

# **Farm to ECE Evaluation Discussion and Webinar:**

## **How do we Quantify the Impact of Farm to ECE?**

April 30, 2026

### Speakers:

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# Acknowledgement

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The conclusions in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



# Today's Agenda



**01**

**Why Consider Evaluation Now?**

**02**

**Creating a Unified Story**

**03**

**What does this mean for you?  
Call to Action**

**04**

**Vermont's Data and Success  
Story**

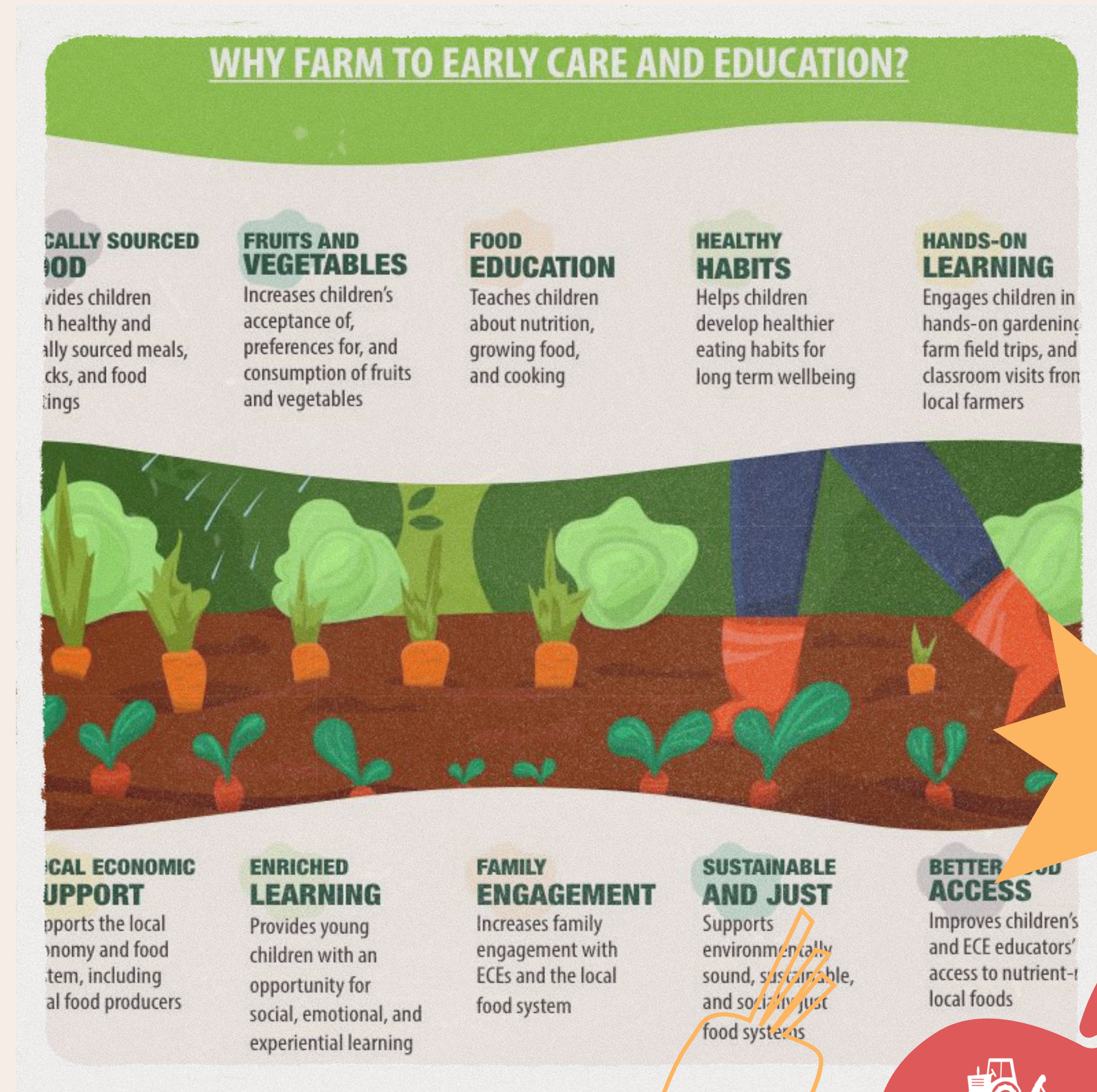
**05**

**Listening – We Need Your Help**

# Why Now?

## Good work happening!

- 1,500 Subscribers to Farm to ECE Info
- ~300 Farm to ECE resources, 2020-2025
- 50 States on Farm to ECE webinars
- 49 State, Region, or Tribal Harvest of the Month
- 43 States active F2ECE coalitions / programs
- 39 Farm to ECE Bills (18 states)
- 25 Farm to ECE Curricula
- 10 LFPI & Purchasing Grants States



# Why now?

## Momentum & Opportunity

Dietary Guidelines/ MAHA

CDC, USDA, & Office of Head Start

900 Head Start Applied Supplementary Funding

Farm to School Growth

Farm to ECE Awareness

Models - Early Adopters & Successful Models

Community Conversations with National and State Partners



We have been working collectively on Farm to ECE for a long time!



