



# LOCAL FOOD *Healthy Kids*

## ANALYSIS OF IOWA'S FOOD SYSTEM: OPPORTUNITIES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



## LOCAL FOOD, HEALTHY KIDS INITIATIVE

The Local Food, Healthy Kids initiative was created to address an issue that impacts children, the communities that they live in, and the food systems that support them. It is our mission to get more local foods into the hands of children across the state of Iowa, and this will remain the overarching goal for years to come. We recognize that to achieve this, Iowa's food system will need major revitalization to fill the demand that schools and early care homes and centers will create. This will include expansions of much larger markets statewide to increase demand and relieve the burden of risk imposed upon producers who wish to scale up to meet the need. By connecting children to locally grown foods, the larger public will benefit through a healthier populace, a strengthened local agricultural economy, and a renewed understanding of connection and community.

### GOAL OF PROJECT:

If Iowa farmers met just half of the existing demand for locally grown food, it would create \$1.67 billion in annual sales and support 12,000 Iowa jobs.<sup>1</sup>

Working with farmers, the early childhood community, and partner organizations throughout Iowa, this project taps an emerging market for locally sourced food – early care and education providers – by developing an infrastructure of policies and practices to improve access to locally grown, healthy food for these organizations that will benefit all Iowans.

### WK KELLOGG PARTNERS:

- ★ Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness
- ★ Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children (IA AEYC)
- ★ Iowa Farmers Union
- ★ Iowa State University Extension and Outreach (ISUEO)
- ★ State Public Policy Group (SPPG)

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS TO IDENTIFY BARRIERS:

- ★ Early Care and Education
- ★ Farm to School Pilot Schools
- ★ Farmers
- ★ Food System Policymakers
- ★ Food Hub Leaders/Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG)
- ★ Leaders in Agriculture

### THIS INITIATIVE WILL

- Generate** ★ A picture of the current landscape of farm to early care and education policies and practices through research of national, state, and local best practices and identification of obstacles through individual interviews, stakeholder conversations, food system networks, and secondary research.
- Convene** ★ Stakeholder discussions with over 100 contributors in group or individual discussions to help formulate policy recommendations and build the will to change the status quo through action.
  - Build** ★ Stakeholder relationships that create a foundation for continued support and action to promote collaboration between local food producers and child care providers.
- Develop** ★ Policy recommendations for growing local farming opportunities and encourage partnerships between farmers and early childhood providers that support healthy communities in the long-term.
- Promote** ★ Supportive policies by utilizing different networks across the state to build awareness and raise the profile of this issue and get people to change obstructive policies and encourage adoption of best practice.

<sup>1</sup> Local Foods Resource Page. Iowa Farmers Union. <https://iowafarmersunion.org/policy/local-foods/>

# THE PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO ADDRESS MANY INTERSECTING NEEDS IN IOWA.

## HEALTH

- ★ **Eating fruits and vegetables can lead to positive health outcomes.**
  - Eating plenty of vegetables and fruits can lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, prevent some types of cancer, lower risk of eye and digestive problems, and have a positive effect on blood sugar.<sup>2</sup>
  - Those who average 8 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day are 30% less likely to have a heart attack or stroke than people who consume less than 1.5 servings a day.<sup>3</sup>
  - Adolescents who eat about 3 servings of fruit a day have a 25% lower risk of developing breast cancer later in life than those who eat 0.5 servings of fruit a day.<sup>4</sup>
- ★ **Iowans of all ages do not have enough fruits and vegetables in their diet. Health care costs will continue to be significant if nutrition does not improve.**
  - Nationally, youth between the ages of 2-19 consume an average of 0.96 cups of fruit a day while the recommended intake is between 1 and 2 cups. Similarly, youth consume an average of 0.9 cups of vegetables a day while the recommended intake is between 1 and 3 cups.<sup>5</sup>
  - Iowa ranks number 13 in the nation in childhood obesity with 15.2 percent of 2-4 year olds in WIC considered obese. Among all children 10-17 years old, 16.4 percent are considered obese.<sup>6</sup>
  - Childhood dietary patterns are associated with dietary patterns later in life. In Iowa, only 10.7 percent of adults meet the daily fruit intake recommendation and only 7.0 percent meet the daily recommendation for vegetables.<sup>7</sup>
  - Obesity impacts rates of diabetes, heart disease, and other poor health conditions. Estimates for health care costs for problems associated with obesity in Iowa are as high as \$5 billion a year.<sup>8</sup>

