

# Minnesota Farm to Kids

Strategic Plan  
2025-2030

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Overview

The Minnesota Farm to Kids Strategic Plan establishes a five-year roadmap for advancing local purchasing and agricultural education in K-12 schools and early care settings across the state. This plan will be collaboratively implemented by members of the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and the Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group, through the formation of Minnesota's new Farm to Kids Alliance.

The Minnesota Farm to Kids Strategic Plan outlines goals and strategies for strengthening statewide programs and structures that build capacity and increase participation in Farm to Kids efforts (including Farm to School and Farm to Early Care), while supporting the ongoing work of local leaders.

## History and Partners

Farm to School and Early Care in Minnesota has been steadily growing over the last decade thanks to local leaders who are dedicated to increasing local food purchases and agricultural education in schools and early care settings.

Growth in Farm to School and Early Care has also been supported by strong collaboration among state-level agencies, institutions, and organizations under the leadership structures of the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team (formed in 2011) and the Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group (formed in 2014). Efforts of these groups have driven legislation, implementation, and evaluation of Minnesota's Farm to School and Early Care grants; supported the creation of state positions dedicated to Farm to School and Early Care efforts; developed structures for needed training, technical assistance, and networking; established Minnesota's Harvest of the Month Program; and more.

Implementation of this Farm to Kids Strategic Plan relies on renewed commitment to collaboration among partners, including those named in this plan and future partners who we hope will join this work.

## Planning Process

Development of Minnesota's first Farm to Kids Strategic Plan began in November 2023 and concluded in October 2024. The planning process followed four phases: preparation, environmental scan, plan development, and plan dissemination. Staff from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) led the strategic planning effort, with assistance from the State of Minnesota's Management Analysis and Development (MAD). The development of the plan was funded by a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant received by the MDA.

Members of the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and the Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group identified the priorities, goals, strategies, and actions outlined in the plan using insights collected from robust stakeholder engagement with producers, school food service professionals, educators, early care providers, youth, and other members of the public. Engagement included focus groups and small group conversations, activities during Farm to School trainings and networking events, individual conversations, and two public input sessions.

# Vision

The Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance aims to unite the efforts of people supporting Farm to School and Early Care to nourish children’s bodies and minds, cultivate viable farms, and build vibrant communities in our state.

We work together to support:

- Development of relationships and infrastructure that advance the production and sustained purchase of local foods.
- Integration of food and agriculture into teaching and learning.
- Availability of diversified, flexible funding to advance Farm to Kids strategies.
- Increased public awareness and participation in Farm to Kids in Minnesota.

*Inspiration for this vision statement came from the Vermont Farm to School Network.*

# Priorities & Goals

In pursuit of our shared vision, Farm to Kids partners have identified the following priorities and goals to guide our work over the next five years:

PRIORITIES	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	Increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods by schools and early care settings.	Improve integration of food and agricultural education in classrooms, cafeterias, and other educational environments.	Build and activate a strong Farm to Kids network.
	<b>GOALS</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Further develop statewide policy and infrastructure that builds capacity for local purchasing.</li><li>➤ Support the development of relationships among schools, early care settings, producers, and local partners.</li><li>➤ Expand statewide programming that builds capacity and preparedness among producers, schools, and early care providers to engage in Farm to Kids.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Increase support for educational food production in schools and early care settings.</li><li>➤ Enhance integration of Farm to Kids into Career and Technical Education (CTE) program frameworks.</li><li>➤ Expand standards-based educational resources, training, and support for food and agricultural education for early care through 12th grade.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Establish the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance to foster shared, collaborative leadership among Farm to School and Early Care partners.</li><li>➤ Evaluate Farm to Kids efforts to inform future work and measure impact.</li><li>➤ Increase reach and awareness of Farm to Kids through coordinated outreach and communication.</li></ul>

# INTRODUCTION



## Plan Purpose

The Minnesota Farm to Kids Strategic Plan establishes a five-year roadmap for advancing local procurement and agricultural education in K-12 schools and early care settings across the state. This plan will be implemented by members of the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and Farm to Early Care Advisory Group, through the formation of Minnesota's new Farm to Kids Alliance.

The Farm to Kids Strategic Plan **identifies a shared vision and principles for advancing Farm to Kids (including Farm to School and Farm to Early Care) efforts** and will serve as the foundation for unifying the work of the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and the Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group.

The plan also **provides priorities, strategies, and actions to guide the collaborative work of Farm to Kids partners** and identifies lead and support roles for implementation.

