

Framing the Future: Local Food for Schools Funding 2025

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Notes

Topic: Framing the Future: Local Food for Schools Funding 2025

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Challenge: How to leverage federal and state resources to increase impact and local foods in school meals.

Background

Context: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has committed to strengthening local food systems and improving student nutrition through a new round of Local Food for Schools (LFS) funding, which gives grant funding to districts to purchase lightly processed and whole local food products.

1. People: Who is involved

- Parents
- Teachers
- Food Service Staff
- School Administrators
- Local Farms
- RI Department of Education
- K-12 Schools
- Legislators - US Congress
- Processors
- Distributors
- Students
- Aggregators
- School Committees
- Stakeholders

1. PEOPLE

Who's involved?

Including you? With and for everyone involved, explore...

2. OBSERVATIONS

What's happening? Why?

Details and all sides of what people are doing, saying, thinking, feeling.

3. PRINCIPLES

What matters most?

Different, maybe competing things here. That's the challenge!

4. IDEAS

What ways are there?

Different who/what/when/where/hows. Look around for ideas!

5. EXPERIMENTS

What's a step to try?

Small, with real details so you DO IT! What happens? (back to #2)

2. Observation: What's happening? Why?

- Exhausting for farmers but is increasing sales
- No universal school meals

- Clear technical assistance – technical assistance has been pretty clear but could use more and more consistent check ins
- Not enough local purchasing for local proteins
- Cost is currently okay because of funding, but is high and not sustainable
- Distrust ordering only through Farm Fresh
- Confusion from suppliers/farmers who maybe are not already selling about how to sell into schools with this program (market channel not LFS)
- Variety of products available are good, but schools are interested in more like mushrooms
- Storage Capacity is lacking
- Needs for allergy free products
- Delivery Issues
- Correct amounts of food getting from suppliers to schools
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3. Principles: What matters most?

- Giving children food they will enjoy
- Serving RI food to RI residents
- Local Economy
- Mutually beneficial partnerships between farmers and schools
- Steady market for farmers
- Scalable preparation for new products to serve
- Fair wage for producers and processors
- Culturally appropriate.
- Quality/Freshness of produce being sent to schools

4. Ideas: What ways are there?

- Create space/facilities to empower small producers
- Farm to School CS
- Use commodity food to offset local food costs
- Market Mobile more user friendly/easier to find and navigate market
- Every shareholder feels values in the process
- Aggregate with more mid-sized farmers
- Individual Quick Freezing + Demand
- Should expand purchasing to supper programs
- Align commodity with local
- More diversity among farmers and products

- Educating farmers and producers about how to get involved in these programs

5. Experiments: What's a step to try

- Participate in "Grow Together RI" CLP being created by Hope and Main
- Partner with SouthSide Community Land Trust or African American Alliance RI to contract for large quantities - involves multiple mid sized BIPOC farmers
- Local Farm Collective
- Transformative technology - efficient freezing techniques

Discussion notes

Local Food Purchasing Incentives (LFPIs)

Programs that provide **additional funding** to schools and early care settings to directly offset the cost of local food or **incentivize increased levels of local food purchases**.

Traditional Incentive Diagram



