

Local Food Program

HB 19-1132



Submitted to:

**Education Committee, Rural Affairs and
Agriculture Committee, and Agriculture and
Natural Resources Committee**

Rebecca Boone, Senior Nutrition Consultant

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COLORADO
Department of Education

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District Operations
Division/School Nutrition
Unit
201 E. Colfax Ave.,
Denver, CO 80203
boone_r@cde.state.co.us



Executive Summary

The Local Food Program (LFP) provides eligible sponsors (schools and school districts), with funding to purchase Colorado grown, raised, processed and value-added products to use in Child Nutrition Programs. In the 2024-25 school year, 32 grantees spent program funds on allowable products and fulfilled the program requirements.

Thirty two sponsors received funding, totaling \$500,000. After a competitive application process, sponsors were awarded LFP funding based on a formula of \$0.05 per lunch served in the determining year or \$1,000, whichever was greater. Basic grant activities included sponsors tracking purchased Colorado grown, raised, processed and value-added products, along with the food cost, product type, quantity, vendor, farmer or producer and invoice date.

In addition to funding for child nutrition sponsors, the School Nutrition Unit at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) awarded Nourish Colorado with the Technical Assistance and Education Grant for the entirety of the program. This \$150,000 annual grant was awarded through a competitive process and provided relevant stakeholders with technical assistance and training. Participating sponsors indicated Nourish Colorado's work had a positive outcome on the LFP implementation.

During the grant period, 87% of the purchases were for Colorado raw and minimally processed products and 13% of the LFP funding was used to procure value-added products such as tortillas and bread. The most purchased Colorado grown produce included apples, tomatoes, peaches, salad greens, melons and potatoes.

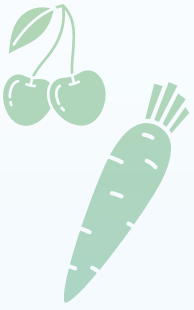
Sponsors also sourced Colorado raised or processed raw animal proteins such as beef,

chicken, bison and pork. Sponsors spent more funding on Colorado grown quinoa than any other grain product. They also procured value-added products such as tortillas, tamales and refried beans. A diverse range of locally grown, raised, processed and value-added products were bought using the LFP funding. Data shows that sponsors procured more raw and fresh foods, as opposed to value-added processed products such as baked items and pre-cooked meats. Compared to the first three years of the program, sponsors have increased their ability to procure, prepare, and serve raw and minimally processed products, as shown by sourcing local foods beyond their LFP award amount.

Over 70% of sponsors (twenty three total) reported spending additional funding on local foods, even after their funding for the LFP was exhausted. It is estimated that over \$2,614,000 was spent by the 32 sponsors on local products throughout the 2024-25 school year, despite the LFP award amount of only \$500,000. This shows an increase in meal quality while supporting the local economy. Utilizing an estimator tool created by Colorado economists, the total estimated impact of LFP funding on the Colorado economy is \$853,816.00.

Purchases were made with local producers, ranchers, distributors, food hubs and retail stores in the 2024-25 school year. Over \$214,500 (42.9%) of the LFP funding was spent directly with a Colorado farmer, rancher, or producer and over the four-year pilot period, sponsors have been able to significantly increase their purchases with locally owned and operated businesses, which in return helps bolster the Colorado economy, residents, and communities.





Definitions

Child Nutrition Programs refers to any of the following federally funded meal programs eligible for the Local Food Program, including the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program and Summer Food Service Program.

Sponsor means a school district, an individual charter school, Board of Cooperative Educational Services that operates a public school or Residential Child Care Institution that has been selected by the Colorado Department of Education's School Nutrition Unit to participate in the Local Food Program.

Colorado grown or raised products mean all fruits, vegetables, grains, meats and dairy products, except liquid milk, grown or raised in Colorado that meet the standards for the Colorado Proud designation.

Minimally processed products mean raw or frozen fabricated products that retain their inherent character, such as shredded carrots or diced onions and dried products such as beans. It does not include products that are heated, cooked or canned.

Value-added processed products mean products that are altered from their unprocessed or minimally processed state through preservation techniques, including cooking, baking or canning.

Participating Sponsor refers to a sponsor that received funds to participate in the Local Food Program.



Introduction

In May 2019, the Colorado Legislature passed House Bill 19-1132, The Local School Food Purchasing Program. Shortened in name to the Local Food Program, this pilot grant program offers eligible Child Nutrition Programs funding for the purchase of Colorado grown, raised, processed and value-added products. The purpose of this grant program is to encourage child nutrition sponsors to procure local products, while in return fostering nutrition education, bolstering Farm to School activities across the state and supporting Colorado producers, ranchers and farmers. The Colorado Department of Education's School Nutrition Unit is responsible for administering the LFP and just completed the fourth year of the program as an extension of the initial three year pilot. While the original legislation expired in January 2024, HB24-1390 extended the LFP for an additional year.

Participating sponsors may use the funding exclusively to purchase products that are Colorado grown, raised, processed and value-added. The only restriction on funding is that value-added processed products may account for up to 25% of the amount awarded. This emphasizes the purchase of Colorado raw fruits, vegetables, dairy, and meat and minimally processed products.

Per statute, sponsors are ineligible to participate in the pilot program if, in the prior year, more than 2,150,000 lunches were served. The criteria for a sponsor to be eligible to participate in the LFP included the following:

- A commitment to local purchasing or food and agricultural education.
- A kitchen with the ability to store, prepare and serve local food products.

Priority and additional scoring points were given to sponsors that:

- Had a district wide population with more than 25% of its students eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
- Served fewer than 1,250,000 lunches in the determining school year.
- Successfully participated in the LFP in prior years.
- Had a rural or small rural designation by CDE.

