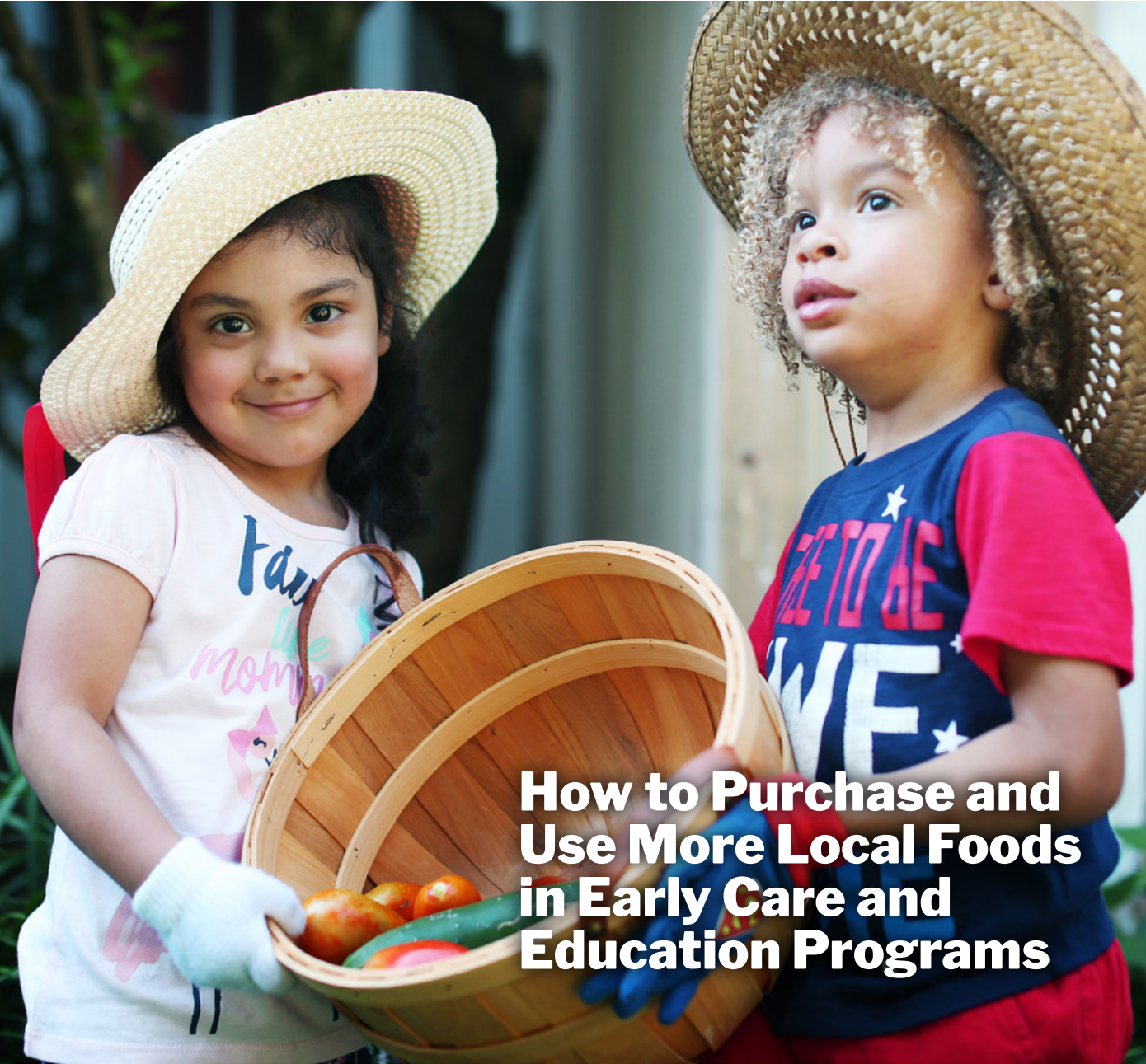
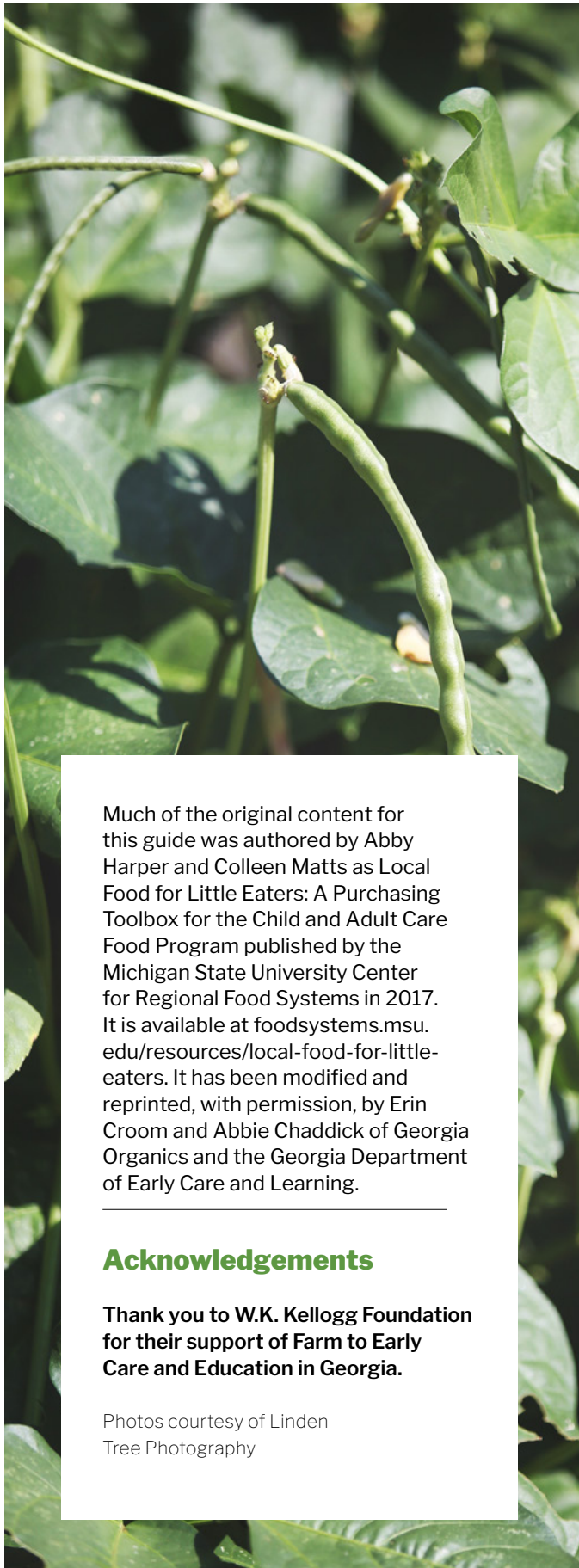


Local Food For Little Eaters in Georgia



How to Purchase and Use More Local Foods in Early Care and Education Programs





Much of the original content for this guide was authored by Abby Harper and Colleen Matts as *Local Food for Little Eaters: A Purchasing Toolbox for the Child and Adult Care Food Program* published by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems in 2017. It is available at foodsystems.msu.edu/resources/local-food-for-little-eaters. It has been modified and reprinted, with permission, by Erin Croom and Abbie Chaddick of Georgia Organics and the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to W.K. Kellogg Foundation for their support of Farm to Early Care and Education in Georgia.

