THE ASSOCIATION OF STATE PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONISTS

2023 SNAPSHOT OF FARM TO ECE STATE RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

Background

Farm to early care and education (ECE) programming is an innovative evidence-based approach providing young children increased exposure and access to local produce, opportunities to learn about nutrition and agriculture, and hands-on learning through gardening. Several states are advancing Farm to ECE programs by capitalizing on statewide Farm to ECE recognition programs. This snapshot document will describe 4 such recognition programs and their respective logistics.

Benefits of Farm to ECE Recognition Programs

Recognition programs are a great tool to uplift ECE educators' and healthy ECE environments. Recognition can help educators promote their healthy ECEs to families and communities, while also publicly elevating public health best practices. Additionally, recognition programs and affiliated ceremonies help promote Farm to ECE across multiple sectors, such as among other ECE educators, farmers, diverse state agencies, and state legislators. This can raise awareness about the value of Farm to ECE.

Drawbacks of Farm to ECE Recognition Programs

Recognition programs require staff time to create and maintain them, which can be a challenge when staffing capacities and funding are limited. Incentives for these programs encourage educator participation but also have associated costs. Programs also require planning time to ensure they structured and promoted equitably, so that the recognition does not simply reinforce existing inequities in ECE educators' resources.

Funding Sources

States funded recognition programs using public and private funding sources. The 4 programs described in this document used funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's State Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Cooperative Agreement, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm to School Grant, discretionary funds, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Services grant program (SNAP-ED) funds, and private foundation funds.

" Recognition programs have costs but are worth it! ECE educators don't get enough recognition. In our state it connected partners, built good will, enabled educators to connect with others doing good work and helped them recommit [to Farm to ECE], and built Farm to ECE buy-in around the state." - New Mexico Grown Partner referring to the Golden Chile Award

ASPHN FARM to ECE GRANTEE PROGRAMS

IOWA'S GOLDEN ROOT AWARD

Background

In 2023, the Iowa Department of Education, supported by the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition piloted the Golden Root Award for Farm to school and early care rams. The Golden Root has different awards for K-12 schools, home based ECEs, ECE centers, and residential child care institutions. Each of the different awards has multiple tiers: "Outstanding", "Gold", "Silver", and "Bronze".

Application

The Golden Root has 10 Farm to ECE categories ECEs can submit information under. Not all applicants will complete all 10 categories. Each category requires different information and documentation. Category examples of documentation include offering local foods, integrating Farm to ECE into policy or procedure, and engaging families or communities in Farm to ECE efforts.

Incentives

Golden Root awardees are recognized at the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Conference, and at the Iowa State Fair. "Outstanding" awardees receive free registration, lodging, and transportation to the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Conference and free registration for the Iowa 2023 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count! Summit in Fall 2023.

Response and Cost of Recognition Program

In the pilot year, 2023, the Golden Root had 30 applicants. All applicants are awarded a digital badge and certificate, at a minimum. It took 40-55 hours to develop the award but expect only about 10-15 hours for future years once the recognition program is established. Beyond staffing costs, the program's incentives cost about $8,000/year.

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IOWA GOLDEN ROOT CONTACT:
CHELSEA KRIST

NORTH CAROLINA'S REACH RECOGNITION

"Recognition programs help ECEs draw in families, and help parents and communities recognize the valuable work providers are doing by promoting their hard work publicly. [These programs] also elevate and support the work that public health advocates believe is impactful."
North Carolina Farm to Preschool Partner referring to REACH (Recognizing ECE's Advancing Children's Healthy Habits)

Background

Wake County Smart Start, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, and Go NAPSACC began developing and piloting REACH recognition in 2020. All licensed ECEs are now eligible to apply once they have a "leading the way" score on Go NAPSACC's self-assessment for any 1 of 6 health modules. Recognition for each module is awarded separately. One of the modules is Farm to ECE.