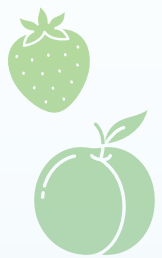
In April of 2025, School Nutrition worked with CDE's Office of Competitive Grants to release a Request for Applications for Child Nutrition Sponsors. Thirty two sponsors out of forty five applicants were selected through a competitive process to receive funding for the 2024-25 school year. Grantees included twenty five returning sponsors from the prior years and seven sponsors new to the program. Award allocations were disseminated in sequential order, starting from the highest scoring application, until funding was depleted.

The legislature appropriated \$500,000 per year for the LFP pilot program to be distributed among selected sponsors and an exact total of \$500,000 was awarded across all applicants. The amount of funding is determined by multiplying the number of school lunches served in the prior year by \$0.05 or \$1,000, whichever amount was greater. The one-time grant payment accrues directly to the sponsor's nonprofit school food account, which can then be used for procurement of appropriate Colorado foods.

CDE Staffing

HB-19-1132 included funding for 0.4 FTE for the program's pilot year. School Nutrition designated one employee to oversee and manage the LFP, with approximately 40% of this employee's payroll covered by the LFP during Fiscal Year 2024-2025. Responsibilities included releasing the competitive application, coordinating with other CDE units, providing program training and technical assistance, overseeing allowable expenditure tracking, overseeing the Technical Assistance and Education Grant and managing grant reporting and evaluation.





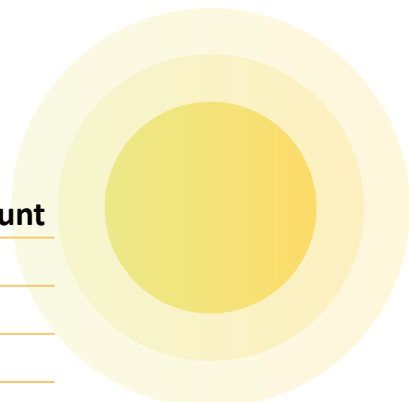
Grant Implementation

The required reporting by participating sponsors consists of tracking purchased Colorado grown, raised, processed and value-added processed products, along with the food cost, product type, quantity, vendor, farmer or producer and invoice date. CDE's School Nutrition Unit developed a reporting tracker that was reviewed monthly. The food items purchased for the LFP were served in the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Service Program. Participating sponsors spent the entirety of the allocated funding for the 2024-25 school year. Hundreds of qualifying items were purchased for Child Nutrition Programs including Colorado grown, raised, processed and value-added processed products.

The chart on page eight lists the thirty two 2024-25 school year grant recipients and their allotted award amounts.



2024-25 Grant Recipients and Award Amounts



SY 24-25 LFP Grantees	Award Amount
Academy of Charter Schools	\$ 8,691.25
Boulder Valley Re 2	\$ 92,191.50
Calhan RJ-1	\$ 1,414.75
Campo RE-6	\$ 1,000.00
Charter School Institute - The STEAD School	\$ 1,000.00
Colorado Early Colleges Fort Collins	\$ 2,627.70
Community Leadership Academy	\$ 2,047.00
Creede School District	\$ 1,000.00
Durango 9-R	\$ 18,216.35
Eagle County RE 50	\$ 20,660.80
Englewood 1	\$ 11,458.85
Frenchman RE-3	\$ 1,072.45
Greeley 6	\$ 49,887.50
Gunnison Watershed RE1J	\$ 7,145.00
Lamar Re-2	\$ 4,947.35
Mancos Re-6	\$ 2,226.90
Mapleton 1	\$ 33,259.70
Moffat County RE: No 1	\$ 7,066.00
Montrose County RE-1J	\$ 24,148.75
North Conejos RE-1J	\$ 3,981.20
Pueblo City 60	\$ 65,720.45
Roaring Fork RE-1	\$ 19,981.15
Salida R-32	\$ 4,914.75
South Routt RE 3	\$ 1,552.65
Swink 33	\$ 1,382.15
The Pinnacle Charter School	\$ 9,110.15
Thompson R2-J	\$ 64,628.40
Trinidad 1	\$ 4,230.30
Vilas RE-5	\$ 1,000.00
Weld RE-4	\$ 25,581.45
West End RE-2	\$ 1,000.00
Windsor Charter	\$ 6,855.50
TOTAL:	\$500,000.00



Technical Assistance and Education Grant

In addition to funding for child nutrition sponsors to purchase Colorado items, the LFP also created the Local School Food Purchasing Technical Assistance and Education Grant. This portion of the LFP offers funding to a non-profit organization to promote the program and offer technical assistance to participating sponsors, Colorado producers, farmers and food aggregators. The selected non-profit organization receives \$150,000 each program year. Allowable use of the funding includes training, technical assistance and physical infrastructure to sponsors and partners, support the development and sustainability of local and regional food systems, offer chef and culinary training and/or help partners implement farm and food safety planning. The selected non-profit organization is awarded the Technical Assistance and Education grant for the entire pilot program.

Nourish Colorado was awarded the Technical Assistance and Education Grant for the entirety of the LFP pilot, starting in 2019. Nourish, formerly known as Livewell Colorado, is a statewide non-profit founded in 2009 that focuses on “strengthening connections

with and between farms, ranches and communities so that all Coloradans have equitable access to fresh, nutritious foods.”¹ Over the past sixteen years, the organization has worked to leverage the procurement power of schools and promote healthy food in institutions. During the four years of LFP, Nourish focused on providing targeted technical assistance to participating sponsors to support the success of the LFP. A large part of technical assistance is helping stakeholders find a shared, common language. “Technical assistance is the range of services and support to individuals, businesses, communities and organizations involved in institutional procurement of Colorado food and agricultural products. Assistance is intended to help them make informed decisions, adopt best practices, navigate regulatory requirements and improve their food and agricultural businesses’ overall operation.”² Seventy eight percent (twenty five out of thirty two) sponsors operating the program noted that the Technical Assistance administered by Nourish helped them better implement the LFP.