Photos courtesy of Linden Tree Photography

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Overview of Farm to Early Care and Education

Local food purchasing is one component of farm to early care and education (ECE), which also includes on-site gardens and food, nutrition, and agriculture education.

In addition to supporting the development of children's healthy eating habits, local food purchasing keeps dollars local, supports local farmers, and strengthens connections between early childhood programs and communities. Access to local, healthy food coupled with education can help children build healthy eating habits and form the foundation for a healthy life.

Farm to ECE can also be a starting point for increasing families' access to local foods. Engaging families in farm to ECE efforts can educate parents and families about local food sources and connect them with farmers and other local vendors.



Benefits of Farm to ECE¹

- Improve early childhood eating behaviors
- Increase knowledge and awareness about gardening, agriculture, healthy eating, local foods, and seasonality
- Increase children's willingness to try new foods and healthier options
- Increase revenue for local farmers
- Build positive community relationships
- Influence family interest in local food and healthy eating



What Does Local Food Mean?

There is no universal definition of local food. Local could apply to a city or town, a county, a state, or a larger region. When thinking about purchasing local food, define what local food is for your program. Communicate your definition and goals to any food vendors you work with so the vendors can help you achieve those goals. It is important to note that local refers to where the product was grown, raised, or produced and not necessarily the location it was purchased. For example, apples purchased at a nearby grocery store may be considered local if they were grown locally. If the apples at the same grocery store were grown in Washington state they would not be considered local.

Local purchasing from a variety of sources is allowable under federal procurement guidelines. Potential local food sources include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Broadline specialty distributors
- Food hubs
- Direct from farmers or farmer cooperatives
- Farmers markets or farm stands
- Local grocery stores
- On-site gardens

¹ From the National Farm to School Network's fact sheet *'The Benefits of Farm to School'*: farmtoschool.org/Resources/BenefitsFactSheet.pdf



This toolbox and the tools in it are for early care and education programs interested in purchasing local food.

This toolbox primarily supports USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) participants in using funds to increase their local food purchases; however, it is also appropriate for ECE programs that are interested in local food but are not yet participants in CACFP. It provides an overview of purchasing local food for ECE programs, federal funding opportunities that can support local purchasing, and step-by-step instructions for purchasing from a variety of different local food sources.

This toolbox can be used collectively or as individual components tailored to specific program goals.

Capitalizing on the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to Support Local Food Purchasing



CACFP provides federal funding that can be used to support local food purchasing efforts. These funds help programs provide nutritious meals and snacks for infants and children as well as functionally impaired adults and adults 60 years of age or older in a nonresidential group setting. In this guide, we will discuss using CACFP for infants and children.

Incorporating local foods into CACFP meals and snacks is seen as an effective strategy for improving the health and nutrition of program participants. Providers can be reimbursed for up to three eating experiences for each enrolled child—either two meals and one snack or one meal and two snacks.

Studies have shown that children receiving CACFP meals are in better health and are more likely to have a healthy weight and height than those who do not receive CACFP meals.² Participation in CACFP has also been shown to increase consumption of milk and vegetables.³ CACFP funds can be a tool to support local food purchasing efforts, and participating in CACFP provides access to training opportunities for providers through state CACFP offices.

CACFP reimburses child care program providers based on paid, reduced-price, and free meal program eligibility. These designations are based on income eligibility of families with participating children. A child care program may receive different reimbursement rates for different children in its program. However, any child enrolled in Head Start is automatically eligible for free meals in the child nutrition programs.

Reimbursement Rates for Centers (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019)*

	Breakfast	Lunch / Supper	Snacks
Paid	\$0.31	\$0.31	\$0.08
Reduced-price	\$1.49	\$2.91	\$0.45
Free	\$1.79	\$3.31	\$0.91

Day care homes are reimbursed in two tiers. Day care homes qualify for Tier I reimbursement rates if they are located in a geographic area categorized as low income based on local school or census data. A day care home may also qualify based on provider household income. A provider that does not qualify for Tier I qualifies for Tier II.

Reimbursement Rates for Day Care Homes (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019)

	Breakfast	Lunch / Supper	Snacks
Tier I	\$1.31	\$2.46	\$0.73
Tier II	\$0.48	\$1.48	\$0.20

To view the most recent reimbursement rates, visit:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/reimbursement-rates>

* These rates do not include the value of USDA Foods or cash-in-lieu of USDA Foods which institutions receive as additional assistance for each CACFP lunch or supper served to participants. A notice announcing the value of USDA Foods and cash-in-lieu of USDA Foods is published separately in the Federal Register, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/07/19/2018-15464/child-and-adult-care-food-program-national-average-payment-rates-day-care-home-food-service-payment>

2 Binder, C., Berg, J., Adamu, M., & Hamm, K. (2015). How the Child and Adult Care Food Program improves early childhood education. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CACFP-report-6.10.pdf>

3 Korenman, S., Abner, K. S., Kaestner, R., & Gordon, R. A. (2014). The Child and Adult Care Food Program and the nutrition of preschoolers. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23687405>

Meeting CACFP Meal Patterns and Best Practices With Local Food Purchasing



Local food purchasing initiatives can be a tool for meeting CACFP meal pattern requirements. The CACFP meal pattern, which was updated in 2016 and implemented in 2017, sets standards for meals served by programs that receive funding. Many of these standards support increased fruit and vegetable consumption, and meeting these standards can be aided by purchasing local food. See Appendix A and B for a guide to the updated CACFP Meal Patterns.

The new CACFP meal pattern standards include several best practices related to fruits and vegetables that could be met through local purchasing. Although only one best practice explicitly mentions local food, others can be easily met by participation in farm to ECE and the increased purchase and use of local foods.

CACFP Best Practices Relevant to Local Food Purchasing



Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.

The USDA understands that the incorporation of local food into CACFP can play an important role in creating a healthy environment.⁴ Because of this, purchasing local foods is a best practice in the CACFP meal patterns; it is seen as a strategy to better meet CACFP standards and improve program quality.



Make at least one of the two required components of snacks a vegetable or fruit.

This best practice emphasizes increasing the number of eating experiences in a day in which children are exposed to fruits and vegetables. Local food purchasing provides access to fresher and more varied fruits and vegetables that can help providers increase the amount of fruits and vegetables they serve.



Serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits more often than juice.

