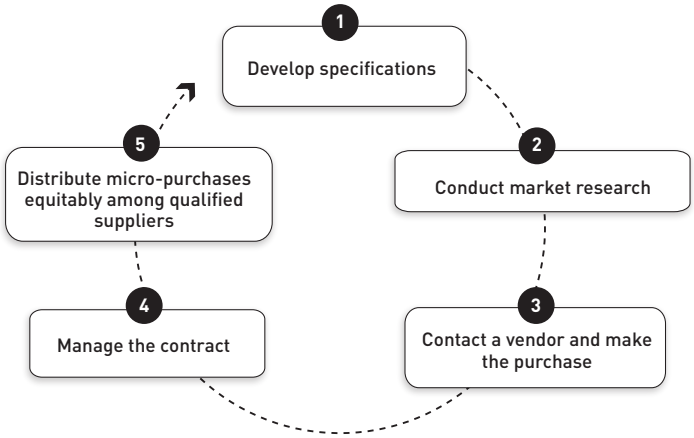
In the example illustrated above, the district would use the formal procurement method for any purchase over $7,000.

The Micro-Purchase Process

While the micro-purchase process is the simplest of the procurement methods, there are still a few steps districts must follow to ensure they are receiving a quality product at the best price. Here is an outline of the steps in a micro-purchase:

FIGURE 4

Five Basic Steps of a Micro-Purchase



The Office of Management and Budget issued new streamlined guidance in 2013 called Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.[8] These revised requirements went into effect on December 26, 2014. These new regulations create a new allowable procurement method called the micro-purchase for purchases where the aggregate value is under $3,000. Micro-purchases enable schools to purchase supplies or services without soliciting competitive quotes, if the school considers the price reasonable. When using the micro-purchase option, schools must distribute micro-purchases equitably among qualified suppliers; develop written specifications and required terms, conditions, and contract provisions; and, document all purchases.

Schools should use the same process to determine whether a micro-purchase falls under the micro-purchase threshold as they would have to determine if a purchase falls under the small-purchase threshold, meaning purchases should not be split arbitrarily. For example, if a district needs to make a one-time purchase of a product and the purchase is valued under $3,000, it may purchase the product without soliciting quotes. However, if the district needs to purchase $3,000 worth of lettuce several times throughout the school year, the school should plan its needs over a period of time and use a competitive procurement method because the aggregate value of the purchase lies above the micro-purchase threshold.

[8]"The Office of Management and Budget issued new streamlined guidance in 2013 called Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. These revised requirements went into effect on December 26, 2014. "Uniform Administrative Requir

The micro-purchase process allows districts to react quickly to changing markets and urgent needs when making small purchases. It will also prove useful to smaller districts where a number of the purchases fall under $3,000. Before contacting a supplier to make a purchase, districts should do market research to understand what a reasonable price for the product is. Micro-purchases may also prove especially useful when purchasing local products. Perhaps a district is committed to purchasing a variety of products seasonally and has built flexibility into its menu to enable the district to purchase small quantities of produce when local farmers might have a surplus.

The Informal Procurement Process

Schools may use the informal process when the estimated amount of the purchase falls below the applicable small-purchase threshold (the lowest of the federal, state and local thresholds). Regulations prohibit breaking up solicitations into smaller pieces to avoid the formal procurement process unless specific circumstances exist to justify splitting the purchase. For more information on splitting procurements, see the Special Topics section on page 76. If the value of a procurement falls below the applicable threshold, schools may choose whether to use the informal or the formal procurement method.

Even though the informal procurement method is less rigorous, it is important to note that competition is still required, and the regulations[9] must be followed. Schools must develop and provide written specifications to the vendor(s), and acquire bids from at least three vendors. Although bids might be received over the phone or face-to-face at a market, schools should document all bids. The award is made to the responsive and responsible bidder with the lowest price.

As detailed in Figure 5, there are five basic steps in the informal procurement process:

FIGURE 5

Five Basic Steps of Informal Procurement

[9] "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 200.320. 2015 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

1. **Develop specifications and terms and conditions:** Detail the requirements of the intended agreement, including delivery and packing conditions.
2. **Identify sources:** Contact potential vendors in a variety of ways (e.g., visiting a farmer's market, calling on the phone, or emailing) and gather three bids.
3. **Evaluate responses:** Ensure that responders are responsible and responsive—in accordance with all aspects of the specifications. Document each bid even if it was offered in a face-to-face meeting.
4. **Award the contract:** Determine which bidder offers the best value and award the contract to the bidder that is most responsive and responsible with the lowest price.
5. **Manage the contract:** Ensure the school receives everything from the vendor that the contract stipulates.

Writing specifications is a vital step as the specifications outline all the school's requirements for the product, its delivery, the providers, and more. Helpful information about specifications can be found in *Appendix G: Writing Clear, Thorough Specifications*. Also, keep in mind that products cannot be purchased until the school knows the exact specifications that it needs.

Schools should not include unnecessary requirements that may increase the price and/or decrease the number of local producers that can meet the conditions laid out in a solicitation. For example, if an item does not need to be refrigerated, then it is unnecessary to include "refrigeration after harvest" as a specification, since maintaining a specific temperature may require a refrigerated truck, or refrigerated storage, and not all vendors may have this capability.

The second step of the procurement process is where informal and formal processes differ most. Formal procurement requires schools to publicly post a solicitation, while the informal method allows schools to solicit bids directly from vendors without advertising a solicitation. Although it is not necessary to publish a written solicitation when using the informal procurement method, it is important to keep documentation on hand to ensure that each vendor contacted receives identical information.

Sometimes, schools are unable to find three sources that meet their specifications. In such cases, the school must document why it was unable to find three quotes and make note of any efforts taken to broaden the specifications in order to get more bidders.

For example, a school district seeks to purchase grape tomatoes from local farmers. It develops written specifications that include quality, quantity, packaging, and delivery requirements. The specifications are then faxed, mailed, or emailed to several farmers before the purchase date. The school district receives informal quotes from only two farmers, and therefore must document its efforts to ensure full and open competition. The district should consider if their requirements were overly restrictive or if there are other producers from which it can request quotes. After this evaluation, if the district has done its due diligence and is confident full and open competition was maintained, the district should record its attempts to obtain three quotes and may award the grape tomato contract to one of the two respondents.

APPROACHING ONLY LOCAL SOURCES

The informal procurement method differs from the formal method in that solicitations do not need to be publicly advertised, allowing the school to more tightly manage who is invited to respond. If a school is making a purchase that falls under its applicable small-purchase threshold, it can choose three (or more) local producers and request quotes without issuing a formal IFB or RFP. This can be done by calling local producers, going to the farmer's market and talking to potential vendors, or posting specifications on a local email list or on a flier in a place where producers will see it. This method represents another potential way to procure local products without using geographic preference.

Example: Tulsa, Oklahoma

Union Public Schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma writes specifications for tomatoes. Then, the school nutrition director calls several tomato growers in the state and emails the request to a list of producers that she has developed, rather than posting it publicly. Union Public Schools always documents each bid received. Here are Union Public School's specifications for tomatoes:

- Available at least ten months out of the year
- Greenhouse-grown, hydroponically grown, or grown outside
- Grade No. 1 quality
- Fully ripe
- Red color stage
- Ten-day shelf life
- Pesticide free and organic
- GAP and Good Handling Practices certified, preferred
- Transported to a school warehouse or to eighteen individual schools
- Must be delivered two days before service
- Must be able to provide an estimated quantity of 36 cases per week

Since the value of the product Union Public Schools needs falls below the small-purchase threshold, this district does not need to formally advertise the solicitation; the district simply calls and emails producers known to be able to supply the product and meet the district's definition of local.

Example: Harrisonburg, Virginia

Harrisonburg City Public Schools is located within a few miles of a semi-weekly produce auction in the Shenandoah Valley. During the spring and fall months, the district gathers a list of products that are available through the auction and useful to the meal programs. The district sends a buyer to the auction every Tuesday and the buyer conducts an informal procurement for the produce items. The buyer compares prices and quality and is able to obtain three quotes from different vendors all in one place. The district documents the process and details the quotes received to illustrate competition was maintained.

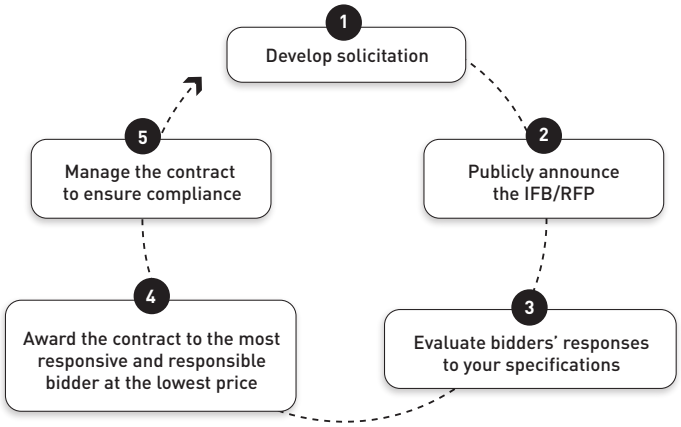
The Formal Procurement Process

For any purchase above the applicable small-purchase threshold, schools must use the formal procurement process.

As detailed in Figure 6, there are five main steps to completing a formal procurement:

FIGURE 6

Five Basic Steps of Formal Procurement



1. **Develop a solicitation:** Determine what solicitation tool you will be using: competitive sealed bidding (invitation for bid) or a competitive proposal (request for proposals). Then draft solicitation language that reflects the types of products and providers you need. As with the informal process, detail requirements of the intended agreement, including delivery and packing conditions. Solicitations must also state the criteria against which the offers will be evaluated.

2. **Publicly announce/advertise the solicitation:** Announce the solicitation in print, such as in the newspaper or online. As long as the information is made publicly available, you may also contact known bidders.

3. **Evaluate the offers:** Evaluate responses using criteria outlined in the solicitation. Objectively document the evaluation of every offer; this documentation may be needed if you are ever required to demonstrate full and open competition was maintained.

4. **Award the contract:** Award the contract to a responsive and responsible vendor who offers the best value.

5. **Manage the contract:** Ensure that you receive everything the contract stipulates from the vendor.

Within the formal procurement procedure, there are two types of procurements: competitive sealed bidding and competitive proposals.

COMPETITIVE SEALED BIDDING: USING INVITATIONS FOR BIDS

Competitive sealed bidding involves first publicly advertising an Invitation for Bid (IFB). An IFB is issued after a complete and realistic specification has been written, and when the contract can be awarded based on price. IFBs must be publicly advertised and provide all necessary details, including any requirements such as required meetings and submission deadlines. The public announcement ensures that all potential vendors are aware of the solicitation and the procurement occurs on a competitive basis with all potential vendors on a level playing field. As mentioned in the steps above, bids are received, documented, publicly opened and objectively evaluated. Note that with this procurement process, negotiation of price or terms is not permitted. A firm-fixed-price contract is awarded to the responsible and responsive bidder with the lowest price. A firm-fixed-price contract is one in which the award is made for a set amount of product at a specific price. Depending on the scope of the purchase, the district may award contracts by line item, making awards to multiple suppliers depending on the lowest price. Alternatively, the school might make a lump sum award based on the lowest price when the district is seeking one vendor to provide a variety of products.

IFBs are often used for food products that require detailed specifications, meaning IFBs must include specifications for the products which bids are being sought. For example, many districts use IFBs when purchasing fresh whole apples. The districts specify size and variety in detail along with requirements regarding quantities, delivery, or other desired conditions. Because many respondents easily meet the baseline requirements for variety, size, quantity, and delivery, price is the driving factor in the selection. Since price will be the primary evaluation criteria, competitive sealed bidding is an appropriate procurement mechanism. While the award of an IFB will be based on price, the vendor must be deemed responsive and responsible.

Often schools include a checklist to assess responsiveness, which may include the ability to provide farm visits, origin labeling or delivery to multiple locations. This concept will be addressed later in this guide.

With any type of procurement, the vendor must be responsive and responsible and be able to provide quality products that meet the specifications. Geographic preference is covered later in this manual, but note that geographic preference may be used in IFBs.

COMPETITIVE PROPOSALS: USING REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

To procure using the competitive proposal method, a school issues a request for proposal (RFP). This formal method of procurement allows for consideration of factors other than price. It can result in either a fixed-price or cost-reimbursable contract (also known as cost plus fixed-fee). Examples of factors other than price that might be considered include technical expertise, past experience, and quality of proposed staffing. The award is made to the vendor who is able to provide the best overall value.

Similar to an IFB, an RFP must be publicized and include information about the required goods, products, and services, along with all evaluation factors and their relative importance. Listing the relative importance of all the factors is highly important for the sake of transparency and ensuring

full and open competition. Negotiations may be conducted with one or more vendors submitting offers, and awards must be made to a responsive and responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered based on the criteria outlined in the RFP. Although other factors can be considered, price remains the primary consideration when awarding a contract, meaning cost carries the most weight in evaluation.

RFPs often consist of two elements: a technical proposal that explains how the tasks will be accomplished, and a cost proposal that details the price for accomplishing the tasks outlined in the technical proposal. Such a two-step process is recommended to evaluate responses to an RFP. The first step is evaluating variables in the technical proposal. The second step is negotiating the price. The RFP instructions should indicate how proposals are selected for negotiation. Selecting vendors for negotiation can be based on the cost or technical portions of the RFP. The instructions might read, "The two vendors offering the lowest cost proposals will be selected for negotiations" or alternatively, "The three vendors receiving the highest scores on the technical proposals will be selected for negotiations."

Though geographic preference will be discussed in depth later in this guide, keep in mind that the geographic preference option can be applied in the technical or cost proposal sections of an RFP.

Documentation

Recordkeeping is essential when using either the informal or formal procurement method. Although issuing a written solicitation is not required when using the small-purchase procedures, it is important to write down specifications to ensure each potential vendor receives the same information.

With all bids, proposals and solicitation documents, recordkeeping ensures that communication with vendors is documented, regardless of how the communication took place (e.g. in person, via email, or over the phone). Some schools may operate completely via email and create an email folder with each offer. Others may prefer hard copies and keep physical files of all specifications and solicitations. Keep information for each procurement together in one place for easy reference.

Schools must document each stage of the evaluation process and who conducted the evaluation. Although schools may not always be asked to justify their evaluation and awarding of a contract by providing documentation, they must still keep records showing their objective evaluation criteria and selection process. If a vendor protests the awarding of a contract, the school should be prepared to respond with this information within thirty days. Schools must be able to document how their procurement procedures meet procurement requirements during a state agency oversight review of procurement activities.

Recordkeeping is essential when using either the informal or formal procurement method.

For an informal procurement, bid documentation can be as simple as filling out a chart as shown in Table 4.

Managing Contracts

Once a contract is awarded, the work is not done! Schools must manage all contracts to ensure that vendors stay accountable and compliant before approving payment. Ensure the vendor is meeting the Buy American provision and providing only domestic products. If the school's needs change, an evaluation of the contract must be made to determine if it constitutes a material change. A material change is a change made to a contract after the contract has been awarded that alters the terms and conditions of the contract substantially enough that, had other respondents known of these changes in advance, they may have submitted a different proposal or bid based on those changes. Contract modifications can be made, as long as these changes do not result in material changes. If the vendor is unable to fulfill the contract, termination must be made as outlined in the terms and conditions of the contract. It would be unfair and noncompliant with procurement regulations to allow the vendor to make a significant change to the offer without allowing all vendors an opportunity to offer new proposals or bids based on the new requirements.

TABLE 4

Bid Documentation Chart

Vendor	Date Received	Responsive and Responsible	Price per Pound
Tom's Toms	July 1	Yes	$2.20
Vickie's Vines	July 1	Yes	$2.05
Fresh Network	July 10	No, can only deliver 5 months of year	$2.75

Opportunities to Target Local Products

A solicitation is more than a purchasing mechanism, it is a powerful tool that can be designed to help districts meet a variety of goals. This part of the guide highlights how schools can target local products in each section of a solicitation. When planning a purchase, the district is in control of the process and the solicitation is the place to indicate the district's priorities.

Sections of a Solicitation

The sections featured below represent parts of a solicitation that often appear in solicitation documents. The sections may be ordered differently or have different names, but in general each of these sections will appear in some form in almost every solicitation. Evaluation criteria is the one section that will only appear in an RFP.

- Title of the Solicitation and Contract Type
- Introduction and Information about the District
- General Descriptions of Goods and Services (Specifications)
- Technical Requirements
- Evaluation Criteria
- Timelines and Procedures (Award procedures, delivery, invoice requirements, payment schedules, etc.)
- Terms, Conditions and Required Contract Provisions

After deciding which procurement method to use, the district will then decide where to include information about its desire for local products. ***A district's desire for local products can be included in almost any part of a solicitation.***

TITLE OF THE SOLICITATION AND CONTRACT TYPE

At the very beginning, often even on the cover page, the solicitation will state the contract and solicitation type, indicating whether it is an informal procurement, a request for proposals, or invitation for bid. Even in an informal procurement, prospective bidders need to know if the purchase is a one-time purchase or purchases that will be made over a limited period. And, if it is a formal procurement, the cover page will often note whether the solicitation is an RFP or IFB and detail the contract type (fixed price, fixed price with price adjustment clause, or cost reimbursable plus fixed fee). A cover page represents an opportunity to target local items by setting the tone for what type of products the school is looking for.

For example, a district may conduct an informal procurement and when requesting quotes indicate that it seeks quotes for its "harvest of the month" program. This information does not explicitly limit bidding to local products, but does signify that the district is seeking a vendor that may be able to support a project beyond regular produce distribution.

INTRODUCTION AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE DISTRICT

The introduction to a solicitation is a school's chance to frame the bidders' perspective. In this section, districts often provide an overview of their programs, detailing the number of students, meals served, and percentage of students eligible for free and reduced priced meals. This section might also provide information on the scope of the solicitation and the contract duration. Many districts also talk about their program goals and the priorities. A school's interest in purchasing from local sources (and the broader context of its farm to school program) can be expressed in the introduction to a solicitation. While a school cannot specify that it only wants local products, the introduction does offer an opportunity to emphasize the importance of a school's interest in local products. Note that a district including its desire for local products in the introduction does not require bidders to supply local items, but it does indicate the district's interest in offering local items and may influence how a vendor responds to the solicitation.

Example

The Food Service Department at the hypothetical Cypress Creek District in Colorado works to provide the highest quality meals to its students. The Department views school meals as an essential component to student health, well-being and future success. Cypress Creek serves about 15,400 school lunches every day and the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price meals is 73%. **The Department works to connect K-12 schools and local food producers to improve student nutrition, provide agriculture and nutrition education opportunities, and support local and regional farmers.**

The sentences in black show a generic introduction to a solicitation that offers basic information about the school district and their school meal programs. It is common to include some context in the introduction so vendors understand what type of business they are undertaking. The addition of the sentence in blue adds some information about the district's farm to school program. While language in the introduction does not require or guarantee vendors will supply local products, it does offer more information about the district's goals. Stating goals up front indicates to vendors that purchasing from local sources is a priority.

Example: San Diego, California

San Diego Unified School District provides extensive information about the district's farm to school program and goals at the beginning of their solicitation for fresh produce. The proposal scope begins with this passage,

> "The San Diego Unified School District Food Services Department is continually striving to promote healthy food options to its students. Food Services has a Farm to School program which seeks to increase children's participation in the school meal program and promote consumption of fruits and vegetables, thereby improving childhood nutrition, reducing hunger, and preventing obesity and obesity related diseases. To help meet these goals Food Services is seeking to enhance the health of school meals by decreasing the distance food travels between farmers and students. The goal of Food Services is to invest 15% of its annual fresh fruit and vegetable budget in local fresh foods. Food Services is striving to achieve this goal by working with vendors who can cultivate relationships with various types of local farmers that can provide local products to the District."

The scope continues on to provide information on how proposals will be evaluated, details of the timeline of the contract, and proposal requirements. While the language in the statement above clearly indicates to prospective vendors that the district is interested in supporting local producers, the ability to provide local produce is not posed as a requirement.

GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS OF GOODS AND SERVICES (SPECIFICATIONS)

In this section the district will describe the exact products and services it intends to purchase. This is the section that includes product specifications (i.e. descriptions of the food items the school is looking to purchase). Product specifications will appear in every type of procurement, even in an informal procurement, and the district should document this information. The terms, conditions and required provisions may also include bond and insurance requirements, and local, state, or federal contract provisions as applicable.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

In the technical requirements section, schools will include criteria for how a vendor will be deemed to be responsive and responsible.[10] Does the vendor have the management, track record and ability to provide the district what it needs? As noted previously, in order to win a contract, vendors must be considered both responsive and responsible. The technical requirements will include factors like delivery schedule and references. In order for a vendor to be considered responsive and responsible, the bidder must meet any product specifications and other requirements that are outlined in the solicitation, meaning if a bidder cannot meet one of the technical requirements or product specifications that bid should not be considered because it is not responsive to the solicitation.

When determining if a vendor is responsive and responsible, it is a black and white evaluation. It is not evaluated on a scale. The vendor can meet the requirements or they cannot, there is not a middle ground. If a district is interested in evaluating services or products on a scale, it should consider using an RFP, which is covered later in this guide.

Technical requirements will appear in every type of procurement, even in an informal procurement, and the district should document this information. It is important to remember that schools must always award to a vendor that is both responsive and responsible. This is true in any type of procurement whether it is formal or informal; the vendor must be able to meet the requirements that are outlined in the solicitation.

10 "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 200.320. 2015 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

Product Specifications and Technical Requirements that Target Local Products

Each of the elements listed here could be used as a product specification or a technical requirement as long as they do not restrict competition. Before using any of these specifications or requirements, the district must do market research to ensure multiple vendors are able to meet the terms outlined in the solicitation.

Particular varieties unique to the region;

- For example, if a district is located in Sonoma County, California and the school issues a solicitation for Gravenstein apples, chances are the product is going to come from a local vendor, because Sonoma is the center of Gravenstein production in the U.S.Freshness (e.g. delivered within 48 hours);
- Requiring product to be delivered within 48 hours of harvest serves a dual purpose—a district will receive fresh produce, and this requirement also increases the chance that the product will be from a local source.

Harvest techniques;

- A school can require that crops be harvested by hand.

Crop diversity;

- A district may require that potential suppliers raise a certain number of crops or livestock.

Origin labeling;

- Requiring a vendor, whether it is a distributor, food hub or producer, to label the farm, county or state of origin creates transparency and provides the district with more information about where its food is coming from. Many suppliers can easily implement state of origin labeling since the vendors need to track where product is coming from for food safety purposes.

