USDA

FRESH FRUIT & VEGETABLE PROGRAM

A Handbook for Schools

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

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Introduction

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides all children in participating schools with a variety of free fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the school day. It is an effective and creative way of introducing fresh fruits and vegetables as healthy snack options. The FFVP also encourages schools to develop partnerships at the State and local level for support in implementing and operating the program.



The Goal of the FFVP

Create healthier school environments by providing healthier food choices

- Expand the variety of fruits and vegetables children experience
- Increase children's fruit and vegetable consumption
- Make a difference in children's diets to impact their present and future health

This program is seen as an important catalyst for change in efforts to combat childhood obesity by helping children learn more healthful eating habits. The FFVP introduces school children to a variety of produce that they otherwise might not have had the opportunity to sample.

Program History

Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program began as a pilot project authorized by Congress in 2002. The pilot provided funds to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables in four States (Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and Iowa) and an Indian Tribal Organization (ITO) (New Mexico) for School Year 2002-2003. The purpose of the pilot was to determine the best practices for increasing fruit (both fresh and dried) and fresh vegetable consumption.

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004

The success of the pilot led to the enactment of legislation in 2004 to expand the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and to make it a permanent program under the National School Lunch Act. The law added four additional states (Washington, North Carolina, Mississippi Pennsylvania and two ITOs (one in Arizona and one is South Dakota) for School Year 2004-2005.

The Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2006

This Act appropriated one-time funding of $6 million to further expand the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program in six additional States.

Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 expanded the FFVP nationwide and provided approximately $9.9 million to begin program operations for School Year 2008-2009.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill)

The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 amended the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act by adding section 19, *the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program*. Section 19 permanently authorizes the program nationwide, and provides significant funding increases, beginning with $40 million in FY 2009 and growing to $150 million and adjusted by annual changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Program Administration



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) at the federal level. At the State level, the FFVP is administered by the State agency that administers the National School Lunch Program. In administering the program, States must keep in mind direction from Congress which provides that the purpose of the program is to make available free fresh fruits and vegetables to children.

Selected schools receive reimbursement for the cost of making free fresh fruits and vegetables available to students during the school day. These fresh fruits and vegetables must be provided separately from the lunch or breakfast meal, in one or more areas of the school during the official school day.

All schools that participate in the FFVP are required to widely publicize within the school the availability of free fresh fruits and vegetables.

Meal Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If a child's disability prevents them from consuming fresh fruits and vegetables as prepared, the school must provide accommodations as they would for other school meals. Schools must consider how the requirement may be applied in the operation of the FFVP. For example, in providing accommodations for the FFVP, schools may have to modify texture. In doing so, schools should consider starting with fresh items and avoid pureeing canned or frozen fruits and vegetables, including baby foods. In most instances, fresh fruits can be pureed; we recognize that this is not always the case for vegetables. Fresh vegetables should be used when feasible but may be cooked and then pureed when needed.

The pureeing of fresh produce for students with disabilities must be done within the constraints of their medical requirements as allowed by their physician. However, schools should make sure that both the parent and the child's doctor are aware of the program and its intent to provide fresh produce in order to determine if the fresh items are an acceptable choice for texture modifications.

FFVP Funds for State Agency Administration

The law permits State agencies to retain a portion of their total FFVP grant allocation for State administrative costs. When budgeting FFVP administrative funds, States should include yearly training for all FFVP School Food Authorities/schools and keep FFVP schools apprised of any updates to the Program.

School Selection Criteria

Section 19 of the National School Lunch Act requires that schools with the highest free and reduced price enrollment be given priority for participation in the FFVP. This is the key selection criterion, which ensures that the Program benefits low-income children that generally have fewer opportunities to consume fresh fruits and vegetables on a regular basis.

To determine the schools with the highest free and reduced price enrollment, States may use the school data reported each October. States may also choose another month provided the same month is consistently used throughout a State.

This criterion cannot be waived to give all schools in a state an equal chance to participate in the Program or to provide geographic dispersion. To be selected for the FFVP, a school must

- Be an elementary school
- Represent the highest percentage of students certified for free and reduced price benefits
- Participate in the NSLP
- Complete an annual application for the FFVP (see *school applications* below)

The application review process must select schools representing the highest percent of students certified for free and reduced price benefits. An eligible high need school should be afforded every opportunity to complete an application to participate in the Program. A state can choose not to select a high need school *if* the

- School fails to meet the deadline for application completion
- School does not have the support of its administration
- State has concerns with the school's administration of another child nutrition program

- State believes the school cannot properly operate the FFVP, *despite previous support from the State*

The total enrollment of all schools selected in the State must result in a per-student allocation of $50-$75 per year. Below is an example that determines the number of students that can participate in the Program within the required per student allocation range.