Purchasing locally can increase access to a wider variety of fruits and vegetables. Additionally, fruits purchased seasonally and locally often come in a greater variety of colors.



Provide at least one serving each of dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas, starchy vegetables, and other vegetables once per week.

Purchasing local food can increase access to a wider variety of fruits and vegetables of different colors. ECE program staff can work directly with local growers to plant different varieties or colors of common produce, such as purple cauliflower, yellow carrots, or a wider variety of dark leafy greens.

⁴United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2015). *Local foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program with questions and answers* [Memorandum]. Retrieved from fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/CACFP11_2015_Local%20Foods%20in%20CACFP_03%2013%202015.pdf

Supporting Culturally Relevant Programming Through Local Food Purchasing

Purchasing local food can be a great tool for increasing access to culturally relevant foods in early childhood programs. Working with local food sources can lead to a greater variety of products available to serve in child nutrition programs. Program staff who work directly with farmers or purchase from farmers markets often have greater access to a wider variety of foods. Program staff can work with vendors to create demand for culturally relevant products to which they may not have had access otherwise.

Other farm to ECE initiatives, such as school gardens and education in the classroom, can also support culturally relevant programming. Gardens can be a space for growing unique vegetables that are traditional foods for children in the ECE program. Likewise, local foods can provide a platform for education exploring traditional foods from different communities and cultures.

For more information on supporting culturally relevant meals, check out these additional resources:

- ✔ **Serving Up Tradition: A Guide for School Food in Culturally Diverse Communities**
Massachusetts Farm to School
massfarmtoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ServingUpTradition.pdf
- ✔ **Child Nutrition Programs and Traditional Foods**
USDA Food and Nutrition Service
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/child-nutrition-programs-and-traditional-foods>
- ✔ **Ready Set Grow: Multicultural Collection of Farm to ECE Books**
The Food Trust's [multicultural collection of farm to ECE books](#) highlights children's books that feature characters from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.

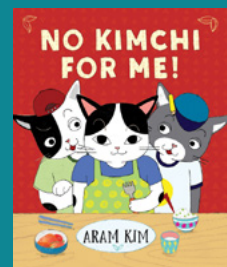
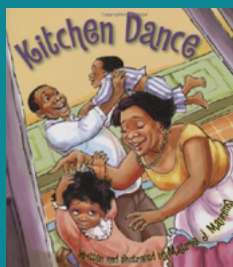
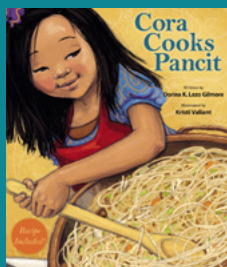
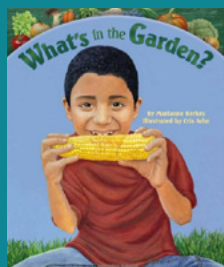
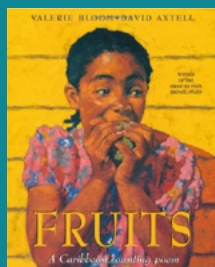
Exploring Traditional Foods

Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties (CAPRW) Head Start Program

in St. Paul, MN, has developed a strong partnership with the Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA) in Minnesota. This program has a large Hmong population and has committed to providing culturally relevant meals. Working with HAFA has helped CAPRW Head Start meet this commitment by sourcing more vegetables and using recipes that are common in Hmong cuisine and building learning opportunities around these culturally relevant foods.

Colusa Indian Child Care in Colusa, CA, is a Native American child care center that works with local tribal farms to source rice, honey, and nuts. These relationships build deeper connections with the center's Native community.

Norris Square Community (NSCA) Alliance Head Start in Philadelphia, PA, places a heavy emphasis on promoting cultural diversity by exposing children to new, culturally relevant foods. The Alliance uses local foods and brings in local college students to teach lessons on foods from different cultures and involve the children in the preparation of small meals with local foods.



CACFP Local Food Purchasing Procedures

Federal micro-purchase threshold: \$10,000

Federal small purchase threshold: \$250,000

Procurement describes the process by which ECE programs solicit bids or pricing for food and non-food items for their food service programs. ECE programs must understand purchase thresholds to determine the proper method for local food purchasing: informal (micro and small purchase) or formal procurement.

Federal micro- and small purchase thresholds are used throughout this resource. Some states have more restrictive state or local purchasing thresholds. As of this printing, Georgia Dept. of Early Care and Learning is not more restrictive than the federal thresholds. However, purchasers should check with their Center Director and local government entities to determine if their center must adhere to a stricter purchasing thresholds.

Procurement Process - Figure 1

Are your costs over the \$250,000 threshold?	
YES	NO
Formal procurement	Informal procurement
Choose	Invitation for Bid (IFB)
	Request for Proposal (RFP)

Note: Program staff are not allowed to artificially divide purchases in order to make them fall under a smaller threshold. A single transaction may refer to the following:

- A single purchase order for an item or items
- The total of all purchases from a single vendor

Micro-purchasing

The micro-purchase threshold is a simpler way to purchase small quantities of local food. Your program can simply find a vendor and purchase its product without getting competitive price quotes. You should still keep receipts and/or document these micro-purchases.

Micro-purchasing was designed to make it easy for CACFP sites to try out new purchases or a new vendor relationship. For example, a program can use the micro-purchase method to purchase seasonal produce from a farmers market or support a special event. If an ECE program plans to regularly purchase local food from the same vendor, it should use the small purchase method.

Also, micro-purchases should be distributed equitably among qualified suppliers. For example:

- A center is using micro-purchasing to buy strawberries from a local farmer. If the center would like to buy strawberries locally again, it should check to see if there are any other local strawberry farmers in the area before selecting the same farmer to purchase from again. If there are multiple local strawberry farmers in the area, the center should receive quotes to compare prices.



Utilizing Micro-Purchases

Georgia October Farm to School Month celebrates a signature Georgia food every year like kale, legumes, or carrots. If a program chooses to highlight the Georgia food once during the month, program staff can use the micro-purchase method for local produce if the total cost is less than \$10,000. It must be a one-time event not typically included in the program's planned food purchases.

A to Z Building Blocks in American Fork, UT, uses the micro-purchase threshold to purchase occasional small quantities of cantaloupe, watermelon, and other fruits from local farm stands based on seasonal availability. Because the centers' purchases are under \$10,000, they are able to use the micro-purchase method.

