



Office of the State Superintendent of Education

A TOOLKIT FOR PROCURING LOCAL FOODS IN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

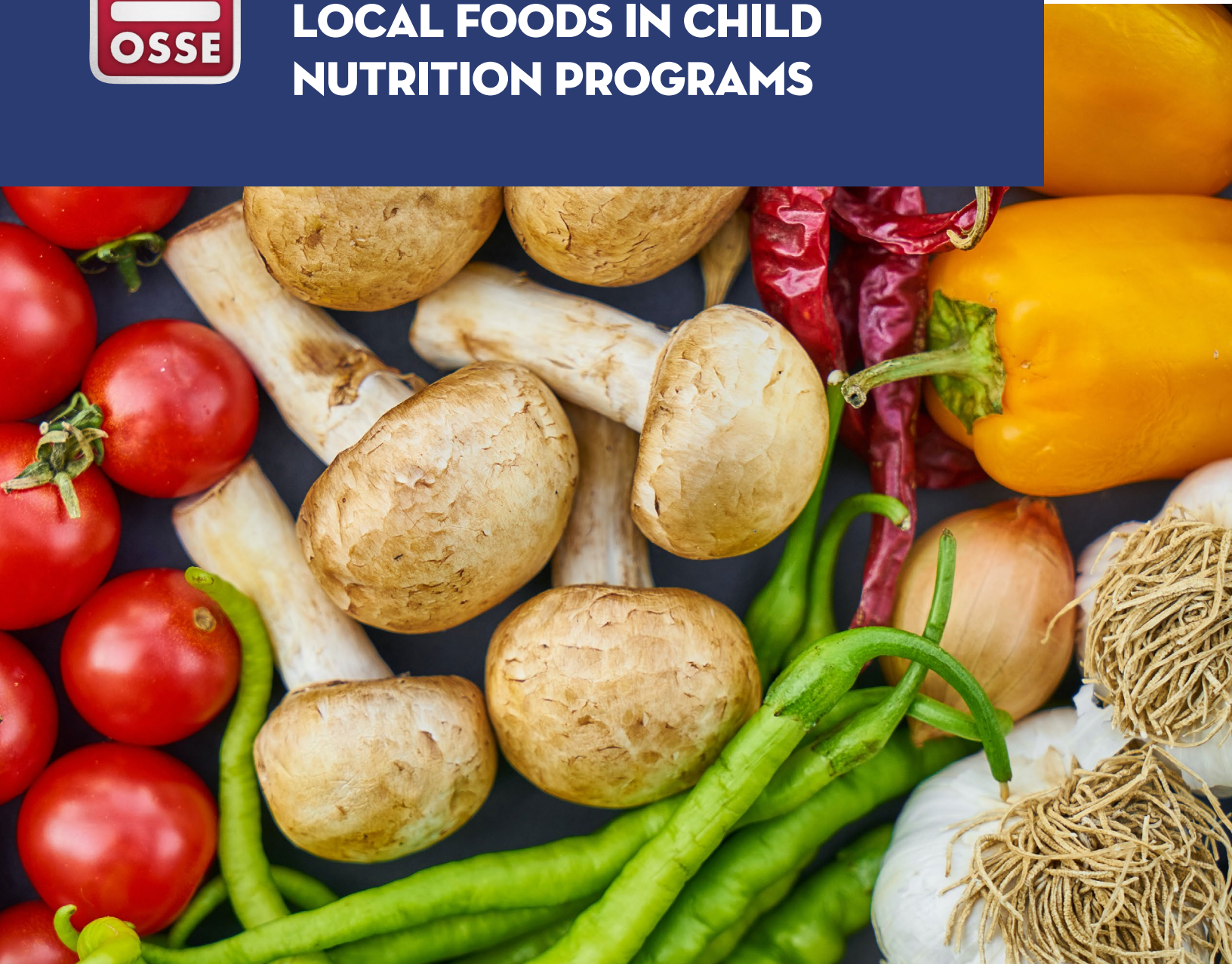




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FORWARD

For those of us in the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) space, it is a good day when we see students thoroughly enjoying the healthy foods that make up their school, early care, afterschool, or summer program meal. We know the care that food service staff put into each meal to ensure that it meets or exceeds program requirements for a safe, nutritious, and appealing meal.