The first of its kind for Minnesota, this plan aims to:

- Increase strategic alignment and collaboration across Farm to School and Farm to Early Care efforts.
- Establish clear direction for the work of Minnesota's many Farm to Kids partners, and provide momentum for the Minnesota Farm to Kids movement.
- Increase support for local leaders, while shifting responsibility for success from a reliance on individuals to a reliance on state-level programs and structures that increase participation and success in Farm to Kids.
- Build and advance equity in Minnesota's food system and educational settings.

## History of Farm to School and Early Care in Minnesota

The Farm to School and Early Care movement in Minnesota has been steadily growing over the last decade. There has been an increase in purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods – including fruits, vegetables, meats, grains, and dairy products – by schools and early care sites. There is greater interest among producers to work with schools and early care sites in their communities, and Farm to School and Early Care initiatives have become more widely accepted as a critical strategy for strengthening Minnesota's food systems and supply chains. Schools and early care providers have also increased the agricultural education they provide in a variety of learning environments, including classrooms and gardens.

### Farm to School and Early Care Leadership

For over a decade, state agencies, institutions, and organizations in Minnesota have been working together to support and expand participation in Farm to School and Early Care efforts across the state. Much of this work has occurred under the leadership structures of the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team (formed in 2011) and the Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group (formed in 2014). These two groups formed to coordinate, streamline, and increase the impact of partners' ongoing efforts related to Farm to School and Farm to Early Care.



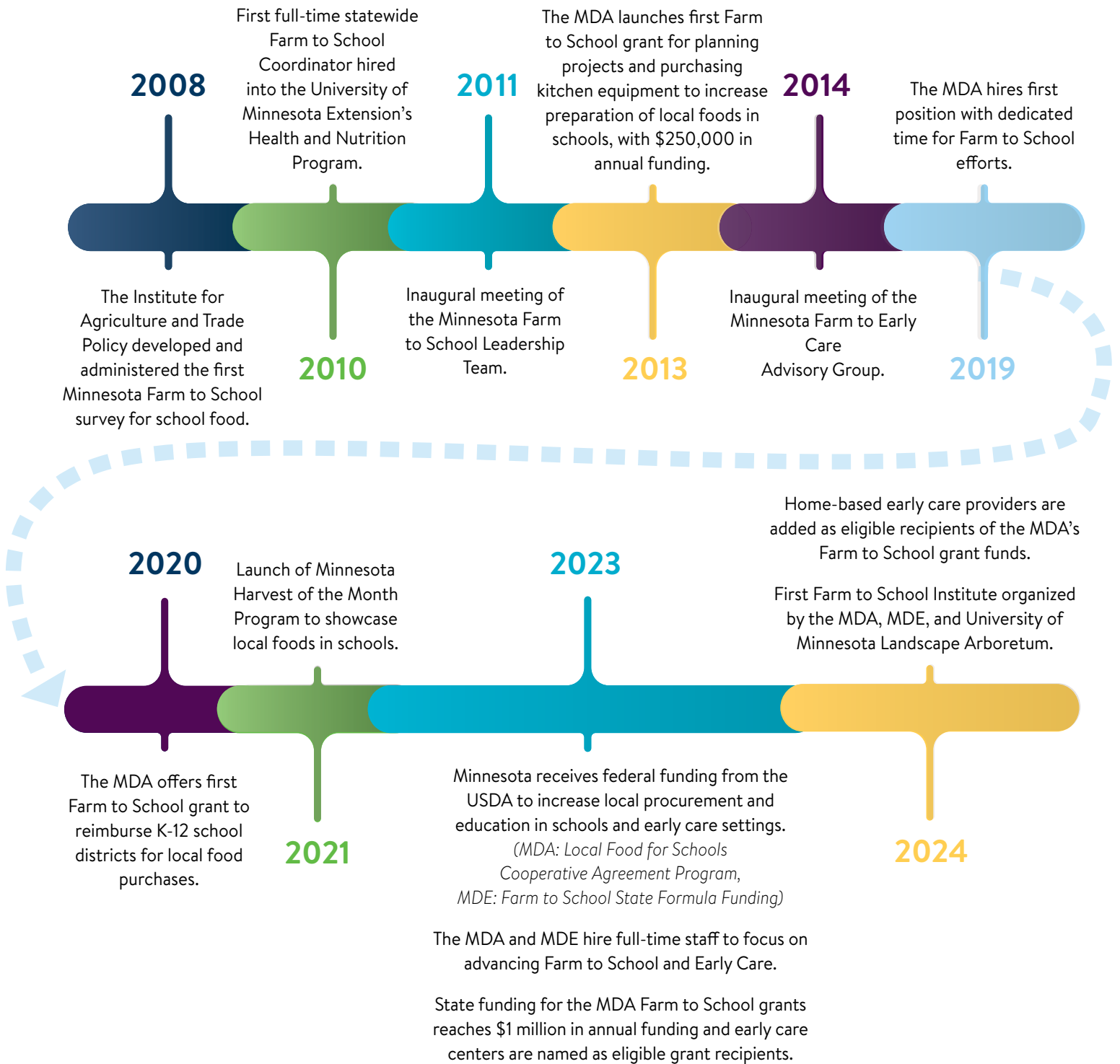
There are also countless local leaders — including school food service professionals, farmers, early care providers, educators, parents, food system advocates, and community partners — working to advance Farm to School and Early Care in their communities.

