Local Food Program



HB-19-1132
Submitted to:
Education Committee, Rural Affairs and
Agriculture Committee, and Agriculture
and Natural Resources Committee
By:
Justin Carter, Farm to School Coordinator

December, 2026
School District Operations Division
School Nutrition Unit
201 E Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3

Definitions 4

Introduction 4

CDE Staffing 5

Grant Implementation 5

Technical Assistance and Education Grant 6

Collaboration with Program Sponsors and Partner Organizations 7

Sponsor Demographics 8

Grant Outcomes 10

Dollar Amount Spent and Product Categories 10

Producers and Businesses 11

Economic Impact 15

Additional Sponsor Expenditures 16

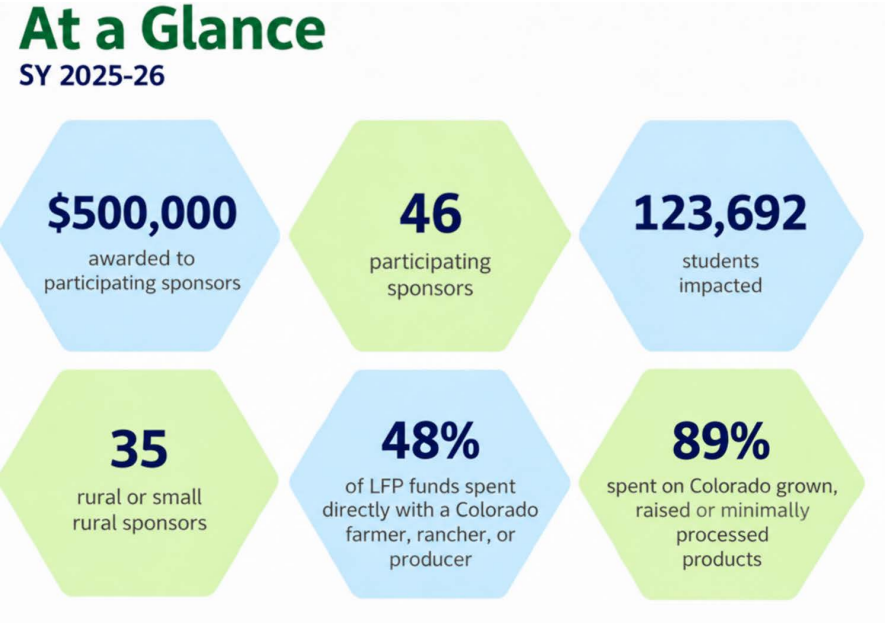
Program Evaluations 18

Conclusion 20

Next Steps 20

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 school year (SY) 2025-26, 46 grantees spent program funds on allowable products and fulfilled the program requirements.



Forty six 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 processed 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. Among surveyed sponsors, 78% reported that technical assistance provided by Nourish Colorado helped them implement the LFP.
During the grant period, 89% of LFP expenditures were for Colorado grown, raised, processed or minimally processed products, while 11% was spent on value-added processed products such as tortillas and refried beans. The most purchased Colorado grown produce included leafy greens/salad mixes, peaches, cucumbers, apples, tomatoes, and melons.

Sponsors also sourced Colorado raised or processed raw animal proteins such as beef, pork, chicken, and eggs. Sponsors spent more funding on Colorado made tortillas than any other grain product while also purchasing raw grains such as quinoa and wheat flour. They also procured other value-added products such as 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 with the first three years of the program, a greater share of LFP expenditures was used for raw and minimally processed products, as shown by sourcing local foods beyond their LFP award amount (see table on additional LFP expenditures, p 17).

Over 65% of sponsors (thirty total) reported spending an additional $710,947.50 on local foods, even after their funding for the LFP was exhausted. In total, over $1,210,947 was spent by the 46 sponsors on local products throughout SY 2025-26, despite the LFP award amount of only $500,000. Thirty sponsors reported spending additional funds on Colorado products after their LFP awards were exhausted. Utilizing an estimator tool created by Colorado economists, the total estimated impact of LFP funding on the Colorado economy is $1,285,000[1].

Purchases were made with local producers, ranchers, distributors, food hubs and retail stores in SY 2025-26. Over $240,000 (48%) of the LFP funding was spent directly with a Colorado farmer, rancher, or producer. Over the program period, sponsors increased reported purchases from 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

[1] https://calculator.localfoodeconomics.com/

administering the LFP and just completed the fifth year of the program, the second 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. Because value-added processed products may account for no more than 25% of an award, at least 75% of award funds must be used for other eligible Colorado 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. Forty six sponsors out of fifty two applicants were selected through a competitive process to receive funding for SY 2025-26. Grantees included twenty seven returning sponsors from the prior years and nineteen 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 2025-2026. 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 SY 2025-26. Hundreds of qualifying items were purchased for Child Nutrition Programs including Colorado grown, raised, processed and value-added processed products.

