Introduction

Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) programs are innovative, evidence-based interventions, which provide young children increased exposure and access to local produce, opportunities to learn about nutrition and agriculture, and hands-on learning through gardening. These early exposures to science, healthy and fresh local produce shape health habits for life, engage the ECE community and impact the local food system.

ASPHN, in collaboration with CDC and the National Farm to School Network (NFSN), partnered with three CDC Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) recipients to implement Farm to ECE programs. ASPHN provided seed funding and technical assistance (TA) to the grantees from January 2021–July 2023.

The CABBAGE grantees successfully partnered with ECE educators in REACH priority populations. They initiated or expanded Farm to ECE programs, increasing the quality of local ECE settings by improving children’s access to healthy food and environments.

This report details the CABBAGE trainings, TA, and resources that ASPHN provided. It summarizes CABBAGE outcomes and its impact on increasing grantees’ Farm to ECE capacity. CABBAGE grantees encountered challenges but ultimately sustained success with increased partnerships, new resources, and an improved Farm to ECE knowledge base.
4 teams located in Michigan, North Carolina, and Nebraska received funding to participate in the CABBAGE between January 2021 – July 2023.

* Note: RAO Community Health participated in the grant from 2021 – 2022.
CABBAGE grantees received TA and funding to build capacity to implement Farm to ECE from January 2021 to July 2023.

Work done by funded CABBAGE grantees positively impacted an estimated 19 ECE sites, over 100 ECE educators, and almost 1,000 children during the grant.

CABBAGE grantees helped ECEs establish partnerships with 13 local farmers and food producers during the grant, expanding ECE access to local foods.

CABBAGE grantee teams and collaborations grew substantially during the grant – partners included ECEs, local farmers and food producers, non profits, Extension, and state agencies.
The CABBAGE evaluation collected data from multiple sources, including:

- Team Lead CABBAGE Final Evaluation Survey
- Program Manager Webinar/Call Attendance Data and Meeting Minutes
- Participant Feedback Surveys from the Farm to ECE Conference
As of July 2023, the CABBAGE teams have reached an estimated . . .

- 945 Children
- 19 Early Care and Education (ECE) Sites
- 107 ECE Providers
- Of those ECEs, 8 were Family Childcare Providers
CABBAGE partnerships grew almost 3-fold during the grant.

January 2021

13 Partners
(Average 4 per team)

July 2023

35 Partners
(Average 11 per team)

We added 3 additional ECE sites and 8 local farmers from year 1 to year 3 and we're still growing!

- CABBAGE Team Lead
Technical assistance (TA), support, and resources were provided throughout the CABBAGE via team lead meetings, networking calls, and Farm to ECE webinars and newsletters.

ASPHN facilitated 72 team lead meetings

ASPHN facilitated 13 networking calls

Grantees attended 26 Topical webinars

Grantees received 31 newsletters
ASPHN Farm to ECE Conferences

ASPHN hosted 3 Farm to ECE Conferences during the CABBAGE.

Two multi day trainings were held online in March 2021 and March 2022.

An in-person Farm to ECE Conference was held in December 2022.
ASPHN held an **in-person Farm to ECE Conference**

**December 5 – 8, 2022**, in Washington, D.C.

Key conference objectives included building capacity to sustain effective, equitable, inclusive Farm to ECE coalitions.

There were **87 participants** at the conference. Of these, 12 were CABBAGE grantees, an **average of 4 attendees** per CABBAGE grantee coalition.

*Note: The full evaluation report from the In-Person Farm to ECE Conference can be found here.*
Most respondents to the conference survey agreed the In-Person 2022 Farm to ECE Conference was useful.

I learned something during the Learning Session that I will use in my work.

I learned something during the Learning Session that will positively impact the long-term sustainability of my work.
Most participants agreed that the conferences were useful, strengthened Farm to ECE knowledge and skills, and increased capacity to address equity in the work.

Participants who attended online Farm to ECE conferences in the past reported that attending the in-person event increased engagement, retention, and networking.

After the conference, attendees planned to center equity in their work, use facilitation skills to foster genuine connection, increase family engagement, and influence Farm to ECE policies.

Many respondents said the field trips were the best part of the conference and highlighted this added value of hosting the event in-person.
Three CABBAGE teams completed a final CABBAGE evaluation survey in July 2023.

Team leads from each CABBAGE team collaborated to complete the survey.

The next slides contain feedback from teams about CABBAGE and its perceived impacts.
All CABBAGE teams reported that the ASPHN educational opportunities and resources provided were **useful** in helping teams reach their goals.

