



*Using Geographic  
Preference to  
Strengthen  
Farm to School*

# A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food





  
*Using Geographic  
Preference to  
Strengthen  
Farm to School*

# A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington- Grown Food

## **Author**

Tricia Kovacs,  
Washington State Department of Agriculture

## **Contributing Authors**

Gaye Lynn MacDonald,  
MacDonald Consulting

Ellen Gray,  
Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network

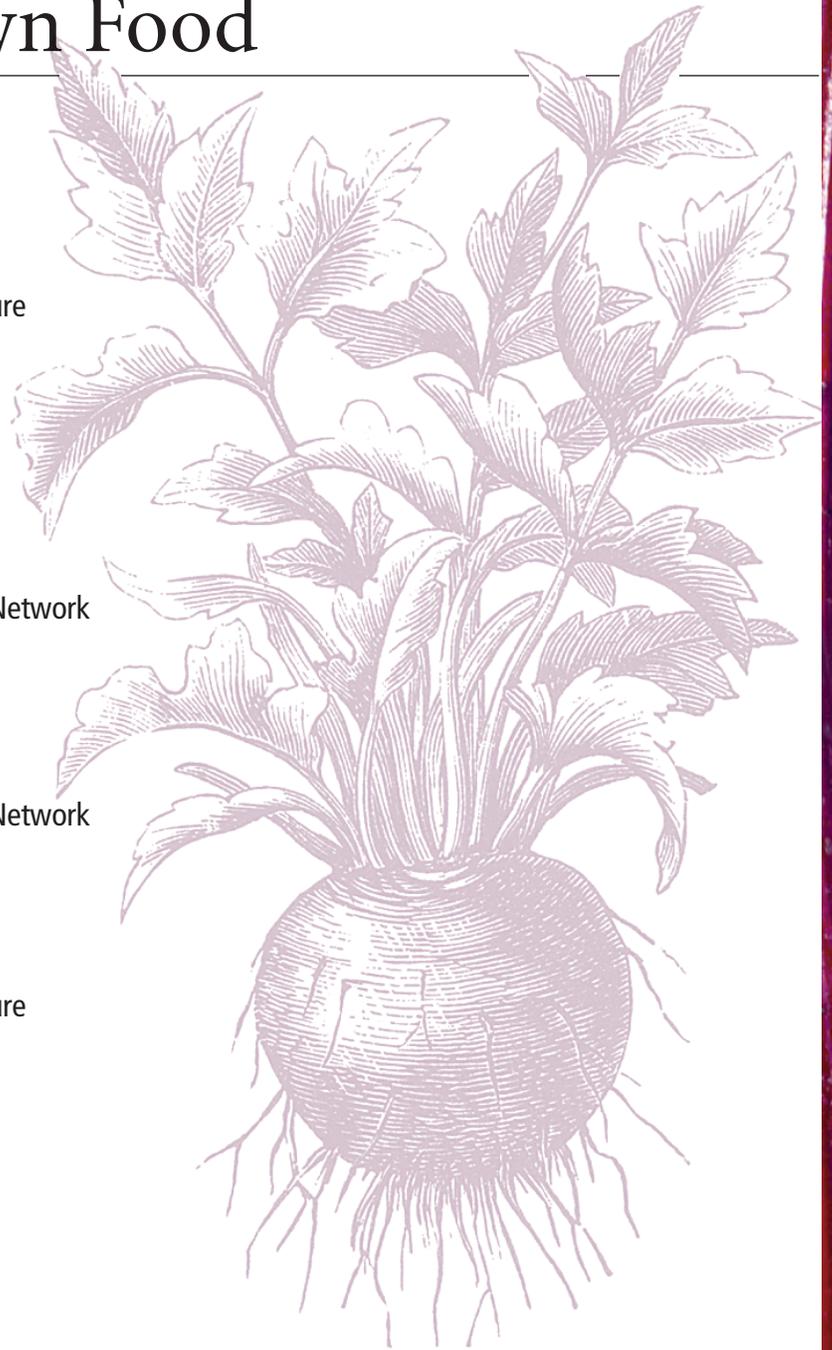
## **Project Team**

Ellen Gray,  
Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network

Kerri Cechovic,  
Washington Environmental Council

Tricia Kovacs,  
Washington State Department of Agriculture

Donna Oberg,  
Public Health-Seattle & King County



**September 2012**



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture



**WASHINGTON  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
COUNCIL**

## Acknowledgments

Sandy Han and Robert Stumberg,  
Harrison Institute for Public Law at Georgetown Law

Kristen Mitchell, Washington State Attorney General's Office

Jill Warning, Attorney

Donna Parsons, Jennifer Mitchell, R.A. Skip Skinner,  
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Brad White and Richard Bonner, Washington State  
Auditor's Office

Mollie Langum, Lake Stevens School District

Tom Ogg, Kent School District

Ed Aylesworth, Arlington School District

Kent Getzin, Wenatchee School District

Sheilah Davidson, School Food FOCUS

Deborah Kane, National Director,  
United States Department of Agriculture Farm to School  
Program

Lynn Rodgers-Kuperman and Anita Pereira-Sekhon,  
United States Department of Agriculture

Becky Elias, Shoko Kumagai, Claudia Coles, Kirk Robinson,  
Washington State Department of Agriculture

Doug Wordell, Spokane Public Schools

Joan Qazi and Rita Ordonez,  
Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network

Laura Plaut, Common Threads Farm and  
School Garden Collective

Candice Cosler, Jefferson County Farm to School

Miriam Coates

Vic Colman, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition

Tim Terpstra, Manager Ralph's Greenhouse

**Design:** Robyn Ricks, Robyn Ricks Design

**Cover Photo:** Kale at Ralph's Greenhouse Farm in the Skagit  
Valley, Mount Vernon WA. Photographer, Tim Terpstra

**Made possible by funding from  
Public Health-Seattle & King County  
and the US Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention.**

Electronic versions and their updates of *A School's  
Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food* are  
available at:

Communities Putting Prevention to Work webpage:  
[www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/nutrition/  
schools.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/nutrition/schools.aspx)

WSDA webpage: [www.wafarmtoschool.org](http://www.wafarmtoschool.org)

WSFFN's webpage: [www.wsffn.org](http://www.wsffn.org)

## Disclaimer

This guide is our effort to coordinate agreement on implementing the geographic preference option in compliance with federal, state and local laws and policies. The guide was prepared with the best information and resources available at time of writing; however, the law is always changing and this document cannot provide a guarantee of reliability or accuracy. Each school district should perform independent analysis, consult with available sources—including the school district's attorneys—and develop district policies for implementing a geographic preference in procurement.

The geographic preference option is new and is only now being tested nationally, so there are no guarantees as to how courts or governments will view implementation of the rule. This guide represents our current interpretation of the applicable state and federal laws. Other attorneys, agencies or courts may interpret them differently.





---

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Governance.....	5
3	The Geographic Preference Option in Federal and State Law.....	11
4	Using the Geographic Preference Option .....	17
5	A Step-by-Step Guide to Buying Washington-Grown Food .....	27
6	School District Policies .....	49
7	Strengthening Farm to School Procurement and Practice .....	57
8	Resources .....	69
	Planning	
	Procurement	
	Food Safety and Handling	
	Government Documents	
	School District Policies	







1





# Introduction



## A school's guide to purchasing Washington-grown food

*Are you interested in working with local farmers and ranchers to bring healthy locally-grown food to your students? Are there times when you are unsure about how to comply with all the guidelines, rules and regulations?*

This guide is intended to clarify today's rules about how to apply a geographic preference in school food purchases and to help school districts increase their use of Washington-grown foods for meal and snack programs.

Serving healthy, appealing food to our students is the primary goal for school nutrition services programs. Good nutrition is critical to health, happiness, focus and academic achievement for Washington's students, and it is challenging work. With tight budgets and the need to serve many meals in a short time, all school districts have a difficult mission to fulfill. Each district has its unique opportunities and barriers based on meal service models, kitchen facilities, eating spaces, staffing levels and access to food.

Across Washington state, schools and communities express a growing enthusiasm for farm to school programs to provide nutritious food, support local farms, and educate students about healthy eating, agriculture, and the environment. Many school districts are creating seasonal menus, hosting farm to school events, starting school gardens, teaching about nutrition and providing hands-on student cooking experiences.

Farm to school programs benefit students, farmers, school meal programs and our economy and environment. Serving locally grown foods in schools:

- ☞ Provides school-age kids with fresh and nutritious foods, encourages lifelong healthy eating habits and helps kids thrive. Good nutrition is linked to learning readiness, academic achievement and decreased discipline and emotional problems.
- ☞ Opens new markets for local farms to improve their economic viability
- ☞ Presents an easy and fun way to get kids involved with academic projects around food, nutrition and the environment.
- ☞ Reduces packaging, refrigeration, storage and transportation, requiring less energy and resulting in less waste.
- ☞ Promotes awareness of how food choices affect our health, communities, and environment

While enthusiasm for farm to school projects has grown, uncertainty has increased about the rules for purchasing locally-grown foods. School nutrition professionals are aware of a range of policies and procedures at the district, local, state and federal level that affect food purchasing for school

meals. Navigating and implementing the rules and policies correctly can be time-consuming and confusing.

In this guide you will find information about the following:

- ∞ Agencies and regulations governing school food purchases
- ∞ USDA's Geographic Preference Option
- ∞ Washington state's school food purchasing law and how it relates to the Geographic Preference Option
- ∞ Methods for applying the Geographic Preference Option
- ∞ A step-by-step guide on how to purchase Washington-grown foods for your district, including:
  - Small purchase thresholds and competitive procurement requirements
  - Guidance and sample language to purchase Washington-grown food
  - Developing vendor qualifications, specifications and preferences to source Washington-grown food from farms and other vendors
- ∞ Guidance and sample language for developing Washington-grown purchasing and wellness policies for your district
- ∞ General farm to school information relating to procurement and policy

## *Our Team and Process*

The Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network, Washington State Department of Agriculture and Washington Environmental Council partnered to create this guide. The project was made possible by a *Communities Putting Prevention to Work* grant from Public Health-Seattle & King County. The team worked with attorneys at Georgetown University's Harrison Institute for Public Law and with a local attorney to conduct an analysis of the federal, state and local rules and regulations governing school food procurement. The Washington State Assistant Attorney General of the Agriculture and Health Division and an Assistant Attorney General for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction have concurred with the Harrison Institute's legal analysis. They also reviewed and provided feedback on this guide. Representatives of the United States Department of Agriculture, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Washington State Auditor's Office also reviewed drafts and feedback. Some of the model bidding and contracting language was drafted by partners at ChangeLab Solutions in Oakland, California.

In the fall of 2010, school procurement managers and nutrition professionals at twelve out of the nineteen King County school districts participated in an e-mail survey and follow-up phone interviews to provide information about their current practices, procedures and barriers for purchasing Washington-grown food. Survey results confirmed that school food procurement professionals need better information and tools to successfully secure Washington-grown food using appropriate competitive procedures. In response to this need, the authors created this guide to assist school districts in implementing the rules for purchasing Washington-grown food.

We hope you will find this guide to be a truly useful tool for navigating in the world of school food purchasing.



2



# 2

## Governance

### Agencies, policies, rules and practices affecting school purchases of local foods

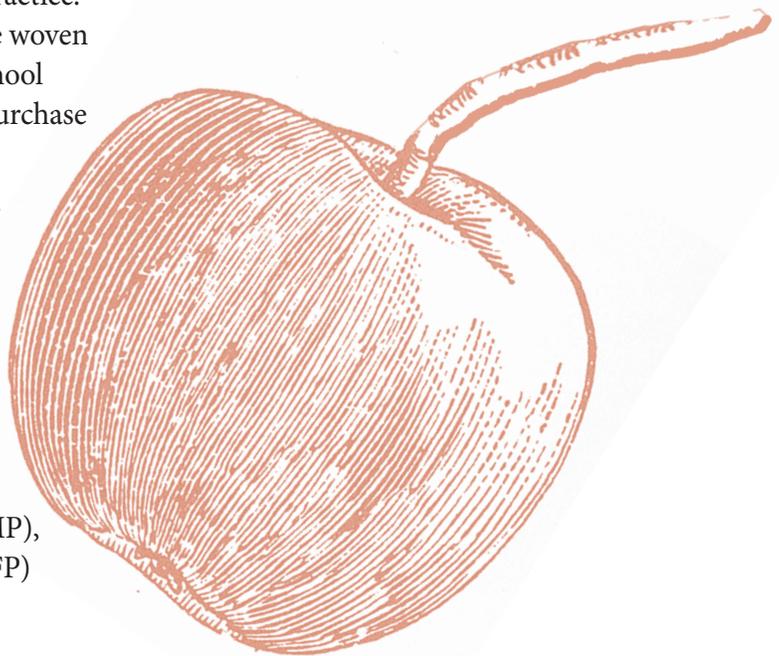
*School food programs are the result of a complex web of regulations, funding allocations, policy statements and individual interpretation of rules and policies in school district offices and kitchens around the country.*

The decision-making that influences what ends up on students' plates is divided among agencies and governments at the local, state and federal levels. Each level of government, from the school district to U.S. Congress, can make regulations and policies about the use of school meal funds, the purchasing process and bidding requirements, and the goals and practices for using locally-grown foods. Legislative bodies and school boards set policy. Government agencies and school districts are responsible for putting that policy into practice. The resulting myriad of laws and policies are woven together to provide a framework for how school districts and other school food authorities purchase food.

The information in this guide will clarify the policies, rules and procedures that affect school districts operating Federal Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs) under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

The key public authorities that govern and implement school food programs, and their respective responsibilities, are depicted in the chart on the following page (figure 1).

As interest has grown in local food purchasing, each level of government has responded. The chart on page 7 (figure 2) highlights recent changes that most affect school purchases of locally grown food and implementation of farm to school programs.