The chart below lists the forty six SY 2025-26 grant recipients and their allotted award amounts.

Award by Sponsor SY 2025-26

Sponsor	Award Amount	Sponsor	Award Amount
Campo RE-6	$1,000.00	Mapleton 1	$33,259.70
Cañon City RE-1	$15,254.30	McClave RE-2	$1,486.00
Colorado Early Colleges 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

Total Award Amount: $500,000

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."[2] Over the past sixteen years, the organization has worked to leverage the procurement power of schools and promote healthy food in institutions. Nourish provided targeted technical assistance to participating sponsors to support implementation 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."[3] 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.



Collaboration with Program Sponsors and Partner Organizations

In SY 2025-26, Nourish worked directly with all 46 grantees, a higher number of districts than the previous school year of 32 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

[2] https://nourishcolorado.org/about/

[3] https://cofoodsystemscouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/CO-Farm-To-Loading-Dock-Report.pdf

cafeteria staff. Nourish focused their efforts on the following projects:

- Thirty four out of the 46 participating providers received Technical Assistance through on-site visits, marketing support, recurring office hours, direct communication, buyer/seller connections, and events. Some highlights include:
    - The STEAD School received a visit from Nourish team members to celebrate Colorado Proud School Meal Month, cooking up pasta bolognese featuring Boulder beef alongside STEAD high school students and featuring the visit through social media.
    - Littleton received support from a Nourish team member with review of their food safety verification form on February 13, 2026. Nourish was able to provide several recommendations to ensure the form covered important bases.
    - CEC Aurora, Community Leadership Academy, Pinnacle Charter School, and the STEAD School received support from a Nourish Colorado team member on March 19, 2026 with accessing producer contacts for a back-to-school training, with the goal of inviting growers to participate in this event.
    - La Veta corresponded with Nourish team members regularly to connect with local food options around Pueblo as they planned for LFP purchasing and used the “Know Who Sells” Guidebook resource to identify potential vendors.
    - Supported 10 sponsors through recurring LFP office hours over the course of the year. These sessions provided support on making connections with producers and working through individual challenges. Districts also sought assistance with LFP promotional efforts during these calls, using office hours to seek marketing materials and address strategies for communicating the impact of farm to school initiatives with school administrators. Several districts participated in more than one office hour session.
- Six sponsors were awarded small equipment grants for small wares that help improve the processing of Colorado products. Each awardee received $1,683.00. Purchases included fruit sectionizers, robo coupes, lettuce spinners, etc.

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 fifth year of the LFP.

- 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 school meal procurement and process to Valley Roots Food Hub, Hearty Provisions, and Common Harvest Colorado.
- Led two hands-on knife skills trainings for conference attendees at the Colorado School Nutrition Association Annual Summer Conference in Loveland, CO June 17th and 18th. In addition to translation tech provided by Cherry Creek School District, our team partnered with a bilingual Chef to provide Spanish translation during both training sessions.
- Hosted two Cultivating Connections; Sowing Successes events which took place in SY ‘25-’26, one in Brighton on November 14, 2025 and one in Grand Junction on December 12, 2025, together engaging 18

LFP districts. These events were targeted towards K12 operators, Colorado producers, and strategic partners, and created space to gather around Colorado Farm to School and offer in-depth LFP learning. The events also included structured networking opportunities between districts, aggregators and producers, incorporating feedback from prior events and trainings.

