

# FRAC

Food Research & Action Center



## **LEVERAGING CACFP FOR FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION** Growing Wins Across Early Childhood and Food System Sectors

January 2024 | [WWW.FRAC.ORG](http://WWW.FRAC.ORG)

# Table of Contents

## Acknowledgments

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) gratefully acknowledges the major dedicated support of the Farm to Early Care and Education work provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

This report was prepared by Katie Jacobs and Lisa Hofmann.

## About FRAC

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) improves the nutrition, health, and well-being of people struggling against poverty-related hunger in the United States through advocacy, partnerships, and by advancing bold and equitable policy solutions. For more information about FRAC, or to [sign up](#) for FRAC's e-newsletters, go to [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org).

<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>2</b>
CACFP Fundamentals	3
Farm to Early Care and Education Fundamentals	4
<b>LEVERAGING CACFP FOR FARM TO ECE</b>	<b>5</b>
How CACFP Can Be Used for Farm to ECE Activities	5
Local Food Procurement	6
Gardening	6
Food, Nutrition, and Agriculture Education	7
State-Level Coordination and Systems Change	7
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH</b>	<b>8</b>
Group Interviews With Farm to ECE Partners	8
Landscape Scan of Existing Literature and State-Level Websites	8
<b>BARRIERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION</b>	<b>9</b>
Enhance Child Care Provider Access to CACFP	10
Support CACFP Provider Farm to ECE Activities	12
Bolster Local Food System Partner Access to CACFP Market Channels	14
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>17</b>
Handwritten Receipt Template	17
Garden Harvest Documentation Form Template	17
Practical Resources to Help Support and Implement Farm to ECE Activities While Leveraging CACFP	18
Semi-Structured Group Interview Guide	18
Characteristics of State-Level CACFP and Farm to ECE Websites and Practices	19

# Background

## CACFP Fundamentals

## Farm to Early Care and Education Fundamentals

**F**ood insecurity is a pervasive and multidimensional issue that requires creative solutions across sectors and across levels of influence. We cannot end hunger without tackling the structural drivers of food insecurity and injustice.

Both the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE) initiatives work across sectors to address some of the social determinants that contribute to food insecurity, including inadequate access to quality early care and education, poor health outcomes, economic instability, and under-resourced food systems. As a result of systems of oppression like systemic racism, stark disparities exist by race, ethnicity, income, and geography in rates of food security and its structural drivers. CACFP and Farm to ECE initiatives combat these disparities and can improve equitable access to fresh, healthy foods for young children.

CACFP and Farm to ECE activities have the potential to support each other and compound their respective positive impacts.

**CACFP Supports Farm to ECE:** It can often be prohibitively expensive for child care providers to purchase local foods for use in meals served to the children in their care. Use of CACFP, as a mandatory federal funding mechanism, is a sustainable funding source for Farm to ECE activities. The most recent National Farm to Early Care and Education Survey demonstrates this relationship through a statistically significant association between sites that received CACFP funding and sites that served local foods, including the percentage of local foods they purchased.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, leveraging CACFP is documented as a recommendation to strengthen Farm to ECE in multiple publications.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

**Farm to ECE Supports CACFP:** Farm to ECE activities can support the impact of CACFP by increasing the actual intake of healthy foods served in CACFP. Farm to ECE has been shown to increase children's willingness to try new produce and increase their fruit and vegetable intake.<sup>5,6</sup> Farm to ECE increases the positive impact that CACFP has on the community by supporting



The report builds on the CACFP information included in the *Enhancing Young Children's Access to Local Foods and Farm to ECE: Federal Funding Opportunities Guide*. This guide provides functional descriptions of actionable and timely funding streams, including an overview of the funding eligibility requirements, allowed uses, timeline, flow of funds, and strategies for action. The guide also highlights case examples of how entities across the country are creatively leveraging funding streams for Farm to ECE. The purpose of this guide is to prepare and position Farm to ECE partners to effectively apply for funding.

local and regional farmers, ranchers, dairies, food processors, and distributors through opening another market channel for their products. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages the use of local food as a means to enhance CACFP operations.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the positive impacts that are compounded when CACFP and Farm to ECE are leveraged together, too few child care sites operationalize each of these strategies. This underutilization is due to a variety of barriers. CACFP and Farm to ECE systems changes — changes to processes, policy, regulations, environments, and available resources — can help alleviate these barriers.

To explore and promote the systems changes necessary to expand and strengthen the role of CACFP in supporting Farm to ECE activities, the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, conducted a series of interviews with key national, state, and local CACFP and Farm to ECE partners, and performed a literature review of existing materials. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, this report identifies key barriers, recommended actions, and best practices for accessing and leveraging CACFP for Farm to ECE activities. This work is possible through previous investments of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation that built a vibrant network of Farm to ECE programs that enabled sharing of best practices and tools for expanding the model across the country.

The report is intended to be used by CACFP and Farm to ECE partners across federal, state, and local levels to help create systems changes to and support direct implementation of CACFP and Farm to ECE. Partners in this goal include policy and regulation decision-makers, state agencies, CACFP sponsors, child care providers, local farmers and ranchers, regional food hubs, and other food system sector partners.

### CACFP FUNDAMENTALS

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federally funded child nutrition program that pays for nutritious meals and snacks served to eligible children who are enrolled at participating child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start programs, afterschool programs, and emergency shelters. Each day, 4.7 million children receive nutritious meals and snacks through CACFP.<sup>8</sup> In fiscal year 2022, 1.5 billion meals were served to eligible children through the program. CACFP is a vital health, economic, and child care quality support for communities (Figure 1).

CACFP is administered at the national level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Within each state, CACFP is administered by a CACFP state agency, often the state’s Department of Education or another agency designated by the state. Child care homes and centers can participate in CACFP through a sponsoring organization. Child care centers can alternatively choose to apply directly to the state agency and operate as an independent center (Figure 2). Participating child care homes and centers receive reimbursement funding for up to two meals

(breakfast, lunch, or supper) and one snack or one meal and two snacks served to each eligible child, each day. Current reimbursement rates can be found at the USDA CACFP Reimbursement Rates website.

Eligible participants in child care homes and centers include children age 12 and younger, migrant children ages 15 and younger, and persons with disabilities of any age.

