



# Rural Procurement Featuring Palominas Elementary School District

**April 15, 2025**

**1:30 PM - 2:00 PM**

**Professional Standards Learning Codes:**



# Meet Your Host



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HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES SPECIALIST

# Welcome!



upLIFT was designed specifically for child nutrition professionals like you. It offers resources to help you LEARN about nutrition, get INSPIRED on meal choices for your participants, FEED students healthy meals, and TEACH others in your community about your programs.

You can look forward to materials and monthly webinars featuring unique upLIFT content showcasing Arizona child nutrition professionals, and providing ongoing inspiration throughout the year. This will empower you to upLIFT your programs in your own unique way!

# Overview

1. Introduction to Rural Procurement
2. Tips for Access and Distribution of Local Foods
3. A Rural District's Experience: Palominas Elementary School District

# Introduction to Rural Procurement

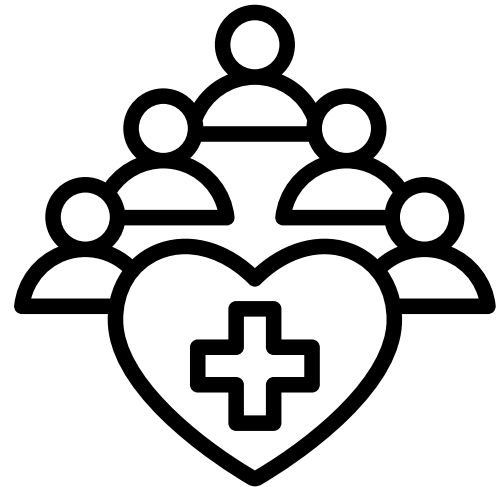
# Benefits of Procuring Local Foods

## Nutritional Advantages

Locally grown foods are typically harvested at their peak of ripeness, which means they contain higher levels of nutrients than commercially produced foods.

Local foods...

- Provide a wider variety of nutrients, which can help students meet their dietary needs.
- Encourage healthy habits by familiarizing students with fresh produce and whole foods.
- Reduce consumption of processed foods.



# Benefits of Procuring Local Foods

## Economic Impact

One of the benefits of local procurement is that it strengthens the local economy by providing expanded market access for local farms and ranches.

- Purchasing locally-grown food supports the local community and the ripple effects can be seen nation-wide.



# Benefits of Procuring Local Foods

## Environmental

Purchasing local reduces the environmental impacts related to wide-range distribution.

- Restores the environment by building healthy soil, reducing greenhouse gases, and resulting in cleaner air.
- Produces minimal-to-no harmful runoff, providing clean drinking water and better habitats for wildlife.





# Introduction

## Local Food Procurement

There are many methods for obtaining local foods for schools:

- Buy directly from producers
- Aggregators to source, process, and deliver local foods
- Producer co-ops and food hubs
- Mainline Distributors
- FSMCs and Food Processors
- School Gardens

# Introduction

## Procuring Local for Different District Types

To choose the best option for procuring local, it is important to know what the district is capable of.

- What local products available to the district?
- What infrastructure does the district have to receive and process the product?
- How will solicitations be crafted?

Rural areas have specific challenges related to **access** to local foods, and **distribution** of these foods, that may deter rural districts from attempting to procure local.

# Understanding Rural Districts

## Unique Challenges

Rural schools represent about a third (34.9%) of those participating in the NSLP.

- Research has found that on average, school meal **participation rates are higher** in rural schools compared with those in urban areas.
- However, at the same time, both students and parents in rural regions **report lower satisfaction** with school meals.

# Understanding Rural Districts

## Unique Challenges

Currently, rural SFAs purchase locally grown and produced foods less frequently than SFAs in other areas.

This may be due to:

- Lower levels of interest,
- higher prices, but mainly;
- limited capacity to procure local foods.

# Understanding Rural Districts

## Additional Challenges

- **Distribution** - Food gets delivered less frequently, therefore fresh produce may not be as feasible
- **Lack of awareness of resources and/or time constraints** - Limited capacity to apply for grants or seek tools to assist in local purchasing
- **Limited Staffing** - Lack of staff to help with other avenues such as school gardens
- **Budget Constraints** - School Food Service may have a smaller budget due to other programs requiring more assistance, such as transportation
- **Limited Community Engagement** - Parents and teachers may not have a capacity to be involved in school food service activities that may benefit the program

# Tips for Access and Distribution of Local Foods

# Opportunities for Rural Local Procurement

## Local-Level Recommendations

Rural Procurement of local foods is **variable**. Some districts may benefit from purchasing through mainline distributors or aggregators, while others can form a successful partnership with a local farm or producer. Other recommendations include:

- Joining cooperatives (also known as consortiums) to help leverage joint purchasing power to procure foods at lower costs and increase access to a greater variety of foods.
- Participation in the USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to also support cost-effective procurement of higher quality foods.
- Increasing the use of school gardens to expose students to new foods and provide integrated learning experiences related to academic subjects.