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 Demographics SY 2025-26

Sponsor Name	Award Amount	District/Site PK-12th Grade Enrollment[1]	Free & Reduced Percentage[2]	Meals Served in SY 25-26[3]	District Rural Designation
Campo RE-6	$ 1,000.00	60	63.5%	11,519	Small Rural
Cañon City RE-1	$ 15,254.30	3,082	51.7%	504,044	Rural
Colorado Early Colleges Aurora	$ 1,000.00	581	57.1%	46,849	
Community Leadership Academy	$ 2,047.00	299	91.6%	64,629	
Creede School District	$ 1,000.00	92	*	8,857	Small Rural
Delta County 50(J)	$ 17,720.00	4,371	58.1%	602,102	Rural
Durango 9-R	$ 18,216.35	4,282	39.2%	518,937	Rural
Eagle County RE 50	$ 20,660.80	6,073	38.6%	619,794	Rural
Englewood 1	$ 11,458.85	2,387	62.6%	401,469	
Fort Morgan RE-3	$ 16,599.30	3,327	61.2%	447,872	Rural
Fowler R-4J	$ 2,196.15	322	56.5%	51,250	Small Rural
Frenchman RE-3	$ 1,072.45	215	21.9%	45,061	Small Rural
Greeley 6	$ 101,876.75	22,778	68.8%	3,468,167	
Gunnison Watershed RE1J	$ 7,145.00	2,035	29.4%	220,377	Rural
Haxtun RE-2J	$ 1,070.35	293	27.7%	44,839	Small Rural
Holyoke RE-1J	$ 2,079.95	519	55.7%	68,056	Small Rural
Ignacio 11 JT	$ 3,561.70	645	56.4%	148,635	Small Rural

Johnstown-Milliken RE-5J	$ 17,505.45	4,205	32.9%	555,107	Rural
La Veta RE-2	$ 1,000.00	241	61.3%	30,284	Small Rural
Lake County R-1	$ 4,147.75	884	54.8%	131,347	Small Rural
Lamar RE-2	$ 4,947.35	1,376	74.3%	187,914	Rural
Littleton 6	$50,799.05	12,904	20.8%	1,305,962	
Mancos RE-6	$ 2,226.90	483	44.7%	68,018	Small Rural
Mapleton 1	$ 33,259.70	6,943	74.2%	1,004,693	
McClave RE-2	$ 1,486.00	253	41.3%	60,993	Small Rural
Moffat County RE: No 1	$ 7,066.00	1,743	51.3%	215,407	Rural
Montrose County RE-1J	$ 24,148.75	5,876	56.0%	716,287	Rural
North Conejos RE-1J	$ 3,981.20	873	58.5%	156,860	Small Rural
Norwood R-2J	$ 1,000.00	188	46.8%	16,890	Small Rural
Ouray R-1	$ 1,000.00	185	28.8%	33,261	Small Rural
Plainview RE-2	$ 1,000.00	28	*	5,431	Small Rural
Plateau Valley 50	$ 1,377.85	278	37.3%	32,894	Small Rural
Roaring Fork RE-1	$ 19,981.15	5,621	49.3%	761,195	Rural
Rocky Ford R-2	$ 3,044.20	557	86.0%	95,640	Small Rural
Salida R-32	$ 4,914.75	1,328	34.7%	124,680	Rural
Silverton 1	$ 1,000.00	67	56.7%	9,580	Small Rural
South Routt RE 3	$ 1,552.65	305	33.9%	45,397	Small Rural
Swallows Charter Academy	$ 1,000.00	675	43.6%	97,905	
Telluride R-1	$ 2,127.90	775	29.0%	63,321	Small Rural
The Pinnacle Charter School	$ 9,110.15	1,922	92.0%	297,567	
The STEAD School	$ 1,000.00	403	78.3%	27,105	
Thompson R2-J	$ 45,552.50	14,280	37.8%	1,677,624	
Trinidad 1	$ 4,230.30	762	77.4%	152,431	Small Rural
Vilas RE-5	$ 1,000.00	38	*	6,836	Small Rural

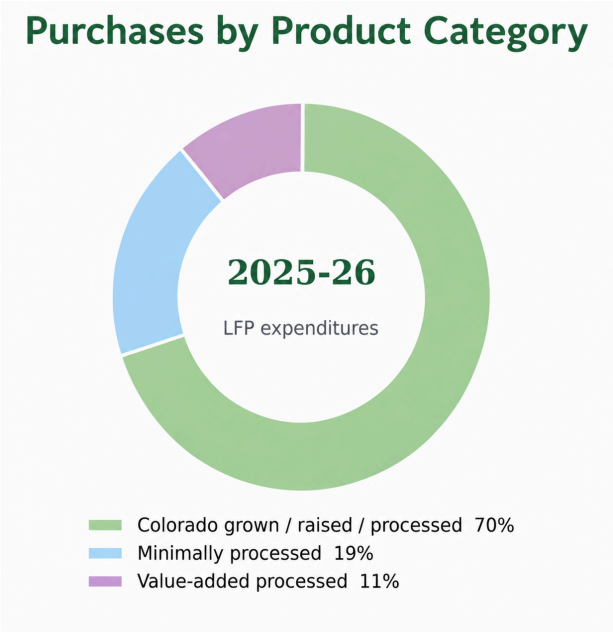
Weld RE-4	$ 25,581.45	8,883	24.5%	836,453	
West End RE-2	$ 1,000.00	255	52.6%	21,745	Small Rural
	Total Award Amount:	**# of Students Impacted:**	**Average F&R Percentage:**	**Total Meals Served:**	**Percentage of Rural Participants:**
	$500,000.00	**123,692**	**51.6%**	**16,011,284**	**76.%**