Sometimes we are even fortunate enough to hear a group of students cheer when they hear a favorite local item, like mumbo chicken or strawberries and greens salad, are on the menu. Knowing that these items are not only appetizing to children, but also supporting the economic vitality of farmers and producers in our region with each purchase of local product, makes those great days.

The goal of this document is to create one resource that marries the inspiring activities celebrating local foods we see here in the District of Columbia (DC) with the best practices for effective procurement that together, can support and sustain an infrastructure for local food procurement in every Child Nutrition Program.

Let's make every day a great day for DC meal programs.

PROCUREMENT

The word *procurement* may connote different assumptions or feelings for our food service partners. For some, procurement may be a familiar part of their everyday operations. For others, procurement may feel like an overwhelming set of steps with many regulations guiding the process. No matter where you fall in your procurement journey, there is a resource for you to help you with your next step.

If you are very comfortable with procurement, jump here)

■ NEW TO PROCUREMENT (START HERE)

Welcome to the wonderful world of procurement!

What is procurement, you ask?

Procurement is what happens every time a CNP purchases a good or service. Whether buying a truckload of chicken or a case of apples, a program is making decisions. When procuring goods or services for meal programs, program operators are responsible for ensuring that eligible participants are benefiting from the program and that taxpayer dollars are used effectively and efficiently. There are many local and federal rules in place to help programs receive the goods and services that meet their needs at the best price.

There are some key requirements to keep in mind when making purchases for your CNP.

1. **Procurement must provide for full and open competition.** This means that all potential vendors are on a level playing field without any having an unfair advantage over another. With full and open competition, a CNP has a better chance of receiving more goods and services at a lower cost than in a non-competitive environment.
2. **Proper procurement includes having and following procurement procedures.** CNPs must have written processes for conducting procurements. This also includes maintaining records that sufficiently details the history of each procurement.
3. **Procurement must be conducted at the most restrictive threshold per the chart below.** Please note that your organization may have a more restrictive threshold than what is listed below.

<u>MICRO-PURCHASE</u>	<u>SMALL PURCHASE</u> (Informal)	<u>FORMAL PROCUREMENT</u>
Federal Threshold: \$10,000 or less DC Government Agency Threshold: \$10,000 or less	Federal Threshold: \$250,000 or less DC Government Agency Threshold: \$100,000 or less	Federal Threshold: More than \$250,000 DC Government Agency Threshold: More than \$100,000
OVERVIEW		
<p>Micro-purchases may be awarded without soliciting competitive quotes if CNP considers price given to be reasonable and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNPs have procedures for utilizing within own documented procurement procedures, including a method for documenting price quote; • If multiple purchases are made, aggregate dollar amount does not exceed micro-purchase threshold; and • To the maximum extent practicable, CNPs should distribute micro-purchases equitably among qualified suppliers. 	<p>Small purchases may be awarded after a CNP has received and reviewed price quotes from at least two qualified sources and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNPs have procedures for utilizing within own documented procurement procedures, including a method for documenting vendors contacted and price quotes; and • If two or more vendors meet all specifications, the vendor with the lowest price wins the bid. 	<p>Formal procurements may be awarded after a solicitation with all necessary clauses and requirements was made publicly available and evaluated for reasonability, responsiveness, and price.</p>
EXAMPLE		
<p>A CNP might use a micro-purchase to source local strawberries from a local grower for a one-time event like Strawberries and Salad Greens Day.</p>	<p>A CNP might use a small purchase to work with a food hub to provide monthly products for a Harvest of the Month program.</p>	<p>A CNP may complete a formal solicitation to procure all their produce, including local items, from a produce distributor.</p>

Also see [Appendix](#) for a Decision Tree for Procurement of Products and Services with Child Nutrition Program Funds.