# Governance and Administration of School Food

## 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*

#### **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Food and Nutrition Service (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*

#### **Washington State Legislature**

- Sets the procurement process requirements for all state entities, including school districts
- Incorporates into law in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW)

### *Implementation*

#### **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)**

- 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 to provide them

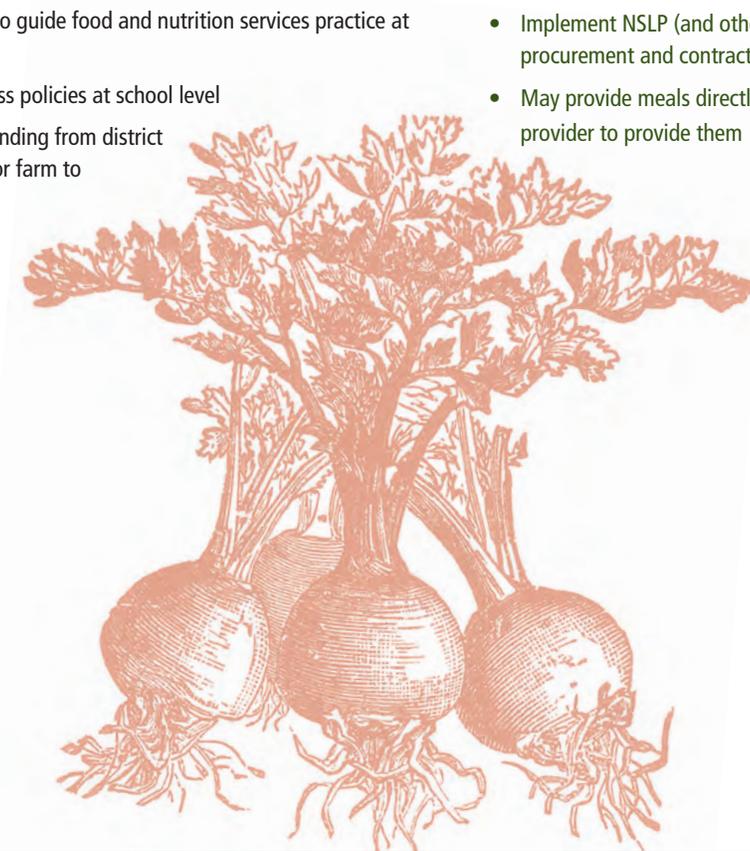


Figure 1

# Changes Affecting Use of Local Food in Schools

## FEDERAL

---

### *Policy*

#### **United States Congress**

##### **2008 Farm Bill**

- Amended the National School Lunch Act to allow child nutrition programs to apply a “geographic preference” when buying food
- Established the USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program for all states, providing funds for fresh produce in schools with high levels of free and reduced lunch eligibility

##### **2010 Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act**

- Authorized and funded USDA to provide technical assistance on farm to school and to provide competitive farm to school grants
- Directed USDA to update and improve school nutrition standards
- Requires USDA to establish regulations on wellness policies and provide technical assistance

### *Implementation*

#### **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)**

##### **Geographic Preference**

- 2009-2011 – Issued guidance memos to assist with geographic preference implementation
- April 2011 – Issued a Final Rule on implementation of the Geographic Preference Option

##### **Farm to School Assistance**

- Created a Farm to School Team in USDA and set up an information website: [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/)
- Established a competitive farm to school grant program

##### **Nutrition Standards**

- Finalized school nutrition standards, with requirements for more fresh fruits and vegetables, more whole grains, low-fat dairy and other detailed provisions

##### **Wellness Policies**

- Issued a 2011 memo on new wellness policy requirements and will publish new regulations in 2012

## STATE

---

### *Policy*

#### **Washington State Legislature**

##### **2008 – Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act**

- Established a Farm to School Program in State Department of Agriculture (WSDA)
- Amended school procurement code to exempt purchases of WA Grown food from state purchasing process required for schools.

##### **2011 Eliminated funding for the WSDA Farm to School Program in state budget**

### *Implementation*

#### **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)**

- Administers school nutrition programs and USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program for Washington state
- Provides guidance to schools on procurement, food safety and general nutrition program operations

#### **Washington State Department of Agriculture**

- Supports farm to school projects, including outreach and education to schools, farms and communities on logistics, rules, food safety, procurement, etc.
- Obtains federal funding and other contracts to continue assistance with farm-to-institution projects

## LOCAL

---

### *Policy*

#### **School Districts**

- Develop and adopt wellness policies
- Some districts have adopted policies to encourage and/or commit to local food purchasing and farm to school programs
- Some have allocated funding from district funds for local food or farm to school projects

### *Implementation*

#### **School Districts**

- Some design seasonal menus and purchase Washington-grown foods for their meal and snack programs
- Some partner with other school programs and local farms or community organizations to provide education about food, farming, health and the environment.

Figure 2

Notes





3



# 3

## The Geographic Preference Option in Federal and State Law

### An opportunity for increasing purchases of Washington-grown food

*The geographic preference is a USDA rule for using federal Child Nutrition Program funds and is based on federal law. States can provide geographic preference policies, as well, and Washington state has done so by establishing a preference option for Washington-grown food. The Washington law does not allow a preference for food grown outside of the state.*

#### The Federal Geographic Preference Option

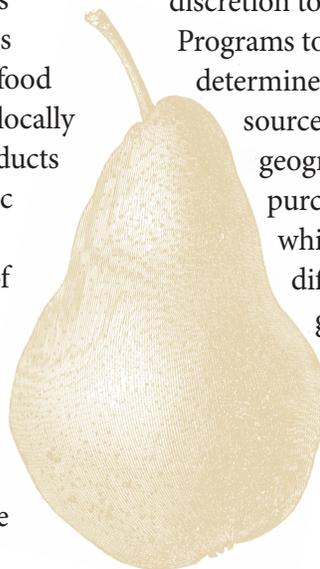
As amended effective October 1, 2008, the National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(j)) directs USDA to encourage schools and other institutions receiving funds through the Child Nutrition Programs to purchase unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural product to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate. This amendment also directs USDA to allow school districts and others participating in Child Nutrition Programs to apply a geographic preference in their food purchasing, in order to buy unprocessed locally grown and locally raised agricultural products for school meals. The resulting geographic preference regulation, the Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs, along with the history of the rule, can be found in 76 Fed. Reg. 22603 (April 22, 2011), and is codified at 7 CFR Parts 210, 215, 220, 225, and 226. Under federal and state

rules, school districts have the discretion to decide whether or not to apply a geographic preference to food purchases.

#### Federal Rules for Using a Geographic Preference

**1** School districts must define “local” and may do so according to their preference.

USDA does not define “local,” but instead gives discretion to institutions operating Child Nutrition Programs to define “local” themselves when they determine the geographic area they wish to source from and for which they will apply a geographic preference when making food purchases. Thus, the geographic area from which products are considered “local” may differ from one institution to another. A geographic preference area may include politically defined areas, such as “state” or “county,” as well as non-politically defined areas such as a “region,” which can encompass parts or the whole of one or more states. This



discretion to determine geographic preference area applies to Child Nutrition Program institutions or to state agencies when they purchase on behalf of those institutions. The purchasing institution must not define local in a manner that unnecessarily restricts free and open competition (e.g., by defining local in a way that only one or two vendors could meet the geographic preference standard).

## 2 Local food cannot be “required” in a procurement request; it can only be “preferred.”

A geographic preference provides an advantage for local products during the evaluation of proposals and bids. A geographic preference cannot be a requirement for awarding the contract or sale. Therefore a purchasing institution may not conduct a procurement request solely for “locally grown and locally raised agricultural products.”<sup>1</sup> Rather, the regulations indicate that a geographic preference may provide a “defined advantage in the procurement process.”<sup>2</sup> This means that a vendor who can provide the products from the geographic area specified in the procurement request may receive extra points or other competitive advantage, but does not automatically win the contract. For example, a procurement request cannot state that the vendor “must be able to provide Washington-grown food,” or “all products must be sourced from within the geographic preference area.”

## 3 Geographic preference is limited to “minimally processed” food.

A geographic preference can only be applied to *minimally processed* locally grown or raised agricultural products. It cannot be applied to foods that have undergone any processing method that “alters the inherent character of the agricultural products...”<sup>3</sup> The regulation offers the following list of allowable food handling and preservation techniques:

Cooling; refrigerating; freezing; size adjustment made by peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting, chopping, shucking, and grinding; forming ground products into patties without any additives or fillers; drying/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); addition of ascorbic acid or other preservatives to prevent oxidation of produce; butchering livestock and poultry; cleaning of fish; and the pasteurization of milk.<sup>4</sup>

Any food handling technique not listed here is not allowed under the geographic preference rule. For instance, a geographic preference cannot be used for food that has undergone the following: cooking, heating (for any other purpose than pasteurization of milk), pickling, and canning.<sup>5</sup>

School districts are free to further process local food, as long as they use a competitive procurement process when soliciting processing contracts. Geographic preference may be applied to procure unprocessed produce, but when choosing a vendor to further process the food, a competitive procurement must be used, which cannot consider location in the award decision. Using a geographic preference in selecting food processing vendors would violate state and federal law.

*For example, let’s say a school district is interested in buying salsa made with local ingredients. Since salsa is heated for canning, a district is not allowed to apply a geographic preference when purchasing the salsa. A school district may apply a geographic preference to first purchase the raw ingredients, such as tomatoes, onions and peppers, when they are in season in Washington, by using a geographic preference. Then they can conduct a competitive procurement process to identify a processor who can combine those ingredients into salsa.*

1 Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs, 76 Fed. Reg. 22603 (April 22, 2011) (codified at 7 CFR Parts 210, 215, 220, 225, and 226).

2 *Id.* at 22603.

3 Geographic Preference Option, *supra* note 67, at 22605.

4 *Id.* at 22607.

5 *Id.* at 22605. See also FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES, U.S. DEP’T OF AG., PROCUREMENT GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE Q&As, MEMORANDUM SP\_18 – 2011 (2011).

## 4 Geographic preference can only be applied to the origin of the product, not the location of the vendor.

A geographic preference can only be applied to products, not to vendors. A vendor from outside the geographic preference area could carry foods grown or raised within the preference area, and therefore must be provided an equal opportunity to compete for the contract.

*For example, Company A, located in Washington and offering Washington raspberries, places a bid for \$3,000, and Company B, located in Oregon and also offering Washington raspberries, places a bid for \$2,950. Assuming all other variables are equal, a school district applying a geographic preference for Washington-grown foods would choose Company B because it offered Washington raspberries for the best price even though the company is located in Oregon.*

## Washington State Law and the Geographic Preference Option

Washington state law (RCW 28A.335.190) allows school districts to apply a geographic preference for Washington-grown food. State laws govern school food purchasing as long as the state laws are at least as restrictive as USDA rules, meaning that they cannot be more lax on competition or other requirements than the federal rule. In this case, Washington state law is more restrictive than federal regulation, specifying Washington-grown as the allowed geographic preference area, rather than leaving it open for districts to decide. Therefore, under state law, schools in Washington may only apply a geographic preference for food grown within the state of Washington. When purchasing Washington-grown food, districts are exempt from the state procurement process (though they are still bound by USDA rules governing use of federal funds).

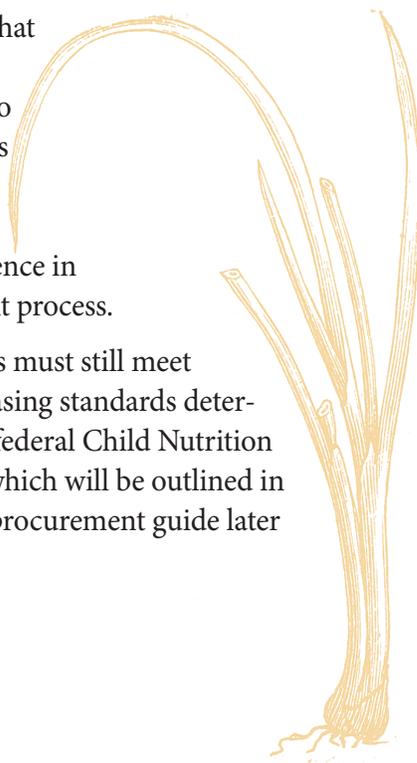
This exemption is in RCW 28A.335.190 (8-11), along with guidance on ways school districts can prioritize purchase of Washington-grown food:

- (8) This section does not apply to the purchase of Washington-grown food.
- (9) At the discretion of the board, a school district may develop and implement policies and procedures to facilitate and maximize to the extent practicable, purchases of Washington-grown food including, but not limited to, policies that permit a percentage price preference for the purpose of procuring Washington-grown food.
- (10) As used in this section, “Washington-grown” has the definition in RCW 15.64.060.
- (11) As used in this section, “price percentage preference” means the percent by which a responsive bid from a responsible bidder whose product is a Washington-grown food may exceed the lowest responsive bid submitted by a responsible bidder whose product is not a Washington-grown food.

“Washington-grown” is defined as grown and packed or processed in Washington. The USDA list of approved food processing levels allowed for a geographic preference still applies.

We recommend that school districts develop policies to support purchases of Washington-grown food, if applying a preference in their procurement process.

District purchases must still meet the USDA purchasing standards determined for use of federal Child Nutrition Program funds, which will be outlined in the step-by-step procurement guide later in this document.



Notes



Lined writing area consisting of multiple horizontal lines for notes.



4



# 4

## Using the Geographic Preference Option

### How to provide a specific advantage for vendors who supply Washington-grown foods

*Neither Washington state law nor USDA specifies how to apply the geographic preference option. This section provides sample methods for incorporating a specific advantage for Washington-grown food into procurement requests.*

The goal of a geographic preference is to apply an appropriate advantage for vendors who provide Washington-grown food, so that you can buy more Washington products for your schools. There are many potential ways to provide an advantage while still ensuring fair and open competition.

The models in this chapter are examples, and should be adapted to your district needs. You may also discover other methods that work better for your district. It is important to work with your district purchasing officers before implementing these or other methods for applying a geographic preference.

The chart on the following page is one example of a framework for applying a price preference or point system evaluation for a geographic preference. Below the chart, there are three potential models for implementing the geographic preference. The models only provide an idea of how a system might work and should be adapted for each district's needs.



---

**However you decide to apply a geographic preference, remember to balance your goals in setting the preference amount.** *The points or price preference must be carefully calibrated to provide an acceptable advantage to those providing Washington-grown food, but not so great an advantage that it can end up committing the district to prices that are not acceptable or feasible. The sample models in this chapter attempt to balance those concerns. Note that all point values could be adjusted, and that these examples do not show which methods are more or less likely to result in purchases of Washington-grown food.*

---

## Geographic Preference Point Chart

The chart below assigns a maximum number of points to two geographic preference factors:

1. How many of the product list items can be sourced from within the stated geographic preference area, and
2. For those foods that the vendor cannot source from within the preference area, does the vendor offer substitute options from within the geographic preference area.

Based on whether your school district's definition of a geographic preference area is one single area or a two-tiered area, you would choose one of the first two (100 point) options, but not both. You determine how many points out of 100 to award in each category, based on the vendor response, though the point assignment needs to be clearly determined and not subjective. The chart and point assignment description would be sent to the potential vendors, within the procurement request, as follows:

The geographic preference will be applied as described in the sample chart below, for a maximum of 140 points: [School district would decide and include either the single area or two-tiered area definition, not both.]

Maximum Rating Points	Actual Points Awarded	Factor Description
100		<b>Use this if your defined geographic preference is a single area definition.</b> All products on the product list are sourced from the geographic preference area (per district definition). Points awarded based on percentage of total listed products (up to the total of 100) that can be sourced from within the geographic preference area.
100		<b>Use this if your defined geographic preference is a two-tiered area definition.</b> All products on the product list are sourced from within the two tiers identified as geographic preference areas (per district definition, if using a two-tiered definition), with at least 60% of the local products sourced within the Priority Area and 40% of products sourced within the Secondary Area. (Note that the percentages and proportions can be adjusted according to your geographic preference priorities, as long as it does not limit the vendor pool in such a way as to unnecessarily restrict free and open competition.)
40		If not able to provide 100% of those produce items on the list, provide a plan for acceptable substitutions of produce list items sourced from within the geographic preference area (per district definition). This will include but is not limited to a list of substitutable products, the farm sources, and when each substitute product is available. ["Acceptable" substitutions are subject to bid evaluator determination, based on variety needs of the district.]
140 Maximum Points		

The following models illustrate application of price preference and point systems. Each model works in conjunction with the Geographic Preference Point chart above.

