



Secretary Brooke L. Rollins

Washington, D.C. 20250

August 24, 2026

Dear State, Tribal, Territory, and Local Government Partners,

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) deeply appreciates your ongoing commitment to ensuring that children across the country continue to receive nutritious meals. To Make America Healthy Again, we must bolster the intention of our child nutrition programs, whose missions are to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities and other food.

Research consistently shows that poor nutrition is a leading contributor to chronic diseases that impact children's academic performance and long-term health. Improving access to nutritious foods, especially whole, nutrient dense foods that are locally sourced, remains critical in supporting children's health.

I write today to remind schools, sponsors, and institutions participating in any USDA Child Nutrition Program (CNP), including the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Special Milk Program for Children, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and the Seamless Summer Option, of the many ways they can purchase local foods to serve in Program meals.

As mentioned in the "[Using Federal Funds to Purchase Local Foods](#)" memorandum, USDA, as directed by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, encourages CNP operators to purchase unprocessed agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised, to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate. The Food and Nutrition Administration supports CNP operators in reaching this goal through a variety of purchasing strategies, including the use of Federal funds received through meal reimbursements (i.e., cash reimbursement) to purchase local foods directly from farmers or indirectly from food hubs, local food distributors, and other local food sources.

In addition, across the last three months, USDA's Farm to School Grant Program has awarded three cohorts totaling nearly \$45 million. The Farm to School Grant program connects farmers to schools and children by incorporating local foods into school meals, summer meals, and childcare settings. It expands economic opportunities for farmers and ranchers, solidifying that American agriculture and healthy eating go hand in hand. Since the Farm to School Grant Program first launched in 2013, more than \$140 million in grants—funding more than 1,250 projects—has connected the bounties of local farmers and producers to schools in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico.

Lastly, through the “Pledge for Healthier School Meals,” USDA encourages States to align their meals with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030. States can act now to accelerate updates and ensure students are served new and different nourishing foods that support lifelong healthy eating patterns, and similarly, review current procurement practices to include local foods. The pledge also prioritizes community education and parental engagement, tools that can expand healthy eating to outside of the classroom.

As we come together to build a healthier future for all students, USDA commends the dedication you bring to administering these critical, vital programs. We look forward to continued collaboration to strengthen nutrition standards, support American agriculture, and foster local food systems.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brooke L. Rollins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brooke" being more prominent and the last name "Rollins" following in a similar style.

Brooke L. Rollins

Secretary

U.S. Department of Agriculture