Ability to provide farm, cafeteria, classroom visits;

- Schools can ask that vendors participate in educational activities, like taste tests, something local vendors are more likely to be able to do than non-local vendors.

Request biographical information about the farmer or history of the farm;

- A district can ask about the producers farming practices and/or for a distributor to provide a list of growers that it works with.

Customer Service;

- A district might require a certain level of customer service when it comes to seasonal sourcing, such as requiring time with the vendor's staff to discuss local produce markets and any advantageous strategies for buying local that the district might benefit from knowing.

The specifications and requirements listed above actively work to target or identify local products. Consider being flexible with your requirements as you are able. For example, broadening requirements to allow for some cosmetic damage (especially for items that will be processed before they are served) might help attract additional local suppliers.[11] Do not include unnecessary requirements that might be burdensome for a smaller operation. For example, if a school usually requires all produce to be delivered in a refrigerated truck, but the solicitation is just for apples, the refrigeration requirement could be removed to encourage more competition.

In addition to particular varieties of produce, consider specific types of seafood that are unique to a school's region. For instance, a district in New Hampshire serves local shrimp, while schools in the south offer catfish raised in Mississippi. Districts in these locales do not specify local, but are receiving local product because Mississippi is the only location where catfish is produced in commercial quantities. The price of these regional varieties is often competitive since the products are not traveling across the country incurring thousands of miles of transportation charges. Offering unique varieties makes for great learning opportunities as well. When writing specifications, districts should ensure that asking for a specific variety is not unreasonably limiting competition. For example, if no spray (indicating that the district wants a product for which pesticide spray was not used) is included as a product specification, and there is only one supplier that can meet that specification, the district should consider revising the specification.

A school might also consider requesting different varieties at different times of the year. Perhaps there is a local variety of apples only available during harvest, and a different variety that is better suited for storage. The district might have a specification that it uses when particular products are in season and then it might revert to a different specification when the product is out of season.

Finally, remember to include as much detail as possible about the factors that are non-negotiable for the district. For example, a food service director might be caught off guard if a farmer delivers unwashed lettuce. If a school wants a washed product or uniform size, the school needs to be explicit about its needs. In addition, not all small farmers are familiar with the US grading system, so instead of just saying US Grade No. 1, perhaps the district can include information about what US Grade No. 1 actually means for the particular product the district is buying. This information is available from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service website.

"Local" can be a preference but never a requirement; therefore it should never be used as a specification. While it is not acceptable to require that respondents be located within 50 miles of the school, it is acceptable to require products be harvested within 48 hours of delivery. Likewise, while it is not acceptable to restrict responses to only those vendors located within a certain area, it is acceptable to award extra points or price preference if vendors can meet criteria such as grown within 100 miles or grown within a specific state or region.

In addition to product specifications, the technical requirements section offers an opportunity to evaluate vendors based on requirements that may target vendors that are able to provide local products. Such requirements are usually included in a checklist used to evaluate vendor responsiveness. For instance, the solicitation might state that to be considered responsive and responsible, the vendor must be able to provide the state of origin for all products on invoices and/or be able to visit the cafeteria twice per year. A local producer could likely

[11] Berkenkamp, Joanne, "Eating our Peas and Carrots: Strategies for Expanding K-12 Access to Fruits and Vegetables Through Supply Chain Innovation and Investment" www.ngfn.org/resources/ngfn-database/knowledge/Eating-Our-Peas-and-Carrots_FINAL2.pdf accessed January 2015.

accommodate these requests while a farmer on the other side of the country could not. Checklists may also include items such as providing biographical and contact information about the farm or farmer producing local products. Remember, competition is the key factor in any procurement. Schools should do market research to ensure that multiple vendors are able to meet the requirements.

A school may decide to include any one or several of these criteria as a requirement for a bidder to be considered responsive as long as these criteria do not restrict competition.

In this checklist, the district has added three requirements that target vendors able to provide local products. In this scenario, Apple Lane is not able to meet the requirements outlined in the solicitation and is not considered responsive and responsible, meaning Apple Lane's bid is not considered. Both Great Granny's and Fred's Fuji's can meet all the requirements and are considered responsive and responsible. Remember, when deciding which technical requirements to use, ensure multiple vendors can meet the requirements to maintain competition.

TABLE 5

Determine if Vendor is Responsive and Responsible

	Apple Lane	Great Granny's	Fred's Fuji's
Contractor able to meet all specifications Product quality Delivery Packaging and Labeling	✓	✓	✓
Provides 24-hour customer service line	✓	✓	✓
Able to provide state of origin on all products	✓	✓	✓
Delivered within 24 hours of harvest	–	✓	✓
Successful track record of working with local producers	–	✓	✓

OTHER PRODUCTION STANDARDS

The list below includes additional production standards that do not necessarily work to target local products, but are sometimes associated with local products. These standards are allowable as specifications, requirements, or evaluation criteria as long as they do not overly restrict competition. For any of these requirements, the district must do market research before issuing a solicitation to ensure that there is more than one producer that meets the standard and that the product will be within a price range the district can afford.

Certified Organic No-till Pesticide Free Grass-fed Cage Free

Example: San Diego, California

San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) uses detailed vendor technical requirements to target local produce when using the informal procurement method. Among other elements, SDUSD's specifications include that:

- Vendor staff should be available for consultation to district staff about seasonal sourcing strategies and menu planning ideas that may deliver the best value to the school district for a minimum of 2 hours per month;
- Products be grown on farms that grow no less than five crops per 500 acres;
- Products be delivered within 24 to 48 hours of harvest; and,
- Products be delivered directly to multiple SDUSD school sites (not a central warehouse).

San Diego is a unique area with many local sources that can meet all of these specifications. In some areas, however, including even one of these specifications could restrict competition. See

Appendix I: Excerpt from San Diego Unified School District Informal Produce Solicitation for San Diego's solicitation language.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation criteria will primarily be included in requests for proposals where the proposals will be evaluated on other factors in addition to price. While evaluation criteria can be included in IFBs, the criteria are not weighted and are posed as requirements to determine if vendors are responsive and responsible. RFPs allow districts to score proposals on a scale and award a contract to a vendor that provides the best value with price and other criteria considered.

Schools can use many of the same elements outlined in the previous section as evaluation criteria. By using one or more of these factors as evaluation criteria, the district indicates the importance of local products, but does not make delivery of local products an absolute requirement. In an RFP, a district would list the evaluation factors and their relative importance. The amount of weight given determines how important the criterion is. Unlike technical requirements or product specifications, which vendors must meet to be considered responsive and responsible, evaluation criteria can factor into an overall score. A vendor may not be able to meet one of the evaluation criteria, but they may score highly in other areas and still win the award.

In this evaluation matrix, the district has decided to include a few criteria that may help target producers that can provide local products. The district decides to include 5 points if the vendor is able to visit the cafeteria or classroom, 5 points if the state of origin is provided on all products and, 10 points if products are delivered within 24 hours of harvest. Apple Lane is not able to meet any of these additional criteria, Great Granny's scores high in all of the additional criteria and has the second lowest price, and Fred's Fuji's does well but is not able to offer farm visits. With the addition of these new criteria, Great Granny's would be awarded the contract.

TABLE 6

Evaluation Rubric with Criteria Targeting Local

	Apple Lane	Great Granny's	Fred's Fuji's
Price = 40	30	35	40
Contractor able to meet all specifications Product quality = 15 Delivery = 10 Packaging and Labeling = 5	25	30	30
Three references, past history = 10	10	10	10
Able to provide farm/facility tour or classroom visits = 5	0	5	0
Able to provide state of origin on all products = 5	0	5	5
Delivered within 24 hours of harvest = 10	0	10	7
100 possible points	65	**95**	92

Some of these evaluation criteria are similar to the product specifications and vendor requirements that are mentioned earlier. A district may decide that providing the state of origin on all products is absolutely necessary, so the district includes this element as a vendor requirement which means the vendor must provide this information in order to be considered responsive and responsible. If the school chooses to include that element as an evaluation criterion, it may end up awarding a contract to a bidder that is unable to provide the state of origin because it was given a relatively small weight in the evaluation. The weight of the evaluation criteria distinguishes which elements are most important, but it is valuable to note that elements included as evaluation criteria are not requirements. Price does not need to be weighted more than 50%, but it should carry more weight than any other criterion.

Example: Springfield, Oregon

In Springfield Public Schools in Lane County Oregon, the district uses an RFP to procure fresh produce. In the RFP, the district outlines its preference for local products and goes further to use "harvest of the month" as an evaluation criterion. The district outlines the "harvest of the month" program in the body of the solicitation and clearly notes what products are preferred for the program. In the evaluation rubric in the RFP, Springfield states that the ability to meet the requirements outlined in the "harvest of the month" section of the solicitation will earn the vendor 10 points in the evaluation of proposals. Including harvest of the month activities in the evaluation of proposals does not explicitly require that a vendor provide local products, but gives a vendor that can participate in this type of program a competitive advantage.

TIMELINES AND PROCEDURES

The information shared in this section of a solicitation includes when bids are due, when a contract will be awarded, information about any pre-bid meetings, as well as requirements for deliveries, invoicing, and payment schedules. This section also explains how to submit quotes, what paperwork is needed, how bids will be awarded, how responders will be notified, and protest procedures for unsuccessful bidders.

There are no rules about when a school can buy products. The solicitation and purchase timeline is at the discretion of the district and can be responsive to the needs of suppliers, as long as the timeline is stated in the solicitation and subsequent contract.

Technically, a forward contract, also known as contract growing, is any contract established in advance of when the product is delivered.

A school could competitively solicit and contract for product a year in advance of when it needs the product delivered. Technically, a forward contract, also known as contract growing, is any contract established in advance of when the product is delivered. In the context of buying local, it often refers to a contract or agreement established with a farmer in advance of the growing season. With a forward contract, a school does not pay until delivery. This burdens the producer, and not the school, with storage.

Forward contracting allows producers to plan for a large demand and plant according to a school district's needs and potentially provides schools with a more reliable supply. Although contract growing offers a guaranteed market for a farmer's crop, this method poses some risk to schools. Forward contracting is permitted under federal regulations, but districts selecting this method must acknowledge the risk and prepare a contingency plan if the producer experiences crop loss (i.e., incorporate language into the contract affording meaningful substitutions or reserve the right to source product elsewhere).

A forward contract could be solicited through an informal or formal procurement process directly with a grower or between a distributor and producers. Distributors are well-versed in forward contracting and are accustomed to finding ways to guarantee supply before a product is available.

Several districts that offer "harvest of the month" programs throughout the school year plan out what they are going to offer and how much they will need to purchase as early as spring of the prior school year. To ensure products will be available at the time planned, districts will engage in a forward contract with farmers or producers that indicates the items will be purchased during the selected time frame.

Typically, there is no exchange in funds at that time, but it allows the producers time to plan accordingly and grow the amounts needed to fulfill the district's needs.

Example: North Carolina

In North Carolina, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDACS) solicits forward contracts for a variety of local produce. Working with an advisory board made up of school districts, each spring the department develops a list of products desired for the next school year. North Carolina started by only issuing one solicitation every year, but has found that they can get better pricing and more stable supply by conducting the solicitation process each quarter. Contracting four to six months prior to delivery allows North Carolina districts to plan menus with confidence and provides growers a guaranteed market for their product.

Watermelon provides a perfect case study for how forward contracting can benefit both schools and producers. Traditionally, watermelon season in North Carolina ends in August, however, as schools in North Carolina are not in session in August, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture contracts with growers to plant watermelons later than they normally would. By waiting a few weeks to plant, growers extend their production season, and the students in North Carolina schools enjoy watermelons in September when the academic year has resumed.

Example: Oregon and Oklahoma

In both Oregon and Oklahoma, the state farm to school coordinators work directly with producers and produce distributors to develop forward contracts for products that will go to schools. In these cases, the districts have already competitively procured the produce distributor and the farm to school coordinators help the distributors find local producers and set up forward contracts.

See *Appendix K: Two Sample Forward Contracts* for two examples: one that a competitively procured distributor might use with a producer and another that a school may use to competitively procure a contract with a farmer.

USING DISTRIBUTORS

Distributors are an integral part of school food service operations. Many schools rely on distributors to deliver the majority of their food since distributors provide a one-stop shop, deliver directly, and hold liability insurance. Schools that want to build procurement of local products into their solicitations and contracts with distributors should develop a solicitation that indicates which products they would like to receive from local sources, the quantities desired, and whether local products are preferred at all times, only in certain months, or as available. Schools also need to include a clear definition of "local." In the solicitation, schools may request that distributors provide both varieties of a product from local and non-local sources, to ensure local products are provided when available and that a non-local product is on hand when a local variety is not in season.

Once a distributor has been competitively procured, a school may purchase products from the contracted list. Often, distributors already offer local products even when local is not specified in the contract, and all a school needs to do is order the product on the contracted list. Additionally, once a contract is established, the school can suggest producers for the distributor to consider working with to procure locally produced items.

RESERVE THE RIGHT TO GO OFF CONTRACT

Districts should consider including a clause in their solicitation and contracts for distribution services that the district reserves the right to purchase products off contract directly from growers or other suppliers. This keeps the contract from being exclusive to one distributor and allows the solicitation of products from other sources when needed.

Example: Shelby County, Tennessee

In the district's solicitation for fresh produce, the Shelby County Board of Education (SCBE) includes two clauses that indicate to vendors that the district reserves the right to purchase from other sources. First, the solicitation notes, "If a vendor is unable to deliver an item(s) within the designated time, the Shelby County Board of Education, in Good Faith and at its sole discretion, may purchase an item(s) of equal or greater quality from another source." In addition, the district writes, "Right to Additional Competition: Shelby County Board of Education occasionally purchases large quantities of specific items and expressly reserves the right to purchase these and other similar items via other competitive methods if deemed in the best interest of SCBE." These two clauses ensure that the district does not enter into an exclusive contract and that the district indicates that there are particular instances where it reserves the right to purchase from other sources.

Example: Knoxville, Tennessee

In Tennessee, Knox County Schools competitively procured a contract for distribution services and works closely with its distributor to procure local products. In the produce solicitation, the school lists produce items that are available from both local and non-local sources and asks that products from local sources be provided when available. Including both local and non-local varieties enables the distributor to offer different prices for the items and affords the school the flexibility to make a decision between the local and non-local items. The distributor provides price sheets as required in the solicitation on a monthly basis and lists local items and the point of origin for each local item. With the price sheets in hand, the district makes ordering decisions based on the recipes for the upcoming week's menu, the source of the products, and the price.

Distributors often provide product lists to customers on a weekly or monthly basis that highlight local items. Some distributors offer the state of origin, while others will note the specific producer the product comes from. See *Appendix L: The Local List from Royal Food Service based in Georgia.*

Geographic Preference

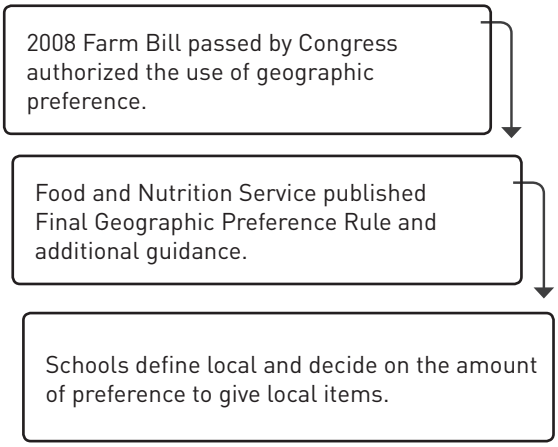
The 2008 Farm Bill directed the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage schools operating child nutrition programs to purchase "unprocessed agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised, to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate," and to "allow institutions to use a geographic preference for the procurement of unprocessed agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised." [12] This section discusses the process for using geographic preference and highlights examples.

[12] "The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, Subtitle C - Child Nutrition and Related Programs, Section 4302 - Purchases of Locally Produced Foods" (Public Law 110-246, 18 June 2008)

A specific geographic preference provision was necessary because procurement regulations governing the child nutrition programs state, "Grantees and sub-grantees will conduct procurements in a manner that prohibits the use of statutorily or administratively imposed in-state or local geographical preferences in the evaluation of bids or proposals, except in those cases where applicable federal statutes expressly mandate or encourage geographic preference."[13]

FIGURE 7

The Process



Thus, the geographic preference legislation provides an exception to the regulation cited above, giving USDA authority to create a new regulation. In 2011, the Food and Nutrition Service published the Final Rule titled, *Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in the Child Nutrition Programs.*[14] This rule achieves three major objectives. The rule:

1. Clarifies who can define local;
2. Defines the term "unprocessed;" and,
3. Explains local cannot be used as a specification.

Geographic preference is meant to offer a defined advantage to products meeting a district's definition of local, but should not be seen as a guaranteed set aside.

The geographic preference option applies to operators of all child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. It enables schools to state a preference for local products, but does not require that purchases be made from local sources. Geographic preference can be used in any of the procurement methods, formal or informal.

As shown in Figure 8, about 80 percent of all foods for school meal programs are sourced with cash assistance, including federal reimbursement, student payments, and, in some cases, state and/or local funding. The geographic preference option can be used for purchasing unprocessed agricultural products with the cash assistance portion of school food funds. Thus it is an option that can be applied to a large piece of the overall school food budget. As discussed later in this guide, USDA Foods comprise about 10 to 15 percent of the food served in school lunch and USDA cannot apply a geographic preference to these procurements in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulations.

[13] "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 200.320. 2015 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

[14] "Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs," Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 210.21 (g)(2). 2013 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

FIGURE 8

Child Nutrition Program Funding

Cash Reimbursement DoD Fresh USDA Foods

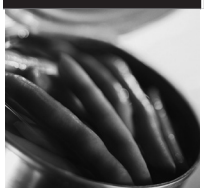
UNPROCESSED FOODS

Geographic preference applies only to unprocessed locally grown or raised agricultural products. Unprocessed products are those that retain their inherent character. The following food handling and preservation techniques are not considered to change a product's character and thus are allowable:

- Refrigerating
- Freezing
- Size adjustment made by peeling
- Slicing
- Dicing
- Cutting
- Chopping
- Shucking
- Grinding
- Forming ground products into patties without any additives or fillers
- Drying or dehydration
- Washing
- Packaging (such as placing eggs in cartons)
- Vacuum packing and bagging (such as placing vegetables in bags or combining two or more types of vegetables or fruits in a single package)
- Adding of ascorbic acid or other preservatives to prevent oxidation
- Butchering livestock and poultry
- Cleaning fish
- Pasteurizing milk

Unallowable food handling and preservation techniques include heating and canning. A school can use the geographic preference procurement option to procure local tomatoes and onions for tomato sauce, but not to procure the tomato sauce itself since the sauce would have been heated.

Which of these products are eligible for geographic preference?

Canned Green Beans	Hamburger Patties	Tortillas	Frozen Mixed Vegetables	Fresh Apples	Dried Beans
					
Geographic preference cannot be used when purchasing canned products because cooking changes the inherent character of the product.	Grinding and forming into patties is allowable under the geographic preference rule; however, adding seasoning, preservatives or binding agents is not allowed.	Again, geographic preference cannot be used on products that are cooked.	Geographic preference can be applied to products that are frozen, cut, mixed, and bagged.	Geographic preference can absolutely be applied to fresh, unprocessed fruits and vegetables like whole apples.	Drying is an allowable process under the geographic preference rule.
NO	**?**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**

TYPES OF PRODUCTS

Geographic preference can be applied to a wide array of products provided those products meet the definition of unprocessed or minimally processed.[15] Allowable products include, but are not limited to the products outlined in Table 7.

TABLE 7

Unprocessed Products for Which Schools Can Use the Geographic Preference Option

Product	Included	Not included
Fruits	Sliced, diced, whole raw, dried or frozen products	Does not apply to any canned products
Vegetables	Sliced, diced, whole raw, dried or frozen products	Does not apply to tomato sauce, canned products or vegetable patties
Meats	Unprocessed frozen products and formed products, such as patties	Does not apply to any meat products that have been cooked, heated, or canned or that have any additives or fillers
Fish	Whole, form fillets or nuggets	Does not apply to any seafood products that have been cooked, heated, or canned or that have any additives. It does apply to fresh and frozen fish, including fillets that contain no additives or fillers
Poultry	Whole, form or various cuts	Does not apply to any poultry products that have been cooked, heated, canned or that have any additives or fillers
Dairy	Unflavored milk	Does not apply to fluid milk products that contain additives, such as chocolate or strawberry flavored milks, nor any processed dairy products such as cheese, yogurt, etc.
Eggs	Whole, shell eggs	Does not apply to liquid eggs
Grains	Quinoa, rice, barley, etc. in whole form and other grains in ground form such as flour	Does not apply to any products that have been baked or cooked

[15] "Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs," Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 210.21 (g)(2). 2013 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

DEFINING "LOCAL"

There are a variety of ways to define local and, sometimes, the school's definition changes depending on the product or season. Note that geographic preference follows the agricultural product, not the location of the respondent, so in the context of defining local when using geographic preference, it is irrelevant where the respondent's business is incorporated or maintains a principal place of business.

The geographic preference rule confers the authority to define local directly to school food authorities. Many state and local governments have adopted definitions of local such as "within the state" or "within the county." A school electing to use its federally conferred option to indicate a geographic preference when sourcing food for the meal programs is under no obligation to adopt any definition of local that might be in existence in its local areas. Only the SFA can determine the definition of local. Thus, any attempted restriction by a local or state government to make decisions regarding how to define local for purposes of the geographic preference procurement option would be inconsistent with federal law and unallowable.

In the same vein, states cannot restrict the use of geographic preference. It is a district's choice whether or not to use geographic preference. Many states, such as Florida and Washington, have even passed legislation that further encourages schools to use the rule and purchase local products as much as possible.

Maintaining Competition

Any price preference, by its very nature, may reduce competition; however, geographic preference may have a greater or lesser impact depending on the characteristics of the market, such as the number of vendors and quantity of product available. The school's application of the geographic preference option must leave an appropriate number of qualified firms, given the nature and size of the procurement, to compete for the contract. **It is imperative that the school does not unnecessarily restrict full and open competition.** For example, indicating a preference for products grown within five miles, when only one farm meets that definition, would be considered an unreasonable limit on competition. However, if 20 farms meet that definition, the preference would not result in an unreasonable limit on competition.

Schools should do everything possible to obtain three quotes, including broadening specifications (e.g., changing the requested delivery date, variety or delivery requirements) if necessary. Though it is not recommended, if a district is unable to find three quotes even after altering specifications, it may purchase the product if only two bids were received. However the school must document all efforts to obtain three quotes and why it was unable to find other bidders.

