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~ Note from Executive Director, Christy Takacs ~

As another school year comes to a close, we want to wish all of our member schools and partners a restful and well-deserved summer break. While students and educators take time to recharge, we know summer is also one of the busiest seasons for school leaders as they focus on facilities projects, operational planning, staffing, professional services, and preparing for a successful new school year. ACES is here to support you throughout the summer months, and our network of nearly 70 contracted vendors is available to assist with a wide range of school and operational needs. Whether you are planning improvements, seeking specialized services, or preparing for upcoming projects, we encourage you to reach out and let us help connect you with the resources you need. Thank you to our member schools and vendor partners for another successful year of collaboration and service to students across New Mexico.

 **KEEPING NEW MEXICO'S SCHOOL MEALS RUNNING SMOOTHLY: USDA FOODS FORECASTING**

**Tammy West, Procurement Program Manager**



"Time to predict what 600 kids will want to eat next October."

One of the shifts on the horizon in regard to school food programs will require **forecasting**. The USDA places strong emphasis on data-driven planning, and upcoming ACES contracts, including our bulk foods contract, will require SFAs to submit annual forecasts. Why? Not only to remain compliant, but also because good forecasting helps ACES secure the right mix of commodities—beans, cheese, tortillas, chicken, produce, and all the staples your kitchens depend on.

While forecasting is not a new requirement, ACES has been taking a closer look at the food service contracting requirements, with particular focus as a cooperative procurement organization. We are working closely with the PED to remain a viable contracting option for food service-related contracts going forward. Due to this, you will be seeing several changes coming down the pike.

When SFAs take a few minutes to look at last year's meal counts, participation trends, and menu favorites, it creates a ripple effect: fewer shortages, smoother deliveries, and more predictable budgets. For ACES, accurate forecasts mean we can advocate more effectively for the products schools truly need while also continuing to provide contracts which allow them to focus on other priorities and spend less time and effort conducting procurements.

#### **What is involved in food forecasting?**

Before the new contract year:

- ✓ Review last year's meal counts
- ✓ Check inventory trends
- ✓ Look at menu favorites
- ✓ Submit your forecast to ACES when requested

A little planning helps to keep both administrators and kitchens calmer, menus more consistent, and students well-fed all year long. And that's something worth celebrating.



**ACES CONTRACTED VENDOR!**

LIVE WEBINAR  
**Get Your Programs in Front of 500,000 Families**  
*How to Turn Your Programs Into an Enrollment Engine*  
June 18th @ 10am PT/1pm ET  
[Register Now!](#)

The image shows a promotional graphic for a live webinar. It features a dark background with a lightbulb icon and text in white and green. The text includes the webinar title, subtitle, date and time, and a call-to-action button.

## **Could you be missing out on one of your strongest enrollment strategies?**

Programs and events can be one of the most powerful tools schools and organizations have to attract new families, strengthen community engagement, and improve retention, but many organizations are missing the opportunity to use them strategically.

Whether you offer summer camps, afterschool programs, enrichment, athletics, childcare, workshops, or community events, the way your programs are promoted, managed, and experienced by families can have a major impact on enrollment and long-term family engagement.

audience, simplify the experience for families, and turn programs into a meaningful driver of enrollment and retention.

**We'll even help you add your programs to national and state-wide marketplaces to immediately increase your visibility and help market your school or organization.**

What We'll Cover

- How to use programs and events you're already doing to attract new families
- Why enrichment, camps, afterschool programs, and events improve retention and engagement
- Ways to get your programs in front of more families and increase participation
- What successful organizations are doing to create stronger community connections



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