

Guidance for the Use of Consultants

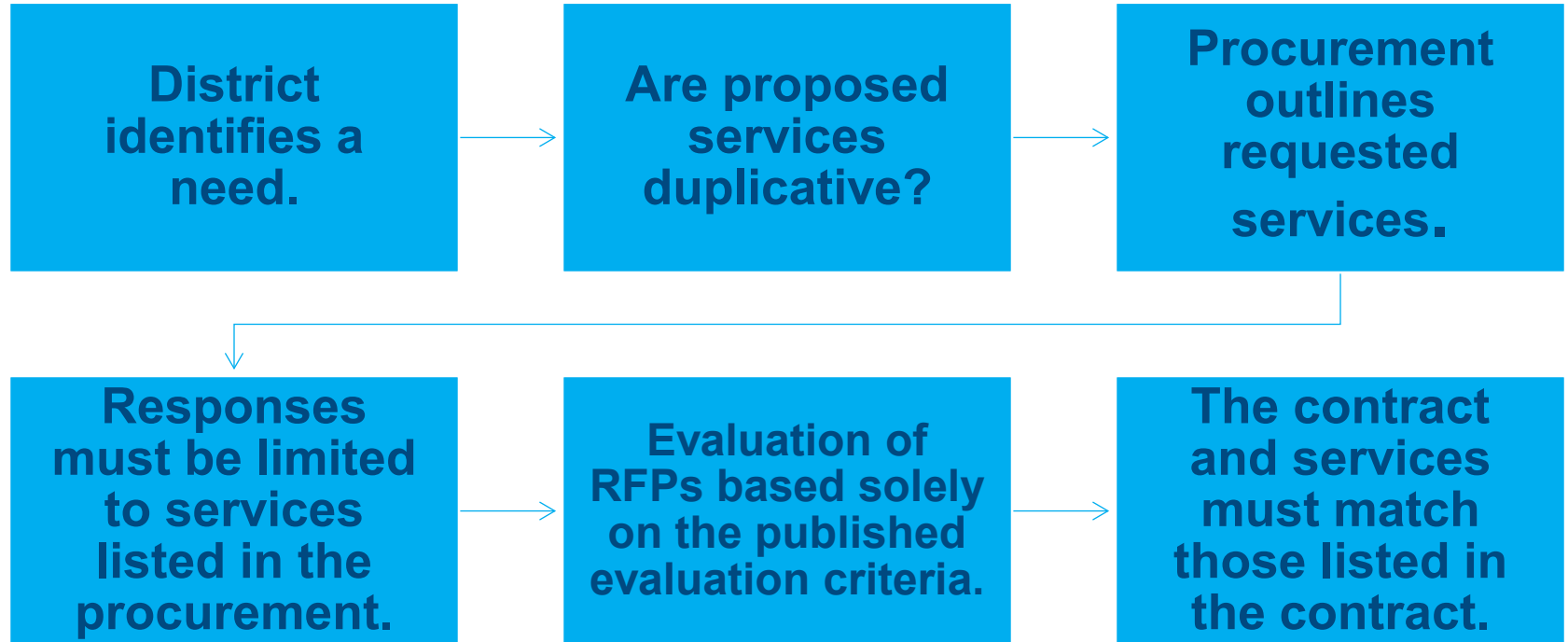


What they are:

- Support food programs
- Assist with recipe development or meal quality
- Short-term training needs unrelated to compliance

TDA supports local decision-making of CEs, including the use of consultants for allowable services.

Procurement Requirements:



ESC Role

Help guide districts to support compliant procurement and allowable services.

Support through technical assistance.

What to Expect from ESC Specialists:

Clarify services the district is seeking

Help the district identify and document their needs

Provide guidance on duplicative services by clarifying what ESCs and ICN offer

Remind districts to avoid communication with consultants during procurement development

Remind districts to eliminate over-responsive bids

What ESC Specialists Should NOT say:

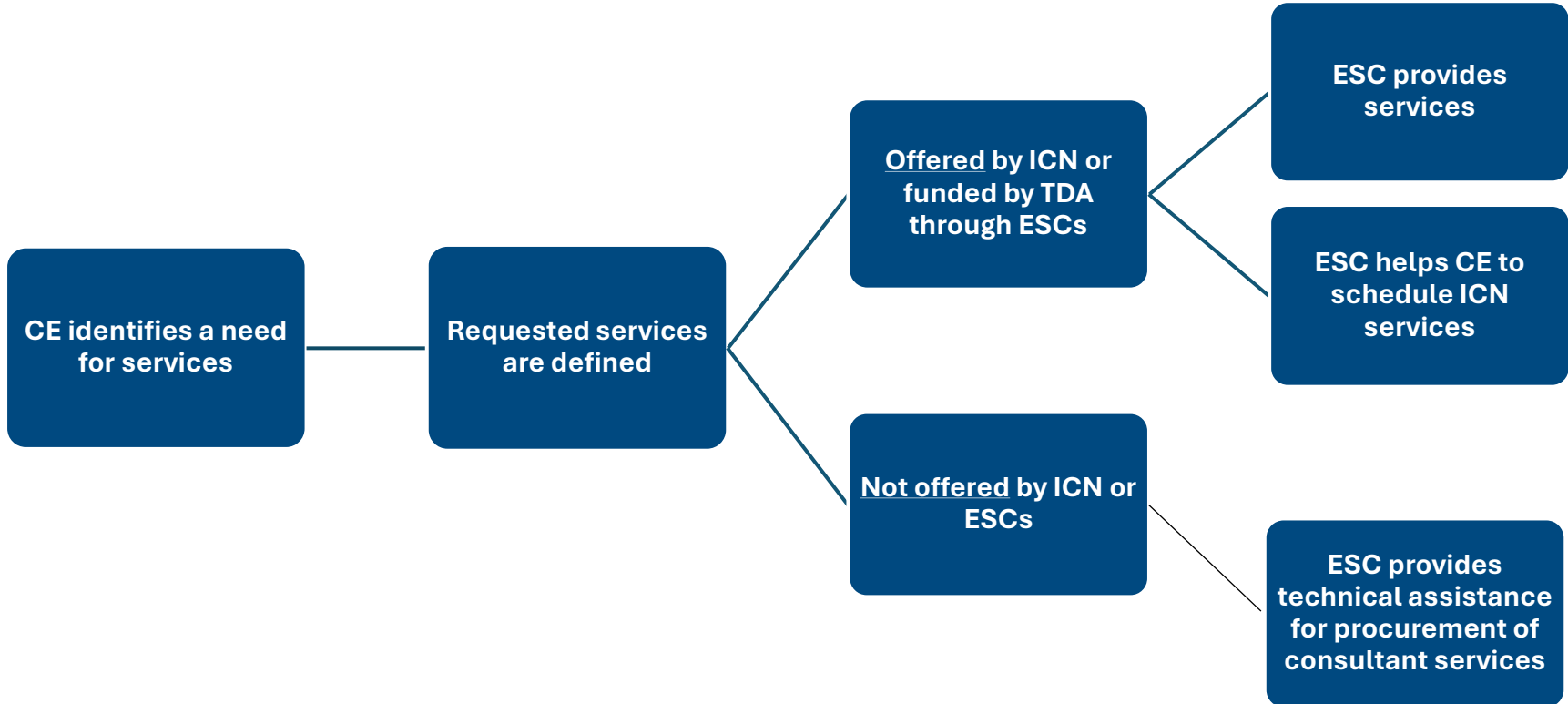
Consultants
are not
allowed.

Consultants
are
duplicative
services.

Any guidance
about a
specific
consultant.

Disparaging
remarks about
a company or
the use of
consultants.

Decision Tree:





Let's Practice

Yes

(or)

No?

Your dietitian recently left and you are requesting assistance with special diets. Can you use a consultant?



Yes

(or)

No?

Your food services managers are having trouble with the food production records provided by TDA. Can you procure a consultant to train your staff on this subject?



Yes

(or)

No?

You are seeking training on leadership to support the professional development of child nutrition staff. Can you use a consultant?