DEVELOPING GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE LANGUAGE

Federal regulations do not prescribe the precise way that geographic preference should be applied, or how much preference can be given to local products. There are a variety of ways to apply geographic preference. One approach is to award local products a percent preference or a certain number of points for products produced within the state or another area the school defines as local. Another option is to use a tiered approach for awarding preference. Regardless of the approach used, the solicitation document must clearly outline how all bids will be evaluated, including the application of geographic preference in the scoring criteria.

TABLE 8

One Penny = One Point Geographic Preference Evaluation

	Owen's Orchard	Apple Lane Farms	Zoe's Best
Cost per Pound	$1.97	$2.05	$2.03
Was the Geographic Preference Met? (Award 10 points)	No	Yes	No
Preference Price Adjustment (one penny per point)	$0.00	$0.10	$0.00
Price Adjusted with Preference Points	$1.97	$1.95	$2.03
Actual Cost of the Product	$1.97	$2.05	$2.03

APPLYING GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE

Listed here are several examples of how a district might use the geographic preference option.

Example One: One Penny = One Point

A school district issues an IFB for apples and includes a preference for apples grown within 100 miles of the school. The solicitation makes it clear that any respondent able to provide local apples will be awarded ten points in the selection process. In this example, the ten preference points are equivalent to a ten-cent reduction in price for the purposes of evaluating the lowest bidder.

As shown in Table 8, Apple Lane Farms meets the stated preference for local products and is awarded ten additional points, which translates into deducting ten cents from Apple Lane Farm's price. This makes Apple Lane Farms the "lowest bidder." The school still pays Apple Lane Farms $2.05 for its product. Deducting ten cents from the price of responsive bidders that meet the geographic preference only applies to determining the winning respondent. Geographic preference would not affect the actual price paid to the respondent. This scenario could apply to an informal or formal procurement.

To apply this example to a real purchasing and cost comparison scenario, calculate the cost per serving by dividing the cost per pound by the number of half-cup servings per pound. According to the USDA Food Buying Guide for School Meal Programs, there are approximately seven half-cup servings per pound of 125- to 138-count apples. Therefore, Apple Lane Farm's apples would cost the district $0.25 per serving, while apples from the lowest bidder, Owen's Orchard, would cost the district $0.24 per serving. Doing this type of cost comparison before issuing a solicitation would be helpful in determining the amount of preference a school might consider using.

If a district issues a solicitation and intends to use geographic preference when evaluating responses, it must outline how it will be applied and how much

preference will be given. It cannot decide after the fact not to apply the preference, meaning that if a vendor with a higher bid wins the contract because of geographic preference, the district should make the award to that vendor. Local products are not always more expensive, but conducting cost analyses and market research before issuing solicitations is imperative to understand if or how much more a district is willing to pay for local products.

Example Two: Percentage Local

In this example, a school district issues an RFP for a produce contract and indicates a preference for fresh fruits and vegetables produced within the state. For the purposes of evaluating bids, the school will award a ten-percent price preference to any respondent that can provide at least 60 percent of the requested items from within the state.

As indicated in Table 9, Matt's Produce is the only firm that is able to supply greater than 60 percent of the requested items from the local area, thus Matt's Produce receives a ten-percent reduction in price for the purposes of evaluating bids. Even with the reduction, Matt's Produce is not the lowest bidder. If price alone were the determining factor for this district, Christina's Crops would receive the contract.

There is a difference when applying geographic preference points (i.e., as "pennies" in the previous example) versus geographic preference percentages, especially for a line item bid. For example, 25 points where one point is one penny applied to a case price of $25 would reduce the bid comparison price to $24.75. Those same points would also be applied to a case price of $50, providing a bid comparison price of $49.75.

Now, if that were to change to a one-percent geographic preference percentage, it would reduce the bid comparison price of the $25 case to the same amount ($24.75) as the 25 preference points. However, the bid comparison price of the $50 case is reduced to $49.50. This difference may change the outcome of the award and indicates the importance of thoroughly thinking through the best way to structure geographic preference for each purchase.

Example Three: Tiered Preference

This example applies geographic preference using different ranges. In this scenario a district issues

TABLE 9

Percentage Local and Geographic Preference Evaluation

	Christina's Crops	Matt's Produce	F&V Distribution
Bid Price	$31,000	$35,000	$34,000
Percentage of In-State Product	20%	80%	50%
Was the Geographical Preference Met?	No	Yes	No
Preference Price Adjustment (-10%)	$0.00	$3,500	$0.00
Adjusted Price with Percentage Preference	$31,000	$31,500	$34,000
Actual Cost of the Product	$31,000	$35,000	$34,000

TABLE 10

Percentage Local and Geographic Preference Evaluation

	Produce Express	Ray's Produce	F&V Distribution
Contract Price	$31,000	$33,000	$34,000
Geographic preference points to respondent able to meet definition of local	No	Yes (10% pref.)	Yes (7% pref.)
Price for comparison	$31,000	$29,700	$31,620

a solicitation and offers a 10% price preference to any bidder that can source products from within 100 miles, and a 7% price preference to any bidder able to source products from within the state. Ray's Produce is able to source products from within 100 miles so this company receives a 10% price preference. F&V Distribution is able to supply produce from within the state, so it receives a 7% price preference. As shown in Table 10, Ray's Produce would be awarded the contract because with the 10% price preference, this company has the lowest bid. Note that the full bid price of $33,000 will be paid when product is purchased. Geographic preference is only used for the purposes of evaluation to determine contract award.

Example Four: Using a Sliding Scale

A preference for local products does not necessarily have to be calculated with absolute values; sliding scales may be appropriate. Table 11 assigns a certain number of points depending on how many items on the product list can be sourced from within the stated geographic preference area. Points are awarded based on the percentage of local products, as defined by the geographic preference area. Based on responses from potential vendors, assign and calculate the number of points the vendor receives. Using this chart ensures points are not assigned arbitrarily. If a school were to use this evaluation scale, it would be included with a description in the solicitation.

As shown in Table 11, ten preference points will be awarded to vendors able to provide equal to or greater than 70% of the requested items from within the state, seven points for 50–69%, and four points for 25–49%. Points for local sourcing will be included along with other evaluation factors.

Example Five: Preference in an RFP

RFPs may include evaluation criteria that allow for consideration of factors in addition to price, and can result in either a fixed-price or cost-reimbursable contract, also referred to as cost plus fixed-fee. Thus, reductions in price are not the only way to confer preference to local products. Some of the factors in addition to price that might be considered include technical expertise, past experience, years in business, marketing capabilities, etc. School districts may include elements such as farm visits, indicating the state or farm of origin on the invoice, or providing farm information for education in the cafeteria as part of the selection criteria. Where factors other than price are included in the selection criteria, awards still must be made to the responsive and responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous to the program with price as the primary criteria.

TABLE 11

Evaluating Geographic Preference in an RFP

Total Points	Evaluation Criteria	Laura's Legumes	Maggie's Pulses	Gary's Grains
50	Price	40	45	50
15	Product Quality Specifications	10	15	15
5	Delivery Specifications	5	5	5
5	Packaging and Labeling	5	5	5
4	Three References/Past History	4	4	4
5	Farm/Facility Tours or Classroom Visits	0	5	5
5	Provide State of Origin on All Products	0	5	5
(10/10)	≥70% of All Products Are State-Grown	0	10	7
(7/10)	50-69% of All Products Are State-Grown			
(4/10)	29-49% of All Products Are State-Grown			
(0/10)	<29% of All Products Are State-Grown			
100	Total Points	64	94	97

A school district issues an RFP for beans and grains and makes it clear that bids will be evaluated using a 100-point system. Using Table 11, ten preference points will be awarded to vendors able to provide greater than or equal to 70% of the requested items from within the state, seven points for 50–69%, and four points for 25–49%. Points for local sourcing will be included along with other evaluation factors such as price.

In Table 11, Maggie's Pulses is able to source 75% of its products from within the state, earning ten points in the local product category in the scoring process. Gary's Grains can source 55%, earning it seven points, and Laura's Legumes is unable to guarantee any products from within the state so it receives zero points in the local preference category. In this RFP, the lowest price proposal will receive 50 points, the second lowest 40 points, and the third lowest 30 points. Gary's Grains wins the contract based on the highest number of points received.

Example Six: Omaha, Nebraska

In Omaha Public Schools (OPS), the school nutrition director includes geographic preference in IFBs for chicken drumsticks and produce. The district defines "local" as within 240 miles, and the IFBs include a

general statement of philosophy regarding the district's preference for local products. Remember geographic preference follows the product rather than the location of the business. The district also reserves the right to award to multiple vendors in the solicitation.

Here is the geographic preference language that the district uses, "Omaha Public Schools will give geographic preference to local all-natural chicken drums in determining the contract award...for the purpose of determining the award, any vendor providing local all-natural drums will receive a reduction of 1% in bid price. This is for bidding purposes only and will not affect the price paid."

This example illustrates that applying a preference can be simple, no complicated charts necessary. The district defines local and clearly states how the preference will be applied. For more specific information about Omaha's solicitation, see *Appendix N: Excerpt from Omaha Public Schools' Solicitation for Chicken Drumsticks.*

Example Seven: Harrisonburg, Virginia

Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS) in Virginia uses a more qualitative approach to geographic preference. The district does not offer a price preference or a percentage discount on the bid price. Instead, the district awards points to vendors who are committed to providing Virginia-grown product. The vendors must be able to offer a list of farms with which the company works, mark local products on weekly price lists, and communicate with the school nutrition director on a monthly basis about the availability of Virginia-grown produce.

Here is the geographic preference language that the district uses, "HCPS is an active participant in Virginia's Farm to School program. Virginia grown produce should be sold to schools when available. Firms should be making an effort to procure and offer Virginia grown produce to schools. Firms should indicate these products on weekly price lists. Please submit a list of Virginia Farms used by your company with this proposal." The district will award up to ten points for meeting this criterion.

The school also includes language about reserving the right to source from other vendors to meet the district's farm to school goals. In the RFP, the school writes, "Please note that HCPS reserves the right to competitively procure Virginia Grown fresh produce direct from farmers, food hubs, auctions, and other small scale aggregators when product is available in support of the division's farm to school efforts." See *Appendix O: Excerpt from Harrisonburg City Public Schools' Solicitation for Fresh Produce* for Harrisonburg's full list of evaluation criteria.

Example Eight: Oakland, California

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) takes a tiered approach. In its RFP for produce, the district defines local as grown within 250 miles of Oakland, California. The district awards twenty points to the vendor best able to meet this definition of local, fifteen points to the second best, and ten points to the third best vendor. "Best able" is evaluated by looking at the quantity and variety of products the vendors are able to provide from within a 250 mile radius.

These geographic preference points are not the only way the district targets local products; OUSD also includes a criterion for traceability. The RFP asks that vendors, "Provide information regarding the farm of origin of locally and non-locally grown products (whole and processed produce) including: a list of farms and products sourced from each farm; unique product identification numbers for locally grown products from aggregated products; and farm of origin information clearly marked on each case delivered to cafeterias. If produce is not purchased

directly from a farm, then please provide as much information as available regarding the source of produce." The district ranks bidder's responses to these criteria the same way as for the geographic preference points. To see Oakland's RFP, please refer to *Appendix P: Excerpt from Oakland Unified School District's RFP for Fresh Produce.*

Example Nine: Roswell, New Mexico

Roswell Independent School District (RISD) defines regional products eligible for geographic preference in two tiers. Tier one includes products grown within 150 miles of the district and tier two includes products grown anywhere in New Mexico. Using an RFP, the district includes geographic preference in the evaluation criteria section of the solicitation. Here is the geographic preference language:

For the purposes of this quote, "farm" is defined as the location where the product is grown, not the address of the packing house or aggregation point... To apply points, all items must be available for a sixty day (60) period unless otherwise specified:

20 items grown within 150 miles or 30 items grown within the state of NM = 15 pts

10 items grown within 150 miles or 19 items grown within the state of NM = 10 pts

5 items grown within 150 miles or 10 items grown within the state of NM = 5 pts

This is a unique way to apply preference and completely within the confines of the regulations. Roswell is creating a tiered preference structure based on the two-tiered definition of local and the number of local products vendors are able to offer.

In addition to geographic preference, the district includes its desire to support its farm to school program in the introduction of the RFP. This solicitation is for a produce distributor and the district includes a clause reserving its right to go off contract to purchase local items from other producers when available. RISD requires that the vendor provide a list of regional farms that it currently works with and that farm of origin is noted on each invoice when these products are delivered. In addition to geographic preference, the district includes other evaluation criteria in the RFP that offer an advantage to local suppliers, such as offering farm tours. For more details on this solicitation, see *Appendix Q: Roswell Independent School District Produce RFP.*

The variety of these examples illustrates the freedom and control that districts have in using the geographic preference option. USDA encourages districts to use geographic preference whenever practical and appropriate, and to explore the numerous ways geographic preference can be structured.

For more information about the geographic preference option, see *Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As Part I* (SP 18-2011) and *Procurement Geographice Preference Q&As Part II* (SP 03-2013). For specific ideas on how to implement geographic preference and sample language, see *Appendix M: Using Geographic Preference in Four Steps.*

Special Topics

DONATED FOODS

Schools may receive donated foods from a variety of sources. For example, suppliers may donate extra or damaged produce at the end of a harvest, or the school may partner with a company that donates food for a special breakfast or lunch day. Because these foods are not purchased, federal procurement regulations do not apply, but schools should keep in mind that donated items must be held to the same food safety standards as purchased products.

Before accepting donated product, schools should inquire about freshness, shelf life, safe handling procedures, and required storage temperatures. The school should also be sure to record the amount of donated food in its accounts to ensure transparency. The value of donated products may be assessed through the Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) Market News website.

The same principles apply to gleaned produce. Some producers collect leftover crops after the fields have been harvested; this process is referred to as gleaning. Frequently, gleaned produce is donated to food banks or other organizations. Although the product might not meet commercial specifications, it is usually safe to eat. Schools can use acceptable gleaned products at their discretion. It is recommended that schools review and document food safety practices, such as Good Agricultural Practices of producers, before accepting gleaned products.

SPLITTING PROCUREMENTS

Schools cannot intentionally divide purchases if the only justification is to keep the price below the federal, state or local small-purchase or micro-purchase threshold. For example, if a school needs to purchase $200,000 worth of spinach for the year, the school cannot arbitrarily split the purchase in half to circumvent the small-purchase threshold. In addition, a school may not split bids if it intends to purchase the same item from two vendors, but did not previously inform the original vendor of its intention to split the bid. To avoid this scenario, schools should simply include language such as, "{The district} reserves the right to award to multiple vendors, using criteria as specified in the evaluation and award provision section," or "{The district} reserves the right to competitively purchase from different vendors throughout the year," in all applicable contracts.

If a school will be purchasing $150,000 worth of lettuce for the salad bar, the procurement cannot be split into two purchases of $75,000 each. However, the school can specify different varieties of lettuce that must be provided and may make the award to more than one supplier using a lump sum award for each variety of lettuce, may award a contract to one supplier, or more than one supplier by defining lump sum groups in the solicitation, such as all schools located in a geographic area that is defined.

There are many legitimate reasons to issue separate bid solicitations. It is typical for a school to divide purchases based on inherent differences in foods such as shelf life, delivery methods, seasonality, and other characteristics. In the case of local procurement programs, if the school has a special menu offering such as "harvest of the month" or a "seasonal special" that justifies a separate bid to make one-time purchases for product and receive the best price (i.e., because products are often cheaper when they are in season), that is acceptable. This type of purchasing practice might improve the quality and/or economic feasibility of a program. In this instance, the split would not be considered an arbitrary action.

Another approach, when an adequate number of suppliers exist, is for the school to conduct a procurement action for a specific item. For example, when purchasing apples, a school could release a specific bid solicitation to target locally grown apples

instead of conducting a procurement to obtain a single supplier for all fruits and vegetables for the school year. This approach could allow local apple growers to compete for the school's apple contract. If a school is not sure about the appropriateness of issuing a separate solicitation, it should contact its state agency. If a school ever finds itself struggling to justify the division of a purchase, the purchase should most likely not be split.

Example: Oakland, California

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) divides its produce bid into four separate procurements to meet the needs of different programs: Childcare, K-12, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and "harvest of the month." While schools should not split procurements to skirt the small-purchase threshold, each of these programs pose unique requirements and warrant separate solicitations for this district. A dietitian manages the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, paying particular attention to the nutrients available in each product served through the program, while the "harvest of the month" program is designed to highlight the area's seasonal products.

TARGETING SMALL BUSINESSES

Regulations say, "Positive efforts shall be made by recipients to utilize small businesses, minority-owned firms, and women's business enterprises whenever possible."[16] This means that schools may find ways to structure solicitations in order to target these types of businesses. For example, if a district is conducting an informal procurement, it may decide only to request bids from minority- or women-owned businesses.

COST OF LOCAL PRODUCTS

Schools are responsible for operating fiscally sound school nutrition programs and cannot sacrifice their bottom lines to purchase local foods. Starting out slowly by purchasing just one local item per month is a perfect way for schools to test the waters and evaluate food costs. Taking full advantage of USDA Foods entitlement dollars is also a great way to keep the cost of a meal down and afford the purchase of local items.

Being aware of the seasonality of local products can help schools purchase the best product at the best price. At the height of their harvest season, local items can be less expensive due to lower transportation costs and to producers' need to move perishable product quickly. Schools are also often able to offer a market for products that growers would not be able to sell on the commercial or direct-to-consumer markets. Instead of trying to buy first-of-the-season, rare, or limited-volume product, look instead for local items that are abundant and available through mainline distributors, which are often more cost competitive.

As with anything new, buying local may take some adjustments, but with a little bit of creativity, local products can become a mainstay in school meal programs.

PURCHASING COOPERATIVES

Cooperative purchasing occurs when school districts collaborate to purchase products. Some districts are members of relatively informal cooperatives that come together to purchase a few items, and other schools are part of more formal or extensive arrangements in which cooperative purchasing accounts for the majority of their food purchases. When a group of school districts joins forces to procure local foods, the districts may reduce their food costs and administrative burdens, while accessing markets or producers they would not be able to access alone. Larger purchases can make local producers aware that schools are a significant market with the potential to contribute substantially to their bottom line. For more information on purchasing cooperatives, NFSMI's *Procurement in the 21st Century* has an extensive section on this topic.

[16] "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 200.321. 2015 ed. (For more information about fFederal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

USING A CO-OP OR FOOD HUB

Some farmers work together to share in the distribution, marketing, processing, selling, or billing of their products and create cooperatives or food hubs, which are a type of distributor. Food hubs range in size and the services they provide, but frequently offer a viable distribution network to supply local food to schools. A cooperative or food hub may allow producers to aggregate their harvests of one type of product to meet the large demand of a school. Working with a co-op also allows schools to work with one entity to supply multiple items instead of working with several individual sources. Schools should ensure that aggregation operations hold the amount of liability insurance required by the district. For more information, visit the Agricultural Marketing Service's food hub website

Example: Washington State

With support from the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), Auburn, Kent and Renton School Districts formed the South King County Farm to School Collaborative. These three districts work closely to develop common specifications and issue RFPs for seasonal produce that include all three districts' needs. By combining demand and sharing the work of the solicitation and review process, the schools have greater buying power and have had success working not only with individual producers, but also with a food hub called Viva Farms. Viva Farms is a farm incubator which provides land, credit, training, and marketing and distribution support to new farmers to grow fruits and vegetables. The South King County Farm to School Collaborative and Viva Farms are a great match, as Viva is able to aggregate product from several growers, offering a consistent supply and multiple products with convenient order and delivery. The schools have purchased items like strawberries and radishes from the food hub. The Collaborative issues an RFP each season for fruits and vegetables and Viva Farms, along with other individual producers, bids on the products its producers are able to supply. Going forward, WSDA is working with the Collaborative to facilitate a bid process for forward contracting to assist farms in planting products schools want, and to obtain prices that work for schools.

USING A FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT COMPANY (FSMC)

As with a distributor, a school may include preferences for local products in the solicitation for an FSMC. That way, the company's responsiveness to the request for local products can be considered in the school's selection. Schools must include in their solicitation the details about how and when they wish to have local foods purchased and how local foods should be used in the provided meals. Food service management companies are seeking strategies to distinguish themselves from their competitors as a way to garner new business in a highly competitive market. One way that companies can do this is to proactively integrate a diverse array of local suppliers into their purchasing profile.[17]

Example: Rhode Island

Adopt-a-Farm is the anchor of Sodexo's farm to school program. It originated in Rhode Island in 2012 with the help of Farm Fresh Rhode Island (FFRI) and Roch's Produce. Sodexo Providence and a local farmer developed a verbal agreement through which Sodexo guaranteed they would purchase all the produce grown on a 20-acre area of the farm. In return, the farm worked with FFRI and unit-level Sodexo staff to develop their growing plan for the land. This collaboration was helpful in ensuring that the farmer grew the varieties of produce that would be needed by the Rhode Island school being served. The growing plan was developed by the early spring so that the farmer could plant on time, and have the

[17] Obadia, Jennifer, "Food Service Management Companies in New England: Barriers and Opportunities for Local Food Procurement," Farm to Institution New England, January 6, 2015. Accessed April 16, 2015. www.farmtoinstitution.org/sites/default/files/imce/uploads/FSMC%20Local%20Food%20Report_DRAFT.pdf

appropriate quantities and varieties of produce ready for the school year.

Roch's Produce, a regional distributor, picks-up produce from the farm, handles all processing and delivers the final product directly to the schools. Roch's also carries the liability insurance sufficient to cover the producer. The intermediary role played by Roch's Produce enables mid-sized farms, without processing equipment, to gain entry to the institutional market. The Adopt-a-Farm program has been considered successful by all involved and it is slowly expanding to additional farms. In two years it has grown to include the Massachusetts school districts of Springfield and Fitchburg.[18]

Example: San Francisco Bay Area, California

Several districts in the south Bay Area in California contract with Sodexo for their food services. Sodexo uses Fresh Point San Francisco as its produce distributor. Fresh Point works closely with the Community Alliance for Family Farmers (CAFF) to identify local producers and source product from within 125 miles of Union City, California. Through this relationship, CAFF has identified small- and medium-sized producers that are able to drop product off at a larger farm site. Fresh Point San Francisco is able to pick up a variety of producers' items from one location. The company also issues monthly "Hot Sheets" that showcase important information about local products, list all of the local products available, and indicate where each provider is located.