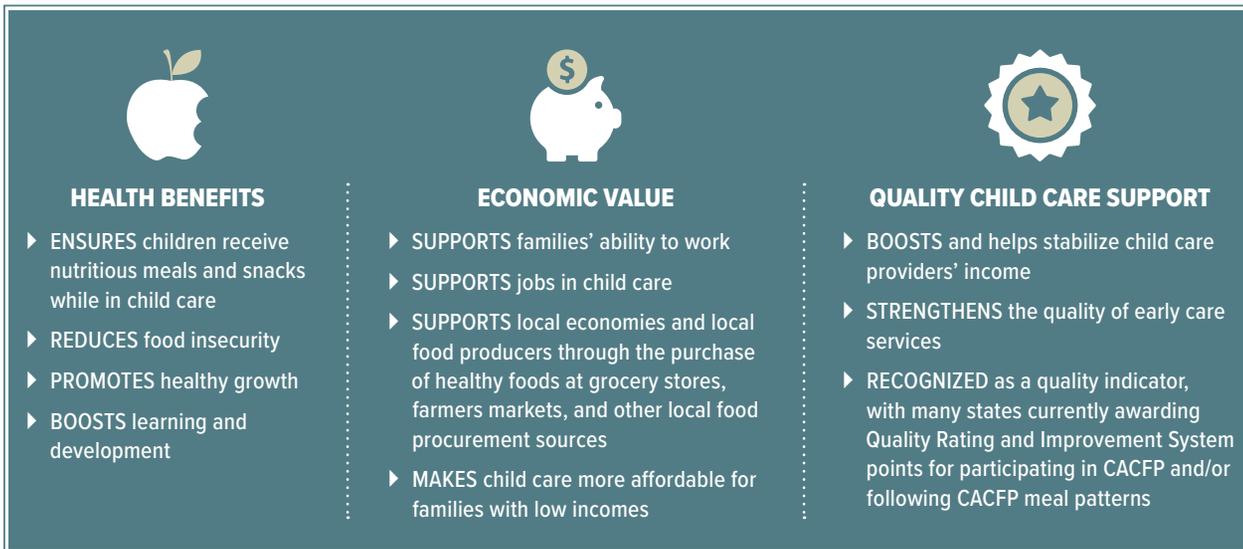
For more information on CACFP, visit USDA FNS’s CACFP webpage.

**WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN CACFP?**

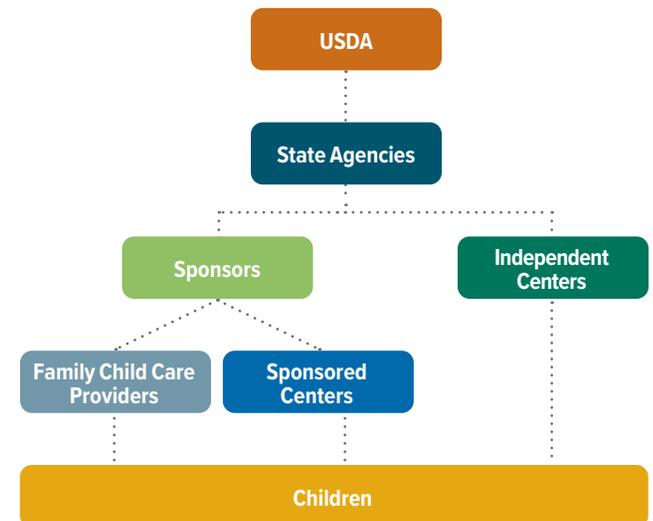
Getting started with CACFP is easy. Visit your state’s CACFP website to learn how to apply and to find a sponsoring organization.

You can also find a sponsor by visiting info.cacfp.org/sponsor.

**Figure 1: CACFP Provides Vital Support for Communities**<sup>9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19</sup>



**Figure 2: CACFP’s Administrative Structure**



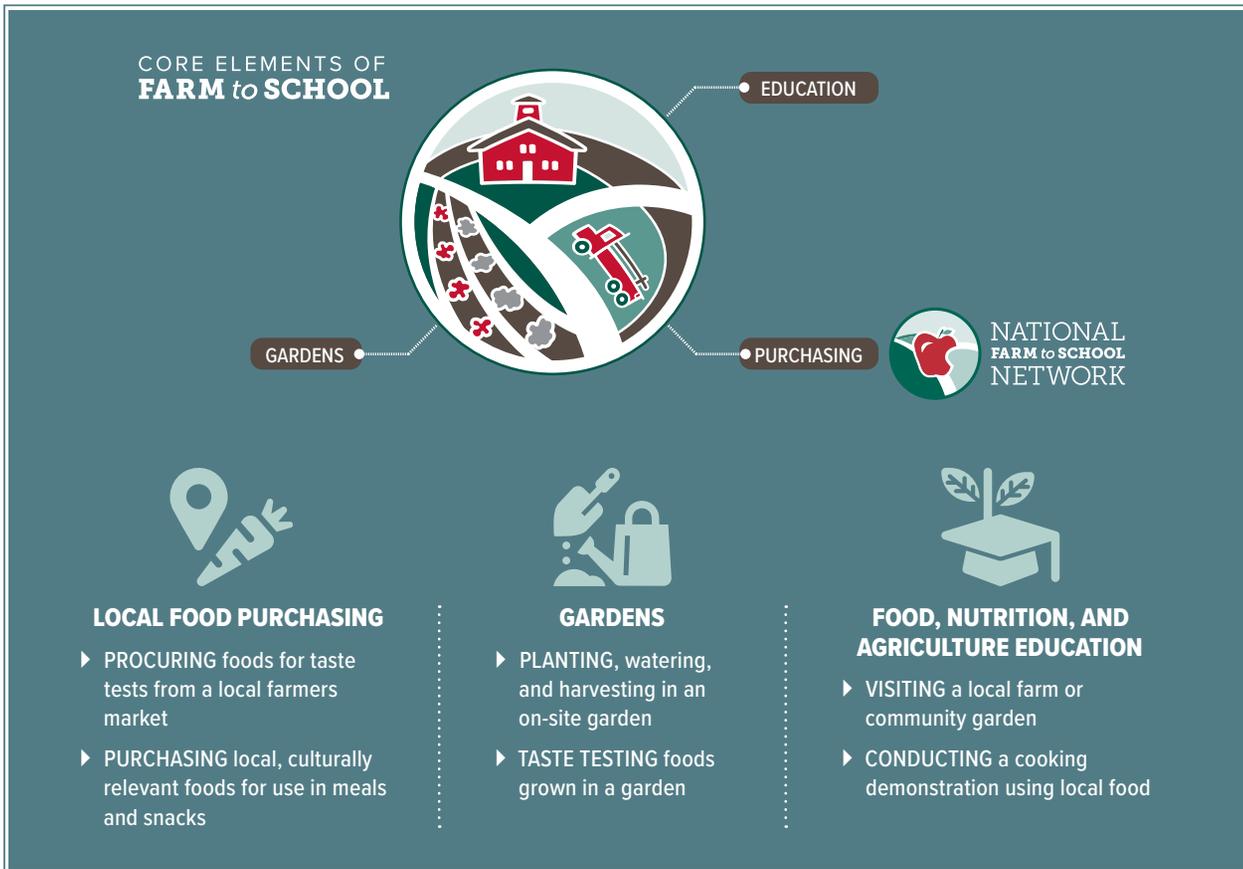
## FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION FUNDAMENTALS

Farm to Early Care and Education initiatives are community-based and include activities to support young children’s connections to fresh and healthy local foods and their engagement with local agriculture. Farm to ECE activities can vary in scale and scope and take place in many ECE settings, including family child care homes, child care centers, preschools, and Head Start/ Early Head Start. Farm to ECE initiatives are multisectoral, working across food, agriculture, health, nutrition, and

early care and education systems. Using the National Farm to School Network’s framework, child care programs engaging in Farm to ECE conduct activities in at least one of three core elements: (1) local food purchasing, (2) gardening, and (3) food, nutrition, and agriculture education (Figure 3).<sup>20</sup> Examples of activities within each core element are included in the figure.

For more information on Farm to ECE, explore the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s [Farm to Early Care and Education Partner Toolkit](#) and visit the National Farm to School Network’s [Farm to ECE webpage](#).

**Figure 3: Core Elements of Farm to ECE Activities**



Source: Modeled from the National Farm to School Network’s [Core Elements of Farm to School framework](#), [farmtoschool.org](#).