$174,005	July allocation (Max of 25% of total school year allocation)
$522,215	October allocation
$696,220	Total for School Year
$ 21,000	Administrative funds retained by State
$675,220	Available to schools

Range of students that can participate:
$675,220 / $50 = 13,504 students
$675,220 / $75 = 9,002 students

After the range of students that can participate has been determined, States should determine the per-student dollar amount they want to achieve.

Outreach to Low-Income Schools

States must conduct outreach to the elementary schools with the highest percentage of students certified for free and reduced-price benefits and should do all they can to ensure that the FFVP reaches these elementary schools. States that have a large number of elementary schools at or above 50 percent certified for free and reduced price benefits than could possibly be funded through the FFVP may choose to target just those schools with the highest need.

States must conduct outreach to their neediest schools before they select any school for participation in the program. High need schools should be aware that if they apply, they will likely be chosen to participate in the Program.

States will assist high need schools in submitting an application as part of the State's outreach efforts.

Please reference policy memorandum, *Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Targeted School Selection and Outreach Process,* found at: https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cn/SP10-2010os.pdf.

School Applications

State agencies must *solicit* applications from elementary schools representing the highest need within the State. Each school that participates in the FFVP must submit an application that includes, at a minimum

- The total number of enrolled students and the percentage eligible for free/reduced price meals
- A certification of support for participation in the FFVP signed by the
    - School food service manager, school principal, *and* district superintendent (or equivalent position)
- A program implementation plan that includes efforts to integrate the FFVP with other efforts to promote sound health and nutrition, reduce overweight and obesity, or promote physical activity

It is recommended that each school include a description of partnership activities undertaken or planned. Schools are encouraged to develop partnerships with one or more entities that will provide non-Federal resources, including entities representing the fruit and vegetable industry and entities working to promote children's health in the community.

The application process must be conducted by the State agency every year. However, at the discretion of the State agency, schools that are reapplying and are accepted to the Program based on their continued high need would be allowed to update the information the State agency has on file rather than submit a new application package. Updates could include a new plan for program implementation, changes in enrollment numbers and free and reduced price percentages.

How It Works



Reimbursement for the FFVP is similar to other Child Nutrition Programs. Schools submit a monthly claim and are reimbursed by the State agency for purchases of fresh fruits and fresh vegetables served free to children during the school day. Within basic requirements, the FFVP gives your school the flexibility to develop your own implementation plan, involve teachers and other school staff, work out problems, and reach your own solutions. Your school decides when, where, and how you want to implement the FFVP, and what mix of fresh fruits and vegetables you want to offer your children.

School Selection

To be selected to participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, your school must

- Be an elementary school
- Have a high percentage of children eligible for free and reduced price benefits
- Make free fresh fruits and vegetables available to all *enrolled* children
- Provide fresh fruits and vegetables only during the school day (not before or after school or during summer school)
- Widely publicize within the school the availability of free fresh fruits and vegetables
- Have documented support of the food service manager, principal and district superintendent
- Serve free fresh fruits and vegetables outside of the NSLP and SBP meal periods

USDA encourages:

- Every effort to provide fresh fruits and vegetables a minimum of twice a week as repeated exposure to new foods is a key to acceptance
- A variety of implementation strategies
- Complementary nutrition education

As a participating school you:

- Receive funds based on an allocation of $50- $75 per student
- Submit a monthly claim for reimbursement
- Must operate the NSLP
- May use no more than 10% of your school's total grant for administrative costs
- Receive reimbursement for the costs of purchasing, preparing, and serving fresh fruits and vegetables to children in your school

To ensure the FFVP runs smoothly, your school should:

- Establish an implementation or operational plan for your school that addresses "who does what and where?" to ensure all operational guidelines are followed
- Establish a monthly budget to assist you in tracking funds and ensure timely expenditures of program funds
- Pay attention to program logistics, right from the start, to make sure food service and other school staff understand how the FFVP works
- Establish partnerships on a local level with grocers, Health Departments, or extension service. State or national level partnerships can also be very helpful
- Incorporate nutrition education into the daily curriculum, preferably during the service of fresh fruits and vegetables
    - Be aware of other purchasing avenues for fresh produce; schools may use their current vendors or try other vendors such as

