



# **Lowcountry Food Bank's School Market Program Policies and Procedures Manual**



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## 1. What is LCFB's School Market Program?

### A. School Market

Lowcountry Food Bank (LCFB) launched the School Market program in the fall of 2017. Based on a model widely utilized across the Feeding America network, the markets represent an effort to provide a true neighbor-choice pantry experience in a school setting. The goal of the Market is to offer a readily available, consistent, and discreet source of nutritious food for children and families. The School Market aims to create an empowering shopping experience around food, ensuring students and their families have access to culturally relevant food options that they can freely choose, to best provide for their own needs. Whereas programs like Backpack Buddies and Kids Café attempt to fill the hunger gap for children during out-of-school time hours, the markets allow families to access a greater quantity and variety of foods that can feed multiple individuals. Locating the market inside a school makes it accessible in a familiar environment and allows the school to have ownership over its operations and, where possible, co-locate additional resources. Markets are stocked utilizing inventory from Lowcountry Food Bank, including non-perishable items, frozen meals, frozen proteins, fresh food such as produce, and non-food items such as hygiene products, as available. Markets are funded through a combination of grants, donors, and community sponsors. Markets can vary in size and scope depending on the needs and capacity of the school. This model offers the greatest variety of food items and results in less food waste because families have the freedom to choose the food they need and want from the market.

### B. Program Model

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| School Market Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Market is a school-based pantry set up as a neighbor-choice model for a market-style shopping experience. Students and their families can select their own dry goods, protein, dairy and fresh produce based on their own's family's needs.</li> </ul>                                       |
| Funding               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LCFB fundraises and seeks grantors and donors to help financially support the costs associated with the School Food Center programs. Utilizing its purchasing power and network resources, LCFB procures a selection of nutritious food for the program.</li> </ul>                                 |
| Market Orders         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Market Partners order food by cases from LCFB inventory of perishable and non-perishable items. LCFB staff builds the order based on School Coordinator's request, depending on food availability.</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| Delivery              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LCFB directly oversees and manages LCFB's School Market Program deliveries to participating schools.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| School Partners       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families experiencing food insecurity are made aware of the program through the school and provided the opportunity to shop at the School Market, selecting the food and non-food items that their families needs and prefers.</li> </ul>                                                           |
| Data & Impact         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each School Market is required to report distribution data monthly back to LCFB. This information is utilized for LCFB distribution metrics, and fulfill funding reports. Additionally, LCFB will conduct program participant impact surveys to support program success and improvement.</li> </ul> |

### **C. *LCFB's Role and Responsibilities***

LCFB is a qualified Feeding America partner within the ten coastal counties of South Carolina. LCFB will act as sole administrator and manager of the Program. In addition to the responsibilities listed below, LCFB reserves the right to take corrective action against an individual or organization in the event of single or repeated noncompliance with the terms and conditions set forth by the memorandum of understanding or the policies and procedures set forth by this manual.

#### **As manager and administrator of LCFB's School Market Program, LCFB will:**

- Maintain relationship and act as liaison between LCFB and School Food Center partners.
- Complete a site visit with all new partner sites prior to establishing the Program.
- Conduct School Market program training for all new partners and their site contacts, and for all returning partners.
- Procure high-quality, nutritionally balanced food items for the Program.
  - LCFB will not distribute candy or soda to the School Market Program.
- Designate the allocation of Program resources at each participating school with input from the School Coordinator (including any modifications throughout the year), based on distribution targets set forth by LCFB.
- Collect reporting and distribution data from participating partners.
- Communicate any modifications to all pertinent partners and resolve issues affecting Program integrity in a professional and timely manner.
- Conduct a minimum of one site visit every two years.

## **2. What is expected of a Partner?**

### **A. *Roles and Responsibilities***

A School Market Partner is defined as a public institution of learning that actively participates in LCFB's School Market Program. Eligible schools must be located within the ten coastal counties of South Carolina served by LCFB and have been identified as serving families experiencing food insecurity. Partners are annually recruited and chosen by LCFB based on their interest, administrative capacity, and degree of need through an annual application process. It is expected that all partners' goals for the program coincide with those set forth by LCFB. The partner must have the space and administrative capacity to conduct food insecurity screenings and manage the Program implementation and administration. The primary responsibilities of the partner are:

- Designate one individual on staff as the Site Coordinator; identify secondary contact as backup. Notify LCFB immediately if designated Site Coordinator information changes.
- Participate in all mandatory Program training upon program initiation, or the occurrence of staff changes in either the primary or secondary coordinator role. If staff changes occur, required training must be completed within 60 days.
- Complete the LCFB approved food safety training OR an equivalent training and accept full responsibility for the purity and fitness for human consumption of all items

accepted.