# Leveraging CACFP for Farm to ECE

## How CACFP Can Be Used for Farm to ECE Activities

### 1. Local Food Procurement

### 2. Gardening

### 3. Food, Nutrition, and Agriculture Education

### 4. State-Level Coordination and Systems Change

## HOW CACFP CAN BE USED FOR FARM TO ECE ACTIVITIES

CACFP can support all three core elements of Farm to ECE activities by providing resources and defraying the monetary costs associated with local food procurement; garden development and maintenance; and food, nutrition, and agriculture education. CACFP state administrative expense (SAE) funds can also be used to support systems changes that strengthen and expand Farm to ECE. Figure 4 summarizes the ways in which Farm to ECE can be leveraged for Farm to ECE activities.



**Figure 4:** Snapshot of Ways CACFP Can Be Leveraged for Farm to ECE Activities

**CACFP can be leveraged to support multiple core elements of Farm to Early Care and Education.**



### 1. PROCUREMENT

CACFP can be used to purchase local foods from:

- ▶ Farmers Markets
- ▶ Food Hubs
- ▶ Community Supported Agriculture Models
- ▶ Other Food Vendors



### 2. GARDENING

As long as produce grown is used as part of reimbursable meals or nutrition education, CACFP can be used for gardening items including:

- ▶ Seeds
- ▶ Fertilizer
- ▶ Watering Cans
- ▶ Rakes
- ▶ Garden Plot Rentals



### 3. EDUCATION

Garden products can be used for nutrition education or taste testing. Providers can use USDA Team Nutrition resources for agricultural and nutrition education lessons.



### 4. STATE-LEVEL COORDINATION

CACFP state agencies can use state administrative expense funds to support Farm to ECE coordination and other activities. Funds can be used for state-level activities, including:

- ▶ Produce state-level Farm to ECE guidance materials
- ▶ Create Farm to ECE coordinators that provide state-level training and technical assistance
- ▶ Conduct statewide trainings and organize statewide meetings to disseminate program information and encourage sharing of best practices
- ▶ Collaborate on regional Farm to ECE efforts





### 3. FOOD, NUTRITION, AND AGRICULTURE EDUCATION<sup>26,27</sup>

CACFP also supports food, nutrition, and agriculture education by offsetting the costs to grow food that is used in taste testing, cooking demonstrations, and/or other educational activities. CACFP funds can be used for gardening supplies when the produce grown in the garden is used for educational activities or in a reimbursable meal.

Additionally, CACFP providers can use [USDA Team Nutrition resources](#) for agricultural and nutrition education lessons and curriculums.



### 4. STATE-LEVEL COORDINATION AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

USDA FNS provides funds to [CACFP state agencies](#) annually to administer CACFP. These funds are called state administrative expense funds. Generally, SAE funds are allowed to be used for state-level salaries and benefits, travel expenses, and costs associated with providing training and technical assistance to CACFP providers and sponsors.<sup>28</sup>

CACFP state agencies can use some of their SAE funds to support Farm to ECE coordination, systems change, and other activities. Funds can be used for state-level activities including:

- ▶ **PRODUCING** state-level Farm to ECE guidance materials,
- ▶ **EMPLOYING** Farm to ECE coordinators that provide state-level training and technical assistance,
- ▶ **CONDUCTING** statewide trainings and organizing statewide meetings to disseminate program information and encourage sharing of best practices, and
- ▶ **COLLABORATING** on regional Farm to ECE efforts like multistate conferences, training, and site visits.

[Appendix 3](#) provides a list of practical resources to help support and implement Farm to ECE activities while leveraging CACFP.



## POLICY, GUIDANCE, AND RESOURCES ON ALLOWABLE CACFP USES FOR FARM TO ECE ACTIVITIES

**WEBPAGE:** [USDA Farm to CACFP](#)

**FACT SHEET:** [Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in Early Child Care and Education Settings](#)

**POLICY MEMO:** [Local Foods in CACFP](#)

**GUIDE:** [Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs](#)

“[Beyond Lunch: Buying Local Foods for Summer and Childcare Programs](#)”

**GUIDE:** [Local Food for Little Eaters: A Purchasing Toolbox for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)

**POLICY MEMO:** [Use of State Administrative Expense \(SAE\) Funds to Support Farm to ECE](#)

**POLICY MEMO:** [Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs](#)

**USDA FNS GUIDANCE DOCUMENT:** [Financial Management CACFP — FNS Instruction 796–2, Revision 4](#)

**WEBPAGE:** [USDA Local Food Directories](#)

**FACT SHEET:** [USDA Geographic Preference: What It Is and How to Use It](#)

**WEBPAGE:** [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)



# Community Engagement and Research

## Group Interviews With Farm to ECE Partners

## Landscape Scan of Existing Literature and State-Level Websites

To better understand the barriers, facilitators, recommendations, and promising practices to leveraging CACFP for Farm to ECE, the Food Research & Action Center engaged CACFP and Farm to ECE experts in group interviews and online surveys. FRAC conducted a landscape scan of CACFP state agency and state-level Farm to ECE websites and performed a structured review of existing peer-reviewed and grey literature resources.

### GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH FARM TO ECE PARTNERS

FRAC interviewed over 75 partners from across the CACFP and Farm to ECE landscape at the federal, state, and local levels. Interviews lasted one hour, and were conducted via Zoom. Partners included representatives from USDA FNS, CACFP state agencies, CACFP sponsors, CACFP providers, including Head Start, child care educators, farmers associations, farmers unions, food distribution vendors, food policy councils, child care associations, agriculture/food advocacy organizations, academic institutions, Farm to ECE state agencies, Extension, child advocate organizations, state departments of agriculture, and USDA Farm to School program representatives. At the state level, CACFP and Farm to ECE partners in 11 states spanning the U.S. were engaged, including:

<b>Alabama</b>	<b>Michigan</b>	<b>Pennsylvania</b>
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>Mississippi</b>	<b>Washington</b>
<b>Iowa</b>	<b>New Mexico</b>	<b>Wisconsin</b>
<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	

Using a semi-structured interview guide, interviewees were asked about their experiences with CACFP and leveraging it for Farm to ECE. Questions aimed to gather information on barriers and facilitators to participating in CACFP and Farm to ECE, existing resources for and ways in which CACFP is being used for Farm to ECE, and what additional or changes to resources, practices, or policies can increase access to Farm to ECE activities using CACFP at the federal, state, and local levels. [Appendix 4](#) outlines questions within the semi-structured interview guide. Interviews were

recorded, transcribed, and coded to uncover themes for each state. The results of the synthesized interview feedback themes are presented in the “[Barriers and Recommendations for Action](#)” section within this report.

### LANDSCAPE SCAN OF EXISTING LITERATURE AND STATE-LEVEL WEBSITES

In spring 2023, we conducted a structured scan of all CACFP state agency websites for communications, practices, and policies related to Farm to ECE, including the mention of Farm to ECE on the CACFP state agency website. We also cataloged characteristics of state-level Farm to ECE/Farm to CACFP webpages as they related to CACFP, where available. Characteristics assessed include the existence of a state-level Farm to ECE website, mention of CACFP on that site, and the presence of resources for farmers or food system partners.

