

Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative Cross-Site Evaluation Summary of Outcomes and Impacts, 2011-2012 (Year 3)

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For the past five years, six rural counties in Northeast Iowa (Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek) have worked together to improve the health and well-being of children and their families in the region. To reach the greatest number of vulnerable children and families, the Initiative chose to focus efforts on building the capacity of the region’s community school districts to change the school environment in which vulnerable children are enrolled. During this period, active and engaged school wellness teams were created with support from the FFI in 18 (90%) of the region’s 20 school districts, some of which are among the most vulnerable in the state. In one school district, 71% of enrolled children were eligible for the free or reduced school lunch program in 2011-2012. What follows is a summary of outcomes and impacts brought by this collaboration and implications for children and families living in the region.

Community Engagement

Late Year 2 revisions to our partners data, combined with new data from Year 3, shows stability in the number and composition of collaborative partners (Table 1). Explosive growth of the Initiative in Year 2 relaxed by Year 3, which brought a net addition of 33 new partners. Youth participation in Year 3 remained steady as well.

Table 1. Change in Initiative Partners

Partners	Year 3	Year 2	Year 1	Planning Phase
<i>Total core, ongoing, and strategic partners</i>	557 (+33)	524 (+246)	278 (+32)	246
<i>Youth</i>	59 (-3)	62 (+25)	37 (+14)	23
<i>Core</i>	50 (-3)	53 (+11)	42 (+9)	33
<i>Ongoing</i>	445 (+28)	417 (+203)	214 (+19)	195
<i>Strategic</i>	62 (+8)	54 (+32)	22 (+4)	18
<i>Potential allies</i>	19 (-10)	29 (+13)	16 (+14)	2
<i>Potential challengers</i>	8 (-3)	11 (+3)	8 (+5)	3

Job Creation and Other Kinds of Individual Economic Opportunities

For the past two years, the Initiative has been tackling the task of documenting job creation, retention, and expansion associated with the Food and Fitness work in NE Iowa. This has led to a greater understanding about how to define a job and how to handle data that falls beyond our narrow definition of a job (i.e. other important forms of economic opportunity that need to be considered as part of noteworthy changes accruing). Table 1 is the culmination of what we learned while tracking jobs. Listed is the number of **full time equivalent** jobs created at the farm level and/or value-added jobs, as well as those created within institutions and for the Initiative. In addition, we tracked other kinds of economic opportunities that do not qualify as jobs (because they may not be full-time), but still need to be enumerated as part of documenting change in the region.

Table 2 shows that a total of 17.5 FTE jobs were created in the region in Year 3. However, **a total of 46.5 FTE jobs have been created in the past three years as a result of the FFI and food systems work in Northeast Iowa.** In addition, 29 new enterprises were created and 3 jobs were expanded. Thus, we have been able to measure

78.5 new or expanded economic development opportunities for residents of the region as a result of the FFI and food systems work in Northeast Iowa.

Table 2. New/expanded economic opportunities associated with the NEI FFI, 2009-2012

Economic Opportunity	Year 3 (2011-2012)	Year 2 (2010-2011)	Year 1 (2009-2010)	Total
<i>New Job Creation, FTE</i>				
Farm-level and value added jobs*	8.5	15	2	25.5
Institutional buyer-created jobs**	3	0	0	3
FFI jobs***	6	7.5	4.5	18
Total number of new jobs created	17.5	22.5	6.5	46.5
Number of new local food producers/food enterprises[^]	10	11	8	29
Number of expanded jobs^{^^}	2.5	0.5	0	3
TOTAL NUMBER OF NEW OR EXPANDED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES	30	34	14.5	78.5

*This category includes production-related jobs such as farm labor jobs as well as jobs associated with on- or off-farm processing, distribution, and marketing.

**This category of jobs includes those created within institutions and retailers buying locally grown food (including local foods buyers/purchasing specialists, food prep jobs, and nutrition outreach coordination).