Utilizing Informal Procurement

Baxter's Child Development Center in Grand Rapids, MI, uses the small purchase threshold to order local fruits and vegetables from a regional food hub. The center documents prices for five frequently purchased products and provides prices from the three vendors of its choice, including the food hub. The center also considers the following:

- The vendor's distance from the center and availability to deliver
- The ability to source all of its needed produce
- A stated priority to support small and minority-owned businesses whenever possible

Informal Procurement (Small Purchase)

For food costs that fall under the \$250,000 small purchase threshold, ECE programs may use simple, informal methods to ensure that their vendors' prices are competitive. To use the informal purchasing method, follow these steps:

1. Write specifications for all items. Local is not allowed to be used as a specification; however, programs can include other specifications that are characteristics of local food, such as the following:
 - Vendor is able to deliver products.
 - Vendor is able to provide location of origin for all products.
 - Vendor is available for farm tours or educational visits to the center.
 - Freshness requirements for product.
2. Record the date, vendors, and quotes received for a minimum of three vendors. Quotes can be obtained verbally but need to be documented in writing using the Small Purchase Documentation Form (see Appendix C).
3. Prepare a documentation sheet that indicates the awarded vendor. See the Agreement to Furnish Foods for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Form (Appendix D).

With this method, program staff can choose the vendors from which they get prices. Program staff can compare from local vendors and then purchase from the lowest priced vendor.

Formal Procurement

Food costs over the small purchase threshold of \$250,000 must be made following formal procurement. Formal procurement often occurs when programs are seeking broadline distributors or food service management companies that manage larger purchases. Formal procurement requires purchasers to create a public bidding process and choose a vendor based on the lowest cost that meets their needs.

Similar to informal procurement methods, programs cannot use local as a specification when requesting vendors. They can, however, ask that vendors provide information on local products when submitting their bids. Buyers can also include specifications such as delivery, freshness, a wide variety of different products, or availability of farmers for education, which are all characteristics of local food.

In addition, buyers can give slight preference to vendors that are able to meet their definition of local for unprocessed, locally grown or raised agricultural products. This practice is known as applying geographic preference. Geographic preference can help make local vendors more price competitive: purchasers assign a small price deduction to the vendors that meet their definition of local, then award the bid to the lowest-cost vendor evaluated based on those new values.

For additional support for applying geographic preference and other local criteria to formal procurement, refer to examples included in the USDA farm to school procurement guide: https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/F2S_Procuring_Local_Foods_Child_Nutrition_Prog_Guide.pdf

Leveraging Buying Power

CAPRW Head Start uses a caterer to provide its meals. When renewing the catering contract, the staff sends out a request for bids that includes information about its farm to Head Start program. The program also states in its request, "Priority will be given to vendors who agree to work with our farm to Head Start initiative."

Salt Lake Community Action Program in Salt Lake City, UT, includes in its procurement policy that the program gives a specific preference to local and fresh products.

Purchasing Local Food from Broadline Distributors

Broadline distributors carry a wide range of products, and some ECE programs work exclusively with broadline distributors to purchase food products. Many broadline distributors are sourcing more local foods and letting customers know about them. Some broadline distributors have local product lines and provide regular updates about new farmers who supply to them.



Benefits of Purchasing Local Food from a Broadline Distributor

- Streamlined process that could fall in line with current purchasing practices
- Consistent and dependable quantities
- Large quantities
- Often, some level of stored products year-round
- Administrative burden limited by working with one vendor

Step 1: Find a Broadline Distributor

If you have already procured your broadline distributor through the formal method, schedule a meeting with your sales representative. Ask them for a description of the company's local purchasing efforts.

If you are looking to establish a relationship with a broadline distributor that has a local food focus, the *USDA guide Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs* ([fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods](https://www.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods)) has specific information on how to apply geographic preference and local specifications to your broadline distributor procurement.

Broadline Distributor Options

A to Z Building Blocks staff procured their broadline distributor using the formal procurement process. The center staff approached their representative to state an interest in purchasing locally grown fruits and vegetables. The distributor now provides a list of local products available, and the centers work closely with their representative to find more products available locally.

Gordon Food Service in Michigan has a Michigan-grown product line, allowing early childhood providers to see directly what Michigan products are available by season.



Setting Up Systems

A to Z Building Blocks staff have a great relationship with their representative, who is aware of the centers' local food purchasing priorities. He makes them aware of new local products as they are available and purchases local when it is available. They meet every six months to go over new lists of local vendors.

Salt Lake Community Action Program works with its broadline distributor as one way to access local food. Its sales representative knows the program's interest in local foods and set up an agreement that whenever local versions of a product are available, the distributor provides those products to the early childhood program.



Step 2: Learn About Practices

Request a list of available products that are grown locally. If your distributor does not have a list of local food products, express your interest in prioritizing local purchases. If distributors know your priorities and know that your business is dependent on them, they might try to find new local sources to meet your request.

Step 3: Compare Costs

Because broadline distributors are typically competitively procured through informal or formal procurement, you can purchase their products without doing additional cost comparisons. Local products may cost more or less than non-local products, so double-check to make sure that each local product fits in your budget.

Step 4: Set Up a System

Using the product list available, identify some starting points for local food purchasing. Choose a couple of products that you could easily incorporate into your menu that are regularly available locally. Looking at products you already purchase that have a local alternative is a good place to start!

Set up a regular communication schedule with your representative. Ask him or her:

- How often will you make information available about local products?
- Will you be adding to your list of local products or local vendors?
- How can we ensure that we are using all of the local product options you have available?

Step 5: Purchase!

Because broadline distributors are competitively contracted, you do not need to do any additional work to make sure you are following CACFP guidelines. Once you have an agreement set up, you can easily tailor your purchases toward local foods.

Purchasing Local Food from Food Hubs

Food hubs are businesses that combine products from multiple farms within a geographic range and distribute that product to food purchasers within a specific range. Food hubs are typically local or regional in scope and may prioritize working with historically underserved farmers and/or organically grown foods.



Benefits of Purchasing from a Food Hub:

- Larger quantities available than through farm-direct procurement
- Diverse availability of products
- Only local products sourced
- Information on farm source can be provided
- Often, some level of stored products is maintained year-round
- Minimally processed or frozen local foods available year-round
- Administrative burden limited by working with one vendor



Food Hub Benefits

Baxter's Child Development Center chose to work with a food hub because the hub had a wide variety of local foods available and was able to deliver directly.

Archway Academy in Sumter, SC, tried to work with farmers one-on-one but could not find any who accepted the program's methods and timeline for payments. Working with a food hub made the process as simple as possible to start.

Finding a Food Hub

The chef at **Baxter's Child Development Center** asked vendors at the local farmers market where they sell their farm products. She found out that many sold their products to West Michigan Farmlink, a regional food hub.

Archway Academy learned about Grow Food Charleston, a Charleston-based food hub, through the early childhood coordinator at the Department of Agriculture.

NSCA Head Start found out about Common Market, a local food hub, through one of its community partners.

Step 1: Find a Food Hub

Food hubs are regional, so if one is not located near you, there may still be a food hub that delivers to your area.

