



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE







# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

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### Introduction: What Are Farm to Early Childhood Programs?

Farm to Early Childhood Programs have evolved from the strong national Farm to School movement as a way of providing fresh, local foods in meal programs that serve the youngest children. Farm to Early Childcare and Farm to Preschool programs focus on purchasing and using fresh, local foods at program sites to promote the development of healthy eating patterns in children from birth to age six. These programs also involve children's gardens, educational activities related to local food and agriculture, and opportunities for building community partnerships.

Preschool and early childcare and education programs range from small home-based daycare programs to larger multi-site programs. This guide directs users from all types of programs through the steps for purchasing Michigan foods and developing lasting Farm to Early Childhood Programs at their site(s). It also helps community members, farmers and other food providers assist with and support starting or expanding these local food purchasing programs.

Farm to Early Childhood Programs support a community-based food systems approach that shortens the distance from farm to table. Increasing the amount of food purchased at Michigan early childcare sites and preschools will help meet the goal of the Michigan Good Food Charter that institutions purchase 20% of their foods from Michigan growers, producers and processors by the year 2020.

Visit [www.mifarmtoschool.msu.edu](http://www.mifarmtoschool.msu.edu) to learn more about Michigan Farm to School and download additional guides and resources. Cultivate Michigan, a local food purchasing campaign of the Michigan Farm to Institution Network, offers promotional materials, purchasing information and tracking tools on their website ([www.cultivatemichigan.org](http://www.cultivatemichigan.org)) to help support purchasing and using Michigan foods at Michigan institutions, including in early childcare and education programs.

For more information on the national Farm to Preschool program, visit the National Farm to School Network's Farm to Preschool Subcommittee website at [www.farmtopreschool.org](http://www.farmtopreschool.org) or the National Farm to School Network's website at [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org). The USDA also offers information and resources on the Farm to Childcare at [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-child-care](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-child-care).

For information on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>. For CACFP education and training information, check out the resources available from the National Food Service Management Institute at [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org). In Michigan, the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is administered by the Michigan Department of Education. More information on Michigan's CACFP can be found at [www.michigan.gov/cacfp](http://www.michigan.gov/cacfp).

Welcome to Farm to Early Childhood Programs: A Step-by-Step Guide. Follow these steps to begin purchasing Michigan foods for your early childcare or preschool program.

## The Farm to Early Childhood Programs Road Map

### Step 1: Get Started

- Understand different types of early childcare and preschool programs in Michigan.



**Tool:** [Types of Early Childhood Programs](#)

- Know your program's rules and regulations for purchasing food. Smaller programs and home daycares purchase food differently than larger programs do. Consider your purchasing practices and what works best for incorporating local foods for your program's size and type.



**Tool:** [Rules and Regulations for Early Childhood Food Programs](#)

- Determine your program's interest and ability to purchase and use local foods.



**Tool:** [Local Food Purchasing Assessment](#)

- Review your current meal planning practices. Analyze your menu to quickly identify opportunities to add local foods to your menus.



**Tool:** [Menu Analysis Worksheet](#)

- Decide which Michigan foods you would like to buy and use in your program. To start, substitute a few local foods on your menus. Your local food purchasing program can grow over time.



**Tools:** [Michigan Products Charts](#)

- Consider the seasonality of Michigan agricultural products and how they can be added to the meals and snacks provided at your program site(s).



**Tools:** [Michigan Produce Availability Charts](#)

- Define what local food means to you. For some, local foods are those from Michigan; for others, local foods may mean those from their local community or surrounding counties. Determining your definition of local provides clarity, focus and a better understanding of your program goals.



**Tool:** [Develop Your Local Definition](#)

### Step 2: Build Community Connections

- Network with farmers, community organizations, other childcare centers, schools and institutions in your community to learn about their local food purchasing practices and sources. Utilize program newsletters, meetings, program events and website(s) to share your Farm to Early Childhood Program plan and local sourcing definition.
- Determine the best avenue(s) for finding and purchasing local products for your program. Finding the most efficient and effective way to purchase and use the local foods you choose helps to build a lasting, sustainable program.



#### Tool: Vendor Options

- Link to local food through food distributors you currently use. Larger programs such as Head Starts may use full-service (broadline) distributors and/or specialty distributors to purchase local foods, in addition to other foods. Determine your priorities and ask questions to help select vendors who meet your specific needs.



#### Tool: Food Distributors Linking Farms with Early Childhood Programs

- Seek out local farmers from whom you can purchase from when local foods are available and in season. This can be a flexible option for programs that want a direct relationship with the farmer and/or smaller, seasonal purchasing opportunities. Some farmers may offer farm shares or sell at local farmers markets, options that may suit smaller early childcare programs well.



#### Tool: Resources to Link with Local Farmers

- Create a Farm to Early Childhood Program Team to support your program's efforts and help foster community connections.



#### Tool: Farm to Early Childhood Program Teams

### Step 3: Prepare to Purchase Local Foods

- Determine your criteria for selecting vendors. Create a plan for evaluating price quotes and/or farmer/vendor proposals based on criteria important to you.



#### Tool: Sample Criteria for Selecting Vendors

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- Prepare a vendor information questionnaire to distribute to potential vendors and farmers. Information received from vendors will help identify how closely a farmer or vendor meets your selection criteria.



**Tool:** [Sample Vendor Questionnaire](#)

- Prepare a product availability and pricing form to distribute to potential vendors/farmers. This form can be especially useful for larger programs. It is beneficial to ask for information important to your decision-making process. Flexibility increases the likelihood that a farmer or vendor will be able to meet your needs.



**Tools:** [Sample Product Availability and Pricing Form A](#)  
[Sample Product Availability and Pricing Form B](#)

- Discuss timelines with local farmers and vendors. Some farmers would like to begin this process early in the spring so they can plan their crops and plantings accordingly, but some may not want to quote prices until the end of the summer when they are more certain of market prices and product availability.
- Prepare a cover letter informing potential vendors of your interest in purchasing foods for your program. Be sure to include your preferred payment method and requirements in this letter



**Tool:** [Sample Letter/Notice of Intent to Purchase Local Foods](#)

- Spread the word. Visit local farmers markets to talk with farmers about this opportunity. Post a notice in your newsletter or local newspaper and on your website to let local farmers, vendors and the community know of your interest in purchasing local foods. Remember to include contact information so farmers and vendors know how to get in touch with you to learn more.

