



Local Food for Schools (LFS) Grant Frequent Asked Questions (FAQ)

See below for answers to questions asked by participating schools in the Local Food for Schools grant. Please send any additional questions to localfoodgrant@texasagriculture.gov.

ALLOWABLE PURCHASES/COSTS

Q1: What are the allowable costs for the LFS Grant?

A1: According to the LFS Grant, funds can be used for food purchases that are unprocessed or minimally processed. Funds may also be used to cover the costs of storage and distribution of agricultural products to schools.

Examples of Allowable Food Products: fruits and vegetables, including 100% juices, olive oil, grains like pasta and rice, meats in whole, pieces, ground forms, meat alternates like beans or legumes, fluid milk and dairy products like yogurt and cheese, a variety of processing states (whole, cut, pureed) and forms (fresh, frozen, dried, canned).

Examples of Unallowable Food Products: processed foods, baked goods like breads, muffins, crackers, other prepared and/or pre-cooked items, bottled water, spices or seasonings, smoked brisket, items that come ready to eat or that require no further preparation beyond heating, pre-packaged sandwiches/meals, chicken nuggets, fish sticks, pre-made pizzas, direct or indirect costs associated with developing and administering the program.

Visit www.squaremeals.org/LFS to view an ongoing list of LFS allowable and unallowable food products.

Q2: What is the definition of “local food” for the LFS Grant?

A2: For the purposes of this grant, the “local or regional,” food item must be from Texas. TDA requires the Farmers/Producers' food to be raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and distributed in Texas. This includes the headquarters of the farmer/producer/distributor.

Q3: Our milk supplier is part of a dairy cooperative headquartered outside of Texas. Would our milk supplier be considered an eligible cost?

A3: Milk is considered an eligible cost provided that the milk is produced, processed, and distributed in Texas and the producer headquarters is in Texas.

Q4: Do the purchases have to be from a TDA Farm Fresh Network Producer?

A4: No. Purchases do not have to be from a producer on the Farm Fresh Network. The Farm Fresh Network is an optional tool for schools to use to locate vendors who are interested in selling local products to schools. Note: The Farm Fresh Network was created prior to the LFS grant; therefore not all Farm Fresh Network members meet the requirements for LFS reimbursement. Grant participants must verify that any intended vendor/producer meets all LFS requirements before making LFS purchases.

Q5: Can you clarify what foods are considered “unprocessed or minimally processed”

A5: Whole foods and foods in a wide variety of minimal processing states (e.g., whole, cut, pureed, etc.) and/or forms (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, dried, etc.) are allowable.

Examples of allowable food products include fruits and vegetables (including 100% juices); olive oil, grain products such as pastas and rice; meats (whole, pieces, or food items such as ground meats); meat alternates such as beans or legumes, and fluid milk and other dairy foods such as cheese and yogurt.

Foods that are generally understood to be significantly processed or prepared are unallowable.

Examples of unallowable products would include baked goods such as breads, muffins, or crackers; prepackaged sandwiches or meals; bottled water; spices or seasonings; smoked brisket; other prepared and/or pre-cooked items that come ready-to-eat or that require no further preparation beyond heating (e.g., chicken nuggets, fish sticks, pre-made pizzas, etc.).

Q6: Is Olive Oil produced in Texas an allowable food product?

A6: Yes; olive oil is allowable provided that it is local.

Q7: Is bottled water from Texas an allowable food product?

A7: Bottled water is not allowed.

Q8: Are spices or seasonings from Texas an allowable food product?

A8: Spices and/or seasonings are not allowed.

Q9: Is flour allowable for purchase?

A9: Yes; flour is an allowable food for the LFS grant program.

Q10: Are purchases made during Farm Fresh Challenge Month (October) allowable?

A10: No; qualifying LFS purchases are allowed starting November 3, 2023.

Q11: When can grant funds be used? This school year and next year?

A11: Funds may be used for qualifying purchases with invoices dated November 3, 2023 through March 31, 2025. TDA will accept reimbursement forms with supporting documentation no later than May 9, 2025.

Q12: Does Beef Jerky, Beef Snack Sticks, and/or Summer Sausage Products meet the LFS criteria of Unprocessed or Minimally Processed Food?

