



Sustaining Strategy and Partnerships: Iowa Farm to School & Early Care Coalition

Final Report 2020 AgMRC Grant

Project Overview

In July 2020, a newly established Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition sought resources to sustain capacity and systemize new initiatives related to statewide communication, local food procurement, and network engagement. The following report details the successes and resources that are a result of this sustained work and support for coalition building. This final report was developed by Coalition Co-Chair and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach FFED staff, Chelsea Krist, December 2022.

Three central project goals are listed below with outcomes detailed in the following pages. This project is a collaboration of Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition members.

Project Goals

Grow capacity through enhanced coordination and collaboration among coalition partners

Extend the reach of the Iowa Farm to School & Early Care Network through enhanced communication

Define and institutionalize coordinated systems for local food procurement across educational sectors



Project Outcomes and Outputs

Grow capacity through enhanced coordination, collaboration among partners

Annual Report

Through a process of defining shared metrics and systems for data collection and evaluation, the coalition has successfully created and shared statewide a total of three annual Iowa Farm to school and Early Care Reports. These three reports are linked below, and follow a similar outline, detailing policy recommendations, statewide numbers, and collaborative projects.

- [2021 - 2022 Annual Report](#)
- [2020 - 2021 Annual Report](#)
- [2019 - 2020 Annual Report](#)

Collaborative Grants and Projects

Alongside shared reporting, coalition members in leadership roles undertook the task of researching and determining opportunities for collaborative fundraising through grants, contract-based partnerships, and fee for service programs. The group now partners to implement several collaborative programs, all of which are detailed in the annual reports.

Extend reach of the Coalition and Network through communication

Website

A communications intern, supervised by FFED staff, was hired to develop an Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Network website. Informed by the needs of coalition partners, this website houses all programs, projects, events, and resources related to Iowa Farm to School and Early Care. The link to the website is here:

<https://www.iowafarmtoschoolearlycare.org/>

Newsletter

In addition to the website for communication support, the Coalition also now releases a monthly newsletter. The Network Newsletter, "The Iowa Beet!" launched in January of 2021 and features stories and resources shared by network members. A sign-up for the newsletter is available on our website and linked [here](#).

Define, institutionalize coordinated local procurement systems across sectors

Local Food Procurement Strategy Team

This strategy team, coordinated by state agency leads, facilitates research and pilot projects related to local food procurement by schools and ECEs. In close partnership with the Iowa Food Hub Managers Working Group, this team offers systematized technical assistance opportunities to purchasing institutions across the state, supporting community nutrition and farmer viability. Examples of these projects are detailed in all annual reports.

Additional Project Outputs

Best Practices for Farm to School and Early Care Coalition Development: Addressing Unique Opportunities and Partnerships offered in Merging K-12 and Early Care Systems

[Link to Best Practices Document Here](#)

This resource is a compilation of recommendations that were developed by members of the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition's Network Development strategy team in the winter of 2022 after two years of partnership and collaboration. With the understanding the coalition development and partnership is wholly dependent on community context, the following best practices are intended to serve as a broad guidance to enable deep, committed partnership in support of equitable food system work. Questions or requests for additional information can be sent to iowaF2SEC@gmail.com.

Emergent strategies for cross-sector (Early Care and K-12 institutions) procurement partnerships

[Link to Emergent Strategies Document Here](#)

This resource was inspired by the evolving and deepening partnerships at the heart of the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition. While the broader impacts of cross-sector partnerships include enhanced diversity, intersectional thinking and work, and a potential for cross-systems change, this resource specifically details how policy opportunity brought around the establishment of the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition, and subsequent innovations in local food procurement initiatives.

