

The Roadmap to Farm to School

Professional Standard Code(s): 1000-Nutrition, 2400-Purchasing/Procurement

Key Areas: 1130-Local Foods/Farm to School (20 mins), 2410-Product Specifications (20 mins), 2420-Bid Solicitation and Evaluation (20 mins)

Hours of Instruction: 1

PREPARATION

Supplies and Equipment	Preparation & Classroom Setup
<p>Classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Projector, screen, Internet access ● Flash drive with Procurement Presentation (for instructor) ● Roadmap poster, edited ● 12 hard copies of “Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs” for table references ● 12 copies of “USDA Food Buying Guide” or “Fruits and Vegetables Galore” (use SNP specialists’ hard copies) ● Tape, 1 roll ● T-Pins, 1 box ● 3 pads of sticky notes, provide a few to each participant ● 3 Black sharpie markers ● Tablets/laptops with chargers and instructions (if applicable) ● Division-specific examples of local foods that could be featured in Harvest of the Month (HOM) or Produce RFP on a laptop or flash drive (provided by participants) ● 5 hard copies of sample RFPs and product specifications 	<p>Ahead of time, reach out to participants:</p> <p>All participants should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bring a laptop and a flash drive with their Produce RFP and specifications for a local products they would like to feature for a HOM celebration, ● Know their small purchase threshold, ● Know their micro purchase threshold, and ● Know whether their division requires GAP certification. <p>Participants who do not bring the requested data/materials will be provided with sample exercise RFPs and sample product specifications.</p> <p>Participants will self-select which project they will work on (i.e. beginner or advanced). Participants will be divided into groups of three; try to place one strong mentor in each group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beginners: participants with less procurement experience will draft specifications of a local product they would like to feature as a HOM.

- Phone timer for switching to the next person's solicitation workshop
- Hand out: Informal Bid Template
- Pull up online Food Buying Guide with case sizes and quality information (will need login information for level 1 authentication)
- Use USDA/AMS price index for the day (online)
- F2S sign-up sheet
- Postcards (provided by Trista)
- Ground rules
- Bike rack

Tables

- Sticky notes
- USDA Decision Tree
- Market Maker brochures
- Lulu's brochures
- Food Hub info
- The Common Market info
- Materials from other produce vendors who wish to supply information

Flash Drive

- Farmer finding resources
- All VA regional food hub information
- Sample bids, Informal bid template
- USDA/VDOE procurement slides
- Farm safety checklist
- Local food tracking tool
- Regional vision mindmaps
- Sample specs and sample RFPs in case someone doesn't bring them
- USDA Resource: Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs
- USDA Procurement Training—Facilitator's Guide
- USDA Food Buying Guide
- Sample RFPs and product specifications

- **Advanced:** participants with more procurement experience will focus on their RFP introductions.

Classroom Setup

- Acquire tablets/laptops for this training module (if applicable).
- Set up computer/laptop, projector, and screen.
- Gain internet access/write login instructions on board or easel.
- Post ground rules and bike rack.
- Hang Farm to School Roadmap poster.
- Load VDOE Procurement Presentation.
- Set up resources table.
- Pull up MarketMaker, Price Index, VCE agent finder (online), sample tracking tool, mind map for the region and for Virginia Overall & Procuring Local Foods pdf (flash drive).
- Put the Procuring Local Foods resource on each table for reference (these are display copies—not for participants to take home)
- Place sticky notes, pens, and postcards on tables.

Greeting Participants

As they enter the room, ensure each participant has a laptop and flash drive and is able to log in and connect to the Internet. Next, ask participants if they have their RFP, solicitation, and product specifications. Participants who have their materials should open the files so they are ready for the module activity. Participants who do not have their materials should be instructed where to find sample materials on the flash drive.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this module, participants should:

1. Have the necessary resources to find farmers in their regions.
2. Understand informal and formal bid processes.
3. Set local procurement goals.
4. Draft language for their own local procurement goals.

