

FFI Regional Impacts

2014



Six rural counties in Northeast Iowa (Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek) are working together to improve the health and well-being of children and families in the region. The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative (FFI) focuses efforts on four strategic areas: K-12 schools, early childcare, local food systems development, and active living/transportation and seeks to involve youth in all four areas. What follows is a summary of outcomes and impacts brought by this collaboration and implications for children and families in the region.

Youth Engagement

FFI engaged 198 youth through 14 FFI Youth 4-H Teams in 2013-14.

- In Year 5, a new Food Empowerment Education Sustainability Team (FEEST) internship program was implemented in Northeast Iowa. Youth interns from three schools coordinated six FEEST meals at their schools or in the community. A FEEST coordinator was hired to oversee the interns and assist them in their work.
- Youth from seven schools were trained to encourage elementary students to try new foods during school lunch through a new Cafeteria Coach program. Youth from three schools implemented the coaching.
- In addition to accomplishments with Youth Teams, 90 youth leaders participated in planning, advocating, and implementing active transportation activities in year 2013-14, up from 48 in year 2012-13.



FFI Impacts on K-12 Schools and Early Childhood

In 2014, the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative worked with 14 active school wellness teams in the region and 37 early childhood classrooms.

FFI's early childhood work is expanding exponentially:

- The **Farm to Preschool (F2PS) program** was implemented at all 15 Head Start classrooms in Northeast Iowa as well as 21 preschool classrooms, reaching **approximately 667 three- and four-year olds**.
- A survey of 125 Head Start parents reveals **3 out of 4 strongly agree their child is more likely to choose or try healthy foods since participating in F2PS activities. Three in five parents strongly agree their family has made healthier food or wellness choices since starting Head Start.**
- **Half of Head Start staff included F2PS in their goals for Year 6.**
- The NICC Early Childhood Education Department is training all of its early childhood education students to use Farm to Preschool curriculum. Students had a chance to test the curriculum out during their field (practicum) experiences.

FFI is reaching vulnerable families:

- Resources created by FFI for use with parents about healthy eating and physical activity were translated into Spanish and used with Spanish-speaking families.
- Grocery store tours were held for Head

Start families in four communities in Year 5 to teach participants to eat healthy on a budget.

- **39 parent outreach events were held** to engage parents in early childhood and K-12 school settings in 2013-14, up from 26 events the previous year.

• **A total of 19 walking school buses operated in 9 communities in 2013-14, up from 17 buses in 2012-13.** The buses involved 250 students and 50 adult volunteers, 35 of whom are parents.

• FFI provided 388 hours of nutrition education in 2014.

FFI's work in schools is deepening:

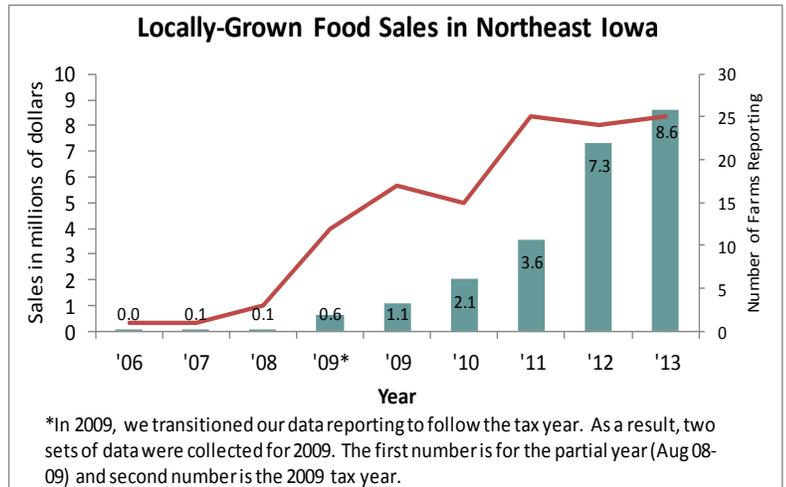
- Ten schools committed to financially supporting an FFI Resource Contact in 2014-15, totaling \$37,500, demonstrating their commitment to maintaining and growing food and fitness programming and education.
- Nine schools have a before- or after-school program that includes food, fitness, and/or gardening. FFI staff provided 63 hours of after school programming in 2013-14.
- 13 (93%) FFI schools have at least one school garden for a total of 19 gardens.
- **Safe Routes to Schools community coalitions have formed in five communities.** These groups of community stakeholders work with FFI's safe routes to school coordinator to organize walking school buses and bike rodeos.
- **Ten Bike Rodeos were held in year 5, reaching 650 students.**

In 2013-14, the overweight or obesity rate of Central K-6 students was the lowest it has been in the five years they have tracked the data— 29%, down from a high of 38% in 2010-11.