- Existing Food Distributors and/or Wholesalers
- Farm to School Initiative
- Local producers

- In all situations proper procurement procedures must be followed
- Be familiar with proper handling and storage of fresh produce to prevent spoilage and loss
- Be familiar with all Food Safety and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles for fresh produce
- Process reports on time, retain records, and comply with all other paperwork and reporting requirements

Best Practices

- Anticipate the need for staff to prepare and deliver food and to process reports and other paperwork
- Coordinate efforts to inform principals, teachers, school staff, children, and parents about the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- Respond to reports from custodians about trash and messes
- Determine the appropriate types of produce to serve and the appropriate portion sizes
    - Keep in mind that the appropriate type of produce and portion size will depend on student age and preference as well as the ways you offer fruits and vegetables
- Identify with your stakeholders the best methods for distributing and promoting fruits and vegetables to your students
- Solicit free nutrition education materials from State, local and federal partners

Who Can Receive Fruits and Vegetables



The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is for all the children who normally attend your school. Any child who is considered a member of the school and who is present during the service of fruits and vegetables may participate.

Children attending a Child Care Center, Head Start program or a split-session kindergarten class located in a FFVP school may also participate if they are considered *enrolled* in the participating school and are in school on the days the program is offered.

Adults at a school including those attending school functions cannot participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. However, teachers can play a valuable role in modeling positive eating habits by consuming fruits and vegetables along with their students. Teachers may participate under the *following conditions*

- Only teachers who are directly responsible for serving the fruit or vegetable to their students in a classroom setting may partake of the fruit and/or vegetable
- The FFVP is not available to the general teacher population and other adults in the school
- Teachers choosing to participate with their students are strongly encouraged to include a nutrition education component to enhance their positive role modeling
- No additional FFVP funds will be provided; schools must stay within their per student allocation

Please note that this policy does not allow teacher or administrator fruit baskets, which were incorrectly purchased by some schools for promotional purposes when FFVP was initially implemented. Free fruits and vegetables are intended for all children enrolled in participating schools and cannot be used as gifts or rewards. You cannot withhold fruits and vegetables as a form of discipline.

Best Practices

Teachers serving fruits and vegetables to their students can model healthful eating habits by participating with their students and including a nutrition education lesson.

Teachers can help monitor and direct the food distribution, and use the opportunity to talk with students about nutrition, health, hygiene and manners.

Serving Fruits and Vegetables

Your school has the flexibility to schedule FFVP during the school day (and at school activities during the school day) for students at a participating school.



The Best Time

Many schools serve fruits and vegetables multiple times during the school day so students have more access to fruits and vegetables.

Fruits and vegetables may only be served during the school day (i.e., not before school or during afterschool programs). This provides an opportunity to incorporate a nutrition lesson along with the service of produce.

The FFVP cannot be served during the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs' reimbursable meal service periods.

The FFVP *cannot* be served as part of summer school sessions.

The FFVP may be provided during a "year-round school's" summer session as this is considered part of the regular school year. Multiple distribution times may be used and may be the best way to maximize participation.

The Best Places

The most successful distribution areas for the FFVP will be places where children can easily consume the fruits and vegetables.

The techniques you use to distribute fruits and vegetables will depend on a number of factors. Consider grade level, maturity of your students, time available to eat the fruits and vegetables, time required for preparation and service of fresh fruits and vegetables, extra clean-up, garbage concerns and staffing issues.

Schools can offer the FFVP to children through a variety of distribution methods.

- Inside classrooms
- In hallways
- At kiosks
- In free vending machines
- As part of nutrition education activities

Best Practices

Most schools use classrooms or a combination of classrooms and kiosks to deliver fruits and vegetables to children.

Offering fruits and vegetables to children in the classroom helps reduce messes, deal more effectively with disruptive behavior, and make the most of learning time. To minimize interruptions to learning, incorporate eating with classroom activities during silent reading or nutrition education (e.g., study the "fruit of the day" in geography, science or math).

Kiosks allow you to offer more choices and provide easy access. Consider staggering access to lessen confusion in hallways. Be sure to serve fruits and vegetables in a manner that can be handled easily.

Vending machines may also optimize distribution of fruits and vegetables. Select fruits and vegetables that are suitable for vending machine distribution and allow adequate time and staff for restocking.

