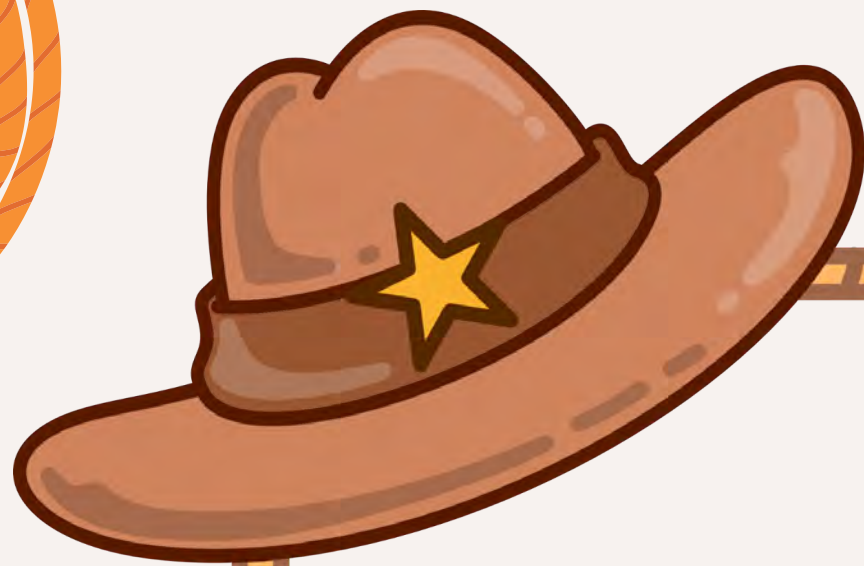


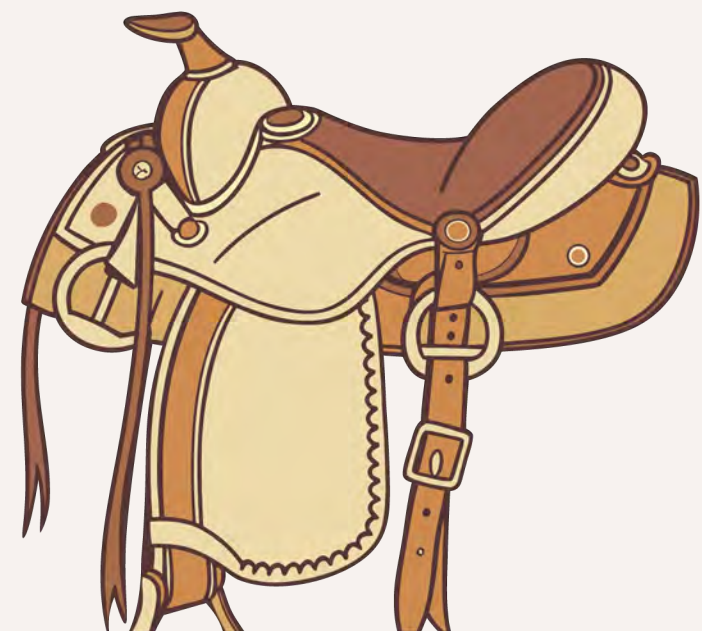


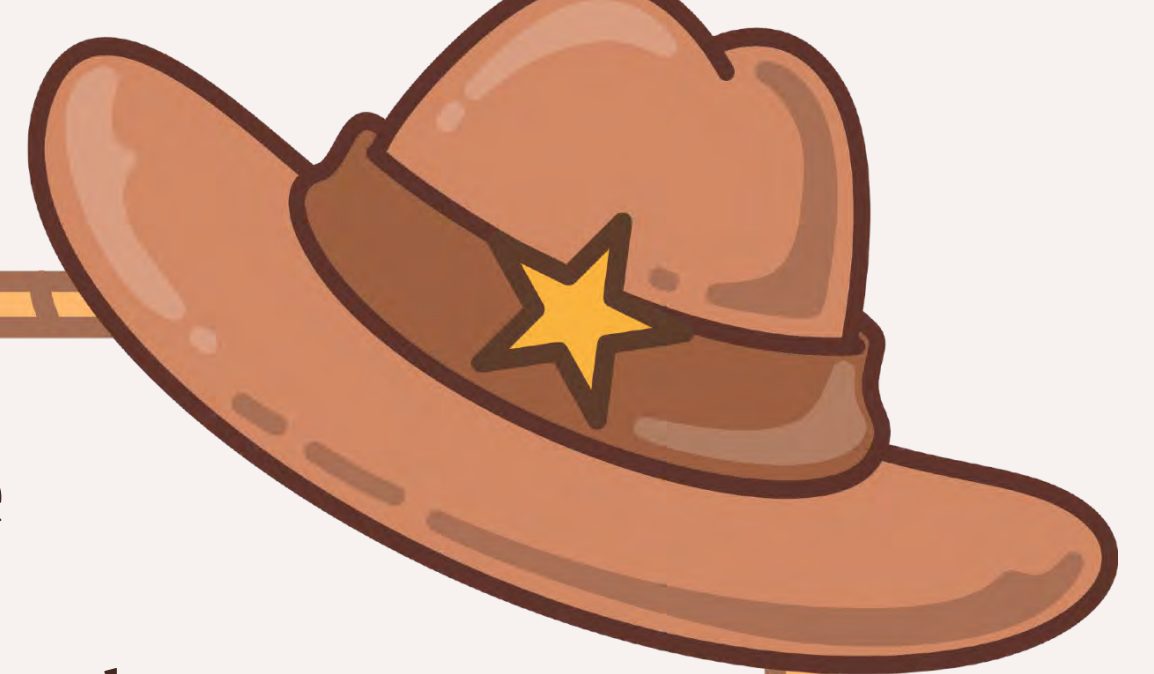
Saddling Up for Success: Expanding Local Foods Procurement Across South Texas Schools

South Texas Cooperative - Child Nutrition Program

Kimberly Keller

Lead-Local Foods Procurement





The Local Foods Initiative

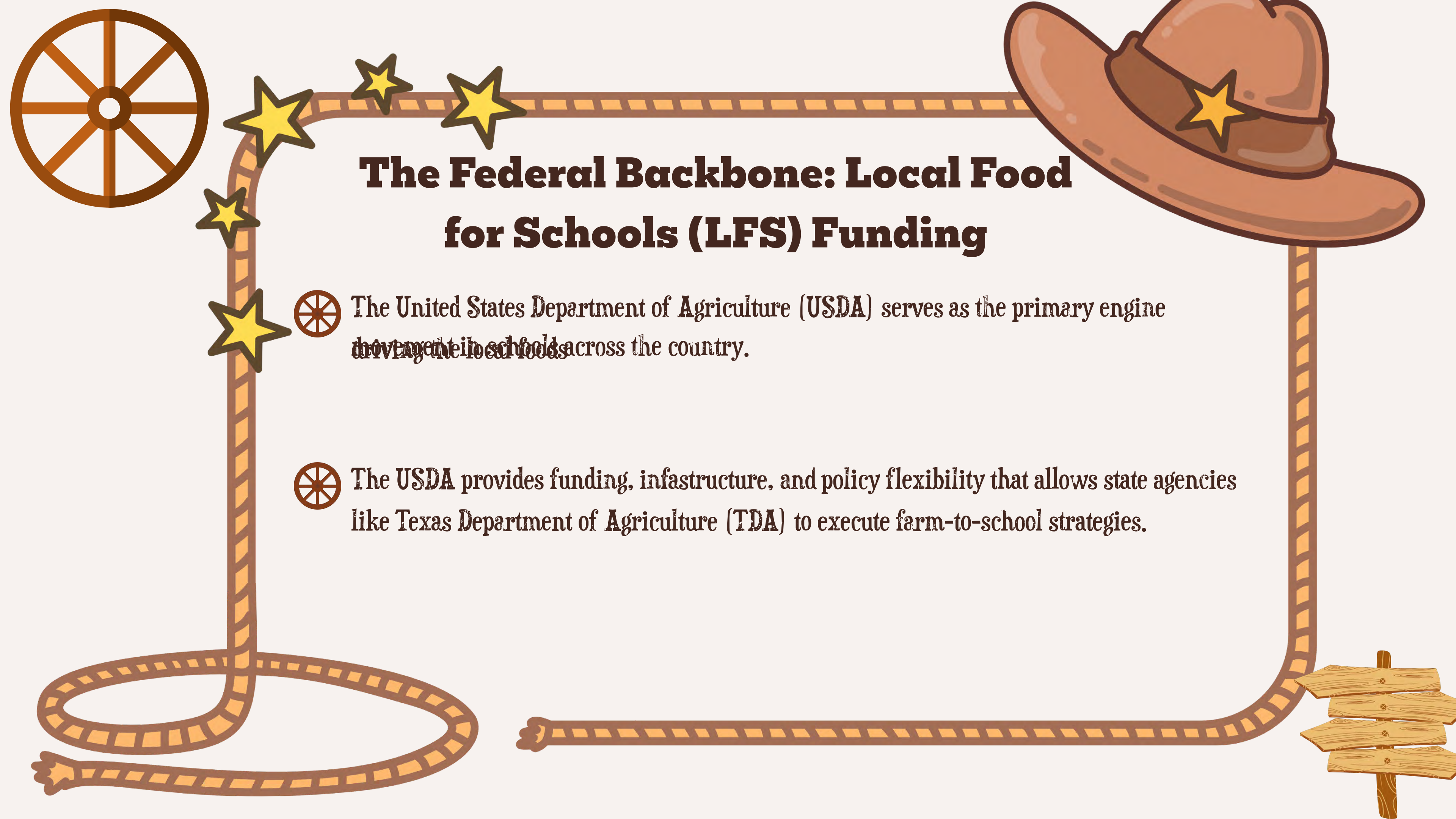


Objective: Drive menu planning towards fresh, regionally sourced items without disrupting participation, increasing waste, or stressing kitchen labor