## EDUCATION

- ★ **Young children, but especially the most vulnerable children and their families, in Iowa communities need early education environments that promote learning and healthy lifestyles.**
  - There are 240,042 children between the ages of 0 and 5 living in Iowa. 75% of families that have children under the age of 6 have all available parents in the workforce.<sup>9</sup>
  - 88,000 of Iowa's children live in poverty. 141,000 children live in families that lack stable employment.<sup>10</sup>
  - 41.3 percent of children in Iowa are eligible for the Free or Reduced Price Lunch program.<sup>11</sup>
  - Increasing the nutritional quality of food for children is one of the most cost-effective ways to improve a child's learning.<sup>12</sup>
- ★ **A diet of healthy, nutritious food has an impact on educational achievement.**
  - A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research verified a correlation between healthier school lunches and improved test scores due to the nutritional quality of the meals. Local food contains more nutrients and is better tasting to children. It results in better overall health and aids in the learning ability of children in schools.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Nutrition Source. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits/>

<sup>3</sup> The Nutrition Source. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits/>

<sup>4</sup> The Nutrition Source. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits/>

<sup>5</sup> What We Eat in America. United States Department of Agriculture. [https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/80400530/pdf/fped/Table\\_1\\_FPED\\_GEN\\_1516.pdf](https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/80400530/pdf/fped/Table_1_FPED_GEN_1516.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The State of Obesity in Iowa. State of Childhood Obesity. <https://stateofchildhoodobesity.org/states/ia/>

<sup>7</sup> Iowa Action Guide on Fruits and Vegetables. Center for Disease Control. [https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/data-statistics/pdfs/Iowa\\_StateActionGuide\\_Sept2018\\_508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/data-statistics/pdfs/Iowa_StateActionGuide_Sept2018_508.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Original estimation calculated from multiple sources: The High and Rising Cost of Obesity to the US Health Care System. Adam Biener, John Cawley, and Chad Meyerhoefer. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5359159/>; Health Care Expenditures by State of Residence. Kaiser Family Foundation. <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/health-care-expenditures-by-state-of-residence-in-millions/>; Economic Costs of Obesity. National League of Cities. <http://www.healthycommunitieshealthyfuture.org/learn-the-facts/economic-costs-of-obesity/>; Iowa Population 2020. World Population Review. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/iowa-population/>.

<sup>9</sup> State of Iowa - July 2019. Iowa Child Care Resource and Referral. <https://iowaccrr.org/resources/files/Data/FY19/FY19%20State%20Iowa.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> 2019 Kids Count Profile – Iowa. Annie E. Casey Foundation. [https://www.aecf.org/m/databook/2019KC\\_profile\\_IA.pdf](https://www.aecf.org/m/databook/2019KC_profile_IA.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Free or reduced price lunch eligibility in Iowa. Kids Count Data Center. [https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/1244-free-or-reduced-price-lunch-eligibility?loc=17&loc\\_t=2#detailed/2/any/false/871,87-.573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35/any/2695](https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/1244-free-or-reduced-price-lunch-eligibility?loc=17&loc_t=2#detailed/2/any/false/871,87-.573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35/any/2695)

<sup>12</sup> SCHOOL LUNCH QUALITY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE. National Bureau of Economic Research. Michael L. Anderson Justin Gallagher Elizabeth Ramirez Ritchie Working Paper 23218. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w23218>

<sup>13</sup> SCHOOL LUNCH QUALITY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE. National Bureau of Economic Research. Michael L. Anderson Justin Gallagher Elizabeth Ramirez Ritchie Working Paper 23218. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w23218>