## Model 1: Price Preference System

In this option, you evaluate bids or proposals as you have in the past, but apply a price preference of a specific percentage to those bids that meet your geographic preference standard. In using the chart above, you might set a point threshold such that any vendor who receives a certain number of points will receive a percentage price preference on their bid. The prices will be compared after the percentage reduction, and the contract will be awarded to the lowest price at that point. Note that the actual price they quoted will be paid, and that the percentage reduction is simply a way of allowing for a higher price if your geographic preference is met.

**Model 1 Example:** *The district sets a price preference of 10% for any vendor that gets 80 points or more on the Geographic Preference Point Chart. Let's say the district has selected a single area geographic preference area (say Washington state), so you use the chart above, with the first option.*

**Vendor A** comes in at \$32,000 (lowest price), and can source 20% of the products on your list from local sources, so gets 20 points for that. They can substitute items that you deem acceptable for a few of those, so they receive 10 more points on line 2. Vendor A receives a total of 30 points. Vendor A does not reach 80 points in the chart, so the price of \$32,000 is their bid price for evaluation purposes.

**Vendor B** offers a price of \$35,000, and can locally source 80% of the items on your produce list for 80 points. Additionally, they can provide acceptable substitutes for most other items, so they receive 15 more points on line 2. Vendor B receives 95 points, so they receive the 10% price preference, which reduces their bid price for evaluation purposes to \$35,000 minus 10%, or \$31,500.

**Model 1 Result:** Assuming all other factors are equal, because of the price preference, Vendor B's bid is lower for evaluation purposes and they are awarded the contract. The prices on their bid are not actually reduced by the price preference, so the prices they quoted are the ones that will govern the purchases as you implement the contract.

*Note:* You must set the price percentage amount prior to sending out the procurement request and include it in the request. You may not adjust the price percentage once you have opened the bid documents.

Table 1. Model 1: Price Preference System

	Vendor A	Vendor B
Price offered	\$32,000	\$35,000
Points for items w/in geographic preference area (x% of 100%)	20	80
Points for acceptable substitutes (x% of 100%)	10	15
Total Preference points	30	95
Points > 80?	No (no advantage)	Yes (10% price preference)
Price for Comparison	\$32,000	\$31,500

## Model 2: Point System

In this option, you will use a point system for specifications and for preferences. Points will be awarded for specifications, with a certain number awarded to the vendor with the lowest price bid. Points will be awarded for geographic preference based on your adapted version of the Geographic Preference Point Chart. Combined points will then determine which vendor is awarded the contract.

**Model 2 Example:** *The district has decided to award the lowest priced bidder 150 points, and will award the second lowest bidder 100 points, if their bid is within 5% of the lowest bid. Eighty additional points are available for other items in the product specifications. The district has defined a geographic preference area with a two-tiered area, so the second option in the Point Chart will be used. Geographic preference points will be awarded as in the Price Preference Model. Vendor qualifications must be met for a vendor to be eligible for the contract award and no points are added for those general qualifications; instead, those who do not meet the qualifications are disqualified.*

**Vendor A** offers the products at the lowest price, so receives 150 points. They can provide 30% of the products sourced within the 1st tier geographic preference area (30 points X 2), and 20% from the 2nd tier geographic preference area (20 points X 1), so receive 80 points. They can substitute items for another 10%, adding 10 more points. They are awarded 55 points on specifications, for a total of 295 points.

**Vendor B** offers the products at the next lowest price, at 4% more than Vendor A, and is awarded 100 points. They can provide 50% sourced from within the 1st tier area (50 points X 2), and 10% from the 2nd tier area (10 points X 1), for a combined 110 points. They can substitute for another 15%, adding 15 more points. They are also awarded 65 additional specification points, for a total of 290 points.

**Vendor C** gets no points for price. They can provide 80% from within the 1st tier area (80 points X 2) and an additional 20% from the 2nd tier area (20 points X 1), so receive 180 points. They can substitute for another 15% of products, and they receive all 80 additional specification points, for a total of 275 points.

**Model 2 Result:** Assuming all other factors are equal, Vendor A is awarded the contract.



Table 2. Model 2: Point System

		Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
<b>Price</b>				
Plug in prices received from each vendor & assign the points to the two bidders offering the lowest overall bid prices.	Price offered	\$32,000	\$33,000	\$40,000
		150 pts. This vendor received 150 pts for lowest bid.	100 pts. This vendor received 100 pts for 2nd lowest bid.	0 pts.
<b>Total Price Points</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Geographic Preference</b>				
Points assigned are expressed as % of items out of total number of items requested (100%), that can be provided from Tier 1, your priority geographic preference area. Multiplying by 2 weights from Tier 1 more heavily.	Points for items w/in 1st tier area (x% of 100% x 2)	30 x 2 = 60 This vendor can supply 30% of the items requested from Tier 1	50 x 2 = 100 This vendor can supply 50% of the items requested from Tier 1	80 x 2 = 160 This vendor can supply 80% of the items requested Tier 1
	Points assigned for items available from Tier 2 are also expressed as % of 100%, but points are not doubled.	Points for items w/in 2nd tier area (x% of 100% x 1)	20	10
	Points for acceptable product substitutions (x% of 100%)	10	15	15
<b>Total Geographic Preference points</b>		<b>90</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Product Specifications</b>				
Assign product specification points as a percentage of 100% with 20 points equal to 100%. See following rows for examples		Your procurement request will clearly spell out specification expectations. Points assigned in each category will reflect how well the vendor met the specification requirements.		
	Product Availability (from produce list or acceptable substitutes), for the bid period	20	20	20
	Acceptable pack size	15	15	20
	Food safety Documentation	20	10	20
	Whole fruit without stickers or wax coating?	0	20	20
<b>Total Product Specification Points</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Total Points, including those for price and geographic preference</b>		<b>295</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>The bid is awarded to the vendor with the highest point total.</b>				

## Model 3: USDA Example of 1 Point = 1 Penny.

This example is drawn from a USDA webinar on Geographic Preference Implementation from July 27, 2011. (We have changed some terms to match those used in this guide.) In this option, a set number of points can be applied for providing products from within the geographic preference area, and the points are equated to monetary amounts for a price preference. The monetary amount is then deducted from the bid or quote amount, for comparison purposes. Note: The deduction only applies to determining the winning vendor and would not affect the actual price paid to the vendor.

*Example for Model 3: School district issued solicitation clearly indicates that 10 preference points will be given to vendors who provide locally raised and grown agricultural products. One point would equal 1 cent; in other words, 10 points would translate into 10 cents. Solicitation requires each vendor to: 1) determine if geographic preference applies; and 2) if so, deduct 10 cents from its bid price before submitting bid. The district receives three vendor responses, and verifies that the geographic preference was applied correctly by the vendors. The three prices are then compared, as follows:*

Table 3. Model 3: USDA Example

	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
Price	\$1.97	\$2.10	\$2.03
Meets geographic preference?	No	Yes (10 points)	No
Price with preference points	\$1.97	\$2.00	\$2.03



**Model 3 Result:** Assuming all other factors are equal, Vendor A is awarded the contract, even though they are not able to provide local products. Even with the preference points, Vendor B was not able to compete on price.



Notes



Lined writing area for notes, consisting of horizontal lines extending across the page.



5



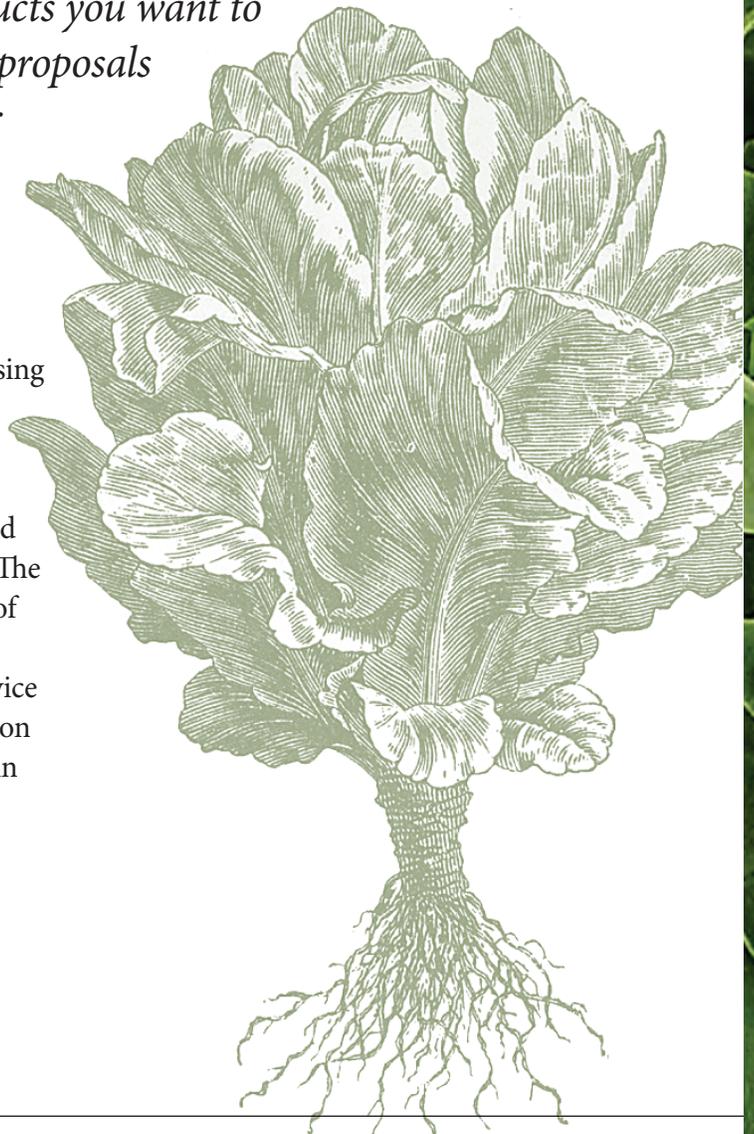
# 5

## A Step-by-Step Guide to Buying Washington-Grown Food

### Guidance for designing and implementing procurement requests to increase purchases of Washington-grown food.

*This section highlights the required procurement procedures, and provides tips for how to increase purchases of Washington-grown food. The goal is to help you appropriately request the products you want to purchase and ensure that the bids, proposals and/or quotes submitted meet your school district goals for purchasing Washington-grown foods.*

On the following page, you will find a quick reference sheet with basic steps for purchasing Washington-grown food. Each of the steps will be explored in more detail throughout the section. Some steps need to be repeated each time you do a procurement. Other steps may not need to be revisited once you have a system in place. The steps are applicable to purchases from all types of vendors, and may be used in both self-operated meal programs and those managed by food service management companies. The language, evaluation criteria, product specifications and preferences in this section should be reviewed by your district purchasing and legal advisors and adapted for your needs.



# Step-by-Step Guide for Purchasing Washington-Grown Food

- 1** Forecasting: Identify the products and quantities you will be purchasing, and estimate the total cost of the purchase.

---

- 2** Depending on the dollar amount of the purchase, determine whether to use a formal or informal procurement method.

---

- 3** Plan your procurement procedure, ensuring compliance with federal, state and school district requirements.

---

- 4** Decide what geographic area in Washington you wish to define as “local.”

---

- 5** Determine how you will apply the geographic preference.

---

- 6** Where appropriate, incorporate these decisions into school district policy to guide food purchases.

---

- 7** Clearly communicate your intent to apply a geographic preference and your definition of “local.”

---

- 8** Clearly define and communicate the evaluation criteria that will be used to select the successful vendor.

---

- 9** Identify vendor qualifications to meet your needs.

---

- 10** Write specifications to clearly state what products you want, the attributes of the products, and the level of processing you require.

---

- 11** State your preferences and how they will be weighted in the evaluation process.

---

- 12** Develop and communicate a plan for reviewing and selecting the successful bid, proposal or quote.

---

- 13** 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.

---

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

---

- 15** Execute a contract that matches your specifications and preferences from the procurement request.

---

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

The following sections will provide details for the Step-by-Step Guide for Purchasing Washington-Grown Food.

## Before You Start the Procurement Process:

**1** **Forecasting: Identify the products and quantities you want to purchase, and estimate the total cost of the purchase.**

Consider your current food service operations, and determine the best ways to increase the use of Washington-grown agricultural products. Consider student enrollment numbers, past purchases, menu plans and a commitment to meeting nutrition standards and incorporating Washington-grown foods as you estimate the quantities and kinds of foods your school district needs. Decide your purchasing needs; for the entire year, for special promotions or projects, or for seasonal produce or other specific types of food. Forecasting will determine your procurement method (Step 2) and which type of vendor or contract (Step 4), and the product needs communicated to vendors (Step 9).

**Tip** Consider adjusting meal plans to include a seasonal focus. Washington farmers can provide a wide variety of fresh products throughout the school year. Visit the WA Grown Food Kit on the WSDA farm to school website for recipes and menu plans that highlight Washington-grown foods throughout the year: [www.wafarmtoschool.org/Toolkit](http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/Toolkit). The chart, along with other menu planning information, can be found in Chapter 7 of this Guide, and is available online in the School Food section of [www.wafarmtoschool.org](http://www.wafarmtoschool.org).



**2** **Depending on the dollar amount of the purchase, determine whether to use a formal or informal procurement method.**

**A full and open competitive process is required for all food purchases.** *The State of Washington and USDA agree that a full and open competitive process is necessary to ensure the best use of government funds in school purchases, regardless of whether an institution is applying a geographic preference.<sup>1</sup> Competitive procurement, whether formal or informal, provides a fair and open forum for the award of public contracts so that school districts can receive the best and most responsive product at the lowest possible price. The process should be objective and free of arbitrary action.*

Both federal and Washington laws identify two methods of procurement: formal and informal. The selection of which method to use is determined by the dollar amount of each purchase. (Note that total purchases from any single vendor cannot exceed the small purchase threshold within a school year.) The “small purchase threshold” is the purchase amount which separates the informal and formal method. For purchases above the “small purchase threshold” a formal method must be used. For purchases below the “small purchase threshold” the informal process may be used. Currently the small purchase threshold at the state level is \$75,000, and the federal level is set at \$150,000. It is important to check your school district threshold, as well, because the most restrictive threshold will apply. For purchases below the applicable small purchase threshold, an informal procurement process of obtaining competitive quotes is sufficient. (This could be as simple as contacting three local vendors or farms to get a price quote on your required items). For purchases above the small purchase threshold, school districts must use a formal procurement process with a sealed bid or request for proposals.

<sup>1</sup> Under the federal regulations, a noncompetitive procurement process can only be used when the award of a contract is infeasible under the other competitive procedures and one of the following apply: 1) an item is only available from a single source, 2) in case of a public emergency, 3) the awarding federal agency allows for noncompetitive proposals and 4) competition is deemed inadequate after solicitation from a number of sources. Note that the conditions that require a noncompetitive process must be well documented.

