

Cultivating Collaboration: How Agriculture and Public Health Can Drive Nutrition Impact

Hosted by: Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) & National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)

February 26, 2026



Webinar Agenda

- Welcome & Opening Remarks
- Poll Questions
- Brief Overview of ASPHN
- Overview of NASDA
- North Dakota State Department of Health & Department of Agriculture Presentation
- Pennsylvania Department of Education & Department of Agriculture Presentation
- Facilitated Discussion
- Q&A



Webinar Objectives

- Understand the role of ASPHN and NASDA in promoting public health nutrition
- Identify where agriculture and public health systems intersect
- Describe successful state-level partnerships between agriculture, health, and related agencies
- Apply partnership models to participants' own state contexts



Welcome & Opening Remarks



Poll Questions





ASSOCIATION OF STATE PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONISTS

Non-profit membership organization of public health nutritionists and related professionals

- 74% of members work in a state government agency (WIC, Child Nutrition Programs, Nutrition Education, MCH Block Grant, CDC-funded programs).
- Remaining members work in academic settings, local agencies, and non-governmental organizations, plus student members.

**ASPHN promotes the value
of public health nutritionists,
develops resources, and
offers professional
development**



Cultivating Collaboration



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

Becky Garrison Warfel

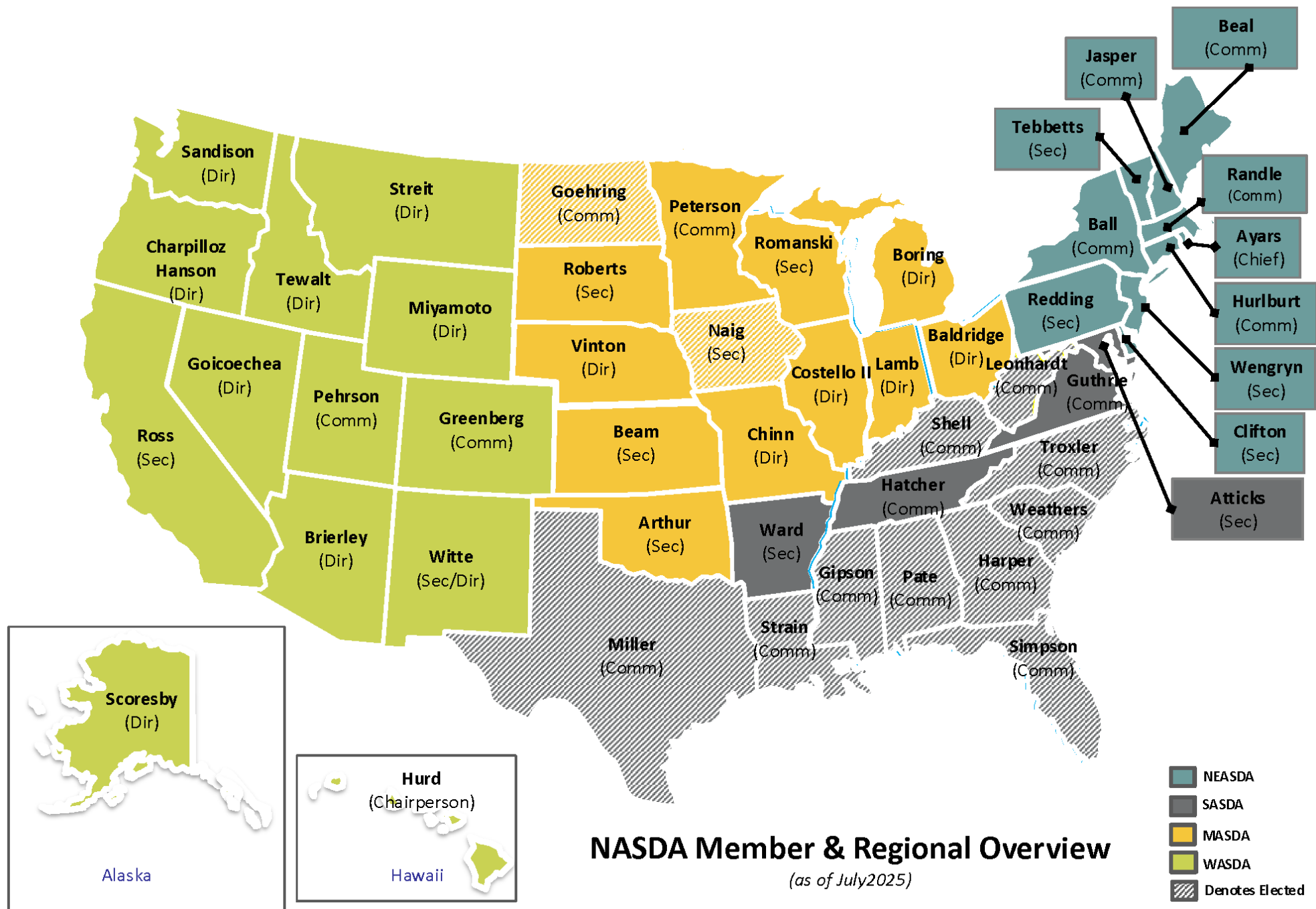
Registered Dietitian, MPA Candidate

Director of Public Policy



Who is NASDA?





About NASDA

Unified Voice for U.S. Agriculture

- Represents all state Departments of Agriculture (50 states + 4 territories)
- Non-partisan, non-profit

NASDA - Policy & Advocacy - 501(c)(4)

- State ag departments are co-regulators with federal agencies (e.g. USDA, FDA)
- Advocates for food and ag policy topics with member consensus (e.g. food safety, farm bill, nutrition security programs)

NASDA Foundation & Partnerships - 501(c)(3)

- Research, education & professional development
- Helps states: Connect farmers to new markets, drive supply chain innovation, and preserve the environment while sustaining agriculture



The (Many) Roles of State Ag Departments



- Food Safety & Consumer Protection
- Farm & Food System Viability
- Local & Regional Food System Development
- Nutrition Security & Food Access
- Animal & Plant Health
- Economic Development
- Natural Resources & Conservation
- Co-Regulators with Federal Agencies (USDA, FDA, EPA)

How Health & Education Agencies Partner with State Departments of Agriculture:



Connect Feeding Programs to Regional Food Systems

- Link nutrition programs with regional farmers, ranchers, and food suppliers
- Expand pathways for local products to reach regional need

Coordinate Food Procurement & Distribution Resources

- Align purchasing across schools, hospitals, and food banks
- Increase regional and in-state sourcing, education, and trainings

