ASPHN 2020-2021
Farm to Early Care and Education Implementation Grant (FIG) Evaluation Report

Prepared by:
Community Evaluation Solutions, Inc.
October 2021
Introduction

Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) programs enrich young children’s health and lives through greater access to nutritious foods and a hands-on approach to food, health, and agriculture education.

The Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN), in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity and National Farm to School Network (NFSN), provided funding and a technical assistance (TA) grant to strengthen state-level Farm to ECE initiatives.

Eleven teams were competitively selected from 21 applicants to receive funding ($90,900 per grantee) and technical assistance, November 1, 2020 to October 31, 2021. Thanks to the innovation, diligence and passion of these teams, this report describes an impactful first year of the FIG.
Evaluation Methods

The FIG evaluation collected data from multiple sources, including:

- Team Quarterly Progress Reports
- Team Lead FIG End of Year Evaluation Survey
- Program manager webinar/call attendance and participation data
- Program manager team lead meeting minutes
- Participant Feedback Surveys on the Online Learning Session
11 states and territories received funding to participate in the FIG
21 states did not receive funding, but participated in educational opportunities through the FIG including webinars and trainings

FIG initiatives, in funded states, impacted **243 U.S. counties**

An average of **50% of counties** in each funded state/territory were impacted by the FIG
As of October 2021, the FIG has reached an estimated . . .

- 219,582 Children
- 1,900 ECE Providers
- 1,206 Early Care and Education (ECE) Sites
- Of those ECEs, 118 were Family Childcare Providers
During Year 1 of the FIG, state teams have engaged with 218 food producers, food hubs, and farmers.

Some ways FIG teams have engaged with food producers, food hubs, and farmers include:

- Coalition membership
- Connecting ECEs with local food producers
- “Meet the Farmer” video series
FIG Coalitions have grown substantially in the last year

October 2020
155 coalition members
(Average 14 per state/territory)

October 2021
234 coalition members
(Average 21 per state/territory)

While the numbers tell part of our state’s story, the true alchemy of the coalition’s efforts lie in connections we’ve fostered with one another. These cultivated relationships have opened doors and discussions for new language, network alignments, integrated actions across policy and investment efforts, and opportunities to investigate integrated programming across state agencies and community partners, among other benefits.

- FIG Team Lead
Most FIG participants found all of the educational opportunities and resources provided were effective in helping teams reach their goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Did not Attend or Use</th>
<th>Not Effective at All</th>
<th>Somewhat Ineffective</th>
<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:1 Team Lead TA Meetings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Learning Session</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIG Webinars</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>FIG Monthly Newsletters</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIG Single Issue Groups (FIG SIGs)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FIG Networking Calls</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FIG Basecamp Website</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Did not Attend or Use  □ Not Effective at All  □ Somewhat Ineffective  □ Somewhat Effective  □ Very Effective
One-on-one technical assistance (TA) calls with team leads were ranked as the most effective FIG resource.

TA was provided in 63 calls with FIG State Team Leads

In total, 255 attendees participated in the TA calls
During technical assistance calls . . .

Participants mentioned 155 new collaborations with a variety of experts:

- 60 new collaborators had expertise in Early Childhood
- 59 new collaborators had expertise in Public Health
- 36 new collaborators had expertise in Food Systems

ASPHN and NFSN Project managers provided teams with 137 resources.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Webinar Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th># of Attendees</th>
<th>Active Participation Rate</th>
<th># of States Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIG Kick Off Meeting</td>
<td>11/10/2020</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing Awareness of Farm to ECE and FIG Reporting: Capturing Your Stories</td>
<td>12/8/2020</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthening Farm to ECE Collaborations</td>
<td>1/12/2021</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIG State Update Networking Call</td>
<td>2/9/2021</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing the Equity in Farm to ECE Access</td>
<td>4/13/2021</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leveraging or Creating Meaningful Farm to ECE Policies at the State or Local Level: Funding Programs and Positions</td>
<td>5/11/2021</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIG State Update Networking Call - 6 State Updates</td>
<td>6/8/2021</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIG State Update Networking Call - 5 State Updates</td>
<td>7/13/2021</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Community Tool Box - Tools to Change Our World and Sustain Our Efforts</td>
<td>8/10/2021</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative Opportunities to Strengthen Farm to ECE via Federal Funding Streams</td>
<td>9/14/2021</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebration and Final FIG Sharing</td>
<td>10/26/2021</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td># of Attendees</td>
<td># of States Represented</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCH &amp; Farm to ECE Funding</td>
<td>4/7/2021</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Go NAP SACC and Farm to ECE</td>
<td>4/26/2021</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm to ECE and Policy/QRIS</td>
<td>5/11/2021</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm to ECE Equity-Centered Coalition Development</td>
<td>5/20/2021</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm to ECE Strategic Planning</td>
<td>5/21/2021</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm to ECE Success Stories</td>
<td>6/1/2021</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CACFP/ Reimbursement</td>
<td>6/10/2021</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCH Funding and Farm to Institution (Part II)</td>
<td>6/24/2021</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Go NAP SACC - Tools and Reports (Part II)</td>
<td>7/16/2021</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Stories and Final FIG report (Part II)</td>
<td>9/10/2021</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 32 states and territories participated in webinars, networking calls, and FIG Single Issue Groups (SIGs).