---

**Federal rules on procurement in child nutrition programs are defined in the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, codified at 7 CFR Parts 3016 and 3019.** *School districts in Washington state often refer to this as the “A-102 Common Rule” (Common Rule). In addition to Common Rule requirements, school districts must also comply with Washington state statutes. To the extent the state law is more restrictive, state law requirements need to be followed. In the area of geographic preferences, Washington law may not allow the full range of options permitted by USDA rule. For example, under the federal rule, the geographic preference area may be defined as covering more than one state, while the State law contracting exemption specifies Washington-grown food.*

---

It is important to note the following when determining which threshold to use for school food purchases in Washington state:

☞ **A competitive process is required for all school food purchases, regardless of dollar amount.** Because school districts are using federal funds, a competitive procurement process (either formal or informal) is required for all school food purchases, no matter how small. Washington law states that school purchases “estimated to be in excess of \$40,000, shall be on a competitive basis.” However, this does not meet minimum federal standards requiring a competitive procurement process for all purchases, therefore the federal Common Rule applies. A competitive process is required for all school food purchases, not just those above \$40,000, as is true for other school purchases under the Washington code (for other “furniture, equipment or supplies”).

- ☞ **For food purchases without a geographic preference, the state threshold applies and a formal procurement is required for purchases over \$75,000.** The Washington state small purchase threshold is \$75,000; all purchases above that amount require a formal procurement process if not applying a geographic preference for “Washington-grown.”
- ☞ **For purchases with a geographic preference for Washington-grown food, the formal bid threshold is \$150,000, rather than \$75,000.** In 2008, the Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act provided an incentive to purchase Washington-grown food by exempting school district purchases of Washington-grown food from the state-required competitive bid process by adding the following sentence: “This section does not apply to the purchase of Washington-grown food.” Though these purchases are exempt from the state procurement requirements, they must still meet the federal requirements. This means that for purchases applying a geographic preference for Washington-grown food, the formal procurement threshold is \$150,000.
- ☞ **Any school district may set its own small purchase threshold that is lower than USDA’s \$150,000 threshold or the state \$75,000 threshold, but cannot establish a threshold that is higher.** If your school district has a lower small purchase threshold, that must be followed, regardless of the geographic preference applied.

---

**If a school district is applying a geographic preference for Washington-grown food, they are exempt from the state procurement requirements (which require a formal procurement for purchases of \$75,000 and more).** *This means that they default to the federal procurement requirements requiring a formal procurement for all purchases of \$150,000 or more.*

---

The dollar amount of the purchase of Washington-grown food determines the procurement process, as seen in the figure 3, below.

**Are you applying a geographic preference for Washington-grown food?  
 "Washington-grown food" is grown and packed or processed in Washington**

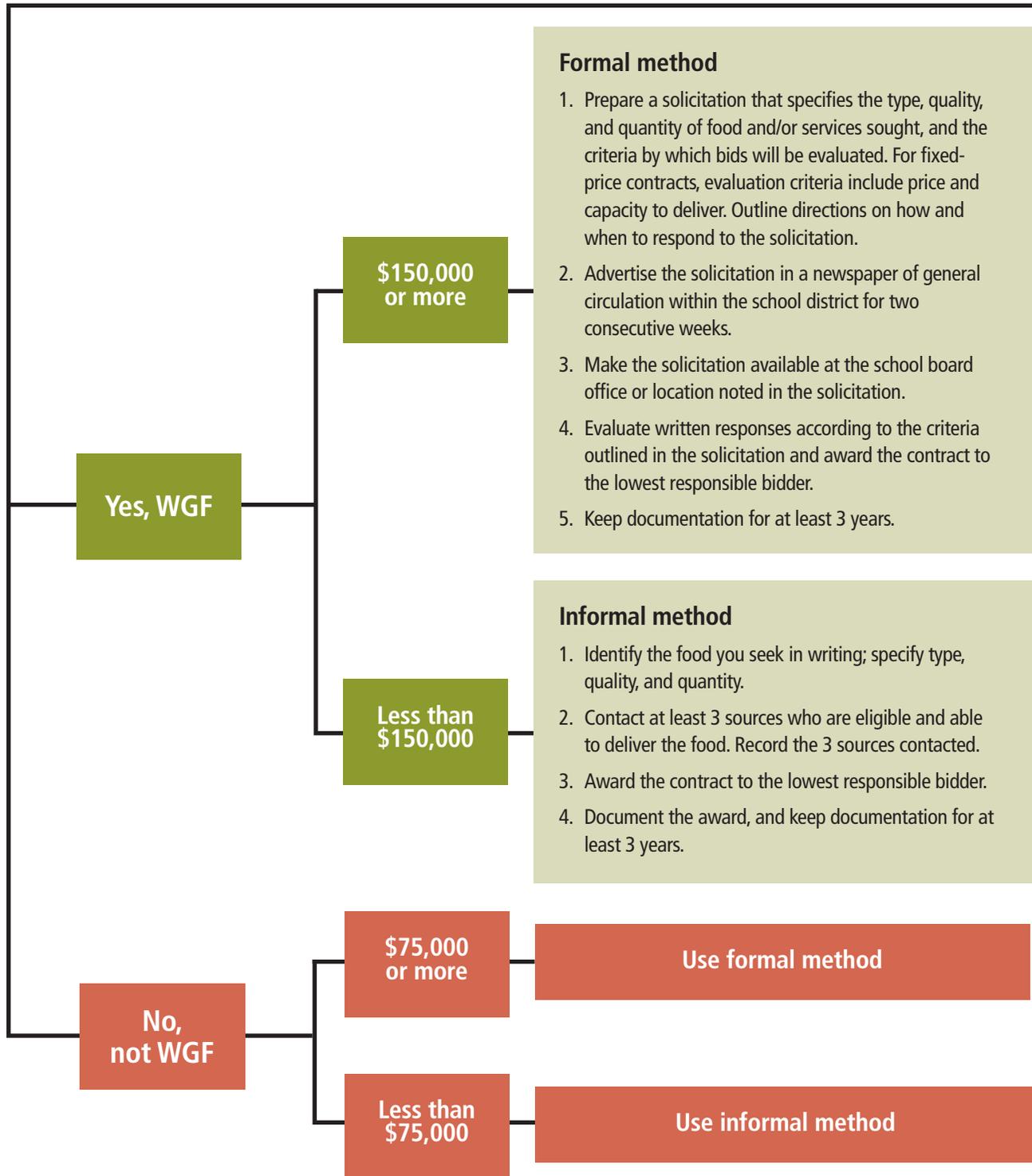


Figure 3



### **3** Plan your procurement procedure, ensuring compliance with federal, state and school district requirements.

**If you are using a formal procurement procedure, work with your procurement office to determine whether you will use a sealed bid or a competitive proposal process.** (You may also hear these referred to as an “Invitation for Bid” and a “Request for Proposals.”)

There are two types of formal procurement processes—a sealed bid or a competitive proposal—and both require formal advertising. A school district would use a sealed bid process if it can describe the desired products with a complete description and can award a contract based on price. Under a sealed bid process, a school district must make its award to the “responsible bidder whose bid, conforming to all the material terms and conditions of the invitation for bid, is the lowest in price.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, the award goes to the lowest responsible bidder who can provide the desired product. A school district would use a competitive proposal when it can provide a description of what it needs, but also solicits input from bidders on what they can offer. Under a competitive proposal process, a school district would consider price and other factors beneficial to the school district for the contract award—as long as those evaluation factors are specified in the request for proposal or solicitation document.<sup>2</sup> If a school district chooses to develop policies giving a preference to Washington-grown food, it must follow the Common Rule requirements for procurement, as well as state law.

If your district considers farmer involvement and/or services to educate students as key to your farm to school program, you may include these factors in the district procurement policy and into a competitive proposal process. It will be important that the procurement request is clear about the kinds of services you are seeking.

<sup>1</sup> 7 C.F.R. § 3016.36(d)(2).

<sup>2</sup> 7 C.F.R. § 3016.36 (d)(2). Note that under the Common Rule competitive proposal procedure, “...Awards will be made to the responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered...” Under Washington case law, when determining an award that is “most advantageous” to the state, the discretion in making the award may be even somewhat broader. *Equitable Shipyards v. State*, Through Dept. of Transp., 93 Wash. 2d 465, 475, 611 P.2d 396, 402 (1980).

If you use the competitive proposal process, in which vendors are asked to propose a range of products and services, you need to be clear about how the proposal will be evaluated.

**If you are using the informal procurement method, consider how, and from whom, you will gather quotes.** The informal procurement method, while less rigorous than the formal method, still requires competition and the use of a written procurement request that clearly outlines the specifications/descriptions for product being purchased. The school district must develop a written request to identify the number, quality and type of goods or services needed and use that request to solicit goods or services from each potential vendor.

The written request may take the form of a relatively detailed solicitation, or it may be as simple as writing down a simple request for quotes and asking a minimum of three farmers at your local farmers market or calling three vendors. It is important that you work from a written request to ensure that each vendor receives the same information and has the same opportunity to submit a quote.

If you receive a verbal quote, it is recommended that you follow up each verbal quote with a written record, which could be as simple as an email acknowledging the quote, or a faxed copy of the quote that has been signed by the vendor. All informal procurement activities should be documented thoroughly in order to respond to auditor or agency reviews, or in case of award protest.

In an informal procurement, you may not need to apply a geographic preference because you are choosing the vendors from whom you will request quotes, and you can request quotes from vendors that supply food from your geographic preference area. If you request quotes from vendors that source both inside and outside your geographic preference area, you can use a simpler description of your geographic preference statement, and make clear how you will apply a preference. It is still important to ensure competition, so make sure the request for quotes is consistent. If you send a request for quotes to one vendor supplying local food and two vendors that do not source locally, and then apply a

geographic preference and select the vendor supplying local food, a protest could be made that the procurement process was not fairly conducted and that the intent was to select that specific vendor.

## **4** Decide what geographic area in Washington you wish to define as “local.”

Washington state law only provides an exemption for Washington-grown food, so your geographic preference area must be defined within the borders of Washington state. If your goal is to support neighborhood farms and celebrate the seasons close to home, then the preference area may be small, and the products limited to those available in your immediate vicinity, as long as you have enough vendors selling that local product to ensure adequate competition. If the goal is to celebrate the diversity and bounty of Washington agriculture, then you may wish to use “Washington-grown” and take advantage of the different growing climates and products available across the state. Washington farmers grow 300 crops, and several of them are available year-round. Below are some examples of ways to define a geographic preference area, and you may identify other ways to define “local” to meet your needs. (See figure 4.)

- A. Washington-grown food, as defined in the 2008 Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act. This includes food that is grown and packed or processed in Washington state.
- B. Mile radius from school district central kitchen or main office, but still within Washington state.
- C. County boundaries to define “local” area. This might be a single county or a group of counties.
- D. Tiered system where there is a priority area, and a secondary area for when items are not available from priority area. Both may be within the definition of “local” for geographic preference purposes, though more points would be awarded for food sourced from the priority area.

## **Sample language for using a tiered system**

(adapted from Oakland Unified School District sample local produce addendum):

The district will use a two-tiered system that corresponds to the food production areas that feed the [region, county or school district—to be defined by district] as criteria for local produce. The tiers correspond to geographic purchasing preference, with the first tier representing the district’s first purchasing preference, the second tier representing second choice, etc. The first tier includes products from within the three-county area (Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish). The second tier includes any produce available to the district within a [XX]-mile radius within the state [may want to include geographic markers for this]. [Note: Second tier could also be Washington-grown, for example.]

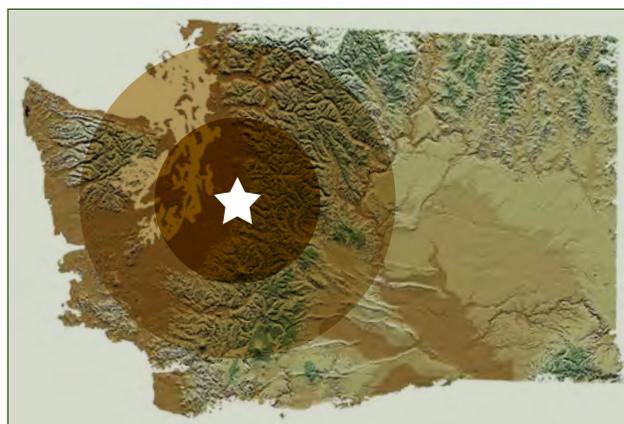


Figure 4

## **5** Determine how you will apply the geographic preference.

Decide how you wish to evaluate the geographic preference component of your procurement, so that you can prepare the procurement document accurately and advertise it correctly.

You may apply a geographic preference in a number of ways. The models in Chapter 4 of this Guide provide examples of ways to incorporate a specific advantage for a geographic preference, or you may identify other models. Whatever model you use to apply the preference, you need to make it clear in your procurement request how important supplying food from the geographic preference area will be in the award process and how vendors will be evaluated. Failure to clearly articulate the evaluation criteria and the method of weighing the geographic

preference could be grounds for protest of the award by those not awarded the contract.

The federal and state regulations do not state the number of preference points or maximum price percentage that can be assigned to a geographic preference. However, the application of a geographic preference must leave an appropriate number of qualified vendors to compete for the contract. It is critical that the geographic preference does not unnecessarily restrict free and open competition.

School districts may purchase food from a variety of types of vendors. Below are some types of procurement and some tips for contracts and considerations that may be helpful.

---

### **Prime Vendor Contract — for a wide range of food service product needs.**

*Districts often use a Prime Vendor for a wide range of food service product needs. These contracts with a large (or “broad line”) distributor may include shelf-stable and frozen products and foodservice supplies, as well as fresh items such as produce, bakery and dairy. The contract is usually renewed every year but can also be “rolled over” with extensions from two to five years.*

### **Category contract or individual purchases— for a smaller, specific subset of your foodservice orders.**

*A category contract may be a contract for fresh produce, or a meat or dairy contract, usually for a time period of at least a year, often with the option to renew after that period. Shorter-term procurements may be appropriate if you are purchasing for a specific harvest season, or to tie in with educational projects, and have specific product needs. An individual purchase may occur due to inability of contracted vendor to supply a needed product, or for special events.*

---

### ***Considerations for Integrating a Geographic Preference into Procurement Requests and Contracts:***

- ☞ Within the larger list of products purchased through contract, you may apply a geographic preference on minimally processed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products that retain their inherent characteristics (as listed on p. 12 of this guide). This may include produce, grain, meat, or dairy items, as long as they are in the USDA list of minimally processed products that may be purchased with a geographic preference.
- ☞ There are a number of ways you could identify which foods you'd like the vendor to source within your geographic preference area and during which times of year. Your product list could highlight which foods you'd like to receive from Washington sources during which times of year—using a seasonality chart as a basis or as an attachment for them to respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to their ability to provide products. (A seasonality chart is included on pp. 59-61 of this Guide, and attached under Resources Tab 1.) Another option is to have a blank on your product list for the vendor to fill in the range of months or dates during which each product is available from local sources (Examples under Resources Tab 2). Note that this may be more difficult for them to answer if your geographic preference area is a radius or other definition, rather than a state boundary definition.
- ☞ Your procurement might state that you will give specific advantage to vendors that can provide a certain percentage of some specifically identified fresh and/or minimally processed items p. 12 of this Guide from the geographic preference area you've defined as “local.” When you determine the percentage of items you prefer to be “local,” remember that you will likely be choosing to buy several out-of-season items—like tomatoes and citrus, for instance—which are not available year-round from Washington.