Local Food for Schools

Tiffany Lankford-Nutrition Specialist



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Fraud Hotline: 1-866-5-FRAUD-4 or 1-866-537-2834 | P.O. Box 12847 | Austin, TX 78711
Toll Free: (877) TEX-MEAL | For the hearing impaired: (800) 735-2989 (TTY)

This product was funded by USDA.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Food and Nutrition Division
Nutrition Assistance Programs



Updated 3/3/2025
www.SquareMeals.org

LFS Reimbursement Update

- Reimbursements are actively being processed
- Approval emails sent in mid-December regarding payment status
- Next LFS office hours webinar: March 19, 2025, from 3:00 pm-3:30 pm



Poll for Future LFS Funding



Questions: CONTACT US



www.SquareMeals.org/LFS



localfoodgrant@texasagriculture.gov



CHILD NUTRITION

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

*Alexandra Molina,
Director for School Operations*



School Operations

School Call Update



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Fraud Hotline: 1-866-5-FRAUD-4 or 1-866-537-2834 | P.O. Box 12847 | Austin, TX 78711
Toll Free: (877) TEX-MEAL | For the hearing impaired: (800) 735-2989 (TTY)



Food and Nutrition Division
National School Lunch Program

This product was funded by USDA.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Updated 3/3/2025
www.SquareMeals.org

Financial Report Update

Due: March 28, 2025

- Data used for the 2025 NSLP Financial Report will be from financial information from SY2024 (2023-2024)
- Six Month Average Operating Expenses: Requires *Excess Net Cash Resource Plan*
- Late financial report submittals will result in a corrective action document (CAD).
- Resources:
 - Blank NSLP Financial Report
 - Preparing for the Financial Report

<https://squaremeals.org/Programs/National-School-Lunch-Program/Compliance/Financial-Report>



USDA Foods Updates

Jaclyn Cantu, RD
Director for USDA Foods



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Fraud Hotline: 1-866-5-FRAUD-4 or 1-866-537-2834 | P.O. Box 12847 | Austin, TX 78711
Toll Free: (877) TEX-MEAL | For the hearing impaired: (800) 735-2989 (TTY)

This product was funded by USDA.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Food and Nutrition Division
Nutrition Assistance Programs



Updated 3/3/2025
www.SquareMeals.org

Ordering Updates

Ordering Updates

Ordering catalogs for NSLP program year 2026 are available to submit requisitions in WBSCM for both Direct Delivery and Processing Diversions.

- USDA has set the rate of assistance at .45 cents per meal and final balances have been updated in WBSCM for PY 2026.
- DoD allocation is now in WBSCM. FFAVORS will update before program year starts in July 2026.

WBSCM Deadlines PY-26

Friday, February 28, 2025: Closing date for Direct Delivery and Processing Diversion Catalogs.

March 1st – April 30th: Create truckloads for materials with enough demand and begin submitting to USDA.

- We will also offset processing requests based off anticipated carryover.

June 1st – July 30th: Redistribute carryover based off requests during round 1 not filled. Processors will receive final allocations for the year and update account balances in K-12 and ProcessorLink

Cancelled Requisitions

January - February 28, 2025: Schools receiving cancellations during this time most likely are placing a requisition incorrectly.

- Example: Sending material to the incorrect ship to listed on Texas Approved Processor List.
- Cancelled requisitions return entitlement and you must place the correct order prior to catalogs closing.
- Continue to monitor your Requisition Status Reports to react quickly!
- Check you have no requisitions in draft status prior to catalogs closing!

Cancelled Requisitions

If a school needs to cancel a requisition, please email CommodityOperations@texasagriculture.gov and include the following information:

- School Name (no acronyms)
- BP ID #
- Requisition Number
- Material Item

Ordering Resources

Please remember to utilize resources available on SquareMeals.org to aid in planning and submitting requisitions.

Food Distribution Program for NSLP -> Resources

- PDFs of NSLP Direct Delivery Recap
- NSLP FAL (Foods Available List) for SY 25-26
- Texas Approved Processor List

USDA Foods Ordering WBSCM Training and Resources

Lessons Learned

- Check Ship-To Code before submitting requisitions.
- Incorrect requests dramatically impact smaller processors.
 - Twelve Oaks, Healthy Lunch Box, Lux Bakery
- Check the appropriate quantity is requested. Some materials must be converted from pounds to cases if diverting to a processor.
- Check the Product Information Sheet resource for beef materials to validate if they are a raw product vs pre-cooked.