¹ [Nourish Colorado](#)

² [Colorado Farm to Learning Dock Report](#)

Collaboration with Program Sponsors and Partner Organizations

In the 2024-25 school year, Nourish worked directly with all 32 grantees, a higher number of districts than the previous school year of 31 grantees. Through collaboration and in-depth interviews with the sponsors, Nourish crafted technical assistance plans, connected food service directors with producers and planned on-site visits with cafeteria staff. Nourish focused their efforts on the following projects:

- Nineteen out of the 32 participating providers received either on-site Technical Assistance and/or a customized workshop/training. Some highlights include:
 - Moffat County School District received three recipe implementation visits and basic culinary training for their team.
 - Swink School District and Lamar School District received support on forecasting, including reviewing velocity reports, estimating realistic quantities of local foods to be purchased.
 - Mapleton School District received a visit to help with a Local Food Program Connections event and the team assisted the central kitchen to prepare Nourish Colorado's smashed potatoes recipe and other local produce offerings to serve on the salad bar.
 - Nourish attended Windsor Charter Academy's Colorado Proud School Meal Day event and met with the Executive Director, Executive Board members, school support staff, four agricultural producer partners that sell to the district, and members of the local press.
 - Supported 15 sponsors with marketing and Public Relations. Support for newspaper articles and/or social media posts regarding Farm to School and Local Procurement for the following sponsors: Weld RE-4 School District, Windsor Charter Academy, Greeley-Evans Weld County School District 6, Academy of Charter Schools, Colorado Early College, Community Leadership Academy, The Pinnacle Charter School, The STEAD School, Trinidad School District, Campo School District, Durango School District, Thompson School District, West End School District, Moffat County School District, and Lamar School District. [All articles and social media posts can be found here.](#)



Nourish's efforts also went to collaborating with and learning from experts within the food systems and farming communities. They continue to provide education, outreach, and marketing support to program sponsors and other partners in the field. Below is an overview of additional work Nourish focused on during the fourth year of the LFP. Nineteen out of the 32 participating providers received either on-site Technical Assistance and/or a customized workshop/training. Some highlights include:

- Continued contracts with three agricultural consultants, including Ogallala Commons, Kitchen Sync Strategies, and Farm Runners.
 - Facilitated monthly calls focused on school market channels, resources to support producers and food hubs, suggestions for improving legislation and funding structure, and marketing, culinary and operational support.
- Provided guidance and support on the school meal procurement process to several Colorado co-ops, including Valley Roots Food Hub, Hearty Provisions, and Common Harvest Colorado.
- Continued developing resources for and updating existing resources on the [Colorado Local Food Program Guidebook](#), an online tool for school meal operators, agricultural producers, and school and community members to use to launch and sustain their Farm to School programs. (Project was funded separately from LFP TA funds).
- Developed a [Flow of Food](#) resource, an interactive resource that illustrates where school districts are procuring Colorado grown, raised, and processed products and how much they are purchasing.





Sponsor Demographics



The table below shows the sponsor demographics, including the total number of students enrolled in the district at sites that serve the National School Lunch Program, the free and reduced-price percentage, the total number of meals served (for both breakfast and lunch) and their designation of either a rural or small rural district.

Sponsor Name	Award Amount	District/Site Enrollment	Free & Reduces Percentage*	Meals Served in SY 24-25**	District Rural Designation
Academy of Charter Schools	\$8,691.25	1,887	33.9%	227,114	
Charter School Institute-The STEAD School	\$1,000.00	421	23.3%	22,220	
Colorado Early Colleges Fort Collins	\$2,627.70	1,045	32.4%	62,042	
Community Leadership Academy	\$2,047.00	316	85.1%	67,795	
The Pinnacle Charter School	\$9,110.15	1,905	81.0%	286,834	
Boulder Valley Re 2	\$92,191.50	25,938	27.6%	2,792,863	
Calhan RJ-1	\$1,414.75	414	51.4%	63,349	Small Rural
Campo RE-6	\$1,000.00	47	55.3%	9,566	Small Rural
Creede School District	\$1,000.00	92	40.2%	7,109	Small Rural
Durango 9-R	\$18,216.35	4,502	36.9%	533,635	Rural
Eagle County RE 50	\$20,660.80	5,964	44.8%	587,480	Rural
Englewood 1	\$11,458.85	2,406	62.3%	387,351	
Frenchman RE-3	\$1,072.45	222	24.8%	42,080	Small Rural
Greeley 6	\$49,887.50	23,124	67.1%	3,682,312	
Gunnison Watershed RE1J	\$7,145.00	2,062	33.6%	221,581	Rural
Lamar Re-2	\$4,947.35	1,397	73.2%	181,300	Rural
Mancos Re-6	\$2,226.90	511	38.2%	70,359	Small Rural
Mapleton 1	\$33,259.70	6,943	71.3%	1,032,226	

Table continues on next page.

Sponsor Name	Award Amount	District/Site Enrollment	Free & Reduces Percentage*	Meals Served in SY 24-25**	District Rural Designation
Moffat County RE: No 1	\$7,066.00	1,821	54.4%	215,683	Rural
Montrose County RE-1J	\$24,148.75	5,991	55.6%	691,203	Rural
North Conejos RE-1J	\$3,981.20	927	62.6%	152,700	Small Rural
Pueblo City 60	\$65,720.45	13,501	77.9%	2,252,203	
Roaring Fork RE-1	\$19,981.15	6,023	48.4%	711,490	Rural
Salida R-32	\$4,914.75	1,281	37.7%	132,157	Rural
South Routt RE 3	\$1,552.65	327	27.2%	41,937	Small Rural
Swink 33	\$1,382.15	290	49.7%	48,405	Small Rural
Thompson R2-J	\$64,628.40	14,587	32.0%	1,819,969	
Trinidad 1	\$4,230.30	769	72.6%	150,322	Small Rural
Vilas RE-5	\$1,000.00	54	70.4%	10,071	Small Rural
Weld RE-4	\$25,581.45	6,702	27.4%	839,666	
West End RE-2	\$1,000.00	260	56.9%	23,810	Small Rural
Windsor Charter	\$6,855.50	1,612	16.6%	191,683	
	Total Award Amount \$500,000.00	# of Students Impacted 133,341	Average F&R Percentage 49.1%	Total Meals Served 17,558,515	59.4% of Sponsors are Rural