There are six steps to the procurement process, no matter the method utilized.

1. **Planning** – Use your developed procurement procedures to determine what goods or services are needed and in what amounts. Forecasting for items needed and budget availability will help identify the procurement method. Other considerations may include delivery location and frequency.
2. **Drafting Specifications and/or Solicitation** – This is the documentation for all the details about the goods or services needed such as descriptions of product variety, amount and quality; requests for delivery, and identification of preferred packaging and farm practices. Note that when describing needs, descriptions must not be so specific as to limit competition to one particular brand without allowing for an equivalent. Depending on the procurement method, there may be [other language or documentation required](#) to make a complete procurement package.
3. **Sharing Specifications and/or Solicitation** – Once the procurement package is finalized, the information needs to be shared with potential vendors. For a micro purchase or small purchase this may look like a CNP calling or emailing potential vendors with the specifications and obtaining at least two price quotes. Sharing a formal procurement must include a public notice.
4. **Evaluate Responses** – Review responses for the most competitive potential vendor. Price will likely be the most important consideration when determining if a potential vendor is competitive; however, the evaluation criteria in a Request for Proposal may also include other factors. All responses should be documented as a part of your CNP procurement records.
5. **Purchase or Award a Contract** – After evaluation, an award is made. For contracts, ensure [federally required provisions](#) are included.
6. **Receive Goods or Services** – Again, while this may look different depending on the procurement method, proper procurement involves managing the goods or services received throughout the whole process. Be sure to maintain all records related to procurements for at least three years plus the current year.

For additional resources related to procurement in Child Nutrition Programs, visit the Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)'s [website](#). Federal regulations related to procurement for CNPs can be found in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at Title 2, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 200.

■ VERY COMFORTABLE WITH PROCUREMENT

Great! Read on for some additional resources that may be useful when procuring local foods for your program.

■ LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT FOR SMALLER SITES

CNPs have many options for potential vendors that may be able to supply local foods including:

- Direct from a [local producer](#): Ask farmers and producers about their products directly.
- Through a [distributor](#): Ask vendors what products are seasonal and available locally. Communicate your preference for local products.
- From a [farmer's market](#): If purchasing volumes are small, consider purchasing seasonally from a farmers' markets and community support agriculture (CSA) programs.
- From [the garden](#): Incorporate produce directly from a school or early care garden.
- [Corner stores/Grocery/wholesale stores](#): look for signage indicating locally sourced items.

For a refresher of best practices for local food procurement as a smaller site, view [this recording](#).

■ LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT FOR LARGER SITES

In addition to the potential vendors listed above, larger CNPs sites might also consider the following channels for local food:

- [Through a food hub or producer cooperative](#): When producers organize to aggregate products through a food hub or co-op, CNPs often benefit by being able to access larger volumes of local product without the administrative burden of working with multiple farmers and producers individually.
- Through a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) or vendor: OSSE has developed [procurement templates](#) with language for requesting local food as a part of a formal Request for Proposal or Invitation for Bid solicitations for meal service.
- As a part of an existing program: For CNPs operating the [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#) or the [Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program \(DoD Fresh\)](#), these programs can be a great place to practice sourcing local produce.

For a refresher of best practices for local food procurement as a larger site, view [this recording](#).

IS THAT LOCAL?

DC CNPs are reimbursed five cents per day when at least one component of a reimbursable meal is comprised entirely of locally-grown and unprocessed foods. Local foods may include beans, vegetables, fruits, grains and flour, fish, meat, poultry, eggs, and other foods that meet the definitions below. When planning to purchase local foods, assessing which products are available locally and when they are in season is essential. The following section will cover local legislation, define local and unprocessed foods, and explore important considerations when procuring local foods.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT OVERVIEW

The Healthy Schools Act (HSA) requires that public and public charter schools serve locally-grown, locally-processed, and unprocessed produce from growers engaged in sustainable agriculture practices whenever possible.