# Purchasing from Farmers/ Producers

## Do Your Research!

### **See who is growing products in your area.**

- Connect with farmers through farmer organizations, state agencies, farmers' markets, roadside stands, U-pick farms, and even neighbors who may plant more than they need.

### **Prepare a short list of products**

- Include volumes, and frequency of purchasing desired items. Note how you will use the items (cut up raw or cooked or both). Don't forget meat, eggs, and dairy!

### **Set up Appointments to Visit or for a Business Call**

- Contact farmers in the early morning or evening. If you leave a message, provide your direct line and indicate when is a good time to call you back.



# Purchasing from Farmers/ Producers

## Visit Farms/Producers!

### **Familiarize Yourself with the Farm/Producer**

- Gain a better idea about food safety, availability, pricing, and challenges, and demonstrate interest.

### **Request Free Samples**

- Ask if they can provide a free sample of the product so that you can see if it will meet your school's needs and requirements.

### **Set-up for a Successful Relationship**

- Plan your purchasing with the farmers so they have advanced notice of what crops or items you are interested in. Commit to realistic purchasing volumes and delivery schedules that suit your and the farmer's needs.

# Purchasing from Farmers/ Producers

## Negotiate Purchases!

### **Request Availability Sheets and Establish Insurance Coverage**

- Have updated information about seasonal availability, the size of food items, quality descriptions, estimated quantity, and price per unit.
- Ask farmer if they carry liability insurance before entering into contracts that may require it.

### **Discuss Item Delivery Details**

- Determine the estimated volume of products the farmer can deliver and establish a schedule including time of day, frequency, and location.
- Review packing requirements: standard box, grade, loose pack, bulk, etc.

# Purchasing from Farmers/ Producers

## Establish Procurement Practices!

### **Procure using a micro-purchase or informal bid?**

- For one-time purchases, consider using a micro-purchase process. For repeat and consistent purchasing, you must use the “3 bids and a buy” informal bid solicitation process.

### **Establish a Payment Schedule Plan**

- Farmers are accustomed to presenting an invoice and receiving payment upon delivery. School districts often have a payment cycle of 30–90+ days. Decide on your schedule from the start.

### **Start Small**

- Start with 1-2 farms and 3-6 products you use regularly. Advertise your local purchasing in school newsletters, menus, and posters to assist with longevity.

# Purchasing Through Aggregators or Mainline Distributors

## Key Points for Establishing a Connection

### **Know the Difference**

- **Aggregator:** A company that negotiates with producers of the food items on behalf of groups of consumers
- **Mainline Distributor:** Distributors that deal with vast quantities of products and are often able to provide better discounts and pricing options for those who buy in increased volumes

### **Determine what you need**

- Are local products highlighted on the order lists? Are notations included indicating a product is sourced locally sent out regularly?
- Can specific farm names for locally grown products be provided, or is the farm of origin information included on product labels? Can items from specific farms be requested?

# Purchasing Through Aggregators or Mainline Distributors

## Key Points for Establishing a Connection

### **Ask Questions About Local Foods**

- Ask your distributor or aggregator for a list of available local foods and a report of current local foods you purchase.
- The report can show amounts purchased monthly, quarterly or annually, and include total product weights and dollar amounts.
- This helps identify menus that work best for available local foods and set goals for the amount of local foods you purchase.

### **Clear Up Expectations and Keep the Conversation Going**

- Let the supplier know what "local" truly means in your world. Make the call if you're all in for local foods or just periodically.
- Talk with your account representative on a regular basis. If you need ideas on what questions to ask, start with the ones we've supplied.

# **A Rural District's Experience: Palominas Elementary School District**

# Palominas Elementary School District

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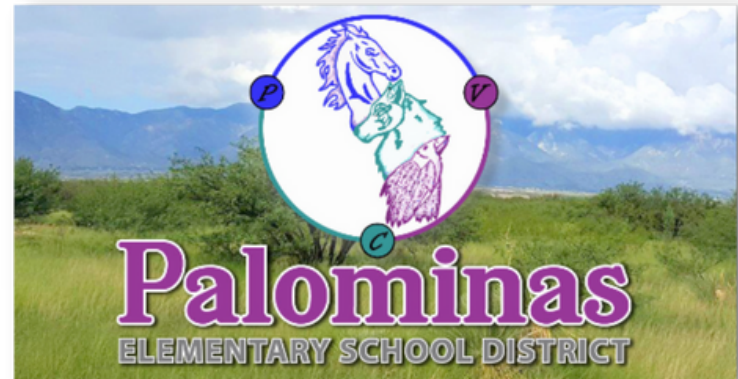
Palominas School District-Food Services