* this data is only for sites that participate in NSLP, not all will match Pupil Membership data



Grant Outcomes

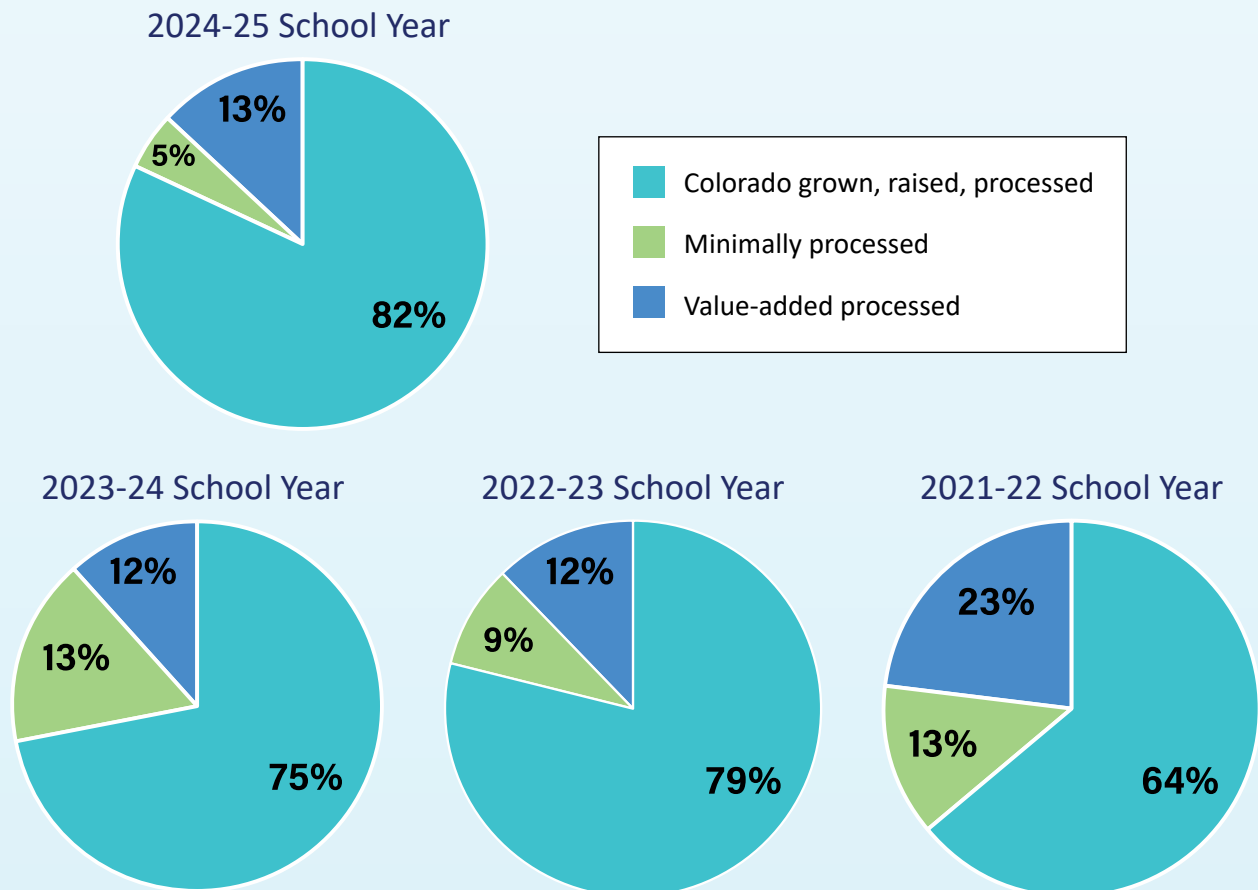
Dollar Amount Spent and Product Categories

Representing 133,341 students, the 32 sponsors that participated in the LFP used the funding to purchase a wide range of Colorado grown, raised, processed and value-added products. The sponsors completed required trackers, developed by CDE, to collect data by invoice date, vendor, secondary sources (producer or farm), item/product, market channel, total cost and product identification. Each sponsor shared online access to a spreadsheet, where the data input lived in real time.

Aggregated data from participating sponsors enabled School Nutrition to analyze trends and patterns in Colorado purchasing. The pie graph below displays expenditures by product category and shows a side-by-side comparison of the same graph from all the LFP program years (2021-2025).

The two defined categories, minimally processed products and Colorado grown, raised and processed products, represent 87% of the funding spent in the 2024-25 school year. Sponsors were limited to a 25% funding cap for value-added processed products and total funding for this category was only 13%. This data highlights that sponsors put more emphasis into procuring raw and fresh foods, as opposed to value-added processed products such as baked items and pre-cooked meats. Compared to the first, second and third years of the program, sponsors have increased their ability to procure, prepare and serve raw and minimally processed products.