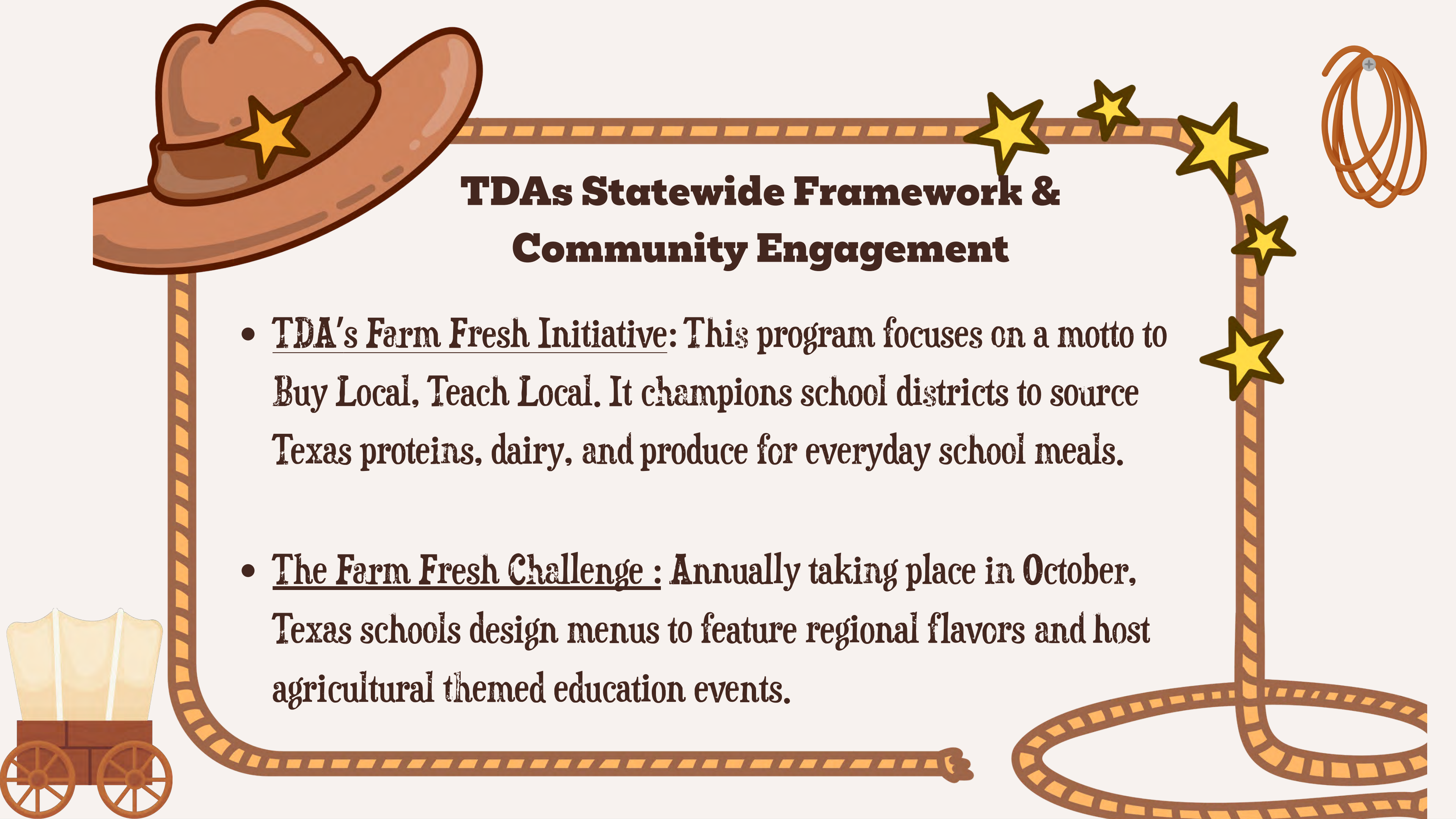
Align district goals with the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and STC-CNP to connect local school districts with Texas agriculture commodities





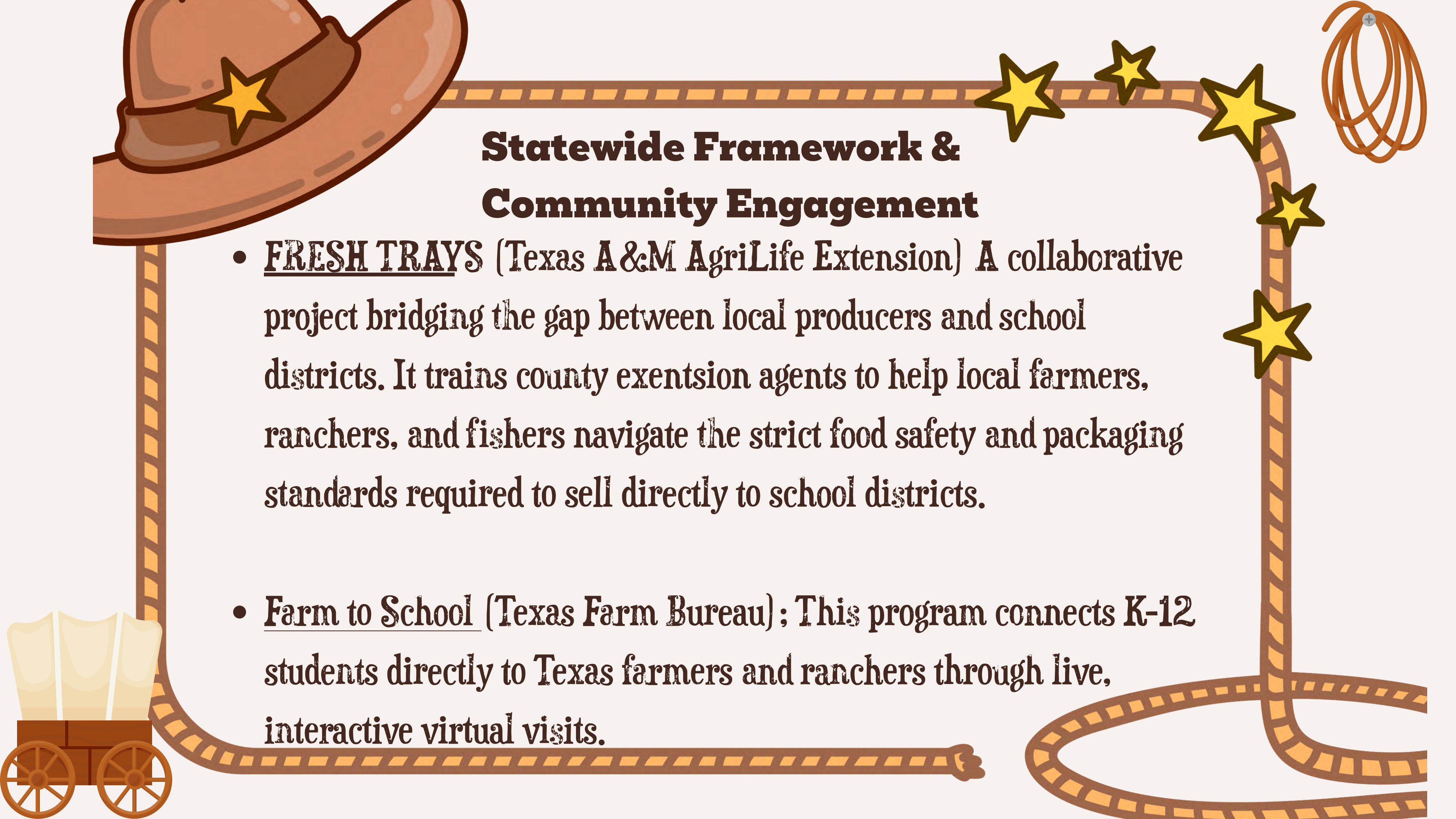
The Federal Backbone: Local Food for Schools (LFS) Funding

-  The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) serves as the primary engine driving the local food movement in schools across the country.
 -  The USDA provides funding, infrastructure, and policy flexibility that allows state agencies like Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) to execute farm-to-school strategies.
- 



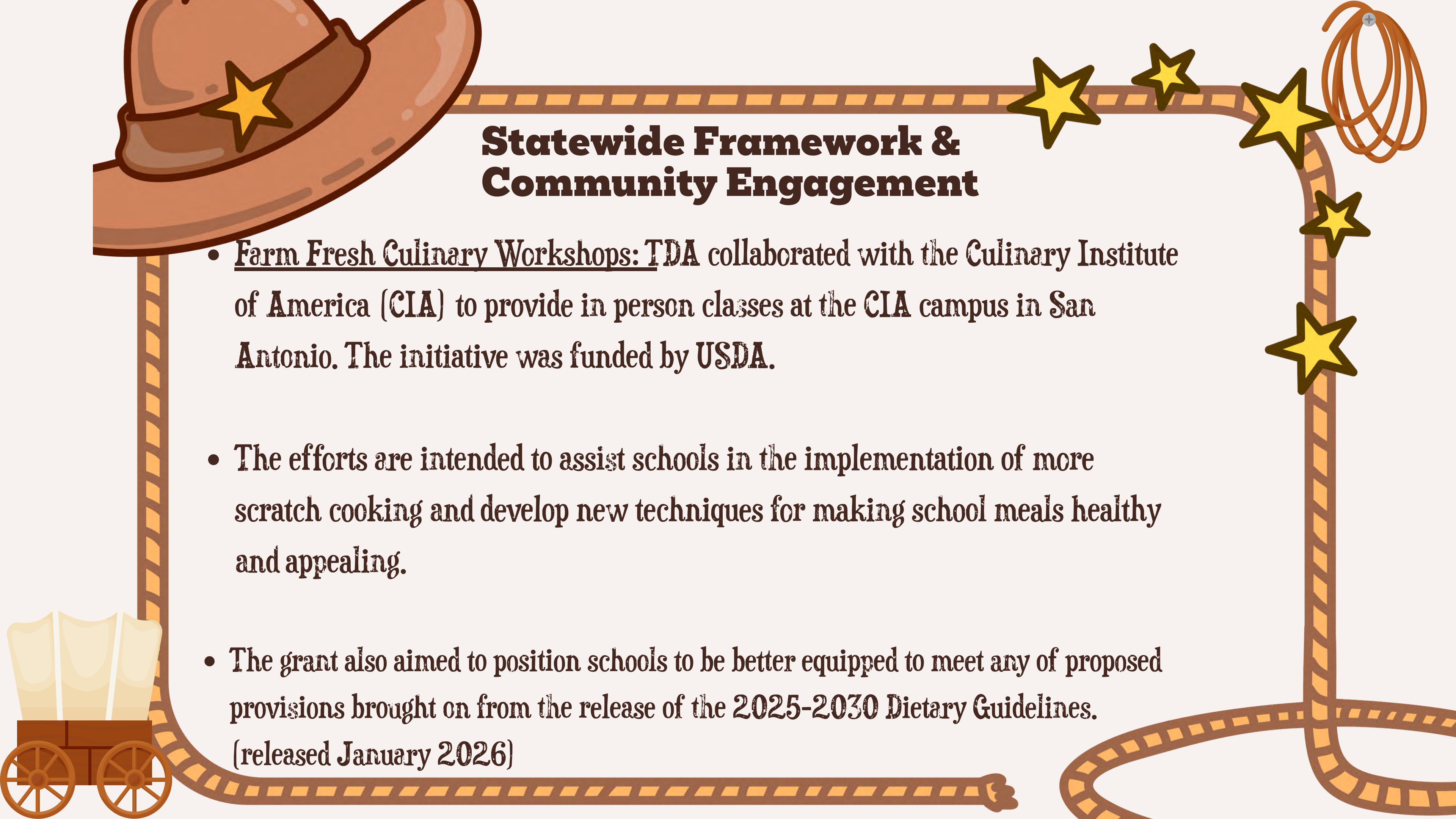
TDA's Statewide Framework & Community Engagement

- TDA's Farm Fresh Initiative: This program focuses on a motto to Buy Local, Teach Local. It champions school districts to source Texas proteins, dairy, and produce for everyday school meals.
- The Farm Fresh Challenge : Annually taking place in October, Texas schools design menus to feature regional flavors and host agricultural themed education events.