To help your school's FFVP run smoothly, develop guidelines to remind children of good manners when they receive and eat their fruit and vegetable snacks, and to dispose of their trash. Setting policies on trash disposal and clean up will improve the fruit and vegetable service.
When you plan your program, try to create serving areas that will encourage children to enjoy eating their snacks, while lessening your concerns about the potential for messes.

Providing a nutrition education component while serving fresh fruits and vegetables is the ideal way to introduce and reinforce good eating habits.

Which Fruits and Vegetables to Purchase and Serve



The FFVP introduces children to new and different fresh fruits and vegetables, like kiwi, star fruit, pomegranate, rutabaga, and kohlrabi. Fruits and vegetables are good low-calorie, low-fat sources of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. The FFVP shows children that fresh fruits and vegetables are healthy and tasty alternatives to snacks high in fat, sugar, or salt.

The produce you serve should be presented in such a way that it will be easily identified or recognized for what it is. Encourage children to enjoy fruits and vegetables as they are. Children should be able to connect to fruits like juicy ripe peaches and tart crunchy apples (*without dips* or flavor additives), or vegetables like crunchy sweet sugar snap peas, or asparagus.

Remember when purchasing for the Program the goal is to serve a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables in their natural state and without additives. Dicing and slicing into smaller pieces for ease of service, as well as the addition of ascorbic acid is acceptable.

The FFVP provides schools the opportunity to purchase exotic fruits or vegetables that are not available locally or that are not domestically grown. When purchasing such items always follow proper procurement procedures and the Buy American provision.

FFVP Does *Not* Allow

- Processed or preserved fruits and vegetables (i.e., canned, frozen or dried)
- Dip for fruit
- Fruit or vegetable juice
- Snack type fruit products such as fruit strips, fruit drops, fruit leather

- Jellied fruit
- Trail mix
- Nuts
- Cottage cheese
- Fruit or vegetable pizza
- Smoothies
- Fruit that has added flavorings including fruit that has been injected with flavorings
- Carbonated fruit
- Most non-food items, except those allowed under administrative/operational costs

FFVP Limits

- Dips for vegetables
    - If you choose to serve dip with vegetables, make sure to only offer low-fat yogurt-based or other low-fat or non-fat dips
    - The amount used should be what is commonly noted as a "serving size" for condiments, as shown on Nutrition Facts Labels: 1 to 2 tablespoons
- Service of "prepared" vegetables
    - *Fresh* (not canned, frozen, dried or otherwise processed) vegetables that are cooked, must be limited to once-a-week and must always include a nutrition education lesson related to the prepared item

If you have any questions about which fruits and vegetables to purchase for the FFVP, contact your State agency for guidance and technical assistance *before* making purchases.

What Your School Should Do

- Adjust your selection of fruits and vegetables to purchase and serve more of your students' favorites, but continue efforts to introduce new items

- Be sure fruits and vegetables are appealing and easy to grab

    - If necessary, pre-cut the produce to make them easier, more appetizing, and not as messy for younger children

- If using dips for vegetables, use a "serving size" that provides only enough to encourage children to eat the vegetables

- Introduce children to different varieties of a fruit (e.g., Bartlett, Bosc, and Seckel pears) or a vegetable (bell, sweet banana, and Poblano peppers)

- Consider pre-cut fruits and vegetables and prepared trays in order to control labor costs and handle lack of extra storage space

- Offer whole fruits on days when staff cannot prepare trays of pre-sliced fruits or vegetables

One goal of the FFVP is to expand the variety of fruits and vegetables your students consume. Try "sample sizes" to introduce new items and then adjust your ordering accordingly. To the extent possible, you should not limit the choices you offer. Find innovative and fun ways to encourage your students to try different foods.

How Schools Purchase Fruits and Vegetables



FFVP schools must follow proper procurement procedures. Produce must always be graded and inspected according to existing local, State and Federal guidelines. Finding suitable vendors or suppliers that provide a reliable supply of produce has been a challenge for a number of schools. Many schools purchase fruits and vegetables from food wholesalers or brokers. The vendors deliver shipments of fresh produce directly to the schools.

Local grocery stores and other retailers are not only good suppliers of fruits and vegetables, but also might be valued partners for free nutrition education and promotion activities.

You can support local agricultural producers by buying fresh produce at farmers' markets, orchards, and growers in your community. Remember: produce purchased with FFVP funds is meant to be used in the FFVP only. It cannot be used in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs. When you are purchasing fresh produce, including produce from local vendors, proper procurement procedures must be followed.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) amended the National School Lunch Act to allow institutions receiving funds through the Child Nutrition Programs to apply a geographic preference when procuring unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products (effective October 1, 2008).

