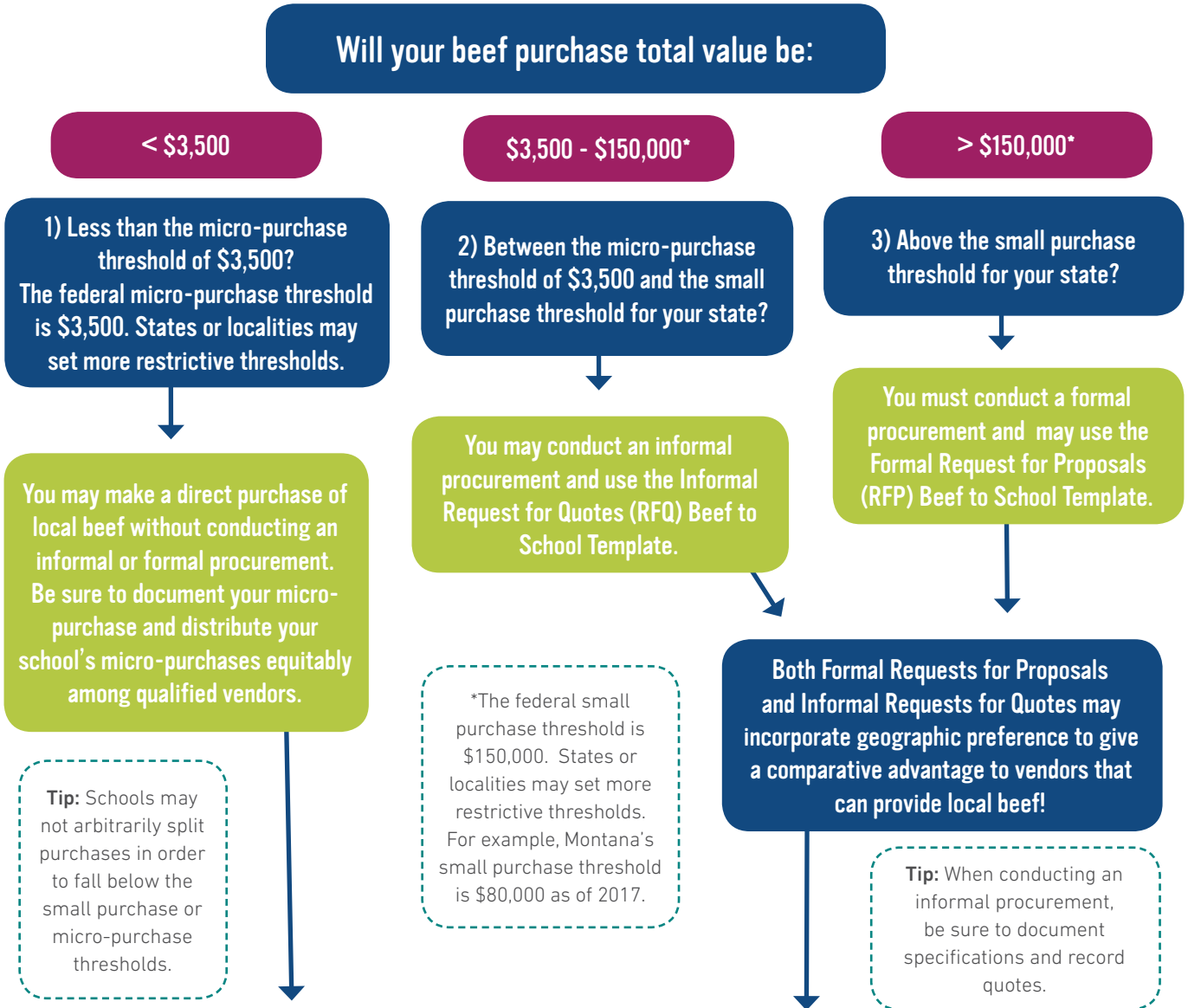


BEEF TO SCHOOL DECISION TREE

This decision tree will help you decide which procurement method to use for purchasing local beef for your school. It will direct you to the Beef to School Procurement Template – either an Informal Request for Quotes (RFQ) or Formal Request for Proposals (RFP).



Any meat served in Child Nutrition Programs must be processed in a USDA-inspected facility or a state-inspected facility if it is one of the 27 states that operates a Meat & Poultry Inspection (MPI) Program. This requirement is included in the Beef to School Procurement Template language. For more information about buying local meats, check out the Local Meat in Child Nutrition Programs fact sheet.

Informal Procurement

The primary difference between formal and informal procurement is that a formal procurement must be publicly advertised. This means that when conducting an informal procurement, you are in control of who you request quotes from and you can choose to make requests only from vendors supplying local products. If there are not three local vendors to request quotes from, you can request products from both local and nonlocal sources and target local products by using product specifications, technical requirements or geographic preference. When conducting an informal procurement, you can collect quotes over the phone, via email or even at the farmers market! Just be sure to document your requirements, specifications and quotes in writing.

Technical Requirements and Product Specifications

In any type of procurement, you can use technical requirements and product specifications to target local products. In order for a vendor to be considered responsive and responsible, the vendor must meet the product specifications and other requirements outlined in your solicitation. Consider using requirements or specifications that target local products, such as:

- * Freshness (e.g. "delivered within 48 hours of harvest")
- * Harvest techniques
- * Production practices
- * State of origin labelling
- * Ability to provide farm visits or visit classrooms

Specifications such as these help increase the chances of getting products that are produced nearby, but do not explicitly require that the products be local. When using specifications related to particular crop varieties and freshness factors, be sure not to overly restrict competition; do the market research necessary to ensure there are multiple vendors able to meet your specifications.

Evaluation Criteria

In an RFP, you are not just evaluating price but the whole package of services and/or products the vendor is offering. Therefore RFPs allow you to give weight to factors in addition to price. RFPs should describe all evaluation criteria, their relative importance, and how they will be used to assess the proposals. The weight of each evaluation factor distinguishes which elements are most important, but elements included as evaluation criteria are not requirements.

You can use some of the same measures mentioned in the technical requirements and product specifications section as evaluation criteria, noting that if these factors are used as evaluation criteria, their relative importance will be evaluated when reviewing proposals and if they are used as technical requirements or product specifications, the factors *must* be met in order for the bid or proposal to be considered.

Geographic Preference

The 2008 Farm Bill directed USDA to allow child nutrition program operators to use a geographic preference for the procurement of unprocessed, locally grown or raised agricultural products. See the resources listed below for more information.

Learn more

FNS's [Procuring Local Foods webpage](#) is chock full of resources to help you buy local including a comprehensive guide, [Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs](#); twelve webinars that dissect each step or method for buying local; and fact sheets on a range of procurement-related topics.

* * * * *

This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number SW 15-028 through the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number 140867026.