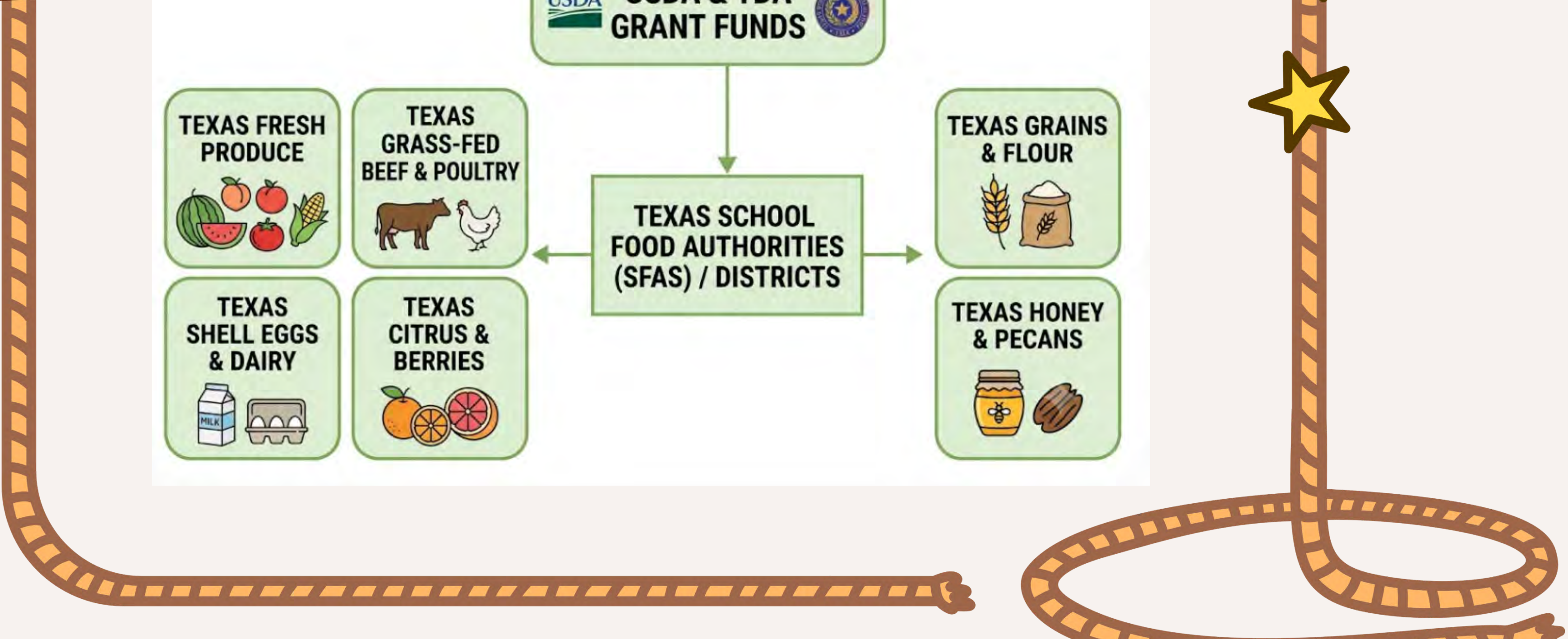
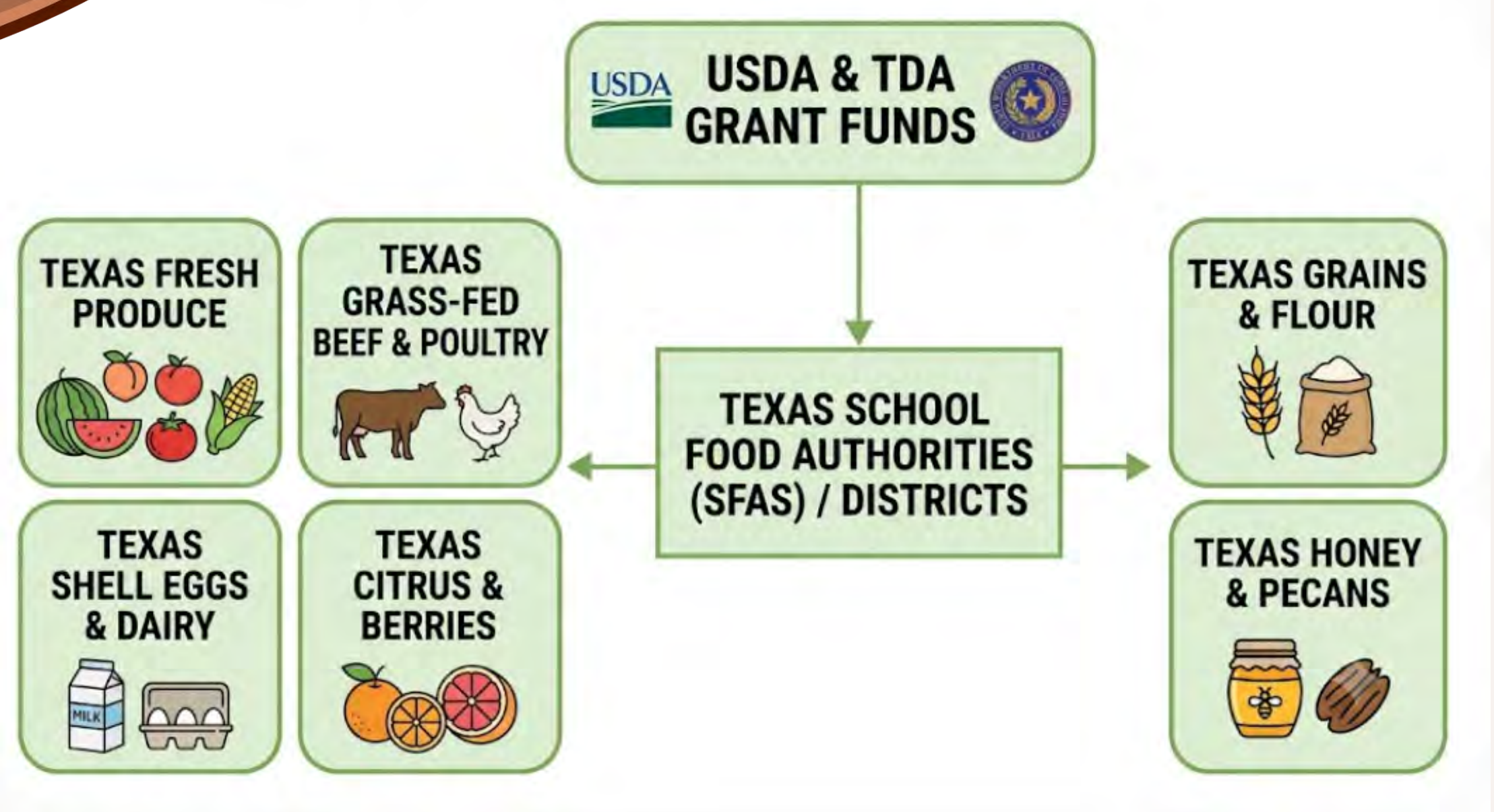
Statewide Framework & Community Engagement

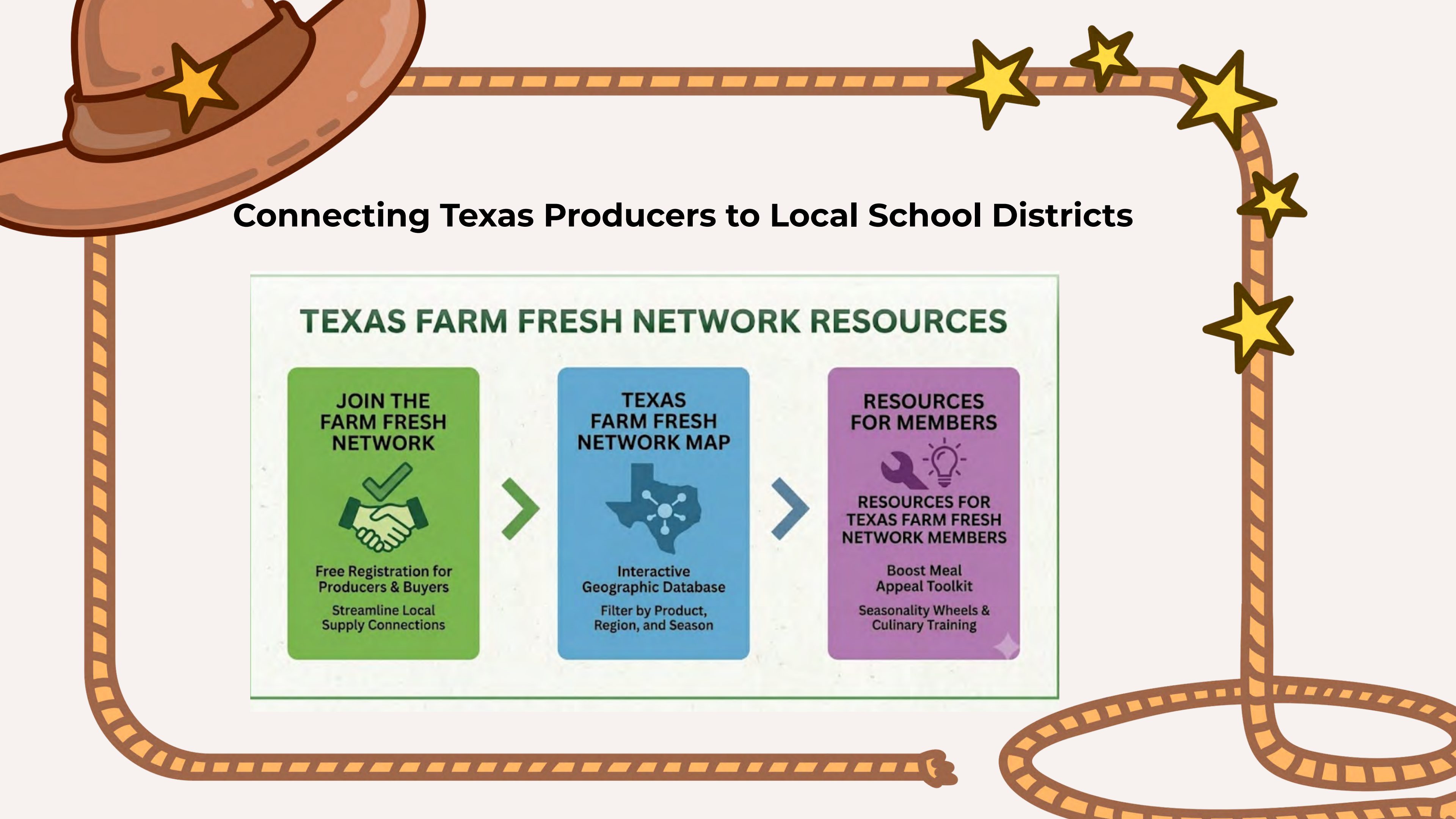
- **FRESH TRAYS** (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension) A collaborative project bridging the gap between local producers and school districts. It trains county extension agents to help local farmers, ranchers, and fishers navigate the strict food safety and packaging standards required to sell directly to school districts.
- **Farm to School** (Texas Farm Bureau): This program connects K-12 students directly to Texas farmers and ranchers through live, interactive virtual visits.