☞ If you wish to apply a geographic preference advantage to vendors who can supply a certain percentage of your fresh produce budget from your geographic preference area, you may ask them to provide information on how much of your prime vendor contract they would commit to spend on Washington-grown food. A geographic preference based on state boundaries may make this easier to identify. If you wish to provide a geographic preference advantage based on this information, it must be clearly stated in your procurement request, with a place for the vendor to commit to a specific budget percentage for food from your geographic preference area. Note that your procurement request will need to include volumes and/or past usage information so the vendor can calculate percent of total product cost, since you will be asking for overall expenditure percent, not price per item. The sample language below could be adapted and used on your produce item listing for vendors:

\_\_\_\_\_ School District wishes to commit to spending \_\_\_\_\_% of its fresh produce budget on Washington-grown fruits and vegetables. Can you commit to providing Washington-grown produce at \_\_\_\_\_% value of this produce list? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_# of points will be awarded for a yes answer in the bid evaluation.

☞ You may request information about the vendor's practices for sourcing Washington-grown products, as well as requesting sample product lists from different seasons (with source locations identified) to see the extent to which they usually provide foods from your geographic preference area.

☞ Your procurement request and contract can specify that the vendor must document on their fresh sheets and/or invoices the origin of the food items offered/supplied. This will allow you to make purchasing choices based on which items are Washington-grown and in season, and, if included on invoices, will provide a way for you to easily track purchases of Washington-grown food.

☞ If you are assigning points for items supplied from your geographic preference area, consider assigning higher point values for higher usage products, such as apples or potatoes. The determination of which items are higher usage should be made based on forecasted menus or past usage data.

☞ You may wish to purchase separately for different seasons or varieties of products or for special projects throughout the school year, such as harvest dinners, educational promotions (like "Harvest of the Month") or other limited scope projects. This provides flexibility to achieve certain goals, such as increasing purchases of seasonal foods or aligning with an educational project. You are not allowed to intentionally split purchases in order to fall below the small purchase threshold and avoid more rigorous procurement practices. But in situations where it is necessary to procure specific food items (such as when participating in a curriculum-related activity like a "Harvest Week" or "Taste Washington Day"), it may make sense to conduct a separate procurement for those specific products. If the procurement falls below the small purchase threshold, the district can use the informal procurement method. If your geographic region has distinct growing seasons, you might consider separate procurements for each growing season. Below is an example of text from a formal procurement request for a specific project, that informs vendors of the scope and anticipated purchase amounts, without guarantees:

The Nutrition Services department of [name of school district] currently has been awarded a USDA Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Grant for ten of its elementary schools; [name of school district] makes no guarantees, either explicit or implied, as to the quantity or value of purchases which will be ordered. However, the district anticipates an expenditure of approximately \$200,000 [or expected dollar amount] from this solicitation contract award.

(adapted from Spokane Public Schools)



As you find farms or local food vendors offering products sourced from your geographic preference area, gather their contact information in a file or binder so you start to build your store of information about agricultural products available in your area. Then as you learn of new potential vendors, you can send them a questionnaire and keep the copy of their response on file. When you are ready to send out a procurement request, you can eas-

ily identify the most appropriate vendors to meet your needs. For an informal request, you could send a letter to the local list, requesting fresh sheets and/or quotes, and include questions within that. (A sample letter to farms is included under Resources Tab 2.)

The sample questions below were written for farms. If you wish to send to a distributor, the questions could be adapted to ask about the farms they source from.

## Sample Questions for Farms

1. What products will you have available within the next year? (Please provide seasonal or monthly information.) What quantities would you be able to supply?
2. Are you able to pack and deliver to schools, or would you want to work with a local distributor? [Tailor this question to your district – central kitchen? Multiple schools?]
3. Do you have Good Agricultural Practices, HACCP, or other third party food safety certifications? If not, can you supply a copy of a farm food safety plan or respond to a questionnaire about your farm food safety practices?
4. Please describe your farm and growing practices. Do you have any certifications (besides food safety certifications? (e.g. Organic, Food Alliance, etc.)
5. Do you carry product liability insurance? If so, what is the coverage level?
6. Would you be interested in partnering for education purposes (like visiting the school to speak to students, providing picture and farm description for a farm profile poster, hosting a farm visit, etc.)? If so, please list your ideas for education about your farm or the farms you source from.



- ☞ Consider ways to make the contract accessible to farms or smaller vendors by acknowledging in the procurement request that you reserve the right to purchase from more than one vendor if price and availability are best served by doing so.
- ☞ Preference could be applied for providing some or all of the items from Washington sources, depending on the scope of the contract. If you expect to purchase year-round from a single contract, then be sure to apply the preference in a way that considers your need to purchase out-of-season items.
- ☞ For meat or dairy contracts, you can apply a geographic preference, as long as they are within the “minimally processed” definition (according to the USDA list on p. 12 of this Guide).
  - You may provide an advantage to meat vendors that sell frozen meat, ground meat or even frozen ground meat patties from Washington sources. However, a geographic preference may not be applied to any foods that are cooked, heated, canned, or that have any additives or preservatives. The federal geographic preference option is available for “locally grown and raised agricultural products,” which means that a farm animal must be raised within the geographic preference area. Be clear about which items you are requesting from local sources, and provide an advantage for only those items when evaluating vendors.
  - Dairy contracts may provide an advantage for those providing pasteurized milk, but not for milk products that contain additives, such as chocolate or strawberry flavors, nor for dairy products that require additional cooking, ingredients or processing, such as yogurt, butter, or cheese. According to the federal geographic preference rule, “local” milk must be from dairy cows that are milked and reside in the geographic preference area. You may also define “local” to mean that pasteurization must take place locally.

## **6** Where appropriate, incorporate these decisions into school district policy to guide food purchases.

If school districts are applying a geographic preference in the procurement process, we recommend that they develop and adopt policies and procedures to guide purchases of Washington-grown food.

### **Putting Together the Procurement**

Once you’ve identified the types and volumes of product, how you will apply a geographic preference, and which procurement method you will use, it is time to assemble the procurement request. The procurement document should clearly state all components of the geographic preference, including:

- ☞ Definition of the geographic preference area
- ☞ Type of geographic preference evaluation; price preference or point system and specific descriptions of what it is and how it will be applied
- ☞ Specific vendor qualifications, specifications and preferences

## **7** Clearly communicate your intent to apply a geographic preference and your definition of “local.”

Each procurement request needs to specify your intent to apply a geographic preference and clearly define your geographic preference area (your definition of “local”). Below is sample introduction text for a district using “Washington-grown” as the geographic preference area in a formal procurement. For an informal procurement, this language could be simplified, but the main points should still be communicated. (Sample included under Resources Tab 2.) The following example was created by attorneys at ChangeLab Solutions in Oakland, California:

# Model Geographic Preference Bid Language for School Food Procurement

## Option 1: “Local” defined as Washington-grown Food

- 1 Applying a geographic preference for Washington-grown products for school food procurement [in Washington state].
  - A. This school district (“District”) or school food authority (“SFA”) desires to serve Washington-grown products to its students.
  - B. Under federal law, this District [or “this SFA”], as the purchasing institution, has the authority not only to apply a “local” geographic preference to minimally processed foods, but also 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 Fruit & 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.
  - C. This district [or “This SFA”] defines “locally grown products” as “Washington-grown,” as defined under Local Farms – Healthy Kids Act section 6 (Revised Code of Washington section 28A.335.190). That definition states, “grown and packed or processed in Washington.” This district [or “This SFA”] will apply applicable federal procurement procedures.
  - D. As required under federal law, this district [or “this SFA”] will provide a price percentage preference of [XX] % [or insert other point calculation system] during evaluation of bids to “locally grown products” purchased for school food procurement, as defined under this geographic preference.
  - E. Pursuant to USDA regulations, the geographic preference in this section is applied only to “minimally processed” agricultural products that retain their inherent character.

Credit: ChangeLab Solutions

## 8 Clearly define and communicate the evaluation criteria that will be used to select the successful vendor.

School food buyers have the right to select a vendor based on vendor qualifications and product specifications in order to obtain food that will be fresh, tasty and healthy for students, as well as meet district needs for form of food and ease of handling in the kitchen.

Even when using an informal procurement process (which may be as simple as an email to three farms or distributors or sharing your product needs with three farms at a farmers market), a written request for quotes is required to document that the specifications discussed with each vendor were identical and to make sure you are consistently communicating your product needs. Using a simple procurement request document that identifies your specifications and preferences will ensure transparency and competition. Whether or not you share a written document with potential vendors, it is

necessary to document your request in as much detail as possible, including all quotes received in response. In order to support ease of administration at the school district, you may want to provide sample documents, such as order forms or invoices, that you want vendors to use if they are awarded the purchase. (Examples of informal procurement requests and related documents are included under Resources Tab 2.)

The contract may be awarded to the vendor offering the lowest price, but language should be clear that it is the lowest price bid or quote that meets the specifications and includes any advantage for meeting geographic preference. This may include a reference to meeting product variety, quality criteria, delivery requirements, or other criteria you have defined within the vendor qualification or specification section of your request. The lowest price may not be the determining factor when you apply a geographic preference, because you can give a price

preference or use a point system that allow you to select a higher cost vendor who is able to provide Washington-grown food. Here is an example of language explaining how a school district will make its award decision:

**Evaluation of Solicitation:** Award will be made to the lowest responsible bidder. The lowest responsible bidder will be determined based on an evaluation of the products available, price, delivery timelines and evaluation criteria shown hereafter. Such determination will, of necessity, require judgmental evaluations by district representatives. The decision resulting from the evaluation process as to which product best meets the needs of various programs remains the sole responsibility of the district and is final.

**Evaluation Criteria** (including vendor qualifications, product specifications and preferences to be applied)

- ☞ Product variety available for distribution
  - ☞ Quality of the products offered
  - ☞ Price per pound and number of servings per case
  - ☞ Ability to meet delivery schedule and service history in general
  - ☞ Agreeable and reliable billing procedures
  - ☞ Ability to provide products sourced from within the stated geographic preference area
- (adapted from Spokane Public Schools)

**Tip** **Request simple language and reject elaborate marketing materials.** In order to give all vendors a level playing field to compete, you may consider requiring that they respond only on forms you provide or in simple format, rather than sending in glossy marketing materials or other elaborate promotions.

**Sample text:**

Proposals are to be prepared simply and in a manner designed to provide [School District Name] with a straightforward presentation of the Vendor's capability to satisfy the requirements of this RFP. Elaborate brochures and other promotional materials are not desired in the proposal and will not be considered.

## 9 Identify vendor qualifications to meet your needs.

It is important that you clearly communicate vendor qualifications. The following list of qualifications includes examples that would likely be required for a vendor to be considered a "responsible vendor." Note: You may consider using some criteria as preferences (in the next procurement step) rather than required qualifications. If preferences, you will need to be clear about how they will be prioritized in awarding the contract.

- ☞ **Ability to meet delivery schedule and service history in general.** Review whether your current delivery schedule and sites are the best fit for your current operational needs. Note that farms may have limited schedules compared to distributors, so set your expectations and requirements accordingly if you want to prioritize buying from farms directly.
- ☞ **Agreeable and reliable billing procedures.** If interested in purchasing from small businesses or farms, it may be useful to include a sample invoice and billing schedule (See examples under Resources Tab 2.) If the farm or business is new to institutional sales, this will help them provide you with the information and format that works best for you, with a payment procedure you prefer. (It may be useful to talk with farms or ranches in your area to see what payment options will work for them, but most can do a 30 day payment invoice.)
- ☞ **Acceptable level of product liability insurance.** School districts typically request anywhere from \$1 million to \$5 million product liability insurance from food vendors. Smaller farms are typically able to meet a \$1 million policy requirement, but may find a \$5 million policy requirement prohibitive.
- ☞ **Commitment to host a farm visit by school district nutrition services representative to review farm practices.** This may include a walk-through by the nutrition director or buyer to review for acceptable farm practices in relation to food safety or other district priorities.



# 10 Write specifications to clearly state what products you want, the attributes of the products, and the level of processing you require.

The list of specifications below includes examples that support a geographic preference for “minimally processed agricultural products.” If you are making a larger contract that includes items for which a geographic preference cannot be applied (e.g. processed meal items or supplies), these specifications would be used only for applicable food categories. For instance, some of examples apply only to fresh produce, meat or dairy products.

## ☞ **Product variety available for distribution.**

You may wish to provide a sample list of “minimally processed” items the district expects to purchase. Note: If interested in making the procurement open to farms, consider whether a single farm will be able to provide all the items on your list. You may also include a statement that you reserve the right to divide the procurement contract among different vendors based on availability and price from different sources. The following is a sample introduction explaining a product listing requirement for vendors.

The list attached in Section III titled “Items to be Purchased” is an example of the types of produce which the vendor can expect to deliver under this contract. The inclusion of this list in no way limits the right of the District to purchase other types of products or requires the District to purchase all of the types listed. Vendor is to fill in the appropriate price per unit as of [date just prior to bid proposal due date], and submit this form with their bid documents.

(from Spokane Public Schools)

(Additional examples are included under Resources Tab 2.)

## ☞ **Sample fresh sheets.** Request sample seasonal listings of local produce items available for distribution for each season during the contract period, including names of farm sources and pricing. You can be specific for which months you wish to view.

**Tip** All of the examples may be listed as required specifications in a procurement request. If you do not consider any one of them a requirement for awarding the bid, you may opt to use it as a preference rather than a required specification. If using as a preference, you will need to be clear about how it will be prioritized in awarding the contract (as discussed in Step 11).

## ☞ **Quality of the products offered.** You may consider requiring a sampling date to test the quality and taste of the product, as in this example from a produce procurement request:

All solicitation finalists may be required to provide a produce cutting, from a select list of produce items identified by the Nutrition Services Director. The precise date and time will be determined and the invited vendors notified prior to [date]. Products will be evaluated as acceptable or unacceptable and qualify or disqualify the vendor accordingly. All products delivered by the successful bidder shall be held to the same product quality standard as that used in this evaluation and award process.

(from Spokane Public Schools)

## ☞ **Size of produce, or number of pieces per case.**

Consider the size of the individual produce items you require, especially if serving whole fruit or vegetables to students. If you'd like an individual piece to equal a serving size for students, you may wish to purchase smaller produce pieces. Growers and produce vendors may be happy to sell these to a school, particularly if their retail or other buyers generally want only the large fruits or vegetables. Farmers may also prefer to be allowed to provide a range of sizes. (This may be advantageous to you, if you could use similar sizes (163 or 150) as servings, or if you can use larger ones for cooking and smaller for individual servings. This benefits the farmer, and may allow them to offer a lower price, since they can spend less staff time sorting produce. Always be clear about your acceptable range of produce sizes. Below (figure 5) is an example of a visual representation of size requirements.