[18] Obadia, Jennifer, "Food Service Management Companies in New England: Barriers and Opportunities for Local Food Procurement," Farm to Institution New England, January 6, 2015. Accessed April 16, 2015. www.farmtoinstitution.org/sites/default/files/imce/uploads/FSMC%20Local%20Food%20Report_DRAFT.pdf

Buying Products from the School Garden

Does your district have excess land or large school gardens? Procuring foods grown on school grounds is another way to source locally. Regardless if the amounts available are only enough to offer to students at one location, students love seeing what they produced in the cafeteria and it will likely encourage their peers to try foods that they may have otherwise turned down.

Schools have three options for using school garden products in school meals and those options are explained in more detail below. Note that USDA does not impose specific food safety requirements; however, some local health departments have school garden food safety guidance and requirements.

1. **Donation** - in this case the products grown or raised in the school garden are donated to the cafeteria and may be used in meal preparation and/or for taste testing purposes. Procurement regulations do not apply when products are donated. Schools should ensure the product meets their general food safety requirements. Sometimes, schools purchase the inputs for the garden, as allowed under SP 32-2009, *School Garden Q&As*, and then the produce is donated to the cafeteria at harvest.

Example: Malvern, Pennsylvania

Great Valley School District (GVSD) has an extensive garden with raised beds, hydroponic beds and a high tunnel. The produce from the garden is donated back to the cafeteria and is used to make homemade vegetable soup, morning glory muffins, roasted broccoli and carrots and many other items. The food service department has ownership of the garden and the school garden coordinator position is a registered dietition who also plans the district menus and manages the Summer Feeding Program. The school garden coordinator is partially funded by the food service department. Currently, the garden is funded through grants, state money, a partnership with a local food bank with some initial start-up supply costs coming from the non-profit food service account.

2. **Intergovernmental Agreement** - With this option, the district enters into an agreement with the public entity (usually a school or district) that operates the garden. The agreement may outline the price for the produce, relative timelines and expectations of both parties. This option is most relevant when the school garden is operated by the school or district itself, a department within the district or by another state or local government agency that wishes to sell produce such as a local department of recreation or a state department of agriculture.

3. **Purchase** - Schools can conduct a procurement for garden produce likely via the informal or micro-purchase methods. In many cases, the purchase may fall below the applicable small purchase threshold, so the SFA may request a quote from the school garden operator and other entities. Geographic preference may be used. Due to the low transportation cost of the garden products, it is likely the price for garden products will be competitive with other suppliers. This option is most relevant when the school garden is operated by a non-governmental entity (e.g., non-profit organization) that wishes to sell to the school meal programs.

Example: Denver, Colorado

Denver Public Schools (DPS) in Colorado has 100 school gardens, 18 of those grow produce and herbs that are sold to the school food service department and served in the cafeteria. Since DPS school gardens are run collaboratively with a variety of local partners including, Slow Food Denver, Denver Urban Gardens, the Kitchen Community, Revision International, and Sprout City Farm, DPS Food and Nutrition Services uses an informal procurement method to purchase products from the garden. For DPS' ½ acre to 1 acre school farms, DPS hires a farming services contractor to grow and harvest vegetables through a formal procurement process to abide by local, state and federal regulations.

Buying Local Meat

Increasingly school districts across the United States are serving local meats. While many districts are interested in sourcing local meat, there remains some confusion about the inspection requirements for meats served in child nutrition programs. This confusion is one factor limiting how much local meat is served in schools districts.

This section clarifies acceptable local meat sources for use in child nutrition programs and provides examples of solicitation language that will help school districts target local meat supplies that are safe.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulates the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products to ensure that it is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. The Food and Drug Administration also manages some aspects of meat processing and sales. Many FSIS programs support the development and expansion of local markets for meat and poultry, and create regional sourcing opportunities for school districts.

The Federal Meat Inspection Act[19] (FMIA) and the Poultry Products Inspection Act[20] (PPIA) are the two main regulations governing meat and poultry inspection. The FMIA defines meat as livestock such as cattle, sheep, swine or goat. The PPIA defines poultry as any domesticated bird such as turkeys, chickens, ducks, geese, guinea fowl and ratites (emus, rhea and ostrich).

Child nutrition programs are not restricted to using only meats slaughtered or processed at USDA inspected facilities. Other acceptable sources of local meat include those outlined below.

Some states operate under a cooperative agreement with Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). State programs must enforce requirements "at least equal to" those imposed under the Federal Meat and Poultry Products Inspection Acts and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978.

- **State-inspected facilities:** 27 states operate under the State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) program where FSIS holds cooperative agreements with the state agencies. Under the MPI program, states provide inspections "at least equal to" those imposed under FMIA and PPIA. Districts can buy meat or poultry from these slaughter and processing facilities or from vendors which buy meat from MPI facilities. These meats are for intrastate distribution only.
- **Cooperative Interstate Shipment facilities:** In four states where the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) program operates, a state-inspected plant (those noted above) can operate as federally-inspected facilities, under specific conditions, and ship their products in interstate commerce. Schools within those four states or states surrounding those four states can buy local or regional meat products from those facilities or vendors which buy meat from CIS program participants.

Further detail about each of these inspection programs is provided in *Appendix R: Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs.* For the most up to date information about purchasing local meat, visit the USDA Farm to School program website (usda.gov/farmtoschool).

[19] "Meat Inspection," Title 21 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 12..
[20] "Poultry and Poultry Products Inspection," Title 21 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 10.

SOLICITATION LANGUAGE TARGETING LOCAL MEAT SUPPLIERS

As with a solicitation for any type of product, a solicitation for meat products enables districts to outline exactly the type of products they are seeking and ensure that the products meet specific requirements regarding safety, labeling and packaging. The inclusion of clear and specific language in solicitations and, ultimately in contracts with vendors, ensures that bidders are aware of a district's needs and requirements.

When working either directly with local ranchers or indirectly with vendors which sell local meats, the following language illustrates potential ways that a school might target local meat or poultry products. The suggested language may correspond to a number of different solicitation sections, and can be used either in part or in whole, depending on the district's needs. The language below provides ideas and suggestions, all solicitation language must be tailored as appropriate for local contexts.

Introduction

As discussed earlier in the guide, the introduction of a solicitation offers districts an opportunity to state its goals without requiring that bids or proposals come from local sources. Here is an example of introductory language that highlights the district's desire to purchase local meat:

"ABC School District seeks to improve childhood nutrition by implementing the school meal regulations, as part of this effort we seek to reduce the distance food travels between food producers and students. Meat procured from local farms is an opportunity for the district to achieve our nutrition goals. "The district" is interested in helping to revitalize the local meat industry and is looking to source from small producers. Small producers are vital to our community, and "the district" is interested in supporting the local economy by working with vendors and/or ranchers that buy or produce foods from our community."

Product Specifications and Technical Requirements

As noted previously, there are a variety of product specifications and technical requirements that a district might use to target local products. The elements below illustrate additional specifications or technical requirements that a district could use when seeking to purchase meat and poultry products:

Product Labels:

- All meat products must be properly labeled and include the appropriate seal of state or federal inspection.
- All ingredients must be declared on the product label and conform to the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act as required by the Food and Drug Administration.
- Cases of product shall be clearly and legibly labeled with product name, product code, production date (actual or coded), case count, and net weight.
- Exempt poultry must be labeled in accordance to the following suggestions:
    - Labels must contain the name of the farm and name of the producer, the address of the farm (including zip code), producer contact information, the statement ''Exempted— P.L. 90–492'' prominently displayed in addition to safe handling and cooking instructions.

Samples and Product Evaluation:

- Each item offered by the vendor may be subject to a product evaluation conducted by a representative from the district.
- Vendor must provide product sample for taste testing, product will be rated on a pass/fail basis if using an IFB and if using an RFP, the district may use a scale.

Inspection:

- The district is accepting meat and poultry from USDA inspected facilities and state facilities operating under the Meat and Poultry Inspection program and/or the Cooperative Interstate Shipment program.
- Vendors may provide "the district" with state inspected meat products bought from a slaughter house, state processor or a combined state slaughter and processing facility.

Inspection of Facilities:

- The district reserves the right to inspect the facilities or have the facilities inspected of the bidder prior to award of the contract.
- The district may request to review the bidder's current Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) food safety system for their facility in order to insure proper storage and distribution practices.
- If the district determines after such inspection that the bidder is not capable of performance within the "he district" standards, their bid will not be considered.
- Any rancher, vendor or processor used by "the district" will allow food service staff to conduct tours and/or inspections of any production, slaughter and/or processing facilities should it be deemed necessary to do so by "the district".

Certificates and Verification:

- Any vendor or broker selling such meats (except exempt poultry products) to "the district" is required by law to register with the USDA if they deal in meat and poultry products in or for commerce via FSIS Form 5020-1. Local licenses are also expected, if required. It is the vendor's responsibility to know such rules and provide such information to the district.
- All products furnished must conform with the specifications and will be subject to inspection and approval of the district.

Example: Kalispell, Montana

At Kalispell Public Schools, the school nutrition director conducts an informal procurement for beef using the specifications outlined below. Of note is the food safety requirement section within the specifications form which states that either a state or federal certification is allowable to be eligible for the award. The value of this purchase falls under the applicable small-purchase threshold and these specifications, along with a bid form, are emailed directly to several local sources. *See Appendix S: Kalispell Public School Beef Specifications* for more information.

Supporting Local Foods in Tribal Schools

Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) are especially interested in offering more traditional foods in schools. One of the biggest myths is that school systems cannot serve traditional food items in cafeterias. USDA encourages tribal, charter, public, and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school systems in Indian Tribal Organization (ITO) communities to use traditional food products as part of school meals. The use of traditional food items such as bison, blue cornmeal, or Alaskan salmon creates a healthy school environment for Native American children. In addition, incorporating traditional food items educates students about tribal and cultural food systems.

There are many Native American producers across the nation who provides a variety of traditional food items. In Wichita, Kansas, The Native American Enterprises sells quality beef, buffalo, pork, lamb, and poultry. On the Native American Isleta Pueblo reservation in New Mexico, Native Natural produces blue cornmeal and Anasazi beans. The Sugpiaq, Inc. located in Anchorage, sells Alaskan salmon, black cod, rockfish and other seafood products. When soliciting for traditional food items the same procurement rules apply for Indian Tribal Organizations. For more information on this topic, please review *Child Nutrition Programs* and *Traditional Foods* (TA01-2015).

ITOs cannot use the Buy Indian Act to preference Indian owned business when conducting procurements for child nutrition programs.[21] The Buy Indian Act does not apply to CNPs. BIE schools are required to comply with CNP regulations to achieve competition in all procurement procedures using federal reimbursement funds.

While a preference or set-aside for Indian-owned businesses is not allowable, SFAs (or an organization acting on behalf of an SFA such as the Bureau of Indian Education) do have a few options to ensure that Indian-owned businesses are able to compete effectively:

1. It is likely that many purchases that tribal schools are making may fall under the applicable small-purchase threshold. Informal procurements are not required to be publicly advertised. This means that schools can request bids from any vendors they like, including exclusively Indian-owned businesses. It is advised that districts gather at least three quotes in an informal procurement.

2. The regulations outline steps that SFAs should take to ensure that minority businesses, women's business enterprises, and labor surplus area firms are used when possible. While this regulation does not allow schools to preference or create a set-aside for minority businesses, it does allow SFAs to ensure that minority businesses are on solicitation lists and are contacted whenever they are potential vendors. Further, this regulation permits districts to divide solicitations in order to encourage participation of minority-owned businesses.

[21] "Department of the Interior Acquisition Regulation System," Title 48 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 1401.301. 2015 ed.

Example: The Circle of Nation Boarding School

Circle of Nations (CNS) is an inter-tribal off-reservation boarding school, chartered under the Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota Oyate and funded by the Bureau of Indian Education. CNS uses geographic preference to target local ranchers and producers. To promote traditional food systems, a variety of produce grown in the school garden and orchard are served daily on the salad bar as a part of the National School Lunch Program. Currently, CNS serves a variety of traditional products for school meals such as green tomatillo, wild rice, and buffalo. The green tomatillos harvested from the school garden are used for a traditional salsa recipe called Verde. Students all rate salsa Verde "better than guacamole!" CNS also serves buffalo meat in a number of recipes such as spaghetti and chili as a way of integrating traditional options.

Beyond Lunch: Buying Local Foods for Summer and Child Care Programs

The principles discussed throughout this guide are relevant to all operators of federal child nutrition programs.

The Summer Food Service Program and the Seamless Summer Option

Summer can be a season of joy and relaxation, but for many children who rely on free and reduced price meals during the school year, it can also represent a time of great need. USDA strives to ensure that children have access to the nutrition they need to return to school healthy and ready to learn through our Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO), which allows schools to continue meeting children's nutritional needs when school is out. Local foods and agriculture-based activities can improve the quality and appeal of summer meals, engage children in building healthy habits, bolster farm to school efforts with continuous programming, and support local and regional food systems all year long. Schools and sponsoring organizations across the country are serving local foods in their summer meals programs and taking advantage of summer's bountiful harvest. Some schools in areas with short growing seasons are even preserving summer's bounty, by freezing products to use later in the school year.

WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT BUYING LOCAL FOR SFSP?

All the same procurement regulations apply; sponsors can use the same tactics to purchase local products that a school district uses during the school year. The procurement method used by schools and sponsoring organizations in the summer months will vary depending on sponsor type, size, and the number of children it serves. An SFSP or SSO sponsor may write their needs for summer foods into their school year contract, or they may create a solicitation that is unique to their summer program. Sponsors who serve children during the school year will want to re-evaluate seasonality and product availability in their menu planning phase for summer, since many new and exciting items may be within their reach. Summer participation numbers may also impact what sources of local foods are viable for you; be sure to review average participation and know what options might be the best fit for your program. Remember, summer is a great time to try new products, serve many fruits and vegetables at their peak freshness, and develop new recipes that showcase your region's harvest.

Example: Dallas, Texas

Dallas Independent School District's (DISD) Food and Child Nutrition Services, in conjunction with the Texas Department of Agriculture, runs SFSP from June through August at over 180 schools and over 20 community locations, serving children and adolescents at colleges, parks, and youth activity centers. Last year, DISD incorporated a preference for local foods and increased the amount of Texas grown cantaloupe, peaches, watermelon, and blueberries served in their meals. They were also sure to develop new kid tested and approved recipes to ensure success. Dallas also strengthens relationships with its producers and exposes children to the world of Texas agriculture by sponsoring events where kids can meet the farmer who provided that day's produce.

Example: Kalispell, Montana

Summer meal menus served at Kalispell Public Schools are specifically tailored to include local fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, greens, and squash that come from several area co-ops, greenhouses, and local farms. Kalispell plans ahead and extends their relationship with vendors from the school year into the summer months, and in so doing is able to serve local hamburgers and polish dogs on summer trays. The district provides breakfast and lunch at three sites throughout the community and in addition to stocking up on local produce, offers agriculture-based activities to keep kids engaged in learning.

For more information about sourcing local foods for the SFSP, see USDA's Summer Food Service Program Toolkit and the SFSP handbook.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program

Farm to school isn't just for K-12 schools. An increasing number of early child care and education providers are engaging in farm to preschool efforts. The term "Farm to Preschool" encompasses efforts to serve local or regionally produced foods in early child care and education settings; provide hands-on learning activities such as gardening, farm visits, and culinary activities; and integrate food-related education into the curriculum.

WHY FARM TO PRESCHOOL?

Integrating local foods and incorporating related hands-on activities can increase children's willingness to try new foods. In fact, farm to preschool is recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as an opportunity to increase access to healthy environments for improved early eating habits and obesity prevention in early care and education. With daily opportunities to serve local products through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), farm to preschool benefits local and regional farmers, ranchers, and fisherman, as well as food processors, manufacturers, and distributors by providing another market for their products.

WHAT IS THE CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM?

The Child and Adult Care Food Program is a federally-funded program that provides aid to child care institutions and facilities for the provision of nutritious meals and snacks that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children.

BUYING LOCAL IN THE CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

Institution versus Facility:

When buying food for CACFP, the federal procurement rules differ for "institutions" versus "facilities." The CACFP defines an "institution" as a sponsoring organization which enters into an agreement with the state agency to assume final administrative and financial responsibility for the program; whereas "facilities" are a sponsored center or a family day care home in the CACFP that do not enter into a direct agreement with a state agency. Institutions participating in CACFP must follow federal procurement regulations, even when using non-program funds to purchase meals. Facilities are not required to follow federal procurement regulations, however, conducting competitive procurements is encouraged as doing so upholds full and open competition. To learn more about federal procurement regulations and allowable costs in CACFP, see the *Financial Management - CACFP FNS Instruction, 796-2, Rev. 4*.

SOURCING LOCAL FOOD

Local foods span the entire meal tray, from produce to dairy, grains, meat, eggs and beans. CACFP providers can define "local" however they choose. Definitions vary widely depending on the unique geography and climate, as well as the abundance of local food producers, in the region. Sources and strategies for targeting local products discussed throughout this guide apply to CACFP. In fact, CACFP operators can find local products through the same sources that K-12 schools use to source locally, including:

[22] "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations, Pt. 200.321. 2015 ed. (For more information about federal procurement regulations, see Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations.)

Directly from a local producer: Ask farmers and other producers about their products. Farmers should be able to answer questions related to price, available quantities, delivery options, and food safety. Unique items may be available or certain small growers may be more accessible to preschools with smaller volume demands.

Through a distributor: Many distributors can supply locally grown food. Ask vendors where food is coming from and what products are seasonal and available in your area. Communicate your preference for local foods in future solicitations by specifying local varieties or including a preference for products available in the area that meets your definition of local. Make sure solicitations are specific enough to get what you want and broad enough to allow for competition between businesses.

From farmer's markets and community supported agriculture programs: In many early child care and education settings, purchasing volumes are small, opening the door to purchasing seasonally from farmers markets and community support agriculture (CSA) programs. CSAs typically provide boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables on a weekly basis throughout the year. This strategy is great for facilities in the CACFP, such as family day care homes, as they can shop at a farmer's markets and purchase CSAs without comparing three bids. Institutions will need to competitively procure from either source - most likely using the informal procurement method to compare three bids from potential suppliers. Visit USDA's Local Food Directories to find a farmer's market or CSA near you.

From the garden: Edible gardens are perfect for smaller amounts of produce and offer endless opportunities for hands-on education for children and family engagement. Fun, kid-friendly foods to start with include snap peas, tomatoes, carrots, lettuce, herbs, and cucumbers.

Example: Bozeman, Montana

In Bozeman, Montana, the MSU Child Development Center at Montana State University succeeds in serving roughly 50% local foods in CACFP through thoughtful and flexible menu planning with a focus on providing healthy, Montana-sourced meals. At the heart of their local-sourcing strategy, the preschool has several raised beds that provide up to 25% of the vegetables for the meal program at peak season. Children help with all aspects of growing, from seed to harvest, as well as cleaning, prepping and enjoying the bounty of kale, squash, carrots and more. The preschool also participates in Towne's Harvest Garden, a campus-based community supported agriculture program that provides small quantities of fresh produce to the preschool that are incorporated into pastas and salads or used for taste-tests. For other food needs, with just over 30 children enrolled daily in the program, staff compare prices at local grocers and bulk food stores, as purchases fall below the small purchase threshold. With several sources for local foods, the four-week cycle menu highlights local offerings and allows for seasonal substitutions. Dietetic interns assist with healthy, meal planning and recipe development with a Montana-sourced perspective. These sourcing and menu planning strategies result in parents regularly joining their children for lunch to enjoy popular items like the vegetarian lentil sloppy joe, featuring Montana-grown lentils.

Example: Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and their child care partner, New Horizon Academy (NHA), launched a Farm to Child Care pilot in Minnesota in the summer of 2012. One of the key aspects of the program is to connect children with where their food comes from by sourcing and highlighting food from local producers. With 62 centers and a centralized food distribution system, IATP and NHA worked with the existing distributor to identify local suppliers for fruits, vegetables, and wild rice. NHA was then able to order these local items directly from their distributor tapping into their existing delivery system. To build relationships with the suppliers and connect to the classroom, IATP also visited each of the farms that supplied food for CACFP, snapping photos of the fruits and veggies in the field to share with the children and families in the program.

Using USDA Foods and DoD Fresh

USDA Foods has a dual mission of supporting domestic agriculture and providing healthy foods to schools. Offerings include a variety of fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables, lean meats, peanut butter, whole wheat grain products, and cheeses. In order to access these healthy options, each state in the country is allocated a certain amount of money, or "entitlement value," to order USDA Foods, based on the number of lunches served in the previous school year. In FY 2014, $1.4 billion in USDA Foods went to schools; in any given year, about 10-15% of the value of food served through the National School Lunch Program comes from USDA Foods.

USDA sources these foods through competitive procurements for which a local preference is not possible. USDA provides data to help states and schools understand where USDA Foods are produced, enabling many schools to make ordering choices that support local economies. Remember, everything is local to someone!

USDA Foods supports local purchasing in several ways:

1. Maximizes Funds for Local Purchases

   In a time of tightening budgets, every dollar's worth of USDA Foods delivered to a school frees up money that a school would otherwise have to spend commercially. By using USDA Foods products, schools can save cash reimbursement dollars for products that they can source locally.

2. Champions American Agriculture

   USDA Foods are all produced in the United States, thus it is possible to order foods through the USDA Foods catalog that are produced in your region. For example, as mentioned earlier, Mississippi is the only state that produces significant, commercial quantities of catfish. If a school is located in the Southeast, USDA Foods catfish could be considered local to that school. Likewise, apricots offered through USDA Foods normally come from California, and pears usually originate in the Pacific Northwest. While USDA cannot guarantee that a particular product will come from a specific state, due to the competitive nature of the procurements, historical state of origin information for all products is available on the USDA Foods website.

   Additionally, USDA is always looking to expand its roster of eligible vendors for the USDA Foods program. Both the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Farm Service Agency work with a variety of vendors and often have set-asides for small businesses.

Example: Vermont

The Vermont Agency of Education, in collaboration with state distributing agencies and departments of agriculture from across the Northeast, is working to promote the USDA Foods program as a marketing opportunity to regional producers. The goal of this effort is to expand the number of vendors from the region that are eligible to sell to the USDA Foods program, giving SFAs the increased opportunity to source locally through USDA Foods. To do this, in December 2014, the Director of Vermont's USDA Foods Program held a meeting for relevant state agencies in the northeast to introduce them to the USDA Foods program. During the meeting AMS outlined the requirements for becoming a vendor and offered support for helping vendors get on board. With this information, state departments of agriculture and education began to brainstorm local producers that could meet AMS requirements, and developed a plan to train them on the process and encourage them to apply. Many in the Northeast are hopeful that this will result in additional marketing opportunities for their producers and an additional source of local foods for their school districts.