- While the legislation permits institutions to apply a geographic preference to purchase locally grown and locally raised agricultural products to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate, it *does not require* institutions to do so

- States cannot mandate, through law or policy, that institutions apply a geographic preference when conducting these procurements

    - This decision is left to the discretion of each local institution

- Geographic preference may *only* be applied to the procurement of unprocessed agricultural products, locally grown and locally raised

- The memorandum, SP 08-2010: Geographic Preference for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in the Child Nutrition Programs, issued November 13, 2009, provided additional clarification for the Child Nutrition Programs

    - The geographic preference provision applies to the FFVP *only* within the framework and requirements of the FFVP (i.e., produce in the FFVP must be *fresh*)

- Schools in the FFVP can choose to apply a geographic preference in the procurement of *fresh* fruits and vegetables for the program

    - Already sliced and bagged items are permissible (but not frozen or dried)

- The memorandum, SP 22-2024: Geographic Preference Expansion Related to the Final Rule issued May 22, 2024 provided additional clarification for the Child Nutrition Programs

    - CNP operators, State agencies purchasing for CNPs, and the USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (USDA DoD Fresh) may use local as a specification and continue to set a geographical preference when soliciting or buying unprocessed agricultural products.

As with other school meal programs, plan to reduce waste. Follow your local board of health/local public health department guidelines for handling leftovers. If you cannot easily use the leftovers in the FFVP, you may be able to use them in your school meal programs -- but only to avoid waste. Plan to use the fruits and vegetables purchased with FFVP funds as part of the FFVP.

Procurement Procedures

The "Buy American" requirement in the National School Lunch Program (as provided in 7 CFR 210.21(d)) applies to purchases made with FFVP funds. Produce such as bananas, which are generally not available as a domestic product, may be purchased even though they are not domestic. Schools needing additional guidance on specific purchases and how an item would be affected by the Buy American provision should contact their State agency for assistance. Schools may

- Buy produce from your local grocery stores and farmers' markets, or contact conventional and organic growers, and distributors

- Support farm-to-school projects by purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables from growers and farmers in your community

    - Farm to school projects are collaborations between farmers and schools that increase your access to fresh, local farm products, and expand market opportunities for family farms

    - Information on the Farm to School (F2S) initiative is found at https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/farm-to-school.

To review current policy on local procurement and geographic preference, please reference policy memorandum, Geographic Preference for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in the Child Nutrition Programs.

Please see Policy Memo SP25-2014: School Food Authorities (SFAs) Purchasing Produce from U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Vendors Using Section 4 and 11 or Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Funds

Nutrition Education in the FFVP



The focus of the FFVP is to bring fresh produce into the school for distribution to children. For too many children, the produce they see in school might be their first exposure to fresh fruits and vegetables, and the only ones they see that day. That is why nutrition education is critical to the program's success.

Providing nutrition education can also help schools reach their goal of a healthier school environment and is a component of several important agency programs and initiatives such as

- A school's Wellness Policy
- Becoming a Team Nutrition School
- Meeting the HealthierUS School Challenge

What should you do in your school?

- Develop nutrition education activities that fit your students
- Use free resources and educational materials available to schools from
    - USDA's Team Nutrition
    - State Fruit and Vegetable Coordinators
- Check out the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for nutrition related information focusing on children, for example, BAM! Body and Mind.
- Visit https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/school, MyPlate.gov, and www.fns.usda.gov/cnd for more resources.

- Include nutrition education whenever possible, especially during the service of fresh fruits and vegetables and even on days when the Program is not offered

- A cooked, fresh vegetable dish can only be provided once a week and must include a nutrition education component

- Adapt lesson plans to include nutrition education

- Consult with FFVP partners to obtain no cost promotional items such as informational fliers, pamphlets, posters, banners and buttons

- Have students create fruit and vegetable posters to decorate classrooms and serving areas

- Use student address systems and student broadcasts to share educational information about the importance of healthy eating

- Promote the FFVP on monthly menus that are sent to parents

- Add a monthly newsletter that addresses nutrition education and the benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables

    - Include the students by having them create and publish the newsletter

Reimbursable Costs



Program costs are broken out into two categories: operating and administrative. However, the allowable costs under these categories may be *different* from those in the National School Lunch Program.

