



SEEDS to SUCCESS

THE LOUISIANA FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Local Procurement in Child Nutrition Programs



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Agenda

- What is Farm to School
- Defining local
- Procurement principles and regulations
- Procurement methods
- Specifications, requirements to target local
- Resources and Questions



What is Farm to School?

- The purchase and use of local foods in meals, snacks, and taste tests
- Hands-on learning and engagement through gardening
- Educational activities related to agriculture, food, health, or nutrition

CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM TO SCHOOL



Benefits for Our Children

- Improvements in early childhood eating behaviors
 - Choosing healthier options
 - Willing to try new foods
 - Consuming more fruits and vegetables
 - Consuming less unhealthy foods and sodas
- Less screen time
- More physical activity
- Gain knowledge and awareness about gardening, agriculture, healthy eating, local foods and seasonality



Impacts Student Food and Nutrition Knowledge and Behaviors



- Demonstrated **willingness to try** new, healthier foods
- **Increased preference** for fruits and vegetables
- **Improved knowledge and attitudes** regarding food literacy, nutrition, health behaviors, and fruit and vegetable consumption
- **Increase in fruit and vegetable consumption** among those with the lowest previous intake
- Potential to **minimize diet-related diseases** in childhood, such as obesity and diabetes



Farm to School in Louisiana

- Louisiana R.S. 17:195.1 (2016): “Develop and implement a farm to school program to promote the use of locally grown and raised agricultural products in school nutrition programs”
- Established through an inter-agency agreement between LSU AgCenter and Louisiana Department of Education Division of Nutrition Services
- Funded by federal grants and state administrative expense funds