# School Profile

## Palominas Elementary School District

- Enrollment: 880
- Free/Reduced Percentage: 44%
- Number of Sites: 3





# School Profile

## Current Learning and Feeding Model

- Currently offering in-person classroom learning
- Students are served both breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria
- Also offer the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, and Farm To School
- Utilize "Cafeteria as Classroom" techniques to provide Farm To School nutrition education



# Procuring Local

## Palominas Procuring Local Vision and Goals

Palominas has a vision to Be the **heart** of the **community** by incorporating local products in their school menus as much as possible.

Each year they have been increasing the percentage of local products on their menus by 5%! They take tiny steps over big leaps in order to reach their goals.

# Procuring Local

## Connecting with Farmers

- Can the farm meet the quantity need on a prespecified basis? Either a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly?
- Do they have all of the qualifications and/or certifications and inspections done for the farm that align with USDA requirements?
  - I.e. leafy greens, eggs are not contaminated
- Do they share the Palominas vision of being the heart of the community?
- Do the farms offer any tours for students?

# Procuring Local

## Student Involvement

- Echoing Hope Ranch is a great place for students to learn about what Palominas serves on their menus
- Use hydroponics for leafy greens
- Do themed community harvests
  - I.e. Pumpkins and community harvest when they do the pumpkins.
- Have animals for the students to interact with during the farm tours

# Procuring Local

## The Future of Local Procurement at Palominas

- Solidify procuring local as a long term purchasing method
- Menu is mainly scratch and speed scratch recipes.
- Each year try to increase 5% procuring local each year, believes in 'tiny steps instead of great leaps' maybe 1-2 items per year
- Use the green onion app to try get better ingredients

# Procuring Local

## ‘Local’ Definition

- Within Arizona.
- Began with highlighting DOD Arizona grown products.
- Also highlighted milk from Stanfield, AZ.
- Continued goal of being the "Heart of the Community" and serving Cochise County as much as local as possible.



# Procuring Local

## Current Farm to School Model

- 20% of menu consists of local products from two Local Farms, Echoing Hope Ranch and Cruz Farm. Also procure from DOD and Shamrock Dairy.
- Every Friday, they operate "Farm Fresh Friday."
- Offer local produce on the daily menu & salad bar.
- Each month they highlight **ONE** vegetable as the "Harvest of the Month."

# Procuring Local

## Rural Procurement Successes

- Positive community aspect and created lasting relationships with UofA Coop and AZ Health Zone.
- Incorporated Family harvest night so parents could interact with the farmers.
- AZ Health Zone taught a community class on how to make a snack with the items farmed.
- Have received positive feedback from parents and parents are educated on where the food is sourced from.
- Great connection between students and the food they are eating and students are highly educated on what is on the salad bar.



# Procuring Local

## Rural Procurement Successes

- Distribution and deliveries continue to be the main challenges, even with Shamrock (1x per week delivery only).
- Stepping out of comfort zone, figuring out the purchasing process and had to do a lot of studying to ensure the correct steps.
- Created their own HAACP with Echoing Hope Farm produce
- Micro versus small purchasing cannot 'spread the wealth.'

# Procuring Local

## Other Nutrition Education

- Farmer Visits
- Virtual Farm Tours
- Mini Garden Workshops
- Taste Tests & Surveys



CELEBRATING LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE IN OUR  
SCHOOL MEALS ALL WEEK LONG  
JUNE 20TH- JUNE 23RD

# Procuring Local

## Handling Challenges

Biggest challenge is patience and understanding. When dealing with smaller farms one crop may be all they to have supply that ordering period.

Overcome by adjusting accordingly using the tips below:

- Take what we can
- Adjust Recipes
- Extra staffing if needed

# Procuring Local

## Helpful Resources

The best resources are in the community of people!

- **The Farmers**
- **Food Service Team Members**
- **U of A Cooperative Extension**
- **County Health Services**
- **ADE Specialists - FANS Team**
- **AZ Farm to School Network**

Also utilize the following resources from [FarmToSchool.org](http://FarmToSchool.org):

- Farm to School Month Toolkit
- Recipes
- Training and Nutrition Education materials

# Procuring Local

## Farm Fresh Challenge!

- Planning involved extending "Farm Fresh Friday" to the whole week.
- No extra equipment or kitchen staffing needed to substitute planned veggie for local veggie.
- Little fun goodies came free from Team Nutrition, U of A Coop. Extension, County Health Services.
- Director & Cafeteria Managers spend the day in the cafeteria providing nutrition education.
- Great customer service opportunity.