Purchases by Product Category



Producers and Businesses

Sponsors purchased products from various vendors across the state, such as prime distributors, farmers, producers, manufacturers and food hubs. Sponsors that were purchasing from an intermediary source, such as a prime distributor or food hub, were asked to provide the secondary source if it was available to them. Several sponsors procured from a food hub as the primary source and were asked to track the farm where the products were aggregated from as the secondary source. As defined by the United States Department of Agriculture, a food hub is “a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution and/or marketing of local/regionally produced food products.”³

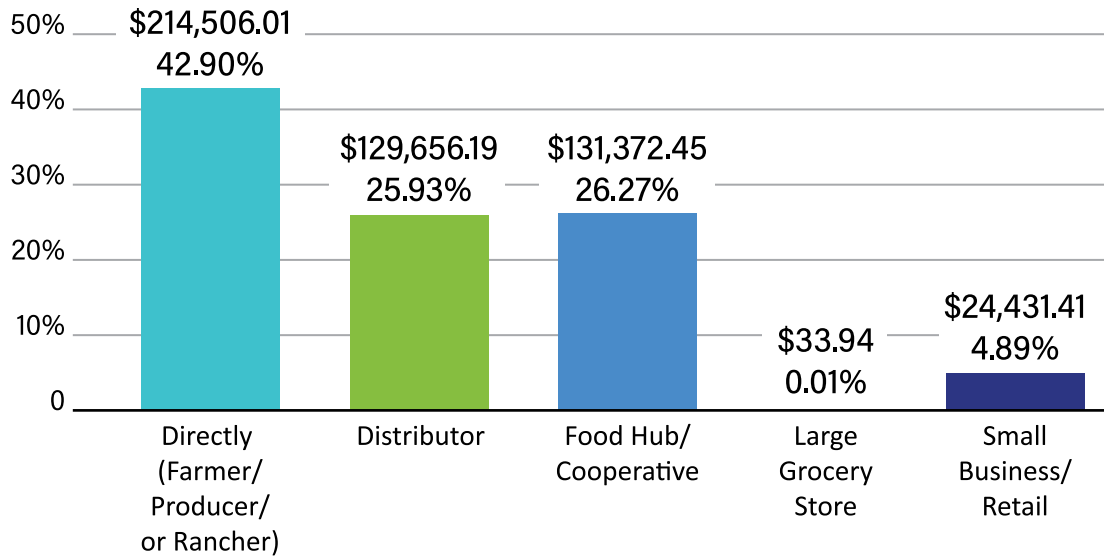
In total, sponsors tracked products from over 80 Colorado producers, farmers, ranchers, distributors, manufacturers and food aggregators as part of the LFP. Over \$214,500 (42.9%) of the LFP funding was spent directly with a Colorado farmer, rancher or producer. Twenty five percent of the funding was spent by sponsors through their prime distributor such as US Foods or Colo Pac, while food hubs and cooperatives accounted for 26% of the funding spent. Four percent of the funding was used at a small business or retail store. Below is a chart that breaks down the total expenditures by market type.

The second chart below shows the dollar amount spent with the top ten vendors, which are Colorado companies, food hubs or smaller family-owned businesses. East Denver Food Hub (now named Hearty Provisions) and Farm Runners are food hubs that operate in the Denver metro region and Western Slope. Colo-Pac, Shamrock Foods and Sysco Foods are statewide produce distributors that source Colorado products for sponsors when possible. Colorado Native Foods is a local pork, poultry and beef processor. Hoffman Farms, Snowden Meats, La Casita and Ray Domenico Farms are smaller, family operated businesses that sell fresh fruits, vegetables, beef and tortillas directly to sponsors. This is a significant change from prior years when sponsors spent more funding with national corporate distributors. Over the four-year pilot period, sponsors have been able to increase their purchases with locally owned and operated businesses, which in return helps directly bolster the Colorado economy, residents and communities.



³ [Getting to Scale with Regional Food Hubs](#)

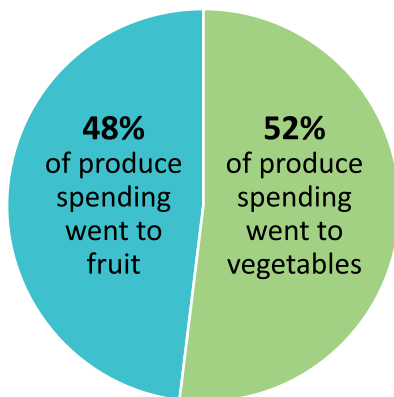
Total Spent with Each Vendor Type 2024-25 School Year



Total Spent with Each Vendor Type 2023-24 School Year

Vendor Name	Total Spent with Vendor
East Denver Food Hub	\$80,368.98
Hoffman Farms	\$66,737.91
Colo-Pac Produce	\$30,835.80
Snowden Meats	\$29,632.97
Colorado Native Foods	\$28,507.84
La Casita	\$22,148.00
Farm Runners	\$17,891.83
Shamrock Foods	\$14,891.18
Sysco Foods	\$14,790.93
Ray Domenico Farms	\$13,633.15

To further understand the impact of the LFP, purchased products were categorized by product type. The following infographics, created by Nourish Colorado, highlight sponsor expenditures on produce, animal proteins, grains, and value-added processed products.



TOP 5 ITEMS

FRUIT

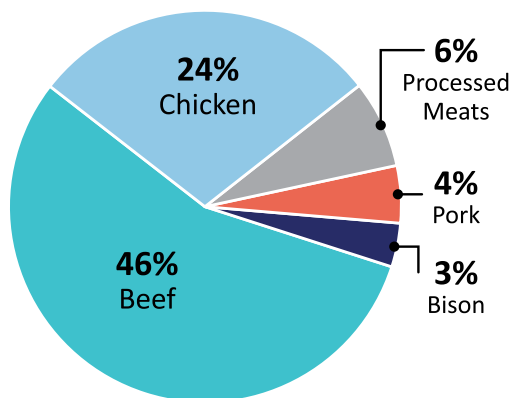
1. Apples
2. Peaches
3. Melons
4. Pears
5. Plums