The operating and administrative categories each allow labor and equipment costs. Equipment listed under administrative costs should be larger equipment purchases where as equipment under operating costs are the smaller equipment purchases.

Please keep in mind that most of a school's FFVP funds must go toward purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables. All non-food costs must be carefully reviewed and deemed reasonable, given the extent of program operations (e.g., daily vs. twice a week and produce that is served whole versus sliced and put in containers).

If schools purchase equipment for the FFVP, they must provide written justification to support the purchase. For example, the justification should explain the need for additional equipment, why the current equipment is not sufficient for FFVP operations, how many times the FFVP program will be offered each week, how many times deliveries are received each week/month and any other information that will support the purchase.

Equipment purchased with FFVP funds that will be used in other school feeding programs must be **prorated** among the programs. The FFVP represents a small program and therefore the funds claimed under the FFVP should represent the smaller portion.

State agencies have the discretion to determine the level of detail they want for smaller equipment purchases, dishes, and disposable supplies such as napkins, paper plates, and plastic bags.

Labor costs in either the "operating or administrative" category must be minimal. SFA/State agencies must, as part of their review process, review these costs and as appropriate work with schools reporting high costs in these categories. Volunteer parents or students can help to reduce these costs.

Operating Costs

Operating costs are the costs of running your FFVP service. These are your documented expenses for acquiring, delivering, preparing, and serving fruits and vegetables. They include the FFVP portion of the goods and services your school pays for such as:

- Buying fruits, vegetables, low-fat or non-fat dip for vegetables only
- Buying nonfood items like napkins, paper plates, serving bowls and trays, cleaning supplies, and trash bags
- Value added services such as pre-cut produce, ready-made produce trays, and delivery charges
- Salaries and fringe benefits for employees who do such tasks as washing and chopping produce, preparing trays, distributing produce to classrooms, setting up kiosks, restocking vending machines, and cleaning up

Administrative Costs

School administrative costs are limited to **10 percent** of your school's total FFVP grant. Schools must not exceed this limit.

School administrative costs are the documented expenses you have for planning the Program, managing the paperwork, obtaining the equipment you need, and all other aspects of FFVP that are not related to the preparation and service of fruits and vegetables.

Administrative costs include the FFVP share of:

- Purchasing or leasing equipment such as refrigerators, coolers, portable kiosks, carts, and portable food bars (remember to prorate as appropriate)
- Salaries and fringe benefits for employees who compile and maintain claims for reimbursement and other financial reports, plan and write menus, order produce, track inventory, and coordinate nutrition promotion activities

What should schools do to ensure that the FFVP runs smoothly?

- Prorate costs: only the FFVP portion of expenses can be charged to the FFVP
- Budget carefully to stay within the 10 percent limit on administrative costs

- Make sure your expenses are reasonable and support the Program's goals

    - For example, fruit baskets distributed to families, taken home by students during breaks or given to school personnel are not allowable expenses

If you have doubts about whether a specific cost is allowable, contact your State agency to discuss it with them, prior to incurring such costs.

Paperwork



Participating in the FFVP requires you to follow reporting and record keeping requirements that are similar to those for the National School Lunch Program. Here are some key points for schools to remember

- Participate in training provided by your State agency
    - School staff must be trained on FFVP requirements and report forms before each new school year
- Complete and submit a *monthly FFVP reimbursement claim* form (or similar reporting mechanism from your State) to claim reimbursement
    - The claim form should identify monthly school purchase data for the FFVP
- You are responsible for ensuring that all claims are correct and appropriate
    - Include only those costs related to the FFVP on your claim form
    - Reminder: claims should be filed on time
- States should follow FNS 60/90 day guidance when approving claims (especially late claims)
- Maintain full and accurate FFVP records in your files
    - Your school must keep these for a period of three years (after the end of the fiscal year to which they pertain)
    - Records must be kept longer if your school has any unresolved audit findings
- Schools should follow procedures similar to those in the school nutrition programs when submitting claims for reimbursement

- Claim forms should be submitted to the SFA for review
- The SFA may then submit a consolidated claim form to the State agency

State Reporting

Financial reporting for the FFVP will be conducted via the Food Programs Reporting System (FPRS). The SF-425 for the FFVP has been set up in FPRS for all States. The SF-425 report must be submitted electronically on a quarterly basis.

Recordkeeping

The recordkeeping requirements for the FFVP are similar to other Child Nutrition Programs.