(This and other photos in this sizing series are included under Resources Tab 2.)

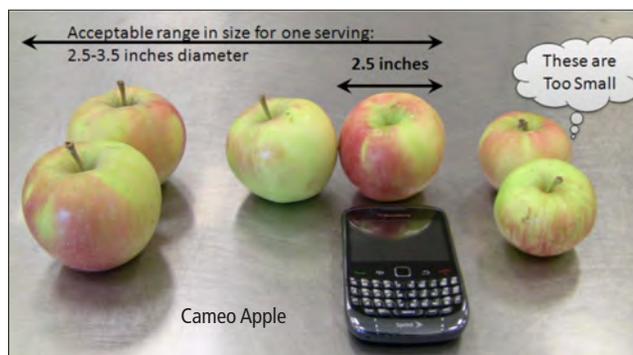


Figure 5. Serving Size for Students

☞ **Price - per pound and/or case count.** This should be included as part of your product list by leaving blanks for vendors to fill in with price next to each item. When evaluating “lowest price bid or quote,” it is most accurate to multiply price per item by usage/volume to ensure you’re getting the lowest price on the items you actually tend to purchase.

☞ **Documentation of food safety procedures utilized by growers.** You may wish to require that vendors provide food safety documentation about the farms they source from by (1) providing copies of grower Good Agricultural Practices or other food safety certifications or (2) by providing copies of farm food safety plans or checklists of procedures used, along with description of how the vendor evaluates, reviews or updates this information. Some districts choose to provide a questionnaire about on-farm food safety practices and require that vendors fill out and sign the form. (Examples of on-farm food safety questionnaires are included under Resources Tab 3.)



**Tip** List your past usage (quantity or volume) by product, so vendors can see the quantity needed. This helps them decide whether they can provide that amount and whether they can offer any discounts based on volume. When evaluating for lowest price bid or quote, calculate with price multiplied by volume to make sure you are considering prices for the items you use in large quantities, rather than an average price for all items.

☞ **Documentation of food safety components of handling, storage and delivery procedures of vendor.** This may be fulfilled by providing copies of a Good Agricultural Practices certification if the vendor is a farm that conducts only field harvesting of produce (i.e. where basic cleaning is the only process before putting in boxes and delivering). In the case of farms and other vendors where more handling, cleaning, processing or packing are done prior to shipping, a Good Handling Practices certification or HACCP plan may be requested. Note that these kinds of certification are not required by law for farms and distributors to sell produce, so not all vendors will have them. You may choose to request copies of farm food safety plans, checklists or other food safety practice documentation. Remember that a WSDA processing license is required if the vendor is doing food processing. (See WSDA’s Food Safety Program website for what processes require a license: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors>.)

Amount of time from harvest to delivery, or from “minimal processing” to delivery. This specification will ensure that you receive fresh produce in the best possible condition. This could apply to whole fresh items as well as items that are sliced, diced or chopped and delivered fresh. For frozen foods, the amount of time specified would obviously be longer, such as “one year from freeze date.” A “time from harvest” provision is most useful for products that have a short storage life. (See product storage tips under Resources Tab 3 to identify appropriate expectations for individual products.)

Two examples of language to meet this standard are:

\_\_\_\_ School District seeks to provide fresh food to our students. We request that all fresh produce (or specific items) be harvested no more than 4 days before delivery to the District. Can you commit to meeting this timeframe? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.

All produce must be from [current or just ended year] late fall harvest, or more recent harvest (i.e. not stored from previous season).

**Freshness and traceability.** Request information from vendors that ensures that they are documenting harvest and distribution information in ways that contribute to food safety and public health in case of a foodborne illness outbreak. For example, you could ask vendors to provide the following information for every box of produce. (If all products in a delivery are from same farm, this could be stated on the invoice.)

**Identified** Each shipping box/case to have farm name or other identifier on it or be uniquely identifiable as coming from a specific farm.

**Location** Name of town, city or county where the harvesting was done.

**Traceable** Name of farm, location of farm, date of harvest, and date shipment was received from farmer.

**Tip** If traceability info is on the invoice rather than each box, have district staff mark boxes to identify farm and delivery date information once the product is in your facility.

**Refrigeration of fresh produce from harvest or “minimal processing” to delivery, or a requirement that it be unrefrigerated for no more than [xx] hours.** This is a way to ensure freshness and quality of produce. Some farms may not have refrigerated vehicles, but may have short enough delivery distance that it will not significantly affect produce freshness. Some produce items, such as apples or potatoes, may be less sensitive to temperature changes, so you could choose to specify this refrigeration requirement in the description of individual types of produce.

**Presence or absence of individual produce stickers or wax coatings.** Fruit coatings are used to prolong storage life, but some districts have reported that fruit becomes unattractive when it is washed, making it less appealing to students. If you are seeking fresh fruit in season, rather than stored fruit, you may be able to get them without wax coatings. Schools may also prefer to have fruit without stickers, so they won’t have to remove them before serving. Most stickers and coatings are applied during the packing process, so it may be easier to get products without them direct from the growers.

**Level of processing needed for specific products.** Remember that a geographic preference can only be applied to “minimally processed” agricultural products, as defined by USDA (see p. 12 of this Guide) For districts that require pre-sliced, washed or bagged produce, this should be stated in the procurement request. Different vendors will have different products available. Most farms will provide whole produce in a form that requires washing, though

some are adding value to their products by installing equipment to provide minimally processed items. Note that while these products are more convenient for kitchen staff, and may reduce staff time, they are also more expensive than whole produce. Some districts have chosen to do more on-site preparation and cooking of whole foods. Reports vary as to costs and staffing requirements, but many districts find that once they have a new routine, staff time and effort is only minimally affected.

☞ **Seasonal availability considerations.** Buying produce in season results in the freshest, best-tasting produce with minimal transportation or storage time, and vastly increases the likelihood of finding affordable local sources. A procurement request for a full year may state that the district wishes to purchase products when they are in season, and may be strengthened by including a chart or list of items by season to specify the foods you would like during each part of the year. For schools that have a rotating menu, it may work to have different menus for each season. This will allow the vendor to check their prices during that season, rather than quoting the average price for a short-season item that is generally purchased from farther away at a premium price. (See Chapter 7 of this guide for more information about seasonal menu planning.)

☞ **Selecting meat and poultry products for cost and quality.** You may apply a geographic preference to meat products that are minimally processed. Butchering, cutting, grinding, forming into patties, and freezing are all explicitly allowed processes under the geographic preference rule, though added ingredients would disqualify meat products from the geographic preference rule. Cuts of meat that are less popular with home cooks or restaurants may provide a lower-cost alternative to schools, and are often desirable for stews or stir-fries. One example is chuck roast, which can be prepared in many ways that could work for schools. Chuck roasts may be slow-roasted for shredded beef for tacos or teriyaki or cut

into cubes to use as stew beef (can also buy pre-cut as stew meat). If interested in purchasing from Washington ranchers, consider buying whole animals and have them cut and packed to your specification by a butcher. Because there are few USDA certified slaughter facilities in Washington, ranchers may welcome the idea to work with multiple school districts, or with large school districts to sell an entire truckload. All meat purchased for school meals must be from a USDA certified slaughter/processing facility.

☞ **Additives or preservatives.** Note that the geographic preference may not be applied to foods that have been cooked or combined with additives, with the exception for the “addition of ascorbic acid or other preservatives to prevent oxidation of produce.”

In support of farm to school goals in your district, and in order to highlight the Washington sources of the products you purchase, the following educational components could be included as specifications in a procurement request:

☞ **Commitment to provide education opportunities for students.** This could be to provide a personal visit to the school district by the grower or his/her representative to educate students about the farm and the products offered. Another idea is to request the vendor to host farm visits by student groups. Such visit could be offered at least one time during the contract period.

☞ **Commitment to host a farm visit for nutrition services kitchen and cafeteria staff.** Opportunities for staff to visit the farm and meet the farmers is invaluable for building mutual respect and understanding, and for inspiring, and empowering nutrition services staff. This personal experience generates enthusiasm that can be passed on to students when staff members encourage students to eat a variety of foods and try new menu items.



## 11 State your preferences and how they will be weighted in the evaluation process.

These are elements that are not required, but that you prefer. Be clear about how important they are to you, in a quantifiable way, whether that is by points, by a percentage preference, or other method. (Examples of methods are in Chapter 4 of this Guide.) If the preferred evaluation factors are stated and weighted, a vendor may then respond to the request with which of the preferences they can meet and which they cannot. The decision is then made based on whether the vendor can meet the required specifications, along with the application of the point score, price credit or other advantage the bidder earns by meeting stated preferences.

### Geographic Preference Commitment to Provide Locally-Grown or Raised Agricultural Products

This is where you can apply points or a price preference for those vendors who supply products from local sources (as you have defined “local” for your geographic preference). You can include an option for item substitution, in case of seasonal or weather-related crop failure. This may increase your likelihood of getting responsive bids or quotes from farm-based vendors. Two examples of substitution language are below:

- ☞ Acceptable substitutions are from like categories, i.e. dark green leafy, red or orange.
- ☞ Acceptable substitutions are different varieties of the identified product, such as substituting Gala apples for Fuji.

In order to compare different vendors’ ability to meet the geographic preference, you need to accurately determine both the amount and the time periods during which Washington-grown or raised agricultural products are provided. The date range of availability could be included as a blank on the produce list, along with the following language:

For each item, vendor shall identify the time period [by date range or by months] during which they can supply that item from sources within the geographic preference area.

(Sample documents included under Resources Tab 2.) Vendors should verify the volumes or quantities of local produce they can supply. Some vendors might be able to supply the quantity but would have to source from both inside and outside the geographic preference area to do so. If you include usage and/or volume requirements on your produce list, you can ask vendors to describe their ability to meet the need, in a similar way to the following sample language:

Vendor must provide documentation of ability to supply and deliver the required quantities of local products in order to receive the points. Documentation shall include a description of the process used to source and obtain seasonal products from growers, and a statement that they will provide the quantities on the produce list, or specify how much they can supply from local sources, if less than the quantities listed.

The availability of agricultural products can be unpredictable based on growing conditions. When responding to a procurement request, vendors assume normal circumstances and usually include a cost consideration for national and regional market fluctuations. Farms within a specific geographic region may be affected by weather patterns, pests or crop failures. Crops can come in earlier or later on different years, depending on weather. One of the benefits (and risks) of working on fixed price contract for a school district is that both farmer and district can rely on a steady price, and will not be affected by price fluctuations in the larger food markets. You may also contract with farmers (as with any vendor) under a cost reimbursable contract, with cost fluctuations tied to regional price indices.

## 12 Develop and communicate a plan for reviewing and selecting the successful bid, proposal or quote.

To ensure a fair and open competitive process, the review and selection process must follow the evaluation criteria published in the procurement request and be designed to ensure competition among responsive bids or proposals. Your procurement document should clearly communicate your evaluation process.

## Implementing the Procurement

**13** 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.

A formal procurement process applying a geographic preference for Washington-grown food must follow federal rules. The USDA Common Rule minimum standards state that sealed bids “will be publicly advertised and bids shall be solicited from an adequate number of known suppliers, providing them sufficient time prior to the date set for opening the bids.” In Washington state, for purchases of food other than Washington-grown food, a formal procurement process means that “complete plans and specifications for such work or purchases shall be prepared and notice by publication given in at least one newspaper of general circulation within the district, once each week for two consecutive weeks, of the intention to receive bids and that specifications and other information may be examined at the office of the board or any other officially designated location.” The contract must be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder that can provide food and/or services that meet the vendor qualifications and stated specifications.

The informal procurement method requires quotes from three qualified vendors. These quotes should be obtained in writing or by telephone, and recorded for public perusal. Quotes may be solicited and received by email, mail, or in person, such as at a farmers market or wholesale market setting.

For all types of procurement, identify and reach out to vendors with the ability to provide food from your geographic preference area. Farm vendors may be located in local farm guides or by joining online or regional farm finder networks. You can also post your procurement request on agriculture-related listservs that reach farms.

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

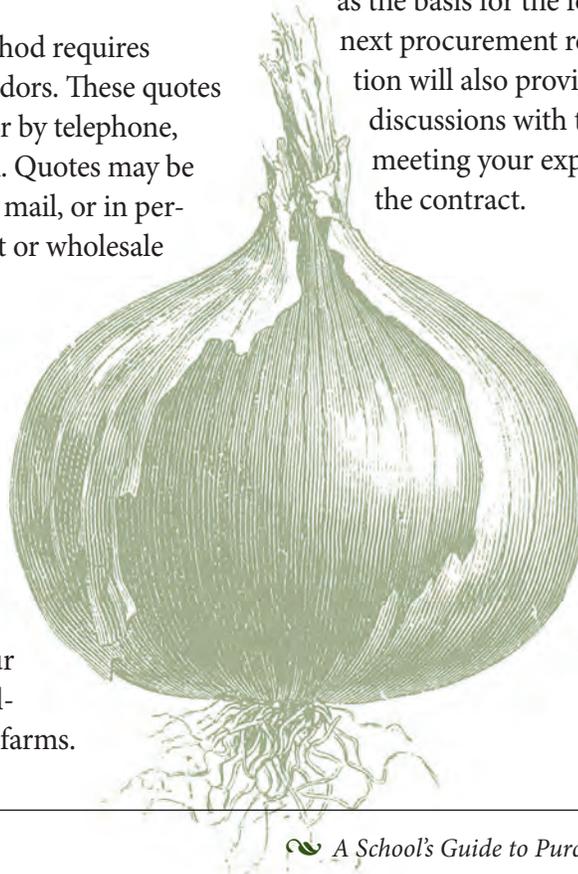
Your award decision must be made using the criteria and system you outlined in your procurement request, so that vendors are receiving fair treatment and your process is competitive and transparent.

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

It is important to clearly state the geographic preference expectations and other product and service requirements in the contract itself, as you did in the procurement request. It is the contract that holds the vendor accountable to meeting the standards.

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

Documenting your experience working with the vendor will help you identify adjustments you may choose to make in future procurement requests and contracts. Records of actual volumes purchased and prices paid at different times of year will serve as the basis for the forecasting process for the next procurement request. The documentation will also provide you clear reasoning for discussions with the vendor if they are not meeting your expectations or the terms of the contract.



Notes \_\_\_\_\_





6



# 6

## School District Policies



### Making a commitment to Washington-grown food

*School district policies offer an opportunity to articulate priorities for serving healthy, fresh, seasonal food to students, providing nutrition education opportunities to meet specific learning standards, and supporting local agriculture.*

The 2008 Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act in Washington state (RCW 28A.335.190) says: “At the discretion of the board, a school district may develop and implement policies and procedures to facilitate and maximize to the extent practicable, purchases of Washington-grown food.”