- Visit a local farmers market and ask farmers where they sell their products.
- Ask community partners who are working in local food which food hubs may sell to you.
- Ask a Cooperative Extension agent what food hubs are available near you.
- Ask your state Department of Agriculture about the food hubs operating in your state.
- Visit the United States Department of Agriculture Food Hub Directory: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/foodhubs>

Learn about your products

Sprout Food Hub in Battle Creek, MI, provides a product list that includes the farm of origin, food safety practices, and other production practices. Programs that purchase through Sprout can know exactly where each product came from and how it was grown.

Comparing costs

Baxter's Child Development Center purchases regularly from the same food hub. The chef compares costs for five different products with other vendors and specifies that the vendors must provide product source information and product delivery, which the food hub does.

Exploring solutions

Common Market in Philadelphia, PA, requires a minimum order for delivery, which can be a challenge for some smaller centers. The food hub works with new customers to figure out if there are storage solutions or central facilities that allow centers to aggregate purchases.



Step 2: Learn About Practices

Contact a sales representative at the food hub to better understand the options for purchasing food for your program. You can ask:

- How frequently do you provide updated product lists?
- Which farmers do you purchase from, and do you provide product information on the farm source?
- Do you deliver to my area? Is there a standard day for delivery?
- Do you have a minimum order requirement for delivery?
- How frequently can I place an order?

Step 3: Compare Costs

If you are making a one-time purchase from a food hub under \$10,000, you can use the micro-purchasing method. If you know you are going to purchase regularly from a food hub, you will need to follow informal or formal procurement methods. For purchases under the small purchase threshold of \$250,000, get quotes from two or three vendors. You can choose to compare only local vendors.

Step 4: Set Up a System

Work with the food hub to set up a schedule for communication, ordering, and product delivery. See if the food hub can accommodate your typical delivery schedule. Working with a food hub may require some flexibility to meet their schedule as well, so be sure to outline any agreements ahead of time.

Step 5: Purchase!

Once you have a routine set, work with your food hub to get information for future years, if they are able to provide it. If there are certain products you are interested in, food hubs may have the option of working with farmers to source new products in larger quantities.

Keep track of your purchases from the food hub. Make sure you receive and file invoices from the food hub for all of your purchases.

Purchasing Local Food from Farmers and Farmer Cooperatives

ECE programs are able to purchase local food directly from farmers. Purchasing local food items from farmers, farmers markets, and farmer cooperatives, is encouraged. ECE providers must ensure proper procurement procedures are being followed according to state and federal CACFP regulations. Developing long-term relationships with farmers and farmer cooperatives will allow early childcare providers to plan ahead for the products they need.



Benefits of Purchasing Directly from Farmers:

- Get fresh products and a potentially greater variety of produce
- Build community connections
- Observe on-farm practices directly
- Keep dollars in your community
- Access opportunities for education, field trips, and deeper engagement with farmers



Connecting Kids to Food

Salt Lake Community Action Program was interested in working with farmers to build stronger communities and use produce as a start for educational opportunities. Working directly with farmers helps the program educate children about the sources of their food, the environment, and the importance of conserving land.

In Search of Farmers

Adventures Learning Centers in Portage, MI, wrote a letter explaining their program and interest in local purchasing and sent it to farmers found on Local Harvest. They received a response from Arcadia Farms and set up an agreement for purchasing local foods.

The director at **MEGA Child Development Center** in Gilbert, SC, knew of a roadside stand just miles from the center. She approached the farmer, asked what they had available for purchase in larger volume, and began the center's local purchasing efforts there.

Step 1: Find Farmers

- Visit a local farmers market and talk to vendors directly. Visit www.georgiaorganics.org and click Good Food Guide to find farmers markets near you.
- Ask your county Cooperative Extension office or state Department of Agriculture for connections to farmers in your area.
- Use online sources such as Local Harvest (localharvest.org) to find farmers in your area.
- Visit a produce auction and talk to the farmers selling products there.
- Talk to members of your community.

Finding Custom Solutions

CAPRW Head Start works with HAFA, a local farmers organization. HAFA aggregates many small farmers' products so that they can provide larger quantities to CAPRWs caterer.

Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County, CA, purchases from local farmers for its Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs. The farmers do not deliver, so the partnership has to schedule staff to pick up products from farmers.

Documenting Purchases

MEGA Child Development Center wanted to work with a farmer that didn't provide receipts. The center created its own simple form that the farmer signs off on at each pickup and uses this form to document purchases for CACFP.



Step 2: Learn About Practices

You can create a farmer questionnaire to ask farmers more about their operation. Consider including questions that matter most to you, such as the following:

- What are your production practices?
- Do you have a food safety plan?
- Are you willing to host educational opportunities on the farm or in the classroom?
- Are you willing to sell seconds (produce that doesn't look perfect) or bulk products at a lower price?
- Do you do seasonal extension for crops or have products available year-round?
- Do you specialize in certain crops?
- Are you open to growing new products according to our needs?
- Do you provide delivery?

Georgia farmers should follow food safety, health certification and sanitation requirements of the Georgia Department of Public Health. Some states have different rules and requirements- contact your CACFP administrative body to find out if your state or program has different rules and requirements.

Step 3: Compare Costs

Bring a list of products you are interested in and get price quotes from farmers. If you are using CACFP funds and purchasing more than once from the same farmer or spending more than \$10,000 but less than \$250,000 at one time, you need to follow the informal procurement process, including obtaining and documenting prices from three vendors. You then must choose the vendor that provides the lowest cost that meets your requirements. You may choose to approach three local farmers to compare costs.

Step 4: Set Up Agreements

Here are some important questions to answer in your agreement:

- How frequently will you communicate, and how—through email, texts, or phone calls?
- Does the farmer offer delivery, and is there a minimum order amount for delivery?
- Is there a particular day and time of the week when you can pick up or they can drop off?
- What will they do if a product is unavailable or does not meet quality standards? Will they provide a substitute or a refund?
- How do they prefer to be paid, and how frequently?

Remember, some farmers may be willing to adapt if they know you will be a reliable long-term customer.

Step 5: Purchase!

Set up regular schedules for communication. Make sure you and your farmer(s) know the best means of communication and days and times you are available so that you are able easily to get in touch with each other.

Remember, receipts or invoices are required for your purchases. Some farmers may not provide receipts unless you ask for them. Specific information required on a receipt includes:

- Date of purchase
- Name of vendor/farmer
- Cost of the item
- Amount purchased
- Total cost

Next Steps: Plan Ahead!

Once you have an established relationship with a farmer, you can start planning earlier. Long-term planning with farmers can be a great way to reduce prices, get more guaranteed product quantity, and build stronger community connections.

Before the season, plan with your local farm partner what crops you are interested in. This way, the farmer can plan to have the quantity you need and you can have confidence in a reliable supply. Some farmers may offer a discount for agreements set up ahead of time.

Some programs have CSA (community-supported agriculture) relationships set up with farmers. In this arrangement, customers purchase a “farm share” at the beginning of the season and then receive regular boxes of seasonal products as they are available. The farmer chooses what goes in each box, so customers get a variety of seasonal produce.