Defining Local and Where to Find Local Foods

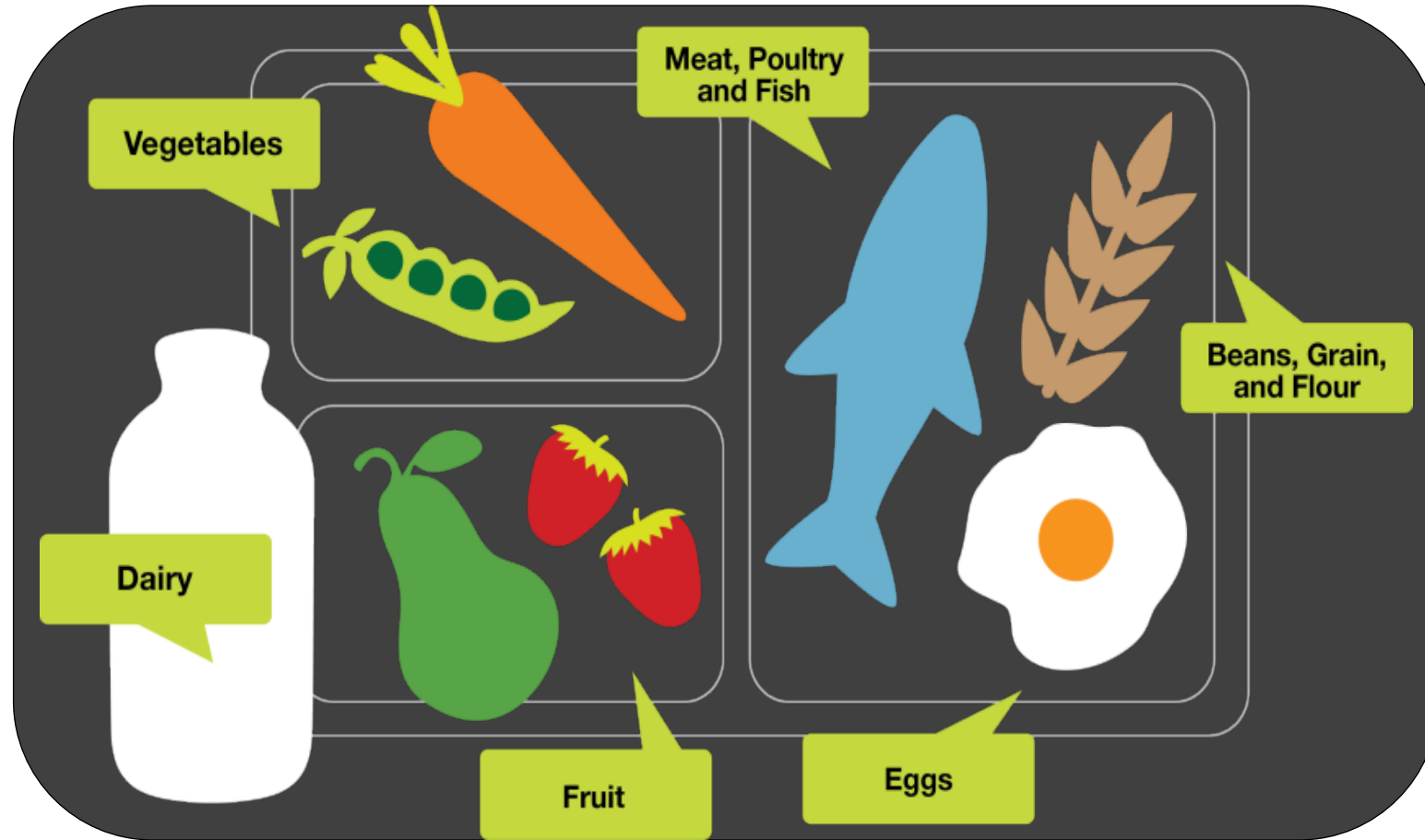


Advantages of Buying Local Foods

- Can buy with the seasons.
- Create and advertise flexible menus.
- Expose students to unique varieties.
- Develop innovative and creative recipes.
- Use lower cost farm “seconds” for specific recipes.
- Do need to consider availability of necessary equipment.
- Determine if your staff is supportive:
 - Culinary skills
 - Product knowledge
 - Willingness to learn



What Types of Products?



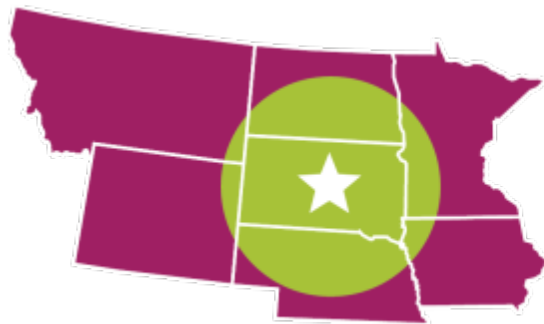
What Does Local Mean?

- Who defines local?
 - School food authorities
 - Childcare institutions
 - Summer Food Service Program sponsors
- What are you trying to accomplish?
 - Is there state based legislation regarding local purchasing that you'd like to be aligned with?
 - Do you want to bring as many local product as possible onto the menu quickly?
 - Do you want to couple local purchases with farm visits and have personal relationships with suppliers?



Defining Local

- Within a radius
 - Within a parish
 - Within Louisiana
 - Within a region
- A district's definition of local may change depending on the:
 - Season
 - Product
 - Special events



What's *Already* Local on Your Menu?

- Look at your records.
- Ask your suppliers whether they purchase local products.

What *Could* Be Local?

- Conduct a menu audit.
 - » Are there items that could easily be replaced with local products?
- Think about ways to integrate.
 - » Louisiana Harvest of the Month program – choose items for the entire year
 - » New recipe development
 - » Salad Bar
 - » Seasonal Cycle Menu – change your fruits and vegetables based on the season
- Include tracking of local in future contracts.



What is Produced in YOUR Area?

After summer break?

Watermelon

Cucumbers

After winter break?

Satsumas

Cabbage

After spring break?

Tomatoes

Strawberries



What items are grown, harvested, produced or processed nearby?



What local products have you seen on school menus recently?



What might be local on the menu?



Five Ways to Integrate Local

1. Identify what is local on the current menu
2. Substitute ingredients
3. Serve local products on the salad bar
4. Start a Harvest of the Month program
5. Develop new recipes



Language with Local Emphasis: Introduction Example

The Food Service Department (The Department) at the 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 free and reduced price rate 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.**