## **Farm to School and Early Care Grants**

In 2013, the MDA launched its first grant program to support Farm to School activities; the grants provided funding to K-12 schools and school districts for planning projects and purchasing kitchen equipment that increased capacity to prepare local ingredients. This initial state investment in Farm to School has continued to grow and evolve over the last decade through state legislation to become an annual \$1 million program that reimburses K-12 school districts, early care centers, and home-based early care providers for local food purchases.



## Minnesota's Farm to School and Early Care Timeline

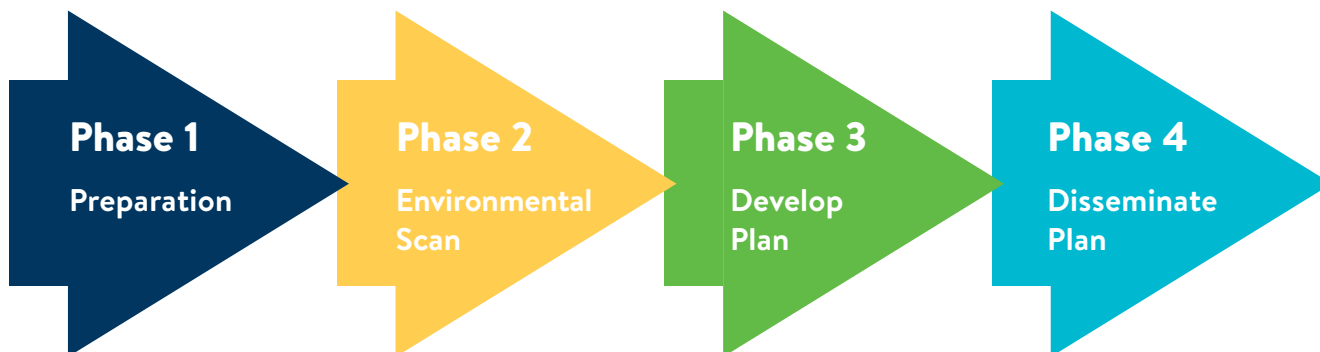


Alongside these milestones, statewide staff and partners launched Minnesota's monthly Farm to School and Early Care Technical Assistance Office Hours; developed many Farm to School and Early Care resources; delivered webinars and trainings on various Farm to School and Early Care topics; coordinated Farm to School and Early Care Month activities and celebrations; and expanded communication, advocacy, and education about Farm to School and Early Care initiatives in Minnesota.



# Planning Process

Development of this Farm to Kids Strategic Plan began in November 2023 and followed four phases: preparation, environmental scan, plan development, and plan dissemination. Staff from the MDA and MDE led the strategic planning effort with assistance from the State of Minnesota’s Management Analysis and Development (MAD). The development of the plan was funded by a USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant received by the MDA.



## Phase 1: Preparation

During this phase, a Design Team was formed with defined responsibilities to:

- Provide input and support alignment of the strategic planning activities to ensure they were complementary and connected.
- Ensure strategic planning activities were inclusive so everyone who participated felt seen, heard, and valued.
- Support strong lines of communication and feedback loops among the project partners and stakeholders.

The Design Team consisted of four partners from the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and the Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group in addition to MDA and MDE project leads. In total, the Design Team met seven times to guide plan development and contribute specific content to the plan. These meetings were facilitated by the MAD facilitators and utilized Mural, an online visual work platform.

The Design Team shaped the critical questions that were asked of stakeholders as part of the environmental scan, led environmental scan activities, supported strategic planning sessions with both the Farm to School Leadership Team and the Farm to Early Care Advisory Team, and helped create a shared mission and guiding principles for the work.

This preparatory phase also included a review of 17 related strategic plans from across the country to provide the Design Team with a better sense of the project scope.