Most policies relating to school food fall into the following categories:

#### 🌀 Food and Nutrition Policies and Procedures

These policies vary in title, but they encompass the set of policies and procedures that guide purchasing, menu planning, service and kitchen operation, nutrition standards and other stated goals or commitments of the school district as relates to food.

Some districts have developed guidelines rather than policies to express goals for nutrition services, as they relate to health standards, local sourcing, food with specific attributes like organic or hormone-free, or to nutrition services’ relationship to school gardens or nutrition curriculum projects.

#### 🌀 General Procurement Policies and Procedures That Apply to Food Purchases

A school district’s general procurement policies may also apply to purchases of food or food-service management. Whenever you are considering making changes to your school food procurement, consult with your district procurement officer to ensure sure your changes meet the district procurement standards. In some districts, wellness policies may serve as food and nutrition policies.

#### 🌀 Wellness Policies and Procedures

Each school district is mandated by state and federal law to have a wellness policy. School wellness polices are a positive way for the school community to identify shared priorities and goals for supporting health and wellness. These policies should include procedures to ensure successful implementation. Nutrition services representatives are required to be involved in the policy-setting process for wellness policies.

The most recent guidance on school wellness policies is from the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which reauthorizes federal child nutrition programs and is referred to as “the Act,” in the memo quoted below. The Act added Local Wellness Policy Implementation provisions to the National School Lunch Act (NSLA).

The following information is partial text from a USDA Memo dated July 8, 2011 (attached in full under Resources Tab 4).

. . . Section 204 of the Act strengthens wellness policies by emphasizing ongoing implementation and assessment. This provision also supports a robust process at the community level, including the expansion of the team of collaborators participating in the wellness policy development to include more members from the community. This approach is intended to foster broad-based community support for the development and implementation of effective wellness policies.

. . . LEAs [Local Education Authorities] may find it helpful to consult the local wellness policy reference materials and sample policies on the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) website at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthy/wellnesspolicy.html>. FNS will be updating these materials to reflect the new requirements; however these materials can still be a useful starting point for LEAs working to strengthen their local wellness policies to meet the requirements of the new law.

#### **Elements of the Local Wellness Policy**

As was previously required, local wellness policies must include, at a minimum, goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness, as well as nutrition guidelines to promote student health and reduce childhood obesity for all foods available on each school campus. The Act added the requirement that local wellness policies include goals for nutrition promotion.

#### **Public Involvement**

LEAs are now required to permit teachers of physical education and school health professionals as well as parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public to participate in the development of wellness policies. The Act also directs LEAs to include these stakeholders in the implementation of the local wellness policy with periodic review and updates.

#### **Implementation, Periodic Assessment, and Public Updates**

The Act requires LEAs to inform and update the public (including parents, students, and others in the community) about the content and implementation of the local wellness policies. LEAs are also required to measure periodically and make available to the public an assessment of the local wellness policy.

Finally, the Act requires LEAs to designate one or more LEA officials or school officials, as appropriate, to ensure that each school complies with the local school wellness policy.

## Examples of Language from School District Policies and Procedures

Each school district has a unique combination of policies and procedures to direct purchasing and school food service practices. Any commitments or intents expressed in school district policies should be reflected in practice when purchasing food, so you may also choose to adapt the policy language for use in procurement requests. The examples below are organized by topic, and may inspire you as you develop policies and procedures in your school district to meet your farm to school goals.

### Locally-Grown Food Commitment

☞ The District food program will support and utilize local foods whenever possible, including school-grown products, and menus will be developed to complement local growing seasons and availability of foods.

(from Lopez Island)

☞ The Governing Board will ensure that the nutritional value of the food served by Berkeley Unified School District and after school programs significantly improves upon USDA and State Dietary Guidelines by providing nutritious, fresh, tasty, locally grown food that reflects Berkeley's cultural diversity. The Board of Education encourages staff to utilize food from school gardens and local farmers based upon availability and acceptability.

(from Berkeley Unified School District)



☞ The district shall develop and implement a plan to integrate local food into the meals served to our students. The plan will identify yearly, progressive benchmarks and goals to increase the use of local foods.

Targets for purchasing regionally produced and/or grown food shall be established by the superintendent and the Board. Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the district shall source a minimum of 5% of the fresh fruit and vegetable food budget on food available from local or regional farmers and this commitment will increase by 5% per year for 5 years, if the cost of the food is less than 20% higher than comparable food grown by farmers in Washington state and an adequate supply of local or regional food is available to meet the requirements of the food service program. The Food Services Director shall report biannually to the Board on the availability and cost of food available from local farmers compared to food grown by farmers in the rest of Washington state.

(from Port Townsend School District)

☞ Every meal served through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs will ... incorporate seasonally available, locally grown fresh whole foods.

(From Wenatchee School District)

☞ Nutrition Services will coordinate its menus with seasonal production of local farms and with production in school gardens so that school meals will reflect seasonality and local agriculture.

(from Center for Ecoliteracy Model Wellness Policy Guide)

☞ Neighboring school districts will work cooperatively and, whenever possible, purchase collectively in order to increase the amount of products purchased from local farms.

(from Center for Ecoliteracy Model Wellness Policy Guide)

## *Extending Foodservice Goals to Non-Meal Foods Offered or Sold to Students at School*

- ☞ Foods offered to students during the day, as snacks, incentives, etc., will conform to the goals of this policy, as will fundraisers that utilize food.

(from Lopez Island)

- ☞ Vending machines and snack bars shall only sell foods that conform to the goals of this policy, during school hours, and whenever possible, after school hours.

(from Lopez Island)

- ☞ Foods offered to students and employees of BUSD during the day as a snack, an incentive, or in school offices, whether provided by parents or BUSD staff, shall be consistent with the goals of the policy.

(from Berkeley Unified School District)

- ☞ The Board recognizes that class parties are a tradition in public education. However, parents and staff are encouraged to provide party snack items that are consistent with the goals of the policy and held after the lunch hour whenever possible.

(from Berkeley Unified School District)

- ☞ To support children's health and school nutrition-education efforts, school fundraising activities if they involve food will use only foods that meet the above outlined nutrition standards for foods and beverages and integrate locally grown produce where appropriate.

(from Wenatchee School District)

- ☞ The superintendent shall ensure
  - A. a variety of healthy food choices are available whenever food is sold or served on district property or at district-sponsored events; Schools are encouraged to offer fresh and minimally processed fruits and vegetables from local sources to the greatest extent possible.

(from Wenatchee School District)

## *Other Attributes of Food to Be Served in the District*

A district board may choose to identify other characteristics of food that are important to their purchasing considerations.

- ☞ The use of foods that contain potential harmful residues of agricultural chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, waxes, and other agents will be reduced or eliminated by efforts to purchase or use foods grown without such agents whenever possible.

(from Lopez Island)

- ☞ The Board supports sustainable organic agriculture and the Farm-to-Cafeteria program. Therefore the Child Nutrition Supervisor shall develop and implement a plan to integrate organic food into the meals served to our students by the Olympia School District. The plan shall seek to reduce or eliminate potential harmful food additives and processes, such as bovine growth hormones, irradiation, hydrogenated oils, and known genetically modified foods.

(from Olympia School District)

- ☞ The Governing Board will ensure that the nutritional value of the food served by Berkeley Unified School District and after school programs significantly improves upon USDA and State Dietary Guidelines by providing nutritious, fresh, tasty, locally grown food that reflects Berkeley's cultural diversity. The Board of Education encourages staff to utilize food from school gardens and local farmers based upon availability and acceptability.

(from Berkeley Unified School District)





Notes





7



# 7

## Strengthening Farm to School Procurement and Practice

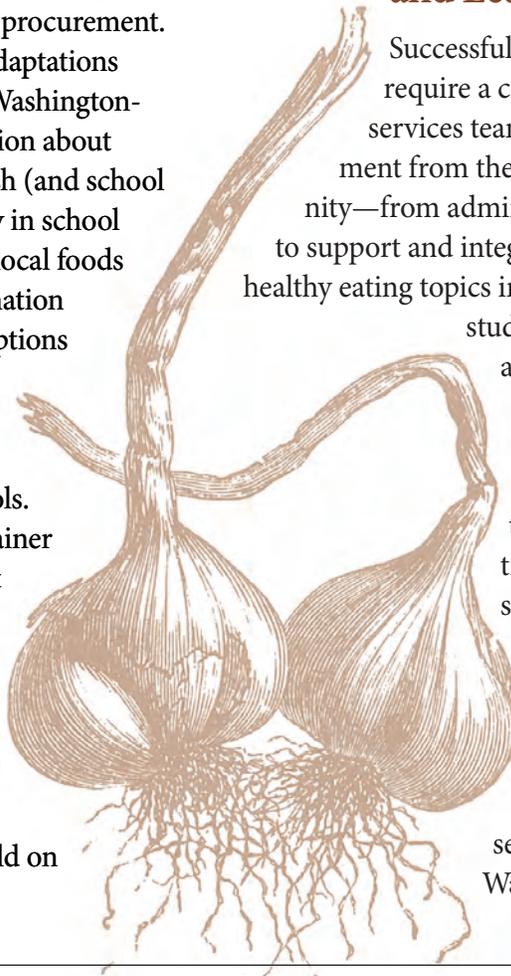
### Additional information and resources to support your procurement

*Farm to school is, of course, about more than the procurement process. Putting some thought into “whole school” engagement, seasonality, food handling, and other farm to school topics will enable school districts to make the most of locally-grown food.*

This section will provide some basic information to support your school district in other aspects of farm to school that relate closely to procurement. Seasonal menu planning and recipe adaptations will increase opportunities for using Washington-grown foods. Resources and information about storage, handling and use of farm-fresh (and school garden) produce can increase capacity in school kitchens to more efficiently use these local foods and improve food safety. Clear information about food safety requirements and options for learning about the on-farm food safety practices can better equip buyers to discuss these issues with vendors and improve food safety in schools. Understanding the volumes and container sizes available when purchasing direct from farms can also inform procurement request documents. Finally, knowing where to go to find more answers, from updates on these topics to information about curriculum, gardens, and farm to school promotion will empower your district to build on farm to school long into the future.

### Engaging School Community and Leaders

Successful farm to school programs require a committed nutrition services team and positive engagement from the whole school community—from administrators and teachers to support and integrate farm to school and healthy eating topics into the school day, to students who will eat the food and parents committed to school meal participation. The initial efforts will be to assess opportunities in the school district, identify realistic (if ambitious!) steps for implementing changes, and work with district administrators to obtain project support and policy development. Once you start serving and highlighting Washington-grown food,



engage the entire school community to come together and encourage students to try new foods and match farm to school efforts with related education in classrooms and for families at home.

## Seasonal Menu Planning and Washington Agriculture

Increasing the amount of Washington-grown food in schools requires menus and recipes that take advantage of the seasonal variety of foods grown in our state. A geographic preference can support you in obtaining Washington-grown produce, and with a menu that reflects the seasons, a greater variety of fresh foods can be offered to students throughout the year. This section includes ideas for adjusting recipes and menus to support goals for seasonal, locally-sourced meals and snacks.

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) seasonality charts (on the following pages) highlight Washington-grown fruits, vegetables and herbs and during which months they are likely to be available for purchase. The charts are organized according to the categories in USDA's 2012 revised school nutrition standards and provide a great starting point for considering menu changes for farm to school.



## Recipes and Menus That Highlight Your Region

Take a look at Washington-Grown Food Kit ([www.wafarmtoschool.org/Toolkit](http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/Toolkit)) to share recipes and menu planning ideas highlighting Washington-grown produce. The kit is organized by Washington food item, and is searchable by season or by foodservice type (including child care and senior meals). All recipes are scaled for food service use! The kit also provides food facts and nutrition information for each item to help with education and promotion in the cafeteria.

## Seasonal Menu Cycles

Consider dividing your menu into seasonal cycles, rather than rotating three-week cycles that are the same throughout the school year. A sample seasonal schedule might be:

**Fall** (September, October, November)

**Winter** (December, January, February, March, April)

**Spring** (May, June)

**Summer** (July, August, or whenever you offer summer meal program)

The months are not evenly divided into the seasons in this example, but more accurately reflect changes in produce availability in Washington state, taking into account the actual length of growing seasons and harvest timing. Ingredients for menus based on seasonality cycles are more likely to be locally available.

# Washington-Grown Produce Seasonality Chart – Fruits and Herbs

Organized by USDA 2012 Nutrition Standards Subgroups

produce	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Apricots												
Cantaloupe												
Nectarines												
Peaches, yellow												
Plums, purple												
<b>Vit A-rich</b>												
Blackberries												
Blueberries												
Cantaloupe												
Honeydew melon												
Kiwiberries												
Raspberries												
Strawberries												
<b>Fruits</b>												
Apples	*	*	*									
Asian pears												
Cherries, Bings												
Cherries, Rainiers												
Currants												
Grapes												
Pears	*	*	*									
Pluots												
Quince												
Watermelons												
Frozen berries												
<b>Herbs</b>												
Basil												
Chives												
Cilantro/Coriander												
Dill												
Fennel												
Lavender												
Garlic												
Mint												
Oregano												
Parsley												
Rosemary												
Sage												

\* Peak harvest season for this product. However, this product is stored and available in other seasons from local sources.

Sources include: Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA); Washington Agricultural Commodity Commissions; WSDA From the Heart of Washington, Puget Sound Fresh, WSDA Farm-to-School survey responses; Full Circle Farm; Tahoma Farms; and Tonnemaker Family Orchard

Made possible by funding from the Department of Health and Human Services and Public Health - Seattle & King County

Washington State Department of Agriculture Revised April 2012



# Washington-Grown Produce Seasonality Chart – Vegetables and Legumes

Organized by USDA 2012 Nutrition Standards Subgroups

produce	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
<b>Dark Green</b>												
Arugula												
Beet green												
Bok Choy, baby												
Broccoli												
Braising Mix												
Chards												
Collard greens												
Dandelion greens												
Endive, Curly (Fresee)												
Escarole												
Kales	‡	‡	‡									
Kohlrabi greens												
Lettuces, butterhead*												
Lettuces, loose-leaf*												
Lettuces, Romaine*												
Mustard greens												
Mizuna												
Rapini (Broccoli Rabe/ Chinese broccoli)												
Salad mix (Mesclun**)												
Spinach												
Turnip greens												
Watercress												
<b>Red &amp; Orange</b>												
Carrots	‡	‡									‡	‡
Peppers, red												
Pumpkins		‡	‡									
Sweet potatoes (yam)	‡	‡	‡									
Tomatoes												
Winter squash, Acorn		‡	‡	‡								
Winter squash, Butternut		‡	‡	‡								
Winter squash, Hubbard		‡	‡	‡								
<b>Legumes</b>												
Black beans, dry												
Cranberry beans, dry												
Garbanzo/Chickpea, dry												
Great Northern beans, dry												
Kidney beans, dry												
Lentils, dry												
Navy beans, dry												
Pink beans, dry												
Pinto beans, dry												

\* Iceberg lettuce is listed in Other subgroup on following page as it does not meet the criteria for Dark-green.