Program Oversight and Monitoring

It is critical that State agencies and SFAs make every effort to ensure FFVP is operating properly in participating schools, especially those new to the program. State agencies and SFAs should

- Review FFVP claims for reimbursement submitted by participating schools to ensure that expenditures are appropriate prior to providing reimbursement
  - Majority of funds are used to purchase fresh produce
  - Equipment purchases are carefully reviewed and prorated
  - Labor costs and all other non-food costs are minimal
- Ensure FFVP schools are reviewed as part of the Coordinated Review Effort (CRE) process, or other oversight or monitoring activity related to the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs
- Avoid issues early on by making every effort to contact schools not scheduled for oversight activity to ensure that the Program is being implemented according to the statute and guidance issued by FNS

Best Practices

Keep a file that contains

- Policy Memoranda
- Addendums
- Contact information for each participating school
- Invoices
- Monthly claims
- Purchase order information
- Vendors/Local farmers

Encouraging Success



Your State agency provides considerable support and encouragement to schools and school food authorities in administering the FFVP. Oversight refers to a variety of methods of monitoring your school's ability to successfully manage the program, both during and between reviews. State and SFA oversight includes

- Keeping in contact about your school's operation of the FFVP
- Holding training sessions and workshops that include partners and others who can assist you
- Conducting onsite visits to assist in implementing and running the FFVP
- Providing technical assistance to answer your questions and concerns
- Ensuring you received and reviewed the information you need to manage and monitor FFVP in your school
- Encouraging your efforts to collaborate with state and local affiliates of FFVP's national partners
- Encouraging your promotion of nutrition education as a regular feature in school classrooms
- Reviewing claim forms
- Sharing information about your school's program among FFVP and financial management staff at the State agency
- Ensuring reports are submitted on time

Partnerships

Outside support, collaboration, and partnerships have been essential elements of Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program success. State, local, and private partners have helped schools better manage the FFVP, resolve logistical challenges of the program, and obtain educational materials for promoting nutritious food choices in and out of the classroom.



Collaborate with State and Local Affiliates

- State Fruit and Vegetable Coordinators
- Produce for Better Health

Encourage Cooperation and Commitment from Partners

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Food service staff
- School nurses
- Custodial staff
- Parents
- Parent Teacher Association
- Student government

Develop New Partnerships

- State and National affiliates of the American Cancer, Diabetes, Dietetic and Heart Associations and School Nutrition Association
- Community Health Agencies
- County and State health and agriculture departments
- Dieticians and dietetic interns
- Extension agents
- Hospitals
- Local grocers and stores
- Vocational clubs
- Produce associations/commodity groups
- Nutrition trade associations
- Health associations
- Food distributors

Food Safety in the FFVP

Preventing or reducing the risk of food-borne illness or injury by contaminated fruits and vegetables is a priority in the FFVP.



Best Practices

- Train food service employees who prepare or serve food on how to properly wash and store fresh fruits and vegetables
- Establish procedures for receiving and storing fresh produce
- Wash hands using the proper procedure
- Wash, rinse, sanitize, and air-dry all food-contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils that will be in contact with produce, including cutting boards, counter tops, knives, and sinks
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for the proper use of chemicals
- Wash all raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly before combining with other ingredients, including
    - Unpeeled fresh fruit and vegetables that are served whole or cut into pieces
    - Fruits and vegetables that are peeled and cut to use in cooking or served ready-to-eat
- Wash fresh produce vigorously under cold running water or by using chemicals that comply with the most recent FDA Food Code (packaged fruits and vegetables labeled as being previously washed and ready-to-eat are not required to be washed)
- Scrub the surface of firm-skin fruits or vegetables such as apples or potatoes using a clean and sanitized vegetable brush designated for this purpose
- Remove any damaged or bruised areas

- Label, date, and refrigerate fresh-cut items
- Serve cut melons within 7 days if held at 41 ºF or below (see SOP for Date Marking, Ready-to-Eat, and Potentially Hazardous Food)
- Do not serve raw seed sprouts to highly susceptible populations such as preschool-age children
- Follow State and local public health requirements
- Please reference the new pamphlet from the FNS Food Safety Division, Best Practices: Handling Fresh Produce in Schools, found at: https://www.fns.usda.gov/fs/produce-safety/best-practices-schools.

FFVP Questions and Answers

Funding



1) **Question**: Must FFVP State level administrative funds be tracked separately from other funding sources, such as SAE?

