



Greater Cincinnati Regional F2S Action Plan¹

This Regional Action Plan draws on the 2019-2020 F2S Action Plans of Campbell County, West Clermont, Cincinnati, Mt Healthy, and Little Miami Public schools. The plan is to develop the regional coordination and infrastructure that is needed to help those schools enhance their F2S programs and advance their goals.



¹ This Action Plan was created with funding from the USDA Farm to School Planning Grant from 2019 to 2020.

REGIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL TEAM

FPC TEAM MEMBERS

Green Umbrella:

- Michaela Oldfield, Director, Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council
- Anne Schneider, Farm to School Coordinator, Green Umbrella
- Annabelle Arbogast, Americorp Public Ally, Green Umbrella

Farm to School Impact Team:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Alice Chalmers	Local Food Connection
Amy Hollar	OSU Extension / SNAP Ed
Andrea Liptak	We Thrive / Hamilton County Health Department
Anna Haas	Local Food Connection
Annabelle Arbogast	Green Umbrella
Anne Schneider	Green Umbrella
Ayrnn McCandless	Cincinnati Museum Center / Food Science Lab
Elise Erhart	Cincinnati Zoo
Ellie Falk	Civic Garden Center
Emilee Armbruster	Greater Cincinnati STEM Collaborative
Malika Smoot	Cincinnati Health Department
Maria Gulley	Granny's Garden/Green City Resources
Meghan Fronduti	Juice Plus Tower Gardens
Monica Smith	Eat Healthy Northern Kentucky
Nicole Gunderman	Gorman Farm
Sara LaVelle	Cincy Good Food Purchasing Coalition/ Clark Montessori Local School Decision Making Committee
Suellyn Shupe	Cincinnati Good Food Purchasing Coalition
Susan Jorgensen	Green Umbrella
Tonia Smith	Cincinnati Health Department
Tony Staubach	Ohio State University Extension / 4H
Trish Bellmore	Southeast Indiana Farm to School

KEY PARTNERS TO CONVENE FOR GREATER CINCINNATI FEED OUR FUTURE ADVISORY BOARD

Project Management	Green Umbrella Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council Cuyahoga County Board of Health
State Agencies	Ohio Department of Agriculture Ohio Department of Education Ohio Department of Health Kentucky Department of Agriculture Kentucky Department of Education Kentucky Department of Health Indiana Department of Agriculture Indiana Department of Education Indiana Department of Health
Local Health Departments	Cincinnati Health Department Hamilton County Health Department - We Thrive Northern Kentucky Health Department - Eat Healthy Northern Kentucky
Buyers	Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) Unified Purchasing Cooperative of the Ohio River Valley (UPC) UPC Cafeteria Committee
Vendors	CPS & UPC Vendor(s) via Fresh Produce Bids - What Chefs Want / Local Food Connection
Extension Offices	Ohio State University Extension - Farm to School Team University of Kentucky Extension Purdue Extension
Other Non Profits	Regional & State School Nutrition Association Chapters Cultivate! Fresh Local Collaborative of Southeast Indiana

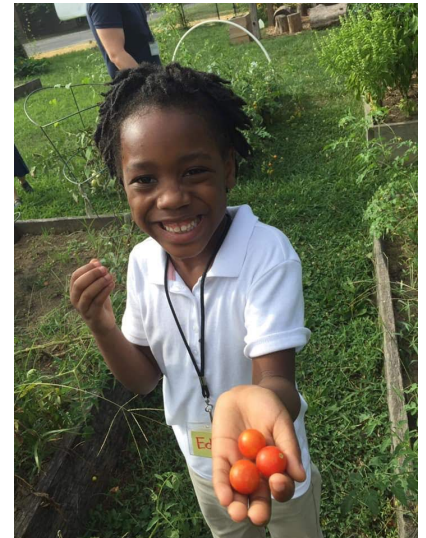


VISION, GOALS & CONTEXT

VISION

Regionally coordinated farm to school program for all schools that includes:

- maximizing local food procured and distributed by school meal programs,
- extensive brand awareness of Farm to School in our region and its impacts on learning, health, and farm economies
- universal classroom exposure of students to agriculture and nutrition literacy education