# Ready to Scale Farm to ECE Up: Need to Address Barriers

## Funding

Regional Food Business Centers  
LFSCC  
LFPA  
Formula Funds  
SNAP Ed  
Farm to School

## FTEs & Capacity

Turnover  
Loss of FTE to other priorities  
Loss of funding = loss of jobs  
Loss of TA with SNAP Ed, etc.

## Impact Story

Telling a consistent story  
about Farm to ECE is hard  
but powerful.....



# Impact Story

**Challenges  
that we want to make  
assets**



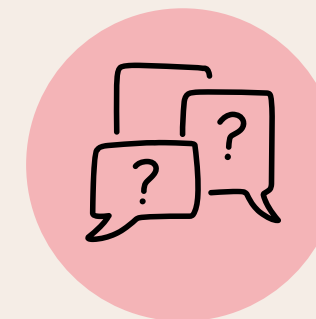
**50+ different types of stories and  
data**



**Many different surveys, tools and  
questions**



**Identifying list of most meaningful  
data points for decision makers**



**Lacking a central place to find  
questions for surveys**



# CREATING A UNIFIED STORY

## Longterm Goal

Show Change Over Time

Launch Farm to ECE  
Census or Relaunch  
National Survey

## Intermediate Goal

Review and Collate  
Common Measures from 45  
Already Released Surveys

## Short Term Goal- Call to Action

Move Towards Common  
Measures Where  
Possible,  
to Improve Measurement  
Promote Work.

# Short Term: Steps

## STEP ONE

**Recognize that we collect data for different reasons**  
**Example: Program implementation, facilitators, barriers, and/or evaluation**

## STEP TWO

**Start identifying what measures are quantifiable and can serve “double duty”**

## STEP THREE

**Organize this by pillar – Gardening, Nutrition Ed, and Local Procurement**

## STEP FOUR

**Share Common Measures: Create a Question Bank**



# Surveys in the Basecamp folder: Where we are now?

| <u>State</u>            | <u>Year</u>            | <u>Participating in F2ECE</u>                         | <u>Local Food Buying</u> | <u>Gardening</u>                                           | <u>Nutrition Ed</u>                 |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| CO                      | 2018, 23               | 58% (vs 37% in 2018)                                  | 58%                      | 63%                                                        |                                     |
| WI                      | 2017, 20               |                                                       | 65%?                     | 75%                                                        |                                     |
| AZ                      | 2019                   |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |
| NJ                      | 2016                   |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |
| MT                      | 2022                   |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |
| MN                      | 2023                   |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |
| AR                      | 2021                   |                                                       |                          | 35% have garden/grow onsite*                               |                                     |
| OH                      | 2019, 25               |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |
| SC                      | ND                     |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |
| WA                      | 2023                   |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |
| NE                      | 2023/24                |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |
| NC                      | 2021                   |                                                       | 64%                      | 58%                                                        |                                     |
| OH –<br>Hamilton county | 2025                   |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |
| CDC<br>CSAW             | 2021                   | Has “Farm to Early Care and Education” activities 50% |                          | Grows fruits, vegetables, and/or herbs on- or off-site 27% |                                     |
| N’tl<br>Survey          | 2012,15’,<br>18’ & 21’ | 82% (vs 49% in 2018)                                  | Of participants 68%      | Of participants 65%                                        | Of participants 71% on growing food |
| GNS                     | ongoing                |                                                       |                          |                                                            |                                     |

# Questions on key topics asked different ways – Example local foods

| <u>State</u>  | <u>Question</u>                                                                                                                                                    | <u>Response options</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AZ            | Of the types of <b>local foods</b> purchases selected in the previous question, how frequently do you or your providers <b>serve</b> these foods in your programs? | Daily<br>One or more times a week (weekly)<br>One or more times a month (Monthly)<br>A few times a year<br>Almost never                                                                                                             |
| GNS           | Over the course of the year, how often are <b>local foods offered</b> as part of meals or snacks?                                                                  | 1 time per week or more<br>2–3 times per month<br>1 time per month<br>Rarely or never                                                                                                                                               |
| WA            | On <b>average</b> , how often do you serve <b>locally sourced foods</b> at your program for a classroom activity, meal, and/or snack?                              | ● Daily ● Weekly ● Monthly ● I don't know ● Never                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| GNS           | During the <b>growing season</b> ,* how often are local fruits and/or vegetables offered as part of meals or snacks?                                               | 3 times per week or more<br>1–2 times per week<br>1–3 times per month<br>Less than 1 time per month                                                                                                                                 |
| CO            | During the <b>growing season</b> (approximately May-October) how often does your program's meals and/or snacks include at least one locally sourced food item?     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Every day</li> <li>▪ Two to four times a week</li> <li>▪ Once a week</li> <li>▪ Once a month</li> <li>▪ A few occasions/instances across the year</li> <li>▪ Never ▪ Don't know</li> </ul> |
| ASPHN<br>Tool | Locally grown or raised foods are served in meals, snacks, and/or in farm to ECE activities (such as taste tests) <b>one time per week or more</b>                 | Fully in place ● In Process ● Not Started Yet, but Planning to Start<br>● Interested in Starting ● Unable or Uninterested                                                                                                           |

## Short term or Achievable Goal- Call to Action

Help Us!

