



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.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

Q1: Can you still apply if you have been awarded another grant?

A1: This grant does not restrict you from applying for other grants from TDA. If you have any questions about a particular grant, please contact technical assistance at LocalFoodGrant@TexasAgriculture.Gov. However, CEs contracting with a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) are not eligible to apply for LFS funds.

Q2: Will requirements be posted online?

A2: Please visit SquareMeals.org/LFS to learn more.

Q3: Are we allowed to participate in Farm to School, FFVP, and this opportunity?

A3: You may participate in both funding opportunities.

Q4: Are CEP schools eligible?

A4: Yes.

Q5: My child nutrition program is contracted with a food service management company, are we eligible for the LFS grant?

A5: No; Only NSLP and SBP Contracting Entities (CEs) who are NOT contracted with food service management companies (FSMCs) are eligible to opt-in.

Q6: Where do I find our UEI number?

A6: 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.

ALLOWABLE PURCHASES/COSTS

Q7: What are the allowable costs for the LFS Grant?

A7: 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, 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, 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.

Q8: What is the definition of “local food” for the LFS Grant?

A8: 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.

Q9: Our milk supplier is part of a dairy cooperative. Would our milk supplier be considered an eligible cost?

A9: Milk is considered an eligible cost provided that the milk is produced, processed, and distributed in Texas and the producer headquarters is in Texas.

Q10: Do the purchases have to be from a TDA Farm Fresh Network Producer?

A10: 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: 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.

Q11: Can you clarify what foods are considered “unprocessed or minimally processed”

A11: 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; water; 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.).

Q12: Is Olive Oil produced in Texas an allowable food product?

A12: Yes; olive oil is allowable provided that it is local.

Q13: Is bottled water from Texas an allowable food product?

A13: Bottled water is not allowed.

Q14: Are purchases made during Farm Fresh Challenge Month (October) allowable?

A14: No; qualifying LFS purchases are allowed starting November 3, 2023.

Q15: When can grant funds be used? This school year and next year?

A15: Funds may be used for qualifying purchases with invoices dated November 3, 2023 and onward. TDA will accept reimbursement forms with supporting documentation no later than March 31, 2025.

Q16: Does Beef Jerky, Beef Snack Sticks, and/or Summer Sausage Products meet the LFS criteria of Unprocessed or Minimally Processed Food?

A16: 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.

Q17: Is March 31, 2025 the deadline to purchase food with this grant money or is this the final date to request reimbursement?

A17: March 31, 2025, is the final deadline to submit reimbursement requests.

Q18: What are examples of allowable storage and/or distribution costs?

A18: 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).

PROCUREMENT

Q19: 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?

A19: For the purposes of this grant, to be considered "local or regional," the producer, supplier and distributor headquarters must be located in Texas.

Q20: My milk vendor provides milk produced in Texas, but the headquarters is out of state, would that qualify?

A20: No; for the purposes of this grant the producer, supplier and distributor headquarters must be in Texas to be considered an allowable purchase.

Q21: Do vendors need to be TDA approved?

A21: No; however, vendors must meet the LFS grant criteria and the current local procurement policies and requirements for school foodservice.

Q22: 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?

A22: 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.*

Q23: Can we only buy from small businesses based on the RFA definition, or can we also buy from large businesses?

A23: 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.

Q24: Have these Local Farm Fresh foods been procured? How does a district know which distributor will provide the products ordered?

A24: 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.

Q25: How do we determine if it is a small business? What qualifies as a small business?

A25: 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.

Q26: Are we able to use all grant funds from the same vendor?

A26: 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.

Q27: Do procurement rules apply? Are we still required to go through all the normal procurement processes for this grant? Micro/small/formal, etc.

A27: 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.

Q28: Will local farmers know we are looking to use them as vendors?

A28: 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.

REIMBURSEMENT

Q29: What records does a CE need to keep when they spend the grant money?

A29: 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.

Q30: Where do we send the invoices?

A30: Reimbursement requests will be submitted on the LFS Online Portal found on www.SquareMeals.org/LFS.

Q31: Will reimbursement come to us as submitted or will it be one lump sum at end of the year?

A31: Reimbursement requests will be reviewed, approved, and processed as they are received.

Q32: Will funds expire if we do not use them all? What if you can't use it all?

A32: Yes; Funds must be spent by March 31, 2025 and invoices with supporting documentation submitted via Reimbursement form. If you have questions or concerns about participating in the grant program, please contact localfoodgrant@texasagriculture.gov.

Q33: How many days is the turnaround to receive the reimbursement after submitting the reimbursement form?

A33: 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.

Q34: 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?

A34: 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.

Q35: How often can I submit invoices? As purchased or after we spend all the allocated funds?

A35: Reimbursement requests with supporting documentation must be submitted no later than March 31, 2025. It is suggested you submit reimbursement requests as soon as possible after purchase to receive reimbursement.

Q36: Is the deadline to submit for reimbursement in January since no invoices will be reimbursed after March?

A36: The deadline to submit for reimbursement and required supporting documentation is March 31, 2025.

OTHER

Q37: Where do I find a copy of the Local Food for Schools Training and/or Office Hours PowerPoint slides?

A37: You can find LFS PowerPoint slides under Resources here: SquareMeals.org/LFS.

Q38: When will we know how much funds we receive as a district?

A38: 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.

Q39: What will the deposit description look like for LFS reimbursement?

A39: The deposit description for LFS reimbursement is “CN squaremeals.org/LFS – CE Name”.

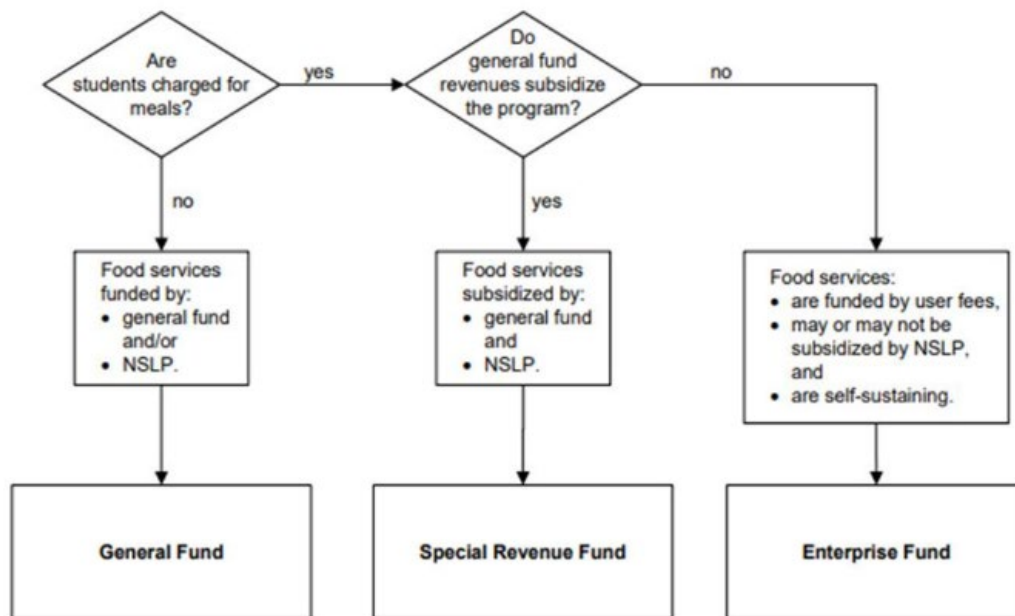
Q40: Can you provide the CFDA number?

A40: The Federal Assistance Listing Number (formally CFDA) for the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program is 10.185.

Q41: What funding code should schools use for this grant?

A41: 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), 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.

Exhibit 1.3.2.1.A Deciding on a Fund for Food Service Operations



End of Exhibit 1.3.2.1.A