A12: Beef jerky, Beef Snack Stix and Summer sausage are allowable LFS foods provided that they do not include flavorings, colorings, or other additives, made with wholesome ingredients, and meet the LFS requirements for locally sourced ingredients.

Q13: Is March 31, 2025 the deadline to purchase food with this grant money or is this the final date to request reimbursement?

A13: March 31, 2025, is the final date to make a qualifying purchase. Schools must submit reimbursement requests by May 9, 2025 to be eligible for reimbursement processing.

Q14: What are examples of allowable storage and/or distribution costs?

A14: Allowable costs under storage and distribution may include any typical direct costs associated with the storage and distribution of commodity products. Examples include direct salaries for temporary warehouse workers; *lease or rental* of delivery trucks or other equipment (forklifts, refrigerators, freezers, etc); payments/fees for common carriers for transporting or storing commodities; *lease or rental* of warehouse space; or supplies used in the storage and handling of commodity products (boxes, pallets, etc).

Q15: In my opt-in form, for the food category question, I stated we were interested in purchasing fruits and vegetables, but now I want to purchase meats as well. Am I restricted to my original answer?

A15: No; the question on the opt-in form was included to understand what schools were interested in purchasing. The LFS team has posted the list of participating schools

and items they are interested in for producers to connect and reach out. Participants are not required to buy or limited to only buy the food categories originally stated; what food categories purchased is up to the grant recipient.

PROCUREMENT

Q16: Does the headquarters of a producer or supplier have to be in the same state or within 400 miles of the delivery destination to be considered a “local or regional” supplier?

A16: For the purposes of this grant, to be considered "local or regional," the producer, supplier and distributor headquarters must be located in Texas.

Q17: My milk vendor provides milk produced in Texas, but the headquarters is out of state, would that qualify?

A17: No; for the purposes of this grant the producer, supplier and distributor headquarters must be in Texas to be considered an allowable purchase.

Q18: Do vendors need to be TDA approved?

A18: No; however, vendors must meet the LFS grant criteria and the current local procurement policies and requirements for school foodservice.

Q19: When a district gets the grant money, who do they purchase the local products from? Directly from the producers on the list in Square Meals? What is the process?

A19: Participating schools may purchase qualifying food products from local vendors/producers through their child nutrition program's procurement policies and procedures. For the purposes of this grant, TDA requires the vendor and/or producer to be located in Texas and the food products to be raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and distributed in Texas. Purchased items must also meet additional conditions; For more specifications on allowable food items and costs, please visit the resource section at www.squaremeals.org/LFS. Additionally, TDA emphasizes purchasing from historically underserved producers and small businesses located in Texas. *Note: Schools are encouraged to use the Farm Fresh Network on Square Meals as a resource, but the producer does not have to be sourced from the Farm Fresh Network.*

Q20: Can we only buy from small businesses based on the RFA definition, or can we also buy from large businesses?

A20: Although the small businesses are targets of the LFS Program, it is allowable to use LFS funds to buy from larger businesses. However, the Business Headquarters (HQ) must be in the state of Texas.

Q21: Have these Local Farm Fresh foods been procured? How does a district know which distributor will provide the products ordered?

A21: Participating school districts are responsible for contracting, determination of product types, quantities, delivery dates, and transportation logistics for qualifying LFS foods. TDA will process payments to CEs on a cost reimbursement basis. TDA requires the Farmers/Producers' food to be raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and distributed in Texas. TDA emphasizes purchasing from historically underserved producers and small businesses. For the purposes of this grant, to be considered "local or regional," the food item and producer or supplier headquarters must be in Texas.

Q22: How do we determine if it is a small business? What qualifies as a small business?

A22: A small business is generally defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as a business that is: a for profit-businesses of any legal structure; independently owned and operated, not nationally dominant in its field, and physically located and operated in the U.S. or its territories. States will determine which businesses are considered small businesses based on this definition. There is no required certification or validation process. There are multiple resources to assist with identifying small businesses. Applicants may wish to consult the Small Business Administration website at www.sba.gov for more information or consult with small business resources within their states or territories.

Q23: Are we able to use all grant funds from the same vendor?

A23: Yes; it is up to the discretion of the participating school which qualifying vendors you choose to do business with, however do consider using the funds for new business and/or make purchases with historically underutilized and small businesses and/or establish new relationships.

Q24: Do procurement rules apply? Are we still required to go through all the normal procurement processes for this grant? Micro/small/formal, etc.