## Phase 2: Environmental Scan

Environmental scanning focused on gathering input from producers, food hubs, distributors, early care providers, school nutrition professionals, teachers, families, students, community members, and related support organizations through the complement of activities reflected in the following table:

Activity	Number of Participants
Six regional Farm to School networking events	165
Nine small group (<10 participants) conversations	60
Four large group (>10 participants) conversations	60
Ten individual interviews	10
Two public input sessions	35
Three strategic planning sessions	20

Approximately 350 people were directly engaged in sharing their experience, wisdom, and ideas in the development of Minnesota's first Farm to Kids Strategic Plan. In addition, data collected from the 2023 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy statewide survey of early care providers (n=301), K-12 school staff (n=264), and 2023 Farm to School grantees (n=97) was used to better understand the benefits, challenges, and opportunities related to Farm to School and Early Care. The [Minnesota Farm to Early Care Action Plan](#), created in 2023, also heavily informed the environmental scan phase and the plan development that followed.

### **Phase 3: Plan Development**

Members of the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and the Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group worked collaboratively over several months to identify priorities, goals, strategies, and actions based on the information and insights collected in the environmental scan phase.

The two groups settled on the following strategic priorities:

1. Increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods by schools and early care settings.
2. Improve integration of food and agricultural education in classrooms, cafeterias, and other educational environments.
3. Build and activate a strong Farm to Kids network.

Partners then identified and refined specific goals, strategies, and action steps for each priority through an iterative process to ensure that the plan felt attainable within the five-year timeline and that every strategy in the plan had sufficient leadership and support to implement. Throughout the plan development process, project management leads considered how goals, strategies, and action steps could shift responsibility for success from a reliance on individuals to a reliance on state-level programs and structures.

Drafts of the plan were reviewed and edited by select partners to ensure the final plan was achievable and in alignment with the shared vision and guiding principles created by the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and the Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group.

### **Phase 4: Plan Dissemination**

Sharing of the Minnesota Farm to Kids Strategic Plan started in October 2024 to coincide with Farm to School and Early Care Month.

## Partners and Their Roles

For well over a decade, growth in Farm to School and Early Care initiatives in Minnesota has been driven by partnership and collaboration among local, regional, and state partners. Implementation of this Farm to Kids Strategic Plan relies on renewed commitment to collaboration among the partners listed in this plan. The following partner organizations have committed to lead and/or support the implementation of specific strategies and actions listed later in this plan.

### Farm to Kids Partners

#### Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)

The MDA has several programs and positions to advance and support Farm to Kids initiatives:

- **Farm to Institution Coordinator:** Oversee implementation of Farm to Kids Strategic Plan and formation of Farm to Kids Alliance; coordinate agency strategy and collaboration for Farm to Kids initiatives; lead and support development of statewide programming; provide resources, outreach, and technical support.
- **AGRI<sup>1</sup> Farm to School and Early Care Programs:** Provide grants and cost-shares for schools and early care providers to increase their purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods.
- **Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom (MAITC):** Provide agriculture-focused curriculum, grants, and professional development opportunities for K-12 educators; develop educational resources for Minnesota Harvest of the Month; coordinate statewide school garden initiatives.
- **Minnesota Grown:** Host an online wholesale directory for local farms interested in selling to schools and other wholesale buyers; coordinate annual Farm to School and Early Care recognition contest.

<sup>1</sup> The [Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation \(AGRI\) Program](#) supports the advancement of Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries through grants, loans, and other types of financial assistance.

#### Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

The MDE provides support and resources to increase capacity related to Farm to Kids in various divisions:

- **Farm to School and Early Care Consultant:** Lead efforts to expand professional development opportunities for school food service and early care professionals; implement opportunities for networking and regional connections amongst buyers and producers; support and facilitate implementation of the Farm to Kids Alliance initiatives.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** Lead development and implementation of Farm to Kids practices and strategies into CTE frameworks; provide opportunities for Farm to School professional development for CTE educators.

#### Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

**Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP):** Disseminate resources and provide technical assistance, training, and funding to local public health SHIP staff to support schools and early care providers in implementing Farm to Kids activities; actively support integration of Farm to Kids and food systems development into statewide public health strategies.



## Farm to Kids Partners (Continued)

### Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)

Conduct and publish Farm to Kids evaluation and seek funding to continue evaluation of Farm to Kids efforts in Minnesota (including evaluation of AGRI Farm to School and Early Care Grant programs, statewide surveys, and qualitative evaluation through storytelling); coordinate statewide policy efforts aimed at advancing Farm to Kids and community-based food systems; support development of Farm to Early Care resources and Farm to Kids communication.

### Land Stewardship Project (LSP)

Coordinate statewide policy efforts and coalitions aimed at advancing Farm to Kids, sustainable agriculture and food systems, and farmer-focused support programs.

### Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)

Provide technical assistance to aggregators and hubs for accessing wholesale markets; support establishment of regional coordinator positions; collaborate on producer trainings and networking events; and serve as a resource on food regulatory issues.

### Renewing the Countryside (RTC)

Provide trainings and resources to producers, aggregators, and hubs; coordinate projects aimed at strengthening local supply chain infrastructures and aggregation; actively support establishment of regional coordinator positions; provide trainings to early care providers; coordinate networking events to strengthen relationships between farmers, schools, and early care providers.

### University of Minnesota Extension (Extension)

Provide technical assistance to producers and schools about wholesale production and food safety for on-farm practices and food service; integrate Farm to Kids into health and nutrition programs; support Minnesota Harvest of the Month.

In addition to these partners and future partners that we hope will join this work, we know that the advancement of Farm to Kids in Minnesota is dependent on the continued hard work of producers, school staff, early care providers, partner organizations, and other dedicated stakeholders. This plan aims to guide the development of stronger state-level programs and structures to support these many individuals as they implement and expand Farm to Kids initiatives in their communities.

# VISION & GOALS

## Overview

The Minnesota Farm to Kids Strategic Plan was developed collaboratively by members of the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and the Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group and informed by stakeholders around the state.

Over the course of the strategic planning process, member partners developed a shared vision and guiding principles for our work together and identified priorities, goals, and strategies for the next five years.

## Vision and Guiding Principles

The strategic plan will serve as the foundation for the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group to unite our efforts as the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance, with a shared vision and guiding principles for our work together.

## Priorities, Goals, and Strategies

The strategic plan is designed to serve as a roadmap for advancing local procurement and agricultural education in K-12 schools and early care settings across the state. The plan is organized around three priority areas and nine goals, with specific strategies and actions for achieving each goal. Each level of the plan – from the three priority areas to the specific actions – reflects the needs and ideas highlighted by partners and stakeholders during the engagement and planning phases for this plan.

## Definitions

**Priorities** – “Our focus” – The most important work to guide our efforts and resources.

**Goals** – “Our achievements” – The results we want to accomplish within those priority areas.

**Strategies** – “Our approaches” – The initiatives to achieve goals.

**Actions** – “Our steps” – The specific steps to take to implement strategies.

The term “**Farm to Kids**” refers to combined Farm to School and Farm to Early Care efforts.



## Vision and Guiding Principles

### Vision

The Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance exists to unite the efforts of people supporting Farm to School and Early Care to nourish children’s bodies and minds, cultivate viable farms, and build vibrant communities in our state.

We work together to support:

- Development of relationships and infrastructure that advance the production and sustained purchase of local foods.
- Integration of food and agriculture into teaching and learning.
- Availability of diversified, flexible funding to advance Farm to Kids efforts.
- Increased public awareness and participation in Farm to Kids in Minnesota.

*Inspiration for this vision statement came from the Vermont Farm to School Network.*

### Guiding Principles

#### **Silos are for farms**

We are committed to working collaboratively. We welcome diverse and intersecting identities and hold differences as a strength. We support Farm to Kids efforts by building bridges across partners and valuing everyone’s contributions.

#### **Kitchens are for experimenting**

We embrace new ideas with openness and curiosity. We bolster proven strategies, recognizing that impactful Farm to Kids work demands a balance between pioneering change and lifting up what works.

#### **All are welcome at the table**

We are committed to a just, equitable food system that promotes the health of all children and benefits producers, workers, educators, and their communities. We seek out, include, and amplify voices who have been systematically excluded, with a particular focus on young people and emerging farmers.

#### **Every community matters**

We honor and are guided by knowledge, experience, and expertise within Minnesota’s unique communities. We know different environments require different approaches and strive to align resources accordingly.



Priority 1: Increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods by schools and early care settings.

**GOAL A**

Further develop statewide policy and infrastructure that builds capacity for local purchasing.

Strategy 1A.1

**Increase funding for Minnesota’s Farm to School and Early Care grant programs. (HIGH PRIORITY)**

Leads: IATP, LSP, MDA

Actions

- 1 **Familiarize decision makers** – Cultivate support for Farm to School and Early Care among key decision makers, including Minnesota Governor’s Office and legislators, through special events (such as farm visits and school lunches) and one-on-one engagement.
- 2 **Legislative strategy** – Explore opportunities to increase funding for the existing grant programs through legislative committees, including Agriculture, Workforce Development, and Health.
- 3 **Build stakeholder network** – Build a network of stakeholders to engage in public advocacy (e.g., hosting on-farm/in-school events, attending listening sessions, submitting letters of support, testifying at legislative hearings).
- 4 **Leverage Free School Meals** – Develop and implement strategies to leverage Minnesota’s public investment in Free School Meals for Kids Program to support local purchasing.
- 5 **Consider grant expansion** – Explore and pursue models for state-funded grants that support additional expenses for increasing local food purchases, such as production supplies, staff training, promotional efforts, and accompanying education.
- 6 **Secure increased funding** – Increase funding for state’s Farm to School and Early Care grant programs so that all interested schools and early care sites can participate.