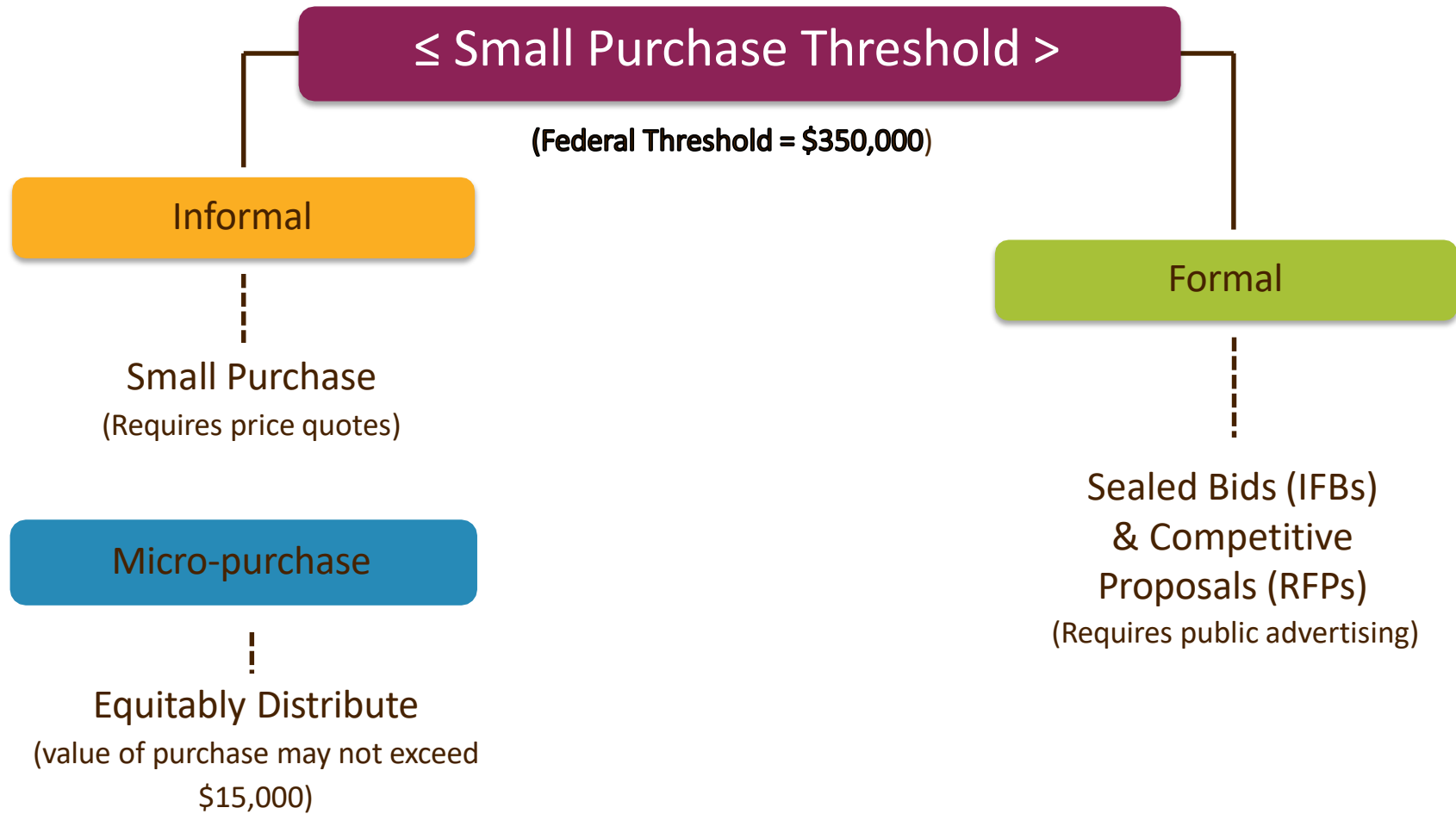


Defining Local: An Exercise

1. What goals do you hope to achieve with your definition of local?
2. How would you define local for fruits and vegetables in your area to achieve this goal?
3. Would your definition need to change for animal-based proteins?
4. Would your definition need to change if you primarily wanted to source from intermediaries versus direct from farmers?



Procurement Methods



1 Micro-purchase Procedure

Use it when:

The aggregate value of your purchase falls below the micro-purchase threshold of \$15,000.

Micro-purchases enable schools:

- To purchase supplies or services without soliciting quotations, if the school considers the price reasonable.

When using the micro-purchase option, schools must:

- Distribute micro-purchases equitably among qualified suppliers, and
- Document all purchases.