Discussion Questions Coming

What do you already collect?

What are some data points that you would like to have?

What do you see others collecting/sharing and that you could too?



# Ad Hoc Advisory Group

Who? Diverse expertise

From? Multi-State and Funding Sources

When? 2026

What? How to document and communicate the impact of Farm to ECE efforts

**OUTCOME: Agreement on need for broad data on reach and impact of each strategies/pillars of Farm to ECE**



# REACH: Starting Point Metrics



How many children ....



How many ...

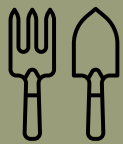


How many ...

# Impact of Each Pillar

## Helping Describe Change over Time

Gardening



How many children are being exposed to gardening?

How many gardens have been created through your hard work?

Local Food



How often are children being served local foods?

Education



How many children are receiving nutrition education in ECE?

# Helping Describe Child Level Impact Gardening and PA (someday!)

## Gardening

One study found that gardening provided 6 min more MVPA and 14 min less sedentary time.

ABC ECE center has 100 kids. What is the potential impact on PA in young children a new garden might have in one month?

## Gardening

$100 \text{ kids} \times 14 \text{ min less sed time} \times 20 \text{ days in care} = 28,000 \text{ minutes in one month!}$

$100 \text{ kids} \times 6 \text{ min more MVPA} \times 20 \text{ days} = 12,000 \text{ min in one month}$

# Impact on local economy (someday!)



## TAKE THE CHALLENGE!

**Spend just \$5 per Week on Alaska Grown Products**

This summer and fall, support local and boost Alaska's long-term food security by spending just \$5 a week on Alaska Grown products. If every household in Alaska did this it would generate \$33 million dollars of revenue in just 6 months!

# **Vermont: Early Adopters**

**Cynthia Greene, Farm to Early Childhood Education  
Partnership Coordinator, Shelburne Farms**



# **Vermont Narratives & Metrics for FTS&EC Success**







VERMONT  
FARM TO SCHOOL &  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
NETWORK

# Farm to School Grows Healthy Vermont Kids, Farms & Families

**Vermont Leads the Way!**  
Vermont is a national leader, showing how we use farm to school and early childhood programs to take care of our children, farms, and families.

- Vermont schools have increased their purchase of local foods almost 10% in the past 10 years—now, we have an average of **14% of purchases coming from local farms and producers**. That's \$3 million a year staying in Vermont.
- **56% of early childhood providers serve local food weekly.**
- **Over 150 Vermont farms sell to Vermont schools and early childhood programs** with apples, maple syrup, ground beef, and dairy products being the top products.



**"So many kids today don't have a connection to their food. To be able to show them firsthand where their food comes from is a treat for us. We love to share what we do as dairy farmers."**  
—Linda Stanley, Paul-Lin Dairy (Bakersfield)



## What is Farm to School & Early Childhood?

Farm to school and early childhood connects children with local agriculture through food, education, and community partnerships. Programs help schools and early childhood sites serve local foods, teach hands-on lessons in agriculture and nutrition, and build relationships with nearby farms.

The approach supports healthy eating habits, strengthens the local agricultural economy, and creates experiential learning opportunities that engage children in understanding where food comes from and how it can improve their bodies and their communities.



**Over 14.5 million school meals** (breakfast and lunch) were served in Vermont schools last year, an increase of 2.8 million since Universal School Meals were established in 2022.

