

Procuring Vended Meals for the Summer Food Service Program

Choose the right vendor so kids and teens enjoy the meals served

Contact a nearby school district or university

- Schools and some universities are knowledgeable about child nutrition program rules and meal pattern requirements
- Formal procurement is not required; sponsors may enter into a [written agreement](#) for the school to provide meals.
- Agree to the price per meal, ordering logistics, and frequency
- Ensure transportation is available to deliver or pick up meals

Source meals from a registered meal vendor

- All meal vendors, aside from schools and universities, must be registered with CDE. Contact CDE to receive a current registered vendor list.
- Use the CDE competitive quote or [request for proposal documents](#) to enter into a contract
- Evaluate which procurement method is appropriate for your contract

Look to local organizations

- Consider working with a local organization to provide meals. CDE School Nutrition can assist local organizations to become registered meal vendors, and this is an excellent way to support the local economy
- Organizations such as local restaurants, catering companies, hospitals or health centers, adult meal programs, community kitchens or others may have the infrastructure to provide vended meals
- Consider contacting a food hub or farmers market to see if they have capacity to prepare vended meals

Utilize multiple vendors

- Sponsors can work with multiple vendors if sponsored meal sites are spread out across the state
- This is an opportunity to provide tailored meal offerings to youth accessing different sites who may have different meal preferences
- Consider procuring shelf-stable meals in case of an emergency

Ensure a Successful Partnership

Utilize these tips to ensure the meal vendor can meet the needs of your program

- Contract language
 - Use detailed language to communicate meal quality expectations
 - Include Geographic Preference specifications in your solicitation to promote local procurement
 - Include nutritional specifications
- Sampling menu items
 - Ask for sample menus to ensure they meet your expectations
 - Send the vendor sample menus that you know youth in your community prefer
 - Make time to taste test items
 - Ensure this request is included in contract language
 - Have the sponsor and youth participate in taste tests to ensure the meals are appealing to everyone
- Communication is key
 - Communicate any issues with the vendor immediately
 - Schedule regular check-in meetings
 - Ensure site staff have a way to communicate issues such as missing meal components, late deliveries, unauthorized substitutions, etc.

Meal Quality Preferences

The options below are a few ways you can commit to high quality meals for your community:

- Request meals made with ingredients that reflect the cultural values of your communities
 - [Use this resource created by the Food Bank of the Rockies as a starting place](#)
- Request healthier options such as more fresh produce or more whole grain items
- Request a greater variety of food such as a combination of hot and cold meals
- Request leak-proof and transportable packaging
- Have procedures for specific meal substitutions
 - For example, replace whole fruit with a different whole fruit option
- Ensure timely deliveries so food doesn't spoil
- Prioritize preferences so the vendor adheres to the most important preferences

Additional Resources

- [FRAC: How-to Guide for SFSP Sponsors on Purchasing High-Quality Summer Meals](#)
- [CDE Vended Meals Webpage](#)