

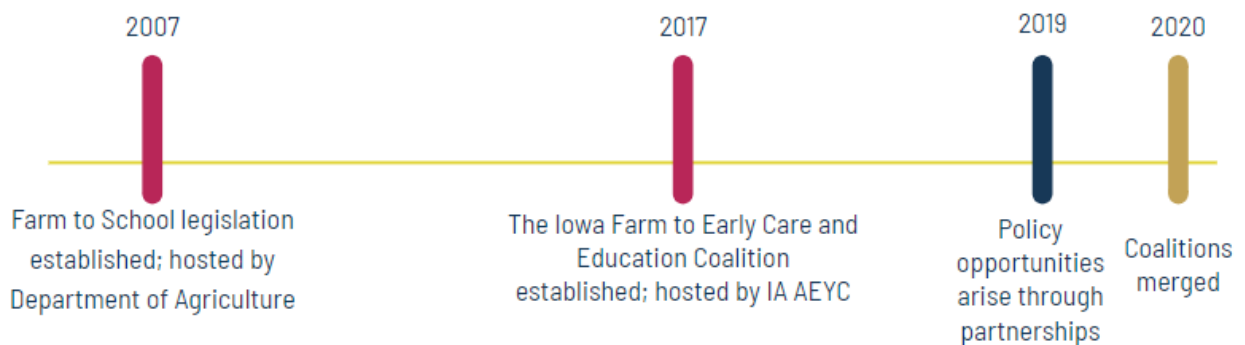
Emergent Strategies for Cross-Sector Procurement Partnerships Across Early Care and K-12 Institutions



A Brief History of State-Level Organizing: Iowa Farm to School and Early Care

In 2007, Iowa Lawmakers passed Farm to School legislation to establish a program through the Department of Agriculture, to work in partnership with the Iowa Department of Education. This work grew into the Iowa Farm to School Coalition which operated for over a decade. In 2017, Iowa AEYC established an Iowa Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Coalition. From this time through 2019, both coalitions operated independently, advancing work across the state but with some duplication of efforts, projects, and participants. In 2019, members across both coalitions were surveyed about the opportunity to merge coalitions and the responses resulted in an overwhelming yes. Partners hosted a strategic planning process to merge the coalitions in January 2020 and have been the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition since.

Policy research being led by Iowa Farmers Union and State Public Policy Group in support of farm to ECE was a major factor in the decision to merge. New and integral partnerships with these groups grew the policy “umbrella” to include K-12 schools and food system stakeholders, alongside ECE. In the summer of 2020, a set of policy recommendations was released, addressing needs in Iowa’s food and education systems for kids and students aged birth through 12th grade. This first example of cross-sector engagement and intentional partnership has set the stage for ongoing work food system work, particularly local food procurement innovation in Iowa.



Below is a depiction of partners who come from largely education-focused organizations and food system organizations. These partnership sectors overlap by way of evaluation and policy efforts and exemplify how specific partnerships are bridging the K-12 School, Early Care and Education, and Food System worlds. Farm to School and Early Care work is intersectional and complex. These partners may tap into and work within multiple sectors, as shown below.

The impacts of having cross-sector partners at the organizing table has energized the coalition's local food procurement work, preparing the group to successfully opt-into often last-minute, large scale federal grants, including:

- Local Produce and Protein Program (2021 USDA Grant): [link to more information](#)
- Local Food For Schools (2022 USDA Grant): [link to more information](#)
- Local Food Purchasing Agreement Program (2022 USDA Grant): [link to more information](#)
- Hub-to-Hub Project (2022-2023): A project piloting new and expanded food hub routes to serve a diversity of institutional partners and markets

Effective state agency partnerships and programs, like those convened through the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition's cross-sector procurement team can elevate the work and opportunity for additional food system partners, including food hubs, food educators, and nonprofits.

Examples: Iowa Cross-Sector Partnerships

Food Systems

IA Dept. of Agriculture
Iowa Farmers Union
Iowa Food Hub Managers
ISU Extension
AEA Purchasing
NE IA Food & Fitness
Iowa Valley RC&D
New Iowa Ag. Vision

Evaluation

ISU Extension

Policy

State Public Policy
Group
Iowa Farmers Union

Education

IA Dept. of Education
IA Dept. of Public Health
IA AEYC
FoodCorps Iowa
CCR&R
Department of Human Services
Department of Management
K-12 Districts and ECEs
Next Step Adventure
Healthiest State Initiative
Everystep 5210
Early Childhood Iowa