For a complete overview of all HSA requirements, please view the [Healthy Schools Act Informational Guide](#). For a summary of HSA nutrition requirements, please view the [HSA Nutrition Overview](#).

HEALTHY TOTS ACT OVERVIEW

The Healthy Tots Act provides funding and resources to support childcare facilities' ability to serve nutritious meals and to offer high-quality wellness programming. Childcare facilities that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are automatically eligible to receive the Healthy Tots reimbursements.

SEASONALITY

Seasonality Charts reflect which fruits and vegetables are in-season and locally available during the different months of the year. The following resources highlight what products are in season in the DC, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area:

- [Washington, DC](#)
- [Virginia](#)
- [Maryland](#)

Purchasing local foods in season can often make for more competitive pricing. Some farmers may use season extension methods such as high tunnels or greenhouses to extend their seasonal offerings. Others may have storage facilities. CNPs can take advantage of in-season pricing by buying fresh produce in season and freezing them for later use.

IS THAT LOCAL?

To be certain the items you are reporting are locally grown/raised and unprocessed, make sure the answers to the following two questions are YES!



2 IS THE FOOD UNPROCESSED? If it went through one of the following processes, it is still considered "unprocessed."

- Cooling, refrigerating or freezing
- Peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting, chopping, shucking or grinding
- Drying or dehydration
- Washing
- Cold pasteurization
- Vacuum packing, bagging or placing in cartons (as with eggs)
- Butchering (as with livestock, fish or poultry)

Remember, please report only items that are processed locally (according to the above methods) if they have also been grown or raised locally!

FINDING LOCAL FOOD

Local supply chains involve many players as local foods can come from local farmers, ranchers, fishermen, food processors, and distributors of all sizes. There are several strategies to get you started on identifying and sourcing local foods and connecting with local food businesses:

GARDEN TO CAFETERIA

Garden to Cafeteria procurement program teaches students growing and harvesting foods safely and delivers fresh, unprocessed foods from their site's garden to their own cafeteria in the form of salad bars, and scratch-cooking.

- [Introduction to the Garden to Cafeteria Program Training](#)

LOCAL FARMERS

This region is home to many farms. Work directly with a regional grower to determine which products they grow can meet the needs for your CNP. Some farms may also run on-farm markets.

- List of Farms in the [SY23 Locally Grown & Unprocessed Tracking Log.xlsx](#)
- [List of Participating Producers in Strawberries and Salad Greens Day](#)
- [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Local Food Directory](#)

FARMERS' MARKETS

Visit nearby farmers' markets to connect directly with local farmers and producers in one visit.

- [The National Farmers Markets Directory](#) identifies about 36 Farmers Markets in Washington DC
- [2022 DC Farmers Markets](#)
- [FRESHFARM Producers & Farmers Directory](#)
- [USDA Local Food Directory](#)

FOOD HUBS

Food Hubs offer a combination of aggregation, distribution, and marketing services at an affordable price. Here is a selection of food hubs in the DMV area:

- [The University of the District of Columbia \(UDC\) Urban Food Hubs](#)
- [FRESHFARM Pop Up Food Hub](#)
- [Virginia Local Food Hub](#)
- [USDA Local Food Directory](#)

SUPPLIES

Adequate supplies and equipment make preparing and efficiently serving meals with local meals easier and safer appetizing meals that incorporate local foods. Choosing the right kitchen supplies can help CNPs improve efficiency when preparing local food, increase the quality and longevity of the produce, decrease food waste, and extend the CNP's budget allocated to procure local food.

Read on for lists of kitchen supplies and equipment helpful to receive, store, prepare, and serve local foods.

FOOD STORAGE

Proper storage of local fruits and vegetables can minimize food waste and increase food safety by [reducing the risk of foodborne illness](#).

Recommended supplies for sites of all sizes:

- Storage containers and airtight bins
- Adequate refrigeration and refrigerators

Recommended supplies for larger sites:

- Blast chillers

FOOD PREPARATION

Proper tools help CNPs prepare local foods onsite.

