

Tips and Tools for Integrating Local Food in RFX for Food Services

About this resource:

This Feed BC resource was developed based on a working session of Post-Secondary Institution Partners held in January 2022 which focused on integrating local food in RFPs for food services. It contains a summary of the tips and themes shared by Partners at the working session on effective ways to get better bid responses from potential food service vendors (Part A), and a template tool for including specific language relating to local food into RFPs for food service operations and suggested evaluation criteria (Part B).

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Note: This resource refers only to procurements that are not covered by trade obligations.

Part A: Tips for creating an effective RFX

1. Know your campus priorities well

Know what your institution is looking for and ensure you articulate it well. Set out the priorities for your food service program in advance by making sure they align with your organization's strategic plans. Where possible, rank your priorities to help guide challenging decisions throughout your RFP development, bid evaluation and ongoing monitoring of your food services contract. Provide vendors with as much information on your goals and priorities as possible such as providing a link in your RFP to your food services or sustainability webpages. This will help vendors know what matters most to your institution from the start.

2. Prioritize value alignment

A key theme throughout the session was the importance of finding a food service provider that aligns with your values. At times, it can be hard to assess what vendors can do and/or offer for your institutions and how much to prescribe in your RFP. One approach is to focus on your strategic priorities alongside your fixed requirements, giving vendors more flexibility to demonstrate value alignment, and scoring them accordingly. This approach allows vendors to show what they can do, such as existing local supplier relationships or successful innovations or procurement tactics they've used elsewhere that demonstrate they can deliver on your local food goals. It is important, however, to remain aware of 'greenwashing'; where proposals sound impressive, but there is limited evidence vendors can deliver on their promises. See page 5 for suggested criteria for evaluating vendor responses related to local food.

Remember that value alignment means achieving a win-win outcome with the vendors you are working with. If values are recognized by both parties, it makes setting and reaching shared goals easier.

3. Tell the market what you want

An effective RFX does a good job of telling the market what is desired or required. As more institutions have been asking for local food through Feed BC and other initiatives, the market has shifted and PSIs can and should expect more from their vendors when it comes to local foods.

It's encouraged to make the criteria relating to local foods mandatory for suppliers, not optional. It's also important to be clear on your definition, targets for local foods and expectations for reporting on these. The [Feed BC Program Standards including Definition of B.C. Food](#) and [Minimum Target for B.C. Food Expenditures](#) can be a useful starting point. You can include, and link to this, directly in your RFPs so that vendors know what your expectations are.

4. It takes time

Food service contracts are often long-term commitments so make sure you allow time to find the right vendor for you. It is common for a procurement process to take up to a year, with some lasting over two and a half years from planning through to execution. Consider doing an in-depth consultation with your campus community as part of the process and hiring external consultants to help in the preparation, development and evaluation of your bids.

5. Build in space for monitoring and continuous improvement

A common challenge for PSIs is how to hold vendors accountable to the existing promises in their bids. It's not just about reviewing a proposal, it's also about what happens once the contract is awarded. It is important to collaboratively develop key performance indicators, including targets for B.C. food expenditures with your vendors and to set up a regular reporting and review schedule. One suggestion is to build performance-based compensation into your contracts. Under a 'scorecard' system, vendors can earn their payments through delivery and quality control and can be enforced beyond the award stage.

One approach will not work for all institutions, it is best to think about what method suits the scale of your institution and what resources are available to you.

6. Focus on outcomes

Once your RFP process is complete, focus on outcomes and remember to celebrate the successes. In order for your contract to remain fruitful, you will need to 'seed, nourish and harvest' it. Building a strong relationship with your vendor will make it easier to progress towards your local food goals and reap the rewards of your hard work together.

Part B. Local Food RFP Template Tool and Evaluation Criteria

What is this tool?

This tool is for those who are looking to integrate more specific language relating to local food procurement and tracking into their next RFX for Food Service Operations. It encompasses a range of B.C. local food related interests, goals and activities and the Feed BC Program Standards to support users to seek services that accelerate and support participation across the Feed BC partnership streams.