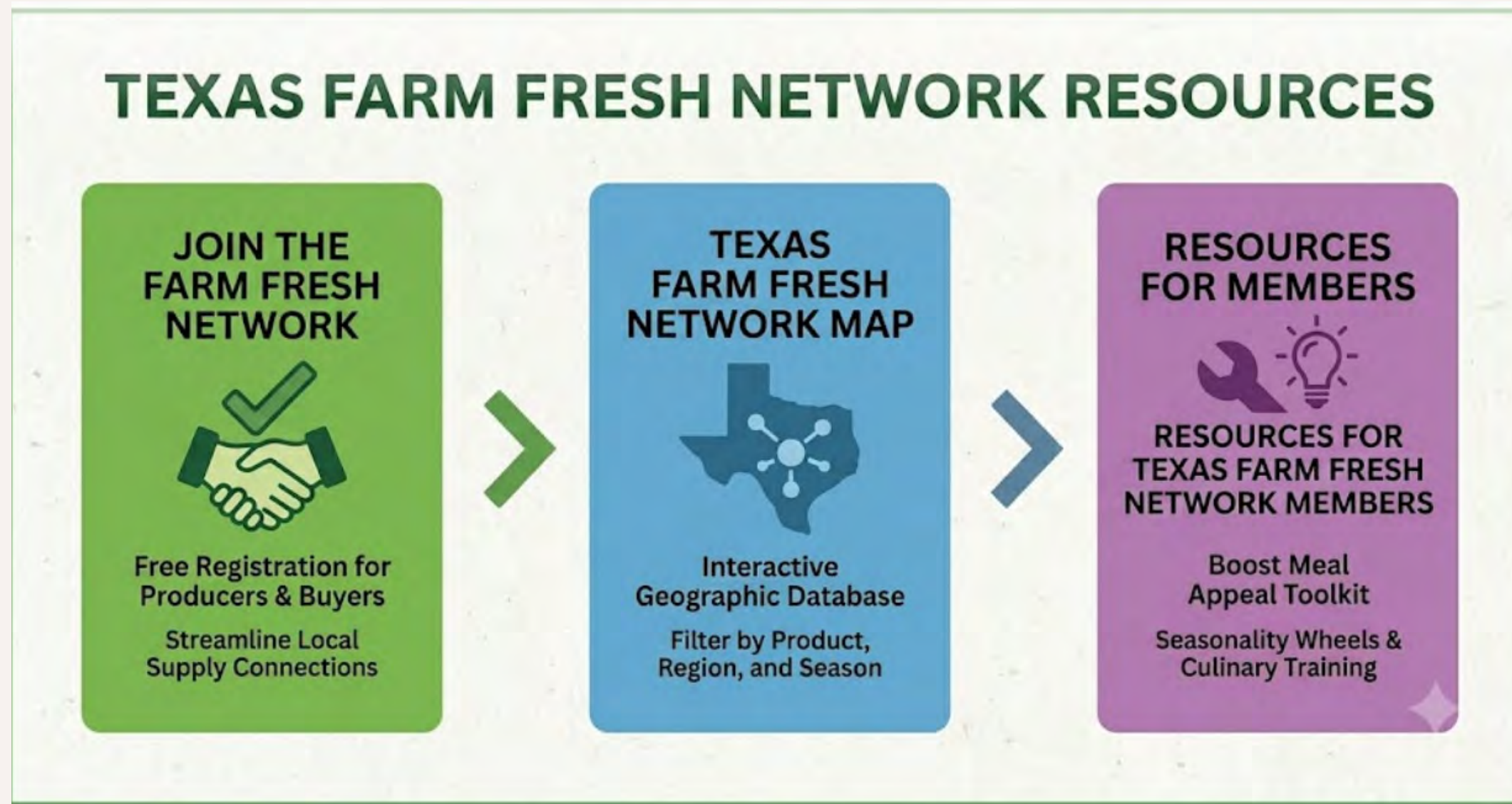
Statewide Framework & Community Engagement

- Farm Fresh Culinary Workshops: TDA collaborated with the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) to provide in person classes at the CIA campus in San Antonio. The initiative was funded by USDA.
- The efforts are intended to assist schools in the implementation of more scratch cooking and develop new techniques for making school meals healthy and appealing.
- The grant also aimed to position schools to be better equipped to meet any of proposed provisions brought on from the release of the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines.
(released January 2026)

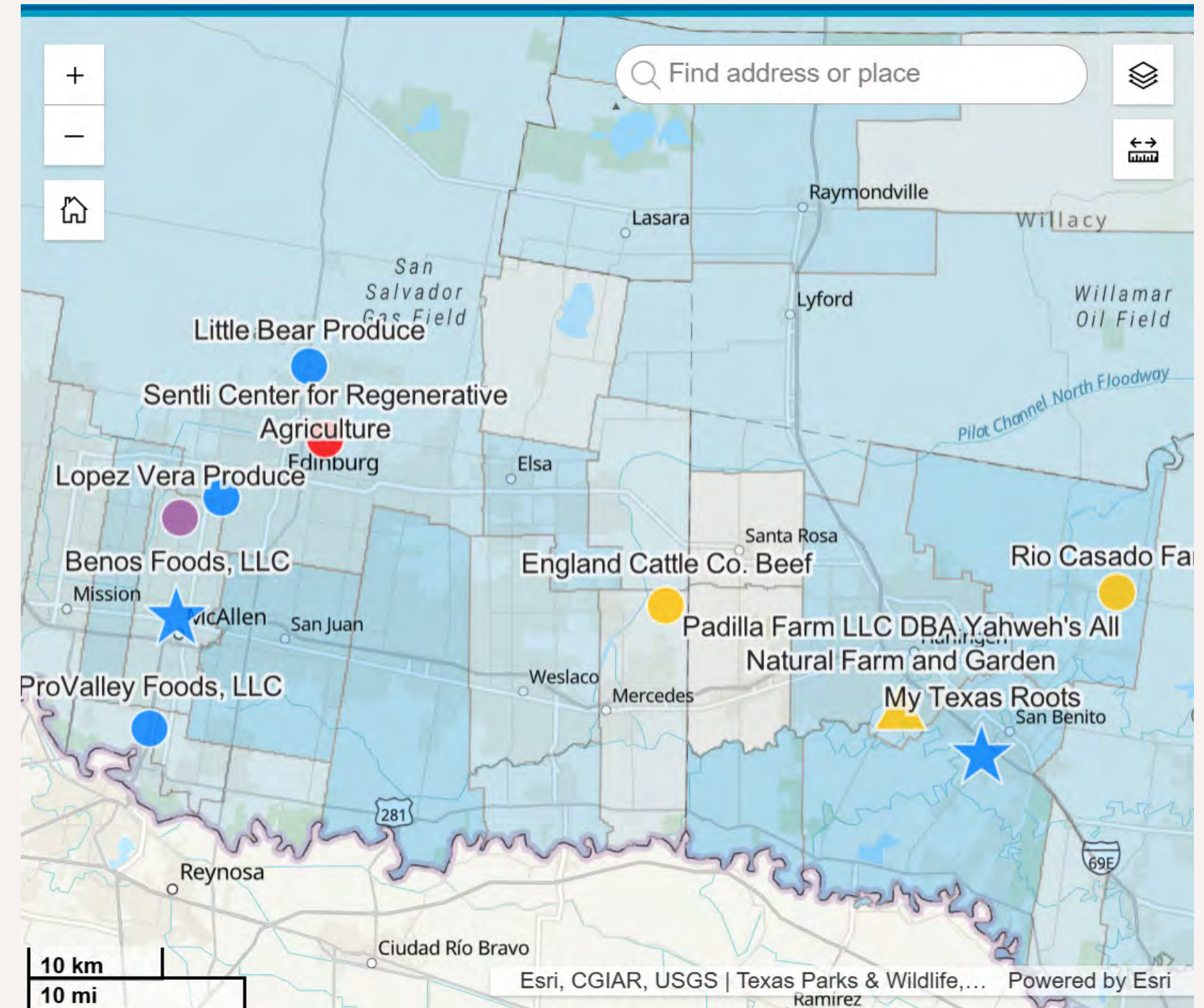
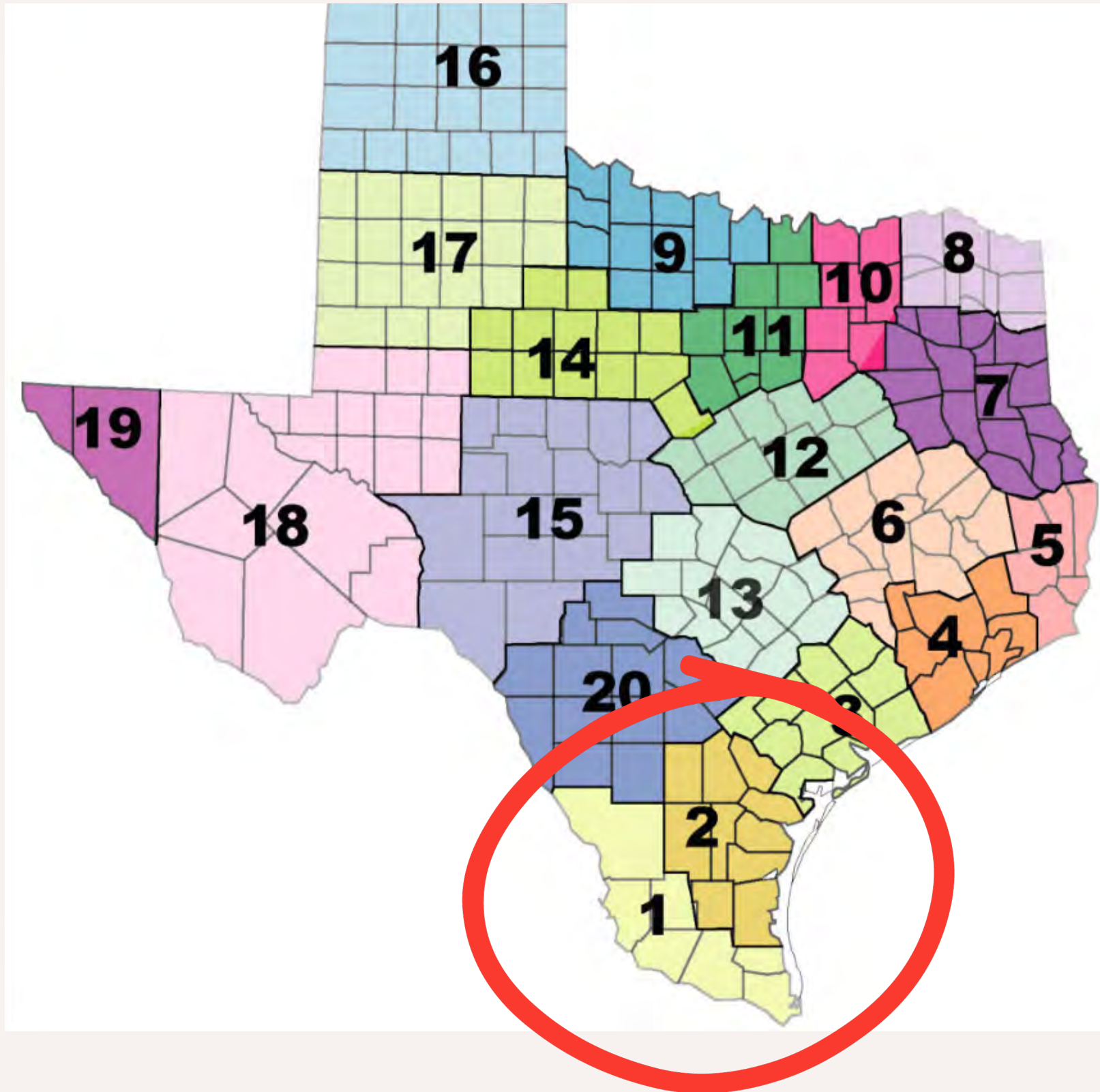