Informal

MEMO
FM 03-
2018



2

Federal Small Purchase Procedure

Use it when:

The estimated amount of your purchase falls below \$350,000, your small purchase threshold.

**Louisiana small purchase threshold is \$60,000

Small purchases require that schools:

- Acquire bids from an adequate number of responsible and responsive vendors;
- Develop written specifications; and,
- Document all bids.

Informal

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Invitation For Bid (Competitive Sealed Bid)

Procurement by competitive sealed bidding is done by issuing an invitation for bid (IFB).

Use it when:

- A complete, adequate, and realistic specification is available.
- The contract can be awarded on the basis of price.

Invitation for Bids require that schools:

- Acquire bids from an adequate number of responsible and responsive vendors;
- Advertise the solicitation publically;
- Open bids at the time and place identified in the solicitation; and
- Award to the lowest, responsible and responsive bidder.



Formal

4

Request for Proposals (Competitive Proposals)

Procurement by competitive proposal is done by issuing a request for proposal (RFP).

Use it when:

- Conditions aren't appropriate for a sealed bid.
- Price won't necessarily be the sole basis for the award.

Request for Proposals require that schools:

- Identify all evaluation factors and their importance to awarding the solicitation;
- Acquire bids from an adequate number of responsible and responsive vendors;
- Advertise the solicitation publically
- Award it to responsible and responsive bidder with most advantageous proposal, price and other factors considered.



Formal

Louisiana Procurement Policy

- Louisiana R.S. 17:194(D)
 - The state DOE and any governing authority of a nutrition program provider may use the simplified acquisition procedures for small purchases up to the Federal Small Purchase Threshold set by 41 U.S.C. 403(11), in order to support procurement of local agricultural products and the USDA Farm to School initiatives. No such authority in this statute shall be in conflict with the USDA child nutrition program requirements, including 2 CFR 200.319(b).



\$350,000

Informal Purchases up to \$350,000 can be applied to Local Agricultural Products



According to Louisiana R.S. 17:194(D), any governing authority of a child nutrition program may use informal acquisition procedures for small purchases up to the federal level (**\$350,000**) to support procurement of local agricultural products and Farm to School initiatives. The dollar amount of the purchase of locally grown food determines the procurement process.



Things to Remember

- Federal regulations require that all procurements above the Micro-Purchase Simplified Acquisition Threshold (\$15,000) are competitive even if other entities do not.
- Louisiana R.S. 17:194(D):
 - Small Purchase Threshold Bill (SB 184) – to provide more simplified acquisition procedures relative to child nutrition programs in order to support procurement of local agricultural products and the USDA Farm to School initiatives.
- **MUST** update procurement plan to reflect increased small purchase threshold for local agricultural products above \$60,000



Things to Remember

- SFA defines local
- Louisiana's increased threshold applies to ALL local agricultural products
 - LFS was not this way
- Geographic preference applies only to minimally processed and unprocessed local agricultural products





1

2

3

4

	Micro-purchase	Small purchase	Invitation for Bids	Request for Proposals
Value	≤\$10,000	<\$350,000	>\$350,000	>\$350,000
Outreach Targeting Local	Yes	Yes+	Yes+	Yes+
Specifications Targeting Local	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Technical Requirements Targeting Local	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geographic Preference	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes



Product Specifications & Technical Requirements

Product

- Regional varieties
- Freshness (e.g. Delivered within 48 hours)

Farm

- Size
- Growing practices
- Harvest techniques
- Crop diversity

Technical Requirements

- Origin labeling
- Farm or classroom visits
- Marketing materials
- Staff time to support district in increasing local purchasing

*Reserve the right to go off-bid for special events (ex: HOTM, quick sales)



Expanded Geographic Preference Option

TIPS:

Local definition may not unnecessarily restrict “free and open” competition.