   Answer: State agencies must be able to account for FFVP State administrative expenditures and to ensure proper and timely expenditure of funds. Whatever tracking method States have that will show these expenditures separately from other *State level expenditures is acceptable.*

2) **Question**: Should schools develop a budget for the FFVP?

   Answer: It is prudent for schools to develop a budget in order to assist in the timely expenditure of funds and FNS strongly encourages schools to do so. While schools are not required to develop or submit a budget plan to their SA (unless required to do so by their SA), they should consider working closely with their SFA and SA to ensure funds are expended according to all guidance and program policy and in a timely manner.

3) **Question**: Can schools bid FFVP, NSLP and SBP purchases together?

   Answer: Yes. However, schools must be able to demonstrate which items are purchased for the FFVP.

4) **Question**: Can schools purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from their own school gardens using FFVP funds?

   Answer: Yes. The funds must accrue back to the school food service account. See our policy memoranda SP 32-2009, *School Garden Questions and Answers* for additional information: https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cn/SP32-2009os.pdf.

5) **Question**: Can schools purchase from gardens located at other schools or other districts?

   Answer: Yes. The funds must accrue back to the school food service account (reference #4).

6) **Question**: A school purchases equipment either with 100% FFVP funds or a percentage of funds (or an SFA on the part of a school(s)) but the following year, the school no longer participates in the FFVP. What happens to the equipment?

   Answer: It is the responsibility of the SFA or SA to direct the disposition of equipment for those schools that no longer participate in the Program in keeping with existing guidance and the regulation at 7 CFR 3016.32(c)(1), and (e)(1) and (2). In general, when the equipment is no longer needed for the original program or project, the equipment may be used in other activities currently or previously supported by a Federal agency. (Please refer to the regulation, *Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments* at 7 CFR 3016.32 for a detailed explanation.)

   Any school requesting FFVP funds for equipment must provide justification for the equipment. The justification should include an explanation on why additional equipment is needed and why current equipment cannot suffice, the extent of the program, e.g. how many days a week the program is offered, and any other information that will support the request for additional equipment.

   It is the intent that selected schools participate for more than one year so the SA is strongly encouraged to select schools that represent strong candidates for long term participation in the Program.

   Schools requesting equipment that may be used in other programs must **prorate** the cost of the equipment among all programs that will use the equipment. Along with the equipment justification, schools must also indicate percent usage for the FFVP, and make sure to only claim that portion directly associated with FFVP operations.

Application

7) **Question**: At the discretion of the State agency, approved FFVP schools are permitted to update their application on file instead of submitting an entirely new application. What is meant by updated information?

Answer: Updating the information on file can include any changes from the previous year's application, e.g. changes to the eligible signatures, enhancements to the implementation plan, changes to enrollment numbers and consequently free and reduced price percentages.

Participation

8) **Question**: May adults participate in the FFVP?

Answer: Teachers may participate under the *following conditions*

- Only teachers who are directly responsible for serving the fruit or vegetable to their students in a classroom setting may partake of the fruit and/or vegetable
- The FFVP is not available to the general teacher population and other adults in the school
- Teachers choosing to participate with their students are strongly encouraged to include a nutrition education component to enhance their positive role modeling
- No additional FFVP funds will be provided; schools must stay within their per student allocation

Please note that this policy does not allow teacher or administrator fruit baskets, which were incorrectly purchased by some schools for promotional purposes when FFVP was initially implemented.

Non-Allowable Costs

9) **Question**: Is full strength/freshly squeezed fruit or vegetable juice allowed in the FFVP?

Answer: No. Juice is not allowed as part of the FFVP.

Miscellaneous

10) **Question**: Who can participate in State agency provided FFVP training?

Answer: The training should be for those in the food service department directly responsible for the FFVP operations and may also include the principal or vice principal.

11) **Question**: The FFVP cannot be provided during summer school. However, can year-round schools serve FFVP in the summer months?

Answer: Yes. Year round schools may participate during their June, July and August sessions.

12) **Question:** Are there limits on the type of benefits that schools can claim for reimbursement for those employees also working under the FFVP?

Answer: Schools can claim for reimbursement a prorated share of employee benefits for those that work on the FFVP.

13) **Question:** What are the requirements for schools to provide nutrition education?

Answer: FNS strongly encourages schools to provide nutrition education as a component of the FFVP. Providing nutrition education is part of helping schools create a healthier school environment. Nutrition education is a required component of several important programs and initiatives for schools such as creating a Wellness Policy, becoming a Team Nutrition School and, meeting the goals of the Healthier US School Challenge.