1 Charter school enrollment from October 2025 meal claims data; otherwise data from CDE Pupil Membership.
2 Data is only for sites that participate in NSLP, therefore not all will match Pupil Membership data. An * indicates data is suppressed due to student privacy.
3 Meal counts are not final and are subject to change based on revisions and adjustments.

Grant Outcomes

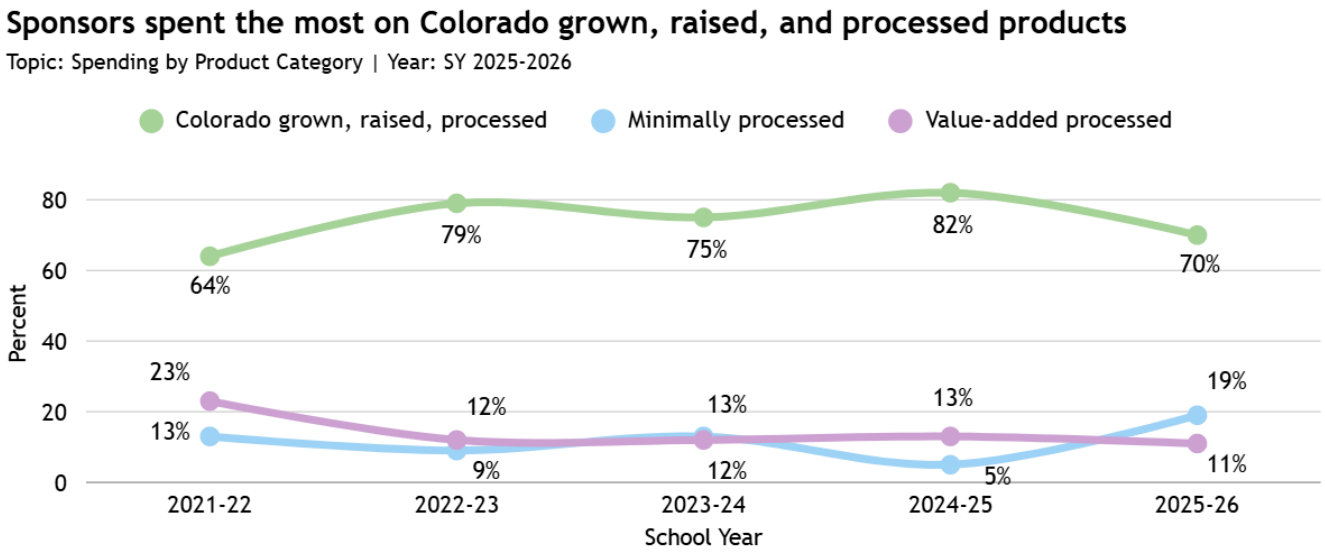
Dollar Amount Spent and Product Categories

Representing 123,692 students, the 46 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.



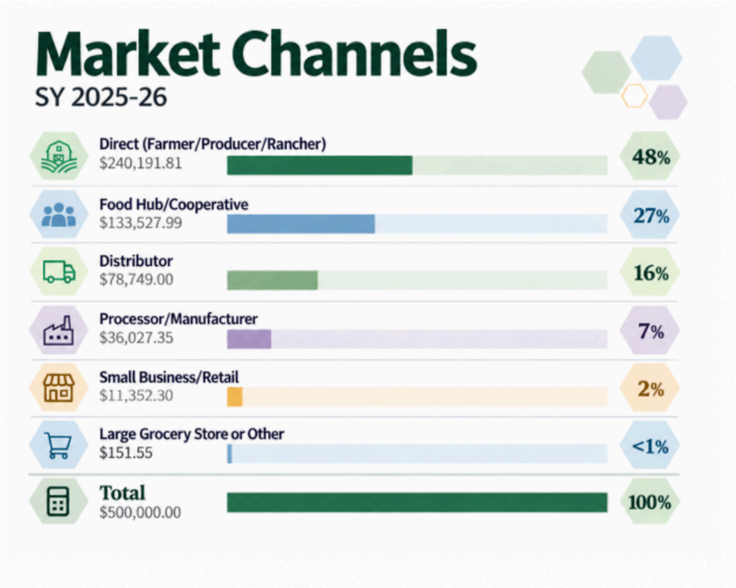
Aggregated data from participating sponsors enabled School Nutrition to analyze trends and patterns in Colorado purchasing. The chart below displays expenditures by product category and shows a side-by-side comparison of the data from all the LFP program years (2021-2025).