- 700 attendees participated in webinars and networking calls (Average: 64 per webinar)
- 168 attendees participated in FIG SIGS (Average: 17 per call)
Of the attendees who responded to the survey, most participants strongly agreed or agreed that they learned something from the online learning session that they would use in their work.

The online learning session took place over 2 days and had 143 attendees.
Most participants strongly agreed or agreed that the online learning session was **useful**, helped build knowledge and skills, and improved their **capacity to address equity**.

- **The online learning session was useful.**
  - Strongly Disagree: 5
  - Disagree: 36
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree: 19
  - Agree: 20

- **The online learning session helped build my farm to ECE knowledge and skills.**
  - Strongly Disagree: 1
  - Disagree: 9
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree: 31
  - Agree: 20

- **The online learning session improved my capacity to address equity in partnerships.**
  - Strongly Disagree: 6
  - Disagree: 33
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree: 20
  - Agree: 20
Many FIG states offered funding or help to ECEs through mini grants, which supported Farm to ECE implementation (e.g., expanding or building gardens, altering food buying, expanding cooking capacity, etc.).

752 Applications were submitted for mini grants

194 Mini grants were awarded

There was a large amount of interest in mini grants which well exceeded funds and TA capacity available.

Funding capacity only allowed for 25% of applicants to receive mini grants.
All FIG participants agreed or strongly agreed that their coalition’s outputs, communications, capacity, and effectiveness increased.

Our coalition's outputs (e.g., trainings, materials, assessments, reports, mini grants, webinars, or other events) increased.

- Strongly Disagree: 3
- Disagree: 8

Our coalition's communications (e.g., regular meetings, newsletters, shared resources or document site) increased.

- Strongly Disagree: 5
- Disagree: 6

Our coalition's capacity (e.g., access to experts or key contacts, knowledge of farm to ECE practices or resources) increased.

- Strongly Disagree: 6
- Disagree: 5

Our coalition's effectiveness (e.g., in engaging stakeholders, and achieving our mission, workplan, and goals) increased.

- Strongly Disagree: 7
- Disagree: 4

□ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
All participants agreed or strongly agreed that the FIG increased farm to ECE awareness, implementation, and resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have increased our use of resources that we have learned about in the FIG.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are more aware of farm to ECE resources we learned about from other states participating in the FIG.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are more aware of resources (includes promising practices or programs, trainings, materials, etc.) in farm to ECE in the US.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of farm to ECE increased in our state.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of farm to ECE increased in our state.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
State FIG teams completed or made significant progress on 75% of their workplan goals and strategies by the end of year 1.
All participants agreed or strongly agreed that their FIG coalition has increased prioritization of equity in their work.

Most participants agreed that their coalition represents the communities they serve (e.g., race, ethnicity, geography, etc.).
When asked how they have addressed equity within ECEs and the children they serve, teams mentioned:

- Promoting traditional/culturally-appropriate foods and foodways
- Providing culturally-adapted resources
- Learning about the impact of farm to ECE on food justice (at conferences)
- Translating educational materials and resources into Spanish

Shifting the food systems narrative includes having a wider array of perspectives and experiences rooted in a shared history and current reality of our food system. We must share and develop more inclusive stories, particularly for young people, that reflect the ways and traditions of all races, ethnicities, and communities.

- FIG Team Lead
When discussing how they have addressed equity in relation to awarding mini grants, teams mentioned:

- Mini grants required limited time burden, literacy, and skill for application and reporting.
- Funding opportunities were advertised widely to a diverse variety of providers and potential applicants.
- Providing resources (e.g., Food Literacy Toolkit) to all applicants (even those who were not funded).
- Selection of mini grant recipients gave preference to certain providers, including:
  - ECEs serving communities of color
  - Family childcare providers (FCCs)
  - ECEs participating in Head Start or CACFP
  - Programs new to F2ECE

We prioritized programs new to Farm to ECE that had not received prior funding, increasing the likelihood that these mini-grants would spread the movement, reaching new providers that have not typically received support from existing initiatives.