In addition to a website scan, we distributed an online survey to all CACFP state agencies. The survey was completed by state agency directors or other staff members as delegated by the director. We received responses from 46 state agencies and the District of Columbia. State agencies were asked about use of State Administrative Expense funds for Farm to ECE activities, their current Farm to ECE initiatives, and what support/changes would help increase Farm to ECE activities leveraging CACFP in their state. [Appendix 5](#) provides tabulated state-by-state results of the website scan and survey.

Beyond resources available on CACFP state agency websites, we also conducted a structured scan for existing peer-reviewed and grey literature resources that relate to leveraging CACFP for Farm to ECE. Resource types include academic articles, USDA guidance and resources, research and recommendation reports, case studies, reporting tools, briefs, and infographics.



# Barriers and Recommendations for Action

Enhance Child Care Provider Access to CACFP

Support CACFP Provider Farm to ECE Activities

Bolster Local Food System Partner Access to CACFP Market Channels

Our community engagement and research activities bolstered the understanding that accessing CACFP and leveraging it for Farm to ECE activities has known challenges, but that there are tangible pathways forward and many examples of successful initiatives/facilitators that provide models/evidence for action. Based on the aggregate research findings, we have developed a set of multilevel and multisectoral recommendations that aim to support access to CACFP and Farm to ECE activities for sponsors, providers, and the children they serve. Recommendations for action fall into three main themes:

- ▶ **Enhance Child Care Providers' Access to CACFP**
- ▶ **Support CACFP Providers' Farm to ECE Activities**
- ▶ **Bolster Local Food System Partners' Access to CACFP Market Channels**

Successfully improving access to CACFP and its use for Farm to ECE activities includes ensuring that implementation of the following recommendations center equity principles and include the input and direction of communities most impacted by food insecurity. Implementation should also be informed by stakeholders that will be impacted by the recommended change. Recommendations should be implemented in ways that actively advance equity and do not have unintended negative consequences and/or increase disparities in access.

Recommendations are tagged/characterized by the stakeholder level at which they can be actualized, ranging from congressional policy changes, USDA

*“We have to focus more on understanding where we are in terms of equity and where different centers that are serving different demographics of children are located. In different areas, automatically, not only are there different resources but different food costs too. Until we change those systemic problems which are related to food cost or low access and things like that we have to make up for it, so that centers where it's harder for them to purchase locally and more costly for them to do so are given more resources to make up for that fact.”*

— Group Interview participant

regulations and guidance creation, CACFP state agency policy and implementation options, CACFP sponsoring organization activities, child care providers, farmers and other food system partners, and community organization advocates. These recommendations are grounded and contextualized in the related barriers, facilitators, and promising practices elucidated from our research. Recommendations span change to processes, policy, regulations, environments, and available resources, and are in line with preexisting recommendation reports.

## STAKEHOLDER LEVELS



CONGRESS



U.S.  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE



CACFP STATE  
AGENCIES



CACFP  
SPONSORING  
ORGANIZATIONS



CHILD CARE  
PROVIDERS



COMMUNITY  
ORGANIZATION  
PARTNERS



FARMERS/  
FOOD SYSTEM  
PARTNERS

## ENHANCE CHILD CARE PROVIDER ACCESS TO CACFP

### 1. PROMOTE AWARENESS OF CACFP WITH TAILORED COMMUNICATIONS



CACFP stakeholders should use existing outreach materials, or develop/modify their own materials, to promote awareness of CACFP among child care providers and to increase their desire and ability to participate in the program. Outreach materials can be intended to directly promote CACFP to child care providers or they can be intended to educate partner organizations, like Child Care Resource and Referral organizations and Child Care Licensing agencies, on CACFP and how these partners can in turn connect child care providers to CACFP.

Any promotional or educational outreach communications should be tailored to the needs of the child care providers in the community, including being in the preferred language of the child care provider. Pilot testing or co-developing outreach messaging with current CACFP providers is an effective way to help ensure that the messaging resonates with the intended audience. CACFP outreach channels can include flyers, newsletters, social media posts and ads, and websites. Helpful resources for partner organizations to begin supporting child care providers' access to the program include toolkits, guides, fact sheets, and manuals that describe CACFP and the process child care providers can take to apply to participate in the program.

### 2. MAXIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY OF TRAININGS FOR CACFP SPONSORS AND PROVIDERS



Maximizing the accessibility of CACFP training for sponsors and providers is crucial. Group interview participants emphasized that this can be achieved through flexible training schedules, including online

options to reduce travel and time burdens, and offering trainings on nights and weekends when providers are less likely to be caring for children. Training and accompanying materials should be offered in multiple languages. Simplified, bite-sized training modules can help providers and sponsors better understand and retain information as group interview participants noted that long training manuals can deter participation.

### 3. STREAMLINE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, REDUCE PAPERWORK, AND MAXIMIZE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE PROGRAM ACCESS



All states interviewed discussed the paperwork cost burden associated with CACFP participation. Thankfully, there are many ways to streamline CACFP operations and increase its reach among families with low incomes. Streamlining CACFP can be achieved by modernizing applications via technology, eliminating the need for “normal days and hours” on forms, adopting electronic data collection, allowing options for remote visit systems that comply with federal CACFP standards, enabling direct certification across all states, and improving the serious deficiency process to help sponsoring organizations resolve issues more effectively.

### 4. IMPROVE CACFP REIMBURSEMENTS FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS



Cost is one of the most cited barriers to providing the healthier foods required by CACFP and is even more so cited as a barrier for purchasing local foods. Increasing the availability and consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lower-fat dairy products among young children in child care is essential to promote healthy development and growth at exactly the time — early childhood — when it can have the most long-term effects. This effort needs to be supported by adequate meal reimbursements for child care providers.

*“I think my biggest thing would be the paperwork, just limiting how much time is consumed with it from kitchen staff who are already working their butts off.”*

— Group Interview participant

#### 4a. Allow child care homes and centers the option of serving an additional meal service, as was previously allowed.

Established through national child care standards, grounded in the latest nutrition and child development science, young children require frequent, small, healthy meals and snacks throughout the day. Considering the extended hours many children spend in care due to their parents' long workdays and commutes, child care providers play a crucial role in fulfilling most of these children's nutritional needs. Formerly, child care providers were eligible to serve up to



four meal services, typically including two meals and two snacks. However, Congress reduced this provision to save on the budget, negatively impacting children's nutrition and health and weakening child care. Reinstating full CACFP support for all necessary meals and snacks is vital.

**4b. Eliminate the area eligibility test to streamline access to healthy meals for young children in family child care homes.** Under the area eligibility waiver enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, all family child care homes qualified for the highest CACFP meal reimbursement rate. This waiver eliminated the usual area eligibility requirement that requires a child care home to be in an area with a 50 percent low-income threshold to receive the higher reimbursement rate. This threshold is not an effective mechanism because it misses many providers serving children from households with low incomes. This is especially

true in rural and suburban areas. In addition, the area eligibility test completely bypasses providers and families struggling in high cost-of-living areas. Permanently eliminating the area eligibility test would bring more child care providers who serve children from households with low incomes into CACFP, and many more children in need would receive healthy CACFP meals and snacks.

**4c. Increase CACFP meal reimbursement rates.** Congress should make a permanent increase to the CACFP reimbursement rates as group interview participants regularly cited CACFP reimbursements as inadequate to cover the full cost of healthy meals and snacks provided to children served by the program. An additional way to help improve CACFP reimbursement rates is to use the Consumer Price Index for Food Away from Home as the annual cost-of-living adjustment for family child care home CACFP reimbursement

rates. The Consumer Price Index for Food at Home, which is the cost-of-living adjustment used for CACFP homes, has not kept up with the cost of providing CACFP meals. The Consumer Price Index for Food Away from Home, which is the cost-of-living adjustment used for child care centers, has been a better indicator of the increase in meal costs for homes and centers.