Priority 1: Increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods by schools and early care settings.

**GOAL A**

Further develop statewide policy and infrastructure that builds capacity for local purchasing.

Strategy 1A.2

**Establish regional coordinators to serve as place-based connectors, educators, capacity-builders, and technical assistance providers to producers, schools, early care providers, and other institutional buyers. (HIGH PRIORITY)**

Leads: IATP, LSP, MDA, MDE | Supports: RTC, MISA, MDH

Actions

- 1 **Pilot** – Implement regional coordination pilot led by MDE using USDA State Formula Grant funds. Document best practices and recommendations for future positions, including how to train and connect regional coordinators to existing resources and networks.
- 2 **Develop strategy** – Develop a strategy to establish statewide regional coordinators based on pilot learnings and evaluation of how these positions could be integrated with existing regional entities and roles.
- 3 **Secure long-term funding** – Pursue funding opportunities for regional coordinators.

Priority 1: Increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods by schools and early care settings.

**GOAL A**

Further develop statewide policy and infrastructure that builds capacity for local purchasing.

Strategy 1A.3

**Stimulate investment in regional food aggregation, infrastructure, and distribution.**

Leads: RTC, LSP, MDA, IATP | Supports: MDH, MISA

Actions

- 1 **Document needs** – Document and share needs, best practices, and success stories for strengthening Minnesota’s regional food supply chains for schools and early care settings. Address specific needs for season and product extension, aggregation, processing, and distribution.
- 2 **Develop strategy** – Identify funding priorities for strengthening regional supply chains to advance Farm to Kids.
- 3 **Integrate and align Farm to Kids** – Strengthen collaboration with regional partners to support and contribute to ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening regional supply chains. Ensure that Farm to Kids learnings and needs are incorporated into regional- and state-level strategies and projects.
- 4 **Secure Funding** – Pursue diverse funding, in collaboration with partners, to build regional supply chain capacity.



**Priority 1: Increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods by schools and early care settings.**

**GOAL B**

Support the development of relationships among schools, early care settings, producers, and local partners.

Strategy 1B.1

**Enhance utility of Minnesota Grown Wholesale Directory to better support connections between producers and institutional buyers.**

Lead: MDA | Support: RTC

Actions

- 1 **Promote** – Increase outreach and education about Minnesota Grown Wholesale Directory to maximize utility of the directory.
- 2 **Make enhancements** – Identify and pursue priority enhancements to the online platform that support buyers and producers. Secure necessary funding for enhancements.

Strategy 1B.2

**Coordinate virtual and in-person events to support connections between local producers, schools, and early care providers. (HIGH PRIORITY)**

Lead: MDA, MDE | Supports: RTC, IATP, LSP, MDH, MISA

Actions

- 1 **Buyer-seller meetings** – Host virtual spaces specifically for buyers and suppliers (such as distributors/aggregators and producers) to meet and discuss local product availability and needs.
- 2 **Regional networking** – Hold regional networking events for producers, buyers, and local partners to make connections and explore partnerships.

## Priority 1: Increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods by schools and early care settings.

### GOAL C

Expand statewide programming that builds capacity and preparedness among producers, schools, and early care providers to engage in Farm to Kids.

#### Strategy 1C.1

### Develop trainings and systems of support for Minnesota producers to access and succeed in wholesale markets, including schools and early care settings.

Leads: RTC, MDA | Supports: LSP, Extension, MISA

#### Actions

- 1 **Producer trainings** – Identify and implement one to two signature programs/events for offering direct training to producers to increase their knowledge and preparedness for selling to schools and early care providers. Secure necessary funding.
- 2 **Train-the-trainer workshops** – Develop and secure funding for train-the-trainer workshops for food system partners (such as farmers’ market staff and aggregators) to expand their capacity for offering wholesale market technical assistance to farmers in their regions.
- 3 **Producer funding** – Secure funding to help producers purchase supplies and small equipment necessary to meet wholesale expectations and sell to institutional markets (e.g., coolers, irrigation, storage, wash/pack supplies).
- 4 **Translation** – Translate existing Farm to School and wholesale market resources for producers into commonly spoken languages among emerging farmers in Minnesota.

Priority 1: Increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods by schools and early care settings.