In 2025-26, 89% of LFP expenditures were for Colorado grown, raised, processed or minimally processed products, while 11% was spent on value-added processed products. Sponsors were limited to using no more than 25% of their award for value-added processed products. Compared with earlier program years, the share of expenditures for raw and minimally processed products increased.



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 USDA, 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."[4]



In total, sponsors tracked products from 146 Colorado producers, farmers, ranchers, distributors, retailers, manufacturers and food aggregators as part of the LFP. Over $240,000 (48%) of the LFP funding was spent directly with a Colorado farmer, rancher or producer. Sixteen percent of the funding was spent by sponsors through a distributor such as Front Range Wholesale and Shamrock Foods , while food hubs and cooperatives accounted for 27% of the funding spent. Two 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.

4

146

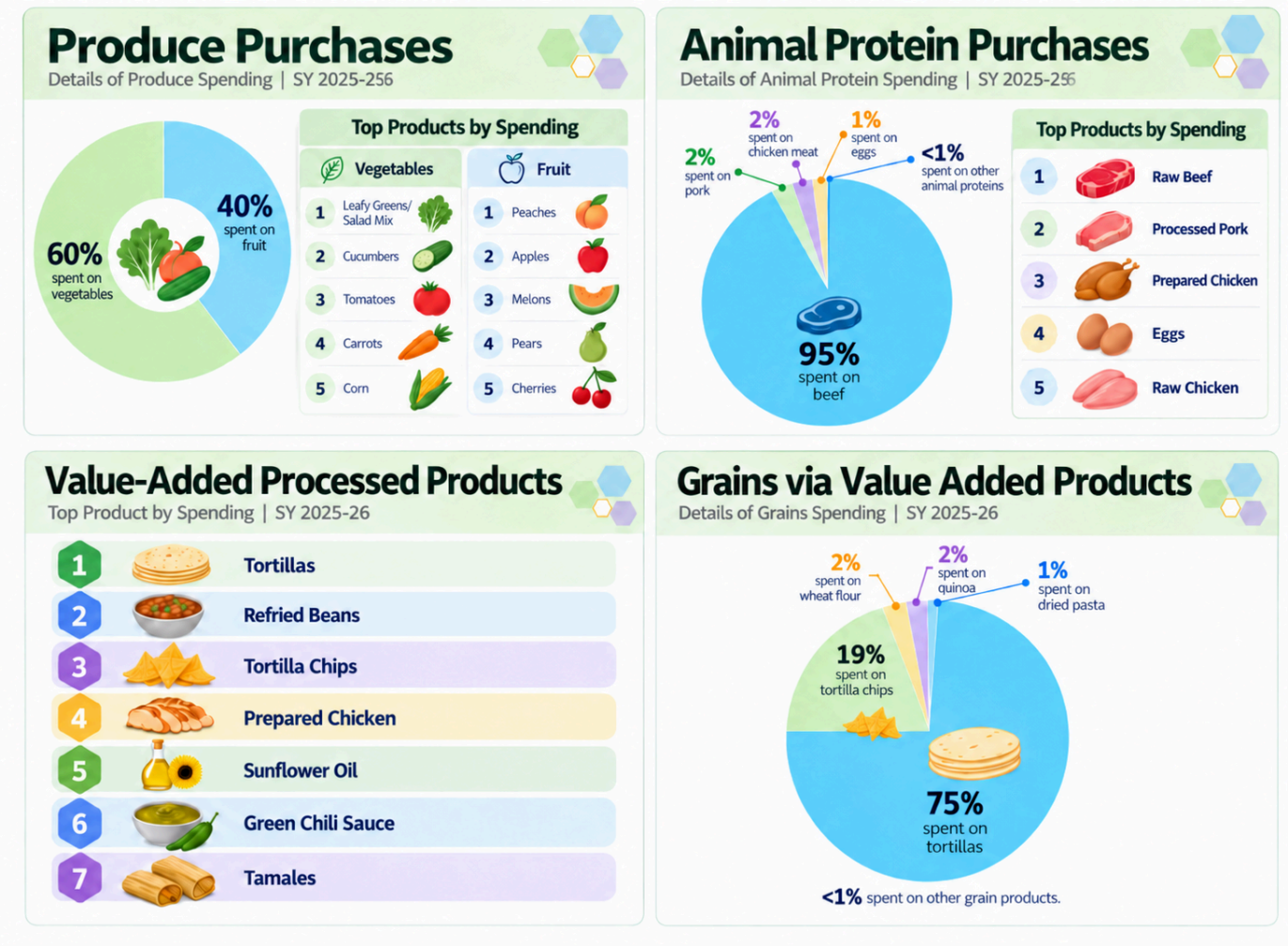
Colorado producers, farmers, ranchers, distributors, retailers, manufacturers and food aggregators were associated with reported purchases.

