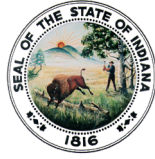




Indiana
Department
of
Health



Eric J. Holcomb
Governor

Kristina M. Box, MD, FACOG
State Health Commissioner

To: Distributors Operating within Indiana

From: [Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity](#)

Date: February 1, 2023

Subject: Call for Letters of Interest for the Indiana Local Food for Schools Program: *Indiana Grown Food for Schools: A Collaboration to Develop Sustainable and Equitable Partnerships Between Indiana Farms and Schools*

The Indiana Department of Health, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (IDOH, DNPA) is offering funding to Indiana distributors (broadline, food hubs, etc.) as part of Indiana's implementation of the [Local Food for Schools Program \(LFS\)](#), *Indiana Grown Food for Schools: A Collaboration to Develop Sustainable and Equitable Partnerships Between Indiana Farms and Schools*, with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) and partners. The LFS Program is designed to strengthen local and regional food systems, support local, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers through building and expanding economic opportunities, and increase local food consumption, specifically within qualifying (NSLP-enrolled) Indiana K-12 schools.

Indiana has been awarded \$4.4 million for this project and this Request for Letters of Intent (RF LOI) seeks interest from Indiana-serving distributors to focus on the purchase and school-based distribution of food from local, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFRs) that promotes and develops long-term economic expansion strategies for participating producers.

All food purchased through LFS Program funding **must** come from local, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The DNPA will primarily utilize the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) definition of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFRs): *"The USDA defines socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers as those belonging to groups that have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice. SDFRs include farmers who are Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian or Pacific Islander."* Individual distributors may widen their eligibility criteria to include producers who have historically and/or contemporarily experienced oppression based on factors including, but not limited to, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ability, or nation of origin. However, producers who meet the USDA-ERS definition above **must** be prioritized for funding within LFS. If Indiana-serving distributors choose to include producers outside of the USDA-ERS definition of SDFRs, distributors must provide a justification of why it was necessary to broaden the definition. The DNPA will consider these justifications on a case-by-case basis.

To **promote**, **protect**, and **improve** the health and safety of all Hoosiers.



Indiana-serving distributors must make all direct food purchases from Indiana-based SDFRs, then distribute purchased food to eligible schools within Indiana. Exceptions will be considered for out-of-state purchases **only** if there is a pre-existing cooperative agreement in place between the out-of-state entity and an eligible Indiana-based SDFR. If this exception is approved and purchases are made from an out-of-state producer, the total distance that the product travels between the farm or ranch where the product originated and the point of distribution to the end customer (school) is **at most** 400 miles.

All food purchased through the LFS funding opportunity should meet all relevant USDA and state regulatory requirements. Technical assistance will be available from the DNPA team, statewide partners, and regional Value Chain Professionals (VCPs) to assist participating producers and distributors in navigating regulatory and food safety requirements.

Distribution of food within the LFS Program must be distributed to those schools identified as priority schools. The DNPA is working with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to create a list of priority K-12, NSLP-enrolled school recipients. The list will be based on Free and Reduced Lunch and Community Eligibility Provision data from IDOE. There can be **no charge** to the participating schools within the LFS project for food distributed.

Allowable costs associated with this project include the direct purchase of food from eligible SDFRs and storage and distribution costs (i.e. Fees charged by commercial warehouse operators and common carriers for storage and transportation of LFS food; Salaries of temporary workers hired to assist with the handling, storage, transportation, or distribution of LFS food).

Unallowable costs within LFS are indirect costs, costs related to the production and processing of food, hard infrastructure purchases, and agricultural training and/or certification costs.

IDOH is seeking letters of interest (LOI) of two pages or fewer from distributors operating within Indiana demonstrating interest and readiness, including:

- Status of procuring local food from Indiana-based producers
- Plan for purchasing local food from qualifying SDFRs to distribute at no cost to K-12, NSLP-enrolled Indiana schools
- Plan for onboarding participating SDFRs as long-term vendors who may continue to sell into schools and other markets beyond the project period
- Capacity to track all food origin and distribution information required by the USDA
- Anticipated support/technical assistance needs from the DNPA and/or statewide partners to implement the LFS project
- Attached [W-9](#) and [Direct Deposit](#) (not included in page limit)



An LFS informational session will be held on **Monday, Feb. 13 from 2 to 3 p.m. ET** via Microsoft Teams. **Access the meeting [here](#).**

LOIs (with W-9 and Direct Deposit forms) must be submitted to Megan Paskey at mpaskey@health.in.gov by 11:59 p.m. EST on Feb. 22.

Please direct inquiries to both:

Megan Paskey, Community Food Systems Manager, mpaskey@health.in.gov

Naima Gardner-Rice, SNAP-Ed and Nutrition Programs Director, ngardner1@health.in.gov