## 5. ENHANCE PROGRAM REIMBURSEMENTS AND SUPPORTS TO BOLSTER CACFP SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS



Sponsors' administrative reimbursement rates should be brought to the level necessary to cover costs of administering the program. This could help mitigate the significant decline in the number of CACFP sponsors, which are the nonprofit community-based organizations that support the participation of family child care homes in CACFP. Additionally, this could help sponsors dedicate further support to the Farm to ECE efforts of the child care providers they serve.

## 6. SUPPORT TEAM NUTRITION'S CACFP NUTRITION EDUCATION AND PROGRAM EFFORTS, SPECIFICALLY FARM TO CACFP RESOURCES



Congress should continue to fund USDA's Team Nutrition to support the continuation of USDA's important role in providing valuable and innovative materials, training, technical assistance, and support to state agencies and program operators on CACFP and farm to CACFP — all of which are critical to the success of the new CACFP healthier meal pattern and nutrition standards. There is room for improvement in nutrition knowledge among child care providers, and CACFP training and materials are an important step in promoting healthy eating among preschool children.



## SUPPORT CACFP PROVIDER FARM TO ECE ACTIVITIES

### 7. INCREASE AWARENESS OF FARM TO ECE AND THE ALLOWABLE USES OF CACFP TO SUPPORT IT, INCLUDING INTEGRATING FARM TO ECE AND LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT TRAINING INTO EXISTING CACFP TRAINING AND SITE VISIT INFRASTRUCTURE



Many CACFP providers do not know about the opportunity to conduct Farm to ECE activities and fewer are aware of the many ways that CACFP can support all three core elements of Farm to ECE activities as described earlier in this report.

CACFP stakeholders should provide training and distribute educational materials to inform child care providers and the entities that serve them on the opportunity to leverage CACFP for Farm to ECE. Leveraging CACFP for Farm to ECE trainings can be integrated into existing training processes and infrastructure. To disseminate information broadly, state-level CACFP and Farm to ECE websites should make cross-references between CACFP and Farm to ECE. Among CACFP state agency websites scanned, 27 percent (14) refer to Farm to ECE and five have specific farm to CACFP information. A greater percentage of state-level Farm to ECE websites refer to CACFP at 41 percent, but more can be done to cross-promote CACFP and Farm to ECE as mutual beneficial efforts.

*“I have trouble finding very clear, concise guidance around CACFP and Farm to ECE. It seems like if there was something that pretty clearly laid out the information like a one pager on gardens and CACFP reimbursement, that states could use to back up their own regulations and programs that would be helpful.”*

— Group Interview participant

### 8. FOSTER PEER AMBASSADORS, LEARNING GROUPS, AND COMMUNITY COACHING AROUND CACFP AND FARM TO ECE



Establishing peer ambassadors, learning groups, and community coaching around CACFP and Farm to ECE encourages knowledge sharing and best practice dissemination, enhancing the overall effectiveness of these initiatives and reducing startup costs like time spent learning about the programs. Child care providers that are already successfully implementing Farm to ECE activities

while leveraging CACFP can help other child care sites that are interested in becoming involved by illustrating the benefits and successes of the program, as well as highlighting any knowledge, tools, or strategies that they have developed over time. Peers can serve as an example of what does and does not work and help illustrate how the cost of local food fits within CACFP reimbursements.

To develop these types of initiatives, CACFP stakeholders should embody cultural humility when partnering with community organizations and child care providers, and recognize that these relationships take time to build. Individuals and organizations from the community should be appropriately compensated for their time.



## 9. LEVERAGE CACFP STATE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE FUNDS TO PROVIDE TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON FARM TO ECE



Part of CACFP state administrative expense funds should be allocated to support Farm to ECE coordination, systems change, and other activities. Funds can be used for state-level activities including:

- ▶ producing state-level Farm to ECE guidance materials
- ▶ employing Farm to ECE coordinators that provide state-level training and technical assistance
- ▶ conducting statewide trainings and organizing statewide meetings to disseminate program information and encourage sharing of best practices
- ▶ collaborating on regional Farm to ECE efforts like multistate conferences, training, and site visits

Group interview participants specifically emphasized a need for a state-level farm to CACFP coordinator that can help provide direct assistance and train-the-trainer programming to help child care providers navigate the process of utilizing CACFP for Farm to ECE activities and providing answers to frequently asked questions. Community organization partners can help advocate for and supplement the capacity of SAE funds to provide technical assistance on Farm to ECE activities for CACFP providers.

## 10. SUPPORT LOCAL-, STATE-LEVEL LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT INCENTIVES FOR CACFP



CACFP stakeholders can provide evidence and advocate for local- and state-level local food procurement incentives that help encourage and defray any additional procurement costs associated with buying local foods. Local food purchasing incentives often increase the reimbursement for local

foods purchased with CACFP funds or CACFP meals served that contain local foods. Multiple states have already successfully funded and implemented local purchasing incentive programs for CACFP providers (Appendix 5).

## 11. DEVELOP AND DISTRIBUTE PROCESSES, GUIDES, AND TOOLS THAT STREAMLINE THE USE OF CACFP FOR FARM TO ECE ACTIVITIES



CACFP stakeholders can develop processes, guides, and tools to help clarify and streamline the use of CACFP for Farm to ECE activities. These resources can be newly developed or modified from existing materials. Group interview participants emphasized that community-specific guides for procuring local foods within CACFP guidelines are needed. Existing materials should be more widely distributed, like those found in Appendix 3, Practical Resources to Help Support and Implement Farm to ECE Activities

*“If there’s just more training at the program level so that everyone is familiar with these concepts and how to integrate local food and Farm to ECE and CACFP isn’t necessarily the special thing that only certain people are doing or certain people know about. It would be a dream for every CACFP specialist to also be informed, at least at a basic level of Farm to ECE, so they could provide that technical assistance.”*

— Group Interview participant

While Leveraging CACFP. Tools and templates like the Handwritten Receipt Template and Garden Harvest Documentation Form Template available in this report are examples of additional resources that can help streamline the use of CACFP for Farm to ECE activities for child care providers.



## BOLSTER LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM PARTNER ACCESS TO CACFP MARKET CHANNELS

### 12. INVEST IN AND/OR DEVELOP SHARED CENTRAL KITCHENS AND PURCHASING COOPERATIVES TO SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS' ACCESS TO CACFP MARKET CHANNELS



Group interview participants emphasized that for local food purchasing in CACFP to be sustainable there needs to be a system in place that does not depend on individual's institutional knowledge. Otherwise, if those people move on to different jobs or roles, then local food procurement will stop. CACFP and Farm to ECE stakeholders can invest in and/or develop shared-services models like central kitchens and purchasing cooperatives between multiple CACFP providers to help increase the sustainability of local food purchasing.