The chart below shows the dollar amount spent with the top ten vendors, which are Colorado companies, distributors, food hubs or smaller family-owned businesses. Hearty Provisions, Common Harvest Colorado and Valley Roots are food hubs that operate in the Denver metro region and San Luis Valley. Front Range Wholesale and Shamrock Foods are statewide produce distributors that source Colorado products for sponsors when possible. Snowden Meats, Hoffman Farms, Turnkey Cattle Company, Uncompahgre Farms, and Colorado Craft Beef are small businesses that sell fresh fruits, vegetables and beef directly to sponsors. Compared with prior program years, a greater portion of LFP expenditures was reported through Colorado producers, food hubs, cooperatives and other vendors.

Top Ten Vendors by Spending, SY 2025-26

Vendor Name	Vendor Type	Vendor Location/Headquarters	Total Spent with Vendor
1. Hearty Provisions	Food Hub/Cooperative	Denver	$71,542.50
2. Snowden Meats	Direct (Farmer/Producer/Rancher)	Yampa	$63,461.26
3. Hoffman Farms	Direct (Farmer/Producer/Rancher)	Greeley	$46,449.10
4. Front Range Wholesale	Distributor	Denver	$28,630.40
5. Turnkey Cattle Company	Direct (Farmer/Producer/Rancher)	Greeley	$24,928.85
6. Common Harvest Colorado	Food Hub/Cooperative	Boulder	$24,922.34
7. Shamrock Foods	Distributor	National Company	$20,728.23
8. Uncompahgre Farms	Direct (Farmer/Producer/Rancher)	Montrose	$16,590.66
9. Colorado Craft Beef	Direct (Farmer/Producer/Rancher)	Akron	$15,600.00
10. Valley Roots Food Hub	Food Hub/Cooperative	Mosca	$14,746.96

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



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. Sponsors reported purchases associated with 146 distinct producers, farmers, ranchers, distributors, retailers, manufacturers and food aggregators. Included in the 146, are nine individual farmers, ranchers, and producers without business names.

- Adobe House Farm
- Adobe Milling
- Ardent Mills
- Austin Family Farms
- Bamber Ranch
- Barber Farms
- Barber Foods
- Bauserman's Market
- Beet Street Farm
- Birdhouse Farm
- Blue Ribbon Processing
- Bow and Arrow
- Callaway
- Campo School Food Production Class
- Castle Rock Meats
- Centennial Cuts
- Chamberlin Farms
- Colorado Craft Beef
- Colorado Fresh Farms
- Colorado Ranchers
- Colorado Tortilla
- Common Harvest Colorado
- Conner Orchards
- Coombs Farms Colorado
- Cranor Charolais
- Cross Creek Ranch
- Cure Farm
- D&L Ovid Meat Company
- Devires Fruit & Produce
- Early Morning Orchards
- Ela Family Farms
- Elevation Farm and Orchard
- Epic Valley Salsa
- Fagerberg Farms
- Farm Runners
- Farmers Fresh
- Figure 8 Farms
- Finch Ranch Artisan Meat
- Fresh Food Hub (Fresh Foundation)
- Fresh Foundation
- Fresh Start Produce
- Front Range Wholesale
- Full Plate CSA
- Gold Canyon Colorado
- Gosar Natural Foods
- Gotham Greens
- Gramma Grass Livestock
- Great Plains Fungi
- Greco
- Haefeli's Honey
- Happy Hogs
- Healthy Harvest
- Hearty Provisions
- High on the Hill Farm
- Hirakata Farms
- Hoffman Farms
- Homestead Natural Meats
- Honey Rock Landing
- Honey Ville
- Hungenberg Farms
- Hungenberg Produce
- HWY 141 Ranch
- Indian Ridge Farm
- Infinite Harvest
- Irrigo, LLC
- Jones Farms Organics
- King Soopers
- Kinikin Processing
- Knapps Farm Market
- La Milpa Tortilla Factory
- La Popular
- Local Hive
- Lovejoy Family
- Maltics Farm, Olathe
- McClean Farms
- McLean Farms
- Milberger Farms
- Mountain Freshies
- Nature Alternative Farms
- Nieslanik Beef
- Ollin Farm
- Other
- Our Backyard, LLC
- Parker Pastures