Recommended supplies for sites of all sizes:

- Sharp knives
- Durable slicers
- Mixing bowls
- Cutting boards
- Food processors

COOKING FOOD

Properly cooking local food for CNPs is easier when using quality cooking supplies and equipment.

Recommended supplies for sites of all sizes:

- Oven
- Microwave
- Stove

Recommended supplies for larger sites:

- Steamers
- Tilting skillets
- Combination oven

SERVING FOOD

Supplies and equipment for serving food help keep foods safe by holding it at the proper temperature and displays local foods in a manner that makes them visually appealing to encourage students to select those choices.

Recommended supplies for sites of all sizes:

- Trays or plates
- Serving utensils

Recommended supplies for larger sites:

- Holding cabinets
- Mobile food carts
- Salad bars
- Warming bags
- Serving lines

HOW DO I PROMOTE LOCAL FOODS?

ANNUAL EVENTS

These annual District-wide events provide opportunities for CNPs to promote local foods in their program:

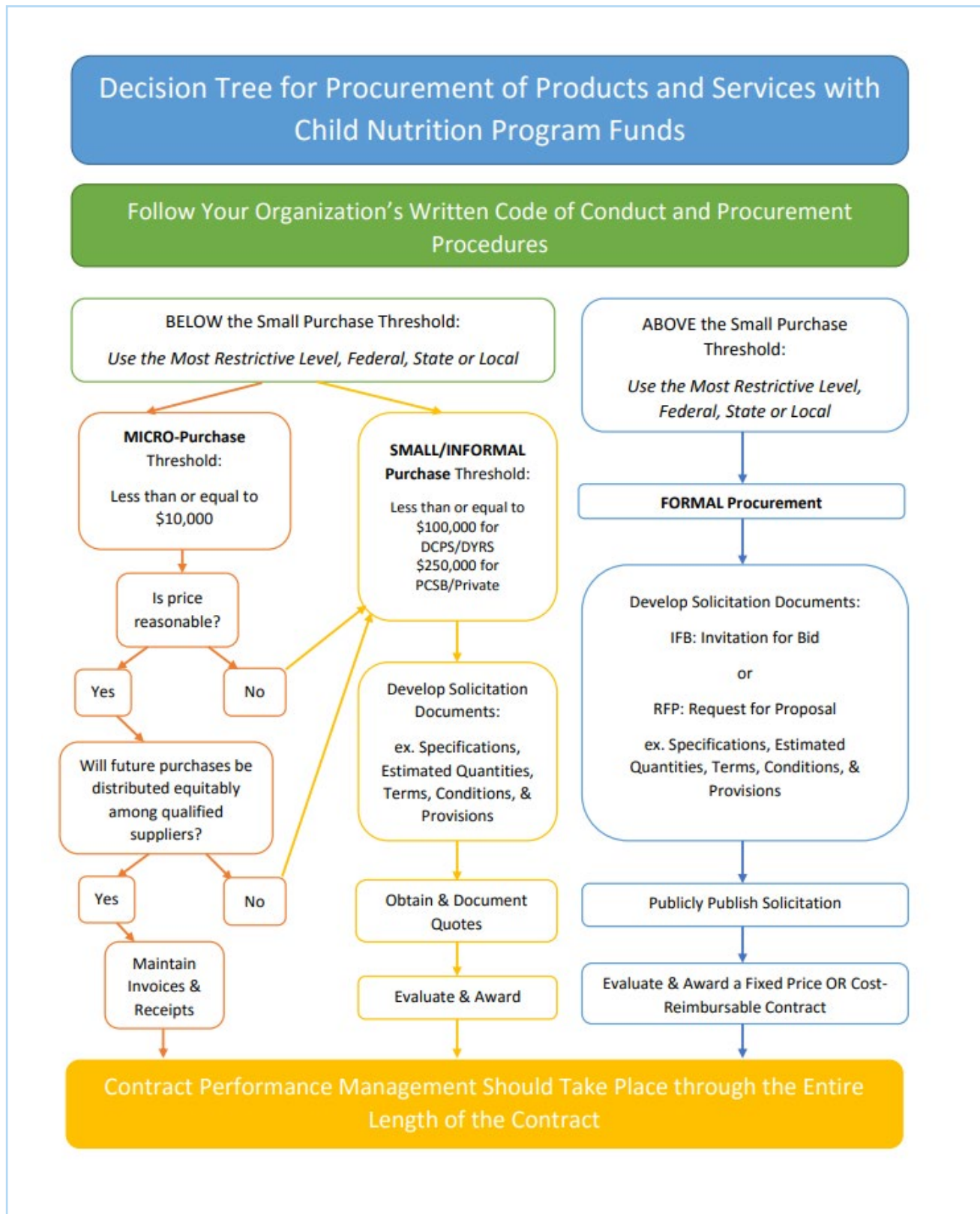
NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH	GROWING HEALTHY SCHOOLS MONTH	STRAWBERRIES & SALAD GREENS DAY
OCTOBER	OCTOBER	JUNE
Each October, join thousands of schools, early care and education sites, farms, communities, and organizations across the country to celebrate food education, school gardens and lunch trays filled with healthy, local ingredients.	October is Growing Healthy Schools Month which celebrates the health of students in public schools throughout the District.	Every June, Strawberries & Salad Greens Day showcases locally grown produce in school meals.