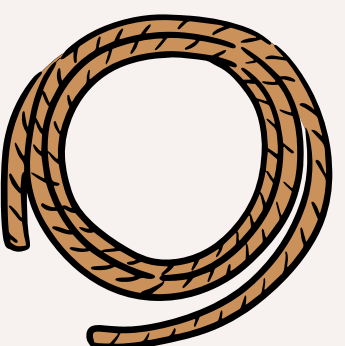


Connecting Texas Producers to Local School Districts



Bridging the Gap: The Local Foods Movement at the South Texas Level

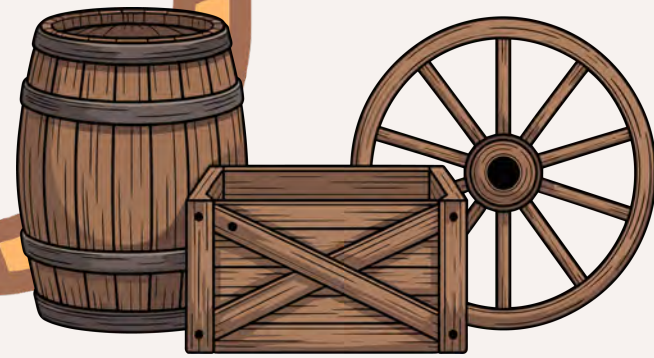




Texas Farm Fresh Network Map
@ South Texas Level

South Texas Farm Fresh Network Members

Little Bear Produce	England Cattle Company
Lopez Vera Produce	ProValley Foods, LLC
Sentli Center For Regenerative Agriculture	Padilla Farm LLC DBA Yahweh’s All-Natural Farm and Garden
Verdant Exchange	My Texas Roots
	Brownsville Wellness Coalition



Texas Farm Fresh Network Producer Output

Sentli Center for Regenerative Agriculture

Address:	2806 E Rogers Rd, Edinburg, TX, 78542
County:	Hidalgo
Distribution Area:	Distribution up to 100 miles
Website:	https://www.sentli.org
Contact Name:	Shakira Raygoza
Phone:	(956) 472-7436
Email:	info@sentli.org

Fruits/Vegetables

	Availability	Details
Beets:	Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, Nov, Dec	
Cabbage:	Jan, Feb, Mar, Nov, Dec	
Carrot:	Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, Nov, Dec	
Cucumber:	Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Oct, Nov, Dec	
Greens:	Jan, Feb, Mar, Nov, Dec	
Melon:	May, Jun, Jul	Watermelon
Squash:	Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Oct, Nov, Dec	Squash, summer (i.e., yellow, zucchini)
Tomato:	Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Oct, Nov, Dec	

PRODUCER PROFILE & CROP AVAILABILITY

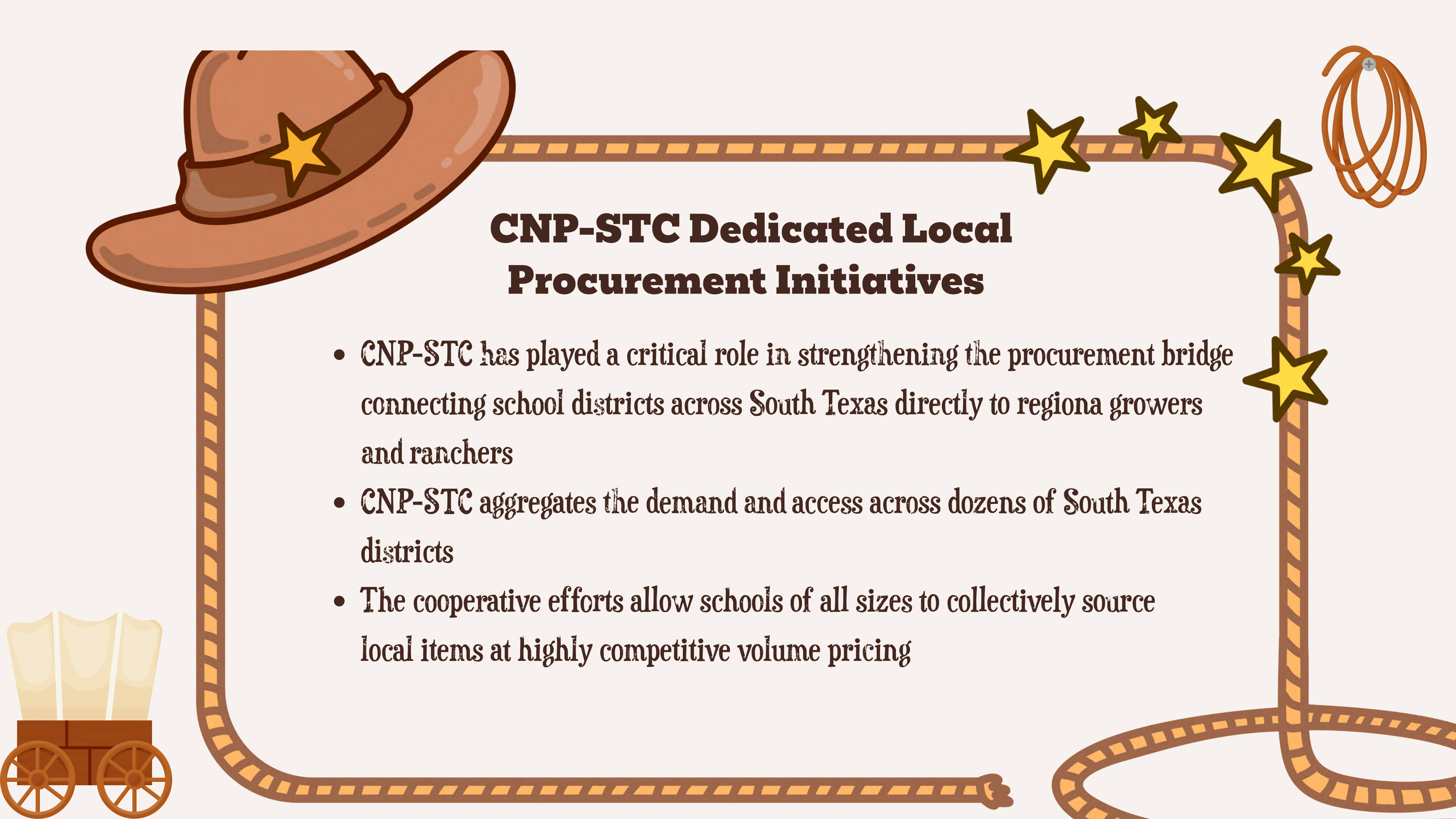
Verified regional agricultural asset mapping for South Texas school procurement networks.