- Pastificio
- Peak To Peak Foods
- Petrocco Farms
- Pochitos Tortilla Factory
- Polidori
- Queen Creek Olive Oil
- Ranch Foods Direct
- Rancho Durazno
- Rancho Largo Cattle Company
- Raquelitas Tortillas
- Ray Domenico
- Red Bird Farms
- Retting Farms
- Rock River Ranches
- Rockey Farms
- Rocky Mountain Fresh
- Rocky Mountain Spice Company
- Rogers Mesa Fruit Company
- Scanga Meat Company
- Shamrock Foods
- Smith Family Farms
- Snowden Meats
- Spring Side Cheese
- St. Michael's Farms
- Stahley Farms
- Stir up Bar Ranch
- Suarez Orchards
- Talbott Farms
- Teasdale
- The Old Fort
- The Summer House
- The Summers House
- Tico's Foods
- Topp Fruits
- Tortilleria la Unica
- Tucci Fresh Produce
- Turnkey Cattle Company
- Tuxedo Corn
- Uncompahgre Farms
- Upper Beaver Creek Ranch
- US Foods
- Valley Roots Food Hub
- Vilas Greenhouse
- Western Slope
- What Chefs Want - Rockies
- White Mountain Farm
- White Mountain Farms
- White Orchards LLC
- White Rock Specialties
- Wild Boyd Farm
- Wiley Processing
- Yoder Farm
- Zia Tortilla

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. The number of reported transactions and vendors declined over the period, while sponsors increasingly used food hubs and other intermediaries 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.[5] 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."[6]

$1,285,000.00

The calculator determined an Impact Valuation for the LFP as $1,285,000.00

Additional Sponsor Expenditures

In addition to local food purchases procured through LFP funds, awardees also tracked the purchase of Colorado products beyond these funds. 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 additional expenditures procured by awardees outside of LFP funds and their total Colorado food expenditures for SY 2025-26.

Local Food Spending by Sponsor SY 2025-26

Sponsor Name	LFP Award Amount SY 25-26	Additional Expenditures on Local Products	Total Spent on CO Foods SY 25-26
Campo RE-6	$1,000.00	$200.13	$1,200.13
Cañon City RE-1	$15,254.30	$85.48	$15,339.78
Colorado Early Colleges Aurora	$1,000.00	-	$1,000.00
Community Leadership Academy	$2,047.00	-	$2,047.00
Creede School District	$1,000.00	$27.66	$1,027.66
Delta County 50(J)	$17,720.00	$20,335.09	$38,055.09
Durango 9-R	$18,216.35	$84,221.63	$102,437.98
Eagle County RE 50	$20,660.80	$1,235.34	$21,896.14
Englewood 1	$11,458.85	$2,350.78	$13,809.63

[5] Local Food Impact Calculator - 2026
[6] Local Food Impact Calculator - 2026

Fort Morgan RE-3	$16,599.30	-	$16,599.30
Fowler R-4J	$2,196.15	-	$2,196.15
Frenchman RE-3	$1,072.45	$2,395.85	$3,468.30
Greeley 6	$101,876.75	$412,160.77	$514,037.52
Gunnison Watershed RE1J	$7,145.00	-	$7,145.00
Haxtun RE-2J	$1,070.35	$2.96	$1,073.31
Holyoke RE-1J	$2,079.95	-	$2,079.95
Ignacio 11 JT	$3,561.70	$144.49	$3,706.19
Johnstown-Milliken RE-5J	$17,505.45	-	$17,505.45
La Veta RE-2	$1,000.00	-	$1,000.00
Lake County R-1	$4,147.75	$16,568.87	$20,716.62
Lamar RE-2	$4,947.35	$2,507.05	$7,454.40
Littleton 6	$50,799.05	$2,090.51	$52,889.56
Mancos RE-6	$2,226.90	$4,906.47	$7,133.37
Mapleton 1	$33,259.70	$37,090.91	$70,350.61
McClave RE-2	$1,486.00	-	$1,486.00
Moffat County RE: No 1	$7,066.00	$5.04	$7,071.04
Montrose County RE-1J	$24,148.75	$121.14	$24,269.89
North Conejos RE-1J	$3,981.20	-	$3,981.20
Norwood R-2J	$1,000.00	-	$1,000.00
Ouray R-1	$1,000.00	$201.65	$1,201.65
Plainview RE-2	$1,000.00	-	$1,000.00
Plateau Valley 50	$1,377.85	$24.80	$1,402.65
Roaring Fork RE-1	$19,981.15	-	$19,981.15
Rocky Ford R-2	$3,044.20	$8.43	$3,052.63
Salida R-32	$4,914.75	$87.74	$5,002.49
Silverton 1	$1,000.00	$349.49	$1,349.49
South Routt RE 3	$1,552.65	$2.12	$1,554.77