- Designate one representative on staff (with backup identified) to be responsible for receiving monthly deliveries from LCFB staff; school staff is responsible for bringing product to its storage location within the building.
- Maintain a complete copy of the *School Market Program Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU) on file and adhere to the program requirements defined in this *Policies and Procedures Manual*.
- Not engage in sub-distribution of food without a signed agreement from LCFB.
- Make the School Market available to children and families at least once a week, during the school year and any operational months, through a choice-based model.
- Ensure all employees or volunteers involved in the program are sufficiently trained.
- Place food orders for the market through the School Food Center ordering process, ensuring orders are submitted by required deadlines.
- Maintain safety and security of the food storage area. Store food a minimum of six inches off of the floor, and four inches away from any walls. The designated storage area must adhere to all South Carolina DHEC food and safety regulations.
- Maintain a procedure for determining that the final recipient of the program food is ill, needy, or an infant, such as using self-declarations of need or other intake process and comply with Section 170(e)(3) and other requirements for use and distribution of donated product.
- Refer families to other resources for food access, including food pantries, SNAP and WIC benefits, and produce prescription programs (if applicable).
- Ensure all children and/or families are given access to, or delivered their program food to, on school property in a discreet and comfortable environment and site does not engage in discrimination in the provision of service against any person because of race, color, citizenship, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation including gender identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran, or as otherwise prohibited under current USDA nondiscrimination statement.
- Retain complete records of received program food and distribution to children or families in a secure location for a minimum of one year from date of receipt.
- Distribute to children and families free of charge; no product can be sold, used for other school programs, used for fundraisers or meetings, stored over the summer months (unless market remains open), or used for any purpose other than to provide food to chronically food insecure children and their families experiencing food insecurity.
- Submit monthly reports utilizing format provided by LCFB by the 5th of each month and submit orders for the upcoming month by deadline indicated. Failure to submit reports will result in the suspension of further deliveries and failure to complete order form by deadline will result in not receiving program food for the upcoming month.
- Provide stories, testimonials, and/or photographs in a timely manner upon request by LCFB.
- Agree to and allow regular site monitoring visits by LCFB, including unannounced site visits. Failure to respond will result in the suspension of future deliveries until the visit can be completed. A minimum of one site visit every two years per Feeding America guidelines.
- Include "in partnership with Lowcountry Food Bank" in any communications regarding the School Market Program.

## **B. *Food Safety***

Food storage areas need to be:

- **Secure:** Food is to be stored in a secure location with limited access. This helps prevent theft, tampering, or other loss of product.
- **Clean:** The storage area should be clean. Make sure the storage space is included in your school's regular cleaning schedule. Floors and shelves should be cleaned regularly in a manner that does not contaminate the food.
- **Temperature Compliant:** Keep accurate thermometers in the door of each freezer or refrigeration unit and dry storage area to ensure that temperatures are always within the following ranges:
  - Dry storage = 35 – 75 °F
  - Refrigerator = 36 – 40 °F
  - Freezer = 0 °F and below
  - Keep twice daily temperature logs on file to document that food is always stored at the proper temperatures. LCFB will provide log templates and will check the logs during site visits.
- **Dry:** Food must be kept away from any steam, hot water pipes, or other heat sources to help prevent mold and other damage to the food. Also, keep food 6" off the ground, 4" away from the wall, and 2' from the ceiling to allow for proper air flow.
- **Pest-free:** Food must be stored at least 6" off the ground for pest control purposes. The food can be stored in a cabinet, on shelving, on a table, or on a pallet. You can request a pallet for your food by contacting LCFB staff. In addition, you should make sure the pest control service that monitors your facility also monitors the food storage area.
- **Fresh:** Food should be stored in a way that makes it easy to use the oldest food first (First In, First Out).
- **Chemical-free:** Cleaning products should be stored away from food entirely. This helps prevent potential leaks from damaging stored food. If any food is contaminated by chemicals, please dispose of the food immediately.