3. Supports Local Processors

   Most states send a portion of their USDA Foods to processors to be turned into end products like burritos, burgers or rice bowls. Check to see if your state has agreements with processors located close to home.

Example: Vermont

Vermont has entered into two in-state processing agreements with companies located in Vermont to further process USDA Foods. One agreement is with a pizza company who will use USDA Foods mozzarella and the other is with a bean company that will use USDA Foods canned beans to make bean burgers and falafel. The bean company also has plans to use some local Vermont ingredients, like herbs and carrots in combination with the USDA Foods beans.

Additionally, Vermont is looking into companies on the Nationally Approved Processors list who are located in the northeast. For example, a fish processing company that processes the USDA Foods Alaskan Pollack is located in New Hampshire. A salad dressing company has facilities in Massachusetts. While Vermont does not currently have processing agreements with these companies, the state may decide to pursue agreements if there is interest from VT schools. It is important to note that when diverting USDA Foods to a processor, districts must still conduct a competitive procurement for processing services.

4. **Promotes Local Fruit and Vegetable Producers**

   The Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD Fresh) allows schools to use their USDA Foods entitlement to order fresh, and often local, produce. DoD contracts with over 47 produce distributors across the country, who are encouraged to provide local produce whenever possible and identify the state of origin of all products in the catalog. Each DoD Fresh produce vendor updates the online FFAVORS catalog for its region of service on a weekly basis and marks locally procured products. "Local" in DoD Fresh signifies that the product is from within the state, the contract award zone, or a state adjacent to the contract award zone. If a school would like to order additional local products through DoD Fresh, it should work with the DoD produce vendor to request additional local options, and/or to suggest specific producers or producer groups that the vendor might work with to secure locally grown produce. Several states rely on DoD produce as an integral part of farm to school efforts.

   For more information about how schools can connect with the DoD Fresh vendor in their area, see the Using DoD Fresh to Purchase Local Produce fact sheet. Both resources are available in *Appendix A: Procurement Resources.*

Example: North Carolina

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDACS) helps facilitate relationships between the DoD vendor, local producers, and school districts. The department surveys school districts to determine which local products they are interested in receiving throughout the year through the program and commercial channels and provides the compiled information to the vendor. The state then works to connect interested local growers with the DoD vendor so that purchasing relationships can be established. NCDACS contracts with many of the same growers that supply commercially purchased products to schools, as such the state facilitates distribution, picking up product at the farm and delivering it to the DoD vendor or the state's warehouse.

Example: Connecticut

In Connecticut, the State Department of Administration Services hosts an annual meet-and-greet event that brings together farmers, schools,

and the DoD vendor. As a result of this meeting, the vendor has developed several relationships with local producers and now offers many local products in the DoD catalog.

Example: Texas

In Texas, schools rely on DoD Fresh distributors to provide Texas products year-round. Due to the size of the state, Texas has three vendors that provide produce to schools through DoD Fresh. The state agency works closely with the distributors and develops a calendar of Texas-grown produce items that will be available to all schools that participate in DoD Fresh. In school year 2012–2013, the DoD vendors offered Texas-grown watermelons, red potatoes, ruby red grapefruit, gala apples, and early seeded oranges. The state agency and the vendors send the calendar of seasonal items to schools and schools are able to order at their convenience. See *Appendix T: Texas Farm to School through DoD Calendar SY2014 Overview.*

Putting it all Together

Every school pieces together a unique procurement puzzle based on its budget, kitchen capacity and infrastructure, staffing situation, local policies, student preferences, access to vendors and farmers and other factors that contribute to the purchasing environment. This guide has described many ways that schools and districts can make local purchasing part of that puzzle. The mechanisms for local purchasing and sources of local foods can be combined in countless ways to the same effect: delicious school meals that nourish children as well as communities. With a bit of patience and a touch of ingenuity, schools can make local purchasing a routine part of their procurement process.

Comparing Procurement Methods

Though informal and formal IFBs and RFPs are used for different purposes as required by the products or services to be solicited, the fundamental principle of full and open competition is maintained in all procurement methods. Table 12 summarizes the differences and similarities between these methods.

TABLE 12

Comparing Procurement Methods

	Formal: IFB	Formal: RFP	Informal	Micro-purchase
When To Use	A complete, adequate, and realistic specification is available and the contract can be awarded on the basis of price	Factors other than price will be considered in the contract evaluation criteria	The value of the purchase falls below the applicable small-purchase threshold.	The aggregate value of the purchase falls below $3,000
How to Get Bids	Publicly advertise	Publicly advertise	Advertise or solicit quotes by phone, email, fax, etc.	Contact vendors directly
Type of Contract	Firm fixed-price contract; no price negotiation	Fixed-price or cost-reimbursable; cost negotiations possible	Fixed-price contract	Firm fixed-price
Geographic Preference	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed
Other Ways to Target Local Products	Include checklist for responsiveness and include elements such as able to offer farm visits, farm of origin labeling or taste testing; use specifications	Include other evaluation criteria such as ability to offer farm visits, source identification or taste testing; use specifications	Approach only local sources; use specifications	Approach only local sources, use specifications, use technical requirements Equitably purchase from available qualified sources

Fayetteville Public Schools (FPS) in Arkansas and Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS) in Virginia (along with dozens of other districts) have pieced together their local purchasing puzzles. Each of these districts has a different approach. FPS combines several of the local purchasing mechanisms discussed throughout this guide into seasonal informal procurements, while HCPS patches together many different solicitations targeting local products in different ways to ensure the district is serving local in the lunchroom as much as possible.

Example: Fayetteville, Arkansas

Fayetteville Public Schools (FPS) has combined nearly every mechanism for targeting local products into one solicitation. Each season the district evaluates their needs and conducts an informal procurement that specifically targets local products. Even though it is an informal procurement, FPS decided it was advantageous to develop relatively formal solicitation documents that outline all the requirements and specifications desired. However, since it is an informal procurement, the purchase does not need to be publicly advertised. The district is in control of who is contacted for quotes and can decide to only approach vendors with local products for bids. This solicitation provides an example of how many of the different mechanisms that are described throughout this guide can work in concert.

FPS developed a two-tier definition of local. Tier one is any product from within Arkansas state lines and tier two is any product from out of state but within 100 miles of the district warehouse (Fayetteville is in NW Arkansas and this definition allows products from nearby producers in Oklahoma, Missouri and Kansas). The school developed this definition because it wants to encourage as much competition as possible and also keep money within the state to boost the local economy.

Each season, the district conducts an informal procurement targeting local products.

The geographic preference language included in the solicitation is:

As allowed under federal law, FPS will provide a price percentage preference during evaluation of quotes to "locally grown products" purchased for school food procurement as defined under this geographic preference. The price percentage is as follows:

1. If a product is grown and packaged or processed within state lines a 10% weighted preference will be applied
2. If a product is grown and packaged or processed out-of-state and within 100 miles of the FPS district warehouse a 7% weighted preference will be applied

The price percentage preference means that for the purposes of comparison, prices for product grown within Arkansas state lines will be adjusted to a price 10% lower than the price quoted for the product by the producer or 7% for product grown out-of-state but within 100 miles of the district warehouse. The price percentage preference affects the quoted price only for awarding of the bid, not the actual price paid to the producer.

When developing this language, FPS reviewed other districts' bid documents and looked to provide an advantage to local suppliers without inhibiting competition. Before settling on the percentages, the district created an evaluation, see *Appendix U: Excerpt from Fayetteville Public Schools Informal Bid Packet* for an example, and tried out different scenarios with realistic prices to ensure that the preference provided a reasonable advantage.

In addition to geographic preference FPS talks about its farm to school program right up front in the introduction, indicating the importance of purchasing local products to the district. Since this is an informal procurement, the solicitation is sent to a targeted group of suppliers that have previously provided local products to the district. The district structures this solicitation as a line-by-line item award in order to allow vendors that only can supply one or two products to bid. Fayetteville also uses technical requirements such as delivered within 24-48 hours of harvest for particular products. Finally, the district also asks about producers' willingness to take part in experiential educational activities and notes that this information will be considered in the event of a tie in pricing.

Fayetteville Public Schools combines nearly every mechanism for targeting local products into one solicitation. One caveat to note is that including all of these elements works for FPS and they have used these terms for a few procurement cycles, but each district is different. Before conducting a competitive procurement and using these tools to target local products, ensure that your solicitation does not limit competition.

For more details on this solicitation and an example of detailed product specifications, see *Appendix T: Excerpt from Fayetteville Public Schools Informal Bid Packet.*

Example: Harrisonburg, Virginia

Harrisonburg City Public Schools has been used as an example throughout this guide and offers a perfect case study for tying all of these different mechanisms to purchase local foods together. The school nutrition director has pieced different procurement strategies together to build a local purchasing program that works in this district. Each district will have different needs and sits in a different market, so there is no one size fits all strategy for buying local. Here is a summary of HCPS's buying local strategies:

Purchasing through distributors using formal solicitations

In the formal procurements for both a produce distributor and a mainline distributor, HCPS includes language that encourages firms to offer local products. In addition, both solicitations note that the district reserves the right to purchase off contract. This clause is important in showing the distributors that the district may make purchases for similar products from other suppliers. This can be incredibly important when purchasing local products because the school may want to purchase a seasonal product from a local vendor who does not supply to the distributor, but the district still needs the reliability of the distributor when those seasonal products are not available. Here is an excerpt from the district's invitation for bid for a mainline distributor that outlines their right to purchase off the contract:

"It is the intent of this solicitation to award all the line item products to one prime vendor. However, in support of our farm to school efforts, the district reserves the right to purchase (competitively solicit) comparable products off bid and directly from local farmers and producers as they are available."

In the district's produce RFP, the introduction includes language stating the district's goals for local purchasing signaling the values of the district to potential vendors. HCPS also includes geographic preference. The preference has a unique structure and awards points based on the number of Virginia farms from which the firm is able to source. Here is an excerpt from the introduction and the geographic preference sections of HCPS's produce RFP:

"The intent and purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to establish a contract with one qualified source to supply fresh fruits and vegetables. Please note that HCPS reserves the right to buy Virginia Grown fresh produce direct from farmers, food hubs, auctions, and other small scale aggregators when product is available in support of the division's farm to school efforts.

HCPS is an active participant in Virginia's Farm to School program. Virginia grown produce should be sold to schools when available. Firms should be making an effort to procure and offer Virginia grown produce to schools. Firms should indicate these products on weekly price lists. Please submit a list of Virginia farms used by your company with this proposal. _____/20 pts

- List includes no Virginia farms – 0 pts
- 1-5 Virginia farms listed – 5 pts
- 6-10 Virginia farms listed – 10 pts
- 11 -15 Virginia farms listed – 15 pts
- 16 or more Virginia farms listed – 20 pts

Purchasing directly from producers using a formal procurement

HCPS began purchasing local beef using the informal method but the purchase value grew and so the district is now using the formal method to purchase beef and beef patties. To target local products, the district uses geographic preference. Note that the preference structure included is different than the preference HCPS uses in its produce RFP discussed above. Here the preference is a 50 cent per pound deduction for the purpose of evaluation. This solicitation is an invitation for bid and price is the only evaluation factor, so structuring the geographic preference in terms of dollar deduction is logical. Here is the beef specification and geographic preference language that the district uses:

"Ground beef must come from cattle specifically raised for beef production (culled dairy cows are not acceptable). Cattle are raised without the use of hormones or sub therapeutic antibiotics, are grass fed or grass fed and grain finished. Ratio of lean to fat should be 85/15 or leaner. Cattle must be slaughtered and processed in a USDA inspected facility. Prefer that cattle be raised and processed within 100 miles of Harrisonburg, VA ($0.50 per pound deducted from quoted price per pound for purposes of comparison between firms if this preference is met)."

Purchasing directly from producers using an informal procurement

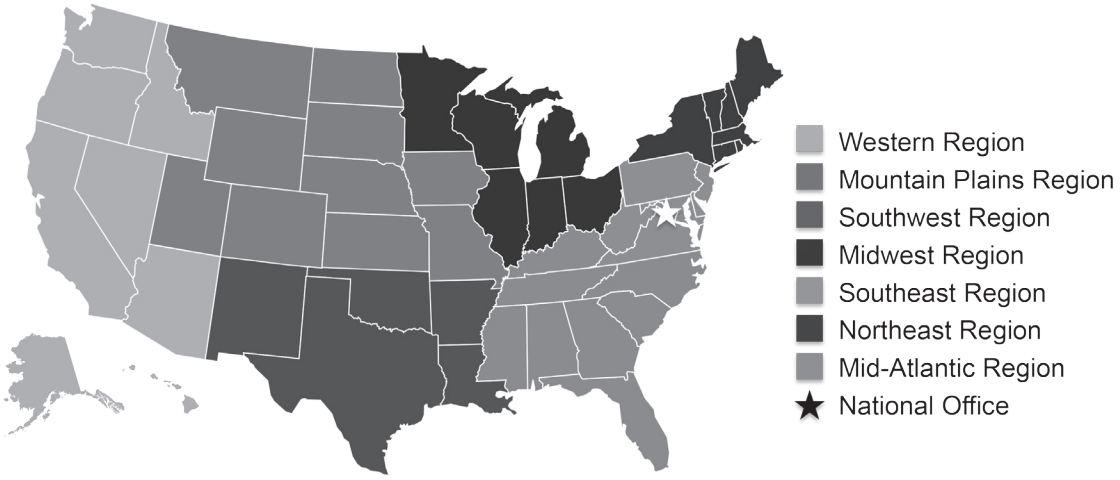
When available, HCPS uses the informal procurement method to purchase lettuce, apples, pork, cheese, and whole-wheat flour. The school nutrition director will gather bids from three local suppliers and make a purchase. In order to offset prices, HCPS often serves hydroponic lettuce with turkey wraps made with USDA Foods whole-wheat tortillas, cheese and low sodium turkey, and will make house-made rolls with a mix of USDA Foods flour and the local whole-wheat flour.

Maximizing USDA Foods dollars

HCPS strategically selects which USDA Foods products to purchase and often serves USDA Foods and local products together in order to stay on budget. The district ensures that it is spending every penny of its entitlement to make sure as much of its cash reimbursement dollars can go towards local products.

Harrisonburg's school nutrition director says, "USDA is a partner in meeting my local purchasing goals. I often shift my entitlement to products that are not available locally and to products, like the roast chicken, that USDA Foods is able to offer at a lower price point than I could get as an individual school district."

As you can see, districts can use a variety of procurement strategies to meet their local purchasing goals. Many of the strategies can be used together. For instance, a district might include vendor requirements that target vendors providing local products in an informal procurement for a forward contract. Or a school might decide to include information in the introduction of an RFP and include evaluation factors that target local vendors and promote transparency about where products are coming from. The point is there are many different ways schools can approach local purchasing and the challenge is finding the strategy that works for each district.



Dig In!

This guide provides an overview of local purchasing options available to schools, but a host of other resources about local sourcing exists as well. Schools may wish to start by reading the regulations and FNS guidance memos on geographic preference, but it will also be beneficial to contact your state agency or a neighboring school district for additional guidance on purchasing local products. Finally, please do refer to the resource pages in *Appendix A: Procurement Resources*.

The USDA Farm to School Program is operated by the Department's Food and Nutrition Service, which has seven regional offices around the country. Each region houses a Farm to School Regional Lead, who is available to provide support to state agencies and other entities regarding local procurement. A list of regions, along with names and contact information for regional and national staff members is available on the USDA Farm to School Program website (usda.gov/farmtoschool).

In addition to USDA staff, a number of states have farm to school coordinators in their departments of agriculture or education. Throughout the country numerous public and private organizations, universities, agricultural extension offices, trade associations, public health organizations, and other entities support local buying efforts by offering training, technical assistance, funding, and other support services. For a complete list of state agency contacts, please visit the USDA Farm to School Program website (usda.gov/farmtoschool).

The procurement process is a powerful element of a district's farm to school efforts. A solicitation is a formal way to indicate a district's desire and preference for local products signaling to the community that schools are committed and interested in investing in a community food system. Money spent on local products impacts the regional economy and helps to create jobs, partnerships and a healthy food system. Districts control much of the procurement process and have power to help affect change by connecting students with their food, offering the highest quality food possible and providing viable markets for agricultural producers.

Appendices

Appendix A: Procurement Resources

Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations

Appendix C: Menu Planning Resources

Appendix D: Excerpt from School Food FOCUS RFI to Supply Locally Grown Fresh and Frozen Fruits and Vegetables

Appendix E: Excerpt from Minneapolis Public Schools RFI

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Appendix I: Excerpt from San Diego Unified School District Informal Produce Solicitation

Appendix J: Excerpt from Springfield Public Schools

Appendix K: Two Sample Forward Contracts

Appendix L: The Local List from Royal Food Service

Appendix M: Using Geographic Preference in Four Steps

Appendix N: Excerpt from Omaha Public Schools' Solicitation for Chicken Drumsticks

Appendix O: Excerpt from Harrisonburg City Public Schools' Solicitation for Fresh Produce

Appendix P: Excerpt from Oakland Unified School District's RFP for Fresh Produce

Appendix Q: Excerpt from Roswell Independent School District

Appendix R: Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs

Appendix S: Kalispell Public Schools Beef Specifications

Appendix T: Texas Farm to School through DoD Calendar SY2014 Overview

Appendix U: Excerpt from Fayetteville Public Schools

Appendix A: Procurement Resources

General Procurement Information

- **Program-specific Procurement Regulations** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/USDA_procurement_reg. htm), from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) – Links to regulations governing each major Child Nutrition Program from Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

- **State Agency Guidance on Procurement** (http://www.nfsmi.org/Templates/TemplateDefault.aspx?qs=cElEPTIzOA==), from FNS in partnership with the National Food Service Management Institute – An online procurement training geared towards agencies that focuses on procurement requirements.

- **Procurement in the 21st Century** (http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=475) from the National Food Service Management Institute – Covers all the basics of school nutrition procurement and includes a section on local foods.

- **Procurement Questions Relevant to the Buy American Provision SP 14-2012** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/ files/SP14-2012os.pdf), from FNS – A memo published in 2012 addressing questions regarding the Buy American Provision.

- **Assessing Proposed Nutrition Education Costs in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program SP 07-2015** (www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP07-2015os.pdf), from FNS – This memo walks through questions an SFA should ask in order to determine if a cost can be incurred by the non-profit school food service account.

Geographic Preference Option and Buying Local Guidance

- **Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As Part II SP 03-2013** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP03_CACFP02_SFSP02-2013os.pdf), from FNS – A memo published in October 2012 addressing additional questions regarding application of the geographic preference option and other mecha¬nisms for local procurement.

- **Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As Part I SP 18-2011** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP18-2011_os.pdf), from FNS– A memo published in February 2011 addressing questions regarding application of the geographic preference option.

- **Final Rule: Geographic Preference Option** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2011-04-22.pdf), from FNS – The final rule, published in the Federal Register, includes a summary, background, and final regulatory language, by program, for the geographic preference option.

- **Farm to School and School Garden Expenses SP 06-2015** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP06-2015os.pdf), from FNS – This memo clarifies the flexibility schools have in spending funds on school garden and farm to school efforts.

- **School Garden Q&As SP 32-2009** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP_32-2009_os.pdf), from FNS – A memo published in July 2009 addressing questions regarding food safety in school gardens and purchasing products from and for school gardens.

- **Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program CACFP 11-2015** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/local-foods-child-and-adult-care-food-program) – This memo provides guidance on incorporating local foods and agriculture-based curriculum in early childhood education and care settings.

- **10 Facts About Local Food in School Cafeterias** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S_10_facts. pdf), from FNS – A fact sheet that provides basic information about buying local products for the school meal programs.

- **Geographic Preference: What It Is and How to Use It** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S_ geo_pref.pdf), from FNS – A fact sheet that introduces geographic preference and offers three examples for how to use it.

- **Using DoD Fresh to Purchase Local Produce** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/FactSheet_DoD_Fresh.pdf), from FNS – A fact sheet that provides basic information about DoD Fresh and how to connect with DoD vendors around the country.

- **USDA Foods: A Resource for Buying Local** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S_BuyingLocal_March2014.pdf), from FNS – A fact sheet that describes the ways USDA Foods supports local purchasing.

- **Local Meat in Schools: Increasing Opportunities for Small and Mid-Sized Livestock Ranchers and Fishermen** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/FactSheet_Local_Meat.pdf), from FNS – A fact sheet that describes opportunities to sell local meat to schools.

- **Buying Local Decision Tree** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/Local_Procurement_Decision_Tree.pdf), from FNS – This flow chart presents several options for including your desire for local products in your procurement process.

Local Purchasing Guidance from Other Organizations

- **A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food** (http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/Page/74/procurement-guide), from the Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network and Washington Environmental Council – This straightforward, resource-filled guide provides information on using the geographic preference option to source local foods in Washington; however, much of the content is broadly applicable.

- **Geographic Preference Primer** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FOCUS_GP_Primer.pdf), from School Food FOCUS – This primer summarizes state and federal law and provides guidance for setting a preference that complies with both. It also provides step-by-step guidance on how a school district can implement a geographic preference policy starting with articulating the legal authority and rationale for buying local.

- **Food Service Management Companies (FSMC) in New England: Barriers and Opportunities for Local Food Procurement** (http://www.farmtoinstitution.org/sites/default/files/imce/uploads/FSMC%20Local%20Food%20Report_DRAFT.pdf), from Farm to Institution New England (FINE) – This document offers tips for working with FSMCs to purchase local products and highlights a few successful models at work in New England.

- **Wisconsin Procurement Site** (http://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/procurement), from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction – This site provides an overview of the procurement process, several templates for documentation and solicitations. It also provides several examples of how to use geographic preference.

Other Helpful USDA Resources

- **Market News** (http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/marketnews), from the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) – Market News provides current, unbiased price and sales information. Reports include information on prices, volume and condition of farm products in specific markets.

- **Food Hubs: Building Stronger Infrastructure for Small and Mid-Size Producers** (www.ams.usda.gov/foodhubs), from the Agricultural Marketing Service – This site houses a working list of food hubs around the country and the Regional Food Hub Resource Guide, which describes the concept, regional impacts and economic viability of food hubs.

- **Summer Food Service Program Toolkit** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-toolkit), from FNS – This site features guidance and material on incorporating local foods and related activities into summer meals programs.

- **Financial Management – Child and Adult Care Food Program FNS Instruction 796-2, Rev. 4** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/796-2%20Rev%204.pdf), from FNS – This rule outlines the financial management requirements for CACFP, including procurement guidance.