# VT TIMELINE

**2025**

**LFSCC**

**CACFP  
SPONSO  
RS**

**2021**

**PURCHASING  
INCENTIVE/  
UNIVERSAL  
MEALS**

**2017**

**FTS BILL  
EXPANDS  
TO ECE,  
UNIVERSAL  
MEALS**

**2016**

**FTS  
CAMPAIGN  
LAUNCHED**

**2009**



VERMONT  
FARM TO SCHOOL  
NETWORK

**CREATED**

**2006**

**FTS BILL  
PASSED**

**2005**

**LEG. STUDY  
COMMITTEE**

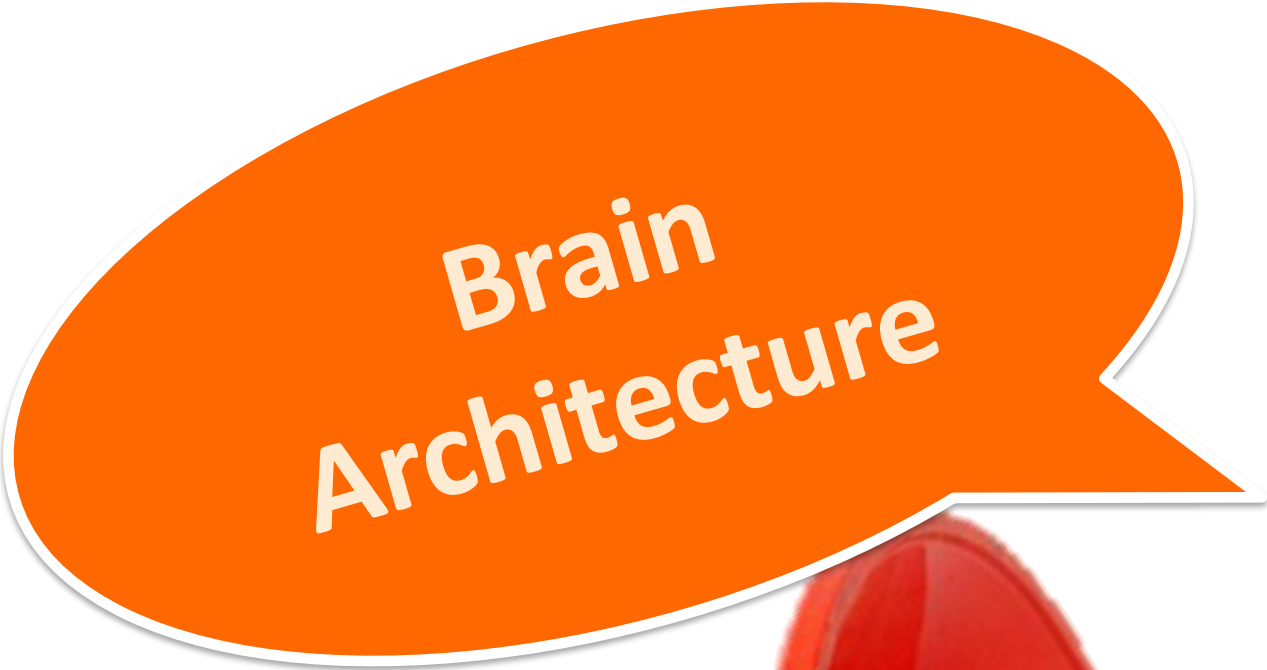
**2000**



**CREATED**



# Narratives



Brain  
Architecture



WIN  
WIN  
WIN



Concrete  
Supports  
(ACES)



Local Farms  
Local  
Economies



ECE as a  
Profession



from data alignment...

**2017 VT FTEC CENSUS**

**VT FTEC Educator PD Survey**

**VDH / MHC DATA**

... **to RBA METRICS**

# HOW MUCH DID WE DO?



## Three New Videos for Connecting Early Learners to Food Systems

**June 2023** – Three videos highlighting activities that explore outdoor, place-based learning; cooking with kids; and extending young children's knowledge of agriculture and the food they eat.



## These Farms Feed Vermont Kids!

# HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?



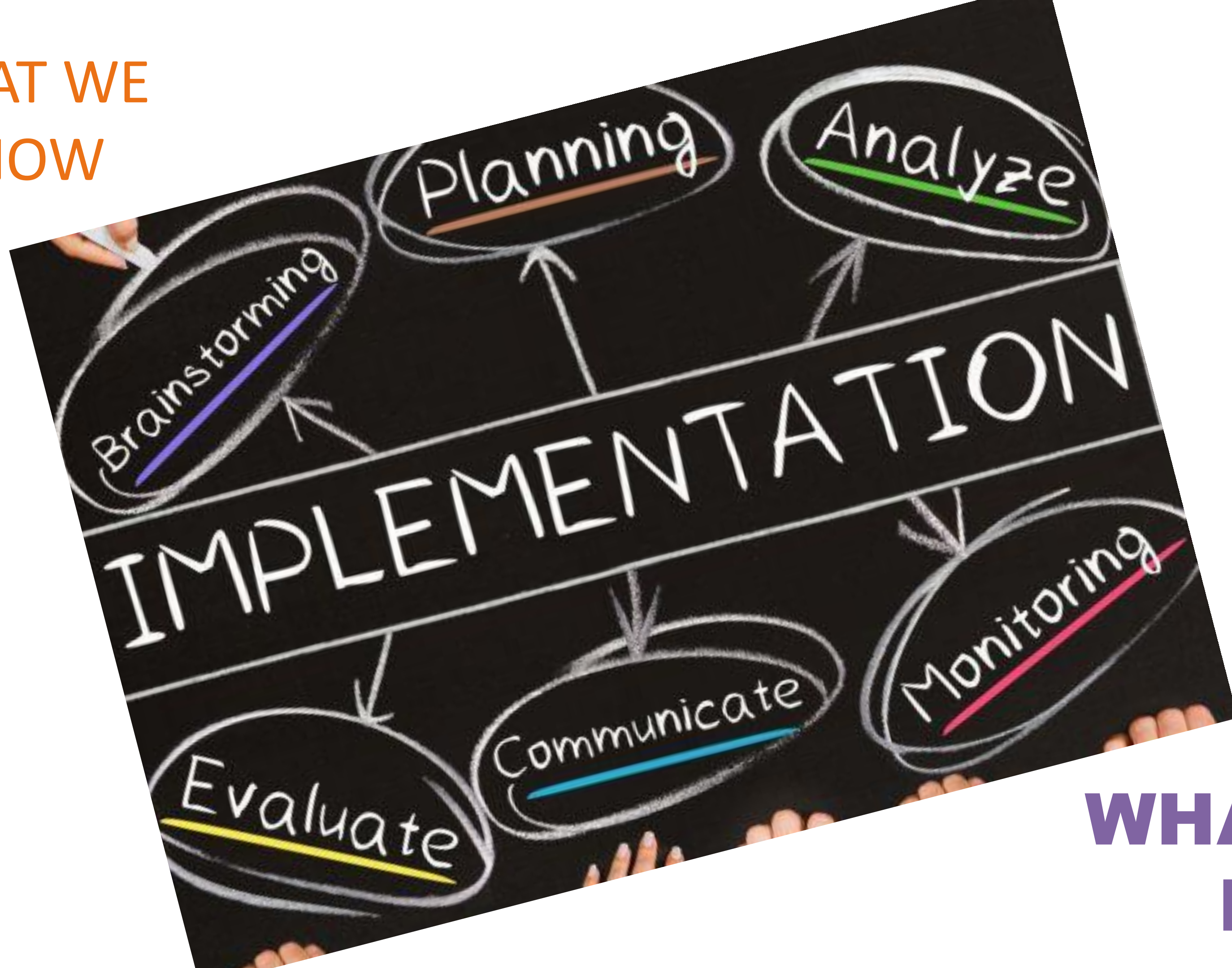
# IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?



