

# FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN THE USDA SOUTHEAST REGION

**A LOOK INTO EXAMPLES OF BEST  
PRACTICES IN THE REGION**



**ARKANSAS**  
**FarmtoSchool**

# CONTENTS

---

Table of Contents.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Farm to School and ECE Questionnaire.....	5
Farm to School and ECE Best Practices.....	12
<b>Collaborative Networks.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Alabama Farm to ECE Coalition.....	16
Georgia Farm to ECE Coalition.....	18
Farm to School Coalition of NC.....	20
North Carolina Farm to Preschool Network.....	22
<b>Nonprofit Involvement .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project.....	26
Florida Agriculture in the Classroom.....	28
Georgia Organics.....	29
Jones Valley Teaching Farm.....	31
Our Daily Bread CACFP/Taking Root.....	33
<b>School District Programs.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Alachua County Public Schools.....	37
Florence One School District; Briggs K-6.....	39
Murfreesboro City Schools.....	41
Tupelo Public School District.....	43
<b>Special Programs.....</b>	<b>44</b>
Alabama Farm to ECE Procurement.....	46
Golden Radish Awards.....	47
Kentucky Junior Chef Competition.....	49
South Carolina Palmetto Pick of the Month.....	50
Conclusion.....	51
<b>Federal Funding Appendix.....</b>	<b>52</b>
State-by-state USDA F2S Grant Breakdown.....	54

*Researched, designed, written, and prepared by AmeriCorps VISTA member Mark Nelson at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture. Special thanks to Sarah Lane, Hanna Davis, Amy Lyman, and Cynthia Edwards at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture for their edits and suggestions.*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

This document would not be possible without the gracious assistance of Shannon Jones and Joy Nolan from United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS) and the contributions of numerous stakeholders throughout the USDA's Southeast Region. I would like to extend my full gratitude toward everyone who set aside time to fill out the questionnaire and granted me time over the phone (or virtually) to discuss more in-depth about farm to school and early childhood education (ECE) work in their respective states.

It is my hope that this document provides a glimpse into the tremendous farm to school and ECE work that people and organizations are doing around the region. Due to the volume and diversity of farm to school and ECE projects and activities, this type of research could span a full calendar year or more on its own, so it should be acknowledged that much of the work has been missed during the collection of research. This document is looking to highlight some of the larger-scale projects happening in states around the Southeast. Any missing information or unrecognized work is an unintentional oversight and does not constitute an intentional omission.

The information presented here was gathered over the course of two months to assist the Arkansas Department of Agriculture Farm to School and Early Childhood Education team with collecting beneficial insights and best practices from the structure and operation of different programs throughout the Southeast, as well as to help facilitate the development of ideas that have potential to be adapted for implementation in Arkansas or elsewhere.

# INTRODUCTION

---

The concept of Farm to School and Early Childhood Education (ECE) is not a new phenomenon, but one that has been growing in strength for the better part of the last two decades.

Dating to the mid-1990s and coinciding with the start of USDA Team Nutrition grants, programs focused on providing training, education, and resource development around healthy school meals began to develop in school districts across the country. Early financial backing and support for farm to school activities emerged from public health initiatives, state, and federal government legislation and research tying proper health and nutrition to positive educational outcomes for students. The early 2000s saw interest in farm to school work take off with the number of states reporting programs more than doubling from 2000 to 2006.

The creation of the National Farm to School Network (NFSN) in 2007 provided a collaborative setting that focused on developing a robust group of partnerships across sectors. NFSN worked with partners in public health, education, and agriculture, to build awareness about farm to school and increase activities at the state and regional levels through training, capacity building, and policy advocacy. In the decade following NFSN's start, all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. territories report farm to school activities.

One of the most beneficial aspects of farm to school and ECE work is the grassroots nature of program design, implementation, and partnership building. Farm to school activities are malleable and adaptable to fit different scales, education models, and circumstances. Innovative work from one school district can be replicated directly into a neighboring district, or the idea can be adapted to fit in a way that works in a different state altogether. A particular strength of farm to school work lies in diverse approaches toward the overarching goals of helping improve the overall health and wellbeing of children.

The information contained in this document is meant to help shed some light on the variety of ongoing farm to school and ECE work happening in the USDA Southeast Region, comprised of the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Similar to farm to school and ECE work across the nation, initiatives and activities in the Southeast have been growing for decades in unique ways. The coronavirus pandemic also caused many disruptions and led to programs adjusting their models to fit the circumstances. Many pandemic adaptations are not featured in this document, however it should be noted that the importance of farm to school and ECE adaptations such as pandemic food distribution through school food authorities (SFAs), home garden grants, pandemic EBT and SNAP with local nonprofit partners and others, tried to cover gaps in our food systems as the disparities, inequities, and fragility of our food system came to the fore during the pandemic.

FARM TO SCHOOL  
AND ECE  
QUESTIONNAIRE



# METHODOLOGY

---

In 13 questions, the Farm to School and ECE questionnaire touched on a variety of topics such as collaborative work in state agencies, grant funding, the three pillars of farm to school (local procurement, education, and school gardens), gauging local interest and promotion of farm to school activities, and barriers and successes in the respective state.

Some questionnaire respondents received a follow-up email for more information regarding specific answers and others were asked to set up a phone call or virtual meeting in order to delve more in-depth on certain topics. The questionnaire responses dictated the direction of the follow ups; there was not a predetermined line of inquiry. Follow-up interviews were unstructured to allow for free-flowing conversation regarding the specific farm to school work detailed in the questionnaire response. In many instances, interviewees provided materials and documents to help exemplify and showcase the farm to school and ECE work, and lengthy notes for each conversation were taken to support what was being described and explained.

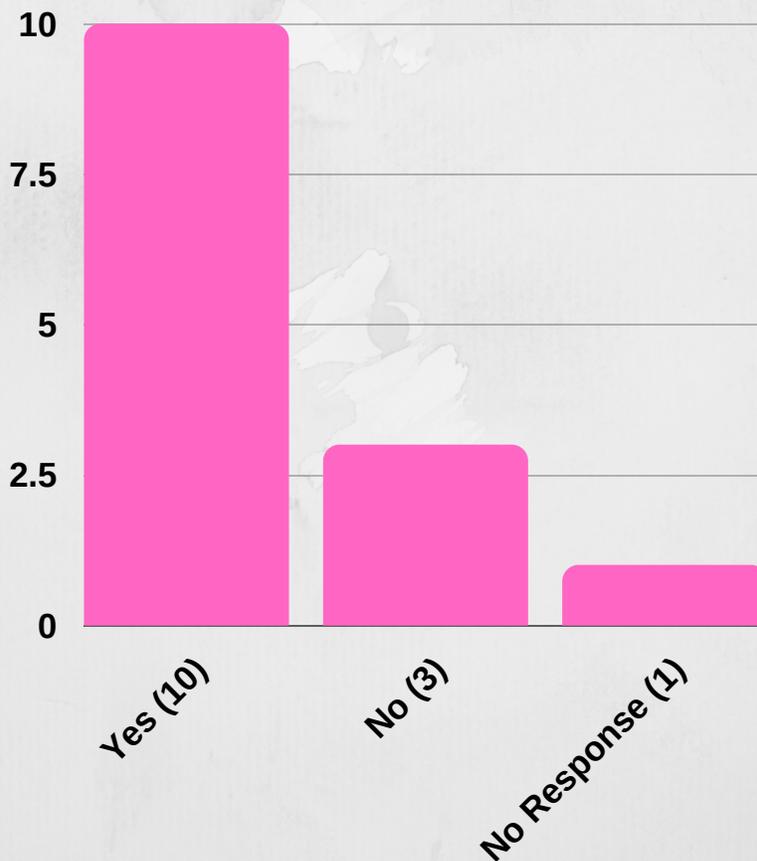
In addition, research was conducted online into the various aspects of farm to school and ECE programs. Information was gleaned from websites, program resources, grant summaries, newsletters, and social media accounts, among others.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