- **Produce Safety University** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety/produce-safety-resources#ProduceSafetyFact_), from FNS and AMS - PSU is a week-long train-the-trainers food safety class for child nutrition program operators directed by the Food and Nutrition Service. Many of the PSU resources are available online; the Produce Information Sheets are particularly helpful when writing specifications..

- **USDA Foods State of Origin Reports** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/food-purchase-resources), from FNS – these spreadsheets detail the quantity (dollars and pounds) of products purchased from each state through the USDA Foods program.

- **Cooperative Extension** (http://nifa.usda.gov/extension), from National Institute for Food and Agriculture – This site maps all local Extension offices across the country.

- **Cooperative Extension Community, Local and Regional Food Systems Community of Practice** (http://www.extension.org/community_and_regional_food_systems), from eXtension – This site connect Extension professionals interested in supporting regional food systems work.
- **Cooperative Extension Healthy Food Choices in Schools Community of Practice** (http://www.extension.org/healthy_food_choices_in_schools), from eXtension – This site connects Extension professions interested in supporting healthy food in schools.
- **How Cooperative Extension Professionals Can Support Farm to School** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/FactSheet_Cooperative_Extension.pdf), from FNS – A fact sheet that describes how cooperative extension helps advance farm to school efforts.

- **Farm to School Census** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/), from FNS – The Farm to School Census surveys all school districts regarding their farm to school activities.

Appendix B: Federal Procurement Regulations

Part 200 of Title 2 of the U.S. Code of Regulations titled, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, lays out the basic procurement requirements that SFAs and sponsors administering the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program must comply with for the procurement of food, and other goods and services, when using federal funds. Program-specific rules can be found in the regulations governing each Federal nutrition program. For example, Part 210 of Title 7 of the U.S. Code of Regulations houses the regulations for the National School Lunch Program and within this section, Part 210.21 addresses state agency and SFA responsibilities regarding procurement.

Part 225 of Title 2 of the U.S. Code of Regulations houses the Cost Principle for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments. These principles guide the spending of all federal dollars and apply to a wide array of government programs.

Having a strong understanding of these regulations is key to being able to procure goods and services for the child nutrition programs with confidence that SFAs are in compliance and, equally important, that they are getting the best products at the best prices.

Requirements for all Federal Funds

- **2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards** (http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/CFR-2014-title2-vol1/CFR-2014-title2-vol1-part200) combines and streamlines many provisions previously found in 7 CFR 3016.36 (http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2006-title7-vol15/pdf/CFR-2006-title7-vol15-sec3016-36.pdf) (State and local governments) and 7 CFR 3019.44 (http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/]pkg/CFR-2012-title7-vol15/pdf/CFR-2012-title7-vol15-sec3019-44.pdf) (Non-profit organizations)
- **2 CFR 225 Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments** (http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2012-title2-vol1/xml/CFR-2012-title2-vol1-part225.xml)

Program Regulations for Procurement

- 7 CFR 210.21 (http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/CFR-2011-title7-vol4CFR-2011-title7-vol4-sec210-21 (National School Lunch Program)
- 7 CFR 220.16 http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/CFR-2011-title7-vol4/CFR-2011-title7-vol4-sec220-16) (School Breakfast Program)
- 7 CFR 225.17 http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/CFR-2011-title7-vol4/CFR-2011-title7-vol4-sec225-17) (Summer Food Service Program)
- 7 CFR 226.22 (http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-1999-title7-vol4/xml/CFR-1999-title7-vol4-sec226-22.xml) (Child and Adult Care Food Program)

Appendix C: Menu Planning Resources

Assessing Production and Seasonality

- **Census of Agriculture** (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/index.php), from USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) – NASS surveys all U.S. farmers every five years and produces county profiles that detail agricultural production in every county. Think about using this data to find out what is produced in your area.

- **The Farm to School Census** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/), from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service – The Census surveys over 18,000 school districts about their farm to school efforts. Think about using this data to find out what districts nearby are sourcing locally.

- **Cooperative Extension** (http://nifa.usda.gov/extension), from USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture – Cooperative Extension agents staff offices in each state and are experts in many agricultural topics, including local food systems. Most counties have an Extension office and these agents can help connect you with producers in your region.

- **Frozen Local: Strategies for Freezing Locally Grown Produce for the K-12 Marketplace** (http://www.iatp.org/documents/frozen-local-strategies-for-freezing-locally-grown-produce-for-the-k-12-marketplace), from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy – this document provides information on several ways schools can preserve the season's bounty for later use.

Seasonal Menu Tools and Examples

- **Current Menus** (http://nutritionservices.mpls.k12.mn.us/current_menus), from Minneapolis Public Schools – These beautiful menus and information-rich promotional pages show that local foods can be incorporated into delicious menus throughout the year, even as far north as Minneapolis.

- **Minnesota Thursdays** (http://nutritionservices.mpls.k12.mn.us/minnesota_thursdays), from Minneapolis Public Schools – This site offers information on all the producers that MPS sources from as well as copies of the district's current menus.

- **Menus that Move** (http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Food-and-Nutrition/Resources-and-Tools-for-Food-and-Nutrition/Menus-that-Move), from the Ohio Department of Education – Seasonal menus that meet USDA's new meal requirements.

- **The Lunchbox** (http://www.thelunchbox.org/), from the Chef Ann Foundation – Recipes, tips, tools, and tutorials on incorporating healthful foods into school meals.

- **Harvest of the Month Program: Taste the Flavors of Texas** (http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/33397), from Dallas Independent School District – This site showcases the marketing materials that the district has developed to highlight their "harvest of the month" program.

- **Home Grown: Menus of Wisconsin** (http://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/national-school-lunch-program/menu-planning/cycle-menu), Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction – This page houses a comprehensive set of resources that helps schools implement a three-week cycle menu that highlights Wisconsin products.

Seasonality Chart Examples

- **Washington Grown Vegetable Seasonality Chart** (http://agr.wa.gov/AgInWa/docs/SeasonalityChartHUSSCVegetablefinal.pdf), from the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

- **What's Growing Around Here?** (http://go.usa.gov/BVkk), from the Office of the State Superintendent in the District of Columbia.

- **Pride from A(pples) to Z(ucchini)** (http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s/documents/HarvestChart.pdf), from the New York State Department of Agriculture.

Integrating Local Foods

- **Pecks to Pounds** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Pecks_for_Pounds.pdf), from the Maryland Department of Agriculture – Translates the typical farm measurements (pecks, bushels, crates, etc.) to pounds. This chart is useful for both farmers and school food service staff to communi¬cate effectively with each other and enables school food service staff to convert farm measurements into serving sizes.

- **Great Trays™ Toolkit for School Foodservice** (http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/cdrr/nutrition/greattrays/), from Great Trays™ partnership in Minnesota – A host of menu planning resources including worksheets, sample menus, and recipes.

- **Using Regionally Grown Grains and Pulses in School Meals: Best Practices, Supply Chain Analysis and Case Studies** (http://www.iatp.org/files/2015_02_02_GrainsAndPulses_EMV.pdf), from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy – This guide highlights examples of schools incorporating local grains and legumes into their menus.

- **Rethinking School Lunch Guide** (http://www.ecoliteracy.org/downloads/rethinking-school-lunch-guide), from the Center for Ecoliteracy –This publication outlines ideas for transforming school lunch and offers a host of resources including information on the California Thursdays initiative and specific recipes for integrating more local foods into school meals.

Menu Planning and Forecasting

- **The Food Buying Guide for School Meal Programs** (http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-school-meal-programs), from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service – A guide (updated to reflect the new meal patterns) meant to help SFAs determine how much food to purchase and how to prepare it.

- **Menu Planning Resources** (http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/menu-planning/menu-planning-tools), from the Food and Nutrition Service's Healthy Meals Resource System – A compilation of menu planning tools, fact sheets, guides, and more.

- **Kidchen Expedition** (http://www.kidchenexpedition.com/), from the Oklahoma Farm to School Program – Full of time and cost efficient, healthful, and local recipes that use Oklahoma-grown produce; recipes are relevant wherever similar foods are grown!

Appendix D: Excerpt from School Food FOCUS RFI to Supply Locally Grown Fresh and Frozen Fruits and Vegetables

School Food FOCUS, at the direction of five large urban school districts in the Midwest, is exploring ways to expand offerings of locally grown and processed fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables for student meal programs.

This RFI outlines the types of products the school districts are looking for and seeks information from potential suppliers. The purpose of this RFI is to gather market data about the availability of local produce to inform future menuing and procurement activities. We are seeking specific information about

1. Availability of local produce
2. Capacity to aggregate, process and freeze locally grown produce
3. Gaps in infrastructure that may inhibit the capacity to serve large urban school districts

While projected pricing is requested, it is not binding and does not impact individual school districts current procurement practice. Information from this RFI will be used to determine practicality of local produce procurement and to develop a bid template for future local fresh and frozen produce that may be used by the identified districts and other districts for the following school year.

What we're asking

The identified school districts are requesting information from suppliers – whether farmer processors, fresh cut produce processors, produce freezing companies, distributors or other entities – that can potentially provide produce that meets the following objectives:

- **Local sourcing and processing.** We're looking for produce that is both locally grown AND locally processed. Each district has defined local as within a specified number of miles of their main office (see Appendix 1 for addresses and mileage ranges). The farms from which product is sourced AND the facilities in which product is pre-cut and/or frozen should all be located within the mileage figures determined by each district.

- **Fresh and frozen produce.** We're looking for volume and price information for both pre-cut fresh and frozen produce.

- **Grade A and cosmetically imperfect seconds.** We are interested in both Grade A product and cosmetically imperfect seconds (sometimes referred to as "unsized non-Grade A" product). We particularly welcome partners that can provide cosmetically imperfect seconds in either fresh or frozen form. Applicants may include information in their response about first, seconds, or both. In the case of seconds, produce must be deemed "second" solely due to cosmetic imperfection and must otherwise be safe, high quality and free of decay.

- **Food safety.** In the case of fresh-cut or frozen produce, produce must be handled in facilities that have a HACCP plan. Farms from which the produce is sourced should be GAP-certified or provide evidence of compliance with food safety standards.

- **Delivery.** We are seeking pricing of local fresh and frozen products prepared for shipment, with prices shown on an FOB basis. Because each district's distribution requirements are unique, distribution mechanisms will be determined separately by district at a later date.

- **Pack size.** Pack sizes are indicated on the response form. Products prepared for shipment must be in the indicated pack size.

- **Volume.** We are seeking entities that can provide significant volumes to meet some or all of the needed volume for a given product for a given district as detailed below. Smaller farms are encouraged to pool their product with other nearby growers to better meet larger volumes. Respondents may submit information about your ability to provide product to one or more districts given the geography of your operation.

- **Estimated demand for each district.** Appendix 2 contains estimated volume of produce that may be purchased by each school district for the upcoming school year. This data is provided for reference only and is not necessarily a predictor of future use.

School Food FOCUS (FOCUS) is a national collaborative that leverages procurement power of large school districts to make school meals nationwide more healthful, regionally sourced, and sustainably produced. FOCUS aims to transform food systems to support students' academic achievement and lifelong health, while directly benefiting farmers, regional economies, and the environment.

School Food FOCUS' Upper Midwest Regional Learning Lab engages selected school districts in collaborative research to discover methods for transforming food options. The lab brings school food service professionals and their community partners together with research and technical assistance to study and work on specific procurement goals. The direct involvement of very large districts and local grassroots activists in reshaping supply chains is unique – and uniquely effective. Read more about the FOCUS Learning Lab at our website: http://www.schoolfoodfocus.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/SFLL-Overview-05.16.11.pdf

School Food FOCUS and the respective school districts in the Regional Learning Lab would like to acknowledge the inspiration for this RFI which comes from the work that Family Farmed, www.familyfarmed.org has done on behalf of Chicago Public Schools and Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) www.iatp.org, has done on behalf of Minneapolis Public Schools and Saint Paul Public Schools. We appreciate their partnership in this endeavor!

Appendix E: Excerpt from Minneapolis Public Schools Request for Information

Part 1: General Information

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) is gathering information about farmers interested in supplying MPS with certain produce items during the 2015-2016 school year through our processing and distribution partner, Russ Davis Wholesale (RDW). MPS' Farm to School program aims to provide fresh, high-quality produce to our students and to educate them about food and agriculture. MPS is particularly looking to partner with small, beginning, family, minority and/or immigrant-owned farms in the Twin Cities region. For the purposes of this solicitation "local" is defined as within roughly 200 miles of Minneapolis.

This Farm to School Request for Information (RFI) will solicit information from farmers in the region interested in selling to MPS during the 2015-2016 growing season. Part 2 (Partner Expectations) describes MPS' Farm to School program in detail. Interested farmers are invited to fill out and submit an RFI Response Form (Part 3 below). The RFI Response Form asks for information about farm practices, product availability, and pricing regarding certain produce items that will be featured regularly on our menus during the fall and winter of the 2015-2016 school year.

MPS will determine which farmers provide the most responsive and cost-effective responses and select Farm to School partner farmers for the 2015-2016 school year. As long as Partner Expectations (outlined below) are met and supply is available, MPS intends to have RDW purchase exclusively from awarded farmer for specific products as needed throughout the duration of the growing/storage season. Farmers may be awarded one or more items, and items may be split between farmers (if farmers indicate that they can provide a portion of the estimated volume).

Learn more about MPS' Farm to School program and Nutrition Services Department at http://nutritionservices.mpls.k12.mn.us/f2s_program

Selection Process

MPS aims to work with a variety of small, beginning, family, minority and/or immigrant-owned farms in the Twin Cities region. The following are some of the criteria MPS is looking for in farmer partners:

- Proven record of respectful, professional business relationships
- Ability to provide a main "point of contact" who can provide consistent, timely phone and email communication with MPS & RDW staff
- Ability to grow and provide high-quality produce
- Demonstrate good stewardship of the land (sustainable growing practices preferred)
- Safe on-farm production and post-harvest handling food safety practices
- Willingness and ability to meet MPS' product specifications and pack sizes
- Ability to provide thorough product traceability
- Ability to make reliable, timely, and accurate deliveries
- At least $1 million in liability insurance
- Competitive pricing

Part 2: Partner Expectations

This section describes the expectations of farmers who participate in MPS' Farm to School program. MPS reserves the right to discontinue purchasing from farmers who fall out of compliance with the Partner Expectations after one written warning.

Onboarding

Farmers must complete the MPS Farm to School onboarding process prior to initial order/delivery.

For farmers who have never sold produce to MPS:

- Provide documentation to MPS (email, mail, or fax):
  - Food Safety Plan
  - Proof of Liability Insurance (at least $1 million)
  - Current water test results
  - *Proof of GAP certification (if applicable, not required)*
- Attend one-day MPS Institutional Sales Workshop – March 2015
  - Review product specifications, pack sizes, delivery & invoicing logistics
- Attend one-day MPS Food Safety Workshop – April 2015
  - Review on-farm food safety and post-harvest handling requirements (for farms that are not GAP-certified)
- Site Visit (1 hour) – June-July 2015 (for farms that are not GAP-certified)
  - If needed, take corrective action based on Site Assessment report – July-August 2015

For farmers who have sold produce to MPS in the past:

- Provide documentation to MPS (email, mail, or fax):
  - Food Safety Plan
  - Proof of Liability Insurance (at least $1 million)
  - Current water test results
  - *Proof of GAP certification (if applicable, not required)*
- Food Safety & Institutional Sales workshops are optional – March/April 2015
- Food Safety & Institutional Sales refresher one-on-one call (1 hour, for those who choose not to attend Workshops) – Feb-April 2015
- Site Visit (1 hour) – June-July 2015 (for farms that are not GAP-certified)
  - If needed, take corrective action based on Site Assessment report – July-August 2015

Funding is available through a grant from the University of Minnesota to compensate growers for travel to workshops and some additional costs of participation in MPS' Farm to School program.

Food Safety

In order to provide food that is safe for MPS students and staff, farmers are expected to follow good on-farm food safety and post-harvest handling practices. This includes safe planting, use of nutrients (compost), pest-control mechanisms, harvesting procedures, cooling, washing, packing, delivery, etc. As part of the Onboarding process described above, farmers must provide a food safety plan that describes how the farm minimizes on-farm and post-harvest food safety risks.

Food safety policies and practices that must be addressed in the food safety plan will be explained in the Food Safety Workshop. This workshop will review requirements and provide tools to assure that farms follow good food safety practices. Additionally, UMN and RDW staff will be available to provide ongoing

food safety technical assistance.

Site Visit
MPS & UMN will conduct a Site Visit to meet the farm staff, observe farm practices, and assure that good food safety practices are being followed. Farmer will receive a report within 7 business days of visit outlining any corrective actions that must be taken before MPS begins purchasing from the farm. UMN partners will be available to assist farmers with corrective actions and provide technical assistance. If applicable, a follow-up conversation or site visit will assure that corrective actions have been taken.

Unannounced Visits
In addition to a scheduled Site Visit, MPS reserves the right to conduct unannounced site visits to participating farms.

Insurance
Farmer must carry product liability insurance of no less than $1 million. A proof of insurance, such as a Liability Insurance Certificate, must be sent (email, fax or mail) to MPS before purchasing begins.

Product Specifications and Pack Sizes
All products must be packed and stored under sanitary conditions, kept at proper temperature, and handled in accordance with good commercial practices. Products delivered must match the specifications and standard pack sizes specified for each product, described in the Produce Availability and Pricing Form below and in further detail at the Institutional Sales Workshop. Farmers will have the option to bulk purchase packaging (boxes, bags, etc.) from RDW at discounted prices. MPS and RDW will communicate appropriate deviations from specified pack sizes and specifications, such as bulk bins, if applicable. Any deviations not previously agreed upon may result in one written or verbal warning followed by discontinuation of service.

The Institutional Sales Workshop will allow farmers the chance to learn about product specifications and required pack sizes. The Workshop will take place at RDW's facility and will walk farmers through pictures and real-life examples of appropriate and inappropriate products/packs, as well as other requirements for ordering, delivery and invoicing.

Traceability
Each case delivered must be labeled with farm name, product, date harvested, and date packed.

Ordering
The product quantities described in the application below are estimates of the quantities that MPS will use during the growing season. RDW will send farmers exact Purchase Orders (PO's) by email with product need dates and quantities no less than 7 days prior to delivery to RDW. Farmers must designate a primary contact person to work with MPS & RDW in a timely manner to communicate availability and order logistics, as well as a secondary contact (for instances when primary contact is unavailable).

Delivery
Farmers must deliver products in clean, new boxes/bags using clean, sanitary delivery vehicles. Bulk boxes will be available for purchase at discounted rates from RDW. While refrigerated trucks are not required, product temperatures will be checked upon delivery at RDW for appropriate ranges. Appropriate temperature ranges will be communicated to farmers during the Institutional Sales Workshop.

Appendix F: Local Purchasing Step-by-Step

Before You Start the Procurement Process

1. Budgeting: Calculate revenues, determine percentage of revenue to be spent on food, and identify maximum food cost per meal available.
2. Forecasting: Identify the products and quantities you will be purchasing, and estimate the total cost of the purchase.
3. Depending on the dollar amount of the purchase, determine whether to use a formal or informal procurement method.
4. Plan your procurement procedure, ensuring compliance with Federal, State and school district requirements.
5. Decide how you wish to define "local."
6. As relevant, determine the criteria and method of evaluation for how you will apply a geographic preference.
7. Where appropriate, incorporate these decisions into school district policy to guide food purchases.

Putting Together the Procurement

1. Clearly communicate your intent to purchase local products and explain how you define local. As relevant, apply a geographic preference to your solicitations.
2. Clearly define and communicate the evaluation criteria that will be used to select successful vendors, regardless of which method you use.
3. Identify vendor qualifications that meet your needs.
4. Write specifications to clearly identify the products you want, the level of processing you require, and any other quality, customer service or performance criteria.
5. State preferences and how they will be weighted in the evaluation process.
6. Develop and commit to a plan for reviewing and selecting the successful bid, proposal or quote.

Implementing the Procurement Process

1. Publicize the procurement opportunity to ensure adequate competition and maximize the likelihood of reaching qualified vendors who can supply food from your geographic preference area.

2. Fairly evaluate based on the vendor qualifications, specifications and preferences in your procurement request, and award the contract.

3. Execute a contract that matches your specifications and preferences from the procurement request.

4. Manage the procurement. Monitor and keep documentation on service, product quality, price and compliance with the contract.

Adapted from A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food, developed by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Accessed April 2013. http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/Content/Documents/SchoolGuideFLowResGuideNoResources-1.pdf

Appendix G: Writing Clear, Thorough Specifications

When drafting specifications for local food items, schools should consider many characteristics, including grade standard, size, quantity, quality, cleanliness, packaging, food safety and delivery. Remember, the more specific the request, the more schools may pay for the product. Consider conducting a pre-bid meeting to discuss with local vendors or producers the types of products the school is looking to purchase.

Characteristic	Description	Your Specification
Product Name and Variety	SFAs can be as specific as they want in terms of product and variety. If an SFA is procuring apples, they might specify a range of varieties or just one variety.	
Grade	Depending on the intended use for a product, it might be important to specify a U.S. Grade Standard. However, local producers may or may not be familiar with U.S. Grade Standards. The SFA should review the grade standard for desired quality and condition of the product that best fits its needs. Upon selecting the grade, include in the specification descriptive words such as "well-formed" or "well-colored" that explain the attributes desired. This will prevent the district from paying for higher quality product than necessary.	
Size	SFAs should include the approximate size of the product where applicable. Size may be expressed by count or number per standard case size, ounces per unit, diameter, etc. Size is also important relative to meal contribution, consistency, yield and labor cost. Note: If you are processing in house with manual or mechanical equipment, make sure the size of the product does not affect outcome.	
Quantity	Quantity should be included in a specification to inform seller how much product the SFA intends to purchase. Generally, the higher the quantity the better the price. Farmers and SFAs sometimes speak different languages. School districts order in cases or pounds, but farmers sell in bushels and pecks. SFAs should refer to conversion charts to help identify quantity needed. Further, stating a product in just pounds may lead to a larger quantity of smaller product, thus increasing labor.	