## Sharing with the Very Hungry Caterpillar

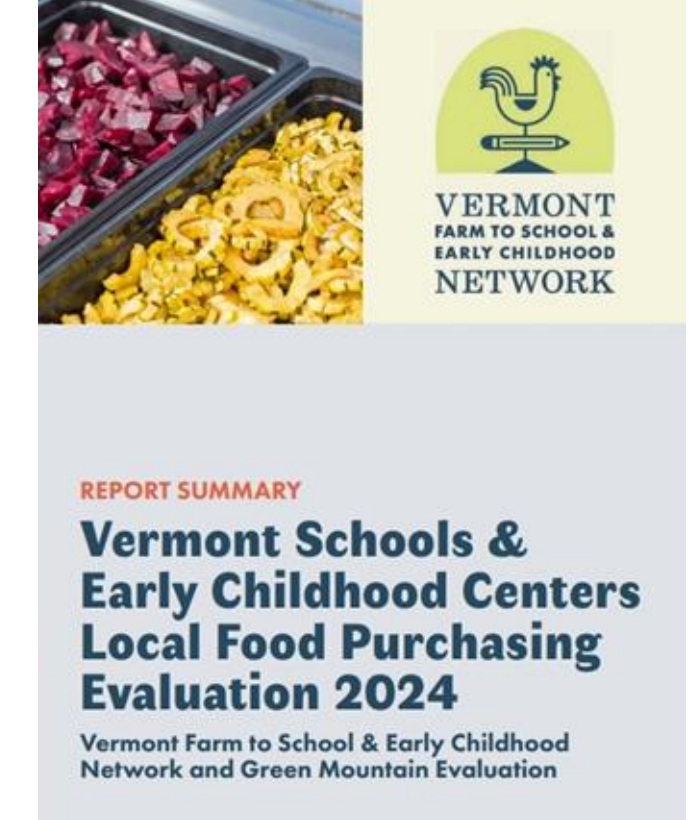
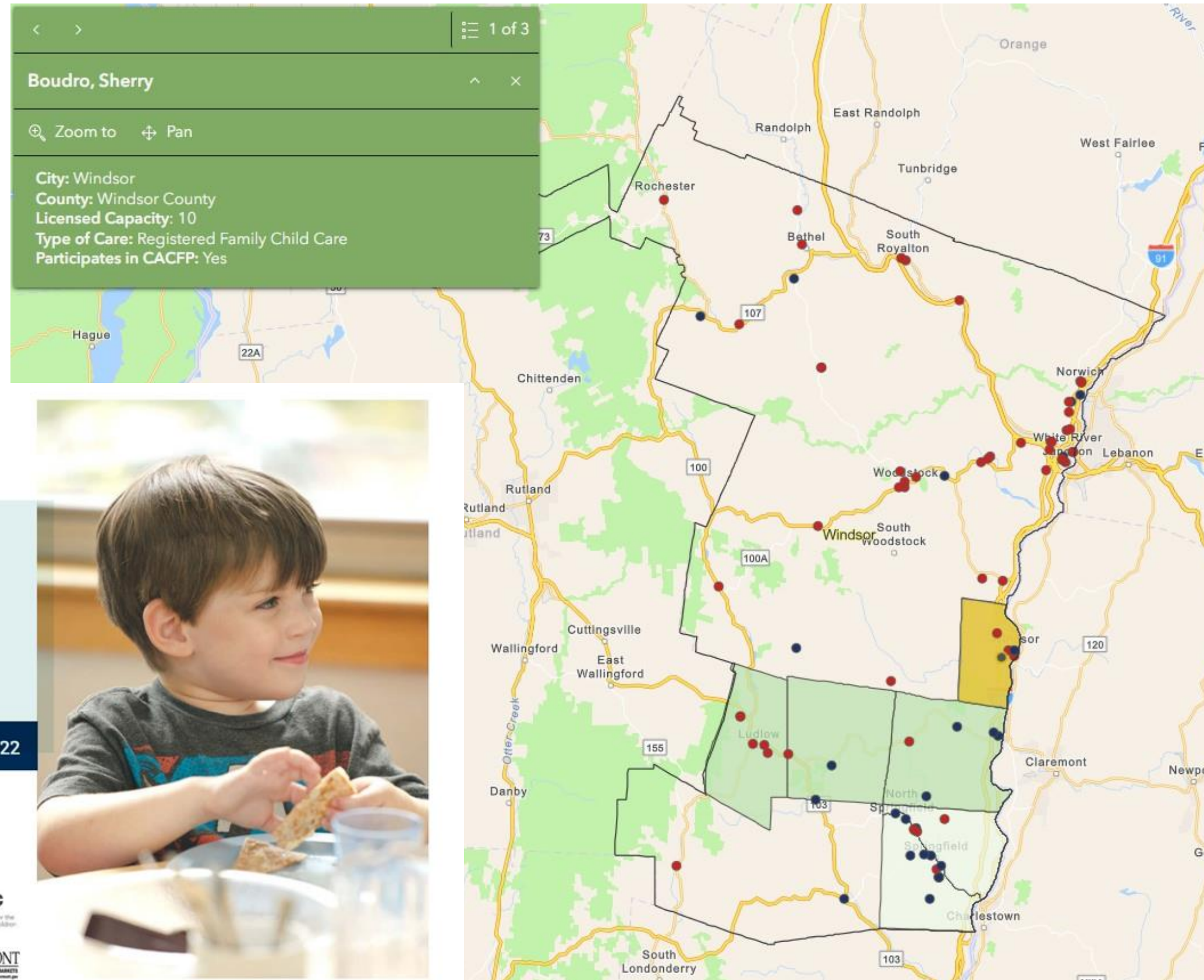
**September 2023** – Early childhood center Growing With Wonder is using child-led, play-based learning experiences to engage with food in a meaningful and responsible way.