### Step 4: Choose Food Products and Vendors

- Discuss food safety with the farmers and/or vendors. Visit the farm and/or talk to the farmer about any food safety concerns you may have to learn which safety practices are in place and how food is produced and handled after harvest. Ask if the farmer or vendor has any food safety certifications or product liability coverage that may help you decide which vendors to choose.



**Tool:** [Food Safety Options on the Farm](#)

- Choose one or more farmers and/or vendors that best fit your local sourcing definition, plans and purchasing needs. Based on information received from current and potential vendors, use your established criteria to evaluate your options. Follow up to let farmers and/or vendors know with whom you have chosen to work.

- Connect with farmers and/or vendors to discuss logistics, including packaging, labeling, ordering, delivery, payment, etc. Discuss other ways to engage farmers and food vendors, such as taking field trips and inviting the farmer/vendor to visit your program.

### Step 5: Begin Purchasing Local Foods!

- Engage children in learning opportunities related to where food comes from while increasing their intake of a variety of fresh, healthy and locally grown foods.



**Tools:** [Serving New Foods in Early Childhood Programs](#)  
[Resources for Meals and Trying Local Foods](#)

- Consider food safety in the classroom and kitchen. Ensure proper handling, washing, storage and preparation of fresh, local foods.



**Tool:** [Resources for Food Safety in the Kitchen and Classroom](#)





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### Step 1: Get Started

#### Types of Early Childhood Programs

This guide is intended to help early childhood educators, institutions, community partners, farmers and other community organizations better understand the how-to of purchasing local foods for early childcare and preschool programs. Below is a general description of different types of early childcare and education programs. Because all programs differ, it is important to consider the number of children served, kitchen and staffing capacity, purchasing rules, and procedures to determine the best method for implementing Farm to Early Childhood Programs.

**Head Start** is a federally funded preschool program that promotes early education, social services, and health and nutrition for children ages three to five and for families meeting 200% or greater of the federal poverty level. Head Start includes the American Indian and Alaskan Native Head Start Program and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program, both branches of Head Start's national outreach.

**Early Head Start** is a community-focused program for families of children ages birth through three and pregnant women. Like Head Start, Early Head Start is for families that meet 200% or greater of the federal poverty level.

**Great Start Readiness Program** is a Michigan preschool program that promotes school readiness of children ages three to five from low-income and at-risk families who do not qualify for or have access to Head Start. At least 75% of the children enrolled in Great Start Readiness must be from families with income below 300% of the federal poverty level.

**Private childcare and preschool** programs are licensed, tuition-based, early childcare settings available to children on an application basis. Any tuition requirements are established by the program's administration, but some programs may offer scholarships for low-income children.

**Family childcare and daycare homes** are licensed or unlicensed daycare providers that receive out-of-pocket payments for childcare services or state-funded daycare payments for low-income families, which in Michigan are offered by the Department of Human Services (DHS). Services provided depend on space available in the home setting.

**Faith-based early childcare programs** are affiliated with a faith-based organization or institution, such as a church or K-12 school. These programs are typically tuition-based, but there are some programs that receive funding through larger faith-based groups for the purpose of providing free tuition for low-income children.



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### Step 1: Get Started

#### Rules and Regulations for Early Childhood Food Programs

A primary distinction between early childcare and preschool programs is whether or not they receive funding through the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP provides federal reimbursements to early childcare and preschool programs that meet federal nutrition guidelines for serving meals to children. These meals are reimbursed at rates based upon a child's eligibility for free, reduced price or paid meals as determined by family income and other factors. More information on CACFP meal patterns and menus can be found at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/Meals/Meal\\_Patterns.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/Meals/Meal_Patterns.htm).

If an early childcare or preschool program is linked to a school district, it may also receive government funding for meals through the USDA National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP). In order to buy food, competitive bidding is required by programs participating in CACFP, NSLP or SBP, unless the program is a home daycare. Home daycare programs only utilize CACFP and have permanent agreements with CACFP for reimbursements.

#### Formal Procurement

Mostly used for larger and/or multi-site programs, formal procurement procedures are for food purchases with a dollar value above the small purchase threshold allowable for the state. In Michigan, applicable local level laws or policies may indicate a lower small purchase threshold than the state threshold, in which case the more restrictive (lower dollar value) threshold should be used. For example, if an early childcare or preschool program is provided food service through a school district, the school district may have its own small purchase threshold that is lower than the state threshold. In that case, the school district threshold would have to be used.

#### Informal Procurement

Informal procurement is for an institution's food purchases with a dollar value below the required small purchase threshold as described above. When purchasing local food through informal procurement methods, notes can be added to justify the purchase of local foods, such as the freshness of food products, availability of specific product varieties, closer proximity to the food vendor or product source, or the product is going to be used for a learning experience.

#### Food Procurement for Different Types of Programs

##### Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

Head Start programs, including Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Alaskan Native and American Indian Head Start, receive 100% CACFP reimbursement per meal per child because all participating families meet low-income eligibility guidelines for enrolling in these programs. Center-based Head Start programs are typically run by a grantee overseeing multiple sites so they are more likely to use formal bids for larger purchases of food (over the small purchase threshold) and informal bids for small purchases (under the small purchase threshold).

##### Great Start Readiness Programs

Great Start programs are also eligible for CACFP funding because they serve a large number of low-income and at-risk children, including those with disabilities or health conditions that make them eligible. Some Great Start Readiness programs are embedded within public schools and, therefore, also receive reimbursements from the NSLP and SBP. Programs receiving government funding through any of these programs must use formal and informal bids, as appropriate, for all food purchases.