LESSON

Instruction	
<p>INTRODUCTION (3 MIN)</p>	<p><i>Say:</i> By now, everyone knows about Farm to School. Farm to School efforts will look different in every division and region based on product availability, administrative support, the level of respect and interface between the instruction and nutrition departments within a school, and the nutrition services department’s willingness to try new things. You probably all even know the “why” by now.</p> <p><i>Ask:</i> Why are state agencies across the country encouraging Farm to School? <i>(Use sticky notes and a sharpie to add these reasons onto our roadmap as people call them out)</i></p> <p><i>Say:</i> Farm to School practices are proven to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase participation in school nutrition programs ● Increase consumption of fresh, healthy foods ● Reduce food waste ● Enrich educational opportunities ● Help solve the obesity and malnutrition crises ● Preserve agricultural lands ● Bolster local, rural economies ● Reduce carbon footprint of food transport ● Develop regional food systems <p>The list goes on.</p> <p>The question is HOW? We know the why, but How do we do it?</p> <p><i>Explain:</i> First, we are going to look over the various tools for finding local foods in Virginia.</p> <p>Next, we will briefly review the basics of local food procurement guidance from USDA.</p> <p>Then, on to our <i>main course</i> of this module: Today we will work together in groups to workshop actual solicitations for your operations.</p>

	<p>It may be an informal or a formal bid. Whatever it is you would like to address.</p> <p>Say: This is a safe space to work on your solicitations and ask questions without thinking the <i>procurement police</i> are going to get you!</p> <p>Finally today, I am excited to share with you the visions that came out of our first-ever Farm to School Network meetings that were held over the winter and early spring.</p>
<p>LECTURE/ DISCUSSION</p> <p>(15 MIN)</p>	<p>(10 mins) <i>Using the projector, look at resources online.</i></p> <p><i>Ask</i> audience members to take turns trying to find products in their areas.</p> <p><i>Introduce and demonstrate how Market Maker works.</i></p> <p>At the conclusion of this section:</p> <p><i>Ask:</i> when you leave here, what are your top three ways to find local producers?</p> <p><i>Say:</i> I recommend calling your VCE agricultural agent and telling them what you are seeking, contacting your VDACS Regional Sales team and letting them know you are interested in working with local farmers, and entering your information into MarketMaker.</p> <p>(5 mins) <i>Say:</i> Now that you know how to find local foods, let’s move into the nitty gritty of how to procure them using one of the federal procurement methods.</p> <p><i>Briefly review the most important procurement slides. Cover micro purchase, informal, and formal bid processes.</i></p> <p><i>Ask:</i> Everyone write your small purchase threshold on your sticky and hold it up. As you can see, it really varies!</p>
<p>Activity</p>	
<p>ACTIVITY</p> <p>(35 MIN)</p>	<p>(30 mins) Workshop Your Solicitations</p> <p><i>Instruct:</i> Now we will work on your own solicitations or specifications that you brought with you today. If you did not bring your own materials, you may use the sample materials provided on the flash drive. We also have a few hard copies you may use.</p> <p>We will work in groups of three. Our objective is to procure local foods in one of two ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Developing a specification for a product you actually want through an informal bid process, or 2- Weaving more local preference into the introductory paragraph of your RFP.

You will work together to on each other's—because three heads are always better than one. You will have eight minutes to work on each person's local food procurement spec of choice.

For example, ... (have example spec from Procuring Local Foods USDA resource)

If you have extra time after drafting specifications for one specific product, go ahead as a group and think of another seasonal, local product that you would like to procure for a Harvest of the Month promotional event and draft specs for it together as a group. The more you work together, the less you will have to do when you really want to procure these items!

- a. **5 minutes** of example
- b. **24 minutes** of work time (groups of 3, 8 minutes on each person's)
- c. **4 minutes** to answer questions which arise in this exercise

Now, as we close out this procurement exercise, I would like to ask each of you to write one achievable Farm to School goal for 2018-19 on the postcard at your table and address it to yourself. I will mail these out to you in a month. Please remember to leave them with me and to write your address on the postcard!

(5 mins) Farm to School Network Regional Visions & Next Steps. (*On projector, pull up the Virginia Farm to School Network Focus and the region's Farm to School Regional Network Map from flash drive.*)

As most of you know, VDOE has been working to increase the consumption of local foods in schools, preschools, and summer feeding programs across Virginia. One way to accomplish this goal was to create a regional Farm to School Network. This network is comprised of Nutrition Services leaders like you, farmers, produce company reps, state agency staff from VDACS and Cooperative Extension, and non-profits who are working to increase access to fresh, local foods in your communities. For more safe, healthy, local foods to reach children's stomachs, it is important for everyone in the value chain to be transparent with each other and for farmers and distributors to understand the regulations we [you] have to follow to purchase local foods.