VEGETABLES

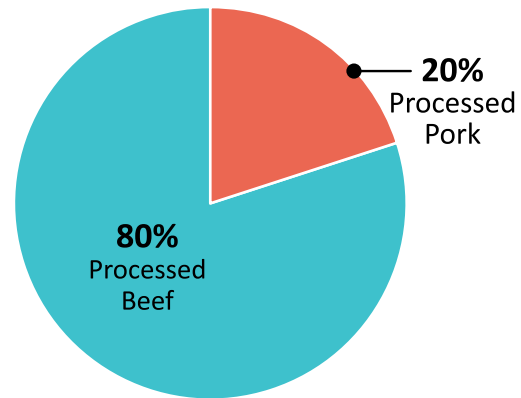
1. Tomatoes
2. Lettuce/Salad Mix
3. Potatoes
4. Cucumbers
5. Carrots

Animal Proteins

Types of animal proteins procured



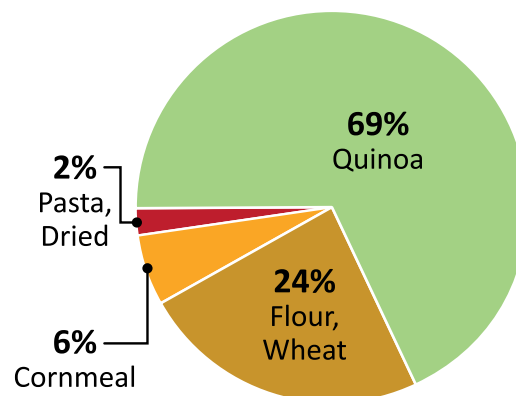
Types of processed meats procured



Value-Added Processed Products

1. Tamales
2. Tortillas
3. Refried Beans
4. Tortilla Chips
5. Hamburger Buns
6. Green Chili Sauce
7. Ketchup
8. Salsa

Grains



Additionally, below is a list of all of the producers, ranchers, food manufacturers and businesses that were involved in the LFP. Some of these listed below were secondary sources, meaning the sponsor procured the products from a food hub or distributor. There were 80 distinct Colorado owned businesses that benefited from the LFP.

Adobe House Farm	Full Plate CSA	Rock River Ranches
American Produce	Hanagan Farms	Rockey Farms
Beet Street Farm	Headwater Farms	Rocking W Cheese & Milk
Blue Ribbon Processing	Hoffman Farms	Rogers Mesa Fruit Company
Bow & Arrow Brand	Honey Rock Landing	Sacred Song Livestock Company
Campo School Food Production Class	I Love Sugar Candy & Sweet Shoppe	Scanga Meat Company
City Market	JnC Farm Co	Shamrock Foods
Cleeves Orchards	John Stone	Siena Donnelson
Coantha Johnson	Kabold Honey	Snowden Meats
Colo-Pac Produce	King Soopers	Socorro Suarez
Colorado Custom Meat Company	Kinikin Processing	Stahley Farms
Colorado Native Foods	La Casita	Suarez Orchards
Colorado Tortilla	La Milpa Tortilla Factory	Sunnyside Meats
Common Harvest Colorado	McLean Farms	Sysco Foods
Conner Orchards	Milberger Farms	Tap Root Cooperative
Creation Gardens	Mountain Freshies	Teasdale
Cross Creek Ranch	Mountain Roots	The Old Fort
Dry Storage	Mountain View Meats	The Summers House
East Denver Food Hub/Hearty Provisions	Musso Farms	Tico's Green Chile
Ela Family Farms	MyFoodShed	Tortilleria La Exitosa
Farm Runners	On the Vine Farm	Tortilleria Las Americas
Farmers Fresh	Paul Hinds	Treyson Kirkwood
Fasset Hay & Cattle	Phoenix Foods	Tuxedo Corn
Finch Ranch Artisan Meat	Polidori	US Foods
Fresh Food Hub (Fresh Foundation)	Ranch Foods Direct	Valley Roots Food Hub
	Ray Domenico Farms	Vicky Brown
	Rez Meetz Urban Zesta Salsa	Vilas Greenhouse
		Wiley Processing

Over the past four years, sponsors' purchasing patterns have changed as the program became more established and relationships with sellers were maintained. In the first year, 2,282 transactions were recorded with over 150 vendors. In the second year, 1,043 transactions were recorded with over 110 vendors, followed by 946 transactions with 54 vendors in the third year. In the fourth year, 939 transactions were recorded. This decrease in transactions, vendors and direct purchases from producers reflects a more stable program, with sponsors increasingly utilizing food hubs and producers to address delivery challenges. The geographic location and student enrollment size of sponsors influence the structure of their supply chain.

Economic Impact

In total, \$500,000 was used for the purchase of Colorado grown, raised, processed and value-added processed products through the grant program. This award amount was utilized to calculate the “Total Impact Valuation,” which is the total economic activity associated with the LFP. By using the Local Food Systems Impact Calculator, a multiplier was added to the initial award amount and the value generated represents the upper limit of the economic benefit.⁴ The Local Food Systems Impact Calculator (LFSIC) is an online tool created by a team of economists at Colorado State University Extension in partnership with the USDA. The intent of the calculator is to support data collection and a science-based analysis of food systems programs and initiatives. The calculator factors together complex economic impacts and contributions within the supply chain and uses a common multiplier to determine the final valuation.

It is important to note that the LFSIC is not a precise measurement of impact, but rather a “rough estimate of the upper bound of economic impact that the LFP may have.”⁵

**The calculator determined an
Impact Valuation for the LFP as
\$853,816.00**



⁴ [Local Food Impact Calculator](#)

⁵ [Local Food Impact Calculator](#)

Additional Sponsor Expenditures

Sponsors were asked to provide estimated totals of local products purchased for the entirety of the 2024-25 school year, as well as estimated totals spent during the 2023-24 school year. There were several ways that sponsors procured local items beyond their LFP award amount. Some sponsors were able to tap into federal funding provided by the USDA to purchase local products, while other sponsors used general food service fund monies to continue to purchase local products. Below is a table that outlines the estimated totals reported by LFP awardees.