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### **Private and Faith-based Preschools and Childcare Programs**

Some tuition-based programs, such as faith-based childcare and preschool programs, may not participate in the CACFP if they do not primarily serve a larger number of low-income families. If they serve a limited number of low-income families, submitting the paperwork necessary for reimbursements may not be worthwhile. These programs are tuition-based and, if they serve meals, such costs are included in tuition.

Some for-profit centers do utilize CACFP funding. Programs that may be eligible for CACFP must receive Title XX funds for at least 25% of enrolled children or licensed capacity (whichever is less), or at least 25% of the children in care must be eligible for free and reduced-price meals based on federal poverty guidelines. Meals served to children are reimbursed at rates based upon a child's eligibility for free, reduced price or paid meals.

Private and faith-based preschools or childcare programs receiving funding from the CACFP are also required to competitively bid for food and follow the formal and/or informal procurement process, depending on the dollar amount of purchases.

### **Family Childcare and Daycare Homes**

A family or group daycare home must sign an agreement with a sponsoring organization to participate in the CACFP. Daycare homes must be licensed or approved to provide daycare services or have an agreement to become licensed or approved within the first six months. Reimbursement for meals served in daycare homes is based upon eligibility for tier I rates (which targets higher levels of reimbursement to homes located in low-income areas, providers who are income-eligible, or serve children who are income-eligible) or lower tier II rates. Tier II homes are those family daycare homes which do not meet the location or provider income criteria for a tier I home. The provider in a tier II home may elect to have the sponsoring organization identify income-eligible children so that meals served to those children who qualify for free and reduced-price meals would be reimbursed at the higher tier I rates.

A child's eligibility for tier I rates in a tier II daycare home may be documented through submission of an income eligibility statement detailing family size and income, or participation in any of a number of means-tested state or federal programs with eligibility at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.

CACFP family daycare home providers establish permanent agreements for receiving reimbursements, rates for which are determined by the home's tier status, as explained above. Family daycare providers are not required to follow the competitive bidding (formal or informal procurement) requirement; the home daycare provider only needs to record purchases and log meals.



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### Step 1: Get Started

#### Local Food Purchasing Assessment<sup>1</sup>

The following questions are designed to help determine your interest in and ability to purchase local foods. This information will be helpful when you begin talking with farmers, distributors and other food vendors about supplying your program with local food.

#### 1. Food preparation and volume

a. How would you describe your food preparation?

- Scratch cooking
- Heat-and-serve (mostly pre-packaged and/or pre-cooked)
- Provided by a neighboring school/district or central kitchen
- Off-site
- Combination of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

b. Numbers served per day:

Breakfasts: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lunches: \_\_\_\_\_  
Snacks: \_\_\_\_\_  
Suppers: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of programs or feeding sites: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of sites where cooking occurs: \_\_\_\_\_

c. Are meals served during the summer months?

Breakfasts served per day: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lunches served per day: \_\_\_\_\_  
Snacks served per day: \_\_\_\_\_  
Suppers served per day: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of programs or feeding sites: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of sites where cooking occurs: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> This assessment tool is adapted from "Evaluating a Potential Institutional Customer" developed by Kelly Irwin at the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources Farm to School Project. Accessed August 2013 at <http://www.massfarmtoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/evaluating-institutional-customer.pdf>.





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### Current produce purchasing

- d. What is a typical order for fresh produce in September, in dollars or volume by month or week?
- e. Are there local products you would consider purchasing if you had enhanced storage or preparation capabilities?

### 2. Logistics: ordering, payment and delivery

- a. What are your procurement procedures?
- b. Does your program purchase food in bulk?
- c. Does your program purchase all or part of its meals using the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?
- d. Does your program receive meals from another school or district? If so, do you know whether they purchase locally?
- e. Does your program have contracted food distributors?
- f. To how many locations is food delivered?
- g. How many food deliveries are made per week per location? At what times?
- h. Do you prefer to place orders by telephone, fax or email?
- i. Are food orders placed monthly or weekly? Are they placed on a specific day each week?
- j. What are your payment procedures? How long will it take for receipt of your payment?

### 3. Purchasing local foods

- a. Many reasons exist for buying locally grown and produced foods. What are the advantages of offering local foods at your program? Check all that apply.
  - Experiential learning opportunities
  - Access to fresher foods
  - Higher quality of food
  - Lower cost of food
  - Ability to purchase special varieties and types of food
  - Promote greater consumption of fruits and vegetables
  - Increase exposure to a variety of fresh foods
  - Know the product source
  - Support the local economy and local farms
  - Build community partnerships
  - Lower transportation costs



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- Reduced use of pesticides, hormones, etc.
  - Positive public relations for the food service program
  - Opportunity for parent engagement
  - Fulfill child, parent and/or teacher requests for local food
  - Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - None of these
- b. Early childcare and preschool programs take different approaches to including local foods in their meal programs. Which approaches are of interest to you? Check all that apply.
- Asking your current vendor(s) or food provider(s) to offer Michigan farm products
  - Buying directly from local farmers or farm markets
  - Planning menus around seasonal availability of local products
  - Buying and highlighting only one or two local products each month or season
  - Hosting one or two local food meals or events each program year (i.e. fall harvest festival, etc.)
  - Beginning by serving local foods on a limited or pilot basis, such as at only one site or only one day per week
  - Educating students about local food and food systems with educational materials and events (i.e. food tastings, posters, farmer visits) within the food setting
  - I'm not sure yet
  - Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - None of these
- c. What are your program's or food provider's requirements for purchasing from local farmers and vendors?
- Product liability insurance
  - Meeting identified food safety and sanitation standards
  - Packaging requirements
  - Specific delivery methods or times
- d. When could you to start purchasing and offering local products through your food service?

## Step 1: Get Started

### Menu Analysis Worksheet

Program Name and Year: \_\_\_\_\_

This worksheet will help identify simple, sustainable places in your current menu planning to substitute or add local foods. Use these findings to jumpstart your local food purchasing program.