- FIG Team Lead
When asked how they have addressed equity within their coalitions, teams mentioned:

- Diversifying coalition membership
- Completed National Farm to School Racial Equity Assessment Tool and used results to guide equity discussions and efforts
- Addressed power dynamics within coalition

To make the coalition as equitable as possible, we needed to mitigate the effects of economic and systemic power dynamics within the group between [state] government agencies and other stakeholders...This led us to foster and empower a subgroup of coalition members made strictly of ECE providers.

- FIG Team Lead

It was important to us that we incorporate the reality of ECE providers into our work, their low compensation and lack of health care weighed with the importance of their work. Our goals for year two include telling the stories of ECEs and their providers, and the monumental work they are doing for the health of our children while facing these systemic challenges and hardships.

- FIG Team Lead
Most participants agreed or strongly agreed that their state’s FIG project is sustainable.

A strong coalition positively affects sustainability and will create long-term benefits for farm to ECE in our state.

- FIG Team Lead
Examples of **sustainable** components of FIG state team initiatives include:

- Farm to ECE coalition websites, resources, and educational materials
- Equity principles integrated into coalition’s work
- Accounting systems created for local food procurement

Our team has provided **education resources** and **technical support** to ECEs that will help **support** and **sustain** the implementation of Farm to ECE at participating childcare centers **years after the FIG is over**.

- FIG Team Lead
When asked to share **policies, systems, or environment changes (PSEC)** that have been implemented to help **sustain** the state's FIG work, teams mentioned:

- **Integration of Farm to ECE professional development resources into state licensure and training for ECE providers**
- **Advocacy for state policies to support F2ECE initiatives**
- **Collaborative food purchasing among ECEs, school districts, and state agencies**
- **Pursuing additional funding opportunities outside of the FIG grant**
When asked to describe their greatest success in the FIG, teams mentioned:

- Expanded the Farm to ECE training opportunities and resources available
- Increased focus on equity in Farm to ECE
- Cultivated meaningful partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, including:
  - ECEs and providers
  - State agencies
  - Cooperative Extension
  - Tribal communities
  - Farmers and food producers

Through this process we have been able to empower ECE providers and amplify voices that are often unheard.

- FIG Team Lead

Partnerships within the coalition are highly collaborative, honest, centered in respect, and deeply committed to this work.

- FIG Team Lead
When asked about challenges they encountered during the FIG, teams mentioned:

- **Reporting requirements and administrative burden**

- **Difficulties balancing FIG meetings and learning events with coalition work implementing FIG activities**

- **Challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic**
  
  - Difficulties accessing ECE sites
  - Food accessibility and supply chain issues
  - Virtual interaction can limit relationship building

More personnel time was necessary than originally planned for in order to fully attend to the many aspects of the FIG.

- FIG Team Lead

I am proud that our ECEs preserved through COVID, and still did farm to ECE and feeding and nourishing kids, while trying to stay in business.

- FIG Team Lead
Recommendations for ASPHN

Continue to work with the 11 funded FIG teams to build upon foundation laid in Year 1

Sustained or expanded funding could support extension of FIG initiatives to reach larger audiences and have even greater impact

Work with state teams to help them balance responsibilities between FIG meetings and education vs implementation of FIG initiatives
Conclusions

Work done by funded FIG state teams positively impacted an estimated **thousands** of ECE sites and providers, and **hundreds of thousands** of children.

FIG **funding**, **support**, **education**, and **resources** allowed state teams to increase **awareness** and **implementation** of Farm to ECE.

State teams **prioritized equity** in their FIG work with ECEs, ECE providers, and coalition members.

FIG activities created **sustainable** positive impact through **policy, systems, and environment (PSE)** changes.

Teams mentioned challenges in **balancing responsibilities**, and noted that **additional resources** and **personnel** would make the FIG more effective.
Acknowledgements

ASPHN would like to acknowledge and thank the rich partnerships and collaborations that made the Year 1 FIG TA successful. This includes work with the NFSN, CDC, and ASPHN Farm to ECE Advisory Committee. The Farm to ECE committee includes Diane Beth, Katie Chatfield, Linda Jo Doctor, Carrie Dooyema, Jennifer Garner, Diane Golzynski, Jill Carlson Groendyk, Diane Harris, Claire Heiser, Everett Jackson, Gabrielle Mnkande, Emia Oppenheim, Karen Probert, Kate Reddy, Meagan Shedd, Marsha Spence, Lacy Stephens, and Margaret West.

Although the FIG only began in November 2020, this team of experts have devoted time, resources, creativity, expertise, and very thoughtful input to ASPHN’s work on Farm to ECE since late 2018. We are grateful to them and look forward to ongoing collaboration and success.

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