Sentli Center for Regenerative Agriculture

-  **ADDRESS & REGION**
2806 E Rogers Rd,
Edinburg, TX, 78542 (Hidalgo County)
-  **LOGISTICAL FOOTPRINT**
Distribution reach up to 100 miles
-  **PRIMARY CONTACT**
Shakira Raygoza
-  **PHONE**
(956) 472-7436
-  **EMAIL ADDRESS**
info@sentli.org
-  **WEB INFRASTRUCTURE**
www.sentli.org

Fruit / Vegetable	Seasonal Availability Window
Beets	January, February, March, April, November, December
Cabbage	January, February, March, November, December
Carrot	January, February, March, April, November, December
Cucumber	March, April, May, June, October, November, December
Greens	January, February, March, November, December
Melon	May, June, July Watermelon
Squash	March, April, May, June, October, November, December Summer, Yellow, Zucchini
Tomato	March, April, May, June, October, November, December





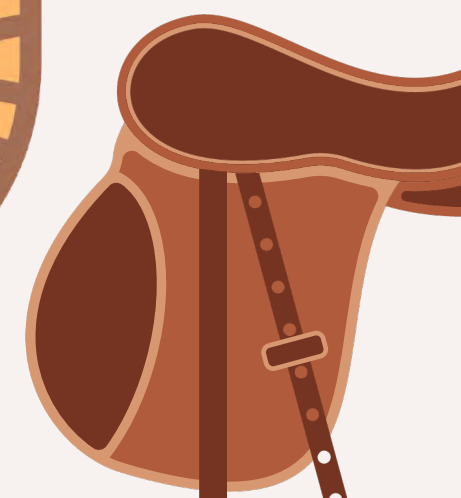
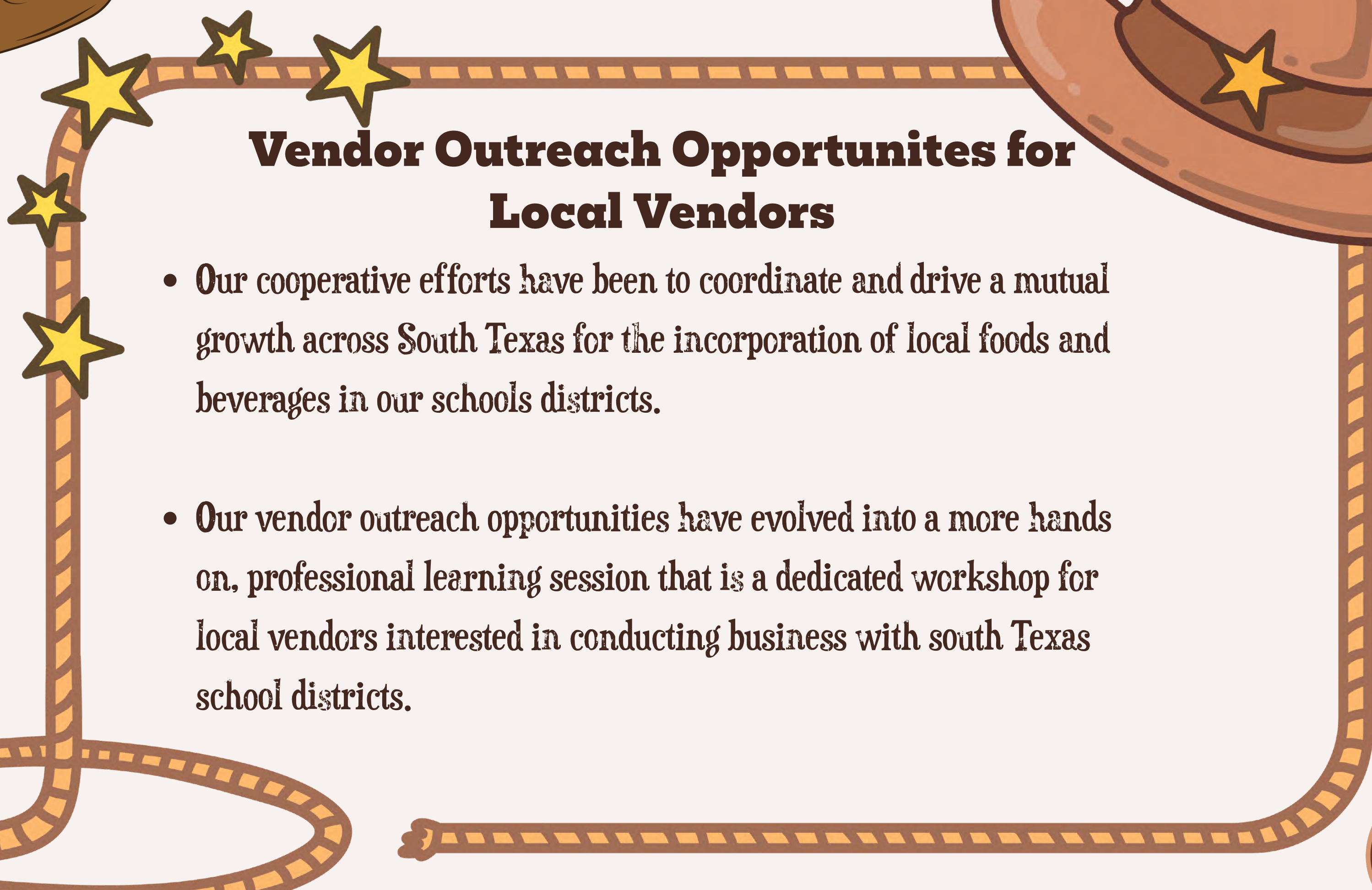
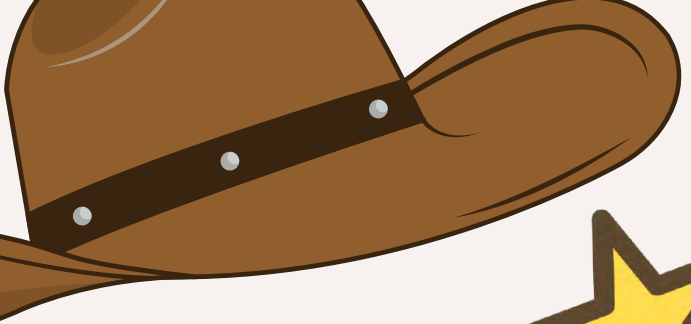
CNP-STC Dedicated Local Procurement Initiatives

- CNP-STC has played a critical role in strengthening the procurement bridge connecting school districts across South Texas directly to regional growers and ranchers
- CNP-STC aggregates the demand and access across dozens of South Texas districts
- The cooperative efforts allow schools of all sizes to collectively source local items at highly competitive volume pricing



CNP-STC Dedicated Local Procurement Initiatives

- **Vendor Outreach Events**
- **The Local Beefs RFP**
- **The Fresh Produce RFP**
- **Chef Collaborations & Culinary Demonstrations**
- **The annual STC-CNP Food Show**
- **The Food Summit 2027**



Vendor Outreach Opportunitites for Local Vendors

- Our cooperative efforts have been to coordinate and drive a mutual growth across South Texas for the incorporation of local foods and beverages in our schools districts.
- Our vendor outreach opportunities have evolved into a more hands on, professional learning session that is a dedicated workshop for local vendors interested in conducting business with south Texas school districts.

Striving for Vendor Success & Integration

- 1. Where to Find Active Bid Opportunities
 - Procurement Portal: eBuyOne (Bonfire Hub)
 - What is is used for: Region One posts all bid opportunities, answers vendor questions, issues addenda, and publishes official award notices through this platform
- 2. How to Get Started as a Vendor
 - Register on eBuyOne
 - Attending these workshops assist with creating a vendor profile in our eBuyOne portal.
 - Vendor can select appropriate commodity codes to receive automated alerts for relevant bid openings.
- 3 Live Platform Training & Navigation
- 4 Networking Opportunities



CNP-South Texas Cooperative VENDOR OUTREACH

NOVEMBER 12, 2025 | 9 AM - 12 PM

JOIN US TO:

- Learn how to get your locally grown and raised products into school cafeterias.
- Learn about resources, grant opportunities, and trainings to advance your ranch and farm.



KEEPING IT LOCAL!



- CNP-South Texas Cooperative members - join us to connect with local cattle ranchers, beef processors and produce growers

INFORMATION

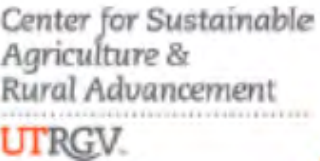
Location: Region One ESC at Edinburg
1900 W. Schunior Edinburg, TX
Starr County Room | Workshop #376964

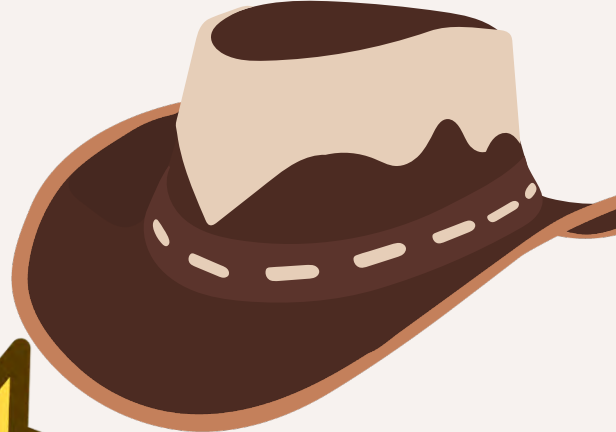
Can't attend in person? Join us on Zoom:
<https://esc1.zoom.us/j/92414458151>

REGISTER NOW!