WHAT WE  
KNOW



WHAT WE  
DO

# DATA STORY-SHARING

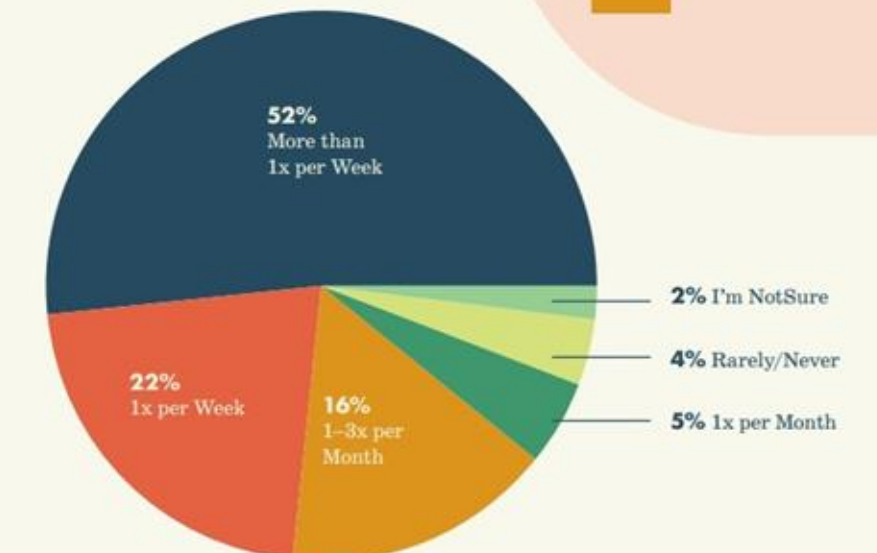


**3** 71% of early childhood education (ECE) programs serve local food; almost all ECEs integrate food education into programming.

Among the survey respondents, 71% of ECE programs serve local foods; produce, maple syrup, and dairy were most common. The contributing facilitators included CSA participation, onsite gardens, strong farmer relationships, food hubs, and grants.

Barriers included high costs, seasonality, storage/logistics, and administrative burdens (especially the Child and Adult Care Food Program, CACFP). Almost all ECEs integrate food education into programming.

**Frequency of Serving Local Food Reported by Early Childhood Respondents**



**Challenges of Serving Local Food Reported by Early Childhood Respondents**



**PROVIDING MEALS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS**

March 2022





"We grow our own food in our school garden, and see it in the cafeteria for lunch. My class harvested potatoes and made French fries. Cooking them made me realize how simple it is to make real food, and I think it changes the way we eat. When you know where your food comes from, you think about it differently."

—Shania, 4th student, Champlain Elementary (Burlington)

**Classrooms** provide real-world context for learning across subjects. Hands-on activities—like planting gardens, visiting farms, and classroom cooking—extend lessons into the community and cafeteria.

"Food is a powerful connector. It brings my students together, builds curiosity, and fosters a sense of pride. I've seen students who struggle to engage in traditional lessons light up when they harvest potatoes, chop vegetables for a soup, or cook a meal they've seen in their own homes. These moments matter. They turn learning into something real and relevant."

—Aziza Malik, Fourth Grade Teacher  
Champlain Elementary

## Return on Investment

- Since 2006, 363 grants have been awarded to 166 Vermont schools and early childhood education programs.
- 81% of Vermont schools have educational gardens serving as outdoor classrooms for learning and exploring.
- Well-fed children are ready to learn, showing improved attendance at school, increased math scores, and decreased behavioral incidents.