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ★ **Many Iowans, especially vulnerable children and their families, lack access to healthy local food in their communities.**
  - Between 1976 and 2000, Iowa lost more than half of its grocery stores.<sup>14</sup>
  - Iowans spend approximately \$10 billion annually on food. An estimated 10 to 15% of food consumed in Iowa is produced in Iowa. There is tremendous potential for growth and jobs in Iowa in local food production.<sup>15</sup>
- ★ **Rural, agricultural communities face significant economic challenges and farmers face growing barriers to find viable economic models. Expansion of local food production and distribution could be a boon to many communities across Iowa.**
  - A 2017 USDA survey found that 4,068 Iowa farms sold local food in 2015 (through all marketing channels), with aggregate sales of more than \$194 million. This means about 5 percent of all Iowa farms are engaged in local food production. Nationwide sales of locally produced edible farm products increased over 200% from 1992 to 2012.<sup>16</sup>
  - In 2015, Iowa's horticulture industry generated \$48 million in direct sales and an additional \$32 million in value-added commerce for a total of more than \$80 million in economic activity.<sup>17</sup>
  - Meanwhile, the farm to school movement in Iowa shows great potential for growth. USDA figures show Iowa schools spent \$940,843 on locally grown foods during the 2017-18 school year, compared to \$659,802 the prior year.<sup>18</sup>
  - As an example, fresh fruit and vegetable growers retain 25 to 38 cents, respectively, for every dollar spent on their products. This compares with only 17.2 cents of each dollar retained by commodity market farmers. Research also shows that farms selling direct-to-consumer have a higher survival rate than other farms – up to 10 percent higher in some cases.<sup>19</sup>
  - Many farmers growing local foods are new or beginning; more than half (59 percent) of respondents in the 2015 Iowa Commercial Horticulture Survey for Food Crops have been growing fruits or vegetables for 10 years or fewer. Although some of them also have been growing commodity crops for longer.<sup>20</sup>

## A RECENT HISTORY OF IOWA'S FOOD SYSTEM

Through the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, much has been attempted with regard to Iowa's food system for many years. The Leopold Center at Iowa State University was created through the 1987 Iowa Groundwater Protection Act. The Center's goals are to identify and develop new ways to farm profitably while conserving natural resources as well as reducing negative environmental and social impacts. The Leopold Center began funding local food system projects through competitive grant programs in 1996 and has worked with numerous local, regional, and state entities to coordinate local food pilot projects.

Through executive order in 2000, Governor Vilsack established one of the first statewide Food Policy Councils to implement food policy recommendations at the local and regional levels and give voice to small scale producers, food justice advocates, and others who represented an alternative to the typical commodity-dominated agricultural interests of Iowa. The Food Policy Council operated successfully until Governor Culver declined to continue its work by not reissuing the executive order that authorized the group.

In 2003, the Leopold Center established the Regional Food System Working Group. The goal of the group was to increase the investment and support for local and regional food businesses in Iowa. The group is comprised of practitioners and community leaders from more than 25 groups that meet quarterly to build more vibrant regional food systems.

In conjunction with many partners statewide, the Leopold Center developed the Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan in 2011 with an appropriation from the Iowa Legislature. The goal was to develop policy and funding recommendations for supporting and expanding local food systems and for overcoming barriers to increasing locally grown food production in Iowa. The Iowa Legislature adopted the recommendation to fund one position as a local food and farm coordinator and allocated \$75,000 to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) for the position. IDALS has

<sup>14</sup> Solving food deserts in Iowa: When small towns lose grocery stores, where do residents turn? The Gazette. <https://www.thegazette.com/iowalideas/stories/human-social-services/solving-food-deserts-in-iowa-when-small-towns-lose-grocery-stores-where-do-residents-turn-20190503>