A24: Yes; School Food Authorities must follow all federal, state, and local procurement laws when purchasing foods and associated allowable costs with these grant awards, including but not limited to procurement regulations [7 CFR part 210.21](#) and [2 CFR part 200.317-327](#), [TDA ARM Procurement Sections 17a-c](#), and local procedures.

Q25: Will local farmers know we are looking to use them as vendors?

A25: TDA has published the list of participating LFS schools on the LFS webpage, www.squaremeals.org/LFS. In addition, efforts are being made to communicate this grant opportunity to producers and vendors across Texas.

Q26: When purchasing items, will we have to have three bids for each food item?

A26: It depends on the Procurement method used and the necessary components of the determined procurement after a cost analysis was performed. When a CE uses the small purchase method, the CE must obtain price quotes from at least three responsible and responsive contractors (see ARM Sect. 17 pg. 23). The documentation for this procurement process for quotes request must be retained as required for records retention. Each (line) item is required to be procured for quotes.

Q27: How can I execute a federally compliant formal solicitation that meets the local LFS requirements for the food and business headquarters when that is not allowed as a technical requirement?

A27: To clarify, a state residency clause or provision cannot be included because it restricts competition. However, local can be used as a preference. As such, you can also award extra points if they meet this criteria. According to USDA's Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs Guide (pg. 56), " 'Local' can be a preference but never a requirement; therefore, it should never be used as a specification...while it is not acceptable to restrict responses to only those vendors located within a certain area, it is acceptable to award extra points or price preference if vendors can meet criteria such as...grown within a specific State or region".

Q28: If I separate my procurement by the school year, procuring some this year and more at the beginning of next school year, would that be considered breaking the purchases up to avoid formal procurement?

A28: No; if procurement occurs in different budget years, then it is considered new procurement.

Q29: What is self-certification for micro-purchasing? Where can I do that?

A29: The self-certification process is an option to increase the micro-purchase threshold for Contracting Entities operating the National School Lunch Program up to \$49,999.99. TDA manages and approves self-certification requests. Submissions are only accepted from August 1-October 31 annually. More information can be found [here](#). Send additional questions to selfcertification@texasagriculture.gov

REIMBURSEMENT

Q30: What records does a CE need to keep when they spend the grant money?

A30: Schools are required to submit an LFS Reimbursement Form for costs incurred for the purchase, storage, and transportation of LFS qualified food, along with required supporting documentation. CEs will need to submit an invoice and answer questions in the form related to the vendor/producer. For detailed information, visit www.squaremeals.org/LFS to access the Reimbursement Portal and resources.

Q31: Where do we send the invoices?

A31: Reimbursement requests will be submitted on the LFS Online Portal found on www.SquareMeals.org/LFS.

Q32: Will reimbursement come to us as submitted or will it be one lump sum at end of the year?

A32: Reimbursement requests will be reviewed, approved, and processed as they are received.

Q33: Will funds expire if we do not use them all? What if you can't use it all?

A33: Yes; Funds must be spent by March 31, 2025 and invoices with supporting documentation submitted via Reimbursement form by May 9, 2025. If you have questions or concerns about participating in the grant program, please contact localfoodgrant@texasagriculture.gov.

Q34: How many days is the turnaround to receive the reimbursement after submitting the reimbursement form?

A34: Reimbursement requests will be reviewed and processed by TDA as they are received. Approved requests will be submitted to the Food and Nutrition Financial Division on a rolling basis. Inadequate documentation will delay reimbursement.

Q35: If we submit payment to the vendor on a monthly basis but this includes numerous invoices, can we submit the reimbursement request form for the monthly payment invoice instead of individual school invoices?

A35: TDA has created an "LFS Payment Request Form" for submission of multiple invoices for one vendor. Complete this form and submit it along with your Reimbursement Request Form. The LFS Reimbursement Portal and LFS Payment Request form can be found at www.squaremeals.org/LFS. For additional questions regarding bulk invoice submissions, contact localfoodgrant@texasagriculture.gov.

Q36: How often can I submit invoices? As purchased or after we spend all the allocated funds?

A36: Reimbursement requests with supporting documentation must be submitted no later than May 9, 2025. It is suggested you submit reimbursement requests as soon as possible after purchase to receive reimbursement.