**Communities** strengthen farm to school connections. Farm visits and community events engage families and highlight where our food comes from.

"Working with the farm to school program has been a boost to our Vermont-owned farm business. This partnership allowed us to grow our yogurt business in a format that worked for our farm, and we look forward to continued growth and the opportunity to supply local dairy to schools throughout the state."

—Jeremy Michaud  
Owner, Kingdom Creamery

## Return on Investment

- Our farm to school and early childhood program works in tandem with the Farm to Plate Initiative, the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, and the Food Security Coalition to grow the economy, connect communities, and build a food secure future for Vermont.



Local yogurt from Kingdom Creamery of East Hardwick is served in schools across the state. Sales grew 82% from 2023 to 2025, and are on track to grow approximately 105% more this school year.

**Cafeterias** support the local economy by buying fresh foods from nearby farms. These ingredients become healthy meals for all students. Taste tests introduce new foods and encourage healthy choices.

"Why should schools serve local food? It gives students the best possible meal because the quality of the food is better and fresher when it hasn't had to travel far. Local food connects kids with the local agricultural economy and teaches them to become better lifelong consumers and eaters. And, purchasing local food supports our neighbors. Money is staying in Vermont and has a multiplier effect on the local economy."

—Bob Hildebrand, Operations Manager  
Whitsons Culinary Group

## Return on Investment

- In the 2023-24 school year, 12 Vermont school food authorities (SFAs) hit a threshold level of at least 15% local purchasing under the state's Local Food Incentive (LFI) Program, collectively spending over \$1.2 million on local food.
- From 2021 to 2024, 106 early childhood programs and after-school programs received CSAs from 59 Vermont farms through the VAAFM CSA Grant Program.
- 77% of Vermont school food service staff surveyed said local sourcing is "influential" or "highly influential" in their purchasing decisions.



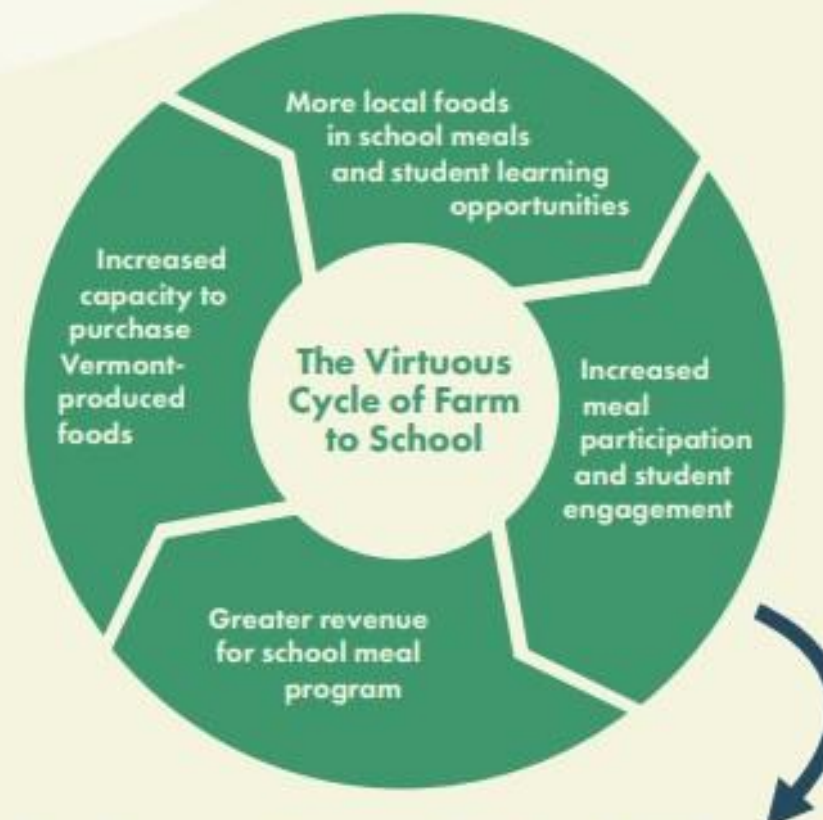
The Mountain Village School, an early childhood program in Lamoille County, purchases 30% local with a full-time chef preparing food for students daily.

## How It All Works Together

Universal School Meals for all students →

Fully funded Farm to School & Early Childhood Grant Program (\$500K) →

Local Purchasing Incentive for farmers and school meal programs (\$500K) →



**The Outcomes:** Engaged students ready to learn • Improved student health, attendance, and behavior • Strong local farms and food businesses • Stigma and lunch shaming eliminated • More scratch cooking with nourishing local foods