Centralized kitchens and purchasing cooperatives can source ingredients from local farmers, prepare meals, and deliver these meals for multiple CACFP providers, increasing the volume of local foods sales (making it more economical for food producers) and ensuring delivery of local food products in compliance with CACFP standards to the providers.<sup>29</sup> These shared service models make it easier for CACFP providers to participate in Farm to ECE because it means each provider does not have to have all the preparation, tools, and kitchen space to prepare unprocessed foods. These models make supplying food to CACFP providers more sustainable for food producers as well because they receive a bigger purchase order for food. Preparing local foods through a centralized kitchen offers the additional benefit of removing the burden of food preparation from centers and allows a third party to ensure compliance with CACFP standards. Shared-services approaches such as this, which connect local farmers to CACFP providers through tailored arrangements, are needed to ensure the sustainability of many Farm to ECE programs.

*“The problem with ECE buying is that usually they cannot reach economies of scale, so a lot of these things end up being more work than they’re able to afford and in an essence that’s racist because those who are able to make time for that, are the ones who get that benefit. I think it would be great if we could continue to explore as a nation of seeing how federal funding could support communities and small businesses in this way, if we could provide technical assistance to folks to really understand how could they carve out a business out of aggregation and prepping and sponsorship to support both the local farmer but also the local [child care] business person.”*

— Group Interview participant

### 13. CONNECT CACFP PROVIDERS AND FARMERS, GARDENERS, OR OTHER FOOD SYSTEM PARTNERS THAT MAY BE INTERESTED IN WORKING TOGETHER



CACFP stakeholders should actively foster relationships between CACFP providers and farmers, gardeners, or other food system partners through online directories, match-making processes, networking events, and regional hubs. Group interview participants discussed the need for a directory for each state that lists all of the food producers in each county and/or region that have expressed interest in participating in Farm to ECE, as well as the CACFP providers in the same area that are currently participating or have expressed interest. This resource would alleviate the burden on both sides of making the connection.

*“A network of sponsored farmers that were working directly with CACFP, that were already approved, would take out some of the process of trying to figure out which ones will work and which ones will not. I think that would help support the Farm to ECE process and link it with CACFP creating a network.”*

— Group Interview participant



#### 14. DEVELOP AND DISTRIBUTE RESOURCES TAILORED TO FARMERS AND FOOD SYSTEM PARTNERS THAT INFORM ON CACFP AND FARM TO ECE



There are few resources available that aim to educate farmers, other local food producers, and their partners about CACFP or Farm to ECE. CACFP and Farm to ECE stakeholders should develop and distribute resources that outline the basics of these initiatives and education on how to connect with and/or supply food for CACFP providers. Creating these resources addresses the lack of information on where or how local food producers can engage with CACFP child care providers and reduces the time and capacity burden on the producer to find and act on this information.

#### 15. DEVELOP A LOCAL FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN TRADITIONAL FOOD RETAIL LOCATIONS AND VENDORS



CACFP and Farm to ECE stakeholders should support local food infrastructure to increase the availability and accessibility of local foods at retail and vending locations in the community via food hubs, farmers markets, local vendors, and grocery stores. It may often be easier for CACFP providers to access local foods in these aggregate retail settings rather than directly from a single local food producer and can reduce purchasing burdens for both the food producer and the child care provider.<sup>30</sup> To help CACFP providers select local foods, stakeholders should encourage grocery retailers and food vendors to stock and appropriately label which foods are local.

*“We had a [grocery store] and they featured all the local farmers that they got produce from and they would have a picture of the farmer and that it was family owned and that was very helpful.”*

— Group Interview participant



# Conclusion

Leveraging CACFP for Farm to ECE is a strategic move to foster wins across early childhood and food system sectors. This report underscores the critical importance and vast potential of the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Farm to Early Care and Education in combating food insecurity and its structural drivers. These initiatives are pivotal not only for children and their families, but also for child care providers and the broader community. The synergistic relationship between CACFP and Farm to ECE is evident and powerful and more must be done to support access to and use of each. The systems change recommendations outlined in this report — including alterations to processes, policies, regulations, environments, and resources — are crucial in overcoming obstacles to accessing CACFP and leveraging it for Farm to ECE activities.

The time is now for stakeholders across the early childhood, nutrition program, and food system sectors to act on these findings and

recommendations. By implementing these actionable solutions, we can strengthen the impact of CACFP and Farm to ECE, helping to ensure equitable access to fresh, healthy foods for young children, and supporting a more just and sustainable food system. The collective effort of policy and regulation decision-makers, state agencies, CACFP sponsors, child care providers, local farmers and ranchers, regional food hubs, and other food system sector partners is crucial in this endeavor.

In embracing these recommendations, we have the opportunity to transform the landscape of early childhood nutrition and support the growth and sustainability of local food systems. The evidence and strategies laid out in this report provide a clear pathway for effective solutions. By working together and leveraging the strengths of CACFP and Farm to ECE, we can build a healthier, more equitable, and resilient food future for our children and the communities they live in.





### Appendix 3: Practical Resources to Help Support and Implement Farm to ECE Activities While Leveraging CACFP

#### National Organization Websites and Resource Directories

- ▶ [National Farm to School Network \(NFSN\)](#)
  - » [Farm to Early Care and Education landing page](#)
  - » [State Resource Directory of Farm to ECE Materials and Guides](#)
  - » [Resource Database](#)
- ▶ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Advancing Farm to ECE webpage](#)
- ▶ [USDA Farm to ECE Resources](#)

#### Starting Farm to ECE Activities

- ▶ [Getting Started With Farm to Early Care and Education](#), NFSN
- ▶ [Introducción A De La Granja Al Pre-Escolar](#), NFSN
- ▶ [Farm to Early Childhood Programs: A Step-By-Step Guide](#), MSU Center for Regional Food Systems
- ▶ [Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in Early Child Care and Education Settings](#), USDA
- ▶ [A Roadmap for Farm to Early Care and Education](#), NFSN

#### Procuring Local Foods With CACFP

- ▶ [Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs](#), USDA
  - » [“Beyond Lunch: Buying Local Foods for Summer and Child Care Programs”](#)
- ▶ [Local Procurement for Child Care Centers](#), NFSN
- ▶ [Local Purchasing for Family Child Care Providers](#), NFSN
- ▶ [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#), USDA
- ▶ [Local Food Directories](#), USDA

#### Policy and USDA Guidance on Leveraging CACFP for Farm to ECE

- ▶ [Local Foods in CACFP](#)
- ▶ [Use of State Administrative Expense \(SAE\) Funds to Support Farm to ECE](#)
- ▶ [Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game and Eggs, for Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- ▶ [Financial Management CACFP — FNS Instruction 796-2, Revision 4](#)
- ▶ [USDA Geographic Preference Guide](#)

### Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Group Interview Guide

#### 1. What is your experience with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?

- a. How would you describe the user friendliness of CACFP?
- b. For child care providers, what are the barriers to accessing the program or the issues with participating?
- c. Have there been any improvements or updates in the program that have made it more accessible and/or approachable?

#### 2. What is your experience with CACFP as it relates to Farm to ECE?

- a. What ways have you seen CACFP used to support Farm to ECE? What ways would you like CACFP to be able to be used to support Farm to ECE?
  - i. How easy or difficult is it to use CACFP for Farm to ECE activities?
  - ii. What are differences in CACFP use for Farm to ECE activities based on their geographic location in the state, i.e. urban v rural areas?
- b. What lessons have your organization, agency, grantees, providers, clients, farmers, or partners, learned regarding CACFP and Farm to ECE?
- c. How can we leverage the funding and power of CACFP to support the work of building equity into the ECE and food systems?

