



Cooperative Agreement: Procurement Practices in School Meals
Issued: April 2024
Project Manager: Dottie Arnold, USFA

Objectives for USDA Form FNS_908

Procurement Practices in School Meals: Making Real Change Work for Healthier Families

Objectives for Advisory Procurement Workgroup:

- a). Identify the 6 most critical challenges in school procurement.
- b). Develop action plans to address critical challenges.

Objectives for Reviewing Procurement Methods being used:

- a). Collect training programs that are available.
- b). Review training for relevance and ease of learning.
- c). Identify specific topics needed to fill gaps for better procurement process.
- d). Identify federal procurement rules that are challenging industry to engage in school procurement and inhibiting districts from engaging with a broader pool of small, minority owned producers or processors.
- e). Collect and compare a sampling of state procurement rules, including further processing methods allowed for USDA foods, to identify the inconsistencies of rules and suggest consistency in various areas for food procurement.
- f). Collect and compare a sampling of local procurement rules to identify barriers at the local level for procuring school food in a cost- effective manner with local, community vendor partnerships in mind.

Objectives for Developing a Bid Template:

- a). Develop information for an interactive bid template that assists in developing a more standardized procurement process in school nutrition.
- b). Include tutorials, with simplified messaging, on a variety of procurement topics.
- c). Include an ongoing specification catalog, created and maintained by USFA, with major food items from all food categories. USFA already has an interactive template for purchasing local produce.

Objectives for Conducting TeamUp Workshops with Procurement Trainers:

- a) Identify experienced professionals successful in school food procurement to assist in TeamUp trainings.
- b) Offer TeamUp workshops in each of the 7 USDA Regions plus additional as funding exists, gleaned topics identified in the investigative phase.
- c) Conduct other training sessions based on training developed above, as requested/accepted by state agencies, national conference planners, or state associations, allowing participants to use template, update their own bids with assistance suggesting improvements, and open discussions about solving challenges.



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Objectives for Webinars for Local Producers:

- a). Identify a variety of small, minority producer organizations that can assist in developing the webinar content and communicating the access to the webinars to their constituent base.
- b). Duplicate the producer webinar conducted in Boston in all of the USFA districts, including building partnerships with other organizations that can assist the producers with engaging in school procurement (such as GAP certification).

Objectives for Conducting Pilots:

- a). Identify ideas and practices, from all stakeholders in the system, identified throughout this Cooperative Agreement, that could make for a more cohesive, efficient procurement system for all involved.
- b). Select 4-5 committed districts, with USDA's guidance and USFA's technical support, to implement ideas from this Cooperative Agreement, using the tools and trainings identified as best practice, to try a new way of doing business for one year.