Swallows Charter Academy	$1,000.00	$976.83	$1,976.83
Telluride R-1	$2,127.90	$564.22	$2,692.12
The Pinnacle Charter School	$9,110.15	-	$9,110.15
The STEAD School	$1,000.00	$250.50	$1,250.50
Thompson R2-J	$45,552.50	$121,132.08	$166,684.58
Trinidad 1	$4,230.30	-	$4,230.30
Vilas RE-5	$1,000.00	$727.24	$1,727.24
Weld RE-4	$25,581.45	-	$25,581.45
West End RE-2	$1,000.00	$172.23	$1,172.23
Total	**$500,000.00**	**$710,947.50**	**$1,210,947.50**

The data shows that sponsors purchased local products beyond the initial LFP award amount and that local purchases have increased over time. Thirty sponsors reported $710,947.50 in local food expenditures beyond their LFP awards, bringing total reported Colorado food expenditures among participating sponsors to $1,210,947.50.

Program Evaluations

As per legislation, the School Nutrition Unit conducted qualitative surveys from sponsors and producers. School Nutrition disseminated these surveys in August 2026. Forty one of the 46 sponsors operating the program completed the end-of-year survey and answered a set of 14 questions. The three highest successes reported were new relationships with producers (27 respondents), increased student engagement or excitement with school meals (23 respondents), and creation of new menu items (19 respondents). The three biggest challenges reported were product availability (25 respondents), delivery of products (22 respondents), high prices (13 respondents), and connecting with producers (13 respondents). In regards to the tracking requirements for the program, 38 sponsors said the tracking requirements were easy, while 3 sponsors noted that tracking eligible products was a burden. All respondents said they would participate in the program again.

CDE School Nutrition has implemented this program for five years and when sponsors were asked how the program could be improved, their feedback included increasing the amount of value-added products that could be purchased, providing more centralized distribution on products, and concerns that tracking is too complicated. Sponsors also shared success stories and highlights from the program.



Conclusion

The 2025-26 program data reflects activities aligned with the purposes of HB 19-1132, including the purchase of Colorado products and participation by Colorado producers. Forty-six sponsors, including 35 rural and small rural districts, expanded their awards on Colorado products. Nearly half of program dollars (48%) went directly to Colorado farmers, ranchers, and producers, and 89% bought raw or minimally processed foods, keeping value-added purchases well under the 25% cap.

The program's reach extended beyond its own funding. Thirty sponsors spent an additional $710,947.50 on Colorado products, bringing total local spending by participating sponsors to $1,210,947.50, more than twice the LFP award. The Local Food Systems Impact Calculator estimates the program's economic impact at up to $1,285,000.



Sponsors reported new relationships with producers, greater student excitement about school meals, and new menu items, and every survey respondent said they would participate again. Challenges remain, chiefly product availability, delivery, and price. Sponsors also asked for more centralized distribution, more flexibility for value-added products, and simpler tracking.

Over five years, participation has grown from 16 sponsors to 46 across communities of every size. As the LFP expands statewide in 2026-27 through the Healthy Meals for All program, these lessons on supply chains, tracking, and technical assistance will guide CDE's work. CDE is grateful to the sponsors, producers, and partners whose commitment makes this program possible.

Next Steps

2025-2026
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 has expanded to a statewide, non-competitive program.

The expanded LFP, which has begun for the 2026-27 school year, will provide sponsors that opted in with increased funding to procure Colorado grown, raised, minimally processed and value-added products. The funding amount has increased from $0.05 to $0.25 per lunch served in the previous school year. CDE has now awarded 134 SFAs and 14 individual charter school sites over $16 million in awards for the expanded program. In addition, CDE has awarded Nourish Colorado the LFP technical assistance and education grant to create connections between awardees and producers during the program. CDE will continue administering the program to support increased use of Colorado products across the state.