<sup>15</sup> Original estimation calculated from multiple sources: Iowa Population 2020. World Population Review. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/iowa-population/>; Annual Per Capita Personal Consumption Expenditures. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. <https://data.iowa.gov/Economic-Statistics/Annual-Per-Capita-Personal-Consumption-Expenditure/sfny-jc1y>

<sup>16</sup> 2018 Report to the Iowa Legislature. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/wp-content/uploads/2018-LFFI-Annual-Report-FINAL-web.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Iowa Commercial Horticulture Food Crop Survey Results. [https://www.iowaagriculture.gov/Horticulture-and-FarmersMarkets/pdfs/2017/Hort%20Survey\\_SINGLEPAGE\\_BLEED\\_0322.pdf](https://www.iowaagriculture.gov/Horticulture-and-FarmersMarkets/pdfs/2017/Hort%20Survey_SINGLEPAGE_BLEED_0322.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> 2018 Report to the Iowa Legislature. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/wp-content/uploads/2018-LFFI-Annual-Report-FINAL-web.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan 2019. [https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/wp-content/uploads/2019-LFFI-Annual-Report\\_FINAL3.pdf](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/wp-content/uploads/2019-LFFI-Annual-Report_FINAL3.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Iowa Commercial Horticulture Food Crop Survey Results. [https://www.iowaagriculture.gov/Horticulture-and-FarmersMarkets/pdfs/2017/Hort%20Survey\\_SINGLEPAGE\\_BLEED\\_0322.pdf](https://www.iowaagriculture.gov/Horticulture-and-FarmersMarkets/pdfs/2017/Hort%20Survey_SINGLEPAGE_BLEED_0322.pdf)

consistently sent the money to Iowa State University which funds positions at the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm, Food and Enterprise Development program.

The Legislature also created a Local Food and Farm Advisory Council, a six member board appointed by the governor to oversee the Iowa food and farm program. It currently meets once a year to review progress on the plan.

Iowa's local food system programming is currently being directed through the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm, Food and Enterprise Development (FFED) program. Much of the food system programming is centered out of FFED, including:

- Farm to School and Farm to Early Care & Education (ECE) Networks
- Food Hub Managers Working Group
- Regional Food Systems Working Group
- Local Food Coordinators

In addition to the efforts of the Farm, Food and Enterprise Development program, the Farm to School Coalition and the Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition have recently combined and have established goals to move forward together as the Farm to School & ECE Coalition. Another key partner in promoting local foods to children served in ECE settings is the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI), which has a long history of working closely with ECE providers and families in Northeast Iowa to promote healthy food and active play for young children. Together, these partners have formed a collective action model and will work together to push locally sourced food to children in Iowa.

## NATIONAL RESEARCH

Many states have enacted policies to develop and promote dynamic food systems. Below are examples of some the most successful state policies and programs.

### WISCONSIN

Wisconsin has had a "Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin" block grant annually since 2008. A total of \$300,000 is allocated each year for farmers and businesses to grow their local markets. The maximum award is \$50,000 and a match is required. Applicants can include individuals, groups, or businesses involved in production agriculture, food processing, distribution, warehousing, retail food establishments, or agricultural tourism. Since 2008, Wisconsin has funded 58 projects totaling over \$1.6 million. This spending has generated more than \$10 million in new local food sales, created 211 jobs, and benefitted more than 2,700 producers and 2,900 markets. Wisconsin's ECE providers are also incentivized to conduct farm to ECE activities through the state's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), where they are able to get a point for farm to ECE activities within the system's Health & Wellness and Family Engagement indicators.

### COLORADO

Live Well Colorado is the umbrella organization driving the farm to school and farm to ECE networks in the state. It also acts as a liaison for information, resources, and opportunities for networks. Live Well Colorado operates the Local Procurement Colorado Program, which is a farm to institution initiative that provides food and trainings for partners to procure, prepare, and serve food from local farmers and ranchers.