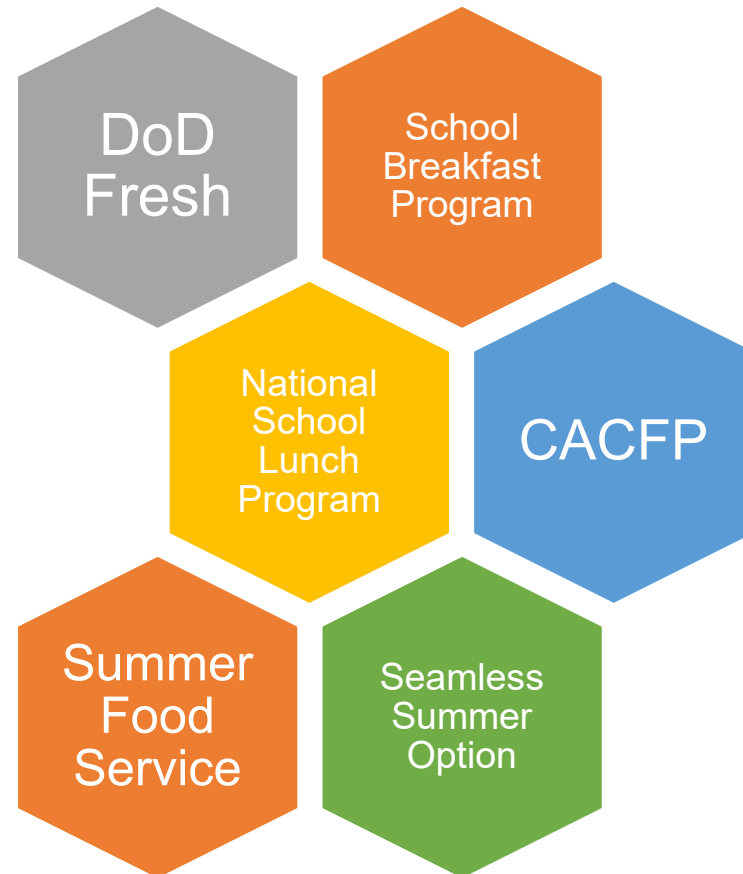
Geographic preference applies to the product and NOT the vendor.

Geographic preference only applies to determining the winning bid and not actual price to be paid.

- A method CNP operators or State agencies purchasing on their behalf can use to increase their procurement of local, unprocessed agricultural products for program meals.
- Updated by the *Final Rule – Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2023 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, April 25, 2024.
 - Adds “local as a specification” as a strategy
 - Defined scoring advantage



Eligible Programs



Unprocessed Agricultural Products



Products that are
*grown, raised, or
caught* locally

*Unprocessed
products that
still retain their
inherent character*



Defining Minimally Processed Foods

Unallowable:

- Premade combination foods
- Value added products
- Preformed or shaped products that fundamentally alters the food

Chopping

Slicing

Dicing

Freeze-drying/Dehydrating

Washing

Packaging

Butchering

Forming into Patties (without additives)

Vacuum packaging



Maintain Full & Open Competition

- CNP operators using federal funds to buy food must adhere to federal procurement regulations
- Multiple businesses competing for a sale gives the operator leverage to negotiate better prices
- Must ensure that an adequate supply of a local product exists in the marketplace based on specifications

Market research is your best tool for determining if you are meeting “full and open competition”



<https://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news/fruits-vegetables>

Formal Procurement

Include Your Desire for Local in the Introduction

- A school's interest in purchasing local products (and the broader context of its farm to school program) can be expressed in the introduction to a solicitation.
 - Remember: a school *may* specify that it wants local products (it can be a product specification).
 - A school *may* indicate its desire to serve local products and emphasize the importance of its farm to school program.



Examples

- **Anne Arundel County Public Schools**, in Maryland, defines local *under Specifications* as
 - “Locally grown products are defined as any food item that is grown within a two hundred-fifty (250) mile radius of Anne Arundel County, Maryland. Items purchased by AACPS shall be determined by availability and school menus.”



Geographic Preference Strategies

1. Local as a Specification

- Only locally unprocessed agricultural products
- Includes a definition of “local”
- Vendor products must meet criteria

2. Defined Scoring Advantage

- Awards extra points to products meeting “local” definition
- When locally produced products are preferred, but not required
- Solicitation defines bid evaluation methods



Strategy 1: Local as a Specification Example

A school usually buys whole tangerines and oranges for lunch service.

They would like to begin sourcing local satsumas during the winter months.

Definition of Local: Must be grown within 200 miles of Bogalusa, LA

Original specification reads:

ORANGES, SWEET TYPE, US NO 1

Oranges, sweet type, U.S. No. 1. Count 138 (Calif., Ariz) or Count 125 (Fla., Tex.). Each will average 2 ½ - 2 5/8 " diameter. Cartons average 40 lbs. By the carton.