Inventory Updates

Inventory Updates

Inventory Levels

- Reminder that schools must maintain their USDA Foods inventory levels less than 6MOH to maintain compliance with the NSLP for SY25.
- Schools need to ensure they are reviewing their Best-If-Used-By Dates, Expiration Dates, and Pack Dates to maintain inventory at optimum quality.
- Forced Shipments are continuing to occur with those CEs that have inventory that has been sitting passed the number of days of free storage.

Inventory Updates

Surplus

- Surplus inventories that are close to expiration will be force shipped out to RAs.
 - TDA will reimburse CEs the cost for delivery in August.
 - All USDA inventory must be depleted and out of the warehouses by April 30th (Processors and State Contracted)

Invoices

- RAs **MUST** pay their invoices timely. Unpaid invoices are subject to legal action.

Warehouse Price Increase:

- 32 cents per case price increase for Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, 8.
 - Increase is due to overall decrease in the number of cases requested for the State Contracted Warehouses and does not include the CPI adjustment.
 - Price can decrease, per the contract terms, if the volume increases.



Policy Update

February 26, 2025

Rachel Baierlein, Senior Policy Analyst



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Fraud Hotline: 1-866-5-FRAUD-4 or 1-866-537-2834 | P.O. Box 12847 | Austin, TX 78711
Toll Free: (877) TEX-MEAL | For the hearing impaired: (800) 735-2989 (TTY)

This product was funded by USDA.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Food and Nutrition Division
Nutrition Assistance Programs



Updated 3/3/2025
www.SquareMeals.org

01

**ARM
Release
February 14, 2025**



Administrator's Reference Manual (ARM)

New release on February 14, 2025

- Twenty-one sections were updated.
- Update guides are located at the beginning of each section.
- New language is highlighted yellow.
- Remember to replace old versions.

<https://squaremeals.org/Programs/National-School-Lunch-Program/Policy-ARM>

ARM Release

Updates made to:

- Add provisions from the Final Rule to Revise Nutrition Standards.
- Add recent updates made to 2 CFR 200, the “Uniform Guidance.”
- Clarify general ARM guidance.



ARM Release

Final Rule to Revise Nutrition Standards

*Final Rule - Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025
Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/school-nutrition-standards-updates>

Flexibilities effective July 1, 2024:

- Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast (Section 8)
- Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Breakfast (Section 8)
- Crediting of Nuts and Seeds (Sections 7, 8, 9)
- Beans, Peas, and Lentils at Lunch (Section 8)
- Bean Dips Exempt in Smart Snacks (Section 22)
- Geographic Preference as a Procurement Specification (Section 17)
- Buy American “FAR List” (Section 17b)

ARM Release

2 CFR 200

Incorporated updates made to the *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*.

- Increase equipment threshold: \$5,000 to \$10,000.
- Increase single audit threshold: \$750,000 to \$1 million.

ARM Section 16, Financial System



02

Final Rule to Revise Nutrition Standards SY 25-26



Final Rule to Revise Nutrition Standards School Year 2025-2026

Upcoming in the next ARM release

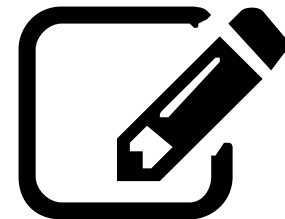
Required provisions effective July 1, 2025:

- Buy American 10% cap on exceptions.
- Product-based limits on added sugars in breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk.
- Afterschool snack meal pattern aligned with CACFP snack meal pattern.

Final Rule to Revise Nutrition Standards School Year 2025-2026

Resources

- USDA Website - <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/school-nutrition-standards-updates>
- TDA School Call (July 31, 2024 Policy Update) - <https://squaremeals.org/Programs/National-School-Lunch-Program/Resources>



03

Summer Non-Congregate





Summer Non-Congregate

Webinar

February 27 at 2 p.m. CST

<https://www.squaremeals.org/Programs/Summer-Meal-Programs/Summer-Non-Congregate-Feeding-Program>

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. email:

program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Fraud Hotline: 1-866-5-FRAUD-4 or 1-866-537-2834 | P.O. Box 12847 | Austin, TX 78711
Toll Free: (877) TEX-MEAL | For the hearing impaired: (800) 735-2989 (TTY)

This product was funded by USDA.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Food and Nutrition Division
Nutrition Assistance Programs



Updated 3/3/2025
www.SquareMeals.org