This tool consists of two sections:

- **Section 1** contains template RFX language that can be used as-is or adapted to incorporate into your solicitation document. This language can be included as mandatory or rated criteria.
- **Section 2** provides evaluation criteria to interpret and evaluate vendors responses, both for RFX questions relating to sourcing B.C. local foods and questions relating to tracking and reporting. This section provides content to help Institutions form the scoring criteria related to local foods in a solicitation.

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Feed BC Definition of B.C. food

The RFX requirements include reference to the [Feed BC Program Standards](#) to support B.C. food procurement in institutions, including Feed BC B.C. food definition, minimum targets and tracking methodology for B.C. food expenditures. A clear definition of 'local' food is a fundamental step to clarify your values and communicate your intentions with supply chain partners. Your institution's definition should reflect your own interests and goals and, if possible, align with Feed BC's definition and metrics stated here to make it easier to advance your local food efforts with food service partners and other PSIs. Your institution may choose to have a more ambitious goal for B.C. foods and Feed BC partners are encouraged to adapt the definition and targets in this tool to reflect this.

How to use Section 1:

1. Review the language below, choose the appropriate clauses and determine any additional details that may need to be included.
2. Adapt the language as needed and insert into your RFP documentation so that vendors can provide information related to their ability to meet your local food requirements.

How to use Section 2:

1. Use the suggested criteria to help inform your scoring scale for evaluating vendor responses.
2. If you are scoring these criteria alongside other sustainability requirements, then consider the general trend among the answers to help inform your overall sustainability score.

Section 1: B.C. Food (Feed BC) RFX Language

[Institution] is committed to working to increase the use of B.C. food¹ with [Feed BC](#), a provincial initiative to encourage, inspire and support a shift to more B.C. food in government-supported facilities.

[Institution] seeks Proponents that will incorporate, support, and contribute to Feed BC by:

1. Sourcing B.C. food to achieve a minimum of [30%] B.C. food expenditures
2. Tracking and reporting on B.C. food purchases including the dollar value / % of B.C. food expenditures
3. Promoting B.C. food, and businesses

Proponents should address all three components in their response as follows:

1. Source B.C. food

How will you achieve a minimum of [30%] B.C. food expenditures? Please describe your experience and provide examples of strategies you will use, such as:

- menu development that promotes B.C. food and other institution interests such as 'from scratch', seasonal, and/or indigenous recipes
- outreach, education and coaching with B.C. food suppliers, industry associations, wholesalers, and distributors within and outside of main distribution channels to seek out, and purchase new B.C. foods
- inclusion of, and purchasing from, regional, small, and medium-sized, social enterprise, and Indigenous-owned food and beverage businesses (as well as business owned by other underrepresented groups)
- other initiatives, opportunities or infrastructure that brings more B.C. food into programs and services

2. Track and Report on B.C. food purchases:

- a) Describe how you track B.C. food expenditures and products in relation to the Feed BC Program Standards. [See: Methodology for Tracking B.C. Food Expenditures and Product Purchases.](#)
- b) Describe how you will report to [institution] at least annually (and upon request) the following:
 - i. dollar value and % of B.C. food expenditures of total food expenditures;
 - ii. a listing of all B.C. produced, and B.C. processed food products purchased.

See example Feed BC Tracking and Reporting Template Form on pages 11-12 of the [Feed BC Partner Guide](#).

- c) Please provide samples of these reports.
- d) Describe how you will use this tracking information to measure, evaluate, and report on progress towards and beyond the [30%] target.

3. Promote B.C. foods and businesses

Describe the marketing and promotion activities you will undertake for [institution clients/beyond] to promote the B.C. foods and B.C. food suppliers/businesses used by the Proponent [at the institution, program, or service]; please detail your company resources, and provide samples of marketing material.