#### 3. What state or local supports, resources, practices, or policies help providers in navigating CACFP and/or leveraging CACFP for Farm to ECE?

#### 4. What training or resources would be useful to you and partners to be able to use CACFP for Farm to ECE activities?

- a. What training and resources do you have to share that would help other partners?

#### 5. As we enter year four of the COVID-19 pandemic and begin to find the “new normal” are there things that have changed because of pandemic-era policies that have helped improve CACFP and/or leveraging CACFP for Farm to ECE?

#### 6. What policies or rules impact use of CACFP for Farm to ECE? What improvements would you recommend?

**Appendix 5: Characteristics of State-Level CACFP and Farm to ECE Websites and Practices**

State	CACFP State Agency Website Characteristics and Survey Responses				State-Level Farm to ECE Website Characteristics		
	CACFP State Agency Department Website	CACFP State Agency Website Mentions Farm to ECE*	State Funds Additional Meal Reimbursement for Local Food Procurement in CACFP Settings*	CACFP State Agency Utilizes CACFP Administrative Funds to Support Farm to ECE Activities**	State-Level Farm to ECE Website Exists*	State-Level Farm to ECE Website Mentions CACFP*	State CACFP or Farm to ECE Site Provides Resources for Farmers or Other Food System Partners*
Alabama	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Unsure	Yes	Yes	—
Alaska	<a href="#">Department of Education and Early Development</a>	—	—	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Yes
Arizona	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—
Arkansas	<a href="#">Department of Human Services</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—
California	<a href="#">Department of Social Services</a>	Yes***	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colorado	<a href="#">Department of Public Health &amp; Environment</a>	Yes	—	No response	Yes	Yes	Yes
Connecticut	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Unsure	Yes	—	—
Delaware	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—
District of Columbia	<a href="#">Office of the State Superintendent of Education</a>	—	<a href="#">Yes, Healthy Tots Act</a>	Yes	Yes	—	—
Florida	<a href="#">Department of Health</a>	—	—	Yes	—	—	—
Georgia	<a href="#">Department of Early Care and Learning</a>	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
Hawaii	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—
Idaho	<a href="#">State Department of Education</a>	—	—	Unsure	Yes	—	—
Illinois	<a href="#">State Board of Education</a>	—	—	Unsure	Yes	Yes	—
Indiana	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—
Iowa	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	Yes***	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
Kansas	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Yes	—	—	—

\*Source: Food Research & Action Center analysis of a scan of CACFP state agency websites and state-level Farm to ECE websites in spring 2023.

\*\*Source: Food Research & Action Center analysis of a 2022 survey of CACFP state agency directors.

\*\*\*CACFP state agency website has a farm to CACFP section or webpage.

## Appendix 5: Characteristics of State-Level CACFP and Farm to ECE Websites and Practices (continued)

State	CACFP State Agency Website Characteristics and Survey Responses				State-Level Farm to ECE Website Characteristics		
	CACFP State Agency Department Website	CACFP State Agency Website Mentions Farm to ECE*	State Funds Additional Meal Reimbursement for Local Food Procurement in CACFP Settings*	CACFP State Agency Utilizes CACFP Administrative Funds to Support Farm to ECE Activities**	State-Level Farm to ECE Website Exists*	State-Level Farm to ECE Website Mentions CACFP*	State CACFP or Farm to ECE Site Provides Resources for Farmers or Other Food System Partners*
Kentucky	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	Yes
Louisiana	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maine	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	No response	Yes	Yes	—
Maryland	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	No response	Yes	—	Yes
Massachusetts	<a href="#">Department of Elementary and Secondary Education</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—
Michigan	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	Yes	<a href="#">Yes, 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids &amp; Farms</a>	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
Minnesota	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	No response	Yes	—	—
Mississippi	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	No response	Yes	—	Yes
Missouri	<a href="#">Department of Health and Senior Services</a>	—	—	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Montana	<a href="#">Department of Public Health and Human Services</a>	—	—	No	Yes	Yes	—
Nebraska	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	Yes	—	No response	Yes	Yes	—
Nevada	<a href="#">Department of Agriculture</a>	Yes	—	No	—	—	Yes
New Hampshire	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	No	Yes	—	Yes
New Jersey	<a href="#">Department of Agriculture</a>	Yes	—	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Mexico	<a href="#">Children Youth and Families Department</a>	—	<a href="#">Yes, New Mexico Grown</a>	Yes	—	—	—
New York	<a href="#">Department of Health</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
North Carolina	<a href="#">Department of Health and Human Services</a>	Yes***	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—

\*Source: Food Research & Action Center analysis of a scan of CACFP state agency websites and state-level Farm to ECE websites in spring 2023.

\*\*Source: Food Research & Action Center analysis of a 2022 survey of CACFP state agency directors.

\*\*\*CACFP state agency website has a farm to CACFP section or webpage.

**Appendix 5: Characteristics of State-Level CACFP and Farm to ECE Websites and Practices (continued)**

State	CACFP State Agency Website Characteristics and Survey Responses				State-Level Farm to ECE Website Characteristics		
	CACFP State Agency Department Website	CACFP State Agency Website Mentions Farm to ECE*	State Funds Additional Meal Reimbursement for Local Food Procurement in CACFP Settings*	CACFP State Agency Utilizes CACFP Administrative Funds to Support Farm to ECE Activities**	State-Level Farm to ECE Website Exists*	State-Level Farm to ECE Website Mentions CACFP*	State CACFP or Farm to ECE Site Provides Resources for Farmers or Other Food System Partners*
North Dakota	<a href="#">Department of Public Instruction</a>	—	—	No	—	—	—
Ohio	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	No	Yes	—	Yes
Oklahoma	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Unsure	Yes	—	Yes
Oregon	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	Yes	—	No	Yes	—	—
Pennsylvania	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rhode Island	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	No	—	—	—
South Carolina	<a href="#">Department of Social Services</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	Yes
South Dakota	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Unsure	Yes	—	—
Tennessee	<a href="#">Department of Human Services</a>	—	—	Unsure	—	—	—
Texas	<a href="#">Department of Agriculture</a>	—	—	Yes	—	—	—
Utah	<a href="#">State Board of Education</a>	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—
Vermont	<a href="#">Agency of Education</a>	—	—	No response	Yes	Yes	—
Virginia	<a href="#">Department of Health</a>	Yes***	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
Washington	<a href="#">Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction</a>	Yes***	—	No	Yes	Yes	—
West Virginia	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	No	—	—	—
Wisconsin	<a href="#">Department of Public Instruction</a>	Yes	—	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wyoming	<a href="#">Department of Education</a>	—	—	Yes	—	—	—

\*Source: Food Research & Action Center analysis of a scan of CACFP state agency websites and state-level Farm to ECE websites in spring 2023.

\*\*Source: Food Research & Action Center analysis of a 2022 survey of CACFP state agency directors.