REVISED specification would read:

LOCAL SATSUMAS, 180 count, whole, free from decay, injury, or disease. Cartons average 50 lbs. By the carton.



Strategy 2: Defined Scoring Advantage

Louisiana Lagniappe School is purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables.

Local is preferred but not required.

In this scenario, vendors may receive additional points based on a sliding scale for offering local unprocessed agricultural products.

Points are awarded as follow:

75% or more = 20 points

50% or more = 10 points

25% or more = 5 points



Strategy 3: Mix of Both

(Might be useful when buying more than one product at once)

When buying a mixed order of fruits and vegetables:

Use local as a specification for products for which local is a requirement

Use a defined scoring advantage for products where local is a preference



Solicitation for Unprocessed Fruits and Vegetables Happy Place Child Care Center Louisiana

Satsumas	Locally grown , within a 150-mile radius of Sunny Town
Strawberries	Locally grown , within a 150-mile radius of Sunny Town
Cabbage	10-point preference for product within a 200-mile radius of Sunny Town

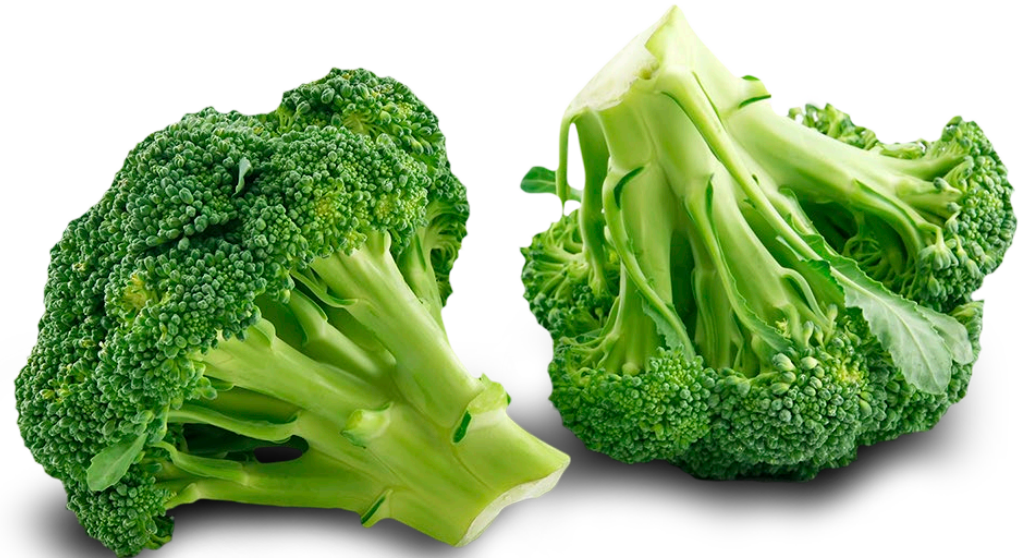
Other Things to Consider When Writing Solicitations to Target Local Products

- Be flexible
- Don't include unnecessary requirements
- Consider what a vendor new to the school food market might not know
 - Condition upon receipt of product
 - Food safety needs
 - Size uniformity
 - Vendor requirements



Two Ways to Use Specifications and Requirements to Target Local Products

1. Use product specifications
2. Use additional requirements to determine vendor responsiveness



Sections of a Solicitation

- Contract Type
- Introduction/Scope
 - Ex. We heart farm to school and want to include as much local as possible. Our goal is to serve 20% local products.
- **General Descriptions of Goods and Services (AKA Specifications)**
 - **Ex. Product specifications**
- Timelines and Procedures
- Technical Requirements
 - Ex. Determine responsive and responsible vendors
- Evaluation Criteria



Example: Use Product Specifications to Target a Local Item

- A variety that is unique to the region
- Product delivery within 24 or 48 hours of harvest



Example: Use Product Specifications



Product Specification

- Celebrity Tomatoes,
 - US. No. 1,
- Five 185 count boxes per week for September - November



Example: Use Product Specifications

Product Specification

- Celebrity or Creole tomatoes,
- US. No. 1 or No. 2,
- Prefer five 185 count boxes per week but willing to consider other pack sizes for September – November
- Delivered within 48 hours of harvest