GOALS

Cafeteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Every school in the region can track what percentage of their purchasing is local- Every school in the region purchases at least one locally sourced product per year and participates in National Farm to School Month- On average, 10% of produce served in schools is local produce sourced from small or very small farms- Every buying coop serving the region incorporates geographic preference in their produce bidding
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Every student at every grade level has at least one exposure to agriculture or nutrition literacy education in the classroom every year- An annual Summit occurs every year to provide professional development and networking opportunities to all teachers interested in providing agriculture and nutrition literacy education- There is at least one Farm to School Curriculum coordinator position within a school district- Teachers and school administrators can access information on F2S opportunities through a central resource
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A regional entity franchises and manages the Feed Our Future Program to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Support and develop additional Farm to School partnerships- Provide value chain coordination- Expand the Greater Cincinnati region-specific marketing & promotional programs- Align and develop regional curriculums and educational opportunities- Oversee assessments and reporting of purchasing and educational impact metrics- Cincinnati Museum Center drives regional recognition of F2S Education through its nationally recognized showcase teaching kitchen. Cincinnati Museum Center, the Cincinnati Zoo, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center align and leverage Feed our Future messaging in their marketing about their local food purchasing- Annual 5% increase in acres of land that is GAP certified, organic fruit and vegetable production managed according to International Labor Standards to meet or exceed school purchasing requirements

CONTEXT

Pre-SY 19/20	
Cafeteria (distribution/procurement resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With funding from USDA's Local Food Promotion Program, Creation Gardens and Local Food Connection established F2S Distribution for 17 regional schools - Cincinnati Public Schools adopted the Good Food Purchasing Program
Curriculum and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Columbus City Schools employs a F2S Curriculum Coordinator who provides curriculum integration support to teachers throughout Columbus public schools. - Cuyahoga County Feed Our Future program is developed to provide comprehensive, integrated F2S program and messaging and - Civic Garden Center, Gorman Heritage Farms, OSU-extension/4-H, Tower Gardens, and Greenacres provide educational programming to schools. - Greater Cincinnati STEM Collaborative creates a STEM School Garden Curriculum - CPS has an Ag-Ed advisory committee and Ag-Ed programs at Gamble and Clark Montessori. - Approximately 115 School gardens are believed to exist throughout the region (based on CGC School Garden Support programming)
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Northern Kentucky Health Department, w/ Kentucky's F2S network and Tina Garland (KDA F2S Coordinator) hosted October F2S Challenges - WeTHRIVE (Hamilton Co Public Health) has School Garden/School Nutrition support for WeTHRIVE schools - GCRFPC regularly participates in OH statewide F2S Network, connects with Tina Garland in KY.
SY 19/20	
Cafeteria (distribution/procurement resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As part of F2S Planning Project, GCRFPC produces Local Food Procurement in Greater Cincinnati: Barriers and Solutions for K-12 School Report - COVID-19 disrupts in-school food service, but CPS buys ~40% of fresh produce spend on local foods, helping sustain F2S despite pandemic - Modeled on CCBH's Feed our Future bids, United Purchasing Coop issues a Fresh Produce and Farm to School Bid. UPC includes 53 public school districts, 81 non-public schools, 3 joint vocational school districts, 1 MRDD, 2 Head Start Programs, 4 educational service centers and 6 other non-profit organizations from southwestern Ohio, northern Kentucky and southeastern Indiana. - DOD Fresh is identified as a 'competitor' for F2S that offers fresh foods that FSDs choose over local because of budget constraints - Purdue has LFPP funding for statewide institutional purchasing support. Funds a value coordinator for SE Indiana. - Fresh Local Food Collaborative of SE Indiana (FLFC) supports Oak Hawk, value chain coordinator for SE Indiana
Curriculum and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cincinnati Museum Center and LaSoupe partner with Kent State to develop food-based curriculums for inspiring STEM. - CPS and GU launch CPS Outside team to get all children in CPS outside as part of their curriculum, including using school gardens more
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GU secures funding via Ohio SCBG & USDA Regional Food Systems Partnerships to pilot expanding Feed our Future to the Greater Cincinnati Region. - CPS hires a marketing person in their Dining Services department, who can support F2S Marketing in CPS

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- National Farm to School Month and Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch leveraging LFPP grant has happened in 2018, 2019 - planned for 2020. Cincinnati Zoo participated in the Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch.

SY 20/21	
Cafeteria (distribution/ procurement resources)	COVID-19 disruptions continue; CPS's leadership on local purchasing continues.
Curriculum and education	GCRFPC hosted the first F2S Educators Summit, virtually, in September 2020. 30 attendees, including many F2S team members, discuss opportunities for better supporting curriculum integration at school and resources for teachers. GCRFPC launches Enhancing Schools Gardens project to develop shared F2S Educational Metrics
Community Engagement	



OPPORTUNITIES

CAFETERIA/LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT

CHALLENGE/NEED	OPPORTUNITY
COVID-19 Impact of Food Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individually wrapped portions - Inclusion in food box distribution to non-congregate meal settings - Advocate for policies that support flexible spending of USDA entitlement or other federally funded school food programs to support small and mid sized local growers and their supply chain
Key Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formally organize key stakeholders in order to increase impact through more efficient communication channels

Lack of Standard Definition for “Local Food”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging a more common definition of local food (such as a geographic preference), setting measurable goals, and tracking changes in local food purchasing can help schools identify targets and assess progress over time
Supply and Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional demand planning can help facilitate local food procurement by coordinating supply and demand for local food and ensuring that the serving size, packaging, and other characteristics of locally sourced foods are aligned with schools’ needs and processing capacity. - Working with a local food hub that has established relationships with local growers and distributors can make it easier for schools to source food locally. - Buying cooperatives can help increase local food procurement in K-12 schools by managing the procurement process for their members. - School food service teams have expressed the need for additional recipe development and staff training, such as an instructional video media library, linked to regional crops.
Processing and Storage Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic investments in processing and storage infrastructure could increase capacity for local food procurement among K-12 schools in the region. - Buyers have expressed a high desire for frozen product which would require an Individual Quick Freezing (IQF) facility in the region. - Conduct a meat processing feasibility study with Southeast Indiana.
Seasonality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategies include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - substituting local food into existing menus during the seasons it is available, while continuing to rely on national supply chains during the off-season, - developing seasonal menu items that are offered specifically during a crop’s seasonal availability - increasing menu offerings that use storage crops and year-round available produce. - Buyers need information about growing seasons vs. planting season and how both dictate availability of product. There is a strong need to tie these two aspects into schools’ initial forecasting plans by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - leveraging velocity reports for previous usage - communicating deadlines for planting for products that have not been purchased in the past to ensure product will be available. - Additional assistance is needed to help growers match crop planning efforts to school demand planning and to continue to monitor based on actual supply closer to the sale.
Food Safety Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtain additional funding for regional partners to provide GAP certification support for regional growers. - Other food safety training resources for farmers in Greater Cincinnati include Ohio State University Extension, the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, and the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA). - Explore feasibility of USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification for school gardens.

Cost and Budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School districts that are members of a buying cooperative can leverage the buying cooperative to purchase more local foods at a better price point. - Advocate for policies that would allow school districts to receive all or a portion of their USDA entitlement in cash (as some states and districts currently do) in order to provide more flexibility to purchase local food, sometimes at a lower cost than commodity products. - Explore future sales contracts and/or additional commitment to value based purchasing incentives to help lower existing significant risk for growers and distributors - The Ohio SNA or other partners could be leveraged to provide more menu planning and budgeting training and technical resources to food service directors in our region. - Providing education and training about local produce to food service staff, students, and families can help increase participation and decrease food waste, making it more feasible to continue purchasing local food. Because students are often more willing to try new foods that they helped grow in a school garden, this can include school garden-based education. - Additionally, auditing food waste in the school cafeteria and implementing strategies to reduce wasted food can help create more room in the food service budget to purchase locally grown foods.
Lack of cohesive Farm to School Framework in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health departments can be key partners for maximizing the success of local food procurement and consumption in K-12 schools. - Program Models: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cuyahoga County Board of Health - Feed Our Future - Franklin County Health Department - Ohio Days: My State, My Plate - Hamilton County Health Department - We Thrive - Northern Kentucky Health Department - Eat Healthy Northern Kentucky

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CHALLENGE	OPPORTUNITY
Coordinated nutrition & culinary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to the Social-Ecological model of public health, children's eating habits are shaped by individual, interpersonal, organizational, community and policy factors. Schools can provide access to and education on healthy foods, but students' other environments and social relations also shape their choices about whether to eat school meals. Major institutions, including health departments and several hospitals, are identifying and focusing on addressing obesity and diet-related diseases as high priority issues through Community Health Improvement Plans. These efforts can and should be coordinated with the Farm to School Regional efforts.
Marketing & Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools have diverse messaging outlets and a variety of higher-priority communications they need to get to students and families. So it's not always easy for FSDs to get their message about F2S into official school communications, or they have to be very selective about what they try to say. Many school FSDs don't have additional capacity to develop integrated, comprehensive, branded messaging campaigns. - A regionally deployed F2S campaign could be provided to schools to make it easier for FSDs to off-load the bulk of the marketing and communications from their plates, while also creating a more impactful regional brand that can saturate students and families awareness

through additional marketing outlets, such as major anchor institutions. The Feed Our Future Program of Cuyahoga County Board of Health is available for franchising to achieve these ends.

Racial equity: the F2S team and organizational partners are disproportionately white-led, while the burdens of our food system are disproportionately born by people of color.

- There is no food justice without racial justice. The GCRFPC must leverage its Community Voices partnerships to amplify the voices and governance roles of people of color in addressing farm to school and the overall food movement work in Greater Cincinnati.
 - The NFSN's leadership on racial justice in F2S is a resource for the GCRFPC to reframe their work.
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CURRICULUM INTEGRATION & EDUCATION

CHALLENGE

OPPORTUNITY

Classroom time is perceived as incredibly precious

- At schools, there is interest in the potential of F2S related materials for creating more engaging learning environments and improving STEM understanding, literacy, physical health, nutritional knowledge, and social emotional wellness. Generally, for teachers to take on added work of changing curriculum or activities, materials need to be able to improve testing results. Organizations providing resources can do more to show teachers that materials will improve testing; and shared or easy to use measures for teachers to measure their organizational goals can be developed.
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Teachers are not well equipped to integrate F2S related materials

- F2S activities, such as school gardens, are known to create more engaging learning experiences and there are a wealth of resources and organizational partners available for teachers to choose from. A curriculum coordinator, like the role in Columbus Public Schools, could help connect teachers in the region to existing organizational partners AND help coordinate curriculum development and training for teachers.
 - OSU has applied for funding to create a "Growing Teachers through the Season" curriculum to educate teachers on using school gardens during the school year, and an add-on curriculum on addressing food safety and nutrition education.
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Teachers doing F2S are often siloed within their schools and districts, lack community partners, and do not have administrative buy-in. They are also often not well connected to activities happening in the cafeteria.

- Stephen Carter at Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy is building a comprehensive program at his school and the CPS Ag Ed advisory board is supporting CPS programs, and others in the region may be as well. There are numerous organizational partners available to connect to teachers. More networking and educational opportunities need to be created for educators, organizational partners, and administrators in the region.
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Funding is a perpetual challenge for organizations

- The collaborative effort of the regional plan helps demonstrate the need for the organizations' work. GU and partners can develop a database of potential local donors, their funding priorities, and the timing of grant deadlines to work with impact team partners and schools to prioritize applications from most competitive partners for
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appropriate funding streams and secure necessary matching funds for national grants.

Organizations struggle to gain access to classrooms & maintain relationships as turnover occurs at school; conversely, organizations with resources are not fully being utilized

- F2S activities, such as school gardens, are known to create more engaging learning experiences and there are a wealth of resources and organizational partners available for teachers to choose from. A curriculum coordinator, like the role in Columbus Public Schools, could help connect teachers in the region to existing organizational partners AND help coordinate curriculum development and training for teachers. A curriculum coordinator could also help organizations understand testing schedules and when/how to plug into academic calendars.
 - More networking and educational opportunities need to be created for educators, organizational partners, and administrators in the region.
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Teachers rely on organizations to provide programming, which do not have the staffing/organizational capacity to reach the full breadth of the region.

- F2S activities, such as school gardens, are known to create more engaging learning experiences and there are a wealth of resources and organizational partners available for teachers to choose from. A curriculum coordinator, like the role in Columbus Public Schools, could help connect teachers in the region to existing organizational partners AND help coordinate curriculum development and training for teachers.
 - OH F2S Network can be a resource - Carol Smathers can always be contacted for resources and support.
 - OSU has applied for funding to create a "Growing Teachers through the Season" curriculum to educate teachers on using school gardens during the school year, and an add-on curriculum on addressing food safety and nutrition education.
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Parents and other members of the community also need education and programming

- Feed Our Future Program of Cuyahoga County Board of Health is available for franchising develop a strategic marketing program supporting the awareness of Farm to School programming goals.
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ACTION STEPS

CAFETERIA

- GCRFPC and partners will work with partner schools and buying coops to develop and release 'local produce' bids modeled on the Feed our Future buying coop bids. Key partner: Cuyahoga County Board of Health Feed Our Future Program.
- GCRFPC will partner with state-wide partners in Ohio to advocate for spending flexibility and leverage state-wide organizations or partners to provide training to local districts on budget-neutral local food bidding and purchasing. Key partners: Ohio Farm to School network, Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Ohio School Nutrition Association, Farm to School leaders
- GCRFPC will partner with local organizations and GU corporate partners to increase institutions committed to values-based purchasing and coordinate bidding on commonly needed products.
- Using the Feed Our Future model, Green Trails Marketing (contracted through GU) will coordinate menu planning and development in the region
- Cultivate! and Local Food Connection will work with local farmers to scale up USDA GAP-certified production in the region.

CURRICULUM/EDUCATION

- GCRFPC partners collaborate to create an 8-month, 8-series teacher education program on using school gardens and out-door education to teach science.
 - Offer series to 'cohort' of teachers in order to incubate a network of colleagues for school garden educators.
 - Leverage Greater Cincinnati STEM Collaborative School Garden curriculum
- GCRFPC will nurture and maintain a network of teachers and organizational partners supporting Farm to School curriculum integration by:
 - Hosting an annual Farm to School educators workshop
 - Partnering with the Civic Garden Center to hold monthly socials at school gardens and other F2S education spaces
 - Maintaining a [Regional Farm to School Resource Database for Educators](#)
- Leverage Cincinnati Museum Center and LaSoupe's STEM cooking program to create a GC STEM Collaborative curriculum around food science.
 - o Share and promote the Carry out Science Food Recipes from CMC.
- Partner with Blue Manatee bookstore, Hamilton Co 4-H and Columbus City Schools to create F2S literacy catalogue and curriculum.
- Create take-home nutrition education tools for feeding programs outside of traditional cafeteria that partners can use to enhance F2S through food access efforts.
- Partner with GU's Food Access and Healthy Eating Impact Team and CPS Outside Team to collaborate on overlapping educational needs

COMMUNITY

- Using Feed Our Future program resources, Green Trails Marketing and Green Umbrella will coordinate a regional messaging campaign around the health and economic impacts of buying and consuming local foods. GCRFPC partners will advocate for the Cincinnati Museum Center, the Cincinnati Zoo and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center to also adopt the Feed Our Future messaging to reinforce messaging.
- Partner with GU's Food Access and Healthy Eating Impact Team and GU's CPS Outside to collaborate on overlapping community needs

EVALUATION

- Measuring local purchasing by institutions: The FOF team will collect produce velocity reports for each local produce vendor from all participating school districts to demonstrate the dollar amounts invested and specialty crop producers supported each school year. GU has a school food procurement baseline established for specialty crops through an existing project with LFC under its USDA Local Food Promotion Program grant. GU will enhance this database to capture the data needed to collect and report on the outcomes and indicators of this measure.
- Measuring consumption of local foods and specialty crops: Pre and post tests will be created and completed for each of the following: FSD or buying coop trainings, conference participation and any webinar or in-person trainings that occur during the project period. The FOF team will be able to track the number of children and youth reporting to have eaten more specialty crops through school food program participating rates.
- Tracking awareness of and interest in F2S: The FOF website will enable us to track in the # of stakeholders that take the pledge, # of producers using the FOF tools, # of marketing tools utilized by all audiences, and # of email campaigns and other marketing efforts instituted as a result of the FOF brand implementation. The produce velocity reports collected for Outcome 1 will also provide data to measure the use of specialty crops at participating schools.
- Develop common survey instruments and metrics for evaluating F2S programs and curriculum outputs and impacts.
 - Conduct a pilot, baseline survey of student knowledge of nutrition and local foods through F2S planning team.
- Conduct a racial equity assessment of F2S work in Greater Cincinnati.

PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

- Current focus will be on building F2S partner capacity and GU coordinating capacity to create plug-and-play resources for schools to adopt and implement.
- GU is developing a database of potential local donors, their funding priorities, and the timing of grant deadlines to work with impact team partners and schools to prioritize applications from most competitive partners for appropriate funding streams and secure necessary matching funds for national grants.
- GCRFPC has secured for an Ohio Specialty Crop Block Grant and a Regional Food Systems Partnership Grant to support the FOF franchise in Greater Cincinnati. The objective is for GU to become the regional coordinator of the Greater Cincinnati Feed Our Future franchise and to have partners regularly using it for their communications.
- GCRFPC is nurturing partnerships with local hospitals, especially Cincinnati Children's Hospital, to develop funding streams to support nutrition and wellness programming at schools that leverage Farm to School programs.
- Civic Garden Center and Gorman Heritage Farm will collaboratively apply for funding to support development and expansion of F2S educational capacity among teachers in the region. Ultimately the goal is to have a sufficiently robust network of educators in the region doing F2S and empowered to integrate into classrooms that less and less external support of F2S education in schools will be required.
- USDA Farm to School Implementation Grants will be applied for to support activities that cannot be funded through other financial programs.