### MICHIGAN

Michigan had a piloted program to provide 10 cents per meal in matching funds for schools to serve Michigan-grown produce. In its third year, the program is seeing positive results including decreased food waste and increased produce consumption. Last year, Michigan's program expanded to serve 135,000 students in 57 school districts and 27 counties. The grantees purchased 93 different fruits and vegetables grown by 143 farmers located in 38 counties and involved 20 additional businesses (processors, distributors, and food hubs). This program has now been re-funded, and will be available to sponsors of ECE programs in addition to school districts statewide.

### NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina Farm to ECE Initiative uses an evidence-informed collaborative model to help connect communities to farm to ECE strategies. The approach involves a professional development hub of 15 community teams across the state that focus on testing, adapting, and improving strategies to promote long-term sustainability. In addition, several of North Carolina's ECE providers are able to access locally sourced foods through a central kitchen model, which prepares Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) compliant snacks and meals and delivers them to ECE sites.

## CALIFORNIA

The California Department of Food and Agriculture Farm to Fork Office hosts California's farm to school efforts and partners with key state agencies to provide a food systems network. It also administers the California Farmer Marketplace, a free statewide website featuring California produce, grains, meats, and other products for sale. Farmers may post products and connect directly with school food services. It is free and open to the general public, farmers, and schools.

The California Department of Education has written locally sourced foods into the state's Child Nutrition Programs:

1) Meals and snacks include locally sourced foods, 2) nutrition and agri-education is integrated into classrooms and cafeteria, 3) students have an opportunity for hands-on learning with a garden.

"California Thursdays" is a commitment to serve locally sourced food once a week. Beginning in 2010, the initiative has grown collectively to serve over 309 million school meals a year (35 percent of the state total).

## GEORGIA

Georgia's Farm to ECE Coalition launched the Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Learning Collaborative, a multi-year initiative that offers hands-on education in nutrition, cooking, gardening, and promotion of local foods to participating ECE providers while sharing resources that can be replicated by providers across the state. Among other programs, including farm to school and farm to early care programs, Georgia established the Golden Radish Award which recognizes local educational programs that successfully implement farm to school programming.

## VERMONT

VT FEED is a statewide farm to school project founded in 2000. They organized a statewide network of different entities working with food systems. Their 5 strategic aims include: demonstrate the economic value of farm to school; demonstrate the educational value; make farm to school easy to use; increase demand of farm to school; and increase the supply of local food to schools. Their overarching goal is 75-50-25: 75 percent of Vermont schools engaged in providing locally sourced food and purchasing 50 percent local by 2025.

## MINNEAPOLIS

Minneapolis Public Schools is a model farm to school program and their nutrition services works closely with local and national farm to school partners. In the 2016-17 school year, the farm to school program impact included: 15 farms and farm co-ops contracted; 27 local fruits, vegetables, and meat sourced; 126,000+ pounds purchased, and \$337,000 spent on produce and meat.

## SUCCESSFUL FOOD SYSTEM STATES

Across the US, there are several states that have been successful in developing their food systems to ensure farmers are getting a fair market price for their products and families have greater access to healthy food. The most successful state food planning systems had variations of four key elements:

- A state food system plan.
- A statewide food system council.
- A state food system coordinator – a single person or organization.
- A statewide food system network – most often a nonprofit.

Throughout Iowa's long history in food systems and agriculture, steps have been made towards achieving and establishing these four key elements. In 2011, Iowa began the process of creating a statewide food system by developing and passing the Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan. However, with cuts to the Leopold Center and an overturn in staff, continued work into establishing this statewide food system has halted. Also appropriated in 2011, Iowa established a statewide food system council, known as the Iowa Local Food and Farm Council - which meets annually to discuss policy and remove barriers for members of the state's agricultural economy. The work of this council can be furthered by the implementation of an ad hoc group of state government leaders who can help review policy and join in on breaking down policy barriers.

Annually, the Iowa Legislature appropriates \$75,000 in funds for statewide food systems coordination. This money goes to aid the work of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. While these funds supplement much of the food systems coordination in Iowa, more funds into this appropriation are needed to continue and grow Iowa's ability to coordinate the agricultural economy and improve local product sourcing. Finally, progress has been made towards a statewide food system network, with the establishment of different coalitions and working groups, including the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care & Education Coalition and the Regional Food Systems Working Group. The creation or establishment of statewide networks can be supported by the Iowa Legislature to gain more participation in networks who will push policy forward.