## **C. *Deliveries***

The Partner must provide the following information to LCFB:

- I. School address
- II. Product drop-off locations
- III. Contact information for individual(s) who must be available to receive product on the agreed delivery date

Any changes in delivery information must be communicated to the School Food Centers Manager or School Food Centers Coordinator at least one week in advance of the next delivery. The school will be given a date for delivery in consideration of the School Market distribution dates and school calendar. An LCFB driver will unload the product at the drop-off location designated by the school and agreed upon by LCFB. School staff are responsible for storing all inventory in a secure location. For liability reasons, LCFB drivers are prohibited from bringing product into school buildings. A school official must sign for the delivery and that

person should compare the inventory with the submitted order within 24 hours of receipt to ensure accuracy and food safety. If items are damaged or appear contaminated, take photos of the food and a photo of the delivery ticket/invoice and contact LCFB immediately.

#### **D. *Equipment***

All supplies and equipment, including commercial refrigerators, freezers, shelving, commercial scale, baskets, etc., purchased by LCFB are the property of LCFB. In the event of the closure of the School Market, all supplies and equipment purchased by LCFB must be returned to LCFB in proper working order. Maintenance of the equipment is the responsibility of Partner site.

#### **E. *Identifying Students and Families in Need***

School Markets are available to all students at the school and their household family members. If a family requires more assistance than the School Market can provide, LCFB will equip you with information on local food pantries and food distributions in the area near your school.

#### **F. *Distribution***

School Markets are run on a choice model. Families can select the items they need, which creates a shopping experience similar to a grocery store and helps to reduce stigma for the students and their families. Using signage, families can be encouraged to make certain food choices, but the decision is ultimately theirs as to the foods they choose.

##### **Operating a Choice Model**

- Food in the market can be distributed based on family size. Each food group will be allotted a number of items to be distributed; for example: 4 grains, 6 vegetables, 3 fruits, 3 proteins, 1 meal (such as beef stew or Hamburger Helper), and 1 snack/drink for a family of 4.
- Signs should be placed on shelves to denote the number of each item.
- Suggested food per household:

| <b>Family Size</b> | <b>Grains</b> | <b>Vegetables</b> | <b>Fruits</b> | <b>Proteins</b> | <b>Meals</b> | <b>Drinks/Snacks</b> | <b>Total Pounds</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1-4                | 4             | 6                 | 3             | 3               | 1            | 1                    | 20-25               |
| 5-8                | 8             | 12                | 6             | 6               | 2            | 2                    | 26-50               |
| 9 and greater      | 12            | 18                | 9             | 9               | 3            | 3                    | 51-75               |

#### **G. *Compliance***

Maintaining accurate, up-to-date, and pertinent documentation is of the utmost importance to the Lowcountry Food Bank. Examples of all required LCFB's School Food Center paperwork can be found on our website. It is the responsibility of all partners to become familiar with required documentation and complete relevant paperwork. The Lowcountry Food Bank reserves the right to conduct and encourages the participation in, voluntary semi-annual surveys regarding customer service, service delivery models, and/or community impact.

Annual Partner Memorandum of Understanding: All partners must annually formalize their participation in the program through an *LCFB School Market Program Memorandum of Understanding* signed by the Partner Site Coordinators and Principal (or other identified party). All partners must maintain a complete copy on file.

Monthly Distribution Reporting: All partners must electronically submit a monthly distribution report via a provided link to LCFB staff. Reports are due no later than the 5th of each month. Reporting information is essential for accurate tracking of surplus. Failure to truthfully complete monthly reports is considered by the Lowcountry Food Bank an offense qualified for corrective action.

Change of Information: All partners are required to contact LCFB School Food Center staff in the event that any contact, logistical, name, address, capacity, or capabilities are changed or adjusted. This may include, but is not limited to, leadership changes, movements, restructuring, adjustments, or temporary substitutes. Changes are to be sent within 30 days of change. If not submitted within given time frame, the Lowcountry Food Bank reserves the right to take corrective action against said Partner.

Site Monitoring: All partners are subject to at least one site visit every other year by Lowcountry Food Bank staff. Maintaining the highest level of quality control and safety is a top priority of the Lowcountry Food Bank. Site monitors reserve the right to substantiate storage locations, distribution processes, and/or persons involved in any and all aspects of roles and responsibilities outlined within this manual or the *School Market Memorandum of Understanding*. Site Monitors will adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Lowcountry Food Bank's *SFC Site Visit Monitoring Form* during all official site visits. Issues of noncompliance must be corrected prior to the next LCFB's Program delivery. The Lowcountry Food Bank reserves the right to annul the *School Market Memorandum of Understanding* at any time should it deem necessary.