Sponsor Name	LFP Award Amount SY 24-25	Total Spent on CO Foods SY 24-25	Total Spent on CO Foods SY 23-24
Academy of Charter Schools	\$8,691.25	\$8,700.00	\$ 8,000.00
Charter School Institute- The STEAD School	\$1,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Colorado Early Colleges Fort Collins	\$2,627.70	\$4,460.87	\$ 22,447.00
Community Leadership Academy	\$2,047.00	\$7,000.00	\$7,000.00
The Pinnacle Charter School	\$9,110.15	\$20,000.00	\$15,000.00
Boulder Valley Re 2	\$92,191.50	\$1,400,000.00	\$1,200,000.00
Calhan RJ-1	\$1,414.75	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
Campo RE-6	\$1,000.00	\$1,035.00	\$2,587.00
Creede School District	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Durango 9-R	\$18,216.35	\$120,000.00	\$120,000.00
Eagle County RE 50	\$20,660.80	\$35,000.00	--
Englewood 1	\$11,458.85	\$17,000.00	\$15,000.00
Frenchman RE-3	\$1,072.45	\$25,000.00	\$45,000.00
Greeley 6	\$49,887.50	\$531,178.00	\$307,385.00
Gunnison Watershed RE1J	\$7,145.00	\$7,145.00	\$6,500.00
Lamar Re-2	\$4,947.35	\$5,000.00	\$3,000.00

Table continues on page 21

Sponsor Name	LFP Award Amount SY 24-25	Total Spent on CO Foods SY 24-25	Total Spent on CO Foods SY 23-24
Mancos Re-6	\$2,226.90	\$11,258.00	\$22,000.00
Mapleton 1	\$33,259.70	\$60,000.00	\$80,000.00
Moffat County RE: No 1	\$7,066.00	\$7,066.00	\$6,000.00
Montrose County RE-1J	\$24,148.75	\$24,148.75	\$13,000.00
North Conejos RE-1J	\$3,981.20	\$7,510.00	\$7,510.00
Pueblo City 60	\$65,720.45	\$65,720.00	\$64,882.00
Roaring Fork RE-1	\$19,981.15	\$25,000.00	\$20,000.00
Salida R-32	\$4,914.75	\$4,925.00	\$4,675.00
South Routt RE 3	\$1,552.65	\$5,500.00	\$2,500.00
Swink 33	\$1,382.15	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00
Thompson R2-J	\$64,628.40	\$150,845.00	\$89,498.00
Trinidad 1	\$4,230.30	\$4,230.00	\$298.00
Vilas RE-5	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	--
Weld RE-4	\$25,581.45	\$30,000.00	\$25,000.00
West End RE-2	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00
Windsor Charter	\$6,855.50	\$22,300.00	\$38,000.00
Total	\$500,000.00	\$2,614,520.87	\$2,137,782.00

The data shows that sponsors purchased local products beyond the initial LFP award amount and that local purchases have increased over time. Despite the LFP funding amount of \$500,00, 32 sponsors reported spending approximately **\$2,614,520** on local products during the 2024-25 school year. This represents a 22% increase from the 2023-24 school year, when total local purchases were reported at \$2,137,782. With the support of technical assistance and strong producer relationships, sponsors have incorporated more local procurement into their school nutrition programs.



Program Evaluations

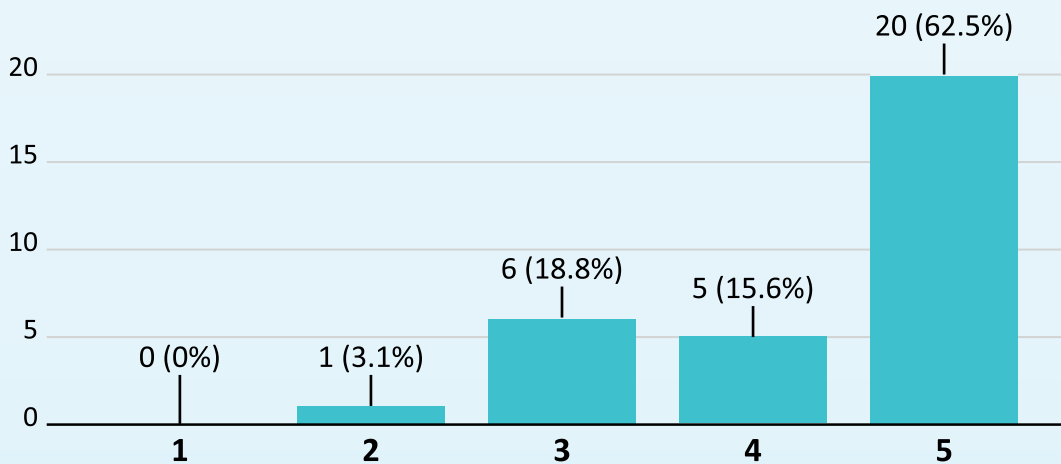
As per legislation, the School Nutrition Unit conducted qualitative surveys from sponsors and producers. School Nutrition disseminated these surveys in August 2025. All thirty two sponsors operating the program completed the end-of-year survey and answered a set of 14 questions. With a 100% response rate from sponsors, the School Nutrition Unit aggregated prevalent successes and challenges from the LFP's fourth program year. The three highest successes reported were new relationships with producers (22 respondents), creation of new menu items (21 respondents) and increased student engagement or excitement with school meals (20 respondents). The three biggest challenges reported were high prices (17 respondents), product availability (15 respondents) and the delivery of products (10 respondents). In regards to the tracking requirements for the program, twenty eight sponsors said the tracking requirements were easy, while four sponsors noted that tracking eligible products was a burden. Thirty one sponsors said they would participate in the program again and one sponsor noted they would not unless more products were available to them.

CDE School Nutrition has implemented this program for four years and when sponsors were asked how the program could be improved, their feedback included improving the application process through CDE's Grant Administration Systems and hosting quarterly meetings to network and address questions.

The following two charts highlight sponsor answers to additional survey questions.