## BARRIERS TO SUCCESS PAIRED WITH POLICY SOLUTIONS

As evidenced by the supporting data and history of what Iowa has done to improve local food systems, there are still factors that need to be addressed to ensure our goal of improving access to local, healthy food for the benefit of Iowa's youngest populations can be achieved. Throughout our extensive research and interviews, common themes around barriers to successfully get more local food into the hands of children kept rising to the top.

Although there are significant barriers that currently inhibit success of such a program, members of the supply, aggregation, and demand communities provided many ideas and identified multiple policies and practices as potential for solutions to their current barriers. This section breaks down the policy initiatives into three categories: federal, state, and regulatory initiatives.

### SUPPLY – FARMERS

#### ★ **Barrier: Insufficient or inconsistent institutional demand increases the risk for farmers to scale up production.**

##### FEDERAL SOLUTION:

- Increase access to federal low-interest loans for beginning farmers focused on growing produce and proteins for the local foods market, including on-farm processing facilities.

##### STATE SOLUTION:

- Provide education, assistance, and incentives for public and private institutions to connect with local farmers and develop supply agreements.
- Create incentives and provide state assistance for food hubs, food co-ops, farm organizations, and local food councils to promote and generate larger market opportunities for farmers to sell products across the state.
- Launch an economic development initiative to encourage diversifying Iowa's agriculture production and scaling-up the production of produce crops.
- Establish tax incentives for planting and harvesting produce crops and/or using multiple crop rotations.

##### REGULATORY:

- Work with state and local regulators to clarify food safety and licensing regulations to allow producers to grow and sell produce to Iowa institutions.

#### ★ **Barrier: Lack of access to land for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers, most often because of the high cost of land and/or lack of collateral.**

##### FEDERAL AND/OR STATE:

- Increase access to loans for farmers who want to develop small farms focused on growing local produce and proteins.
- Carve out and target a specific category for urban farming in beginning farmer loan programs.

##### LOCAL:

- Change zoning regulations to allow produce farming in urban settings.

#### ★ **Barrier: Whole farm crop insurance rules lack clarity and sufficient incentives for insurance providers and adequate protections for start-up farmers and farming operations diversifying or converting to producing local foods.**

##### FEDERAL:

- Modify crop insurance rules to eliminate barriers and simplify the process for beginning farmers and farmers diversifying to alternative crops such as fruits and vegetables to qualify for crop insurance.
- Provide better education, training, and financial incentives for crop insurance providers.

#### ★ **Barrier: Iowa has a lack of processing and storage facilities and local foods aggregation capacity.**

##### FEDERAL:

- Increase funding for the USDA Local Agriculture Market Program. The Farmers Market and Local Foods Promotion Program needs expanded and Iowa should enhance education and awareness efforts to promote applications from Iowa farmers, local foods businesses, non-profit food hubs, co-ops, and local food councils.

#### STATE:

- Create grants, loans and other incentives for building processing and packaging facilities, including on-farm processing facilities for marketable products, i.e. milk into cheese, yogurt, ice cream or butter, and fruits and vegetables.
- Develop an interactive website for farmers to connect with other producers and allow customers, both individuals and institutions, to buy directly from farmers. This would act as a clearinghouse for local purchases.

### AGGREGATION – FOOD HUBS

Food hubs, which serve as an aggregation point for collection and distribution of locally grown products between farmers and institutions, have their own barriers to facilitating the transfer of product.

#### ★ **Barrier: Institutional use and demand for locally grown food is not at a level to meet the aggregate sourcing that food hubs need to be sustainable.**

#### FEDERAL:

- Increase the USDA Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) and grants available through the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) for increased investment in the development, improvement, and expansion of local and regional food business enterprises.