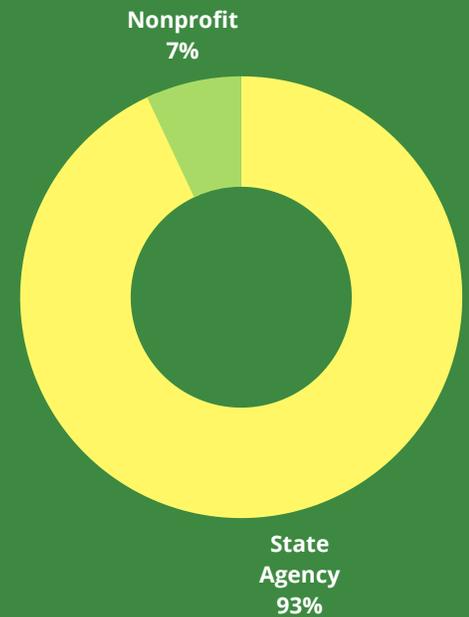
The Farm to School and ECE questionnaire was distributed to an email listserv of USDA Southeast Region stakeholders on Aug. 20, 2020, and the period of research closed on Oct. 30, 2020. Emailed as both a Google Form and a Microsoft Word document, the questionnaire elicited 14 responses (13 from state agency stakeholders and one from a nonprofit partner).

The following is a summary of information acquired from the questionnaire responses.

**Question:** Has your agency/department received grant funding to support farm to school programs?



**NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS**



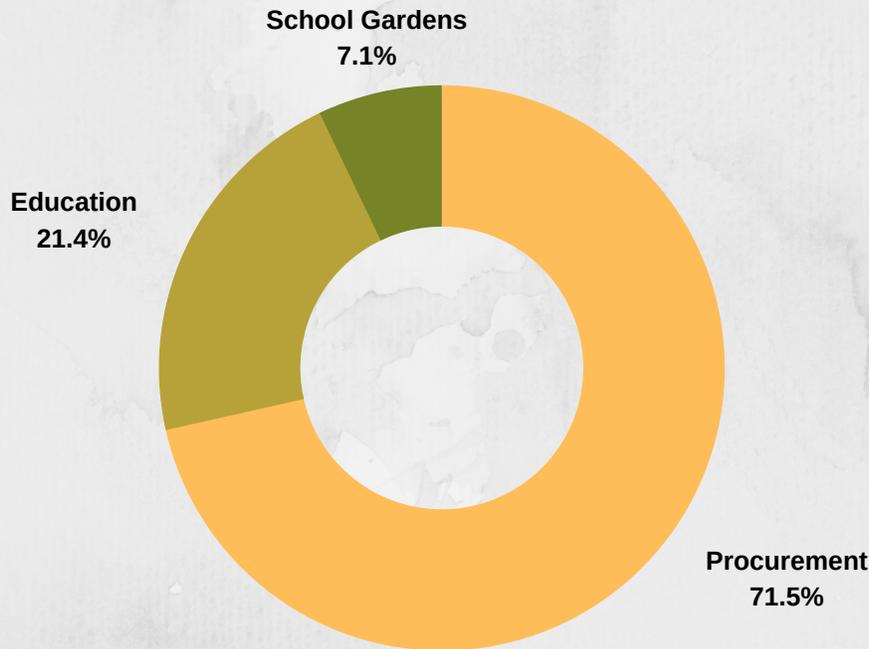
**ALL EIGHT STATES IN THE REGION ARE REPRESENTED**