Staple Menu Items (often repeated, special funding to serve, or required)				
Product	Procurement Method	Purchase Frequency	Standards for Purchasing	Times Served per Week/Day
Proteins (meats, beans, nuts, other legumes)				
Dairy				
Vegetables				
Fruits				
Beverages (juice, water, etc.)				

Other Menu Items					
Product	Procurement Method	Purchase Frequency	Standards for Purchasing	Times Served per Week/Day	
Proteins (meats, beans, nuts, other legumes)					
Dairy					
Vegetables					
Fruits					
Beverages (juice, water, etc.)					
<b>Additional Information</b> (special dietary considerations, menu-themed celebrations or holidays, etc.)					





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### Step 1: Get Started

#### Michigan Products Charts

The following charts list Michigan foods, including fruits and vegetables, beans and legumes, meat and dairy products. Which of these foods do you currently purchase, whether processed or fresh, and/or serve? Which would you consider purchasing locally? Check all that apply.

<b>Fruits</b>	<b>Processed</b> (frozen, canned, etc.)	<b>Unprocessed</b> (fresh)	<b>Purchase Locally</b>
Apples	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apricots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blackberries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blueberries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cantaloupe/Honeydew	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cherries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cranberries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grapes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Muskmelon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nectarines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pears	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Raspberries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rhubarb	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strawberries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watermelon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>Processed</b> (frozen, canned, etc.)	<b>Unprocessed</b> (fresh)	<b>Purchase Locally</b>
Asparagus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Beans, green	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Beets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broccoli	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brussels sprouts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cabbage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carrots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cauliflower	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Celery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Vegetables	Processed (frozen, canned, etc.)	Unprocessed (fresh)	Purchase Locally
Corn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cucumbers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eggplant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greens (collards, kale, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lettuce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mushrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Onions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parsnips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peppers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Potatoes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pumpkins	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Radishes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rutabaga	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salad greens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spinach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Squash, summer (yellow, zucchini)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Squash, winter (butternut, acorn, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sweet potatoes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tomatoes (cherry or grape)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tomatoes, slicing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turnips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Herbs	Dried	Fresh	Purchase Locally
Basil	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cilantro	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mint	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oregano	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parsley	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Herbs	Dried	Fresh	Purchase Locally
Rosemary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thyme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Beans and Legumes	Dried	Canned	Purchase Locally
Adzuki	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cranberry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cannellini/white kidney	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lima	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Navy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pinto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Red kidney	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Meat Products	Whole or whole muscle cuts	Ground or Formed	Purchase Locally
Beef	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chicken	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turkey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lamb	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pork	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

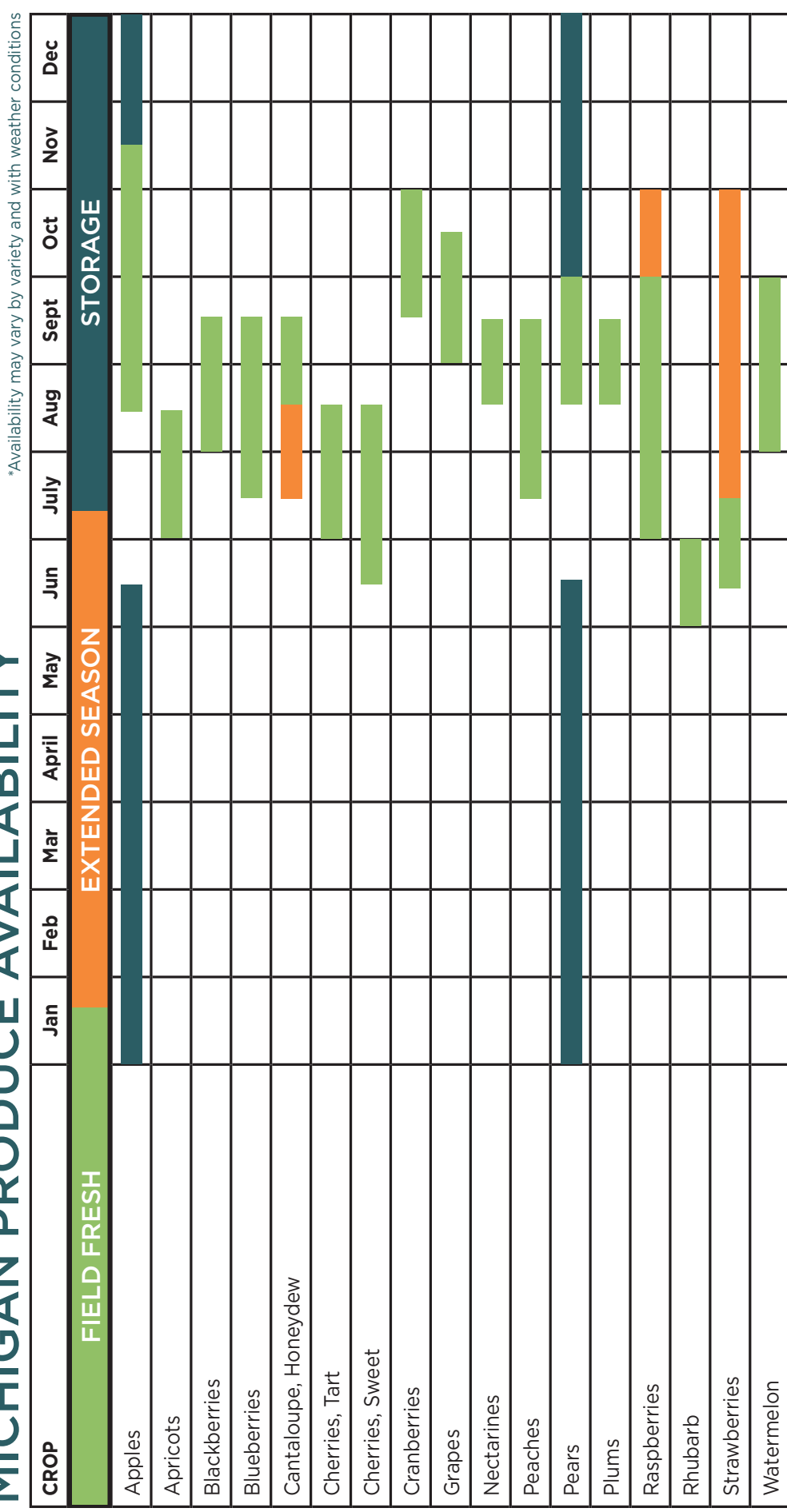
Dairy Products	Currently Purchase	Purchase Locally
Milk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cheese	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eggs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yogurt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ice Cream	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 1: Get Started

### Michigan Produce Availability Charts

The following charts were developed for *Putting Michigan Produce on Your Menu: How to Buy and Use Michigan Produce in Your Institution* (available at [www.mifarmtoschool.msu.edu](http://www.mifarmtoschool.msu.edu)) to indicate the seasonal availability of locally grown products. Check the seasonality of the products you would like to purchase to see if they can be incorporated into your food program, even if for just a week, a month or a season.