CSAs can be a good option for smaller programs to sample new foods and bring in educational opportunities. They also allow programs to learn about seasonal availability of farm products.

CSAs can provide a framework for exposing children to a diversity of foods for educational activities. Farmers get income up front, which allows them to plan for their season. CSAs do not guarantee a certain amount of food, but it is usually much fresher and higher quality than normal retail produce and often cheaper and more convenient than farmers market produce.

If choosing to purchase from CSA using CACFP funds, a site must still follow small purchase requirements and contact one or two other potential vendors for quotes. These other quotes can be from other CSAs or other different types of food providers.

Pre-Planning

CAPRW Head Start meets with its partnering farmer group in February to plan for the following fall. They decide on menus, products of interest, and timeline, and works with the program’s caterers to plan accordingly. This allows the food program to have a more sustainable source in its local purchasing efforts.

Supporting CSA's

SW Colorado Farm to Preschool partners are working with providers to set up CSA shares with local farmers. They discussed logistics ahead of time, including the general contents and sizes of the baskets and delivery/pickup. They also facilitated subscriptions, which was helpful for centers in getting started. You can read more about their work at <http://www.HCFS.org>



Purchasing Local Food from Farmers Markets

Farmers markets typically have many different vendors in one location and operate on a weekly basis. Some are open only during peak harvest months; others are open year-round.

Farmers markets are a great resource for finding local food products, but some have vendors who do not grow all of the food they sell or source it locally. It is important to ask farmers market vendors where their products come from to make sure you are purchasing locally.



Benefits of Purchasing from Farmers Markets:

- Access to many different farmers and vendors in one place
- Products available seasonally, which can be useful for learning about seasonality
- Great for small quantities and for farm to ECE taste tests
- Opportunity to meet different farmers, try them out, and explore long-term partnerships before committing to working with one

Step 1: Find a Farmers Market

- Online search engines such as LocalHarvest.org provide options for searching farmers markets in your area.
- Some nonprofits or other community organizations map out farmers markets in their state. Georgia Organics provides a list of Georgia farmers markets at <https://georgiaorganics.org/good-food-guide/>
- Ask your local Cooperative Extension office.
- Visit the USDA Farmers Market Directory: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets>
- Some farms will also have roadside stands. Like farmers markets, these are good if you want the flexibility of choosing on a weekly basis what you bring in.

Step 2: Learn About Practices

Farmers markets often have many vendors, but not all are local or sell only their own locally grown products. Ask questions:

- Do you grow all of the product you sell, or do you source from other farmers?
- Where does your product come from? Is it local?
- What are your production practices?
- Do you have a food safety plan?
- Are you open to educational opportunities on the farm or field trips?
- Are you willing to sell seconds or bulk products at a lower price?
- Do you specialize in certain crops?

Step 3: Compare Costs

Programs are allowed to shop at farmers markets while following proper procurement rules. For Small Purchase procurement (less than \$250,000), you will need to document and compare prices from a minimum of three vendors. Bring a log with you to the farmers market to document products and prices from at least three farmers.

Micro-purchases (less than \$10,000 from a single vendor) can also be used at farmers markets as a way for centers to test out a new product or relationship.

Step 4: Purchase!

Purchasing from a farmers market allows you to make regular, easy cost comparisons and follow the informal purchasing method.

Make sure to get receipts for your purchases. Some farmers may not provide receipts unless you ask for them. For reimbursement purposes, many states, including Georgia, accept handwritten receipts from farmer's markets, farm stands, and farmers in the event that a printed receipt cannot be produced. However, certain information is required (listed below). Check with your state CACFP office to ask about any requirements.

Receipts must include the following:

- Date of purchase
- Name of vendor/farmer
- Cost of the item
- Amount purchased
- Total cost

Tips for Local Food Purchasing Success

Though farm to ECE can be challenging, programs throughout the country are trying innovative approaches to creating successful and sustainable local food purchasing initiatives. No two farm to ECE programs are alike, and no two programs will use the exact same strategy for purchasing local food. The following are some examples of creative ways programs are integrating local food into the backbone of their programming.

Use Local Foods as an Educational Opportunity

Building in educational opportunities throughout the day can help increase children's willingness to try new foods. Many programs integrate educational activities to support the introduction of new foods through farm to ECE.

- **Head Start Program standards** require programs to use more of the day for education. Serving local foods provides an opportunity to build conversations about local food, where food comes from, and seasonal eating into mealtime. http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/docs/pdf/hs-prog-pstandards-final-rule-factsheet_0.pdf
- **Archway Academy** offers weekly farm to ECE lessons to support its local purchasing efforts. The program also developed a farm to ECE library full of books about farms and healthy eating.
- **Georgia's October Farm to School Month** campaign provides simple resources, lessons, and activities for learning, growing, and trying a new food during October. Resources are available at georgiaorganics.org/for-schools/octoberfarmtoschoolmonth.
- **Georgia's Harvest of the Month Program** provides educational materials featuring a different seasonal product each month. This can be a great tool for accessing education materials to support your local procurement efforts.
 - www.gafarmtoschool.org/harvest-of-the-month/
 - <https://www.qualitycareforchildren.org/farm-to-ece-tools-resources>

Find Cost Savings Strategies

Sometimes, though not always, local food costs more. Many programs have adopted strategies to cut costs to be able to buy more local food.

- **Baxter's Child Development Center** has switched to mostly scratch cooking. This allows them to manage portion control and the amount of waste, which saves money for more local purchasing. They save money making more foods from scratch.
- **Adventures Learning Centers** switched from disposable to reusable plates and utensils. Although the centers initially had an increase in cost to purchase dishwashers, this switch increased their food budget and allowed them to spend more for local food over the long term.
- **CAPRW Head Start** worked with its caterer to have two local food days per week. The program balances local products with slightly higher costs with lower cost vegetables on other days.
- **Salt Lake City Community Action Program** accepts seconds - imperfect-looking fruits and vegetables - from farmers at a lower cost.
- **NSCA Head Start** works with Common Market, a food hub in Philadelphia. The Head Start is able to purchase food at a 25% discount through Common Market's Food Access Fund that targets organizations expanding food access for low-income communities.



Collaborate with Other Partners

Explore beyond your center to find innovative and supportive partnerships.

- **Little Ones Learning Center** developed a partnership with the Georgia State University Department of Nutrition. Dietetic Interns from GSU complete three week internships with the Center leading nutrition education, gardening, and taste test activities.
- **NSCA Head Start** programs face some logistical barriers to on-site storage space and volumes. While some centers may be too small to order the minimum volume for delivery, they work with their food hub to find innovative solutions. Sometimes centers are able to aggregate purchases to meet the minimum requirement, or they are able to round out orders with other shelf-stable products that are used for other programs. They also found a partner in a local college. They work with college interns to do nutrition education and taste tests with their children.
- **CAPRW Head Start** works with its caterer, farmer group partner, and a local distributor to source local food. By connecting the farmer group with a distributor, the caterer can use more fresh, minimally processed, local food in a ready-to-use form without adding labor costs for the caterer.
- **Salt Lake Community Action Program** started out small the first year, but plans took off after developing a task force. The program now collaborates with partners all over the city for grants and projects, and its farm to ECE program is growing because of these partnerships.