- In-Person Farm to ECE Conference: Extremely Useful (3), Very Useful (2)
- Monthly Team Lead Meetings: Very Useful (2)
- Farm to ECE Basecamp Website: Very Useful (2), Moderately Useful (1)
- Farm to ECE Webinars: Very Useful (3)
- Quarterly CABBAGE Networking Calls: Very Useful (3)
- Springboard Opportunities: Very Useful (3)
- Farm to ECE Newsletters: Not Useful At All (1), Slightly Useful (2)
CABBAGE teams completed a variety of activities, during the grant, to support educators implementing Farm to ECE.

- Helping educators create Farm to ECE family engagement materials/activities (3)
- Helping educators integrate teaching farming, nutrition or about food (3)
- Helping educators garden, indoors or outdoors at the ECE (3)
- Helping educators access, purchase and/or serve local foods (3)
- Creating materials for ECE educators to help them with Farm to ECE (3)
- In-person or online trainings for ECE educators (2)
- Helping educators identify local farmers or food producers (2)
- Created and/or offered a mini grant to educators for Farm to ECE (2)
- Helping educators identify family needs as they relate to food or gardening (1)
- In-person or online 1 on 1 coaching for educators (1)
- Farm to ECE learning collaborative (1)
The number of ECEs that implemented the 3 pillars of Farm to ECE generally increased between 2021-2023.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECEs with Gardening (Indoors or Outdoors)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEs Purchase and/or Serve Local Foods</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEs Teach Children about Nutrition, Growing Food, or Cooking</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The number of ECEs was unchanged from 2021 to 2023 for the following categories: Gardening – NKFM, Local Foods – EMU*
Most teams agreed that the CABBAGE helped increase communication in and coordination of Farm to ECE.

Increased communication in Farm to ECE

- Strongly Disagree: 1
- Disagree: 2
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 1
- Agree: 1
- Strongly Agree: 1

Increased coordination of Farm to ECE

- Strongly Disagree: 1
- Disagree: 1
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 1
- Agree: 1
- Strongly Agree: 1
All teams strongly agreed that the CABBAGE positively impacted the effectiveness of their Farm to ECE work.
Teams were asked to rate their satisfaction with the CABBAGE on a scale from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied).

All three CABBAGE teams reported that they were extremely satisfied with the grant.
All teams agreed that their team introduced at least one tool or resource and that ECE providers used them successfully.

Our team used at least one resource or tool with ECE providers that helped children learn about food, agriculture and/or nutrition.

Our team increased the number of tools or resources ECE providers used successfully in their Farm to ECE work.
Most teams agreed they learned about new resources, improved existing tools or resources, and increased their creation of Farm to ECE materials.

Our team increased the number of materials about Farm to ECE created by my program.

Our team improved existing tools or resources that support ECE providers.

Our team learned about a resource that yielded success for another team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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Examples of **activities** implemented by CABBAGE grantees included:

- Created Harvest of the Month kits for ECEs focused on tastings and education materials
- Focused on diversifying local produce options and sharing culturally tailored ways to incorporate local produce
- Purchased CSA boxes, gardening supplies, and Farm to ECE classroom materials for ECEs
- Streamlined interaction with ECEs for onboarding, determining needs, and regular communication
CABBAGE grantees had the option of participating in ASPHN Farm to ECE Springboard Opportunities with subject matter experts. Diverse opportunities were offered with the goal of helping grantees sustain Farm to ECE efforts after the CABBAGE ended.

Opportunities and the participating grantees were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Springboard Opportunity Topic</th>
<th>CABBAGE Grantees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength-Based Communications and Grant Writing</td>
<td>All Grantees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm to ECE Resource Translation into Multiple Languages</td>
<td>EMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Local Food Procurement Trainings for Farm to ECE</td>
<td>NKFM, PHL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping the Local Food Procurement System for Farm to ECE</td>
<td>NKFM, PHL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All grantees agreed that ASPHN Farm to ECE Springboard Opportunities met or exceeded their expectations.

Grantees gave most subject matter experts who led Springboard Opportunities a rating of 4 out of 5 (good).

* Note: Some grantees participated in multiple Springboard Opportunities.
All grantees agreed that the CABBAGE helped their team achieve the following REACH goals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase access to healthy foods</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve connectivity to healthy food</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement outreach and education on healthy food choices</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve nutrition through ECEs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement culturally tailored strategies to improve access to</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>preventive health programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase community awareness about community resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked about **challenges** encountered during the CABBAGE, grantees mentioned:

- **Limited capacity at ECEs due to staff shortages, COVID restrictions, etc.**

- **Timing of growing season – limited engagement in winter, onboarding new sites late in the season**

- **Challenges recruiting and engaging new partners and ECEs**

Scalability [of our work] has been slower than anticipated, as the **timing** of onboarding new sites (generally August/September) **does not coincide with the growing season** (mostly April-October).