TEN IDEAS FOR INTEGRATING AND MARKETING LOCAL PRODUCTS

To begin integrating local products, CNPs often start by answering the questions:

- Which local foods will be most popular among students?
- Which local foods are already on our menu?
- What is the CNP's budget for local products?
- Will the CNP develop recipes to highlight new products, or will it substitute ingredients?

1. Audit Existing Menu	2. Substitute Ingredients	3. Salad Bar	4. "Harvest of the Month" program	5. Develop New Recipes
Identify and label products that the CNP is already purchasing locally.	Adjust existing recipes and menus to accommodate local products. Substitute a non-local ingredient with local options.	This is an option to offer a variety of seasonal vegetables and fruits.	Highlight one local ingredient monthly or seasonally.	Create new menu items to highlight local products and food traditions.
6. Surveys and Menu Tastings	7. Media Campaign	8. Classroom Integration	9. Guest Speakers	10. Contests and Fundraisers
Gather student feedback to determine which local food items students are enjoying the most.	Create posters, flyers, window clings, farmer trading cards, and post pictures on the CNP website or on social media sites to promote local options.	Give advanced notice of when local products will appear on the menu, so that educators can introduce new foods during nutrition classes or afterschool clubs.	Reach out to local producers or chefs and see if they'd like to visit your program's site to give a talk.	Feature local food in fundraising events or student contests (i.e., Student art contest with local foods focus).



RESOURCES

The USDA Farm to School Census- includes data on the variety of farm to school activities, types of locally sourced products purchased by school food authorities (SFAs), as well as estimates on how much is spent on locally grown products. ([Home | USDA-FNS Farm to School Census](#))

The USDA Census of Agriculture- 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. (www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/)

■ THE USDA FOODKEEPER APP

The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service FoodKeeper app helps you understand food and beverages storage to maximize the freshness and quality of produce. For more information about the USDA FoodKeeper App, check [here](#)

■ EQUIPMENT GRANT

Funding for kitchen supplies can be supported through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Equipment Grant that allows the purchase of capital equipment used to serve healthier meals; meet the nutritional standards with emphasis on more fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals; improve food safety, and expand access to food services. For more information about the NSLP Equipment Grant, check [here](#).

■ REPORTING LOCAL FOODS

DC CNPs report their local tracking to OSSE.

[Local Tracking Logs for Schools](#)

[Local5 Reimbursement Information \(Healthy Tots Act\)](#)

■ MARKETING LOCAL PRODUCTS

[Marketing Materials](#) and [Farm to School](#) resources from The Lunchbox.

[National Farm to School Month](#)

[Growing Healthy Schools Month](#)

[Strawberries and Salad Greens Day](#) and [Resource Packet](#)

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