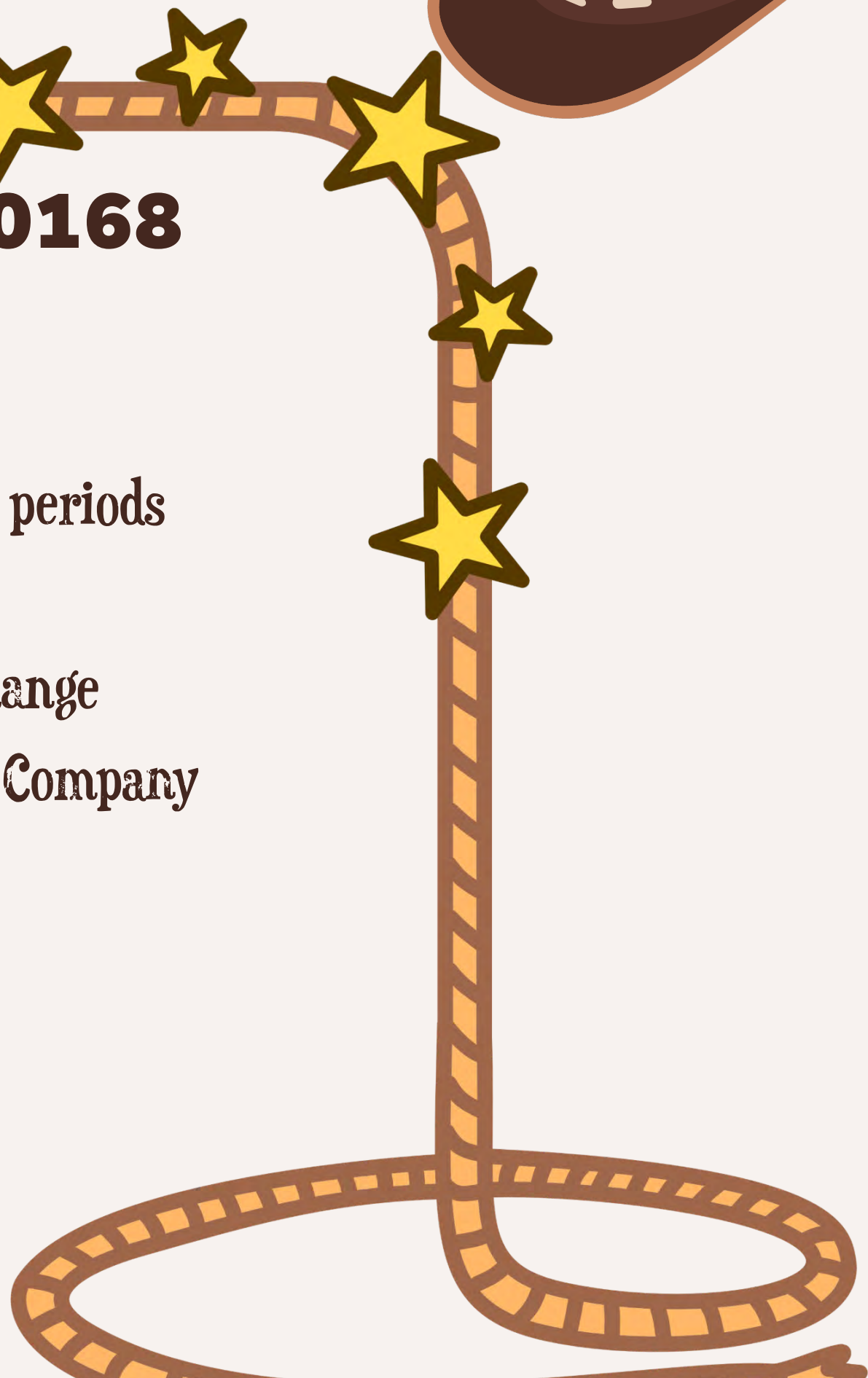


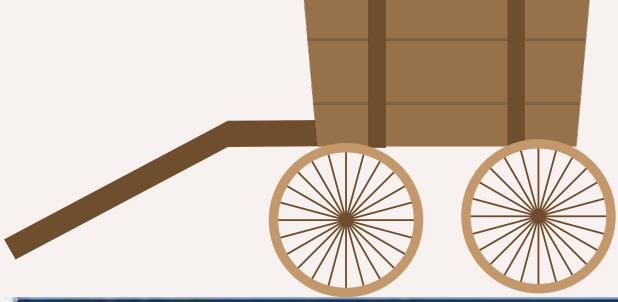
In partnership with:





Local Beef Products RFP 25-0168

- Awarded on May 14, 2026 for immediate use
 - Effective May 14, 2026 - June 30, 2027
 - Extension options for four (4) additional one (1) year periods
 - 7 Awarded Vendors
 - Asprire Staffing Incorporated dba Verdant Exchange
 - Elstner Meat Processing LLC dba Weimar Meat Company
 - England Cattle Company, LLC
 - Felitos Finest LLC dba 2F Akaushi Beef
 - Pel Agro LLC
 - Pro Valley Foods, LLC
 - The Common Market, Inc
- 
- 



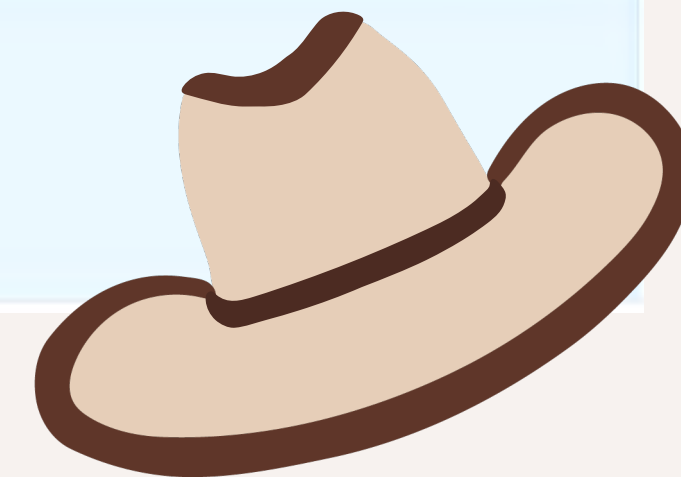
Child Nutrition Program - South Texas Cooperative (CNP-STC)

Local Beef Products RFP 25-0168 — Master Vendor Contact & Tier Directory

Vendor / Firm Name	Coop Tier	Customer Service Contact	Phone Number	Email Address
Felito's Finest LLC dba 2F Akaushi Beef	Tier 1	Stephanie Martinez	956-735-3707	stephie@2fakaushibeef.com
Aspire Staffing Inc. dba Verdant Exchange	Tier 1	Noemi Colmenero	956-261-4209	noemi@verdantexchange.net
		Hernan Colmenero	956-261-0742	hernan@verdantexchange.net
PEL AGRO LLC	Tier 1	Emmanuel L. Pierre	281-901-4552	pelagrollc@gmail.com
England Cattle Company, LLC	Tier 2	Brooke England	956-662-0810	brooke@englandcattleco.com
Elstner Meat Processing LLC, dba Weimar Meat Company	Tier 3	Sadie Elstner	979-484-9749	sadie@weimarmeatto.com
Pro Valley Foods, LLC	Tier 3	Janelle Saldana	956-800-4019	jsaldana@provalleyfoods.com
The Common Market Texas, Inc	Tier 3	Hallie Casey / Logistics Team	832-356-5011	orderscmtx@thecommonmarket.org

Local Beef Tier # and Description:

- Tier 1: Raised and Processed within Region 1 and Region 2 Counties
- Tier 2: Raised within Region 1 and Region 2 Counties and Processed anywhere in Texas
- Tier 3: Raised and Processed anywhere in Texas



REGION ONE ESC — CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM SOUTH TEXAS COOPERATIVE **Local**

Beef Products Master Specifications (RFP 25-0168)

Contract Term: Board Approval (May 14, 2026) through June 30, 2027 with four (4) one-year extension options.

#	ITEM CATEGORY	TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS & QUALITY REQUIREMENTS	TARGET SIZING / PACK	STATE
1	Beef Brisket (Light)	Raw, USDA Select or higher, unseasoned, trimmed with no sinew or silver skin attached.	Catch wt approx 15-20 lb; 20 lb/case	Frozen
2	Beef Brisket (Heavy)	Raw, USDA Select or higher, unseasoned, trimmed with no sinew or silver skin attached.	Catch wt approx 35-40 lb; 40 lb/case	Frozen
3	Beef Brisket (Deckle-Off)	Whole, Deckle-off, Boneless, NAMP-IMPS 120 (includes Point & Flat). Navel end removed to caudal edge of specified rib; internal pectoral fat tissue completely removed.	Bulk case: 30-40 lb	Frozen
4	Beef Cuts into Strips	Raw, USDA unseasoned, trimmed with no sinew/silver skin. Zero additives: No water, phosphates, binders, or extenders. Tailored for fajita/stir-fry applications.	Pack 4 / 10 lb bags (40 lb total)	Frozen
5	Beef Inside Skirts	Raw, USDA unseasoned, trimmed whole pieces/slabs. Zero additives: No added water, phosphates, binders, or extenders. Fully compliant with Texas sourcing lines.	Case weight approx 25-50 lb	Frozen
6	Beef, Cubed/Diced (Vac)	USDA cut, 1/2" to 7/8" uniform cubes, raw, unseasoned, no sinew/silver skin. Zero additives: No water, phosphates, binders, or extenders.	Pack 10 lb vac-sealed; 30 lb/case	Frozen
7	Beef, Cubed/Diced (Bulk)	Raw, USDA cut, 1/2" to 7/8" cubes, unseasoned, trimmed cleanly. Zero additives: No water, phosphates, binders, or extenders. Intended for institutional stew uses.	Pack 4 / 10 lb bags (40 lb total)	Frozen
8	Beef, Ground (80/20)	100% pure ground beef, 80% lean to 20% fat ratio. Zero additives: No added water, phosphates, or extenders. ("Or equal" lines are fully acceptable).	Pack 10 lb pks; 4/10 lb per case	Frozen
9	Beef, Ground (85/15)	100% pure ground beef, 85% lean to 15% fat ratio. Zero additives: No added water, phosphates, or extenders. Raw bulk processing block.	Pack 10 lb pks; max 4/10 lb/case	Frozen
10	Beef, Ground (Bulk)	100% pure raw commercial ground beef line. Sized for volume food preparation blocks.	Pack 8 / 5 lb (40 lb total)	Frozen
11	Beef Patties (Bulk)	100% pure ground burger patties, 1/3 lb each, 80/20 ratio. Zero additives: No water, phosphates, extenders, or fillers allowed. Raw processing line.	Pack 10 lb pks; 4/10 lb per case	Frozen
12	Beef Patties (Layered)	100% pure 80/20 burger patty, 1/3 lb. Zero added water/extendere/fillers. Layered 3 patties per pack separated by food-grade paper; vacuum-sealed for maximum freshness.	Pack 1 lb packs; 40 lb/case	Frozen



PRODUCT CODE# PRODUCT DESCRIPTION	88010 BRISKET 3 PER CASE 30-40 LB \$4.99LB \$149-\$199	88020 SLICED BEEF STRPS 4/10 LB PER CASE \$7.25LB \$290.00	88030 CUBED BEEF CUT 7/8" 3/10 LB PER CASE \$7.25LB \$217.00	88035 CUBED BEEF CUT 7/8" 4/10 LB PER CASE \$7.25LB \$290.00	88040 GROUND BEEF 80/20 4/10 LB CASE \$5.65LB \$226.00	88050 GROUND BEEF 85.15 4/10 LB CASE \$5.99LB \$239.00	88060 80/20 PATTIES 1/3LB 4/10 LB LOOSE PACK \$5.99LB \$239.00	88070 80/20 PATTIES 1/3LB 3/PKG*V.P. 40LB CASES \$6.25LB \$250.00
POUNDS NEEDED PER WEEK:			-					
POUNDS NEEDED PER MONTH:			450 lbs per month					
AUG-26			15 cases					
SEP-26								
OCT-26			15 cases					
NOV-26								
DEC-26								
JAN-27			15 cases					
FEB-27								
MAR-27								
APR-27								
MAY-27			15 cases					

*VP- VACUUMED PACKED

***PRICE PER LB & CASE PRICE - PRICING QUOTED WAS BASED ON FEB-MARCH 2026 USDA NATIONAL BOXED BEEF.
PRICING IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE UPON MARKET FLUCTUATION.NOTIFICATION WILL BE SENT PUT 30 DAYS PRIOR TO DELIVERY.
PRICING DOES NOT INCLUDE DELIVERY. THAT WILL BE DETERMINADE ON MILEAGE AND AMOUNT ORDERED

2F CATTLEMAN'S GROUND BEEF IS MADE UP OF TEXAS COMMERCIAL CATTLE THAT HAS BEEN FINISHED ON A CORN/GRAIN FED RATION.