**GOAL C**

Expand statewide programming that builds capacity and preparedness among producers, schools, and early care providers to engage in Farm to Kids.

Strategy 1C.2

**Expand professional development opportunities for school food service professionals, early care professionals, and educators to build knowledge and skills for purchasing and serving local foods.**

Lead: MDE | Support: MDA

Actions

- 1 **Improve communication** – Integrate Farm to Kids information and resources into existing state communications and trainings for child nutrition operators. Provide clear guidance on how to purchase local foods in adherence with federal and state regulations.
- 2 **Increase culinary training** – Increase access to culinary training focused on scratch-cooking, local foods, and culturally relevant foods. Promote existing training resources (such as Team Nutrition videos), and partner with child nutrition associations and groups to offer in-person training opportunities.
- 3 **Formalize professional development** – Formalize structure for providing annual trainings and webinars about local procurement topics (including food safety) for food service professionals. Provide trainings geared towards specific audiences, including school food service professionals, early care providers, and CTE educators.
- 4 **Expand Farm to School Institute** – Establish long-term plan to grow and fund the Minnesota Farm to School Institute as an annual professional development opportunity for school districts to grow their local purchasing, community partnerships, and education. Expand Institute to include early care providers.



## Priority 2: Improve integration of food and agricultural education in classrooms, cafeterias, and other educational environments.

### GOAL A

Increase support for educational food production (gardens, greenhouses, hydroponics, etc.) in schools and early care settings.

#### Strategy 2A.1

**Create a central location for Minnesota educators and partners to access current information and resources for educational food production.**

Lead: MDA

##### Actions

- 1 **Organize resources** – Organize existing resources from various partners and websites. Identify needs for future resource development.
- 2 **Create resource hub** – Identify and/or build an online resource repository to host all materials (documents, resources, and educational materials) in an organized manner.
- 3 **Develop sustainability plan** – Develop a sustainability plan for the resource hub to ensure that current information and resources are maintained.

#### Strategy 2A.2

**Create and support a community for educational practitioners that cultivates peer-to-peer learning, collaboration, and growth for educational food production. (HIGH PRIORITY)**

Lead: MDA | Support: MDE, IATP, RTC

##### Actions

- 1 **Statewide directory** – Create statewide directory of individuals/ organizations that can provide technical assistance and support to schools and early care providers regarding educational food production and activities.
- 2 **Networking events** – Organize regular networking events for gardens and educational food production in K-12 and early care settings to foster peer-to-peer learning and community partnerships.
- 3 **Advisory board** – Explore the value of an educational food production advisory board, and possible integration or connection to CTE advisory committee.

## Priority 2: Improve integration of food and agricultural education in classrooms, cafeterias, and other educational environments.

### GOAL B

Enhance integration of Farm to Kids into Career and Technical Education (CTE) program frameworks.

#### Strategy 2B.1

### Create connections and build awareness to embed Farm to Kids concepts within CTE in Minnesota.

Lead: MDE | Supports: CTE Partner Organizations

#### Actions

- 1 **Integrate with CTE frameworks** – Integrate Farm to Kids concepts within Minnesota CTE frameworks.
- 2 **Collaborate** – Create opportunities to collaborate with CTE educators, Farm to School coordinators, food service staff, early care providers, and agricultural experts to guide CTE program design.
- 3 **Promote existing resources** – Highlight the benefits of incorporating lessons such as Minnesota Harvest of the Month into classrooms and connecting these activities to cafeteria programs and leadership development opportunities.

#### Strategy 2B.2

### Provide professional development opportunities for CTE educators on Farm to Kids integration.

Lead: MDE

#### Actions

- 1 **Identify needs** – Conduct a needs assessment to identify the specific training needs of CTE educators related to Farm to Kids integration.
- 2 **Develop trainings** – In collaboration with partners, develop ongoing training opportunities (such as workshops, online webinars, or hands-on trainings) to address identified needs.

## Priority 2: Improve integration of food and agricultural education in classrooms, cafeterias, and other educational environments.

### GOAL C

Expand standards-based educational resources, training, and support for food and agricultural education for early care through 12th grade.

#### Strategy 2C.1

### Expand Minnesota Harvest of the Month resources to engage more schools and early care settings. (HIGH PRIORITY)

Lead: MDA, Extension | Support: MDE, MDH, IATP, RTC

#### Actions

- 1 **Develop culturally relevant materials** – Create educational and promotional materials for K-12 schools that are culturally relevant and inclusive, including materials translated in multiple languages.
- 2 **Adapt for early care** – Pilot and adapt K-12 resources for early care settings, using input from a variety of early care providers (home and center providers, preschools, Head Start, etc.).
- 3 **Identify funding** – Develop long-term funding strategies for Minnesota Harvest of the Month program.