## MICHIGAN PRODUCE AVAILABILITY\*



Putting Michigan Produce ON YOUR MENU



# MICHIGAN PRODUCE AVAILABILITY\*

\*Availability may vary by variety and with weather conditions.

CROP	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
	<b>FIELD FRESH</b>											
	<b>EXTENDED SEASON</b>											
	<b>STORAGE</b>											
Arugula												
Asian Greens (Mizuna, Pac Choi, Tatsoi, etc.)												
Asparagus												
Beans, Fresh (Green, Wax, etc.)												
Beets												
Broccoli												
Brussels Sprouts												
Cabbage												
Carrots												
Cauliflower (inc. Romanesco)												
Celery												
Chard												
Corn												
Cucumbers												
Edamame (Green Soybeans)												
Eggplant												
Garlic												
Greens (Beet, Collard, Mustard, Turnip, etc.)												
Kale												
Kohlrabi												
Leeks												
Lettuce (Leaf, Iceberg, Romaine, Bibb, etc.)												
Mushrooms, Fresh												
Onions, Mature												
Onions, Spring/Green/Scallions												

Putting Michigan Produce ON YOUR MENU

# MICHIGAN PRODUCE AVAILABILITY\*

\*Availability may vary by variety and with weather conditions.

CROP	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>FIELD FRESH</b>	<b>EXTENDED SEASON</b>											
<b>STORAGE</b>	<b>STORAGE</b>											
Parsnips												
Peas, Peapods & Shelling												
Peppers, Hot & Sweet												
Potatoes												
Pumpkins												
Radishes												
Rutabaga												
Salad Greens (Mesclun, Baby Greens, etc.)												
Spinach												
Sprouts (Alfalfa, Bean, etc.)												
Squash, Summer												
Squash, Winter (Butternut, Acorn, etc.)												
Sweet Potatoes												
Tomatoes												
Turnips												
Basil												
Chives												
Cilantro												
Dill												
Mint & Oregano												
Parsley												
Rosemary												
Sage & Thyme												

Putting Michigan Produce ON YOUR MENU



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 1: Get Started

#### Develop Your Local Definition

When it comes to local food, defining “local” is up to you. Geographic preference is one way that early childcare programs and preschools can make local foods a priority. According to the USDA, programs receiving Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funding can use geographic preference to establish their own geographic areas for purchasing locally grown and minimally processed foods and give “preference” to quotes or proposals received for these local foods. Learn more by visiting the USDA website at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S\\_geo\\_pref.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S_geo_pref.pdf).

First, consider who should or needs to be involved in developing a definition for local food sourcing. This process might involve including teachers, parents, community partners, farmers and other community members to help establish a definition that builds community awareness of local foods among children, parents, teachers, staff, and community partners in the early childcare center or program. If the definition requires approval from a supervisor, director or funder, include them in the decision-making process. If your program receives foods from a local school or district, talk to the food service director about any local definitions currently used and if or how the definition fits with the goals of the local food purchasing program.

When you are ready to develop your definition, consider the following characteristics of your program, community and current food sources:

- Center/program type
- Center/program size
- Food purchasing procedures and/or requirements
- Food services you provide (meals and/or snacks)
- Goals of purchasing local foods
- Foods available locally by season
- Locations of farmers and local food sources that might work with you
- Your distributors’ definitions of local food, if applicable

Since it is up to the early childcare or preschool program to define local, there are a number of options for definitions including:

- The local community
- The city where your childcare center or program is located
- Within a 5-county area surrounding your center or program
- Within a 200 mile radius
- Within Michigan
- Within the Great Lakes or Upper Midwest Region

The broader your geographic definition, the more local foods and sources to which you may have access. Allow room for your definition to grow, and consider prioritizing different geographic areas within your definition. Once you develop your definition, share it publicly and use it as a networking opportunity for building support.



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Some additional questions to consider include:

- Can you develop a definition that supports the mission, vision and goals of your program/center?
- Can you also develop a definition that supports any other community goals (i.e. health, economic, etc.)?
- Are some parents of children in your program farmers or food advocates? Are they willing to help you buy local foods?
- Are there local farmers and vendors who could provide food for your program/center and also serve as field trip sites?
- Are there opportunities to collaborate with community partners, other programs/centers, or other institutions in your area to purchase local foods together?
- Is a school or program garden a viable food source for your food program?



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 2: Build Community Connections

#### Vendor Options

Now that you have developed a definition for “local”, consider which vendors you prefer to use to purchase local foods and learn more about them and their products. If you have current food vendors, talk with them about your definition for local food and products you would like to purchase. Many larger programs and those linked with a school or school district may already source food from full-service (broadline) and/or specialty distributors, which they could purchase local foods. They could also consider purchasing local foods directly from farmers. Smaller programs and home daycares may have more flexibility in purchasing local foods and buy direct from the local farmers market or grocery store.