Application

Each REACH module application requires different documentation. Farm to ECE applicants complete questions about their program, submit 1 month of menus with local foods indicated, send garden photos showing enough for kids to taste and join in activities, describe taste tests or cooking activities, and share ECE handbooks documenting Farm to ECE commitment.

Incentives

REACH awardees are recognized on the REACH website, social media posts, partner newsletters, and at the annual North Carolina Farm to ECE Institute. Awardees receive certificates and yard signs, and when funding is available, books and materials. Awardees also receive help marketing their award within their communities.

Response and Cost of Recognition Program

In 2022, REACH awarded 10 recognitions for the Farm to ECE module. It took 10-15 hours/week over a year to develop REACH (for all 6 modules), but the leads anticipate the hours dropping now that the program is established. Costs beyond staffing include graphic design, printing costs, yard signs, shipping, and website subscription.

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NORTH CAROLINA REACH CONTACT:
ELLIE MORRIS

MICHIGAN'S GROW MORE AWARD

"This [Farm to ECE] experience allows the children to learn more about fruits and vegetables, how things grow, responsibility for other living things, entrepreneurship, and how to work hard for a goal."
-Nominator of Little Daisy Daycare for the Michigan Grow More Award

Background
Michigan's Grow More Award was started in 2021 by the Michigan Farm to ECE Network. It recognizes ECEs, caring for children birth to age 5, and farmer/food producers doing remarkable Farm to ECE work. For ECEs this may be extraordinary gardens, education, or sourcing and serving local foods. For food producers this is for work they do to improve ECEs' access to healthy, affordable, local food.

Application
Awardees are nominated by themselves or others. Nominators explain how the ECE or farmer/food producer improve access to healthy, affordable, local food, how they increase nutrition education and health outcomes, and/or how they support improved ECE environments. ECE nominations are also asked to include descriptions of any innovative solutions for diverse ECE environments.

Incentives
Awardees are recognized at the Michigan Farm to ECE Network meeting, on the Network's website, and in the Network's social media posts. Every awardee receives a digital certificate, and when funding is available, awardees also receive a stipend.

Response and Cost of Recognition Program
In 2022, the second year of the Grow More Award there were 9 ECE applications for 8 ECE awards and 1 farmer application. The program requires an estimated 25 hours/year to keep it running. The only costs are those of the associated staff time.

ASPHN FARM to ECE GRANTEE PROGRAMS

MICHIGAN'S GROW MORE CONTACT:
MEAGAN SHEDD

NEW MEXICO GROWN GOLDEN CHILE AWARD

Background

The Golden Chile Award was started in 2021 by the New Mexico Grown Coalition. New Mexico K-12 schools, ECEs, farmers, and senior centers, doing extraordinary Farm to ECE work, are all eligible. All applicants receive an award. Applicants are categorized based on Farm to ECE progress: Golden Chile (mature), Blossom (reaching maturity), Sprout (growing strong), or Seed (program has potential).

Application

Applicants submit information and documentation for their Farm to ECE work. Submissions for ECEs can include menus with New Mexico Grown Foods identified, descriptions of culturally aligned materials, edible garden and outdoor environment documentation, types of New Mexico Grown eaters' choice activities, and information on program sustainability.

Incentives

Awardees receive 2 certificates, one of which is poster-sized and signed by the governor. ECEs are recognized at the New Mexico Grown Awards Ceremony and in the New Mexico Department of Health Newsletter. They also are provided opportunities to network with other award winners and partners involved in the NM Grown Coalition.

Response and Cost of Recognition Program

In 2022, the Golden Chile Award received 40 applications, 10 of which were ECEs. All applicants receive an award. The program requires an estimated 75-85 hours/year to maintain. Costs beyond staffing are minimal because much are provided by the coalition as in-kind donations. However, the certificates cost about $100-200/year.

NEW MEXICO'S GOLDEN CHILE CONTACT: GABRIEL GAARDEN

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