

Farm to School Procurement



NH Farm to School (NHFTS) is a statewide program working to connect NH farms and schools. Farm to school connections enable schools to serve healthy, locally grown foods in their cafeterias, integrate farms, food, and nutrition into their curriculum, and explore food and agriculture-based learning opportunities.

For further information, please contact:

Stacey Purslow
NH Farm to School
Coordinator
Sustainability Institute
107 Nesmith Hall, 131
Main St Durham, NH
03824
(603) 862 -2542

Stacey.Purslow@unh.ed



How to purchase local foods using USDA procurement guidelines

The purpose of using proper procurement procedures is to ensure competition in order to get the best product at the best price. Accountability to the taxpayers about the effective use of school nutrition funds is of equal importance.

- All purchases need to be made in accordance with federal procurement regulations, through either an informal or formal procurement process.
- When writing a solicitation, “local” may not be used as a product specification as it may restrict fair and open competition.
- A minimum of three bids is required when spending federal funds. Document efforts to obtain three or more bids. Bids could be subject to auditing.
- Award the contract to the bidder that is most responsive and responsible with the lowest price. Lowest price is not the ultimate determining factor. **Responsive** means that the vendor or farmer must conform to all the stated terms and conditions of the solicitation. **Responsible** means that the vendor or farmer must be capable of performing successfully under the terms and conditions of the solicitation or contract. Is the farmer or vendor delivering the right product to the right place at the right time?
- The length of the contract can vary. It could be seasonal or monthly or a one time purchase such as for a special meal or event.
- You can include a preference for local or regional products when competitively procuring your non-farm distributors.
- Formal procurement involves publically announcing the solicitation online or in print.



Using a Forward Contract

- **This is also called contract growing.** The farmer agrees to grow certain crops in specified quantities at a set price for the school or schools or other entities like a buying group. This allows farmers to plan, plant and pack according to the school's needs. It also assures a sale for the farmer.
- Schools can include language in the contract to address crop failure and the right to source product elsewhere.
- Forward contracts still need to be competitively procured.
- Schools can plan menus around the contracted produce.
- Distributors and farmers can also have forward contracts. You should consider working with your competitively procured distributor and ask them to contract with farmers to provide products to the school.
- Forward contracts can take a lot of time so start planning in the fall for next year.

Using the Informal Procurement Process

- **The Federal Small Purchase Threshold is \$150,000.** If you will be purchasing more than this amount from the same vendor over the course of one year, you will need to use the **formal procurement method**.
- New Hampshire has **not** set a small purchase threshold, however, if your city/town or county has and it is lower than the federal threshold, you will need to use that lower figure.
- Develop a written, informal solicitation. Although you cannot use the word local as a specification in the solicitation, you can use words like fully ripe, harvested within 48 hours of delivery, or include specific varieties of produce that you know are locally produced.
- Informal bids can go to farmers or other local sources like a cooperative. They can be contacted by phone, mail, e-mail or in person. Be sure they all get the same information.
- If you are not able to solicit three bids, check your solicitation to ensure that you were not overly restrictive, and document your efforts to contact additional vendors.
- Sole source procurement may happen when only one supplier or distributor can fulfill the solicitation. This could be true when sourcing fresh fish or beef from NH.

For questions regarding proper procurement procedures, please contact the NH Bureau of Nutrition Programs and Services: 603- 271-3646