Consider which options might work best for your center/program, local definition and goals. Options for local food vendors include:

- Broadline distributors
- Specialty distributors, such as distributors of produce, dairy, bread and other local foods
- Farmers markets
- Farmer cooperatives, or groups of farmers who work together to supply products to customers
- Farmers
- Farm stands
- Edible gardens at childcare centers or community gardens



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 2: Build Community Connections

#### Food Distributors Linking Farms with Early Childhood Programs

Many Michigan food distributors already buy food from Michigan farms, farmer cooperatives and food processors and vendors. It is okay to ask your distributor questions about their purchasing practices. Buying food from local sources helps food distributors take advantage of cost savings, including reduced transportation costs, seasonal availability, and product quality and freshness. Listed below are some ways in which you can work with your food distributors to link to local food.

If your early childcare food program is operated through a neighboring school or district, start this conversation there first. Similar to speaking with the food distributor, you can use these tips to work with your food provider to link your program with local farms.

1. Involve your food distributor(s) in your Farm to Early Childhood Program team. Let them know you are interested in buying local foods.
2. Gather baseline information on available products and request local sourcing information from your current food distributor(s). Which local foods does your distributor already carry? Ask your food distributors to send regular updates of local food product availability. Food distributors that work directly with farmers will have the most up-to-date information about in-season products and when and how long they will be available.
3. Buying local foods through your distributor(s) does not have to mean losing the connection to the farmer. Ask your food distributor to link you to their suppliers so you can develop relationships with the farmers and, in turn, connect them with program staff members, parents and children. Ask your distributor to provide you with supplier profiles containing information that is important to you. If the farmer's growing practices are important, request that profiles include information about how the food was grown (i.e. organic, integrated pest management, etc.).
4. As much as possible, build flexibility into your menu so you can take advantage of local, seasonal foods as they are available. If farmers need to sell surplus products quickly, distributors may pass on the savings to you if you are able to be flexible with your menus. Adapt your menus to support seasonality.





# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 2: Build Community Connections

#### Resources to Link with Local Farmers

##### Statewide Resources

###### Local Harvest

Locate farmers markets, family farms, community supported agriculture (CSA) and other sources of sustainably produced food.

<http://www.localharvest.org/>

###### Michigan MarketMaker

This interactive mapping system links producers and consumers in Michigan.

<http://mimarketmaker.msu.edu/>

###### Michigan State University Extension

Locate the MSU Extension office in your county.

<http://www.msue.msu.edu/>

###### Michigan Farmer's Market Association (MIFMA)

Find the location of farmers markets across Michigan.

<http://mifma.s434.sureserver.com/find-a-farmers-market/>

###### Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS)

MIFFS connects beginning and underserved farmers across the state to resource opportunities.

<http://www.miffs.org>

###### Natural Resources Conservation Service

This site provides a listing of county and state service offices.

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs>

###### Michigan Agritourism Association

This site provides a directory of farm markets and other agri-tourism operations located in Michigan.

<http://www.michiganfarmfun.com/>

###### Michigan Farm Bureau

Locate the local Michigan Farm Bureau office in your county.

<http://www.michfb.com/counties/>

###### Michigan Agricultural and Commodity Organizations

The Michigan Agricultural Commodity Directory lists the locations of and contacts for the agricultural commodity organizations in Michigan (updated Dec. 2012).

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdard/April\\_2012\\_Commodity\\_Directory\\_382456\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdard/April_2012_Commodity_Directory_382456_7.pdf)

###### Michigan Organic Food and Farming Alliance (MOFFA)

Visit this site to download the "Eating Organically Guide".

<http://www.moffa.net/>



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### **Certified Naturally Grown**

This site provides a current list of certified small-scale, direct-to-market farmers and beekeepers who use natural growing and harvesting methods in Michigan.

<http://www.naturallygrown.org/farms/list/227/MI>

### **Regional Michigan Resources**

#### **Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network**

Food hubs are centrally located facilities with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution and/or marketing of locally or regionally produced food products.

<http://foodsystems.msu.edu/activities/food-hub-network>

#### **U. P. Food Exchange**

This group connects local food activity within three regions (eastern, central and western) of the Upper Peninsula and coordinates local food efforts between the regions.

<http://upfoodexchange.com/>

#### **Taste the Local Difference**

This Michigan Land Use Institute guide includes six maps each representing a specific geographic area of northwest Lower Michigan. Each map contains information on finding local food on farms, in restaurants, at retailers and breweries, and more.

<http://www.mlui.org/food-farming/projects/taste-the-local-difference/>

#### **Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council**

The mission of the Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council is to “reconnect food, place and community.”

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Greater-Grand-Rapids-Food-Systems-Council/77470278524?v=wall>



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 2: Building Community Connections

#### Farm to Early Childhood Program Teams

Community connections are a major part of going local in your early childcare or preschool program. Get connected in the community and build a Farm to Early Childhood Program team to support purchasing and using local foods in your program.

Farm to Early Childhood Program teams begin at the local level: local support and resources are an important part of keeping your effort going. Possible team members include parents, teachers, directors, farmers, farmers market managers and/or vendors, volunteers and other community members who have a shared goal of supporting your local food purchasing program. As formal or informal as you would like it to be, a Farm to Early Childhood Program team can help guide your efforts and provide support, people-power and resources for your program.

#### Teams for Larger Multi-Site Childcare Programs

Some early childcare and preschool programs already have teams in place as part of their program structure. For example, Head Start includes team-building as part of its work towards community collaboration, self-assessment and cooperative learning. These teams often focus on program components such as health and nutrition, education, literacy or parent involvement. Since these structures already exist, it may be to your advantage to add Farm to Early Childhood Program to existing efforts or form a subcommittee.

Some examples of groups or gatherings that may already be established and could add a Farm to Early Childhood Program subcommittee include:

- Parent meetings
- Meetings for health services
- Team management meetings
- Staff meetings
- Community partners

If you would like a standalone Farm to Early Childhood Program team, consider who will be on your team, including people listed in the next section on family home daycares.