# Try It Local

## Try it Local: Arizona's Local Food for Schools Program

**“Try It Local”** is an Arizona Department of Education (ADE) campaign intended to promote local Arizona products for use in School Meal Programs. The program aims to strengthen local and regional food supply chains and to encourage and support School Food Authorities (SFAs) with creating sustainable local procurement practices.

USDA has awarded \$4,380,275 for assistance in purchases of unprocessed or minimally processed domestic local or regional foods for use in meals served in School Meal Programs.

# Try It Local

## Allowable Foods and Expenses

Invoices eligible for reimbursement using LFS funds are for foods meeting the definition of **unprocessed or minimally processed, domestic, local, or regional, and used in meals associated with the School Meal Programs. Incidental costs** (such as those related to storage and distribution) that are a part of the normal or customary purchase price charged by a vendor for any given food product are also allowable.

ADE will process requests for reimbursement through submission of eligible paid invoices dated July 1, 2023, and later, on a first come first serve basis, through June 30, 2026, or until funds are obligated, whichever is first.

# Try It Local Resources

## Resources for SFAs

- Information Sheet for SFAs
- Aggregators and Mainline Distributors Guide
- Try it Local Resource List - Mainline Distributors, Aggregators, and Farmers/Producers



# Try It Local Interest Form

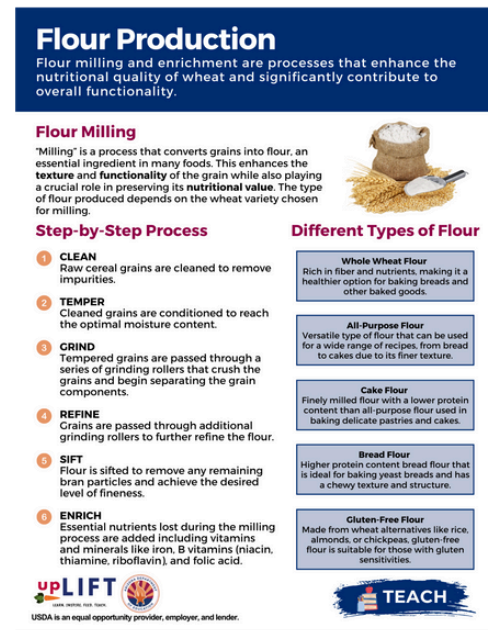
## Try It Local Participation

- HNS is eager to help SFAs understand Try it Local and procure local foods eligible for Try it Local funds. Please submit a **School Interest Form** to connect, learn more, and start receiving funds for eligible food purchases.
- [How to Receive Try it Local Funding for Eligible Food Purchases](#)

# Resources



One in a  
Melon



Nutrition Knowledge  
Fact Sheet

<https://www.azed.gov/hns/nslp/uplift/>

# Looking Ahead

## Join us next month!

### **upLIFT Webinar Series Summer Edition: Utilizing USDA Foods to Your Advantage for Summer!**

**May 20, 2025**

**1:30 pm to 2:00 pm**

Join us next month for an insightful webinar on leveraging USDA Foods and DoD Fresh to enhance your Summer Food Service Program. Discover strategies to maximize these funds, optimize your menu offerings, and ensure a successful and nutritious summer program for your students community! This webinar is open to all operators of the Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option; register today!



# Thank you!

**Any questions?**  
**Please type them into the Q&A now.**

If you are attending the live webinar, you will receive an email once attendance has been completed. Once you have received this email, your training certificate will be available in Arizona Professional Learning Development (APLD).

If you are watching the recorded webinar, you can access the survey link and certificate of completion at the end of the webinar slides.



# Congratulations!

You have completed the recorded webinar: [Rural Procurement](#)

To request a certificate, please go to the next slide.

In order to count this training toward your Professional Standards training hours, the training content must align with your job duties.

Information to include when documenting this training for Professional Standards:

- Training Title: [Recorded Webinar: Rural Procurement](#)

Please Note:

- Attendees must document the amount of training hours indicated regardless of the amount of time it takes to complete it.

# Congratulations!

## Requesting a Training Certificate

Please click on the link below to complete a brief survey about this webinar. Once the survey is complete, you will be able to print your certificate of completion from Survey Monkey.

\*This will not appear in your ADE Professional Learning Development (APLD) Account.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/upliftrecordedwebinar>

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