# On the Horizon

Updating CACFP map data

Child Care Act 76

Universal School Meals

Local Food Purchasing Incentive

ECE Procurement Pilot Evaluation

Vermont Senate Bill 206 (S.206), the ECE Profession Bill

Examine other data gaps and/or story needs

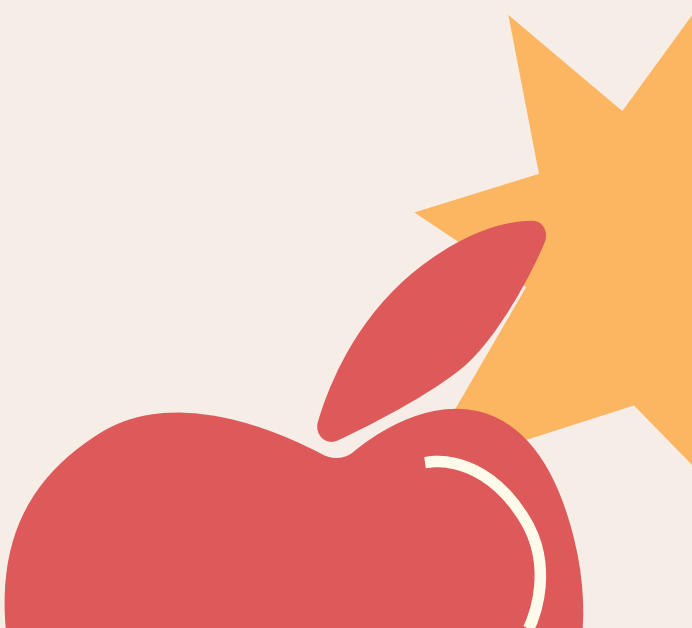




# Discussion

## We need your input

Goal is for ASPHN to offer a question bank with vetted questions!  
Help us help you....we need your input





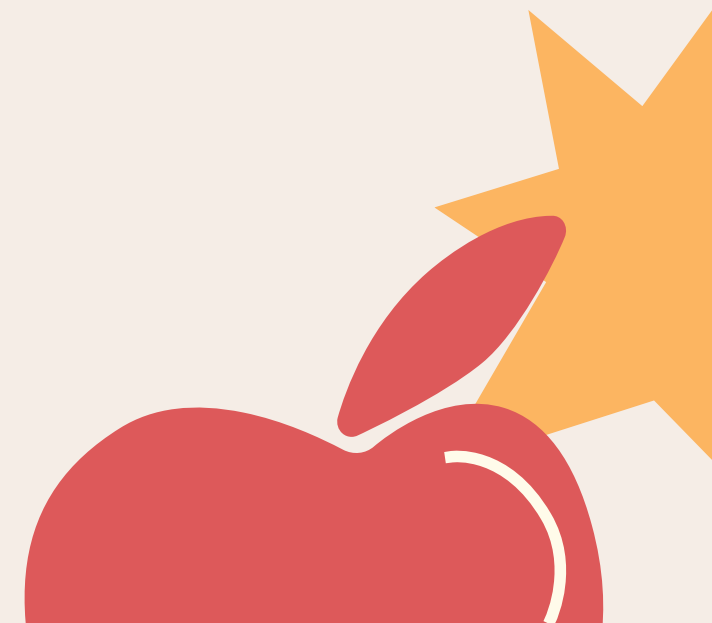
# What does this mean for on the ground evaluation?

Discussion

Reach

What are you measuring?

What data do you find most impactful among those that you ask about and share?

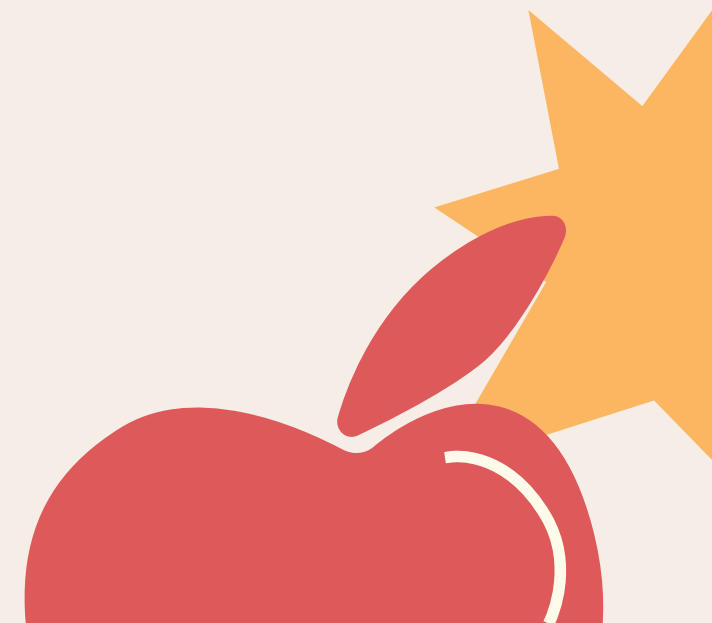




# What does this mean for on the ground evaluation?

Discussion

What are the measures you wish you had to share about Farm to ECE?



# What do you think?

Can we shift to similar measures?

What would you need?

Do you want to help? Next Ad Hoc.... [emia@asphn.org](mailto:emia@asphn.org)

Other thoughts?



A decorative border surrounds the central text, featuring various fruits and vegetables. At the top, there are yellow banana slices, a pink flower, a red tomato, a green star-shaped vegetable, and a yellow banana. On the left, there are green leaves, an orange, and a green leaf. On the right, there is a pink cherry, an orange star-shaped vegetable, and a red apple. At the bottom, there is a yellow wavy line, an orange ribbon, a green star-shaped vegetable, a white carrot, and a red apple.

**Thank you!**