Characteristic	Description	Your Specification
Quality	Quality descriptors are included in U.S. Grade Standards. Again, the SFA should review desired attributes of quality and condition to include in specification. Also, specifying number of hours or days from harvest or ripeness of the product may improve the quality of the item received.	
Cleanliness	SFAs should indicate their expectations regarding the product's cleanliness. Consider stating product should be clean with no visible signs of dirt or pests.	
Packaging	SFAs should designate size and/or weight of packaged product. Large, heavy containers may be unsafe and unmanageable by employees. Inner packaging may not be necessary if the outer package is sufficient. The district should determine if new packaging is required, otherwise farmers may repack product in used containers. Some SFAs receive local products in reusable containers, also known as reusable plastic containers (RPCs). Be sure RPCs are cleaned and sanitized between uses.	
Food Safety	SFAs should always purchase food from reliable, reputable sources that follow GAPs and good handling practices (GHPs). USDA does not require school nutrition programs to purchase from GAP certified farms. In some instances, school districts or States may require schools purchase only from GAP certified farms. Food safety requirements should be clearly outlined in the bid proposal. Ultimately, it is up to the buyer to determine and document purchases are coming from a safe source.	
Farm Practices and Characteristics	SFAs are free to specify farm characteristics and practices, as long as they do not overly limit competition.	
Delivery	SFAs should establish delivery criteria. Allow flexibility in harvesting and delivery due to weather, where applicable. Product harvested in wet fields could lead to problems with product cleanliness.	

Appendix H: Pecks to Pounds

This resource is from the Maryland Department of Agriculture and translates the typical farm measurements (pecks, bushels, crates, etc.) to pounds. This chart is useful for both farmers and school food service staff to communicate effectively with each other and enables school food service staff to convert farm measurements into serving sizes.

Translation Chart
"Pecks to Pounds"

Commodity	Unit	Approximate Net Weigh	
		U.S. Pounds	Metric Kilograms
Apples	bushel	48	21.8
	loose pack	38-42	17.2-19.1
	tray pack	40-45	18.1-19.1
	cell pack	37-41	16.8-18.6
Asparagus	crate	30	13.6
Beans	bushel	56-60	25.4-27.2
Blackberries	12, 1/2-pint basket	6	2.7
Broccoli	wirebound crate	20-25	9.1-11.3
Brussel sprouts	ctn, loose pack	25	11.3
Butter	block	55,68	25,30.9
Cabbage	open mesh bag	50	22.7
	flat crate (1 3/4 bu)	50-60	22.7-27.2
	ctn, place pack	53	24
Cantaloupes	crate	40	18.1
Carrots	film plastic bags, mesh sacks, and cartons holding 48 1lb. film bags	55	24.9
Cauliflower	WGA crate	50-60	22.7-27.2
Celery	crate	60	27.2
Cherries	lug	20	9.1
Corn	wirebound crate	50	22.7
	ctn, packed 5oz ears	50	22.7
Cucumbers	bushel	48	21.8
Eggplant	bushel	33	15
Eggs	average size, case, 30 doz.	47	21.3
Garlic	ctn of 12 cubes or 12 film bag pkgs, 12 cloves each	10	4.5
Grapes	Eastern, 12-qt basket	20	9.1
	Western, lug	28	12.7
	Western, 4-basket crate	20	9.1
Honey	gallon	11.84	5.4
Honeydew melons	2/3 ctn	28-32	12.7-14.5
Kale	ctn or crate	25	11.3
Lettuce	carton packed, 24	43-52	19.5-23.6
Lettuce, greenhouse	24-qt basket	10	4.5
Milk	gallon	8.6	3.9
Onions	dry, sack	50	22.7
	green, bunched, ctn 12-doz.	10-16	4.5-7.3

Courtesy of the Maryland Department of Agriculture

Appendix I: Excerpt from San Diego Unified School District Informal Produce Solicitation

San Diego Farm to School Informal Procurement

Local Foods from Urban Agriculture Sites San Diego Unified School District April 2013

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the informal procurement process for small-threshold purchases for food defined as San Diego Local Grown specifically on Urban Agricultural sites as part of our Farm to School program (FTS). San Diego Unified School District's (SDUSD) FTS program seeks to increase children's participation in the school meal program and consumption of fruits and vegetables, thereby improving childhood nutrition, reducing hunger, and preventing obesity and obesity-related diseases. We seek to do the above by enhancing the health of our school meals by decreasing the distance food travels between farmers and students to 25 miles from the San Diego County border and using our annual fresh fruit and vegetable budget for local fresh foods.

What is Farm to School?

Farm to school connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school; improving student nutrition; providing agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities; and supporting local and regional farmers. FTS, at its core, is about establishing relationships between local foods and school children by way of including, but not limited, to:

Local Products in School Meals – breakfast, lunch, after-school snacks; and in classrooms: snacks, taste tests, educational tools.

Food systems curriculum and experiential learning opportunities such as school gardens, farm tours, farmer in the classroom sessions, culinary education, educational sessions for parents and community members, and visits to farmers' markets.

San Diego Unified School District's (SDUSD) Long-Term Farm to School Goals

1. Strive to purchase and use local fresh fruits and vegetables in our food service programs. These programs include, but are not limited to, the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Afterschool Snacks, Childhood Development Centers, and Summer Lunch Programs.

2. Serve one "all local" lunch per month.

3. Use sustainably raised hormone and antibiotic-free meat and/or protein sources in school meals; use locally raised proteins when possible.

4. Develop supplemental FTS activities and experiential learning opportunities for students, such as:

    a. School gardens,

    b. Nutrition education,

    c. Farm-based education activities, and

    d. Cooking education.

5. Create community and vendor partnerships that support the goals of SDUSD's FTS program.

San Diego Local from Urban Agriculture is defined for the purpose of this informal bid as minimally processed agricultural products (as defined by the USDA rule 7 CFR 210.21; 220.16; 215.14a; 225.17; and 226.22) grown within 25 miles from the San Diego County border on urban agricultural sites.

These foods must be:

1. Grown on farms that grow more than five food crops at one time;

2. Grown on farms that utilize a majority of hand harvesting, hand packing, or human labor power in growing, harvesting, and packing of food;

3. Delivered within 24 to 48 hours of harvest;

4. Delivered directly to multiple SDUSD school sites (not a central warehouse). The number of drops is to be determined by the district on a case-by-case basis;

5. Produce should be generally free from insect damage and decay, and

6. Product must be rinsed, cleaned, and packed in appropriate commercial produce packaging, such as waxed cardboard boxes. Standard industry pack (case counts) is required and/or half packs are allowable when it comes to bundled greens.

Evaluation

This is not a single lot award but a line-by-line award; we are asking that the urban farmers provide information for the items (highlighted in yellow only) within the list provided from pages 4 to 8. The school district retains the right to award multiple contracts to multiple vendors. Only the information in this document will be used to evaluate the bid. Bids will be awarded to the vendor who can provide the products sought in this solicitation at the lowest price. Experiential education is a critical part of SDUSD's FTS program; please outline any educational opportunities you might provide in the appropriate spaces provided below. If a tie in pricing occurs, farms that demonstrate the greatest educational benefit to SDUSD students will be awarded the contract.

Appendix J: Excerpt from Springfield Public Schools

General Produce Specifications

All product supplied must be grown in the United States with the exception of bananas. When product is not available in the Unites States market, approval must be obtained from the Nutrition Services Supervisor or her designee before a substitute product is delivered from a foreign market. If approval is granted for substituting a product that will be obtained from a foreign market, the Contractor and/or Contractor's processor must assume total responsibility for the safety of this product. The district reserves the right to purchase Oregon produced produce directly from the producer (farmer) for the purpose of promoting Oregon products in conjunction with educational programs such as the district's Harvest of the Month" (HoM) program.

Harvest of the Month Produce Specifications

The District is implementing a Harvest of the Month educational promotion throughout Springfield Public Schools . Harvest of the Month is one step toward realizing the vision Springfield Public Schools holds for school cafeterias as a model for health, wellness and food system sustainability. With HoM the cafeteria is viewed as a learning laboratory to introduce students to locally sourced foods. The District will serve one HoM fruit or vegetable at least twice during the month in which it is featured.

The District's intent is to purchase locally grown produce. It is desirable to purchase product from farms that are located as close to Springfield Public Schools as possible in order to provide the freshest produce possible. The District is interested in purchasing produce from farmers whose production practices support environmental sustainability goals, such as (but not restricted to), reduced use or elimination of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, use of organic fertilizers, fewer transport miles between farm and District, and environmentally friendly packaging. Featured HoM products will be promoted through the Nutrition Services Department at Springfield Public Schools. In addition, some schools may choose to provide supplemental educational activities in their classrooms and/or their school garden programs.

The District used the following in determining which products to feature in HoM:

1. **Availability** of the item in markets where students live such that the featured item is more likely to also be offered outside of the school environment.
2. Anticipated **purchase price** of selected items was considered and it was determined that District would attempt to purchase selected items during the height of harvest season to allow for competitive pricing.
3. Consideration was given to **children's food preferences** and how much children generally like each item selected for HoM.

4. Foods were selected to represent the **diverse** bio-cultural landscape and food economy in which the school District is located. Considerations included foods both associated with traditional Pacific Northwest cuisine and those that honor diverse culture's culinary histories.

5. Foods selected were chosen for their **ease in preparation** given existing kitchen equipment and available recipes.
6. To **familiarize** staff and students with the HoM program and build early community support and student acceptance, popular foods will be featured early in the school year.
7. To promote **school garden connections**, foods were selected that are also likely to be grown in school gardens.
8. **Nutrient dense** foods were selected.
9. To aid in incorporating foods into the meal pattern, the **storability** of selected items was considered.
10. So that kitchens may incorporate the HoM products into a variety of dishes, the **versatility** of the selected item was considered.

Based on the above considerations, the District has chosen to feature the following HoM products. In months where the availability of quantities needed of the selected food is unknown, two items have been listed. Proposers who offer fresh products that wish to be considered other than those listed for HoM on Attachment K are encouraged to submit these products for consideration by filling out the required information in the blank spaces provided.

September	October	November	December	January	February	May	June
Tomatoes	Pears	Squash	Potatoes	Apples/Beets	Beets	Carrots	Strawberries

Oregon Preference

To the extent allowed by Law, the District reserves the right to give preference to goods and services produced within the state of Oregon when all things are equal with competing offers. When fruits and vegetables grown in Oregon are in season and all things being equal, the District would prefer to purchase locally grown produce.

Evaluation Criteria

Category	Maximum Score
1. Meets Specifications	30 Points
2. Experience & Capacity of Proposer/Past Performance (References)	30 Points
3. Cost	40 Points
4. Harvest of the Month	10 Points
Total Possible Score	110 Points

To provide a uniform basis for evaluation of all proposals received, each Proposal must provide the information requested below. Responses shall be presented by category as listed, and in the same order.

1. **Category:** Meets Specifications
Information required: Type of products offered for each product category and/or product samples if provided by Proposer or requested by District.

Evaluation criteria: Extent to which offered products are deemed acceptable and suitable for the student meal program at each district. The extent to which products meet the requirements and specifications of the District and/or USDA guidelines including quality assurance and food safety requirements.

2. **Category:** Experience and Capacity/Past Performance
Information required: The experience of the Proposer within the industry, as well as the capacity and capabilities for provision and distribution of the products listed in the RFP. A minimum of three references is required which demonstrates the Proposer has provided similar services.
Evaluation criteria: Overall level of demonstrated experience by the Proposer and their capability to perform the terms of the contract. Successful past performance of Proposer based on information provided by other agencies and organizations that services have been provided to. References may be obtained from agencies not listed in the proposal.

3. **Category:** Cost
Information required: Cost of products and services offered as listed in Attachment D and/or Attachment K.
Evaluation criteria: Total estimated cost of goods and services provided.

4. **Category:** Farm to School – Harvest of The Month
Information required: Describe the products listed in Attachment K. Provide additional information on food safety if HoM produce differs from general produce food safety. Provide information so that evaluators may assess the level of sustainable and natural growing techniques used including any third party certifications such as Organic or Food Alliance Certified.
Evaluation criteria: Meets specifications as listed in Attachment K. Production and Processing Practices related to Sustainable Farming.

Method of Award

The award will be made to the proposer(s) that are deemed to be the highest ranked offerors consistent with the criteria listed in the RFP. The District reserves the sole right to award to either single or multiple Proposers for each product category. The cost determination shall be based upon the Extended Price (Total Unit Cost x Estimated Quantity)

Notice of award shall be mailed to all proposers. The District may award multiple contracts designating the highest ranked proposer as the primary contractor from whom items will first be purchased, and other contractors as alternate contractors from whom products will be purchased if not available from the primary proposer.

Appendix K: Two Sample Forward Contracts

Example 1: Producers and Distributors

This example is a template of what a distributor and producer may agree to in advance of harvest for the producer to guarantee a market for its products and for the distributor to guarantee supply to the school districts. The distributor has been competitively procured, so the school district is not involved in this second agreement between the producer and the distributor. The distributor or a farm to school coordinator may help facilitate this agreement. This example was adapted from a template created by Williamette Farm and Food Coalition.

It is the intention of _____ *(name of distributor)* to purchase _____

_____

(list of products) from _____ *(list of producer(s))*

It is the intention of _____ *(producer or processor)* to grow and sell the following product(s) to _____ *(name of school district)* through _____ *(name of distributor)*

Product name: _____

The total estimated quantity to be delivered: _____

The timeframe the product will be ripe for harvest: _____ to _____

When it will be delivered to distributor: _____

Packing requirements: _____ Unit pack: _____
(standard box, U.S. grade, loose pack, bulk, etc.)

Post-harvest handling practices: _____

Cost per unit paid to producer: $_____
(this may be a range acceptable to both parties)

Cost per unit paid by school district: $_____
(this may be a range acceptable to both parties)

Payment terms and payment process: _____

Other notes: _____

_____

_____

_____

Agreed by: _____

Producer representative: _____
(printed name, signature, and date)

School district representative: _____
(printed name, signature, and date)

Distributor representative: _____
(printed name, signature, and date)

Example 2: State Agencies on Behalf of School

This example is a template of a solicitation a school or State agency might issue to establish a forward contract. This template was adapted from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Solicitation Number: _____

Issue Date: _____

Bids Due: _____

Contact Information: _____

Award Criteria: Award will be based on the lowest and most advantageous bid(s) as determined by:

- Price
- Quality of produce offered
- Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified
- Geographic preference
- Suitability of produce for intended use
- Conformity with intent of specifications herein
- Guaranteed delivery schedule

Award of Contract: It is the general intent to award this contract to a single overall bidder on all items. The right is reserved, however, to make awards based on individual items or groups of items, if such shall be considered by the State to be most advantageous or to constitute its best interest. Bidders should show unit prices, but are also requested to offer a lump sum price.

General Specifications: Product must be identified by label indicating the produce from which it originated. If the cases of the product do not have the name of the producer on it, the product will be refused and rejected. Product must be held at the proper temperature as noted in product specifications to begin the cold chain and the cold chain shall not be broken while in custody.

All produce is to be the current season's harvest.

Item	Description	Qty.	Unit	Unit Price	Total Price
1	Blueberries **Packed:** 12 1-pint clam shells per flat **Quality:** US, No.1, well-colored, not overripe, clean, not crushed, split, leaking, or wet, free from stems, mold, or decay. Blueberries should be no more than 48 hours from harvest to pick up. Acceptable sizes range from med (189/cup) to large (129/cup). Store at 40 degrees or below if held over 24 hour period before pick up. **Delivery:** 3000 flats to be picked up from producer farm on May 19 and May 21	6000	Flats	$	$
2	Romaine Lettuce **Packed:** 24 heads in a box, 40-pound box **Quality:** US Grade No. 1, stored at 40 degrees or below immediately after harvest and packing, Romaine should be no more than 8 hours from harvest to pick up, free from decay, bruised or discolored leaves **Delivery:** 400 boxes to be picked up from producer on April 28, April 30, May 5, and May 7, 2013	1200	Boxes	$	$
3	Strawberries **Packed:** 8 1-pound clam shells per flat **Quality:** US Grade No. 1, cap (calyx) attached, picked ripe, firm, store at 40 degrees or below if held over 24 hour period prior to pick up. Strawberries should be no more than 48 hours from harvest to pick up. Acceptable size: Large—Greater than 1 inch in diameter **Delivery:** 5600 flats to be picked up from producer on April 28, April 30, May 5, May 7, May 11, and May 14.	4000	Flats	$	$

Appendix L: The Local List from Royal Food Service

ROYAL

THE LOCAL LIST

Weekly Seasonal Produce for Georgia and Local States

February 9, 2014

GEORGIA grown

Peak of Season

GEORGIA	FARM	LOCATION
CARROTS	*Coggins Farms*	*Lake Park, GA*
CHEESE, ASHER BLUE	*Sweet Grass Dairy*	*Thomasville, GA*
CHEESE, GREEN HILL	*Sweet Grass Dairy*	*Thomasville, GA*
CHEESE, THOMASVILLE TOMME	*Sweet Grass Dairy*	*Thomasville, GA*
EGGS, FRESH SHELL (white & brown)	*L & R Farms*	*Pendergrass, GA*
HONEY (blackberry, cotton & wildflower)	*Allison's Honey*	*Cleveland, GA*
GREENS, Collards, Turnip,Mustard, Kale	*Herndon Farms*	*Lyons, GA*
LETTUCE, GA GOURMET MIX	*Stone Creek Hydroponics*	*Hartwell, GA*
LETTUCE, HYDRO BIBB	*Stone Creek Hydroponics /Sweetwater*	*Hartwell, GA / Canton, GA*
ONIONS, GREEN VIDALIA	*Herndon Farms*	*Lyons, GA*
ROOT, TURNIP	*Herndon Farms*	*Lyons, GA*
TOFU	*The Soy Shoppe*	*Atlanta, GA*
WATERCRESS, HYDRO LIVING	*Stone Creek Hydroponics*	*Hartwell, GA*
YOGURT, GREEK ASSORTED	*Atlanta Fresh Artesian Creamery*	*Norcross, GA*
FLORIDA	**FARM**	**LOCATION**
ARUGULA, BABY	*B & W Growers*	*Feldsmere, FL*
BEANS, GREEN TIPPED	*Pero Family Farms*	*Delray Beach, FL*
CABBAGE, RED	*Wilkson-Cooper*	*Belle Glade, FL*
GRAPEFRUIT, RED	*DNE*	*Lake Hamilton, FL*
CORN	*Wilkson-Cooper*	*Belle Glade, FL*
JUICE, ORANGE & GRAPEFRUIT	*Orchid Island Juice Co.*	*Ft. Pierce, FL*
MUSHROOMS, WHITE (ALL)	*West Coast Mushroom Co.*	*Quincy, FL*
ORANGES	*DNE*	*Lake Hamilton, FL*
PEPPERS, GREEN BELL	*Goodson/Pexco/Fresh Start*	*Balm/Plant City/Delary Bch*
PEPPERS, VEGGIE SWEETS	*Goodson/Pexco/Fresh Start*	*Delray Beach, FL*
PEPPERS, STOPLIGHT MIX	*Goodson/Pexco/Fresh Start*	*Delray Beach, FL*
PICKLES, FRESH	*Chicago Pickle Company*	*Palmetto, FL*
SQUASH, YELLOW	*Pexco/Five Brothers*	*Plant City/Homestead, FL*
SQUASH, ZUCCHINI	*Pexco/Five Brothers*	*Plant City/Homestead, FL*
STRAWBERRIES	*Naturipe & Wish Farms*	*Plant City/Homestead, FL*
TANGELOS	*DNE*	*Lake Hamilton, FL*
TANGERINES	*DNE*	*Lake Hamilton, FL*
TOMATOES (round, cherry, Roma)	*Assorted Growers*	*Various Areas FL*
NORTH CAROLINA	**FARM**	**LOCATION**
POTATOES, SWEET	*Wayne Bailey Co.*	*Chadbourn, NC*
SOUTH CAROLINA	**FARM**	**LOCATION**
TENNESSEE	**FARM**	**LOCATION**
SPROUT, ALFALFA	*International Speciality Supply*	*Cookeville, TN*
SPROUT, BEAN	*International Speciality Supply*	*Cookeville, TN*

Appendix M: Using Geographic Preference in Four Steps

This worksheet is meant to help you work with school districts to use geographic preference for purchasing local, unprocessed agricultural products. While you (or the district) may not be able to answer every question on this sheet, the prompts will help you think through the applications of the geographic preference option.

With a specific district and a product you know is available in that area in mind, work through these questions with a partner.

1. Define local

- How has your school or district chosen to define "local" or "regional"?
- How did you establish this definition?

2. Determine whether the procurement is informal or formal

- What is the value of the purchase?
- What is the applicable small-purchase threshold?
- If the purchase amount is over the small-purchase threshold, will you use an RFP or IFB?

3. Decide how much preference to give

- How much more are you willing to pay for local?
- How many local vendors are there?
- What is the market price?

Tip: Remember that the stronger the preference you give to local products, the more those products might cost you. Think carefully about how much preference you can afford to award. You may also consider using a Request for Information.

4. Determine how much preference will be applied

Outline how geographic preference will be applied:

- Dollar value
- Point system
- Percentage
- Other?

Tip: Check out the examples on the next page for ideas on how to apply geographic preference.

Sample Geographic Preference Language

Example One: State Grown Definition of Local, Price Preference:

_____ School District seeks to serve _____ state-grown products to its students. We are currently seeking quotes for the following items for our (Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program or other special event or project) for the months of _____ and _____.

We hope to purchase produce items that are grown and packed or processed in _____ State, and will apply a 10% price preference to such products as we review the quotes.

Example Two: Two-tiered, Price Preference:

The _____ Public Schools Food Service Program desires to serve fresh, locally grown products to its students. To this end, the Food Services Department is seeking to develop a list of vendors that meet all procurement requirements from which quotes may be requested.

This district defines "locally grown products" eligible for this geographic preference at two levels. These levels are:

1. Grown in _____ , _____ or _____ Counties

2. Grown in _____ State

As allowed under federal law, the_____ Public Schools will provide a price percentage preference during evaluation of quotes to "locally grown products" purchased for school food procurement as defined under this geographic preference.

The price percentage is as follows:

1. Grown in _____ , _____ or _____ Counties-5%

2. Grown in _____ State-3%

The price percentage preference means that for the purposes of comparison, prices for product grown in one of the 3 counties will be adjusted to a price 5% lower than the price quoted for the product by the vendor or 3% for product grown outside these counties and still within the State. The price percentage preference affects the quoted price only for awarding of the quote, not the actual price paid to the vendor.

Example Three: One Point = One Penny

_____ School District seeks to serve _____ county-grown products to its students. We are currently seeking quotes for _____ for our (Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program or other special event or project) for the months of _____ and _____.

We hope to purchase produce items that are grown and packed or processed in _____ county, and will apply 10 preference points to any bidder able to supply product from _____ county. For this solicitation, 10 preference points are equivalent to a 10 cent reduction in price for the purposes of evaluating the lowest bidder.