WE CUT OUT AND DISPOSE OF ALL NERVE AND EXCESS FAT. WE WILL BE ADDING OUR WAGYU KARUBI WHICH IS A 65/35 MIX TO UPGRADE THE QUALITY,
FLAVOR AND TEXTURE OF OUR CATTLEMAN'S GROUND BEEF PATTIES.

CNP-SOUTH TEXAS COOPERATIVE LOCAL BEEF INITIATIVE

KEEPING IT FRESH!

Together with local cattle ranchers and beef processors, Child Nutrition Programs (K-12) are exploring ways to overcome challenges from both stakeholder groups to bring locally raised fresh beef products to our schools.

JOIN US TO:

- Participate in a discussion of common attributes leading to program success and potential solutions to common barriers.
- Provide feedback regarding the upcoming CNP-STC Beef Products RFP for SY 25-26

INFORMATION

Date: June 11, 2025 | Time: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Location: Region One ESC at Edinburg
1900 W. Schunior Edinburg, TX
Fort Ringgold Room | Workshop #372292

REGISTER NOW!

Post Award - Future Efforts

Annual Vendor Meeting = Partnership
Local Foods Consortium
Food Systems Coordinator

Fresh Produce RFP 23-0136

Contract Extension Periods

Contract Period	Board Meeting / Approval	Start Date	End Date	Status
Original Term	November 16, 2023	November 16, 2023	August 31, 2024	Completed
Extension 1 of 4	June 18, 2024	September 1, 2024	August 31, 2025	Completed
Extension 2 of 4	August 21, 2025	September 1, 2025	August 31, 2026	Completed
Extension 3 of 4	Proposed (Renewal Due)	September 1, 2026	August 31, 2027	Proposed / Current
Extension 4 of 4	Future Option	September 1, 2027	August 31, 2028	1 Option Remaining

Reference File: Extension Packet - CNP-STC Fresh Produce RFP 23-0136-E3.pdf

Fresh Produce RFP 23-0136

Recommended Awarded Vendors



Aspire Staffing Inc.

MCALLEN, TEXAS

Doing business as **Verdant Exchange** (formerly dba Institute for Ecology Scholarship and Health). Approved regional supply line specialist.



Labatt Food Service

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Broadline commercial food distributor offering comprehensive logistical support, fresh inventory pipelines, and specialized school nutrition divisions.



Nicho Produce Co.

EDINBURG, TEXAS

Locally established fresh produce provider focused on direct regional farm sourcing, daily co-op dispatching, and high-quality seasonal crops.

Fresh Produce RFP 23-0136

Verdant Exchange & Produce Sourcing for Culinary Demonstrations

Item Name	Origin	Supplier
Zucchini	Local	Terra Preta
Tomatillo	Mexico	
Jalapeno	Local	Terra Preta
Cilantro	Mexico	
Green Onion	California	
Red Cabbage (Shredded)	California	
Shredded Carrots	California	

Item Name	Origin	Supplier
Kale	Local	Little Bear
Lime	Mexico	
Grape Tomatoes	Local	Village Farms
Celery	California	
Strawberries	California	
Parsley	Local	Terra Preta
Red Plums	California	



REGION ONE ESC • CNP-STC Cooperative

Culinary Showcase & Chef Yield Testing

Framing real classroom kitchen workshops to verify product yields, establish standardized recipes, and empower local food service staff.



Enhancing Meal Appeal

Cooking Demonstration
Presented by Chef Daniela Villarreal



Heat and Texture

- High heat + short cook time = golden exterior without overcooking the interior
- 165°F is a safety floor, not a finish line - color, texture, and crispness matter too
- Spacing on sheet pans prevents steaming; crowding kills crunch
- Convection fans dry out surfaces fast, use them intentionally for crispiness, not by default

Color & Visual Appeal

- Roast vegetables instead of steaming - caramelization adds color and flavor
- Bright herbs, citrus, and colorful toppings signal freshness at the line
- Avoid gray. Overcooked proteins and vegetables lose student trust immediately
- Keep sauces and dressings separate until service to preserve color and texture

Presentation on the Serving Line

- Portion with intention. A sloppy scoop reads as low quality food
- Use clear or branded packaging to elevate perception (takeout-style cups, wraps, etc.)
- Label items with appetizing names, not just ingredient lists

Flavor Building

- Caramelize aromatics (onion, garlic) before adding liquid — it's the difference between flat and flavorful
- Season in layers, not just at the end
- Acid (citrus, vinegar) brightens flavors and can replace excess salt

Brought to your by The Culinary Collective

Enhancing Meal Appeal

Cooking Demonstration
Presented by Chef Daniela Villarreal



Menu 1

Crispy Bean and Vegetable Tacos
Valley Harvest Slaw
Salsa Verde
Seasonal Red Plums

Menu 2

Roasted Tomato Flatbread
Caldito de Campo
Breaded Zucchini
Fresh Red Strawberries

Crispy Bean and Cheese Tacos

Goal: Golden brown and crispy exterior, warm and moist filling

Strategy: High heat, spacing, quick cook = lock in texture without steaming

Valley Harvest Slaw

Goal: Fresh and crisp, bright colors, balanced flavors

Strategy: Chill vegetables until service; massage dressing into kale only, fold in remaining vegetables just before serving to prevent wilting.

Salsa Verde

Goal: Bright and consistent colors, packaged to resemble take-out salsa

Strategy: Aerate during blending for a creamy, vibrant look

Roasted Tomato Flatbread

Goal: Golden crust, caramelized tomatoes, melty cheese

Strategy: Roast tomatoes separately first for deep caramelization; finish flatbread hot and fast

Caldito de Campo (Veggie Quinoa Soup)

Goal: Flavorful vegan soup, identifiable quinoa and vegetable pieces

Strategy: Caramelized vegetables and low simmer, keeping quinoa separate until service.

Breaded Zucchini

Goal: Golden, crispy breading with tender zucchini inside

Strategy: High heat, spread spacing, quick cook time - batch cook to maintain crust integrity



Scan here for the full recipes

Active Cooking & Prep Training

ACTIVE CLASSROOM DEMONSTRATIONS

Standardized Workstation Training



Standardized Portion Skills (Right)

Training staff on consistent knife cuts to meet rigid volume and cup portion guidelines.



Recipe Formulation & Culinary Phases



Step 1: Prep

Sourcing clean beef cuts and placing them under active cooktop heat.



Step 2: Flavor

Applying exact metric quantities of custom paste and ground seasonings.



Step 3: Simmer

Stirring aromatics and fresh citrus factors to cook thoroughly.



Step 4: Portion

Evaluating final cooked volume alongside compliant cabbage additions.

The Standardized Yield Testing Steps



1. As Purchased (AP)

Weighing and recording raw ingredients directly out of vendor delivery cases.



2. Active Prep

Removing non-edible waste (skins, seeds, extra fat) to record the raw edible portion.



3. Thermal Cooking

Simmering, baking, or cooking ingredients and measuring moisture shrinkage values.



4. Edible Portion (EP)

Establishing true final edible weight to calculate compliant meal contributions.



Region One Purchasing Team & Chef Daniella



Save
THE
Date



REGION ONE ESC
STUDENTS FIRST

2026 SOUTH TEXAS COOPERATIVE
FOOD SHOW
a spoonful of magic

SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 1, 2026

**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND
CONVENTION CENTER**
7355 PADRE BLVD. | SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TX

DAY 1

- Audience: SN Personnel & Administrators
- Learning Breakout Sessions
- Networking Event at 6 PM

DAY 2

- Audience: Students, SN Personnel, Administrators & Decision Makers
- Student Activities
- Food Tasting Event

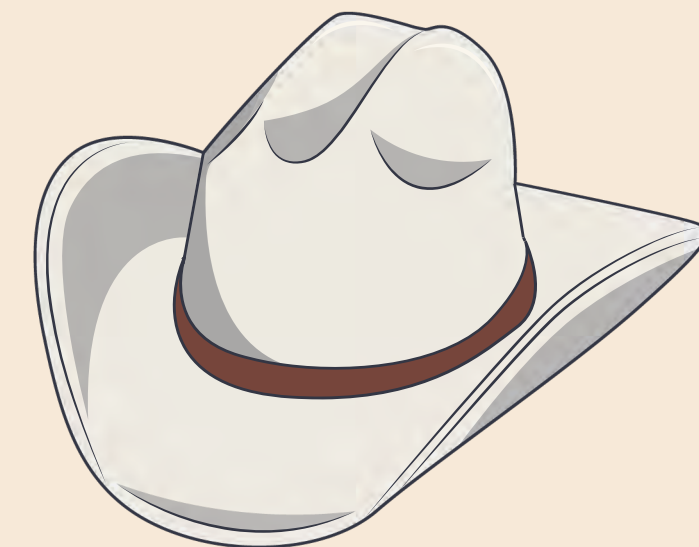
For more information, please contact:
Idania Gonzalez, Purchasing Technician | 956.984.6204 | idgonzalez@esc1.net

The poster features a whimsical illustration of a night scene with a large, glowing full moon. Inside the moon's glow is a silhouette of a castle with a tall spire. Fireworks are exploding around the castle. In the foreground, on a green grassy hill, are three cartoon characters: a red tomato-like character with a face and arms, a white stick figure with a face and arms, and a green milk carton with a face and arms. The background is a deep blue sky with white stars and a few colorful clouds at the top.

Save the Date Food Summit 2027

- April 21 -22, 2027, Location Region One Education Service Center
- Connect local farmers, ranchers, distributors and school nutrition staff
- Explore ways to source more local foods for South Texas schools
- More details to follow





**Thank
you**