Q37: Is the deadline to submit for reimbursement in January since no invoices will be reimbursed after March?

A37: March 31, 2025, is the final date to make a qualifying LFS purchase. The deadline to submit for reimbursement and required supporting documentation is May 9, 2025.

Q38: I have submitted a couple of reimbursement requests. How do I confirm my request has been approved and when the reimbursement has been deposited?

A38: TDA will send a notification when your reimbursement request has been accepted and sent to F&N Finance for approval. Once approved, reimbursements will be deposited within 30 days.

Q39: To verify local status of meat products, do I need to provide cattle birth certificates?

A39: No; you do not need to provide cattle birth certificates when verifying food product origin. A written statement from the vendor or reference from the vendor website is sufficient.

Q40: Do we need to collect blank checks for reimbursement? What do I need to submit in my reimbursement request?

A40: For reimbursement requests, please submit the following:

1. Completed Reimbursement Request Form
2. Invoice(s) (use Payment Request Form if more than one invoice per vendor)
3. Supporting Documentation as applicable (recipes, local vendor information such as website or written communications, etc.)

The Reimbursement forms and portal can be found at www.squaremeals.org/LFS.

Q41: Is there a list of farms that LFS grant recipients are using already?

A41: Yes; TDA will be sharing a list of vendors that LFS recipients have used for reimbursement for this grant.

OTHER

Q42: Where do I find a copy of the Local Food for Schools Training and/or Office Hours PowerPoint slides?

A42: You can find LFS PowerPoint slides under Resources here: SquareMeals.org/LFS.

Q43: When will we know how much funds we receive as a district?

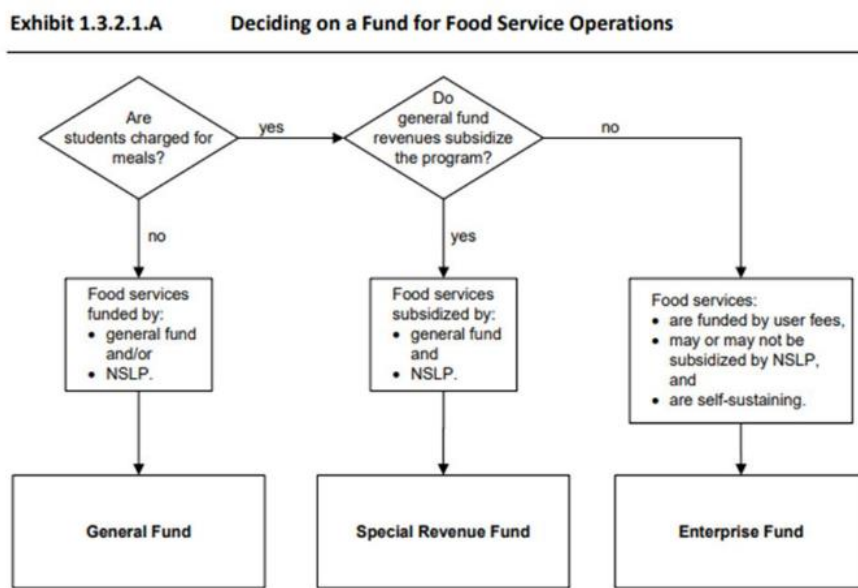
A43: Commissioner Sid Miller will call district superintendents to formally award schools. Additionally, TDA sent out email notification to participating schools. Please reach out if you have not received the award emails.

Q44: What will the deposit description look like for LFS reimbursement?

A44: The deposit description for LFS reimbursement is “CN squaremeals.org/LFS – CE Name”.

Q45: What funding code should schools use for this grant?

A45: TDA cannot dictate what funding codes the CE should use. The grant should be categorized in accordance with food service operations. According to Module 1, Section 1.3.2.1 of the Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG: Module 1; available on [texas.gov](https://www.texas.gov)), food service operations should be recorded in either the general fund (fund 101), special revenue fund (fund 240), or enterprise fund based on several factors.



End of Exhibit 1.3.2.1.A

Q46: Can you provide the CFDA number?

A46: The Federal Assistance Listing Number (formally CFDA) for the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program is 10.185.

Q47: Where do I find our UEI number?

A47: You may request your Unique Entity Identifier (formally known as DUNS number) from your Business Office or TX-UNPS. For technical assistance, contact LocalFoodGrant@TexasAgriculture.gov.