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, from November 1, 2021 to October 31, 2022. Thanks to the innovation, diligence and passion of these teams, this report describes an impactful second year of the FIG.
Executive Summary

Eleven states and territories received TA and funding to implement Farm to ECE during year 2 of the FIG – these coalitions had almost eight hundred members by the end of year 2.

Work done by funded FIG state teams positively impacted an estimated thousands of ECE sites and providers, and almost two hundred thousand children in year 2.

FIG teams received over $1.5 million in funding outside of the FIG, increasing the long term sustainability of coalitions’ Farm to ECE work.

State teams prioritized equity in their FIG work with ECEs, ECE providers, and coalition members, especially via the awarding of mini grants.

FIG activities created sustainable positive outcomes through policy, systems, and environment (PSE) changes that will support the long term impact of work done through the FIG.
11 states and territories received funding and technical assistance in the FIG

15 additional states participated in FIG webinars and trainings

FIG initiatives, in funded states, impacted 254 U.S. counties

An average of 50% of counties in each funded state/territory were impacted by the FIG
Between November 2021 – October 2022, the FIG reached an estimated . . .

- 186,477 Children
- 3,192 Early Care and Education (ECE) Sites
- 4,247 ECE Providers
- 136 were Family Childcare Providers

Of those ECEs,
During Year 2 of the FIG, state teams engaged with 288 food producers, food hubs, and farmers. Some ways FIG teams have engaged with food producers, food hubs, and farmers include:

- Coalition membership
- Farmer and food producer trainings
- Connecting ECEs with local food producers
Coalitions have grown substantially since the beginning of the FIG

- **October 2020**: 155 coalition members (Average 14 per state/territory)
- **November 2021**: 376 coalition members (Average 34 per state/territory)
- **October 2022**: 797 coalition members (Average 72 per state/territory)
The **most common** area of expertise for FIG team members was **Public Health Systems**.

**Non-profit organizations** were the **most common** type of employer for FIG team members.

* Examples of “other” organizations/positions include childcare facility directors, local food producers and farmers, food service directors, etc.
FIG teams started **over 100 new collaborations in Year 2** with a variety of experts, including:

- **70** new collaborators had expertise in Early Childhood
- **40** new collaborators had expertise in Public Health
- **37** new collaborators had expertise in Food Systems

During TA calls, ASPHN and NFSN Project managers provided teams with **82 materials and resources**.
FIG Resources and Education

The FIG provided a variety of educational opportunities and resources to support participants.

Funded states ranked the resources that were most useful to their FIG work.

1) Tailored Monthly TA Calls
   (with ASPHN and NFSN Program Managers)
2) Farm to ECE Webinars
3) FIG Update and Networking Calls
4) Farm to ECE Annual Meeting
5) Farm to ECE Monthly Newsletters
6) Farm to ECE Resource Library
<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>Partnering with Indigenous Nations and Communities</td>
<td>11/9/2021</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm to ECE Procurement Innovations</td>
<td>12/14/2021</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIG Update and Networking Call - Part 1</td>
<td>1/11/2022</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIG Update and Networking Call - Part 2</td>
<td>2/8/2022</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April Discussion lots of Farm to ECE Topics</td>
<td>4/12/2022</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm to ECE Provider Roundtable – Challenges &amp; Wins</td>
<td>5/10/2022</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm to ECE Metrics and Evaluation Webinar</td>
<td>7/12/2022</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIG Update and Networking Call - Part 3</td>
<td>8/9/2022</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIG Update and Networking Call - Part 4</td>
<td>9/13/2022</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Inclusive Nature Programs</td>
<td>10/11/2022</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>42%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Many FIG states offered **mini grants** to ECEs or farmers, which supported Farm to ECE implementation (e.g., expanding or building gardens, local food procurement, expanding cooking capacity, etc.)

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

Funding capacity only allowed for **16% of applicants** to receive mini grants.

**651** Applications were reviewed for mini grants

**107** Mini grants were awarded
### Farm to ECE Online Learning Session

103 unique participants attended the **Farm to ECE Online Learning Session**, March 2022. The theme of the 3-d training was *Leveraging Farm to ECE to Engage Families and Address Equity*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th># of Attendees</th>
<th>Active Participation Rate</th>
<th># of States Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Engagement in Farm to ECE</td>
<td>3/29/2022</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebrating Culturally Relevant Foods in Farm to ECE</td>
<td>3/30/2022</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Future of Farm to ECE</td>
<td>3/31/2022</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>81</strong></td>
<td><strong>52%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they learned something during the learning session that they would use in their work.