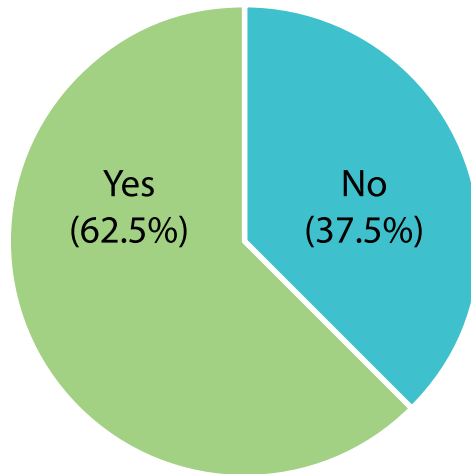
On a scale of 1-5, how much did the LFP funding increase your ability to purchase Colorado products?

32 responses



Was the LFP funding the main reason
you were able to purchase Colorado Products?

32 responses



Sponsors also shared success stories and highlights from the program.



"Bison Posole was a hit on CO Proud School Meal Day! The recipe was so popular it got picked up by Minnesota schools for a promotional opportunity."

"We were able to purchase apples from our FFA students, and the funds went to their program."



"We are doing 100% local pork and beef. We scratch cook as much as we can. We have implemented grow towers, and we are starting to implement a hydroponic system in our ag department to work with us to provide fresh vegetables and fruit. We have a life skills class that comes in weekly and scratch cook local products with us."

"The main success was the increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables rather than getting trashed."

"We have three local beef suppliers now. One of them is American Wagyu."

"The best story is that our kids can't wait to try new foods. When the students grow their food or know the people who produce it, they are excited to try it. They eagerly eat in the cafeteria and want to take seeds and recipes home so that they may eat the food they have at school at home. In my book, that's a BIG win!"





Conclusion

Each year, LFP administration allows for program growth and process improvement. School Nutrition updated the tracking tool used by sponsors. After analyzing data sets from the first three program years, the program manager and School Nutrition's data manager identified unnecessary tasks and incorrect data fields. The fourth iteration of the LFP tracking tool includes additional automated and prepopulated fields, which has improved data accuracy and alignment with information collected by other Colorado

partners. This update also reduced the tracking of unallowable products, resulting in the most accurate data set to date.

Program participation and spending ease increased over time. Participating sponsors grew from 16 in the 2021-22 school year to 32 in 2024-25. Sponsors of different sizes and locations successfully implemented the LFP, demonstrating the program's applicability across diverse contexts in Colorado.

Next Steps

House Bill 22-1414, Healthy Meals for All Public School Students (HSMA), was passed by voter approval of Proposition FF in the November 2022 election cycle. The HSMA program provides funding opportunities to Colorado public school food authorities participating in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program via reimbursement for meals provided to students that would otherwise pay full price for a meal. Colorado is one of nine states across the nation offering a universal free meal program. With the passage of HSMA, the LFP was set to expand to a statewide, non-competitive program. During the first and second program years of HSMA, the state saw a significant increase in breakfast and lunch participation, which put unforeseen budget constraints on the program.



The expanded LFP, which was set to start in the 2024-25 school year, would have provided any sponsor that opted in with increased funding to procure Colorado grown, raised, minimally processed and value-added products. The funding amount was set to increase from \$0.05 to \$0.25 per lunch served in the previous school year. However, due to HSMA budget restraints, the statewide expanded LFP was put on hold in February 2024. Two ballot measures voted on in November 2025 passed, allowing the LFP to be fully funded as a statewide, non-competitive grant.

The additional year of the pilot program allowed CDE to send out a Request for Applications to operate the LFP for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years. In fall of 2025, CDE was able to award 46 sponsors a total of \$500,000.

Below is a list of the awardees for the 2025-26 school year, which includes nineteen new sponsors. Details and results from the final year of the LFP pilot will be provided in next year's annual report.

Sponsor Name	Award Amount	Sponsor Name	Award Amount
Campo RE-6	\$1,000.00	Mapleton 1	\$33,259.70
Canon City RE-1	\$15,254.30	McClave Re-2	\$1,486.00
CEC Aurora	\$1,000.00	Moffat County RE: No 1	\$7,066.00
Community Leadership Academy	\$2,047.00	Montrose County RE-1J	\$24,148.75
Creede School District	\$1,000.00	North Conejos RE-1J	\$3,981.20
Delta County 50(J)	\$17,720.00	Norwood R-2J	\$1,000.00
Durango 9-R	\$18,216.35	Ouray R-1	\$1,000.00
Eagle County RE 50	\$20,660.80	Plainview RE-2	\$1,000.00
Englewood 1	\$11,458.85	Plateau Valley 50	\$1,377.85
Fort Morgan Re-3	\$16,599.30	Roaring Fork RE-1	\$19,981.15
Fowler R-4J	\$2,196.15	Rocky Ford R-2	\$3,044.20
Frenchman RE-3	\$1,072.45	Salida R-32	\$4,914.75
Greeley 6	\$101,876.75	Silverton 1	\$1,000.00
Gunnison Watershed RE1J	\$7,145.00	South Routt RE 3	\$1,552.65
Haxtun RE-2J	\$1,070.35	Swallows Charter Academy	\$1,000.00
Holyoke Re-1J	\$2,079.95	Telluride R-1	\$2,127.90
Ignacio 11 JT	\$3,561.70	The Pinnacle Charter School	\$9,110.15
Johnstown-Milliken RE-5J	\$17,505.45	The STEAD School	\$1,000.00
La Veta Re-2	\$1,000.00	Thompson R2-J	\$45,552.50
Lake County R-1	\$4,147.75	Trinidad 1	\$4,230.30
Lamar Re-2	\$4,947.35	Vilas RE-5	\$1,000.00
Littleton 6	\$50,799.05	Weld RE-4	\$25,581.45
Mancos Re-6	\$2,226.90	West End RE-2	\$1,000.00