#### Strategy 2C.2

### Integrate Farm to Early Care learning objectives and best practices into existing state resources and systems for early care providers.

Lead: MDH | Support: MDE, RTC

#### Actions

- 1 **Increase access to curricula** – Research Farm to Early Care curricula already available to early care providers via Develop, the state of Minnesota’s resource platform for early care professionals. Submit additional curricula, as needed, for approval to Develop.
- 2 **Promote and train** – Collaborate with early care partners to expand promotion and training of available, accredited Farm to Early Care curricula.
- 3 **Integrate Farm to Early Care into state rating system** – Explore opportunities to align Minnesota’s QRIS rating system with Farm to Early Care and public health objectives by broadening definition of health to include healthy eating.

## Priority 3: Build and activate a strong Farm to Kids network.

### GOAL A

Establish the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance to foster shared, collaborative leadership among Farm to School and Early Care partners.

#### Strategy 3A.1

### Formalize and implement Farm to Kids Alliance structure that unifies work of state’s existing Farm to School Leadership Team and Farm to Early Care Advisory Group. (HIGH PRIORITY)

Lead: MDA, MDE | Support: IATP, MDH

#### Actions

- 1 **Membership agreement** – Develop membership agreement that articulates the relationship with existing Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team and Minnesota Farm to Early Care Advisory Group and focuses on values, commitment to personal and collective responsibility, and information sharing.
- 2 **Meeting design** – Agree on standard meeting scheduling and content.
- 3 **Leadership structure** – Determine expectations for Alliance leadership and confirm leaders.
- 4 **New membership** – Engage new partners to build diverse network participation.
- 5 **Funding** – Secure funding to support Alliance administration and activities.

#### Strategy 3A.2

### Establish plans for implementing the Farm to Kids Strategic Plan.

Lead: MDA | Support: MDE, MDH

#### Actions

- 1 **Create implementation plan** – Create an implementation plan and timeline for Alliance members to execute the strategic plan.
- 2 **Form committees** – Determine and assemble necessary work groups/ committees for implementing components of the plan.
- 3 **Track progress** – Monitor and communicate progress with Farm to Kids partners and stakeholders.



## Priority 3: Build and activate a strong Farm to Kids network.

### GOAL B

Evaluate Farm to Kids efforts to inform future work and measure impact.

#### Strategy 3B.1

#### Advance evaluation for Farm to Kids programs and initiatives in Minnesota.

Lead: IATP | Support: MDA, MDE

#### Actions

- 1 **Statewide survey** – Develop plan for recurring statewide Farm to School and Farm to Early Care survey(s) to supplement USDA Farm to School Census data. Secure funding to administer the survey(s) and analyze data.
- 2 **Integration** – Identify existing evaluation mechanisms, such as Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) site visits, that can advance Farm to Kids data collection and evaluation.
- 3 **Grant program** – Develop and implement an evaluation plan for Minnesota’s Farm to School and Early Care grant programs as they grow. Identify processes to streamline data collection, organization, and evaluation.
- 4 **Prioritize additional evaluation** – Identify other evaluation priorities (including qualitative and quantitative data) and Alliance members who are positioned to lead them.

## Priority 3: Build and activate a strong Farm to Kids network.

### GOAL C

Increase reach and awareness of Farm to Kids through coordinated outreach and communication.

#### Strategy 3C.1

### Develop platforms and processes for consistent, coordinated Farm to Kids communications. (HIGH PRIORITY)

Leads: MDA, MDE | Supports: MDH, IATP

#### Actions

- 1 **Central website** – Create or identify a shared Farm to Kids website to serve as a central hub for Farm to School and Early Care information and resources. Collaborate with partners to update/align existing websites.
- 2 **Communications** – Formalize Farm to Kids communication plan for website, newsletter, and shared branding.
- 3 **Annual report** – Publish annual Farm to Kids report for Minnesota to share Farm to Kids progress and successes with decision makers, stakeholders, and general public.

#### Strategy 3C.2

### Develop ways to nurture, elevate, and celebrate participation in Farm to Kids activities.

Lead: MDE, MDA | Supports: LSP, IATP

#### Actions

- 1 **Statewide conference** – Organize Minnesota’s first Farm to Kids Conference.
- 2 **Recognition program** – Expand and formalize Minnesota Grown’s Farm to School and Early Care recognition program.
- 3 **Farm to School & Early Care Month** – Elevate promotion and formalize coordination for Farm to School & Early Care Month (October each year).
- 4 **Success stories** – Document and share Farm to Kids success stories through a variety of communication channels.