64 FIG team members attended the March 2022 Farm to ECE Online Learning Session. 28 completed the event survey.
Most respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Farm to ECE Online Session was useful, helped build knowledge and skills, and improved their capacity to address equity.

The learning session was useful.

The learning session helped build my Farm to ECE knowledge and skills.

The learning session improved my capacity to address equity in Farm to ECE.
All eleven FIG teams completed the end of year close out survey in October 2022.

Team leads from each FIG team collaborated to complete the survey

The next slides contain feedback from teams about FIG and its perceived impacts
When asked about **local food procurement** at ECEs, teams mentioned:

- Developed freely available trainings on local food procurement in Farm to ECE
- Worked to establish or promote local food purchasing incentive programs (e.g., [Local Foods Makes Cents](#))
- Facilitated connections between ECEs and local farmers, food hubs, and local food coaches

[Our] Farm to ECE **procurement pilots** were intended to help ECE staff obtain locally grown, healthy foods from a variety of sources, including **direct from farmers** as well as through **farmers markets, food hubs** and/or **distributors**; to serve in meals, snacks, and/or as part of educational activities. Through these pilots, the goal was to develop **collective local food sourcing solutions** driven by the unique needs and goals of each community.

- FIG Team Lead
FIG teams received **over $1.5 million** in funding in addition to the FIG. When asked about funding external to FIG, teams mentioned:

- Funding for new dedicated Farm to ECE positions/personnel within state agencies
- Leveraging USDA SNAP-Ed funds to support Farm to ECE in their state

FIG teams received or benefited from funding from several state agencies and other organizations, including:

- Department of Health & Human Services
- Department of Health
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Education
- CDC State Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Program
- USDA Farm to School Grants
- State University Grants
- Foundations
- Vital Village Grants
- Non-Profit Organization
- State COVID Relief Funds

[We were] awarded [$170K] to . . . 1) Increase the amount of **local produce served** by low-income (ECE) [FCC] providers, and 2) Create a **reproducible** and **sustainable** farm to ECE **learning cohort** with training model for childcare providers that include **community supported agriculture** (CSA). This proposed approach **provides hands-on education** through the **delivery of [local] produce** via CSA to early **family childcare home providers**.

- FIG Team Lead
FIG teams completed or made significant progress on 77% of their year 2 workplan goals and strategies by the end of year 2.
Most FIG participants agreed or strongly agreed that their coalition’s **effectiveness**, **communications**, **capacity**, and **outputs** increased.

- **Effectiveness**: 1 Strongly Disagree, 7 Disagree, 3 Agree
- **Communications**: 1 Strongly Disagree, 6 Disagree, 4 Agree
- **Capacity**: 10 Agree, 1 Strongly Agree
- **Outputs**: 1 Strongly Disagree, 6 Disagree, 4 Agree
Most participants agreed or strongly agreed that the FIG increased farm to ECE awareness, implementation, and resources.

**Awareness** of Farm to ECE increased in our state.

**Implementation** of Farm to ECE increased in our state.

We are more aware of resources on Farm to ECE in the US.

We are more aware of Farm to ECE resources from other FIG states.

We have increased our use of resources that we have learned about in the FIG.
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:

- Focus on diverse and underserved populations and ECEs that serve them
- Developed website and resources focused on traditional foods and foodways (informed by Tribal partners)
- Translating educational materials and resources, creating new Spanish Farm to ECE website
- Developed and promoted culturally tailored resources (e.g., culturally appropriate recipes and foods)

Through work [with our Tribal partners], we learned that Tribes operating on federally recognized tribal lands should have Tribal sovereignty when it comes to food safety rules, but that the current [state] ECE licensing standards seem to conflict with this fact, [leading to] misinformation [about ECEs’] ability to use their traditional foods . . . we are working collaboratively with our traditional foods workgroup to request amendments to the licensing standards in order to clarify that Tribes have the right to serve their traditional foods.