#### Single-Site Daycare Centers and Preschool Programs

Smaller early childcare centers and preschools may not already have established teams or groups that meet on a regular basis, but there are several options for forming a team to support your local food purchasing program at this level. You may want to network with staff members from another daycare or preschool in the community who are also interested in or already purchasing local foods, or form a team of your own. Potential members include:

- Parents
- Teachers
- Community partners
- Local farmers
- Staff members from other preschool programs
- Staff members from other early childhood organizations



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Home Daycare Centers

Parents and community members involved in home daycares may support your team efforts. Home daycares can also network with other home daycares or groups that are involved in Farm to School in the community. For example, if you feel your home daycare is too small to start its own Farm to Early Childhood Program team, you may want to link up with a group in your community or another home daycare or school already doing Farm to School. Potential sources for members include:

- Parents
- Local farmers
- Farmers markets
- Home daycare networks
- Other home daycares
- Other early childhood organizations



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 3: Prepare to Purchase Local Foods

#### Sample Criteria for Selecting Vendors

Early childcare or preschool program: \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Price
- Local source
- Food quality
- Taste test results
- Dependability of vendor
- Service after sale
- Delivery schedule
- Payment method and schedule
- Flexibility
- Promotion/education programs
- Liability insurance requirement
- Food safety and sanitation standards

Write justification for award below.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Representative's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 3: Prepare to Purchase Local Foods

#### Sample Vendor Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone and/or email: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to deliver to more than one location?

Yes

No

Amount of product liability insurance coverage (provide copy of policy): \_\_\_\_\_

Current local customers and contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Payment terms and expectations (i.e. receipt must be left at each delivery, one statement to be paid to vendor, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List any USDA, state and/or local inspections or certifications your facility receives and frequency (i.e. annual, bi-annual, etc.). Attach copies of the most recent inspection or certification report(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your food safety practices: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please explain your credit/return policy for products of unacceptable quality: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you available to visit our program to talk with children about how your product is grown?

Yes

No

Is your farm available for field trips?

Yes

No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vendor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



### Step 3: Prepare to Purchase Local Foods

#### Sample Product Availability and Pricing Form A

Vendor Name and Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in the columns below for count, packaging, unit price, the project quantity available, minimum delivery amounts and the months the product will be available. List additional available products and varieties you would like us to consider purchasing on the back of this form.

Product	Count	Variety	Packed	Condition/Description	Unit Price	Projected Quantity Available	Minimum Delivery Amount	Months available
Apples		Any variety	Tray packed	Ripe, firm, crisp, juicy, smooth skin free of blemishes, bruises, and scars. Color typical of variety. Washed.				
Asparagus		Spears		Spears to be bright green, free from woody stalks and discoloration. Straight stalks free from decay and wilt. Washed.				
Potatoes		Russet or Round White		Firm and smooth (not wrinkled); free of soft and/or dark spots, cut surfaces and greenish color. Loose dirt removed. Washed.				
Winter Squash		Butternut		Firm and smooth (not wrinkled); free of soft and/or dark spots and cuts. Caramel-color skin with orange/yellow flesh. Washed.				

After careful review and evaluation, this proposal has been awarded by the Program Director to (insert vendor's name).

Program Representative's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 3: Prepare to Purchase Local Foods

#### Sample Product Availability and Pricing Form B

Vendor Name and Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in the columns for projected availability and unit pricing for the listed products. If there are products not listed below that you would like considered for use in the program/center meals and snack program, please add them to this form in the space provided below.

Product	Projected Quantity	Months Available	Unit Price
Pears	10 cases/month		
Apples	10 cases/month		
Pre-washed red potatoes – Size B	30 pounds/month		
Grape/cherry tomatoes	50 flats/month		

After careful review and evaluation, this proposal has been awarded by the program to (insert vendor's name).

Program Representative's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 3: Prepare and Distribute Bid Documents

#### Sample Letter/Notice of Intent to Purchase Local Food

Dear Produce Vendor:

Great Lakes Childcare Program is now accepting proposals for fruits and vegetables for delivery for its food program. Your contact information was provided by [e.g. Michigan State University Extension] as a potential supplier.

If awarded a contract by Great Lakes Childcare Program, vendor(s) may be asked to host school field trips and/or visit the program to offer hands-on educational presentations introducing their local produce to children and staff members. All successful vendor(s) will be asked to meet with the Great Lakes Childcare Program Food Service Manager and/or Director individually or collectively to review a vendor contract/agreement prior to delivering produce and/or giving school presentations. All contract arrangements between the Great Lakes Childcare Program and any successful vendor(s) regarding delivery schedules, ordering, payment, availability/pricing of produce and/or other pertinent items will be made during that meeting. Great Lakes Childcare Program reserves the right to award contracts to multiple vendors, and it does not guarantee any specific ordering volumes.

To submit a proposal for consideration, complete and return the enclosed product availability and pricing forms and written questionnaire. If there is a product not listed on the forms that you would like us to consider for our school meals program, please add it to the produce pricing/availability form. Submit the completed forms to the Food Service Manager, Great Lakes Childcare Program, street address, city, state, zip code. All proposals are to be delivered in a sealed envelope with **Produce Service** clearly printed on the outside of the envelope. The proposals must be received by **noon on August 15, 2015**, and be addressed to the attention of [name]. Bids will not be accepted by fax or email.

Direct all responses, questions and inquiries to: Jane Doe, 123 Avenue, City, MI 12345, or call 123-456-7890.

Sincerely,

Name  
Title



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 4: Choose Food Products and Vendors

#### Food Safety Options on the Farm

With young children food safety is essential, and early childcare and preschool program directors, kitchen staff members, and teachers all seek to provide safe, wholesome food to children in their programs. Below are some formal and informal ways that you can obtain more information about food safety production and handling practices of fresh foods from farm owners and vendors.