Invest in Staff

Long-term local purchasing initiatives need solid program infrastructure to support them. By adding farm to ECE to staff position descriptions, training requirements, and procurement guidelines, strategies can continue in a program even after their original champions have moved on.

- **Baxter's Child Development Center** includes "familiarity with local food availability and preparation" as a requirement in the job description for its chef. If the center's current chef leaves, local food knowledge is required of anyone new who would be hired.
- **Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County** is developing a farm to ECE position to increase local food purchasing for its Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs. This position will coordinate local purchasing initiatives and education for all of the centers.
- **Norris Square Community Alliance Head Start** has regular professional development opportunities for staff. Once a month, they use these meetings to host a local chef to introduce different cooking techniques and herbs to help prepare local foods. They also offer trainings on seasonal menu development.



Appendices



United States Department of Agriculture


Serve Tasty and Healthy Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)


Sample Meals for Children Ages 1-2

What is in a Breakfast?


Milk (4 fl. oz. or ½ cup)
Vegetables, Fruit, or Both (¼ cup)
Grains (½ serving)

Optional: Meat/meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains component up to 3 times per week at breakfast.






¼ cup
Diced Peaches



¼ cup
Oatmeal





½ cup
1-year-olds:
Unflavored whole milk
2-year-olds:
Unflavored low-fat (1%)
or fat-free (skim) milk

Sample Breakfast

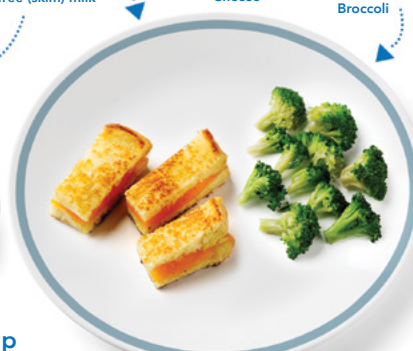
What is in a Lunch or Supper?

Milk (4 fl. oz. or ½ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternate (1 oz. eq.)
Vegetables (½ cup)
Fruit (¼ cup)
Grains (½ serving)






½ cup
1-year-olds:
Unflavored whole milk
2-year-olds:
Unflavored low-fat (1%)
or fat-free (skim) milk



Grilled Cheese Sandwich
Made with
½ serving
Enriched Bread and
1 oz.
Cheese

⅛ cup
Broccoli




⅛ cup
Blueberries


Sample Lunch/Supper

All grains served must be whole grain-rich or enriched.
Breakfast cereals may also be fortified.
At least one grain served each day must be whole grain-rich.


What is in a Snack?

Pick 2:
Milk (4 fl. oz. or ½ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternate (½ oz. eq.)
Vegetables (½ cup)
Fruit (½ cup)
Grains (½ serving)






Offer and make water available all day.



Yogurt Dip
Made with
¼ cup
(2 oz.)
Yogurt

Yogurt must not contain more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 oz.



½ cup
Bell Pepper Strips

Sample Snack

Note: Serving sizes are minimums.

Updated USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns must be implemented by October 1, 2017. Learn more about the CACFP meal patterns, including information on ounce equivalents (oz. eq.) and serving sizes at <https://teammnutrition.usda.gov>.



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Serve Tasty and Healthy Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Sample Meals for Children Ages 3-5



What is in a Breakfast?

Milk (6 fl. oz. or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
Vegetables, Fruit, or Both ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
Grains ($\frac{1}{2}$ serving)

Optional: Meat/meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains component up to 3 times per week at breakfast.

$\frac{1}{2}$ serving
Whole Grain-Rich
Mini Pancakes



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup
Unflavored
Low-Fat (1%)
or Fat-Free
(Skim) Milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Sliced
Strawberries

Sample Breakfast

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup
Unflavored Low-Fat (1%)
or Fat-Free (Skim) milk



1 Taco
Made with
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
Lean Ground Beef,
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Lettuce*, and
 $\frac{1}{8}$ cup
Chopped Tomatoes

$\frac{1}{2}$ serving
Enriched Flour Tortilla



$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Roasted Sweet
Potatoes

Sample Lunch/Supper

A second, different vegetable may be served in place of fruit at lunch and supper. In this meal, the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of lettuce and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of tomatoes in the taco meets the vegetable component, and the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sweet potatoes is used to meet the fruit component.

*Raw leafy greens, such as lettuce, credit for half the amount served. The $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of lettuce in the taco counts as $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables in this meal.

What is in a Lunch or Supper?

Milk (6 fl. oz. or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternate ($1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. eq.)
Vegetables ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)
Fruit ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)
Grains ($\frac{1}{2}$ serving)



All grains served must be whole grain-rich or enriched.
Breakfast cereals may also be fortified.
At least one grain served each day must be whole grain-rich.

What is in a Snack?

Pick 2:
Milk (4 fl. oz. or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternate ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz. eq.)
Vegetables ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
Fruit ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
Grains ($\frac{1}{2}$ serving)



$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Apple Slices



$\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
Cheddar Cheese

Sample Snack

Offer and make water available all day.

Note: Serving sizes are minimums.

Updated USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns must be implemented by October 1, 2017. Learn more about the CACFP meal patterns, including information on ounce equivalents (oz. eq.) and serving sizes at <https://teamnutrition.usda.gov>.



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SMALL PURCHASE DOCUMENTATION FORM

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Name of Individual Soliciting Information: _____

Instructions: Use this form to document small purchases. Individual or grouped transaction(s) that exceed \$10,000 for similar items must be documented below. Ensure at least two (2) quotes are used between qualified sources, (3) three are preferred. Attach additional supporting documentation to this form. **Circle or note the vendor selected.** Complete bottom section if the lowest bidder was not selected.

Vendor Name, Address, Telephone	Individual's Name and Position Providing Price Quote	Item Name/Description of the goods or services, including quantity, any other pertinent terms or conditions required by the organization and date of services	Date of Contact	Method of Contact	Discussion with Vendor	Price Quote and Duration	Final Negotiated Price
Vendor 1							
Vendor 2							
Vendor 3							

If the lowest bidder was not selected, document below the reasons the lowest bidder could not meet the specific contract terms sought.