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

- Simplifying mini grant application and invoicing processes to reduce burden on providers and increase equitable access to mini-grants.

- Funding opportunities were advertised widely to a diverse variety of providers and potential applicants.

- Selection of mini grant recipients gave preference to certain providers, including:
  - ECEs serving communities of color, indigenous communities, or immigrant communities
  - Family childcare providers or Family, Friend, and Neighbors (FFN) providers
  - ECEs serving children enrolled in the Child Care subsidy programs
  - ECEs serving areas with lower Child Opportunity Index scores
  - ECEs participating in Head Start or CACFP

[Our] team has attempted to prioritize the most under-resourced ECE sites in order to level the playing field of Farm to ECE programming in [our state].

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

- Developing coalition equity workgroups and hosting equity workshops (facilitated by an equity consultant) with coalition members
- Diversifying coalition membership
- Updating mission and purpose statements to include equity as a central focus
- Providing financial support to coalition members whose employers do not pay them to attend coalition meetings

[Our] team continues to acknowledge the uniqueness and variety of needs and motivations of coalition members and has taken an equitable approach to coalition-building and meeting facilitation, [which] has played a pivotal role in empowering coalition members to voice their needs and concerns with each other and the larger ECE community . . . This intentional communication builds trust, confidence to communicate, and enthusiasm for Farm to ECE policy and program implementation.

- FIG Team Lead
All participants (100%) agreed that their state’s FIG project is sustainable. Examples of sustainable components of FIG state team initiatives include:

- Farm to ECE websites, resources, trainings, and educational materials developed through FIG made readily available

- Secured funding for Farm to ECE efforts (outside of the FIG)

- Contributions to state-level food systems plans and Farm to ECE policies

- Helped establish Farm to ECE focused positions/personnel within state agencies

[Our] team believes that the continued learning opportunities provided to early childcare providers afforded by the FIG has been immensely impactful in influencing participants’ willingness and eagerness to not only shift personal beliefs and practices regarding fresh and local produce, but also has provided lasting and sustainable impact on individuals’ investment in providing Farm to ECE activities . . . We feel as though the shift in attitudes towards Farm to ECE will have a continued positive impact long after the completion of FIG.

- FIG Team Lead
When asked to describe their greatest success in the FIG, teams mentioned:

Held well-attended virtual Farm to ECE conferences and trainings

Served a wide range of ECEs, children, and providers through mini grant programs – including many organizations new to Farm to ECE

Advocated for policy changes to increase access to Farm to ECE

We have found the FIG experience to be a wonderful opportunity with enough flexibility to be responsive and creative for community needs. The learning and collaboration between states is unlike any other grant program and has helped us grow.

- FIG Team Lead

[Our mini grant] pilot programs provide the opportunity to engage new audiences around the state and to learn from our community members. Farm to child is not a one size fits all, our grantees understand that and work to advance local procurement, gardening and nutrition and agriculture education with intention, while being nimble to the needs of those they serve.

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

- **Staff turnover within coalitions, and at partner organizations, state agencies, and ECEs**

- **Reporting requirements, timelines, and administrative burden**

- **Challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic**
  - Difficulties accessing ECE sites
  - Virtual interaction can impact engagement
  - Staff turnover at ECEs and other partner organizations

There were very minimal challenges associated with participating in the FIG during year 2. [Our] challenges are only *indicative of the success of year 2*; with the growth of our ECE provider network, issues of *staff over-extension* have arisen as staff can only serve as many partners as time will allow.

- FIG Team Lead

Persistent *environmental shifts* within the early childhood, health, and food system landscapes - primarily *exacerbated by the pandemic* - have proven to be stressful and challenging circumstances for implementing grant driven work. Flexibility has been our mantra!

- FIG Team Lead
Conclusions

Work done by funded FIG state teams positively impacted an estimated thousands of ECE sites and providers, and almost two hundred thousand children in Year 2.

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

Teams focused on procurement, purchasing, and serving local foods, educating ECE providers and connecting them with local farmers, food hubs, and local food coaches.

State teams prioritized equity in their FIG work with ECEs, ECE providers, and coalition members, especially via the awarding of mini grants.

FIG activities created sustainable positive outcomes through policy, systems, and environment (PSE) changes that will support the long term impact of work done through the FIG.
Acknowledgements

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