

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

IS THERE A VENDOR LIST SCHOOLS CAN USE TO FIND LOCAL PRODUCERS/SUPPLIERS WITHIN 400 MILES?

Yes – Massachusetts Farm to School has a local producer [map](#) and [list](#) for districts to use. This list is not exhaustive – school districts are welcome to buy from other growers/producers/suppliers that can provide eligible products.

IS THERE A LIST OF FOOD HUB VENDORS?

Yes – Massachusetts Farm to School has a [list of regional food hubs](#) that specialize in providing local/regional foods.

WILL FLUCTUATING PRODUCE PRICES BE A PROBLEM?

While prices in the conventional produce market do tend to fluctuate throughout the year, produce pricing in the local/regional market tends to be more stable. If you develop a sales relationship directly with a producer or with a food hub you will establish pricing through the procurement process.

IS MASSACHUSETTS PRODUCED CHEESE AN ALLOWABLE PRODUCT TO PURCHASE WITH NORTHEAST FOR SCHOOL (NFS) FUNDS?

Yes! Value added dairy products produced within 400 miles are allowed.

ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRODUCED CORN TORTILLAS MADE WITH MASSACHUSETTS' CORN AN ALLOWABLE PRODUCT TO PURCHASE WITH NFS FUNDS?

Yes! Grain products grown and processed within 400 miles are allowed.

IS MASSACHUSETTS PRODUCED FLUID MILK ELIGIBLE?

Yes, milk produced within 400 miles is eligible.

IS SHELF STABLE MILK ELIGIBLE?

No, shelf stable milk is not eligible under this program.

DO LOCAL EGGS NEED TO BE PASTEURIZED?

Please refer to your local board of health for any questions about food safety protocols for foods served in schools.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO USE THESE FUNDS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HARVEST OF THE MONTH (HOTM) PROGRAM, AND WILL THE MONTHLY ITEMS BE THE SAME YEAR TO YEAR?

Yes - HOTM items are consistent year to year and can be found here. HOTM is a great program to highlight local purchasing using NFS funds and beyond! [Learn more about Harvest of the Month.](#)

WHEN WILL WE KNOW IF AND HOW MUCH FUNDING EACH DISTRICT WILL RECEIVE?

The interest form is now closed. DESE notified districts of their level of funding at the end of April 2023.

DO FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT COMPANIES STILL NEED TO DO THE RFP PROCESS IF THEY ALREADY HAVE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL SUPPLIERS?

All purchases must follow federal and state procurement practices. If you have existing vendors who have been previously procured with these regulations in mind, you do not need to complete a new/different procurement process to spend these NFS funds.

WHAT WILL THE PAPERWORK/REPORTING REQUIREMENTS BE FOR NFS?

Similar to SCA funds- it will use a reimbursement mechanism in which districts will submit a request for reimbursement for allowable expenses/products.

CAN A DISTRICT PURCHASE FROM COMMBUYS WITH NFS FUNDS?

Yes and it is up to the SFA to ensure compliance with the LFS grant requirements and procurement regulations. When purchasing using a state contract only the items listed in the contract have been procured. Also, some contracts require the buyer to still get quotes (depends on the contract). Finally, it is still the responsibility of the SFA to ensure the product is grown within 400 miles and that the vendor can provide the required details.

CAN A DISTRICT USE COMMBUYS (STATE CONTRACTS) AS ONE OF THE THREE QUOTES NEEDED FOR A SMALL PURCHASE?

No - since the RFQ needs to communicate the same information to all vendors.

WHAT IF SCHOOL DISTRICTS DO NOT RECEIVE 3 RESPONSES TO THEIR REQUEST FOR QUOTES?

The 3-quote process requires school districts to send their request for quotes to at least three vendors. They do not need to receive 3 responses to be in compliance with procurement regulations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CAN FSMCS UTILIZE THEIR OWN CONTRACTED VENDORS IF THEY SOURCE LOCALLY?

All purchases must follow federal and state procurement practices. If you have existing vendors who have been previously procured with these regulations in mind, you do not need to complete a new/different procurement process to spend these NFS funds.

CAN FSMCS POTENTIALLY PAY THE VENDOR INVOICES (IF THEY ALREADY HAVE THEM SET UP AS A VENDOR) AND THEN SEND THE SFAS AN INVOICE FOR THESE PURCHASES IF ALL DOCUMENTATION IS TRACKED? OR IS IT REQUIRED THAT THE SFAS PAY DIRECTLY?

SFAs are required to reimburse FSMCs for all allowable expenses incurred in the operation of the SFS. These funds can only be used to purchase local unprocessed or minimally processed foods. If you were already doing that, nothing changes at all. What FSMC and SFA's need to do is track these food purchases so they have documented that they spent the amount they received in NFS funds on allowable local foods.

HOW DOES THE REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS WORK?

Districts will request reimbursement for allowable product expenses on a monthly basis through an on-line form. This form will request basic information for reimbursement: the amount to be reimbursed, products purchased, and the farm/food hub/producer/supplier of the products.

HOW LONG DO DISTRICTS HAVE TO USE ALL OF THE FUNDS?

The current end date of the program is: June 30, 2024. Schools are required to have spent all funds by June 30th, 2024.

WHAT HAPPENS IF DISTRICTS ARE UNABLE TO USE ALL THE FUNDS?

DESE will be in contact with districts during the course of the program and redistribute unused funds prior to the June 30, 2024 deadline.