\*\* Mesclun often includes arugula, chervil, leafy lettuces, endives and other greens such as mizuna, radicchio or sorrel.

‡ Peak harvest season for this product. However, this product is stored and available in other seasons from local sources.

Sources include: Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA); Washington Agricultural Commodity Commissions; WSDA From the Heart of Washington, Puget Sound Fresh, WSDA Farm-to-School survey responses; Full Circle Farm; Tahoma Farms; and Tonemaker Family Orchard

Made possible by funding from the Department of Health and Human Services and Public Health - Seattle & King County

Washington State Department of Agriculture Revised April 2012

produce	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Starchy	Corn/Sweet Corn, <i>fresh</i>											
	Corn/Sweet Corn, <i>frozen</i>											
	Green peas/shell peas, <i>fresh</i>											
	Green peas/shell peas, <i>frozen</i>											
	Potatoes, fingerling											
	Potatoes, purple											
	Potatoes, Yukon/Red/Russett etc.											
	Sunchokes (Jerusalem artichoke)											
Other	Asparagus											
	Artichokes											
	Beets, red/golden/Chioggia etc.	‡								‡	‡	‡
	Brussels sprouts											
	Cabbages, green											
	Cabbages, red											
	Cabbages, savoy											
	Cabbages, napa											
	Carrots, purple											
	Carrots, white											
	Cauliflower & Romanesco											
	Celery											
	Celery root (Celeriac)											
	Cucumbers											
	Fennel											
	Green beans											
	Green peas, snap/snow											
	Kohlrabi, root											
	Leeks											
	Lettuce, Iceburg											
	Mushrooms, Crimini/Enoki/ Oyster/Portabella/Shiitake/White											
	Onions, yellow/storage											
	Onions, sweet/Walla Walla											
	Parsnips											
	Pea vines											
	Peppers, green											
	Peppers, purple/chocolate/white											
	Peppers, yellow/orange											
	Radicchio (Chicory, red-leaved)											
	Radishes											
	Rhubarb											
	Rutabaga ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡		‡	‡								
	Summer squash, white scallop											
	Summer squash, yellow											
	Summer squash, zucchini											
	Tomatillos											
Turnips, root		‡	‡	‡	‡							

‡ Peak harvest season for this product. However, this product is stored and available in other seasons from local sources.

## Seasonal Substitutions

Using the seasonality chart for Washington (or similar charts for your geographic region), review your menus and snack lists with an eye toward replacing ingredients or side dishes with ones that can be highlighted during times they are locally available. Seasonal planning will support more local farm purchases, at better prices, and introduce and highlight new foods to students when they are tastiest. Suggestions for substitutions or additions include:

### Fall

Washington state provides so many delicious options in early fall! September and October are the best time to showcase the variety of foods available. Green salads, vegetable pasta sauce, and seasonal vegetables on the menu can allow for substitutions as new produce items become available, or harvest of other items winds down.

Fruit salads or “seasonal fruit” on the menu provides flexibility to use whatever is in season during this harvest time – the school year may start with late-season berries, melons, plums and pluots, with apples and pears providing most of the fruit in late autumn.

### Winter

Winter in Washington state continues to provide many delicious produce items. Consider:

- ☞ Kale or other greens in lasagnas, soups, pasta sauces or stews
- ☞ Various combinations of roasted winter vegetables (potatoes, squash, turnips, etc.)
- ☞ Frozen berries, dried apricots, and lots of different varieties of apples and pears

### Spring

The variety of fresh Washington-grown foods is limited in early Spring, but becomes more plentiful in later Spring. Menus may need to use storage crops like potatoes (lots of varieties!) and dried or frozen fruits and vegetables, but local lettuces, spinach, snap peas, and strawberries can be highlighted toward the end of the school year.

### Summer

Of course, summer offers a wide variety of fruits and vegetables throughout the State of Washington, but this is also the time when school is not in session. Summer meal programs can highlight those foods only available in mid-summer—like cherries and peaches and blueberries that may not be available fresh once school starts.

## Handling and Storage of Washington-Grown Produce

While storage and handling procedures are no different for Washington-grown than for any other produce, if you are purchasing whole, raw produce, it may be useful to review temperatures and storage tips for the different types of produce. Washington-grown produce may have a longer shelf life than food that has travelled longer distances, especially if it was harvested just before delivery and has been stored and shipped at appropriate temperatures. Kitchen handling is critical to ensure food safety and minimize cross-contamination between foods. (Resources Tab 3 has information from USDA and other sources that provide guidance for food safety, prolonging freshness and ease of handling fresh produce.)



## Translating Servings to Pounds (or Other Measurements Farms Commonly Use)

Schools and farms speak slightly different languages when it comes to calculating quantities for fresh produce. There are a couple of great tools for thinking about what packing container sizes and order units farms and other food vendors may use for fresh produce. (Fact sheets showing common shipping units for fresh produce are included under Resources Tab 1.)

The Oklahoma Farm to School Program has developed an interactive produce calculator for use by schools and farms. Their description says, ‘The produce calculator was developed to help producers and food service personnel to calculate quantities and costs of various fruits and vegetables needed by a school/university or any other food service provider. The spreadsheet based program calculates poundage needed from a farmer based on the desired number of servings and serving sizes. It also calculates the serving cost based on the price of the produce. Conversion calculations have been taken from the USDA Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs.’ <http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/Page/56/Schools-getting-started-with-farm-to-school> (links to the tool are at the bottom of the page).

## Food Safety on the Farm

Food safety is a critical concern for schools, farms and farm to school advocates, and should be considered every step of the way from food growing in the fields to how it is served on the plate. It is important that you consider the origins of the products you serve, and the practices used to minimize risk of food borne illness or other contamination throughout the supply chain.

Currently there are no federal or state food safety requirements for fresh produce purchased for school meals, but this is a rapidly-changing area of federal law. For now, it is up to each school district to set its own standard for these purchases. Schools and institutions generally assume that their distributors are taking food safety precautions, and that foods purchased from those distributors are covered by the distributor’s liability insurance. Some wholesalers and food service companies require farms to have a certification, such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) or other third party certifications, and some do not. Schools purchasing direct from farms have varied requirements for food safety documentation and for liability insurance. Some districts require a GAP or other certification. Some ask farmers to fill out a food safety checklist. Others require a food safety plan and/or choose to visit the farms to review their practices.

### *Good Agricultural Practices and Third Party Certifications*

**Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)** are a voluntary set of food-safety guidelines designed to help farmers improve and document food safety from the farm to the market. These practices include:

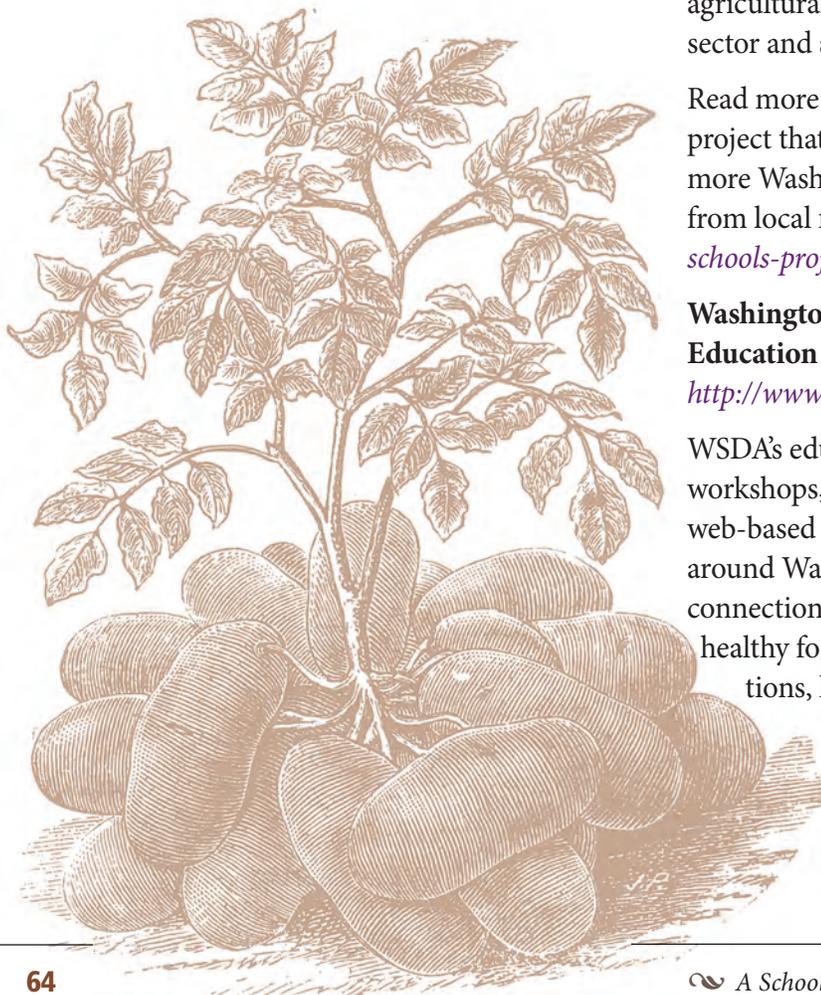
- ☞ Developing a food safety plan for the farm
- ☞ Training farm employees about this plan and on-farm food safety practices
- ☞ Implementing and documenting farm practices to reduce the risk of microbial or other contamination of farm products

Farms can achieve a USDA GAP certification by obtaining a GAP audit from WSDA. Most farms are familiar with GAP as farm practices, and may be following many of the guidelines without getting a certification. Some schools use a farmer questionnaire when buying directly, to ensure that food safety measures are being taken on the farm. If your school district serves any food grown in school gardens, it is a good idea to provide guidance or a checklist to educate and require school garden coordinators to use safe practices. (Some examples of guidance can be found under Resources Tab 3.)

## Questions, Feedback and Sharing Resources

We hope you find this document useful as you build your farm to school programs, and start to integrate a geographic preference into your purchasing. It can be challenging to get started, but with experience it will get smoother. We look forward to hearing about your experiences with implementing a geographic preference to purchase Washington-grown food, and learning from each other as we continue to gather, develop and share sample documents, procurement language and tips.

WSDA staff members are happy to provide technical assistance on geographic preference and procurement, so please email us at [farmtoschool@agr.wa.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@agr.wa.gov) if you'd like support or have questions. To be notified of updates to this guide, please visit our webpage at [www.wafarmtoschool.org](http://www.wafarmtoschool.org) and subscribe to the WSDA Farm to School listserv. Updates and new appendix items will also be posted with the guide under "School Food" on the website.



## Where to Learn More ...

### Washington Farm to School Policy and Practice Resources

#### Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network

[www.wsffn.org](http://www.wsffn.org)

The Network is a non-profit organization that formed in 1997 to provide a unified, statewide voice to advocate for sustainable agriculture programs and policies. Its mission is to "educate, organize and advocate for food and farming systems to become economically prosperous, ecologically sound and socially equitable." They are an activist-based network that includes organic and sustainable farmers; environmental organizations, faith-based groups, farmers' markets, anti-hunger and nutrition advocates, the natural foods industry, educators and others. Their vision is a vibrant food and farming culture across Washington state with empowered networks of individuals, farms, organizations, businesses, and institutions dedicated to sustainable agricultural practices, a fair and prosperous farming sector and access to healthy food for all.

Read more about WSFFN's Fresh Food in Schools project that is helping school districts purchase more Washington-grown fruits and vegetables from local farmers at <http://wsffn.org/fresh-food-in-schools-project>

#### Washington State Department of Agriculture Education and Outreach Team

<http://www.wafarmtoschool.org>

WSDA's education and outreach team provides workshops, resources, a state-wide listserv and a web-based toolkit to support farm to school efforts around Washington state. WSDA seeks to assist connections between farms and schools to support healthy food service in schools and other institutions, highlight the bounty of Washington's agriculture, expand economic opportunities for farms, and support education about food, farming, agriculture and the environment.

## Washington Environmental Council (WEC)

[www.wecprotects.org](http://www.wecprotects.org)

WEC is a nonprofit, statewide advocacy organization that has been driving positive change to solve Washington's most critical environmental challenges since 1967. WEC joined with farming interests, children's health advocates, anti-poverty activists and others to develop and pass the Local Farms – Healthy Kids Act which was signed into law by the Governor in 2008. The goal was to protect farmland, improve kid's health, and reduce energy and waste, all by promoting local foods. If you would like to help get more local food into your kid's school and help local farmers, read our Local Farms - Healthy Kids Toolkit, which provides a guide to get you started: [www.wecprotects.org/issues-campaigns/local-farms-healthy-kids/local-farms-healthy-kids-toolkit](http://www.wecprotects.org/issues-campaigns/local-farms-healthy-kids/local-farms-healthy-kids-toolkit)

## National Farm to School Information Sources

### USDA Farm to School

[www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/)

USDA recognizes the growing interest among school districts and communities to incorporate regionally and locally produced farm foods into the school nutrition programs. USDA is supporting farm to school efforts through a number of initiatives, and continues to look for ways to help facilitate this important connection. Visit the website for information on the USDA Farm to School Grant Program, and to view their up-to-date resources and guidance.

### National Farm to School Network

[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)

The National Farm to School Network supports the implementation of Farm to School in all 50 states and the District of Columbia through focused work in the following priority areas: 1) policy development; 2) training and technical assistance; 3) information development and dissemination; 4) networking; 5) media and marketing; and 6) research and evaluation. The network includes national staff, eight regional lead agencies, 50 state leads who serve as local points of contact for

information and resources, and thousands of farm to school advocates and community leaders from all over the country. Join the network to receive our email newsletter. Washington State Department of Agriculture is the Washington state Lead of the National Farm to School Network.

## FoodCorps

[www.foodcorps.org](http://www.foodcorps.org)

FoodCorps places motivated leaders in limited-resource communities for a year of public service. Working under the direction of local partner organizations, they implement a three-ingredient recipe for healthy kids. Service Members:

- ☞ Deliver hands-on nutrition education
- ☞ Build and tend school gardens
- ☞ Bring high-quality local food into public school cafeterias

## National Farm to School Policy Resources

### National Farm to School Network's Policy Page

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/policies.php>

You can find a variety of farm to school advocacy resources on the policy page of this website, including information on national and state farm to school legislation, how to incorporate farm to school into local wellness policies, federal money available to support farm to school programs, and available technical assistance.

### Wellness Policy Resources

#### Ecoliteracy's Wellness Policy Guide

[http://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/uploads/cel\\_model\\_wellness\\_policy\\_guide.pdf](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/uploads/cel_model_wellness_policy_guide.pdf)

Language and recommendations to help schools and districts develop, monitor, and update comprehensive wellness policies that set high standards for healthy learning.



Electronic versions and their updates of  
*A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown  
Food* are available at:

Communities Putting Prevention to Work webpage:  
[www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/nutrition/  
schools.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/nutrition/schools.aspx)

WSDA webpage: [www.wafarmtoschool.org](http://www.wafarmtoschool.org)

WSFFN's webpage: [www.wsffn.org](http://www.wsffn.org)