Strengthen Connectivity & Distribution

- Coordinate logistics with distributors and emergency food networks
- Invest in aggregation, storage, processing, and delivery infrastructure

Why These Partnerships Matter



Improve Public Health Outcomes

- Increase access to diverse, nutritious foods
- Support prevention-focused health strategies

Build Stronger Community Food Systems

- Ensure reliable supply for nutrition programs
- Strengthen emergency food response capacity

Maximize Public Funding Opportunities

- Reduce duplication across agencies
- Maximize expertise and cross-sector knowledge

Questions?

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Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant

An Overview of Purpose, Impact, and Funding

What is the MCH Block Grant

- **A federal grant program under Title V of the Social Security Act**
- **Supports the health and well-being of mothers, infants, children, including children with special health care needs, and their families**
- **Provides funding to all U.S. states and jurisdictions**

North Dakota MCH Domains

- **Perinatal/Infant (safe sleep with a focus on breastfeeding)**
- **Child Health (food sufficiency and medical care coordination)**
- **Adolescent Health (mental health)**
- **Women's Health (postpartum visits)**
- **Children with Special Health Care Needs**

Child Health Domain

- **Funding offered to 28 Local Public Health Units**
- **Additional allocation of funding to universities, regional education associations, and Tribal partners**
- **2025 funding available to support 25 early care and education sites**

Gardening and Early Care and Education



Resources and Contacts

- **Cavalier County Health District**

[Farm to Table Booklet- FINAL draft](#)

- **Bismarck Burleigh Public Health**

<https://vimeo.com/user/12561684/folder/18016335>

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North Dakota Department of Agriculture

Doug Goehring,
Agriculture Commissioner



www.ndda.nd.gov

1-800-242-7535

North Dakota Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition

- Department of Agriculture (NDDA)
- Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI)
- Department of Health and Human Services (NDDHHS)

Working to advance programs that connect young children with local agriculture through gardening, nutrition education, and local foods.



2025 Garden Grants

- \$400 garden grants for eligible ECEs
- \$35,000 in total funding from NDDA and NDDHHS
- 241 applications for 35 mini-grants
- 264 Extension Master Gardener volunteer hours



Results

- 44% response rate
- 936 children impacted
- 73% observed significant change in an interest in gardening/nature
- 55% observed significant change in a willingness to taste new fruits/veggies
- 45% observed significant change in teamwork and cooperation

“The most successful aspect has been the children’s active participation and enthusiasm. Watching them take ownership of the garden and then enjoy eating what they grew was incredibly rewarding. It created hands-on learning opportunities, taught responsibility, and encouraged healthier food choices in a fun, natural way.”