Example Four: Percentage Preference for a Minimum Percentage Local

_____ School District seeks to serve regionally grown produce from within 400 miles of _____ county. We are currently seeking quotes for a variety of fruit and vegetable products. For the purposes of evaluating bids, respondents who can supply at least 60% of the requested items from within 400 miles will receive a 20% price reduction.

Adapted from A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food, developed by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Accessed April 2013. http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/Content/Documents/SchoolGuideFLowResGuideNoResources-1.pdf

Appendix N: Excerpt from Omaha Public Schools' Solicitation for Chicken Drumsticks

Omaha Public Schools will give geographic preference to local all-natural chicken drums. Local is defined as raised with 240 miles of the Teacher's Administration Building, 3215 Cuming St., Omaha, NE, in determining the contract award. Any vendor submitting a quote for this product will be awarded a geographic preference of 1 percent. In other words, for the purpose of determining the award, any vendor providing local all-natural drums will receive a reduction of 1 percent in bid price.

This reduction is for bidding purposes only and will not affect the price paid.

Item Description: Chicken All-Natural Drumsticks - Bulk, Frozen, or Fresh. Average pieces per case 137, average weight per drum 4.64 oz., and average meat weight per drum, at least 2.56 oz. Packaged under USDA inspection and USDA inspected, using USDA approved packaging. Packaged in 40-pound cases. Approximately 269 cases.

Appendix O: Excerpt from Harrisonburg City Public Schools' Solicitation for Fresh Produce

Please see attached fresh produce list for a nonbinding listing of fresh produce desired for the 2013-2014 school year. Each offeror must provide current pricing on all items listed and return the list with its proposal. Because produce prices fluctuate on a daily basis, price will serve as only one consideration in making the contract award. HCPS reserves the right to request produce that is not shown on its list at this time.

To Be Completed by Offeror

1. **Qualification of Offeror:** The offeror must have the capability and capacity in all respects to fully satisfy all of the contractual requirements.

2. **Years in Business**: Indicate the length of time you have been in business providing this type of service: _____ years _____ months _____ /15 pts.

3. **References**: Indicate below a listing of at least four (4) recent references for whom you have provided this type of goods/service. Include the date the goods/service was furnished and the name and address of the person the HCPS has your permission to contact. _____ /10 pts.

Client: _____

Date: _____

Address/Phone: _____

Person to Contact: _____

Offerors are asked to provide a narrative response describing how their firm will be able to meet each of the conditions listed below:

Offerors must be able to consistently provide high-quality produce to all Harrisonburg City Schools. _____ /10 pts.

Offerors have policies and procedures in place to assure food safety. _____ /10 pts.

A wide variety of specialty and certified organic produce items must be available to all schools with no more than a 2-day lead time. Please include a complete list of available products with proposal. _____ /5 pts.

HCPS is an active participant in Virginia's Farm to School program. Virginia-grown produce should be sold to schools when available. Firms should be making an effort to procure and offer Virginia-grown produce to schools. Firms should indicate these products on weekly price lists. Please submit a list of Virginia Farms used by your company with this proposal. _____ /10 pts.

Computerized (not handwritten) price lists must be provided to the central School Nutrition Program Office on a weekly basis by fax or email. _____ /5 pts.

Monthly invoices separated by individual school should be sent to the central School Nutrition Program Office by the 5th of the following month. A consolidated district invoice is not acceptable. _____ /5 pts.

Deliveries will be desired on Tuesdays and Fridays, but must be available on any day of the week as needed. Deliveries must be made by 10:45 am. Shortages in deliveries must be corrected on the same business day unless prior arrangements are made with the SNP director or school cafeteria manager. _____ /5 pts.

A company representative should contact the SNP director on a monthly basis at minimum to discuss upcoming produce specials, availability of Virginia-grown produce, market conditions that will potentially affect prices, and other related issues. _____ /10 pts.

If offeror has previously provided fresh produce to Harrisonburg City Schools, please briefly comment and cite examples of how the above conditions were met during the time of service. _____ /10 pts.

Appendix P: Excerpt from Oakland Unified School District's RFP for Fresh Produce

Produce Bid Award Point System

The District has chosen to implement a point system to make awards. The following scoring system will be used in determining which of the three lowest bidders will most closely meet the best interests of the District. There is a possible score of 100 points.

Cost

Lowest cost will be determined by total cost of all line items bid multiplied by total anticipated usage for each item.

- Lowest Bidder: 50 points
- Second Lowest: 40 points
- Third Lowest: 30 points

Sourcing

Geographic Preference: Provide produce grown within a 250-mile radius of Oakland, CA.

- Rated Best Able To Meet Guidelines: 20 points
- Rated 2nd Best Able To Meet Guidelines: 15 points
- Rated 3rd Best Able To Meet Guidelines: 10 points

Traceability

Provide information regarding the farm of origin of locally and non-locally grown products (whole and processed produce) including: a list of farms and products sourced from each farm, unique product identification numbers for locally grown products from aggregated products, and farm of origin information clearly marked on each case delivered to cafeterias. If produce not purchased directly from a farm please provide as much information as available regarding the source of produce. A sample of a traceability report will be requested with any produce samples provided.

- Rated Best Able To Meet Guidelines: 15 points
- Rated 2nd Best able To Meet Guidelines: 10 points
- Rated 3rd Best Able To Meet Guidelines: 5 points

Awarded vendor must have a proven ability to deliver high-quality produce in a timely manner, to a large customer with multiple sites, requiring daily and or weekly deliveries. References of past and present customers may be checked to determine ability to meet required service levels.

- Rated Best Able To Meet Service Requirements: 10 Points
- Rated 2nd Best Able To Meet Service Requirements: 6 Points
- Rated 3rd Best Able To Meet Service Requirements: 2 Points

Total _____

Specifications

The vendor who is awarded this contract will meet or exceed the following minimum requirements:

- Ability to provide locally grown produce. For the purpose of this quote, locally grown is defined as within a 250 mile radius from Oakland, CA. Oakland Unified prefers locally grown products whenever possible and has a goal of procuring 50 percent of produce locally.
- Provide name and location of farms that items are purchased from 1 week prior to delivery. Products should be labeled designating local source (grower, address of farm). For the purposes of this quote, "farm" is defined as the location where the produce is grown, not the address of a packing house or aggregation point. Vendor to establish written purchasing agreements with school district approved farmers or aggregators. These agreements should indicate that the vendor is willing and able to purchase produce from these growers or aggregators whenever possible.
- Vendor to report to Oakland Unified net price farmer will receive on a price-per-pound or price-per-case basis for product purchased.
- The vendor shall State the brand and item number bid; if none is indicated it is understood that the vendor is quoting the exact brand and number specified. If proposing product "equal to" the brand specified any differences should be clearly noted—include specifications and nutrient analysis. Vendors may propose any product equal to that specified. Certain specifications set forth herein for the purpose of establishing standards are not intended to preclude any vendor from bidding who can meet these specifications and requirements.
- Product specifications are based on products and pack sizes currently in use. Alternate pack sizes may be accepted when pack size specified is not available. Specifications shown have been established by the Nutrition Services Department assuring compliance with Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act 111-296; therefore, alternates may not be considered in circumstances where the menu, recipes, or noncompliance with (HHFKA) 111-296 is affected. If proposing an alternate or "generic" item, please quote it in addition to the brand requested, if possible. In any case, the District will be the sole judge as to whether the products are, in fact, substantially equal to the specifications set forth herein and whether such deviations are acceptable to the District.

- Product shelf life shall not be less than three (3) to seven (7) days from date of delivery. Products should be dated, showing a "produced on" or "pull" date.
- Vendors submitting price requests certify that no preservatives are used in the preparation of products.

Answer the following questions related to OUSD's produce specifications. Feel free to attach additional pages if you need more space to provide a complete answer.

Please describe your company's ability to provide the District with locally grown, source-identified produce. What systems do you have in place for tracking and labeling locally grown produce?

Please describe your relationships with farmers with farms under 500 acres. Do you typically work with pack-houses, grower-shipper operations, or with farmers directly? If you are able, please attach a list of farms you regularly purchase from to this price request, indicating those under 500 acres.

Oakland Unified has existing relationships with a number of small farmers and aggregators who provide produce for the District's on-school farm stands (the Oakland Fresh Produce Markets). The successful bidder will demonstrate willingness and ability to work with these farmers to provide produce for the school meals program. Please describe your company's strategy for working with these farmers and /or aggregators.

Does your company have a sustainability plan or philosophy? If so, please describe that here.

Appendix Q: Excerpt from Roswell Independent School District

Select language from introduction:

The purpose and intent of this document is to secure the best quality produce at competitive prices for the Roswell Independent School District (RISD). The District will give preference to bidders that provide fresh, seasonal and regionally grown produce. The Roswell Independent School District seeks to increase children's participation in the school meal program and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, thereby improving childhood nutrition, reducing hunger, and preventing obesity and obesity related diseases. We seek to do the above by enhancing the health of our school meals by decreasing the distance food travels between farmers and students to our geographic area. Service and price are of equal concern. The District is, therefore, willing to consider any and all options that will make service more effective and price more economical while providing reasonable income and security of contract to the bidder. The intent and purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to establish a contract with qualified sources to supply fresh fruits and vegetables as described in Appendix A and B. Please note that Roswell Independent School District reserves the right to buy regionally grown fresh produce direct from farmers, food hubs, and other small scale aggregators when product is available in support of the division's Farm to Cafeteria efforts.

Select language from the evaluation criteria

The purpose and intent of this document is to secure the best quality produce at competitive prices for the Roswell Independent School District. The RISD desires to serve fresh, regionally grown products to its students; therefore the District will give preference to bidders that provide fresh, seasonal and regionally grown produce.

- District defines regionally grown products eligible for this geographic preference at two tiers:

    1. Grown within 150 miles of the District.

    2. Grown in the state of New Mexico.

The bidder will provide a list of the regional farms that produce will be sourced from. The list will include farm name, farm location and a list of the products sourced from each farm. All farms must meet district requirements outlined. Farm of origin must be written on each invoice for each delivery. For the purposes of this quote, "farm" is defined as the location where the product is grown, not the address of the packing house or aggregation point. To apply points, all items must be available for a sixty day (60) period unless otherwise specified:

15 items grown within 150 miles or 30 items grown within the state of NM = 15 pts

10 items grown within 150 miles or 20 items grown within the state of NM = 10 pts

5 items grown within 150 miles or 10 items grown within the state of NM = 5 pts

(Seasonality Chart)

Total pts_____/15 pts

- Please see attached fresh produce lists (including Appendix C) for a non-binding listing of fresh produce desired for the 2013-2014 school year. Each bidder must provide current pricing on all items listed and return the list with its proposal. Because produce prices fluctuate on a daily basis, price will serve as only one consideration in making the contract award. RISD reserves the right to request produce that is not shown on its list at this time.

Price list included, low bidder = 45 pts

Price list included, second lowest bidder = 35 pts

Price list included, not low bidder = 25 pts

Price list not included = 0 pts

Total pts_____/45 pts

- All produce items listed must meet product specifications outlined in the RISD "regionally grown" product and price sheets. Products deemed regionally grown must be harvested and delivered within a 48 hour period unless otherwise specified. All invoices must indicate harvest and delivery date.

    100% of price quotes meet product specifications = 15 pts

    50% or above of price quotes meet product specifications = 10 pts

    20% of above of price quotes meet product specifications = 5

Total pts_____/15 pts

- Farm to School (FTS) connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in schools; improving student nutrition; providing agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities; and supporting local and regional farmers. FTS, at its core, is about establishing relationships between local foods and school children by way of including, but not limited to:

    Local Products in School Meals – breakfast, lunch, after-school snacks, and in classrooms: snacks, taste tests, educational tools.

    Food system curriculum and experiential learning opportunities such as school gardens, farm tours, farmer in the classroom sessions, culinary education, educational sessions for parents and community members, and visits to farmers markets.

Bidders that offer the following Farm to School activities

- Farm tours for nutrition services = 4 pts
- Farm tours for students = 4 pts
- Farm in the classroom = 4 pts
- T&TA to school gardens = 4 pts
- Promotional material = 4 pts

Total pts_____/20 pts

Appendix R: Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs

State Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs

State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) Programs are an integral part of the nation's food safety system. Currently 27 states operate meat and poultry inspection (MPI) programs, meaning these states hold cooperative agreements with USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). MPI programs must enforce requirements "at least equal to" those imposed under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act. Product produced under State Inspection is limited to intrastate commerce, unless a state opts into an additional cooperative program, the Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program described below. Meat in states not operating an MPI program must be federally inspected. About 1,900 meat and poultry establishments are inspected under state MPI programs. All of these establishments are small or very small. State MPI programs are characterized as providing more personalized guidance to establishments in developing their food safety oriented operations.

The 27 states that participate in the MPI program are Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Georgia (Meat Only), Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota (Meat Only), Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming. In these states SFAs can buy from state inspected facilities.

For more information, visit the Food Safety and Inspection Service's Website (http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/state-inspection-programs/state-inspection-and-cooperative-agreements).

The Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program

The Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) program promotes the expansion of business opportunities for state-inspected meat and poultry establishments. Participation in the CIS program is limited to plants located in the 27 states that have established a Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs (MPI) and maintain "at least equal to" FSIS regulatory standards. Under CIS, state-inspected plants can operate as federally-inspected facilities, under specific conditions, and ship their product in interstate commerce and internationally. Without CIS, a state-inspected plant is limited to sales within its own borders even if an adjoining state is just across the highway or river.

States participating in the Interstate Cooperative Shipping Program include Indiana, Ohio, North Dakota and Wisconsin.

For more information, visit the Food Safety and Inspection Service's Website (http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/state-inspection-programs/cis).

Appendix S: Kalispell Public Schools Beef Specifications

Kalispell Public Schools
233 1st Ave. East - Kalispell, Montana 59901
Phone: (406)751-3400 Fax (406)751-3416

SUPERINTENDENT	ASST. SUPERINTENDENT	FINANCE DIRECTOR	FOOD SERVICE
Darlene Schottle Ed.D.	Dan Zorn Ed.D.	Gwyn Andersen	Jenny Montague, MS RD
(406)751-3434	(406)751-3434	(406)751-3412	(406)751-3646

Food Service Purchasing Specifications

Product:	Beef Burger Patties
Quality:	80/20 grassfed beef patties (pastured cattle, fed hay in winter is fine) Fresh or IQF Frozen
Portion/Unit Size:	2 oz. patties (6/1 lb.)
Case Size and Packaging:	10-40 lb. (20 lb. cases preferred)
Delivery/Receiving Temperatures and Requirements:	Fresh - below 41 degrees F at all times Frozen – below 0 degrees F at all times *Delivery in Refrigerated Delivery Vehicle Mandatory, must be received by kitchen lead or head cook
Delivery Schedule:	Deliver between 7:00-8:30 am to 4 school kitchens (GHS, FHS, KMS, Central Kitchen) Fresh - Deliver once or twice per week Frozen – Deliver once or twice per month
Shelf Life Upon Receiving:	Fresh – 3 Days Frozen – 3 Months
Food Safety Requirements:	Proof of liability insurance **Current State or USDA Certification Required** (Daily Inspections/Testing Required) *Initial and Annual Inspection of facility for cleanliness conducted by School District Food Service Director must be allowed
Quantity:	300 lb./week (15 x 20 lb. cases) throughout school year Total Annual Purchase: Approx. 12,000 lb.

Appendix T: Texas Farm to School through DoD Calendar SY2014 Overview

Farm to School (FtS) Products & Delivery Periods					
Delivery Period Week of:	SY 2014				
2-Sep-13	FTS003 Watermelons, Seedless /2 per				
9-Sep-13					
16-Sep-13					
23-Sep-13					
30-Sep-13					
7-Oct-13		FTS004 Apples, Whole			
14-Oct-13					
21-Oct-13				FTS001 Oranges, Early Seeded Variety	FTS002 Grapefruits, Red
28-Oct-13					
4-Nov-13					
2-Dec-13					
9-Dec-13					
3-Feb-14					
10-Feb-14					
17-Feb-14					
24-Feb-14					
3-Mar-14					
10-Mar-14					
17-Mar-14					
24-Mar-14					
31-Mar-14					
7-Apr-14					
14-Apr-14					
21-Apr-14	FTS003 Watermelons, Seedless / 2 per		FTS005 Potatoes, Red		
28-Apr-14					
5-May-14					
12-May-14					
19-May-14					

TX-UNPS Commodity Code	Description
FTS001	Oranges, Early Seeded Variety
FTS002	Grapefruits, Red
FTS003	Watermelons, Seedless, 2 per/cs
FTS004	Apples, Whole
FTS005	Potatoes, Red

Appendix U: Excerpt from Fayetteville Public Schools

Fayetteville Public Schools

Seed to Student Program

Informal Bidding Packet

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to outline the informal bidding process for foods defined as locally grown for use in Fayetteville Public Schools' (FPS) Child Nutrition Department and the Seed to Student program (S2S). Using an informal bidding process to make local food purchases that fall within the small-purchasing threshold ensures: fair competition among growers; federal and state regulations are met; products are cost-effective; and the district can forecast product availability, and therefore, consistently purchase large amounts of local product for seasonal menus. The state established small-purchasing threshold allows FPS to use the informal bidding process to buy locally grown foods when total purchases from a single grower per bid term do not exceed $10,000.

Farm to School is broadly defined as a program that connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional producers. Farm to School programs are a fun way for students to try new foods, learn about where their food comes from, and feel connected to their food system. It is our hope that a robust Seed to Student program will increase students' fruit and vegetable intake, improve student nutrition, and reduce childhood hunger and obesity. We seek to accomplish the following by offering students more fresh and minimally processed foods and purchasing as many of those products locally as possible.

You are receiving this document because either you are a past vendor who has previously sold local product to FPS or you have indicated interest in providing products in the future. We are primarily interested in purchasing produce for our school lunch program and special events. The products listed in this document will be offered to 9,500+ students in the district on a schedule that currently operates 5 days a week during the academic year. Additionally, we plan to purchase local products for the summer lunch program that offers meals to approximately 360 students 5 days a week during the school summer break and to preserve for use during the winter months when availability of local product is limited.

Bid evaluation, review and award criteria:

This is not a single lot award but a line-by-line award opportunity; we are asking producers to provide information for the items they are interested in growing for the district within the table below. Bid term duration will be decided by grower and FPS representative during the bidding processes. The school district retains the right to award multiple bids to multiple producers. Producers do not need to bid on every product to be considered for the bid. Only the information in this document, and FPS Seed to Student Guidelines, will be used to fairly evaluate and award bids. Bids will be awarded to producers who are responsible and can provide the products sought in this solicitation at the lowest price, per federal regulation; geographic preference will be applied during the evaluation process to give an advantage to local producers. The school district reserves the right to use other producers if better pricing is available and does not guarantee any specific ordering volumes. During the bid term, FPS will monitor and keep documentation on producer service, product quality, price, and compliance with the FPS Seed to Student Guidelines to ensure we continue to work with the most responsible producers.

Definition of local and geographic preference:

FPS desires to serve fresh, locally grown products to its students. To this end, the Child Nutrition Department is seeking to develop a list of vendors that meet all procurement requirements from which quotes may be requested or supplied through weekly procurement or on an "as needed" basis. Under federal law, this department, as the purchasing institution, has the authority to apply a "local" geographic preference to minimally processed foods and to determine what is "local" for the purposes of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs such as the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Program, the Special Milk Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and the Department of Defense Fresh Program. FPS defines locally grown products eligible for the geographic preference for the purposes of informal bidding as agriculture products that are minimally processed (as defined by the USDA rule 7 CFR 210.21; 220.16; 215.14a; 225.17; and 226.22) and grown and packaged or processed:

2) within Arkansas state lines (tier 1)
3) out-of-state but within 100 miles of the FPS district warehouse (tier 2)

As allowed under federal law, FPS will provide a price percentage preference during evaluation of quotes to "locally grown products" purchased for school food procurement as defined under this geographic preference. The price percentage is as follows:

1) If a product is grown and packaged or processed within state lines a 10% weighted preference will be applied
2) If a product is grown and packaged or processed out-of-state and within 100 miles of the FPS district warehouse a 7% weighted preference will be applied

The price percentage preference means that for the purposes of comparison, prices for product grown within Arkansas state lines will be adjusted to a price 10% lower than the price quoted for the product by the producer or 7% for product grown out-of-state but within 100 miles of the district warehouse. The price percentage preference affects the quoted price only for awarding of the bid, not the actual price paid to the producer.

Producer qualifications:

Producers are considered to be responsive, responsible and good candidates for our program and the bidding process if they meet the following requirements:

1) History of providing quality customer service and product to FPS or can provide references to demonstrate this, upon request
2) Communicate in a timely manner via phone and email
3) Can provide product to meet all or the majority of FPS needs for that product for several weeks during a season
4) Provide product that meets the specifications outlined in the informal bid information below
5) Comply with the requirements outlined in the FPS Seed to Student Guidelines
6) Can deliver product within 24 to 48 hours of harvest, unless the product can be cold stored for longer periods of time or delivered frozen
7) Be willing to participate in district farm to school educational events, schedule permitting (optional).

Experiential learning is a critical part of the FPS S2S program; please describe your willingness and availability to be present on school campuses for educational Seed to Student programming opportunities in the space provided below. Please describe any additional experiential educational opportunities that you might be able to provide FPS students, if any. For example, do you host farm tours or do you visit school classrooms and talk about farming and agriculture with students? If a tie in pricing occurs, producers who demonstrate the greatest educational benefit to FPS students will be awarded the bid.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please describe below your organization's capacity to trace product from farm to institution? _____

_____

_____

_____

Informal Bidding Evaluation Form: For Official Use Only

Bids will be awarded to vendors who are responsive, responsible and can provide the products sought in the solicitation at the lowest price, per federal regulation.

Product specification + BID TERM DURATION:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Farm #1	Farm #2	Farm #3
Name: Contact information:	Name: Contact information:	Name: Contact information:
Meets producer requirements: ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**	Meets producer requirements: ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**	Meets producer requirements: ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**
Poundage/wk:	Poundage/wk:	Poundage/wk:
When & # of weeks available:	When & # of weeks available:	When & # of weeks available:
Delivery day:	Delivery day:	Delivery day:
Price quote:	Price quote:	Price quote:
Geographic preference (circle one) · Tier 1 (10%) · Tier 2 (7%)	Geographic preference (circle one) · Tier 1 (10%) · Tier 2 (7%)	Geographic preference (circle one) · Tier 1 (10%) · Tier 2 (7%)
Adjusted price quote:	**Adjusted price quote:**	**Adjusted price quote:**

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