***FFI jobs are those created using WKKF dollars and leveraged dollars to pay for staff to support FFI efforts. These include Food and AmeriCorps service member positions, school outreach coordinator, Safe Routes to School Liaison, sustainable foods educator, communications liaison, and a food value chain coordinator.

[^]Numbers in this category are not included in the category on New Job Creation as they are not typically full-time jobs. However, they ARE an indicator of increased economic opportunity related to local foods. The majority of local food farmers have non-farming day jobs and gradually enter the local food scene by diversifying their farming operation or creating a new product line or adding one to their enterprise. Those included in this count may be conventional row crop farmers including fruit or vegetable crops in their operation, for example. A whole new job is not necessarily created but the enterprise does offer new economic opportunities.

^{^^}These are jobs that already existed but were expanded to include additional paid time spent on local foods/FFI work.

Increase in Local Food Sales and Purchases

Other economic opportunity is measured by overall local food commerce. The region experienced an increase in the number of dollars spent on local foods with immeasurable benefits on strengthening the region's economy. We know that:

1. Local food sales tracked in Year 3 increased \$1.5 million from the year before to reach \$3.6 million (based on 25 farms/farm groups reporting). Sales in Year 2 were \$2.05 million (16 farms/groups reporting) and \$1.12 million in Year 1 (17 farms/groups reporting).
2. Local food sales for 10 of the same producers tracked in Year 2 and Year 3 show **an increase in local food sales of \$1.5 million, compared to an increase of \$1.12 million among nine farmers reporting in both Years 1 and 2.**
3. **Local food purchases by institutions in the region increased \$73,000 to reach nearly \$1.2 million.** Institutional purchases were \$1.123 million in 2010 and \$832,000 in 2009. In Year 3, 26 institutions reported purchasing local foods compared to 20 in Year 2.
4. **School purchases of locally grown food decreased by \$174 from Year 2 to Year 3.** Selling local food to schools continues to be a formidable challenge in our region. Local food purchases were down for several reasons, the most notable of which is school food service apprehension about a lawsuit requiring schools to consider three competitive bids when setting procurement contracts. Aggregation of local

product only exacerbates this problem as aggregated products qualify as one bid. Low margins are to be earned on local food sold to schools with limited budgets, which also makes them an undesirable market for food hubs.

In addition to targeted capacity building work of the Initiative, a variety of other noteworthy reasons are also linked to the increase in local food sales and purchases.

- 1) **Food processing is up;** 5 new food processing licenses (for a total of 21) were issued in the region in Year 3 by the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals.
- 2) **New partnerships are emerging among traditionally competitive businesses that are generating a cascade of benefits.** WW Homestead Dairy and Country View Dairy is a good example. Each began operations in 2011. Both focused on processing milk from dairy farms and direct marketing. WWHD produces milk, cheese and ice cream; CVD produces yogurt. At a NIFF Coalition hosted event, owners from each dairy were able to connect with each other and talk about challenges. WWHD shared they were not meeting ice cream demand because they could not find a market for skim milk. DVD shared they were dumping their cream because they lacked equipment to package it. As a result of that connection, WWHD now buys cream from CVD which benefits both businesses, the institutions who buy and serve their products, and the children and adults who consume the products.
- 3) **The NIFF Coalition is continuing to partner with county economic development offices to award \$8900 in mini grants to local food operations.** Funds were used to purchase equipment, livestock housing, greenhouse construction, packing shed renovations, marketing materials, and school garden projects where gardening is used as a business training opportunity.
5. **The NIFF Coalition is supporting a variety of ways to connect farmers with buyers.** The Coalition maintains a listserv that connects suppliers and purchasers. This listserv is facilitating instant product transactions and fostering new relationships between growers and buyers. In Year 3, the Coalition also launched a school food procurement pilot project to help schools secure bids for locally grown food. In addition, the NIFF Coalition is hosting a new annual event called the NE Iowa Food and Farm Expo to connect face-to-face farmers, farm support providers, and suppliers in the region.