Corrective Action: In the event that there is an issue of noncompliance, as identified by the contents of this manual, LCFB reserves the right to document the deficiency(ies) and follow official procedures regarding corrective action. Partners that do not meet the training, storage, reporting, or participation guidelines, and/or have been cited as non-compliant during any site monitoring must be placed on corrective action. The corrective action will allow the partner up to 30 days to fully and permanently correct the deficiency(ies).

The procedure for all corrective action is as follows:

- LCFB will notify the partner in writing of the deficiency(ies) and corrective action plan.
  - A Distribution Noncompliance Form must be filled out explaining the situation resulting in noncompliance with program regulations.
- On subsequent unannounced monitoring visits, the monitor must document follow-up to show corrective actions were implemented, maintained, and completely corrected:
  - If the partner completely corrects the deficiency(ies) within 30 days, LCFB will notify the organization and the responsible coordinators that LCFB

has rescinded its deficiency determination. A 90-day probationary period will begin after corrective action has been taken to ensure that policies and procedures are being adhered to. The partner will continue to submit valid reports during this process.

- If the responsible coordinators have not fully and permanently corrected their deficiency(ies), LCFB will continue its actions to disqualify the partner by issuing a notice of intent to terminate.

#### **H. *Communication***

Lowcountry Food Bank believes that clear and effective communication is an absolute necessity for the success of LCFB's Program. In order to ensure the efficiency and reliability of the LCFB's Program logistics, it is mandatory that all Partners inform Lowcountry Food Bank Staff of any and all changes that may affect or coincide with contractual obligations and/or responsibilities; this includes, but is not limited to, changes to drop-off locations within the site, and/or staff changes. All communication between Lowcountry Food Bank staff or volunteers and a partner should be conducted with the utmost degree of professionalism, clarity, and honesty. Lowcountry Food Bank reserves the right to take corrective action against the partner in the event of single or repeated noncompliance with the communication standards set forth by this manual.

#### **I. *Public Relations***

The Lowcountry Food Bank is a qualified Feeding America agency and administrator of the School Market Program within the ten coastal counties of South Carolina. It is of the utmost importance to the Lowcountry Food Bank that the promotion of the program and its relationship with Partners is always accurately represented.

Branding: LCFB grants Partners non-exclusive, non-transferable, revocable authorization to use the "LCFB School Market Program" name in connection with the partner's participation in the Program, only during the contract year. The partner has access to use the "Lowcountry Food Bank" logo; this does not include any other logos affiliated with the LCFB. Additionally, this does not include the rights for the partner to share the LCFB logo with any other organization. Upon expiration or termination of the LCFB's School Market MOU, the partner shall discontinue use of the LCFB's brand and logo. The partners cannot use any name, brand, or logo like the LCFB's brand or logo at any time.

LCFB recognizes the need to keep the public informed of the work of both organizations (LCFB and the school) through the media. While we realize that each school has unique policies and procedures that must be followed in order to protect your students, we expect the Site Coordinator to take responsibility for any decisions regarding media. LCFB requests that all schools and their official representatives respect the following media procedures regarding the School Market program:

- Inform LCFB whenever LCFB's name is referenced in a media context prior to printing.
- Direct local media outlets to contact the VP of Communications & Marketing at 843-747-8146 x 167 with any questions for LCFB.

- Do not divulge any information that violates the privacy of participating children or families, including but not limited to, names or demographic information.
- Do not share details about the funding of your program to outside parties, including monthly budget allocation. In order to fundraise for this program, we need to be consistent with the information we communicate externally. The budget we allow for your food purchasing does not include significant overhead costs incurred by the program. You will help us sustain the program by keeping all financial information confidential.

### **J. *Use of Product***

The food received for the LCFB School Market Program can only be used for the purpose explicitly described in LCFB Memorandum of Understanding. Food cannot be sold, used for other programs or fundraisers, or used for any other purpose other than to provide food to students and families of the Program Partner.

### **K. *Best Practices***

The following are best practices for operating School Markets. These guidelines will help you operate your School Market in a way that will maximize the program's impact.