#### STATE:

- Support a statewide initiative to promote local foods as a key component of rebuilding Iowa's rural economy.
- Build capacity at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) to capitalize on USDA local foods marketing assistance programs through education, awareness, and grant access.

#### LOCAL:

- Develop regional buying clubs to create demand for wholesale markets.

#### ★ **Barrier: Food hubs lack sufficient logistical support – especially for transportation, physical space, and storage capacity--and little to no ability to process raw product.**

#### FEDERAL:

- Expand the USDA Business & Industry Loan Guarantee Program and target assistance to food hubs for processing, storage, distribution, and marketing locally produced food in areas with a lack of processing and storage facilities.

#### STATE/LOCAL:

- Support financial assistance for building capacity at Iowa food hubs for operational improvements, transportation, processing, packaging, and storage facilities for fruits and vegetables.
- Establish and support local food coordinators and operations staff.

### DEMAND – INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CENTERS AND HOMES, AND SCHOOLS

Early care and education (ECE) centers and homes, as well as schools, have an interest in working to serve more locally sourced product. However, they encounter several barriers to completing this goal, including general fragmentation of the system, budget constraints that make it difficult to prioritize high-quality local food over competing demands, and uneven access to training and professional development to successfully implement initiatives focused on child health and nutrition.

#### ★ **Barrier: Lack of access to training and tools to identify local food producers and coordinate purchase agreements.**

#### STATE/LOCAL:

- Incorporate acquiring and preparing locally sourced produce into the job descriptions for school nutrition directors.
- Infuse training and technical assistance on local food procurement to ECE/school staff into state's existing training infrastructure (e.g., Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) training, licensing consultants).



★ **Barrier: Early care and education centers lack incentives and financial resources to purchase locally grown products.**

**STATE:**

- Provide a purchasing incentive through CACFP of 10 cents per meal for meals prepared with locally grown products.
- Provide incentives through direct funding and subsidies for spending a certain percent of budget increases on local food purchasing.

**REGULATORY**

- Include local food purchasing into the new Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and child health/nutrition standards for ECE programs.
- Explore potential changes to DHS regulations to facilitate the inclusion of locally grown foods into menu planning.

★ **Barrier: Lack of awareness around the benefits of purchasing and eating locally grown product, including buy-in from parents and students.**

**STATE:**

- Launch a statewide education initiative to teach communities about the importance of buying and consuming locally grown products.
- Develop a statewide award/recognition program to showcase exemplary farm to ECE/school programs in communities.
- Invest in farm to school and farm to ECE programs (Farm to School Early Care & Education Coalition) that provide training and tools to facilitate local food procurement across the state.
- Create a statewide "Harvest of the Month" calendar to promote nutrition education in the classroom.

**LOCAL:**

- Include local food purchasing as a priority for "School Wellness Policy Committees."
- Promote family engagement initiatives across ECE/school sites that communicate the value of locally grown products (e.g., cooking workshops, farm stands).
- Leverage local FFA and 4-H programs to grow local produce on-site at schools, ECEs, and other institutions to generate community-wide interest in locally grown produce.
- Support the creation and operation of local food councils.

★ **Barrier: Many early care and education programs do not have the infrastructure, a clear understanding of food handling rules, or the time to prepare and serve fresh produce.**

**STATE:**

- Clarify the local food procurement rules, such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification rules, and provide education and training on the rules for providers through consultations and site visits.
- Grants, loans, and other incentives for building processing and packaging facilities for fruits and vegetables.

★ **Barrier: Lack of local food programs for schools, ECEs, and other institutions to create sufficient demand for farmers to be profitable.**

**STATE:**

- Create regional buying groups to increase market demand and buying capacity.
- Develop a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) pilot program for ECE programs to engage in local food purchasing.
- Expand Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) incentive "Double Up Food Bucks" for locally grown products to be sold to families of young children through farm stands at ECE/school sites.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



For more information on this initiative, please contact Emilee Harris at [SPPG at eharris@sppg.com](mailto:eharris@sppg.com).