Economic Impact of Local Food

The FFI supports the growth of local foods commerce in the region through local job creation, food purchasing, and food distribution.

- **18 new jobs were added in 2013** by local food farms and local food buyers.
- **In addition, 15 new local food producers or food enterprises** joined the local food system in 2013.
- **School purchases of local food were up by 67%** from \$20,236 in 2012-13 to \$33,792 in 2013-14. Of the 13 schools reporting in both years, 9 (69%) increased purchases of local food compared to 2012-13.
- **The total value of local foods purchased by non-school markets was up by 20%**, from \$1,160,978 (n=17) in 2012 to \$1,398,962 (n=9) in 2013, despite the fact that the number of institutions reporting was only about half as many in 2013 as 2012. Of the six non-school respondents reporting in both years, half (3) increased local food purchases and half (3) decreased local food purchases.
- The Iowa Food Hub (IFH), a non-profit food hub that emerged out of the NIFF Coalition and the FFI, supports the aggregation and distribution of foods produced in Northeast Iowa to lessen the effects of poverty. Accomplishments in 2013-14 include:
 - ◊ In September 2013 **the IFH acquired a refrigerated truck** using a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant to coordinate delivery of local foods.
 - ◊ The IFH hired a full-time food hub intern, who later transitioned into the **full-time food hub coordinator**.
 - ◊ By Summer, 2014, the IFH was grossing **\$30,000 in sales per month**.
 - ◊ **The IFH was one of eight food hubs selected to participate in a**



pilot Group GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) program supported by the USDA and Wallace Center. The program allows food hubs and other organizations to meet safe agricultural practice standards at a lower cost, making them more competitive while reducing food safety risk.

- **FFI used a two-year USDA Farm to School grant** to encourage farmers to work together to increase production and double school purchases of local food at four schools.
- Through collaboration with County Line Locker, the IFH, and the FFI's Farm to School program, **local pork appeared on the menu at six of the region's K-12 schools and Luther College** during the spring of 2014. Ten hogs were processed per week for a total of about 80 hogs, which were delivered to the schools and Luther by the IFH.

Communities Invest in Community Work by Supporting FFI

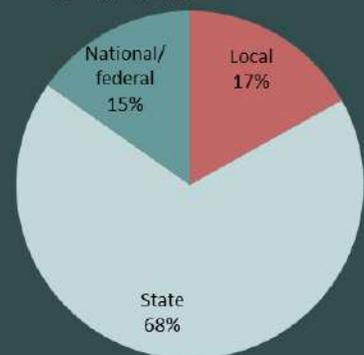
FFI is extremely thankful for the financial support it has received from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation since 2008. FFI will continue to receive WKKF support for the next two years, with the support level dropping each year.

To continue FFI's success, increased financial support from the community will be essential. The slice of the FFI's financial pie contributed to local sources, shown at the right, will need to grow. Some of the ways the community has begun to support FFI include:

- Ten schools have agreed to contribute toward the stipend of an FFI Resource Contact (RC), an AmeriCorps or FoodCorps service member to work in their school in 2014-15, totally \$37,500 in contributions.
- Over \$5,000 was raised by FFI in one day on Great Give Day, a social media event that encourages community members to donate to local nonprofits. The funds will be used for FFI school outreach in 2014-15.
- Northeast Iowa Community College, a FFI Core Partner, began financially supporting FFI's early childhood regional outreach with \$5,000 per year for three years, beginning in July 2014.

How might you contribute? Please join community members in supporting community work; visit www.iowafoodandfitness.org to learn more.

Percent leverage by source geography, 2013-2014



The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative is grounded in the work of these core partners:

