

# ProCureWorks Evaluation

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# Introduction

This report summarizes findings of a qualitative assessment of the management, implementation and strategies used by ProCureWorks during its first two years (2015-2017). ProCureWorks (PCW) was formed as a joint initiative between School Food Focus (SFF) and Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) to leverage and support sustainable procurement in both schools and hospitals in California. When PCW was started, it engaged 5 school districts representing over 530 schools, and 8 health care systems with over 55 member hospitals. The overarching goal was to use the buying power of the health and education sectors to transform the food supply chain in both of these institutional settings. The UC Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program (UC SAREP) was asked to conduct this participatory evaluation in February 2017, to be completed by February 2018.

## Methods

Data for this qualitative assessment was collected during summer, fall and winter of 2017 through 27 in-depth interviews of ProCureWorks stakeholders, including 13 school district and hospital food service staff, 5 producer representatives (from Mindful Meats, Community Grains and Foster Farms), 2 community partners, and 7 PCW leaders. Interviews lasted 30-90 minutes and included questions about:

- How the interviewee was involved in PCW and for how long
- Changes in procurement practices (buyers) or sales (producers) as a result of participation in PCW
- Successes as part of PCW
- Challenges in PCW
- Key factors contributing to successes
- Changes to existing policies/practices as a result of participation in PCW
- Collective goals achieved by PCW in the last 2 years
- Ways in which PCW's work has influenced other organizations

Notes were taken during interviews, which were later summarized for key themes and read and discussed by each of the two evaluators to ensure clarity in emerging themes.

The following report documents (1) descriptive findings directly from the interviews and (2) themes that emerged from several questions or interviewees as we looked at the data overall. We have organized these themes into several sections, including observations and recommendations (a mixture of stakeholder ideas and our own) for each section.

# Descriptive Results

The following section describes the successes and challenges of ProCureWorks as articulated by the stakeholders interviewed for this assessment. They are provided in summary form for clarity, but without added analysis.

## Overview

At the time these interviews were conducted, the PCW participants from 3 identified pilot regions across CA (Sacramento, Bay Area and San Diego) had already decided to focus on driving change in three product categories and through four strategies broadly categorized as “procurement processes.” The three product categories included poultry, beef, and grains, and the PCW members identified specific regional producers that they wanted to work with to procure these priority products: Foster Farms, Mindful Meats and Community Grains.

[Foster Farms](https://www.fosterfarms.com/)<sup>1</sup> is a chicken producer based in California with farms in California, Oregon, Washington, and Louisiana. They provided California-produced USDA-verified No Antibiotic Ever (NAE) chicken for PCW. [Mindful Meats](http://www.mindfulmeats.com/)<sup>2</sup> sources organic, pasture raised beef from dual purpose dairy/beef cows on farms in the Bay Area of California, and provided local, grass-fed beef for PCW. [Community Grains](https://www.communitygrains.com/)<sup>3</sup> is a grain mill and distributor that sources whole grains from California farms that meet its sustainability standards and formulates flour and pasta products. They were able to provide local, whole grain pasta for PCW.

The four procurement processes included 1) developing shared contract and specification language 2) working with Foster Farms to adopt the Certified Responsible Antibiotic Use (CRAU) label as their baseline standard for poultry production, 3) developing metrics to define family farms and small to mid-sized businesses to incorporate into the PCW Food Guidelines and 3) addressing the significant distribution challenges that might preclude PCW stakeholders from purchasing products within the three product categories. Small working groups with representation from both institutional sectors were developed for each of the three product categories and four procurement processes. These working groups acted as subcommittees within the Community of Practice, each dedicated to furthering the goals of the PCW project.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fosterfarms.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mindfulmeats.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.communitygrains.com/>

# Successes

## Original goals

ProCureWorks has articulated three program goals:

1. Establish ProCureWorks as an ongoing cross-sector Community of Practice.
2. Transform key regional and national supply chains through collaboration among California PreK-12 school systems, hospitals, universities and the food industry to increase institutional procurement of healthy and sustainable foods.
3. Create a cross-sector, social change network to leverage the purchasing power and moral authority of public institutions to transform the food system toward greater public and environmental health.

This assessment suggests that PCW has made significant progress toward Goal 1, and limited progress toward Goal 3 (significant steps have been made toward building the network, less toward leveraging it). Goal 2, which deals with supply chain transformation, has proved more challenging to achieve.

## Successes as articulated by stakeholders

When asked about the achievements of ProCureWorks (PCW) in its first 2 years, interviewees (primarily buyers and PCW leadership) spoke broadly about a range of values and benefits in addition to procurement-based indicators of success. Some of these achievements were framed as laying the groundwork needed to support future procurement changes – as one interviewee said, *“we are currently positioning ourselves to meet procurement-based goals.”* Other successes were described as having value independent of any potential changes to procurement. Those buyers who had already made procurement changes as a result of PCW were in the minority, but were able to add important observations about the benefits associated with procurement change. Producers were most likely to describe success primarily in terms of sales, and saw PCW achievements thus far as laying the groundwork future buying relationships.

Below is a summary of the successes of ProCureWorks, as expressed by stakeholders in these interviews.

## Laying the foundation for procurement change

### Creating a learning community / Community of Practice

Interviewees described the creation of a learning community and Community of Practice as a major success of PCW. Within that community, participants were able to learn from each other and about the opportunities and challenges associated with shifting procurement practices. Participants described an iterative process of trying something out, sharing results, and trying again in order to better understand and address the challenges to accomplishing their shared goals. As one interviewee said:

*It’s been for me not about the outcomes yet, but figuring out the challenges in implementing something like this. Everyone is looking at and talking about resilient, sustainable food*

*systems from their own perspective with similar goals. What we've been doing is finding out what "local sustainable food economies" means to different actors, how we can find middle ground, speak the same language, promote the same goals, press the same system levers – or at least press different levers in a coordinated way, based on shared understandings and goals. For me the success of the past two years is the process, the approach, how we do things. We say we need to change this massive system, yet how do we work with institutional players, how do we use a communications framework to do that? What we've created is a model to deal with some of these issues.*

By facilitating experimentation with different models and strategies within a Community of Practice, PCW was able to better see opportunities at different scales, and explore different strategies of meeting the group's shared objectives. These early stages of work helped grow the knowledge base of PCW and its support organizations to further this work.

## **Building relationships**

In addition to creating opportunities for learning and trying out new procurement strategies, interviewees also described relationship building as a major success for PCW. Multiple buyers described the connections they made with other buyers as "making things feel possible," and "increasing their confidence in asking for change" after better understanding the options available to them and realizing they were not alone in their procurement goals. Interviewees described this relationship development as a step in building the foundation for larger change, and frequently reported learning from each other as well as from PCW leaders and resources.

## **Planning and goal setting (aligning standards, identifying challenges, needs, and options)**

Many stakeholders we interviewed expressed the belief that large systems change happens slowly, and that successful planning and goal setting are key to eventually meeting PCW's procurement-related objectives.

PCW successes reported in this arena include:

- facilitating cross-sector collaboration to identify shared goals and align standards
- building and maintaining an active Community of Practice
- developing relationships across the supply chain
- identifying logistical challenges and possible ways to overcome them
- researching product availability and working with producers to build up the supply of products that met PCW standards
- making direct connections between buyers and sellers

One interviewee spoke about how the initial planning phases of the project, particularly the chosen standards, had positioned PCW as part of a national movement for large scale systems change, saying:

*NAE is an upcoming trend in food service, especially for those feeding large numbers. The achievement of PCW has been the ability to have these large entities talking about their desire and creating movement toward NAE products. We're not the only group*

*working in this arena, other large scale national programs are as well. I personally hope these groups will change the standard food systems available to us. We might find in 5-10 years all our commodity goods will be NAE. That's my goal, that it becomes mainstream for schools and hospitals.*

Of note is that several interviewees expressed concern that this evaluation was happening too early in the process to truly capture successes, and that inaccurate negative judgements might be made based on limited procurement change without fully understanding how important planning and goal setting are to making that change happen in a sustainable way.

## **Serving as an advocate, uniting voices and articulating vision**

Although the activities that make up success in this section have been mentioned previously, PCW's advocacy and communications roles came up often enough to be worth noting on their own. Stakeholders spoke highly of the communications work of PCW both in terms of facilitating collaboration and building the case for procurement change, and also in terms of crafting and articulating a sense of "us" across two distinct sectors. It was the development of this shared vision and voice that allowed for PCW to serve in an advocacy role for both sectors.

## **Building relationships and buy-in from producers**

All three producers (Foster Farms, Mindful Meats, and Community Grains) demonstrated significant buy-in to the project, including changing practices and making investments to better meet the needs of buyers. Stakeholders described PCW's articulation of product demand across buyers as being key to getting the producers to take the buyers seriously in a way they may not have if each had articulated their demand individually. This was particularly true for smaller scale buyers.

Specifically, producers made or are considering the following changes:

- Foster Farms became process verified through the USDA, expanded product availability, and invested in equipment to provide portioned products to schools and hospitals.
- Mindful Meats is considering making investments in their own processing equipment and beginning to work through a distributor (Goldstar Foods).
- Community Grains reformulated pasta products for schools to make them more palatable to children and to insure that they performed in school kitchen settings. This included adjusting the recipe so that it could be cooked in a variety of ways (including steamed, baked, and reheated), as well as adding an additional 1-2% gluten, which makes whole grain pasta look like white pasta. They also developed cooking methods and participated in training school staff. These changes took place primarily in collaboration with Oakland Unified School District prior to the initiation of PCW, but are included because they still demonstrate producer buy-in to the PCW model.

On the whole, producers view themselves as collaborators in the project and see it as being (or having the potential to be) mutually beneficial. This can be viewed as a success of both PCW communications with producers, and of its organizing work.

## Realized benefits of procurement change

Although most buyers we spoke to were not yet making large changes to their procurement practices, the few who had (all school buyers) shared the benefits they perceived in their settings. These benefits included being able to serve a better quality product, better participation in the school meal program, less food waste, and a more positive perception of school meals. Other answers described changes in the perceptions of the buyers themselves, such as feeling that they were contributing to a more sustainable food system.

## Factors Contributing to Success

Interviewees listed a number of factors as contributing to PCW successes. These fell primarily into the following categories:

- Good communication
- Emphasis on front-end work, including planning, training, and relationship building
- Building connections between different types of stakeholders
- Facilitating cross-sector alignment around goals, vision, and purchasing criteria
- Detailed research on product options
- Understanding of the financial realities of both sectors
- A dedicated staff member from both HCWH and SFF working on PCW
- Previous work, including work done by School Food Focus, Health Care Without Harm, Farm to School in CA, California Thursdays, Good Food Purchasing Policy, and by leaders in individual school districts and hospitals.
- Focusing on processes first rather than skipping straight to products

## Challenges

The challenges described by stakeholders fell across a range of issues. However, most challenges fell into the following five categories:

1. The logistics of distribution and purchasing
2. PCW standards
3. Menuing and staffing
4. Pricing
5. Communications

Although most challenges were expressed to some degree across stakeholder groups, buyers typically expressed concerns primarily with the prices of priority products, getting products that met their specifications, and getting products within their current purchasing framework. Producers expressed concern with volumes not being sufficient to justify the investments they had made or were considering making as a result of PCW, and expressed the need for support in building relationships with distributors around these products.

**It is important to note that while some of the challenges expressed in this section relate to the specific procurement goals set forth by the PCW Community of Practice, others describe broader, more systemic barriers to procuring products with sustainability characteristics like locally grown, organic, grass-fed, and NAE. Stakeholders did not necessarily distinguish between these two types of challenges.**

## Challenges related to the logistics of distribution and purchasing

- Distribution came up repeatedly as a primary challenge to this work. Buyers want to be able to get products that meet PCW standards through their existing purchasing channels, and this is not currently the case for many.
- Schools and hospitals have different purchasing criteria, budgets, procedures (including contract procedures), and don't work with the same distributors. That make collaborating to build and articulate shared demand a challenge.
- It is a challenge to get distributors to buy into the mission of PCW. Their margins are better on other (more conventional) products, so they don't typically stock the types of products PCW is promoting. There is a perception that the volumes are not there yet to make the case to distributors. Stakeholders feel that PCW needs to better understand the perspective and requirements of distributors and why they are making certain decisions in order to better work with them.
- Smaller scale producers like Community Grains and Mindful Meats face unique challenges in selling to institutions, including setting sustainable price points, getting distributors to stock their products, and meeting the processing and portion requirements of institutional buyers.
- It is not fully understood at this point how and to what extent independent purchases made through PCW standards may influence supply chain actors, or whether some sort of collective purchasing entity is needed to meet PCW objectives.
- Institutional buyers may not be attractive clients for distributors to work with on these new products due to relatively low volumes purchased, the fact that they are relatively low margin products, and the extra requirements of working with public/government buyers.
- Challenges related to building demand and communicating it to distributors were reported by both buyers and producers. Stakeholders viewed this challenge as related to both volume/price (need a certain base volume to get the price to a level that all can afford to participate and volume can increase) and communication (need PCW to articulate demand to distributors in a way that neither producers nor single buyers can).
- The higher volume purchasing that would help drive wider availability can trigger more cumbersome procurement procedures for some buyers. For example, purchases over a certain amount may require a contract and bid process in which the buyer may not ultimately be able to make the choice they would like.
- In addition to distribution, production itself is a challenge, particularly for smaller producers who may not currently have the capacity to process their product to meet the specific requirements of institutional buyers. This introduces an additional expense for these producers that already have a higher price per unit than conventionally produced products. Without the

ability to guarantee sales volumes, encouraging these producers to make investments in processing could undermine their financial sustainability.

- So far, select producers have been willing to work with PCW and have made changes (or are considering making changes) as a result, including shifting production practices and making new investments in processing or certification. However, producers reported that both the number of potential buyers and the amount of potential sales has not been what they expected.
- The USDA's Schools/Child Nutrition Foods Programs (USDA Direct Delivery / Commodity Supplemental Food Program, USDA Foods Processing, and USDA/Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program) potentially present both a challenge and an opportunity for school buyers. Low cost food purchases through these USDA programs can free up funds for purchasing higher cost, more premium products, but also limits the total volume schools purchase from private companies. Several stakeholders suggested that a better understanding of the impact of these USDA food programs on K-12 buyers was needed, as well as considering if the USDA food programs system itself could be influenced by a collaboration like PCW (such as shifting the baseline for products provided to schools to a certification like CRAU (Certified Responsible Antibiotic Use)).<sup>4</sup>

## Challenges related to PCW standards (including priority products and producers)

- Multiple stakeholders expressed the concern that the early choice to narrow down to three producers may have created more challenges than benefits. These concerns fell into a few broad categories:
  - Concerns that the standards (including purchasing from the priority producers) were overly ambitious, “too much too soon,” and that they were unattainable for too many participating buyers.
  - Concerns that the benefits of competition were lost by narrowing too early.
  - Concerns that partnering with PCW was not actually beneficial (in financial terms) for small and mid-scale producers like Community Grains and Mindful Meats, though they might share the values of the program and want to participate based on those shared values.
    - This included the concern that smaller vendors needed more support to be able to produce at scale than PCW could actually provide, and that regardless of level of support provided, these types of partnerships might not be sustainable in the long term or as mutually beneficial as initially believed (or as beneficial as a similar relationship with a supplier at the scale of Foster Farms could be).
  - Concerns that more progress could have been made with broader, more flexible categories, rather than focusing on specific producers with the “best” products (rather than “better” products or categories of products).

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<sup>4</sup> Poultry producers in conformance with CRAU are prohibited from using antibiotics with analogues in human medicine routinely or without clear medical justification. Use of antibiotics with analogues in human medicine must be rare, well documented, and prescribed by a veterinarian.

(<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/crau>)

- This feedback included suggestions to remove the “local” / “California-raised” preference, work with larger scale producers, and limit the number of parameters (to only “No Antibiotic Ever (NAE) beef,” for example, rather than grass-fed and organic beef).
  - Several stakeholders expressed that more flexibility, such as multiple “levels of participation,” would have made it possible for more buyers to make meaningful improvements to their current buying practices, rather than aspiring to something that felt unattainable and thus not making changes.
- Additional challenges raised included:
    - Confusion over lack of alignment between School Food Focus and ProCureWorks standards.
    - Standards are perceived by some as more compatible with hospital purchasing than school purchasing.
    - The actual product specifications that would be available via Foster Farms were not clear to buyers.
    - Challenges related to balancing supply and demand over time, including the need for a transition period for suppliers to meet standards after they are introduced.
    - Challenges related to distribution of the products of small and mid-scale producers while meeting the financial and logistical needs of both buyers and producers.

## Challenges related to menuing and staffing

- Several buyers mentioned challenges with staff acceptance of procurement and menu changes, and brought up the importance of adequate change management that included addressing any staff concerns, making sure staff have the equipment they need, and providing training in how to receive and cook raw product. Interviewees also mentioned the key positive role that staff could play in promoting change once they were on board.
- Schools and hospitals each have unique menu constraints, both related to price and meal content (legal requirements for school meals, therapeutic meals in hospital settings) and to size and level of processing (one school reported issues with larger frozen products not thawing according to procedures).

## Challenges related to pricing

- Price came up repeatedly as a major obstacle for most buyers, and will likely be an ongoing challenge in pairing what is a premium product in the marketplace with institutional types that require low price points. However, some buyers reported that the changes they made were cost-neutral or even created cost savings.
- Those buyers who saw price as a challenge reported various strategies for mitigating costs, including smaller portion sizes, blending with alternative proteins, or offering meat to a meal as an add-in rather than the default. Those who were unable to find a way to make purchases in a cost-neutral way were generally not able purchase PCW products.

- Producers also saw pricing as challenging, but from the opposite perspective – they found it difficult to produce and deliver a suitable product for institutional buyers while still making a profit.
- Buyers reported getting different prices than other buyers on the same product from the same distributor due to differences in contract terms. The question was raised as to whether participating buyers could all get the same price on the same product from the same distributor.
- Buyers expressed that it was a challenge to justify the additional cost of priority products in situations where their higher price could not be neutralized by adjusting other costs, and that this is something PCW could help with from a communications standpoint.
- Many schools don't have the equipment needed to process raw product, and reported that it would be too costly to send it to a processor. Schools cannot increase meal price to offset more expensive ingredients.

## Challenges related to communications

- Buyers expressed that they found it challenging to communicate the changes they were trying to make to customers (students, parents, patients). Some were also hesitant to communicate or do any marketing related to only partial changes in their purchasing; others were not.
- Stakeholders expressed the need for better public-facing communications, as well as stakeholder-specific messaging (how to tell the story / make the case to different constituent groups).
- Buyers expressed lack of solid understanding of their buying options, whether the supply could be guaranteed, and how to justify or mitigate added costs.
- While most interviewees spoke positively of PCW organizing activities, some felt PCW calls were not consistent, making it hard to keep the Community of Practice engaged.
- More education may be needed around the difference between various certifications or label claims around antibiotic use in livestock. For example, the phrase “antibiotic free” is sometimes used in verbal communications about PCW, but as a label claim only describes standard convention practice, as the absence of detectable antibiotics in meat is already the baseline legal standard. Concerns were raised that using this language too casually within the community dilutes understanding and commitment to certifications that actually impact production practices (like NAE, organic, or CRAU).

## Other challenges

- Multiple interviewees framed the length of time required to make changes to procurement and within the supply chain as a challenge, and were concerned that not enough time had gone by to accurately evaluate the success of PCW efforts.
- Those who had been involved with either SFF or HCWH prior to PCW expressed confusion around determining what activities or changes should be attributed to PCW versus previous work.
- Meeting logistics were challenging for many PCW members due to time constraints, and several interviewees expressed the concern that long-term engagement is difficult to maintain without tangible results.

- The difficulty of collecting and analyzing procurement data (both baseline and progress data) was mentioned as a challenge.

# Thematic Results:

## Observations & Recommendations

The following section describes themes that emerged from responses to multiple questions or arose from multiple stakeholder groups. In some cases we suggest potential programmatic changes or questions that should be addressed in the future, based on both on the interviews themselves and a review of various procurement reports, grant reports, and communications reports.

### **Distribution and contractual issues**

#### Observations

##### **Importance of making new products available through conventional distribution channels**

At the time this report was written, distribution is a clear challenge for PCW. Most institutional buyers currently involved in PCW don't want to or are unable to buy directly from producers. To make significant procurement changes, they need to be able to buy new products from their current distributor.

The producers selected by PCW, on the other hand, face significant challenges selling PCW priority products to distributors for several reasons. In some cases, they don't have an established relationship with a particular distributor, or they prefer not to use distributors because of the associated costs. In other cases, they may have solid relationships with distributors with other products, but distributors will not stock the new products that PCW has prioritized without proven demand. We did not conduct any interviews with distributors as these contacts were not available at the time of our evaluation, suggesting that PCW has significant work to do to build the working relationships with distributors necessary to bridge these gaps.

In some cases, depending on current product availability, a distributor may be a more important lever for change than a producer. As a result, several participating buyers reported buying PCW categories (like NAE or whole grain) from other producers rather than from the producers that are partnering with PCW because they cannot get the PCW priority products through their existing supply chain/distributor. Actual procurement change thus far seems most closely related to whether the priority products are available from current distributor, and/or under the buyer's current contract.

## Importance of supporting producer partners as they make investments in supply

The producers currently partnering with PCW have made or are considering making significant investments in changing their practices and products to better meet the needs of school and hospital buyers. It does not yet seem clear whether these investments will pay off. Producers expressed disappointment and in some cases frustration that demand was lower than they had anticipated – in part due to distribution challenges forcing PCW buyers to purchase priority product categories from their competitors.

## Importance of carefully considering trade-off between program priorities

There may at times be trade-offs between desirable product or producer attributes. While PCW written materials largely describe desired attributes as either independent or complementary, interviewees described these attributes as at times conflicting with one another. For example, choosing a product with certain desired sustainability attributes (local, smaller scale) may make desired logistical attributes (available through a distributor) harder to achieve. In cases where desired attributes involve trade-offs, PCW will need to determine the strategic priorities that will best lead to the desired outcomes.

## Recommendations

- Prioritize building relationships with distributors. Include distributors as a major audience for program messaging. Focus on communications that frame distributors as collaborators and facilitators.
- Select producer partners that are willing and able to work with the distributors used by hospitals and schools. Purchasing relationships through distributors must be mutually beneficial (for producers, distributors, and buyers) to be sustainable. It may be difficult to achieve a price point that can ensure this is the case for smaller producers.
- If focusing on a specific product type from a single producer (e.g. NAE chicken from Foster Farms), rather than a category (e.g. NAE chicken), it is important to be able to deliver demand when they deliver supply. For example, Foster Farms reports very limited sales associated with PCW, despite making significant investments. This is corroborated by the School Food Focus School Year 2015-16 report which shows Foster Farms purchases going down between SY 14-15 and SY 15-16.
- If not already known, research and communicate the minimum slotting requirements of specific distributors as they relate to priority products and regional distribution centers. There may be a regional element to this equation (slotting requirements by warehouse rather than by distributor). Buyers did not seem to have a clear idea of exactly how much volume over time was needed for a distributor to stock a particular product.
- Develop and maintain a solid understanding of the contractual obligations of buyers across the spectrum of partner institutions. There was a high level of variability in this arena expressed in our interviews. Understanding these contractual obligations, as well as building relationships

with distributors, will likely be key to developing options for buyers to make purchases within established channels, rather than requiring purchases outside of them.

- Consider ranking or ordering program values, like “local” and “NAE” in some way (either in terms of importance, or by order of operations). This will help to determine strategic priorities in cases where priorities may compete or involve significant trade-offs vis-à-vis one another.

## Scaling up strategically

PCW raises a number of important questions about what it means to “scale up” efforts to increase the sustainability of the food system. These questions include:

- What are the unique strategic levers for food systems change associated with institutional buying? Are there unique roles that can be played by public institutions?
- Do the same producer attributes relating to sustainability (local, organic, etc.) that have resonated with consumers in smaller scale or direct market contexts also resonate with institutional buyers? Do these attributes present any new challenges or trade-offs when scaled up to institutional settings?
- How can mutually beneficial relationships be assured across the supply chain while scaling up?
- Which types of producers are best positioned to initiate and benefit from the types of changes PCW is trying to make?

The following observations and recommendations relate to these and other similar questions.

## Observations

### Scale of production

Interviews from PCW participants suggest that institutional buying may present a better opportunity to leverage change in large scale producers than to support small scale producers. Small scale producers often pay a high price (in time, new processing investments, reduced margins) to access conventional distribution channels, and institutional buyers often have limited options for purchasing outside of these channels. PCW has created a unique opportunity to influence larger scale producers and distributors, as well as possibly help mid-scale values-based producers scale up. There does not seem to be as much opportunity at this time to create successful/mutually beneficial relationships with smaller scale producers, who are facing more demands and stricter requirements trying to sell to institutions than they usually deal with. Smaller scale, values-based producers may believe in a program like PCW and want to try to help it succeed, but that does not necessarily mean it is financially sustainable for them to participate.

## Prioritizing local producers

The importance of buying from local producers is currently a major component of PCW messaging. However, this approach comes with significant challenges and possible drawbacks that PCW may want to consider moving forward.

When prioritizing local production, it is important to also reflect on the intersection of geographic location, scale, and market orientation. California is home to producers at every scale – from tiny urban farms to multinational corporations. Some of these producers serve only local markets, others serve national or even international markets. These are all “local” under PCW’s current definition.

This raises two primary questions:

- What specific community benefits does PCW hope to achieve by prioritizing buying from local producers, and are all producers that are physically located in California likely to deliver these benefits?
- What are the attributes (including scale) that make an individual producer most likely to have the capacity to benefit from selling to institutional markets?
- Do the producers most likely to deliver the desired community benefits associated with “local” also have the capacity to benefit from selling to institutions? Is there significant overlap between these attributes or do they typically apply to different producers?

For example, many producers serving primarily local markets may be too small to benefit from engaging with institutional markets. They may not be able to sustainably balance their own higher costs of production with the lower price points and more complex processing and distribution requirements of institutional buyers. If a local producer is sufficiently large enough to benefit from selling to institutions, that producer is more likely to be local only in terms of geographic location, but not in terms of the markets it serves or how its profits circulate.

Clarifying the intended benefits of working with local producers and assessing how well these are currently being realized (in the specific, not in the abstract) makes it possible to make strategic decisions concerning any potential trade-offs associated with local purchasing.

For example, if those local producers that are most likely to benefit from selling to institutions are large enough that they do not primarily serve local markets, locally aggregated demand may not be the most effective way to influence them. A program that did not prioritize local sales could leverage national partnerships with institutional buyers and organizations to influence producers and distributors in a way that is more closely aligned with their market orientation. Local focus also limits the producers that can work with (be supported or influenced by) PCW. There may be out of state producers that could provide products with other desired attributes (NAE, grass-fed, whole grain, etc.) more efficiently or in ways that are more mutually beneficial – for example at lower price points, through existing distribution networks, or with more or other bundled values.

## Selection of producer partners

Multiple interviewees suggested that PCW may have selected producer partners too soon without fully understanding the supply chain landscape, resulting in selecting producers for whom partnership might not actually be mutually beneficial in either the short or long term, or those that are too hard for institutions to buy from. It was also suggested that narrowing the focus so soon may have prevented some buyers from participating who might have been able to participate with broader focus, and that it reduced competition (and any associated benefits) among producers because the “winners” were preselected. It is unclear, based on the interviews we conducted and the written materials we reviewed, exactly how and based on what criteria producer partners were selected. It seems possible that there may have been a stronger emphasis placed on producer alignment with multiple PCW values, rather than on feasibility within institutional supply chains.

## Influencing the supply chain

While some smaller scale producers may not benefit from selling to institutions, that doesn’t mean that the same is true for smaller scale buyers. In fact, our interviews suggest the opposite may be true – that smaller scale buyers may see more benefit from a collaboration like PCW since their low purchasing volumes make it more challenging for them to request new products on their own.

The following strategic questions related to influencing the supply chain emerged in different ways across multiple interviews:

- What is the likely impact of independent purchases made through these standards (and communicated by an entity like PCW) versus actual joint purchasing (purchasing cooperative or other similar mechanism)?
- What is the likely impact of working within a system to make incremental change (“normalizing” a new baseline – like CRAU, or NAE - for public institutions, working within existing distribution networks, etc.), versus building an alternative system (direct purchasing, trying to expand market for more premium sustainable products).

## Recommendations

- Understand that PCW may not be able to meet all potential goals for procurement change simultaneously, and identify and focus on the unique opportunities of PCW. We suggest that these unique opportunities primarily involve influencing mid-scale and larger scale actors in production and distribution, and perhaps working to shift to a more sustainable baseline rather than support the producers that have the most desirable sustainability attributes at the onset.
- Evaluate the potential benefits of PCW to producers at different scales. It may not always be true that institutional buyers can be a beneficial market for small or even mid-scale local producers. Engage potential producer partners based on detailed understanding of the logistics and price points of both buyer and seller. The fact that buyer and seller share certain values does not necessarily mean they will be able to forge a financially sustainable relationship with one another.

- If PCW wants to prioritize work with smaller scale producers, it will be important to understand and find way to accommodate the limitations of these producers. Be as transparent as possible about any processing or distribution requirements, as well as anticipated demand, so that they can make responsible business decisions regarding their engagement. Underestimate rather than overestimate demand when working with producers if exact numbers are not available.
- Consider de-prioritizing local / “California-raised” in some contexts. Larger producers – for whom institutional sales are most likely to be feasible and beneficial – are often not primarily serving local markets, regardless of where they are physically located. Thus though they may technically meet the program’s definition of local, this applies only to their location, not their market orientation. The broad market orientation of these types of local producers may limit the efficacy of local efforts to influence them. In these cases, consider partnering with or forming national networks to build greater influence.
- Consider the producer attributes that intersect with geographic location, including scale and market orientation. Be clear about which of the benefits PCW hopes to promote through local purchasing flow from which of these attributes.
- Consider the potential role that could be played by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party processor, co-packer, or food hub, particularly in making it possible for smaller scale producers to get the correct product specifications to schools and hospitals. PCW would need to clarify how such an entity would interface with producers and either buyers or distributors, as well as how much their involvement would impact costs, but still seems worth exploring as a way to work with smaller scale producers.
- Clarify PCW’s strategic goals around influencing procurement. Does PCW hope to change a small percentage of institutional purchases of a product with all (or most) of its desired sustainability attributes? For example, participating institutions buy 15% of their beef from Mindful Meats. Or does PCW hope to shift to a more sustainable baseline? For example, 100% of chicken purchased by participating institutions is CRAU? This is not to say that both cannot be pursued simultaneously, but that strategic goals around each product should be clear and with limited resources prioritization may be required.

## Communications

### Observations

#### Producer response

The producers involved with PCW have shown a high willingness to invest in change to meet the demands of the market that PCW represents. Each expressed an affirmative desire to be part of the work, and described their relationship with PCW as collaborative, rather than adversarial. Though individual producers may have limitations, or even create bottlenecks, our interviews do not suggest the producers currently involved are resistant to the type of change PCW is seeking. This is promising, and

reflects positively on both the PCW model and PCW communications with these producers. Future efforts may help determine whether they are representative in this sense.

Producers' motivations to collaborate with PCW include both shared values and a perception that the program is developing a new market in which they may have a competitive advantage. Producers who buy into the tenets of PCW are likely to be important partners in building and articulating the demand needed to get distributors (and others, such as consumer, policy makers, etc.) on board.

## **Consumer-oriented messaging**

Several buyers mentioned that pressure from consumers (students, parents, patients) would help them justify making the procurement changes they desired. This theme – increasing demand through consumer education – also emerged in the California Ed-Med Collaborative Findings Brief. Consumer-oriented messaging to increase demand in institutional settings could also serve as an educational opportunity to influence consumer choices outside of institutional settings.

## **Relationship-based change**

When working through challenges around price points, contractual issues, distribution, etc., it can be easy to lose sight of how highly relationship-based this type of change work can be. Positive working relationships are the foundation on which negotiations around logistical and economic challenges take place. Direct connections, trust, and alignment around shared goals all appear to have played key roles in the change that PCW has supported thus far, and will likely continue to do so. Supply and demand in a relationship-heavy project like PCW are iterative, and require support on both sides. Time will be needed to reach an equilibrium, which makes building the types of relationships that can survive over time regardless of the pace of change particularly important.

## **Terminology**

There may be room for increased clarity and accessibility in some of the terminology used by PCW.

For example, the term “sustainably produced chicken,” which is used in PCW marketing and grant materials, is fairly broad and open to interpretation. In the context of PCW, however, it is defined specifically as CRAU, NAE, RWA, USDA Organic, or Global Animal Partnership, and narrowed down further through product selection to NAE chicken. While broad messaging like “sustainably produced chicken” or “sustainably produced meat” leaves room for PCW to pivot to other attributes or types of certifications over time, the current focus on reducing antibiotic use appears to have high resonance with stakeholders and may be worth communicating more directly in the future.

Also, the California Ed-Med Collaborative Findings Brief found that the term “procurement” was perceived as jargon and did not resonate outside a limited audience of practitioners. In the next iteration of the program, or if more consumer-focused messaging is pursued in the future, it may be worth revisiting the name of the collaboration to find something that has broader appeal. There does not yet appear to be a high level of brand recognition for PCW, so this may be doable without significant transition costs.

## Recommendations

- Consider re-focusing messaging more on specific attributes or issues in the supply chain, such as the routine use of antibiotics, rather than broad terms like “sustainable.”
- Consider more targeted messaging by stakeholder group, particularly consumers and distributors. Previous communications and relationship-building work with producers demonstrated that PCW has the capacity to make others feel invested in its goals. Apply similar strategies to distributors and consumers.
- Consider whether the name “ProCureWorks” has resonance with audiences beyond current participants, and whether or not it may be (or become) a priority for PCW to reach beyond that audience.
- Communications will likely play a key role in making multiple independent purchases “add up” to a movement for change from the point of view of key stakeholders like consumers and distributors. It is possible an effective communications strategy could have an even larger impact than a shift toward joint purchasing, which has been suggested as a possible next step. Explore both options moving forward.

## Managing costs

Buyers described very different perceptions and experiences with the costs of the products promoted by PCW. Some described the changes they had made as cost neutral, or even reported cost savings. Others had not made any purchases because the costs were too high. Determining exactly what factors contribute to why the same products are affordable for some buyers but feel inaccessible to others will likely be key to expanding procurement change in the future.

## Observations

### Strategies for managing costs

Those buyers who were purchasing PCW products at the time of our interviews reported several different practices and approaches for managing costs. One involved reducing serving sizes – for example, a hospital moving from 5oz to 4oz chicken breasts – while keeping the consumer price the same. Another involved blending a more expensive protein with a more affordable one – such as “blended burgers” made with grass-fed beef and beans. Other strategies involved saving money on other expenditures and using the savings to purchase higher cost protein. For example, one hospital buyer reported that they were able to save on produce through seasonal ordering (putting “seasonable vegetable” instead of broccoli” on the menu), and a school buyer reported redirecting their savings from purchasing low cost products through USDA food programs toward PCW products.

## Cost savings

Those reporting costs savings had access to the equipment necessary to prepare fresh foods, and found the fresh (raw) PCW products they were able to acquire through their distributor were less expensive than the processed products they had been purchasing previously.

## Inaccessibility due to cost

Unsurprisingly, those who had not yet purchased PCW products were most likely to report that the products were inaccessible due to price. It is unclear exactly why it is the case that buyers within the same types of institutions have such different experiences in relation to cost. Possible reasons that emerged from our interviews included differences in the availability of cooking equipment, buyers receiving different prices on the same product due to distribution/contractual issues, and buyers working with different budget parameters even in similar settings.

## Recommendations

- How the cost of changing procurement practices is experienced by different buyers appears to be very context specific. PCW should explore further what factors make these products affordable for some buyers but not for others.
- It is unclear whether pooling demand at the scale of PCW will impact the price at which these products are available to buyers. Though it is theoretically true that purchasing in higher volumes can reduce per-unit price, PCW will need to work with specific distributors around specific products to determine what these thresholds are, and if they are meaningful to buyers.
- Consider including per unit pricing information in future quantitative reports, as this is a key factor in buyers' decision making. If high levels of variation are found, this is also potentially useful information.
- If PCW continues to work with smaller scale producers, this will likely limit their ability to advocate for lower costs for buyers, as these smaller scale producers have significantly higher costs of production. Larger scale producers can spread costs associated with new, more sustainable products across more units and likely have more capacity to keep prices closer to what schools and hospitals are accustomed to paying.

## Strategic considerations: aggregating or articulating demand?

A collaboration like PCW raises several important strategic and logistical questions around demand aggregation as a social change strategy:

- What level/volume of aggregated demand is necessary to influence supply chain actors? (either to change practices, make new products available, or to lower prices)

- What location(s) in the supply chain should such aggregated demand be directed for the greatest impact? (i.e. should demand be focused on individual producers? distributors? product types/categories?)
- Does PCW leadership understand the thresholds for change among various supply chain actors? And if so, can PCW aggregate demand with enough volume and focus to meet these thresholds?
- What ways can PCW influence the supply chain outside of, or in addition to, facilitating the actual aggregation of demand? What role has (can) communications play?

## Observations

### Level of aggregation/volume necessary to influence supply chains

Finding practical ways for food service buyers to pool their purchasing power has been a challenge for PCW. Food service buyers were often committed to making product level changes toward healthier alternatives, but were able to purchase these products more cheaply or easily outside of the PCW identified producer framework. For example, they purchased NAE chicken or grass-fed beef, but did not purchase it from Foster Farms or Mindful Meats. Some have suggested that PCW endorse this strategy and shift from promoting specific producers to promoting product types. This would likely make it easier for more buyers to participate, but has the potential downside of diluting the ability of participating buyers to meaningfully pool their shared purchasing power.

So how important is it that buyers purchase products with PCW attributes from PCW producers (or from the same producers, in general)? The answer to this question lies both in how PCW aims to influence supply chains, and what volume of aggregated demand is needed to influence prices or spark new investments at each point in the supply chain.

This brings up several additional questions for PCW to consider around its own capacity and priorities:

- What actors in the supply chain does PCW currently intend to influence? How was this decision made?
- What supply chain actors is PCW best positioned to influence?
- Where in the supply chain is change most (or first) needed?

The overall volume of demand as well as the “focus” needed in that demand in order to influence different supply chain actors will likely depend on the size, type, and current practices of those actors. It will also depend on whether products with the attributes PCW is looking for are (a) currently available in the market (supply is there on production end), (b) currently available through institutional distribution channels (supply is there on distribution end), and (c) currently available at price points that are accessible for schools and hospitals.

*If PCW is trying to influence individual producers to change their practices or offer new products with different attributes, aggregated demand that is focused on specific products will likely be important in order to justify any investments the producers need to make to change these practices. The volumes necessary to justify these investments or to lower per-unit prices will vary by producer.*

*If PCW is trying to support individual producers that already have the attributes PCW is looking for – either to make them more financially sustainable or enable them to scale up – volume needed will likely depend on the level of change the producer must engage in to sell to PCW buyers. If the producer already has a product in the form needed by PCW buyers, they may only need sales volumes sufficient to justify the cut taken by the distributor. If the producer needs to make additional investments on the production end, either to scale up or add processing to meet the needs of buyers, more volume will likely be needed to support these investments. Also, the higher the percentage of a producer’s sales that occur via PCW (mostly applicable to smaller producers), the more important it will be that sales volumes are stable and predictable over time.*

*If PCW is trying to influence distributors and supply is already available, then demand from multiple buyers for general categories of products (like NAE poultry) may be sufficient for distributors to stock new products. The distributor could then select the best producer option from their business perspective (cost, efficiency, etc.) that has the desired attributes.*

*If supply is not available on the production side at the scale needed by institutions, PCW will either need to consider products with different attributes, or work to support small or mid-scale producers to scale up, in which case the considerations listed above for those types of producers will apply.*

## **Role of communications in influencing the supply chain**

While supply of products in the market with the PCW attributes must be supported by demand to be sustained over the long term, managing the logistics of aggregating demand from schools and hospitals is not the only way PCW can potentially contribute to these supply chain shifts.

Thus far, the tangible changes that have been made by supply chain actors as a result of the PCW collaboration – including investments and engagement on the part of all 3 producers involved – have primarily been due to improved communication, not increased demand. And while producers made these changes in anticipation of demand – and even though some have expressed surprise or even disappointment that the demand has not yet materialized to the level that they had hoped – none expressed regret at making the changes they’ve made. Rather, they spoke optimistically of an emerging market of which PCW is part, and see their partnership with PCW as enabling them to better understand that market, or even giving them a competitive advantage in it. An important takeaway is that PCW is not the only market for its affiliated producers, and these producers are not depending entirely on PCW to create the demand needed to justify their efforts. What PCW has done is communicate a movement, or in more economic terms, a market shift, and facilitated communication among stakeholders around the requirements and constraints of that market.

PCW buyers, likewise, are not purchasing PCW products because purchasing volumes have reduced prices, though some expressed hope that this could happen in the future. They are buying the products because they now understand that they are available, why they are valuable, and how to get them. Those that have made changes are doing so within their current budget constraints.

What this highlights is the key role good communication can play in leveraging change in institutions and markets. Even if PCW is never able to aggregate the demand of participating buyers to the threshold required to justify supply chain shifts from a purely economic perspective, there is still the potential to articulate (or even help activate) existing unmet demand for healthier, more sustainable products

among institutional buyers, particularly in the public sector. Many buyers described their experience with PCW as “making change feel possible,” and that producers/distributors “took them more seriously” as a result of their collaboration. This suggests the potential for change is not only embedded in the purchasing power of participating institutions, but also in the potential to change the story of what is possible, and what is expected.

## Recommendations

- Be clear about what supply chain actors PCW intends to influence, and make sure the thresholds for leverage at each point in the supply chain are understood. Understanding leverage includes understanding both PCW own capacity and the economic realities and beliefs motivating supply chain actors.
- Applying pressure and aggregating demand are not the only tools a collaboration like PCW can use to pursue its objectives. Education, relationship building, and storytelling are also powerful mechanisms for change on their own, regardless of whether they I
- Consider the role PCW may be able to play in communicating demand rather than orchestrating it. For example, prioritizing the communication of shared demand for product categories, rather than promoting joint buying strategies of specific products.

## Forming the collaboration: Structure and Role of PCW

### Observations

#### **Do the benefits of cross-sector collaboration outweigh the challenges? How do different stakeholders understand these benefits and challenges?**

There are two ways to approach these questions – first, in terms of logistics and second, in terms of messaging. The answers may be different in each arena.

In terms of logistics, school and hospital buyers have different criteria, budgets, processes, and distributors. As a result, buyers from both sectors talked about the demand aggregation goals of PCW primarily in terms of challenges, rather than benefits, at least in the short term. Some expressed curiosity about the other sector, or hoped for future benefits like lower prices, but few articulated an understanding of specific, tangible benefits in the present to cross-sector purchasing collaboration.

On the other hand, terms of messaging, buyers expressed a clear understanding of the similar social and cultural roles their institutions play, and of the PCW case for values and purchasing alignment. The story of hospitals and schools working together for the public good appears to resonate across stakeholder groups, regardless of the logistical challenges involved.

## Role of PCW

Education and communication emerged as two key roles for PCW moving forward. Our interviews suggest these roles have broader support from stakeholders than PCW taking the role of directly managing the procurement process (for example through creating a joint purchasing entity in the future or arranging for sampling).

### Education

Stakeholders made a number of suggestions regarding the types of educational needs that PCW could fulfill, including some activities that have already taken place or are in progress.

One suggestion was researching and identifying suppliers for products with desired sustainability attributes, including a wider range of product types (cooked, raw, whole muscle, various cuts, etc.). Another was analyzing the current institutional purchasing among participants to identify patterns and opportunities for collaboration (like high volume purchases, or instances when multiple buyers are already purchasing from the same suppliers). Several interviewees expressed hope that PCW would articulate more explicit strategies for procurement change for buyers in different contexts with different resources and constraints. Examples might include strategies for shifting procurement patterns through bid language, from within an existing contract, through a new contract, in collaboration with an existing distributor, by purchasing directly from a producer, etc. Even though there is a good deal of variation among buyers and effective strategies are context-specific, it is likely there are still a number of common paths/strategies that could be more clearly articulated as options by PCW. It was also suggested that PCW could help with “menu engineering” to help buyers make higher prices work with their budget.

### Communication

Interviewees spoke highly of PCW’s role as a communicator in making direct connections and building relationships between supply chain actors, as well as telling the big story of the collaboration. PCW has demonstrated a capacity for crafting inclusive messaging that encourages stakeholders see their common interests rather than their differences, and to perceive change as possible. It has also been able to facilitate relationship building that many of those we interviewed believed was necessary to make procurement change happen.

## Structure of PCW

Overall, those we interviewed spoke very positively of the structure of PCW. Specific structural pieces that came up included having someone embedded in each sector co-leading the project, and an early focus on utilizing the communications teams of both SFF and HCWH to build shared goals, identity, and a sense of “us” from two different sectors. The communications achievements detailed elsewhere in this report likely originate in the intentional early focus on communications that was built into the structure of PCW from the beginning.

Several interviewees mentioned the need for a better process for conflict resolution, though it was unclear what the specific areas of conflict had been. One interviewee suggested adding an additional PCW representative or manager that wasn’t based at a school- or hospital-oriented organization as an independent manager of the collaborative work.

## Messaging about the collaboration

### Moral authority

PCW's current messaging around the "moral authority" of schools and hospitals seems to resonate well with some audiences (funders, people working at schools/hospitals) but may not be as effective with some of those PCW needs to influence moving forward, including producers and distributors. It is possible that producers and distributors may even find this language off-putting, as if it implies that they are "not moral" in some way.

## Recommendations

- Find more or better ways to articulate the tangible benefits of the cross-sector collaboration (even if these are future benefits), since the challenges associated with the collaboration are so clear/tangible to participants.
- Talk to distributors about what their perceptions are of a collaboration between hospitals and schools. They are well positioned to help assess the challenge and benefits of working with both types of buyers to make new purchasing options possible.
- Consider developing multiple levels of messaging for PCW's multiple stakeholder audiences. The current messaging (which was designed to bring schools and hospitals together) may not work equally well with stakeholders outside that immediate collaboration.
- Consider focusing PCW activities on communications and education moving forward, rather than getting deeper into managing logistics.

## Additional stakeholder recommendations

The following are recommendations made by interviewees that we wanted to capture, but did not fit easily into existing sections.

- Consider potential policy roles for PCW, such as articulating a collective voice on policy impacting sustainable procurement in public institutions (state, local, national).
- Consider bringing the University of California's non-medical campuses into the model, or, more generally, expand to more types of public institutions. Look into expanding partnerships beyond public institutions to other large scale buyers (including retail, fast food, etc.) to build the demand/volumes needed for larger scale change.
- Some school buyers reported redirecting savings from low cost USDA food programs to purchase PCW products. However, others raised concerns that the low cost of USDA food programs meats may be undermining PCW's procurement goals in schools by limiting volume to a very small ("token") amount in those schools that are purchasing them.

Learn more about the USDA food programs and what production systems these products are coming from. Explore whether there may be potential for an entity like PCW to influence the sustainability of products available through USDA programs. For example, by promoting NAE or CRAU certifications for all meat served in public institutional settings, to children under 18, to hospital patients, etc.

- Include labor in the conversation. Food service workers are on the front lines of procurement change and play a key role in feasibility and acceptance. Labor groups may exist that could be good partners for PCW. In this same spirit of extending the tent, continue to build partnerships with non-purchasing partners like consumers and community organizations.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Number/types of interviewees

- Total of 27 interviews were conducted.
- Food service buyers – contacted 15, interviewed 13. Six represented school food service (San Diego, Davis, Oakland, Elk Grove, Oxnard, Turlock), and seven represented hospital food service (Washington Hospital, UC Davis Medical Center, UC San Francisco Medical Center, UC San Diego Medical Center, San Francisco Veteran’s Affairs, California Pacific Medical Center, Kaiser Permanente).
- Producers – contacted 6, interviewed 5, including one representative from Mindful Meats, two from Foster Farms, and two from Community Grains.
- Distributors – no distributors were contacted or interviewed.
- ProCureWorks Leadership – contacted 8, interviewed 7. Three were primarily associated with School Food Focus and four were primarily associated with Health Care Without Harm.
- Additional stakeholders – two additional stakeholders were interviewed, representing CAFF and Food Service Partners.

## Appendix B: Interview Guides

### Consent for interviewees:

*[To be asked at the beginning of the phone call or interview. Interviewees must consent verbally before continuing the interview.]*

Hello. My name is Gail Feenstra and my colleague is Shosha Capps. We are researchers at UC Davis in the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program and are working with ProCureWorks to evaluate the strengths and challenges of their program over the last couple of years.

- Would you be willing to be interviewed as part of this program evaluation?
- We will be asking you a series of questions about your participation and experience with the program over the last couple of years. The interview should only take about 30 minutes.
- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- If you have any questions after the interview, you may contact me [Gail Feenstra] by phone at 530-753-3063 or by email at gwfeenstra@ucdavis.edu.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Thank you.

### Interview Protocols [Focus on procurement for 2014-2017]

#### For food service/administrators/buyers:

Can you tell us when you started working with ProCureWorks?

Which sites were involved in the project?

What products did you focus on [chicken, beef, grain]?

How did your procurement practices change as a result of working with them?

*[Prompts: amounts purchased? Innovative procurement strategies (process-oriented shift, e.g. changes to distributor contracts, collective asks to distributor)]*

What were your goals for change?

To what extent has the procurement of priority products increased/decreased for the pilot school district and/or hospital sites?

What successes occurred? What worked well? *[Prompts: different suppliers? products with different attributes?]*

What challenges did you encounter and how did you deal with them?

What key factors contributed to increased procurement from your perspective? *[Prompt: Why do you think some of the changes you mentioned occurred?]*

From your perspective as a food service director, what collective goals has ProCure Works achieved in the last 2 years? *[Prompt: focus on goals that were achieved through the collaboration and likely could not have been achieved separately]*

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you.

### **For producers:**

Can you tell us when you started working with ProCureWorks?

What products did you focus on [chicken, beef, grain]?

How did your sales to distributors and/or food service buyers change as a result of working with them?

*[Prompts: amounts purchased? Innovative procurement strategies (process-oriented shift, e.g. changes to distributor contracts? collective supplying to distributor?)]*

To what extent has the sale of priority products increased/decreased as a result of this project?

What successes occurred? What worked well? *[Prompts: products with different attributes?]*

What challenges did you encounter and how did you deal with them?

What key factors contributed to increased sales from your perspective? *[Prompt: Why do you think some of the changes you mentioned occurred?]*

Have you made changes to existing policies, practices or products as a result of this project? If yes, in what ways? What new policies, practices or products have you developed?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you.

### **For ProCureWorks leaders:**

From your perspective as a Focus/HCWH leader, what collective goals has ProCure Works achieved in the last 2 years?

*[Prompt: focus on goals that were achieved through the collaboration and likely could not have been achieved separately]*

What successes have ProCureWorks members encountered in their efforts to increase procurement of priority products? What worked well? *[Prompts: amounts purchased? Innovative procurement strategies (process-oriented shift, eg changes to distributor contracts, collective asks to distributor)]*

What challenges have ProCureWorks members faced in their efforts to increase procurement of priority products? How did they deal with them?

What key factors contributed to healthy collaboration between the two organizations? *[Prompt: Why do you think some of the changes you mentioned occurred?]*

In what ways has the collaborative's work influenced other organizations/agencies/entities outside of ProCureWorks membership?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you.

### **For distributors:**

Can you tell us when you started working with ProCureWorks?

What products did you focus on [chicken, beef, grain]?

How did your procurement practices with suppliers and/or sales to food service buyers change as a result of working with ProCureWorks?

*[Prompts: amounts purchased? Innovative procurement strategies (process-oriented shift, eg changes to buyer contracts, collective asks from buyers?)]*

To what extent has the procurement of priority products increased/decreased as a result of this project?

Have you noticed an increase (or decrease) in the availability of more local and/or sustainable products from your suppliers, as a result of participation of your customers in the PCW initiative?

What successes occurred? What worked well? *[Prompts: different suppliers? products with different attributes?]*

What challenges did you encounter and how did you deal with them?

What key factors contributed to increased procurement and/or sales from your perspective? *[Prompt: Why do you think some of the changes you mentioned occurred?]*

Have you made changes to existing policies or practices as a result of this project? If yes, in what ways? What new policies and/or practices have you developed?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you.

### **For outside stakeholders:**

From your perspective as a community stakeholder, what collective goals has ProCure Works achieved in the last 2 years?

*[Prompt: focus on goals that were achieved through the collaboration and likely could not have been achieved separately]*

What successes have ProCureWorks members encountered in their efforts to increase procurement of priority products? What worked well? *[Prompts: amounts purchased? Innovative procurement strategies (process-oriented shift, eg changes to distributor contracts, collective asks to distributor)]*

What challenges have ProCureWorks members faced in their efforts to increase procurement of priority products? How did they deal with them?

What key factors contributed to healthy collaboration between the two organizations? *[Prompt: Why do you think some of the changes you mentioned occurred?]*

In what ways has the collaborative's work influenced other organizations/agencies/entities outside of ProCureWorks membership?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you.