\*\*\*CACFP state agency website has a farm to CACFP section or webpage.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 National Farm to School Network and Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems. (2022). 2021 National Farm to Early Care and Education Survey. Available at: <https://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/2021-national-farm-to-early-care-and-education-survey>.
- 2 National Farm to School Network and Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems. (2022). 2021 National Farm to Early Care and Education Survey. Available at: <https://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/2021-national-farm-to-early-care-and-education-survey>.
- 3 Farm to Institution New England. (2023). Farm to Early Childhood in New England: New Report Outlines Current Landscape and Opportunities. Available at: <https://farmtoinstitution.org/blog/farm-early-childhood-report>.
- 4 Every Child Thrives. (2021). Resources to grow the farm to early care and education movement. *W.K. Kellogg Foundation*. Available at: <https://everychildthrives.com/resources-to-grow-the-farm-to-early-care-and-education-movement>.
- 5 Taniguchi T, Haslam A, Sun W, Sisk M, Hayman J, Jernigan VBB. (2022). Impact of a Farm-to-School Nutrition and Gardening Intervention for Native American Families from the FRESH Study: A Randomized Wait-List Controlled Trial. *Nutrients*. 14(13):2601. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu14132601>.
- 6 Betty T. Izumi, Cara L. Eckhardt, Jennifer A. Hallman, Katherine Herro, Dawn A. Barberis. (2015). Harvest for Healthy Kids Pilot Study: Associations between Exposure to a Farm-to-Preschool Intervention and Willingness to Try and Liking of Target Fruits and Vegetables among Low-Income Children in Head Start. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*. Volume 115, Issue 12. Pages 2003–2013. ISSN 2212–2672. Available at: [https://www.jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672\(15\)01249-6/pdf](https://www.jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672(15)01249-6/pdf).
- 7 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2015). Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program with Questions and Answers. Available at: [https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/f2s/CACFP11\\_2015\\_Local%20Foods%20in%20CACFP\\_03%2013%202015.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/f2s/CACFP11_2015_Local%20Foods%20in%20CACFP_03%2013%202015.pdf).
- 8 Food Research and Action Center and Hunger Solutions Consulting analysis of U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service July 2023 Keydata Report. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data/july-2023-keydata-report>.
- 9 Gurzo K, Lee DL, Ritchie K, et al. (2020). Child care sites participating in the federal child and adult care food program provide more nutritious foods and beverages. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*. 52(7):697–704. doi:10.1016/j.jneb.2020.02.009. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32268971>.
- 10 Chriqui JF, Leider J, Schermbeck RM, Sanghera A, Pugach O. (2020). Changes in Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Practices at Participating Childcare and Education Centers in the United States Following Updated National Standards, 2017–2019. *Nutrients*. 12(9):2818. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7551123>.
- 11 Food Research & Action Center. (2017). Hunger and Health — The Role of the Federal Child Nutrition Programs in Improving Health and Well-Being. Available at: <https://frac.org/research/resource-library/hunger-health-role-federal-child-nutrition-programs-improving-health-well>.
- 12 Food Research & Action Center. (2020). FACTS: The child and adult care food program. Available at: <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/cacfp-fact-sheet.pdf>.
- 13 Edwards, C. P., Knoche, L., Raikes, A., Raikes, H., Torquati, J., Wilcox, B., & Christensen, L. (2002). Child Care Characteristics and Quality in Nebraska. Prepared for the Midwest Child Care Research Consortium. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=ccflpubs>.
- 14 Heflin, C., Arteaga, I., & Gable, S. (2015). The Child and Adult Care Food Program and food insecurity. *Social Service Review*, 89(1), 77–98. doi:10.1086/679760. Available at: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/679760?mobileUi=0&journalCode=ssr>.
- 15 Korenman S, Abner KS, Kaestner R, Gordon RA. (2013). The Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Nutrition of Preschoolers. *Early Child Res Q*. 28(2):325–336. doi: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2012.07.007. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3653583/>.
- 16 Gordon, R. A., Kaestner, R., Korenman, S., & Abner, K. (2010). The Child and Adult Care Food Program: Who is Served and What are Their Nutritional Outcomes? *NBER Working Paper*, 16148. doi 10.3386/w16148. Available at: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w16148>.
- 17 Liu, S. T., Graffagno, C. L., Leser, K. A., Trombetta, A. L., & Pirie, P. L. (2016). Obesity prevention practices and policies in child care settings enrolled and not enrolled in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 20(9), 1933–1939. doi: 10.1007/s10995-016-2007-z. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27112556/>.
- 18 Lumeng, J. C., Kaciroti, N., Sturza, J., Krusky, A. M., Miller, A. L., Peterson, K. E., Lipton, R., & Reischl, T. M. (2015). Changes in body mass index associated with head start participation. *Pediatrics*, 135(2), e449–e456. doi: 10.1542/peds.2014-1725. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25583912>.
- 19 Gayman, A., Ettinger de Cuba, S., March, E., Cook, J. T., Coleman, S., & Frank, D. A. (2010). Child Care Feeding Programs Support Young Children’s Healthy Development. Boston, MA: Children’s HealthWatch. Available at: [https://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/CACFP\\_brief\\_January2010.pdf](https://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/CACFP_brief_January2010.pdf).
- 20 National Farm to School Network. (2021). Farm to Early Care and Education: Cultivating healthy habits for our littlest eaters. Available at <https://www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/early-care-and-education>.
- 21 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2023). Financial Management CACFP — FNS Instruction 796-2, Revision 4. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/fns-instruction-796-2-revision-4>.
- 22 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2011). Final rule on Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs. 76 FR 22603. Document number: 2011–9843. Available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2011-9843/p-60>.
- 23 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2015). Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program with Questions and Answers. Available at [https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/f2s/CACFP11\\_2015\\_Local%20Foods%20in%20CACFP\\_03%2013%202015.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/f2s/CACFP11_2015_Local%20Foods%20in%20CACFP_03%2013%202015.pdf).
- 24 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2015). Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program with Questions and Answers. Available at [https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/f2s/CACFP11\\_2015\\_Local%20Foods%20in%20CACFP\\_03%2013%202015.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/f2s/CACFP11_2015_Local%20Foods%20in%20CACFP_03%2013%202015.pdf).
- 25 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2014). Farm to School and School Garden Expenses. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/farm-school-and-school-garden-expenses>.
- 26 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2015). Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program with Questions and Answers. Available at [https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/f2s/CACFP11\\_2015\\_Local%20Foods%20in%20CACFP\\_03%2013%202015.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/f2s/CACFP11_2015_Local%20Foods%20in%20CACFP_03%2013%202015.pdf).
- 27 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2014). Farm to School and School Garden Expenses. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/farm-school-and-school-garden-expenses>.
- 28 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2015). Questions and Answers Regarding the Use of State Administrative Expense (SAE) Funds and State Administrative Funds (SAF) for Farm to School Related Expenses. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/qas-regarding-use-sae-funds-and-sa-funds-farm-school-related-expenses>.
- 29 Bloom, D., Boys, K., Shisler, R. C., Dunning, R., Hundley, C., & Yates, D. (2022). Exploring Models of Local Food Procurement in Farm to Early Care and Education Programs. *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension*. 10(1), 3. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.54718/CONI3088>.
- 30 Rutz, J., Bloom, J., Schroeder-Moreno, M., Gunter, C., (2018). Farm to Childcare: An Analysis of Social and Economic Values in Local Food Systems. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*. 1–17. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2018.083.004>.



**Food Research & Action Center**

1200 18th Street, NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20036  
202.986.2200 | [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)



[@fractweets](https://twitter.com/fractweets)



[facebook.com/foodresearchandactioncenter](https://facebook.com/foodresearchandactioncenter)



[@fracgram](https://www.instagram.com/fracgram)



[linkedin.com/company/food-research-and-action-center](https://linkedin.com/company/food-research-and-action-center)