#### Formal Audits and Assessments

- GAP (Good Agriculture Practice) and GHP (Good Handling Practices) audits are on-farm audits administered by the USDA focusing on best practices to assure that foods are produced and handled in the safest way. These audits are voluntary as requested by the farmer and conducted on the farm during harvest. Farmers are charged a fee for the audit.
- Other third-party businesses offer comprehensive on-farm food safety audits that may be required by larger buyers such as broadline distributors and grocery store chains. These audits are offered by companies such as Primus Labs and the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) on a fee for service basis. Both of these private companies provide third party verification of safe food production, and practices related to farm workers, storage, packaging, processing facilities and other types of farming practices for farms and ranches.
- The Michigan Safe Food Risk Assessment (also known as Michigan's Safe Food A Syst) is another option farmers can use to evaluate their food safety practices. This assessment is aligned to GAP principles, but it is designed for smaller-scale and more diversified farms. This assessment is free to the farmer and includes education and technical assistance provided by technicians. This program is linked with the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) offered through the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). Check this website to see if a trained technician is available in your area: <http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-50772-275514--00.html>.

#### Site Visit

Farm visits are also an option for you to begin building a relationship with a farmer and learn more about his/her production and handling practices. Many farmers who operate smaller operations carry out safe and healthy farming practices, but may not document their practices. In these cases, you can ask the farmer for a food safety and sanitation plan and/or visit the farm and ask the farmer questions related to:

- Recordkeeping
- Worker hygiene
- Pesticide use
- Compost and manure use
- Post-harvest handling

For more information related to on-farm food safety and visiting a farm, visit:

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/food/farm-to-school/docs/farm-food-safety-questions.pdf> or  
<https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/Checklist-for-Retail-Purchasing-of-Local-Produce>.



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 5: Begin Purchasing Local Foods!

#### Serving New Foods in Early Childhood Programs

Serving new foods in early childcare and preschool programs can be both rewarding and challenging. If children have not previously been provided with opportunities to try new foods, it may take some effort on the part of teachers to introduce new foods. A number of approaches can help introduce new foods into early learning environments and encouraging healthy eating.

#### Local Foods and Meal Time

The majority of early childcare and preschool programs serve family-style meals. These meals are structured around eating together for the purpose of creating conversation around food, forming good eating habits and sharing a meal. Below are some ideas you may want to use during mealtime to introduce new foods and create table talk:

- Talk to the children about where their food comes from and point out foods grown close to home.
- Model good eating practices in front of the children, and try new things yourself.
- Give the children small samples to taste.
- Talk about certain foods being in season in Michigan.
- Ask the children if they try local foods in the home.
- Feature a food of the week or month and serve it in different ways.

#### Activities with Children

Classroom activities and structured learning times provide opportunities for children to learn about new and local foods. Learning times can be connected to the meals being served while enriching children's learning. Below are a few ways you can incorporate local foods into learning:

- Set up taste testing tables and guide children around the room to try new foods and talk about what they liked and why.
- Choose children's literature that supports a local and healthy food culture in your program.
- Take field trips to a local farm or farmers market, and while you are there, buy some local food products to take back to the class to try.
- Teach seasonal activities related to planting, growing, and harvesting fruits, vegetables and herbs.



# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 5: Begin Purchasing Local Foods!

#### Resources for Meals and Trying Local Foods

There are a number of resources available that provide educational materials and ideas to support healthy eating practices and teaching about local foods. Trying new foods can be a creative, fun way to expand learning opportunities in the classroom.

##### **Preschoolers – Choose My Plate**

Choose My Plate for Preschoolers from the USDA has information and resources on healthy eating for young children. The website features information on developing healthy eating habits, trying new foods, promoting good nutrition, and food safety.

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers.html>

##### **Grow it, Try it, Like it!**

“Grow it, Try it, Like it!” from the USDA is a garden-themed nutrition education kit for childcare centers that introduces children to garden foods. It includes seven booklets featuring fruits and vegetables with age-appropriate activities for children.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-try-it-it>

##### **Office of Head Start**

The Office of Head Start website has information for Head Start and Early Head Start programs, links to the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program and American Indian and Alaskan Native Head Start branches, and information on CACFP regulations and meal patterns for all Head Start programs.

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

##### **Guide to the Table Recordkeeping System**

This resource developed by the Community Development Institute for Head Start programs provides an overview of Head Start meal recordkeeping systems, the CACFP program and requirements for serving meals in Head Start. Information on family-style dining and menu planning for preschool-age children, as well as for infants and toddlers, is included.

[http://www.cditeam.org/table/pdfs/TABLEguide\\_eng.pdf](http://www.cditeam.org/table/pdfs/TABLEguide_eng.pdf)

##### **Farm to Preschool Website**

The Farm to Preschool website from the National Farm to School Network offers information related to nutrition education, gardening and procurement of local foods with resources for introducing children to new foods through meals, snacks and taste tests.

<http://www.farmtopreschool.org>

##### **Harvest for Healthy Kids**

Harvest for Healthy Kids offers free resources and activity kits for teaching children about seasonal foods, including those grown in Michigan. The kits feature specific foods and include activity plans, recipes and more.

<http://www.harvestforhealthykids.org/>





# FARM TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 5: Begin Purchasing Local Foods!

#### Resources for Food Safety in the Kitchen and Classroom

Serving fresh and local foods in early childcare and preschool food programs can raise a number of questions related to food safety and food handling. Below is a list of resources to guide you with understanding safe food practices.

##### **The United States Department of Agriculture Produce Safety Resources**

This website offers a number of resources developed with the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI). These resources are intended for child nutrition professionals, including information on handling fresh produce in the kitchen and classroom, as well as product-specific information. Training materials, webinars and information on school gardens are also available.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety/produce-safety-resources>

##### **Best Practices for Handling Fresh Produce in Schools**

This guide from the USDA and NFSMI gives advice on handling fresh produce and minimizing the risk of foodborne illness. It covers purchasing and receiving, washing and preparation, hand hygiene, serving foods and proper storage of foods.

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/foodsafety\\_bestpractices.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/foodsafety_bestpractices.pdf)

##### **The Food Allergy Book**

This booklet from the NEA Health Information Network contains information for food service workers related to foods that trigger common food allergies in children. It details both food allergies and intolerances and precautions that can be taken for children with allergies.

<http://www.neahin.org/educator-resources/foodallergybook.html>

##### **Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD)**

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has a number of resources related to food safety. Its website contains information related to packaging, proper food handling, licensing, and regulations.

<http://www.michigan.gov/mdard>