Leveraged Funding

The total amount of funds leveraged in Year 3 (both indirect and aligned) is \$709,072. Table 3 shows funding leveraged in the five years the Initiative received funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Of these totals (based on a separate analysis), 26% was leveraged from national/federal sources, 48% was leveraged from state sources, and 26% was leveraged from local sources within Northeast Iowa. The majority of total FFI-related funding came from the public sector (68%), 11% came from the civic sector, 2% came from the private sector, and 19% resulted from multi-sector collaboration.

Table 3. Leverage of the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative, 2008-2012

	WK Kellogg Foundation funding	Direct Leverage by NEIF&F	Aligned Leverage by NEIF&F	Total Leverage by NEIF&F	Total FFI Related Investment
Planning Phase (2008-2009)	\$500,000	\$0	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$900,000
Year 1 Community Action Plan (2009-2010)	\$400,000	\$237,093.00	\$656,059.00	\$893,152.00	\$1,293,152
Year 2 Community Action Plan	\$400,000	\$278,201.81	\$86,214.00	\$364,415.81	\$764,415.81

(2010-2011)					
Year 3 Community Action Plan (2011-2012)	\$400,000	\$480,568.86	\$228,503.03	\$709,071.89	\$1,109,071.89
GRAND TOTALS*	\$1,700,000	\$995,863.67	\$1,370,776.03	\$2,366,639.70	\$4,066,639.70

School Capacity, Practices, Customs, and Policy Change

The focus of the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative is to build the capacity of schools to lead school wellness work by engaging a diverse group of youth and adults to create change at the local level. Indicators we are tracking with respect to this focus provide incontrovertible evidence that the Initiative is making progress in this arena. A wide range of school practices, customs and policies is changing as a result of FFI work, highlights of which are listed below.

- Year 3 hailed an increase in the number of engaged and active school wellness teams from 14 in Year 2 to 18 in Year 3 (out of 20 school districts in the region).
- A minimum of 690 hours were spent on school wellness programming in 18 school districts by FFI staff and affiliated FoodCorps/AmeriCorps service members. 335 different events were held to conduct wellness programming. 26,207 different contacts were made with target audiences.
- 15 of the 18 active school wellness teams met 6-12 times per year, exceeding the twice-a-year meetings required by the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. 16 of 18 schools set goals that exceeded federal requirements for school wellness.
- Six schools in the region are currently piloting a regional, cycle menu in response to 2012 implementation of the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act that among other things, limits the number of calories served in school meals.
- 17 of 18 active school wellness teams applied for outside funding to support wellness activities. 15 of the 17 actually received funding, totaling \$73,318 for school wellness work.
- School administrators serve on 16 of the 18 active school wellness teams; teachers and school food service staff serve on all 18; nurses serve on 17.
- Luther College offers a pilot continuing education class to train K-12 teachers on topics of wellness. 48 of the region’s teachers have completed the course.
- 16 of 20 school districts have youth teams totaling 240 youth. 110 youth have been trained to do cross age teaching where high school students learn to teach local food- and nutrition-related content to elementary students.
- The Central Community School district revised the job description for a vacant PE teacher position to include duties as the school district’s FFI youth coach. The Postville Community School District revised a vacant food service director position description to include duties that include serving as head of the school wellness team, cooking from scratch, and using local food in school meals.
- 17 of the region’s 20 school districts are sourcing locally grown food. 15 school districts had school gardens. 6 school districts harvested 4,270 pounds of produce from school gardens, valued at \$5756, which was used in school meal programs. 7 school districts acquired new kitchen equipment to handle and store fresh food. A local foods after-school club was created for elementary students at West Central Community School District (CSD).
- Decorah has 5 walking school buses compared to 2 last year. In the Riceville CSD, parents must send a note why their child is NOT participating in monthly Walking Wednesdays where students are dropped off at a supervised central location to walk to school.
- The percent of children walking/biking to school this year is 22%, up 4% from last year, according to Safe Routes to School tallies from 13 participating school districts (2 more than last year).