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¹ Feed BC B.C. food definitions: A final product produced and/or processed within British Columbia. For a full definition and examples visit: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/feedbc/feed-bc-program/feed_bc_program_standards_-_definitions_of_bc_foods.pdf

Section 2: Evaluation Criteria

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1. Source B.C. food to achieve a minimum of [30%] B.C. food expenditure.	
<i>How do you propose to meet a minimum of [30%] B.C. food target?</i>	
Poor (0-4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proponent fails to address the questions, or details very minimal operational and/or procurement capacity for B.C. food sourcing. Proponent provides insufficient or limited details or examples of existing relationships with B.C. producers and processors, dedicated operational staff, business practices, supply chain partners and other capacity indicators.
Good (5-7)	<p>Proponent provides a detailed response that includes most of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrated operational and procurement capacity for B.C. food sourcing including existing relationships with B.C. producers and processors, dedicated staff, business practices and supply chain partners commitment to regularly plan for, implement, and evaluate B.C. food sourcing goals/targets <p>Proponent provides insufficient to limited information on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> capacity for strategies and tactics to achieve and grow B.C. food targets based on institution’s interests demonstrated knowledge of B.C. food products, suppliers and food and agriculture businesses demonstrated experience developing and implementing B.C. or local food targets in a similar food service context
Excellent (8-10)	<p>Proponent Meets the criteria of “Good” Scoring AND Proponent provides a detailed and comprehensive response that includes all or most of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes experience and/or capacity for strategies and tactics to achieve and grow B.C. food goals/targets based on institution’s interests, such as: use of procurement pathways or practices that allow for greater inclusion of local/B.C. food products such as small and medium sized and regional food and agriculture businesses. initiatives or practices that support inclusion of and purchasing from social enterprise and Indigenous-owned food and beverage companies (and other underrepresented groups). outreach, education and coaching efforts with B.C. food suppliers, industry associations, wholesalers, and distributors within and outside of main distribution channels to increase B.C. food. describes other initiatives, infrastructure, or opportunities such as equipment to grow, harvest, preserve or prepare local food. Demonstrates knowledge of B.C. food products, suppliers and food and agriculture businesses and details more than one approach to pursuing and expanding B.C. food inventory with supply chain partners. Demonstrated experience developing and implementing B.C. or local food targets in a similar food service context
2. Track and Report on B.C. food purchases.	
<i>Describe how you track B.C. food expenditures and products in relation to the Feed BC Program Standards. See: Methodology for Tracking B.C. Food Expenditures and Product Purchases. Describe how you will report to [institution]</i>	

<i>at least annually (and upon request). Describe how you will use this tracking information to measure, evaluate, and report on progress towards and beyond the [30%] target.</i>	
Poor (0-4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proponent fails to address the questions, or details limited capability to B.C. food expenditures and purchases Proponent provides insufficient report samples
Good (5-7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proponent provides a detailed response that demonstrates most of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> operational capacity including dedicated personnel and business processes for the ongoing tracking of B.C. food expenditures and purchases capability for reporting on the dollar value and % of B.C. food expenditures and a listing of all B.C. produced, and B.C. processed food purchases Proponent may provide 1 or more report samples including dollar value and % of B.C. food expenditures Demonstrates knowledge of Feed BC program Standards
Excellent (8-10)	<p>Proponent Meets the criteria of “Good” Scoring AND:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a detailed and comprehensive response that includes capability to report on and use B.C. food tracking or other procurement metrics to evaluate and measure sourcing goals/targets, strategies, and tactics, and/or successful and unsuccessful efforts to source more B.C. foods Proponent includes 1 or more report samples including dollar value and % of B.C. food expenditures of total food expenditures and a list of all B.C. produced, and B.C. processed, food purchases Demonstrates knowledge of Feed BC program Standards

3. Promote B.C. foods and businesses

Describe the marketing and promotion activities you will undertake for [institution clients/beyond] to promote the B.C. foods and B.C. food suppliers used by the Proponent [at the institution, program, or service].

Poor (0-4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proponent fails to provide details or examples of initiatives, programs, or resources that would support B.C./local food education, promotion or learning initiatives.
Good (5-7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proponent provides a detailed response indicating at least one way they will support B.C./local food education, promotion or learning initiatives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of social media, in-house signage to promote/showcase B.C. food and businesses/ suppliers Labelling a B.C. food or menu items Hosts events or other engagement activities around B.C. food and business Proponent provides at least one example of existing marketing material relating to local food or makes a commitment to developing more materials.
Excellent (8-10)	<p>Proponent Meets the criteria of “Good” Scoring AND:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides a detailed response indicating multiple ways they will support B.C./local food education, promotion or learning initiatives through signage, social media, storytelling and/or hosting/supporting community-events provides greater than one example of existing marketing material and initiatives relating to local food promotion

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