One hundred and seventy-three (173) participants attended the first round of 8 network meetings in Virginia in February and March. Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Local Food Hub hosted sessions on food safety, and Andrea Early from Harrisonburg City and Trista Grigsby of VDOE [and I] discussed procurement tips and helped farmers and stakeholders understand why school divisions have to follow federal procurement guidelines. Then together the groups brainstormed distribution options and discussed creative solutions to the problems we face actually receiving the food. Finally, we worked to

develop a regional roadmap of priorities which is shaping future trainings and opportunities statewide. I want to pull up the Virginia Farm to School Vision to show you the common themes in the visioning sessions across Virginia, and then I want to show you your region's vision and discuss next steps.

Pull up Virginia Farm to School Network Vision

I think we can all agree that our job is to feed students the highest quality foods we can with the budgets we have to work with. Right? Incorporating local foods helps us do that and also provides a platform for marketing and promoting our programs so that we can increase participation.

[Go to "Overall" section of Mindmap. Can click on it and move it on the screen.]

The mind maps for each region's Farm to School vision and the overall vision are located on your flash drive under the Farm to School section. Take a look at all the regions when you have a moment, and especially I ask you to explore your own region's vision and Virginia's Farm to School vision and consider how you can be a part of making these visions a reality.

Common visions for Farm to School across Virginia:

- Increase access to healthy, fresh foods for students across Virginia,
- Be sure that the food we serve our children is safe,
- Increase awareness and promotional opportunities around the local foods you make the extra effort to procure,
- Get support from community partners, VDOE, Cooperative Extension, and VDACS to change the perception of school lunch,
- Work with our existing distributors and produce companies to get more local produce delivery options, and
- Have better means of obtaining information about farmers who want to sell to schools.

Farm to School Vision in your region:

Pull up the region's mind map. You won't have time to explore this very much, but just show them how to get there on the flash drive and what it looks like.

So, where do the regional networks go from here?

The next regional networks will be diving deeper into the visions and using them to create a strategic plan. We will be seeking regional leads as well as developing a Farm to School leadership team, which will help guide our work. If you would like to join the leadership team or be a

leader in your region, please be sure to add your name to the list which can be found on the resources table.

How is VDOE helping schools access more farm fresh foods?

VDOE is working with VDACS to update the Farm to School website so that it does include more information on farmers who want to sell to schools. We are partnering with VDACS, VCE, and Virginia Small Farm Outreach Program at VSU to hold farmer training sessions in the fall. We will be launching Harvest of the Month toolkits for the fall, and we are developing a statewide Farm to School Conference next March. If all works out as planned, it will be held the day before the SNA conference in the same location so everyone can attend.

Closing Remarks

CLOSING
(2 MIN)

Say: To conclude, I hope you are leaving here today with a better sense of how you can find local products. Please remember to explore some of the resources we have provided you with today, including Market Maker, our Farm to School visions, your Virginia Cooperative Extension agent, and the VDACS Sales and Marketing Team.

Now that you have started workshopping your RFP language or drafting your Harvest of the Month product specification, I hope you will find that your procurement tools are more effective at reaching your target vendors and casting the net wide enough to get competitive prices for the products you want. If you need help, please reach out to your colleagues in this room, to me, or to your specialist at VDOE. Tegan Hagy, Farm to School, USDA’s Farm to School Regional Lead based in New Jersey, is also a great resource. We can all be resources for each other, and we can work together to increase local foods procurement across Virginia.

If you’re new to Farm to School, don’t be afraid: I suggest that you start small, just start **somewhere**. I highly recommend tracking your local food purchases as you go because it is *much* easier than backtracking through all your invoices. A sample tracking tool is available on your flash drive of resources to help you keep track of all your great work to procure and promote Farm to School (*show this on the projector if there’s time*). As you increase your use of local products and your promotional activities in your school cafeterias, classrooms and school garden, be prepared to increase your meal participation—because Farm to School works!

Takeaway: Why do we do Farm to School? For communities. For local economies. For farmers. For the environment. For our schools. And, let’s be honest, it can increase our meal participation. But most of all, our kids are *hungry* for real food and for a connection to their communities—and Farm to School provides both.

	<p>Thanks and have a great day, and if there is a way Trista [I] can help you get more local foods into your schools specifically, please use one of your sticky notes and add it to the roadmap with your name & division so that Trista [I] can reach out to you personally. Thanks & have a great day!</p>
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