Sections of a Solicitation

- Contract Type
- Introduction/Scope
 - Ex. Farm to school is a district priority and we want to include as many local products as possible. Our goal is to serve 20% local products.
- General Descriptions of Goods and Services (AKA Specifications)
 - Ex. Product specifications
- Timelines and Procedures
- Technical Requirements
 - Ex. Determine responsive and responsible vendors
- Evaluation Criteria



Example: Vendor requirements

Vendors will provide products:

- **Grown on farms that are less than 50 acres in size;**
- **Grown on farms that grow more than five food crops at one time;**
- **Grown on farms that utilize a majority of hand harvesting, hand packing or human labor power in growing, harvesting, and packing of food;**
- Delivered directly to multiple school sites (not a central warehouse). The number of drops is to be determined by the district on a case-by-case basis;
- Produce should be generally free from insect damage and decay; and,
- 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.



Tips for Working with Local Farmers

- Plan in advance— give you and your partners time to organize and prepare
- Set up clear expectations
 - commonly purchased or desired foods
 - volumes
 - product sizes
 - quality
 - price points
 - product packaging
 - food safety
 - product liability insurance
- Establish clear processes that work for producer(s) and food service(s)
- Collaborate and aggregate



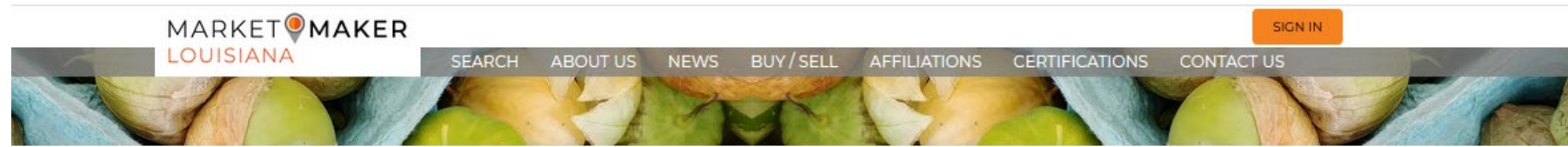
Finding Local Growers

- Louisiana MarketMaker - <https://la.foodmarketmaker.com>
- Seeds to Success website under “Finding Local Food”
<https://seedstosuccess.com/>
- Louisiana Grown website - www.louisianagrown.com
- Louisiana Direct Seafood - www.louisianadirectseafood.com
- Visit your local farmer's market
- Call your parish Extension office