#### Hours of Operation

Please select hours that are most convenient for your families. You are able to set your own hours of operation based on your unique community but need to ensure food is accessible and available to families during school hours of operation and on an as-needed basis. You may use an Order Ahead model, make home deliveries, and make appointments to ensure families have consistent access throughout the month to the market. Maintaining consistent distribution dates and hours from month to month will make it easier for families to know when to shop. Remember, you may distribute items to students on an as-needed or 'emergency' basis at any time. As per the MOU, you are required to make the market available to students and their families at a minimum of once per week.

#### Volunteer Recruitment

A small, committed volunteer base can make a huge difference for your School Market. Volunteers can assist with everything from receiving food and stocking shelves to running the Market and collecting data for reports. Volunteers may also be interested in organizing a food drive to help stock the Market. If you are in need of volunteers, we suggest clubs or organizations within your school. Working in the Market can be a great way to earn community service hours. Often other school officials or teachers are eager to assist, so do not hesitate to advertise the need for volunteers.

#### Respectful and Dignified Experience

Requesting food assistance is often very difficult for families. This is made easier by welcoming them with a kind word and a smile. Encourage your volunteers to politely engage in conversation with people and assist them with carrying grocery items to their cars. Do not request information from people beyond what is required by LCFB. LCFB

offers partners training for staff and volunteers: [Welcoming Environment Training](#).

### Market Layout

Consider how the arrangement of shelving and refrigeration can maximize distribution efficiency. If your Market is large enough, establish a circular rotation that will allow people to enter, shop, and exit as smoothly as possible. If your Market is too small to allow more than two or three households to shop at once, consider a table layout where Market items are laid out on tables in a separate space, such as a gym, during distribution hours. LCFB offers partners training for establishing a choice market: [School Choice Training](#).

### Additional Information on Services

School Markets can be a powerful connection point among schools, families, and other community resources. Families may need information related to budgeting, employment, day care, housing, health care, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly known as food stamps, and WIC, etc. LCFB can help provide additional information to local resources such as community food pantries. Information on other resources should be available but not compulsory for people. School Markets may also provide the opportunity to share information about school resources intended to improve student performance. Additional [Community Resources](#) to assist students and families can be located in the linked map.

### Engagement and Outreach

Please take advantage of all the opportunities to advertise the School Market to students and their families. These may include Parent Nights, school media, report cards, flyer distributions, and social media. Please ensure that all advertisements include the following required language: “this is an equal opportunity program.”

## **L. *Additional Information***

### Can I get food or equipment from other sources besides LCFB for my Market?

Yes. Please ensure that you or your volunteers look through the donations to ensure that food has not been tampered with, is safe to consume, and is clean. This helps to ensure the integrity of the product for the safety of your families. You may not distribute food that is homemade, home canned, or otherwise prepared by a non-commercial organization. Also, while LCFB provides start-up equipment, you may accept donations of storage equipment from other sources. Please inform the School Food Centers Manager if any equipment is donated to your market. LCFB staff will inspect the equipment to ensure safety. Additionally, LCFB staff will ensure proper use and maintenance of thermometers.

### What are the types of items I can get from LCFB?

Items include staple shelf-stable products that can be found in any home such as canned fruits and vegetables, canned protein, vegetarian protein, pasta and sauces, etc., hygiene items when requested and available, and fresh-frozen meals when requested and available. Perishable items are available such as dairy, produce, and meat. Candy

and soda will not be sent to School Market programs.

Can I ever repackage items received from LCFB?

No. Food items received from LCFB cannot be repackaged, opened, or altered in any way. For instance, if you receive a 25 lb. bag of chicken, you may not separate it into smaller bags to distribute; you would have to distribute the entire 25 lb. bag of chicken to one family. Cases of canned goods that are wrapped together may be separated and families may take one or more cans at a time (instead of the whole case). You may separate toilet paper, diapers, and other hygiene products from larger sets.

Can I donate extra items from my Market to another organization?

No. All product that is received from LCFB must be distributed through your Market to students, their immediate families, staff, and community members that are in need. You cannot take product to other organizations, non-profits or pantries. All of the food must be directly distributed through your school. This helps ensure proper food storage and handling as well as compliance with regulations. LCFB strives to provide the appropriate quantity of items for each School Market. If the school is receiving too much food or not enough, please contact the School Food Centers Manager or School Food Centers Coordinator to adjust numbers as needed.

## **M. *Appendix***

Included in this section are links to examples of documentation related to these procedures:

- [SFC Site Visit Monitoring Form](#)
- [LCFB Temperature Log](#)
- [School Market Reporting Form](#)
- [School Market Ordering Process](#)