- CABBAGE Team Lead

Our local supply chain is **not set up** to make **getting local produce** to schools and ECEs **affordable** . . . While there are no easy/quick solutions, there is interest and (slow) progress forward. Until then, we will continue to **support as many ECEs as we can** with **fresh, local produce** delivered to their door.

- CABBAGE Team Lead
When asked about their greatest success, CABBAGE grantees mentioned:

- Cultivating new relationships between ECEs and farmers/food producers
- Developing strong engagement, trust, and positive attitudes about Farm to ECE among partners and beneficiaries
- Expanding reach of Farm to ECE programming in their communities
- Partnering with state agencies (e.g., Dept. of Education) to incorporate Farm to ECE professional development for educators

[Our] greatest success that has and will continue to lead to the greatest impact is the explosion of interest and support for Farm to ECE in our community and our state. This pilot was the first time we've focused on Farm to ECE in our community on a broad scale, and including partners such as Extension and the Department of Education will ensure this work will not only continue, but will be expanded to providers and producers across the state!

- CABBAGE Team Lead

An in-home provider partner asked us about starting a community garden in her area. She was able to start an onsite garden at her home with our support, and now would like to work towards a garden that serves her community. . . . she sees the broader positive impacts Farm to ECE can have and wants to create a community collaborative.

- CABBAGE Team Lead
The technical assistance and support funding provided by ASPHN was truly a game changer for Farm to ECE in our community! We are so grateful for the opportunity and can't wait to continue this work.

- CABBAGE Team Lead

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity!! It allowed us to dive into the Farm to ECE work and deepen our knowledge to better serve our communities. Our providers are so grateful for all of the resources and garden knowledge!

- CABBAGE Team Lead

We are so pleased to share that our CABBAGE funding launched many broader conversations about Farm to ECE . . . This has been a wonderful opportunity to spark interest and adoption of Farm to ECE efforts in our community and across the state!

- CABBAGE Team Lead

We appreciated the length of time for CABBAGE. We feel that our efforts could have fizzled out after just one year but having three years allowed us to learn and create stronger partnerships.

- CABBAGE Team Lead
Recommendations for ASPHN

Continue to support impactful Farm to ECE work through other available mechanisms after the CABBAGE concludes.

Share CABBAGE findings and outcomes with funders and stakeholders using evaluation reports, infographics, etc.

Maintain availability of Farm to ECE educational resources (e.g., via Basecampa) that were shared during the CABBAGE.
Conclusions

CABBAGE teams and partnerships grew substantially during the grant. Work done by grantees positively impacted over one hundred educators, and almost one thousand children.

The CABBAGE provided technical assistance which increased teams’ capacity to engage and implement Farm to ECE at the local level.

The technical support, educational opportunities, and resources offered by ASPHN were very useful in helping CABBAGE teams achieve their goals.

CABBAGE funding, support, education, and resources allowed teams to increase their coordination of and communication about Farm to ECE.

All teams were extremely satisfied with the CABBAGE and felt that it positively impacted the effectiveness of their Farm to ECE work.
Acknowledgements

ASPHN acknowledges and thanks the partners that helped make the CABBAGE successful. This includes work with NFSN, CDC, and the ASPHN Farm to ECE Advisory Committee. The committee has included the following individuals: Cynthia Atterbury, Sunny Baker, Diane Beth, Katie Chatsfield, Tomas Delgado, Jennifer Dellaport, Linda Jo Doctor, Carrie Dooyema, Jennifer Garner, Diane Golzynski, Reynaldo Green, Jill Carlson Groendyk, Diane Harris, Claire Heiser, Everett Jackson, Melissa Lonsberry, Gabrielle Mnkande, Emia Oppenheimer, Karen Probert, Kate Reddy, Sophia Riemer Bopp, Meagan Shedd, Margaret Smith, Marsha Spence, Lacy Stephens, and Diona Williams.

Since ASPHN’s Farm to ECE Grantee Programs began in 2019, the committee has devoted time, resources, creativity, expertise, and very thoughtful input to ASPHN’s work on Farm to ECE. We are grateful to them and look forward to ongoing collaboration and success.

Thank you,
Emia Oppenheimer, PhD, RDN, Farm to ECE Program Manager

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