MARKET  MAKER
LOUISIANA

Louisiana MarketMaker Search Tool



Search

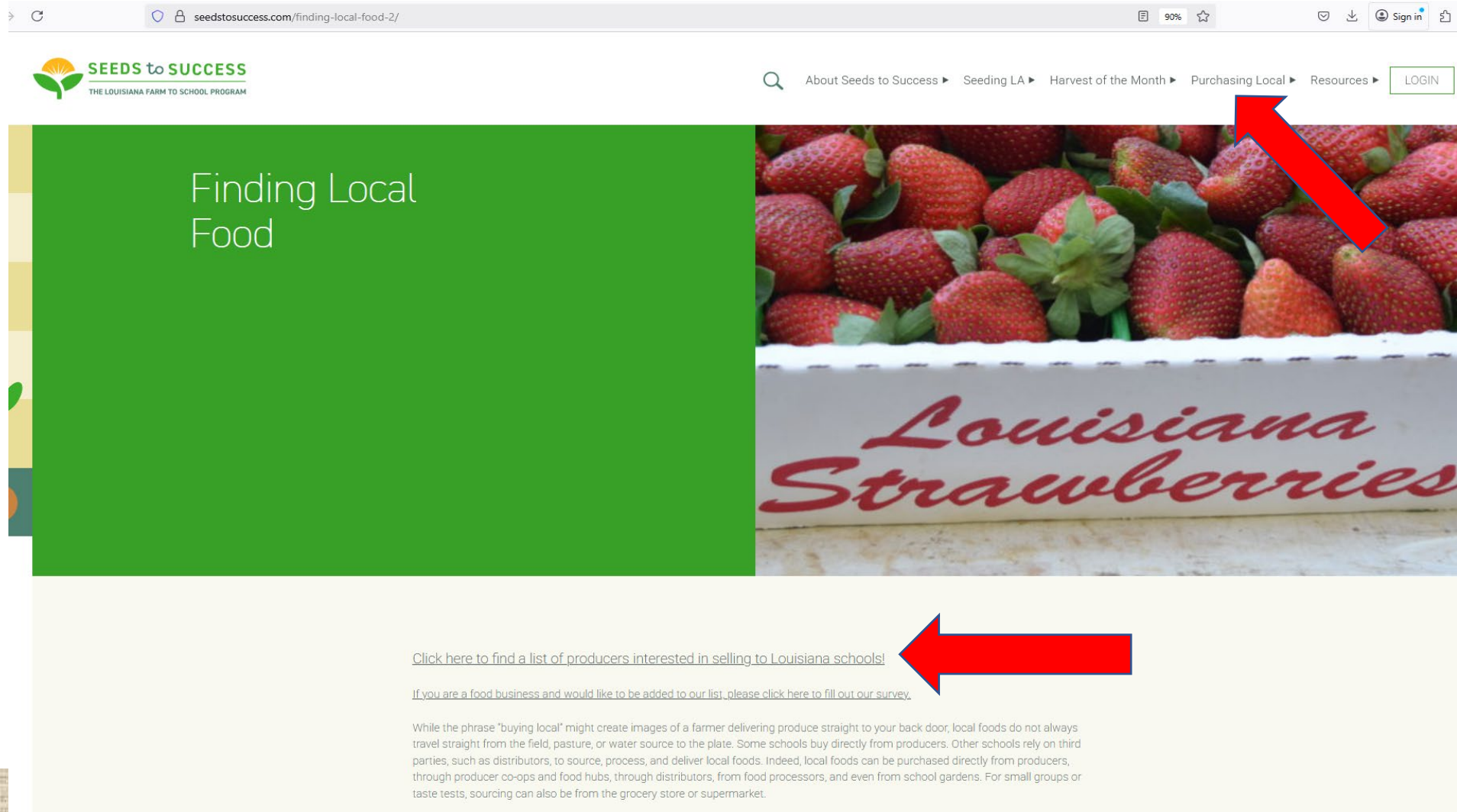
strawberries 1 - 34 of 34 X

Location Business Type Certifications Product Attributes + Filters Relevance

- Faust Farms** Learn More...
12519 Liuzza
Amite, LA
9854746251
- Johnsdale Strawberry Farms** Learn More...
22061 Robertson Ln
Ponchatoula, LA
9855421040
- Mary's Country Produce** Learn More...
21351 Hwy. 22 E
Ponchatoula, LA
9855071641
- Kevin Liuzza Farms, LLC** Learn More...
14342 New Genessee Rd
Tickfaw, LA
9859815788

A map of Louisiana is displayed on the right side of the search results. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent white rectangle representing the state's outline. Several green circular markers with numbers inside are scattered across the map, indicating the locations of the search results. A red location pin is visible near Lake Charles. The map shows major cities and highways across the state.

Local Food Sources Contact List



Requests for Information

- Survey the market to understand:
 - Quantity available
 - Price point
 - Seasonal availability
 - Willingness to work with schools
 - Whether geographic preference is necessary
 - Who the producers are!
- Collaborate with surrounding districts
- Work with a community partner



SEEDS to SUCCESS

THE LOUISIANA FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Louisiana
HARVEST *of the* MONTH



Harvest of the Month: Celebrating Local All Year Long

Promotional campaign promoting locally grown foods in Louisiana schools, ECE centers, institutions, and communities. Each month, participating sites focus on promoting one locally grown item (e.g., strawberries). Activities could include:

- serving local items in a meal or snack
- offering taste tests
- featuring posters celebrating Louisiana commodities
- teaching food education to help students get to know the featured item



Comprehensive and Complete



Louisiana Harvest of the Month Posters, Coloring Pages, Newsletters

Louisiana Harvest of the Month Recipes for Cafeteria & Home

Taste Test Guide & "I tried it" stickers

Louisiana Harvest of the Month Compendium of Activities & Lessons

Louisiana Harvest of the Month Toolkit

NEW! Harvest of the Month video series

What's In Season Seasonality Chart for Louisiana-grown produce

Menu Analysis Worksheet

Farmer Checklist and Conversation Guide

Checklist for Producers Selling Produce to K-12 Schools

Local Foods Worksheet