“We had several children who are “picky” eaters. The first time we harvested strawberries and tomatoes they were not willing to try them. We continued to read books, learn about nutrition, and spend time caring for the plants. The second time we harvested all the children tried the harvest.

“The students are curious of the growing process. Their awe and wonder in seeing the plants grow is amazing.”



Contact Information

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Farm to Child Nutrition Collaboration

Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture and Education

February 26, 2026

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA): Roles related to Farm to Child Nutrition Programs



- USDA Foods, Department of Defense Fresh, Local Food for Schools
- PA Farm to School Grant Program
- PA Preferred Days
- Wholesaling to Institutions trainings increase producers' capacity to sell to schools and early care and education settings



Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE): Roles related to Farm to Child Nutrition Programs

- Administration of School Nutrition Programs, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program
- Technical Assistance on local foods procurement, culinary trainings focusing on use of local foods
- Pennsylvania Harvest of the Month (PA HOM) resources and training
- Mini-grants for projects that highlight local foods
- Funding for partners working to develop producer directory for child nutrition programs audience
- Statewide farm to child nutrition summits (2022, 2024, 2026)



Ways PDA supports PDE's projects

- Presenting and connecting individually with school food authorities regarding finding sources of local foods
- Collaboration in planning regional farm to school gatherings
- Collaboration in planning statewide farm to child nutrition summit
- Collaboration with group of partners sharing ideas toward development of producer directory
- Printing of PA HOM materials



Ways PDE supports PDA's projects

- Wholesaling to Institution trainings
 - PDE presents about school, early care and education and summer programs as potential markets for producers to consider
 - Formula grant funding to support trainings
- PA Farm to School Grant application review
- Promotion of PA Preferred Days



Pennsylvania Farm to School Network

- Vision:
Every child in Pennsylvania is meaningfully connected to and nourished by thriving and resilient community food systems.
- Leadership team includes statewide farm to school and early care and education partners from state agencies, nonprofits, higher education
 - PDA and PDE both have representation on this team

<https://pafarmtoschool.org>



Additional potential future collaboration

- PDA may develop a webinar for Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program operators about developing partnerships with local producers





Contact/Mission

For more information on the (the topic of the presentation) please visit PDE's website at www.education.pa.gov

The mission of the Department of Education is to ensure that every learner has access to a world-class education system that academically prepares children and adults to succeed as productive citizens. Further, the Department seeks to establish a culture that is committed to improving opportunities throughout the commonwealth by ensuring that technical support, resources, and optimal learning environments are available for all students, whether children or adults.

Facilitated Discussion

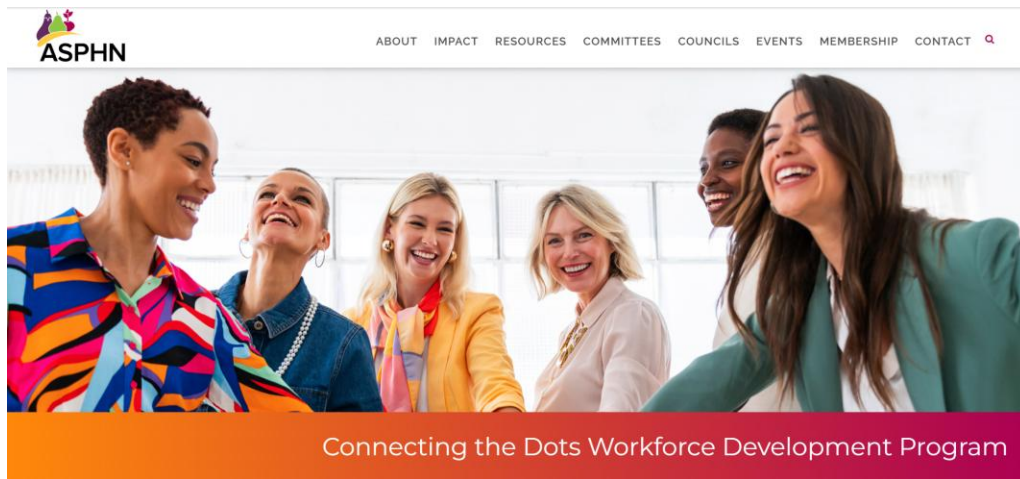


Q&A



Stay Engaged!

Check out the Connecting the Dots Webpage:
www.asphn.org/connecting-the-dots/



Webinar Evaluation Survey:



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