Agreement to Furnish Foods for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

This agreement is made and entered into between _____ and _____
Name of Food Vendor
 _____, WHEREAS the _____ agrees to provide
Name of CACFP Organization Name of Food Vendor

Food Items (inclusive/exclusive) of milk/juice to _____ for the rates herein listed:
Circle one option Name of CACFP Organization

<i>BIDDER COMPLETES THIS CHART</i>	Totals		Totals
<i>Food Only</i>	\$	<i>Nonfood items only</i>	\$
<i>Milk Only</i>	\$	<i>All food items</i>	\$
<i>Bread Only</i>	\$	<i>Food and Non-Food</i>	\$
TOTAL OF ALL ITEMS			\$

*The contract period should not extend beyond one year. Therefore, the number of operating days should equal the total number of days the site(s) will be open for food service during the summer.

It is further agreed that _____, pursuant to the provisions of the CACFP Federal regulations, 7 CFR
Name of Food vendor

Part 226 and Food Crediting Guide, attached copies of which are part of this agreement, will ensure that food items meet the minimum meal pattern requirements, including creditable components and accurate portion sizes, and will maintain complete and accurate records that at a minimum include details regarding the preparation and delivery of food items ordered. Said records will be provided to _____ promptly by the last calendar day of
CACFP Organization
 each month to meet its responsibility. It is further understood that the **Sponsor** is ultimately responsible for meeting accurate record keeping requirements and submission of all monthly claims for reimbursement in accordance with 7 CFR 226.

_____ acknowledges its responsibility to pay for all food items delivered in accordance
Name of CACFP Organization
 with this Agreement and federal regulations. _____ understands that neither
Name of Food Vendor

USDA, nor Bright from the Start assumes any liability for payment of food items delivered, or the differences between the food items delivered and the number of meals/snacks served or claimed for reimbursement; nor does Bright from the Start or USDA assume liability for the Sponsor's non-payment for food items.

_____ agrees to retain all required records under the preceding clause for a period
Name of Food Vendor
 of three (3) years, plus the current year, from the date of receipt of final payment under this agreement (or longer, if an audit is in progress); and upon request, to make all accounts and records pertaining to the CACFP available to Bright From the Start, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, USDA, any of its Agents, and the General Accounting Office for audit or administrative review immediately upon request.

This agreement shall be effective as of _____ through _____. The Agreement may be terminated by
Date: MM/DD/YY Date: MM/DD/YY
 written notice given by either party to the other party, at least 10 days prior to the date of termination.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the dates indicated below:

Signature and Title of Food Vendor

Signature and Title of CACFP Organization

Date: MM/DD/YY

Date: MM/DD/YY

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Agreement to Furnish Foods for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

This agreement is made and entered into between _____ and _____
Name of Food Vendor
 _____, WHEREAS the _____ agrees to provide
Name of SFSP Organization Name of Food Vendor

Food Items (inclusive/exclusive) of milk/juice to _____ for the rates herein listed:
Circle one option Name of SFSP Organization

<i>BIDDER COMPLETES THIS CHART</i>	Totals		Totals
<i>Food Only</i>	\$	<i>Nonfood items only</i>	\$
<i>Milk Only</i>	\$	<i>All food items</i>	\$
<i>Bread Only</i>	\$	<i>Food and Non-Food</i>	\$
TOTAL OF ALL ITEMS			\$

*The contract period should not extend beyond one year. Therefore, the number of operating days should equal the total number of days the site(s) will be open for food service during the summer.

It is further agreed that _____, pursuant to the provisions of the SFSP Federal regulations, 7 CFR
Name of Food vendor

Part 225 and Food Crediting Guide, attached copies of which are part of this agreement, will ensure that food items meet the minimum meal pattern requirements, including creditable components and accurate portion sizes, and will maintain complete and accurate records that at a minimum include details regarding the preparation and delivery of food items ordered. Said records will be provided to _____ promptly by the last calendar day of
Sponsoring Organization
 each month to meet its responsibility. It is further understood that the **Sponsor** is ultimately responsible for meeting accurate record keeping requirements and submission of all monthly claims for reimbursement in accordance with 7 CFR 225.

_____ acknowledges its responsibility to pay for all food items delivered in accordance
Name of Sponsoring Organization
 with this Agreement and federal regulations. _____ understands that neither
Name of Food Vendor

USDA, nor Bright from the Start assumes any liability for payment of food items delivered, or the differences between the food items delivered and the number of meals/snacks served or claimed for reimbursement; nor does Bright from the Start or USDA assume liability for the Sponsor's non-payment for food items.

_____ agrees to retain all required records under the preceding clause for a period
Name of Food Vendor
 of three (3) years, plus the current year, from the date of receipt of final payment under this agreement (or longer, if an audit is in progress); and upon request, to make all accounts and records pertaining to the SFSP available to Bright From the Start, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, USDA, any of its Agents, and the General Accounting Office for audit or administrative review immediately upon request.

This agreement shall be effective as of _____ through _____. The Agreement may be terminated by
Date: MM/DD/YY Date: MM/DD/YY
 written notice given by either party to the other party, at least 10 days prior to the date of termination.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the dates indicated below:

Signature and Title of Food Vendor

Date: MM/DD/YY

Signature and Title of SFSP Organization

Date: MM/DD/YY

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



The Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition

The Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition is a network that joins stakeholders in early care, food, farming, and nutrition to coalesce resources, support farm to early care education, and create a dialogue for building statewide programming.

Members share a mission to connect early childhood programs, local farmers, and stakeholders for the purpose of:

- Helping children develop healthy lifelong eating habits through exposure to gardening, hands-on nutrition education, cooking and local foods;
- Increasing access to healthy, local foods, gardening opportunities, and food-based activities to enhance the quality of the educational experience in early care and education;
- Providing all early care and education providers, regardless of geographic location, type of program or socioeconomic status, the information, resources, and support to successfully implement farm to ECE initiatives;
- Creating a healthy eating environment which enables children to make healthier choices;
- Collaborating with Georgia farmers and distributors to provide increased access to local foods



Coalition Members:

- **Bright from the Start:**
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
- **Captain Planet Foundation**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
- **Children's Healthcare of Atlanta/ Strong4Life**
- **Children's Museum of Atlanta**
- **Common Market Georgia**
- **Emory University**
- **Food Well Alliance**
- **Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students**
- **Georgia Association for the Education of Young Children**
- **Georgia Child Care Association**
- **Georgia Department of Agriculture**
- **Georgia Department of Education**
- **Georgia Department of Public Health/Georgia Shape**
- **Georgia Head Start Association**
- **Georgia Head Start Office of Collaboration**
- **Georgia Family Connection Partnership**
- **Georgia Organics**
- **Georgia State University-Health Policy Center**
- **HealthMPowers**
- **Little Ones Learning Center**
- **Mercer University**
- **Southern Crescent Technical College**
- **United Way**
- **USDA**
- **University of Georgia**
- **University of Georgia Cooperative Extension**
- **Voices for Georgia's Children**

To learn more visit <https://georgiaorganics.org/for-schools/farmtoearlycare> or contact Erin Croom at erin@georgiaorganics.org



www.georgiaorganics.org | www.dec.state.ga.gov/nutrition