# QUESTIONNAIRE

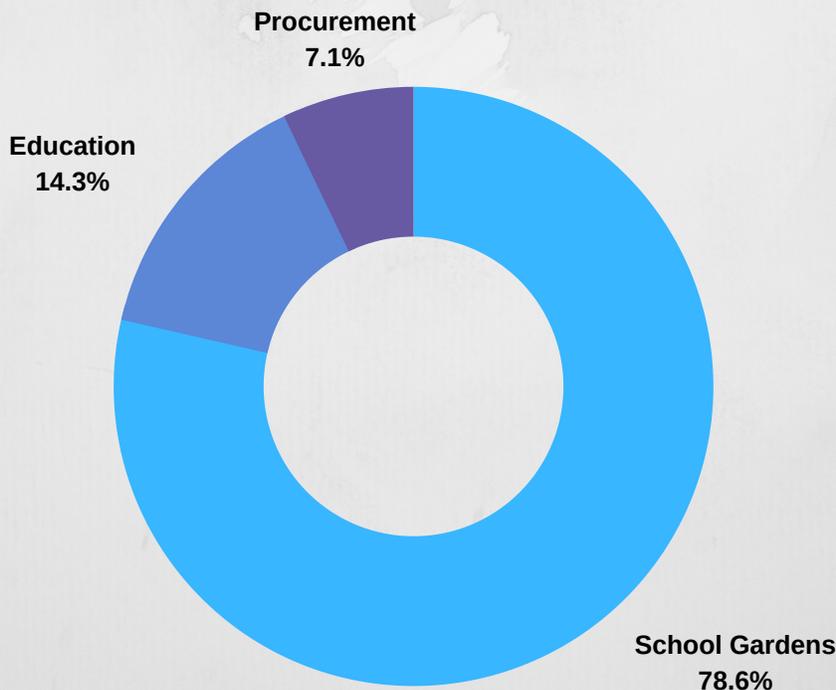
**Question:** Please rank the “three pillars” of farm to school (school gardens, education, or local procurement) from the strongest to weakest component of your agency/department’s farm to school programming.



## "Strongest"



## "Weakest"



Education most frequently fell into the middle with 57 percent (8 of 14 responses) labeling it as neither strongest, nor weakest. Local procurement came in the middle 28.5 percent of the time, while school gardens were in the middle 14.3 percent.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

**Question:** How would you characterize the interest in farm to school programs in your state?



The responses for this question were put into a word cloud generator with the more frequently listed words growing larger in the cloud. Note the four most commonly used responses included “significant,” “growing,” “high,” and “strong” when referring to the interest in farm to school activities in the respective states.

**Question:** How would you characterize the culture (e.g., top-down, grassroots, collaborative, innovative, siloed) surrounding farm to school programs in your state?



Like the preceding question, the responses to this question were put into a word cloud generator with the more frequently listed words growing larger in the cloud. “Grassroots,” “Collaborative,” and “Innovative” were most frequently used in responses.

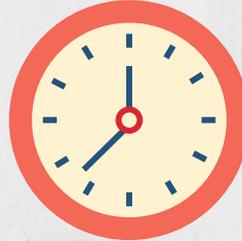
# QUESTIONNAIRE

**Question:** What are the main barriers in creating sustainable farm to school programs in your state?

## TIME

“Time to implement activities on top of other responsibilities.”

“Many partners are only allowed a percentage of their duties/time to be spent on farm to school programs thus making it difficult to provide the attention and support a growing program needs.”



## PEOPLE

“Staff capacity is a significant barrier.”

“One primary barrier is inadequate staffing for farm to school.”

“Turnover at schools with administrators and farm to school champions.”



## FUNDING

“Money is always a barrier, which we are trying to combat with the additional legislative funding.”

“Funding for staff time.”

“The main barriers are receiving additional funding, and product seasonality issues.”

“Competition for funding.”

“Funding for gardens and upkeep.”



To protect anonymity in answers: names, states, and organizations have been removed from the following quotes in response to questions about barriers toward creating sustainable farm to school and ECE programs. These responses are only from the questionnaire, not from any of the follow-up emails or interviews.



Another barrier is:  
"generating  
interest in  
curriculum  
programs."



# QUESTIONNAIRE

## LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

“Procurement of local foods for ECEs due to smaller scales.”



“Disconnect between the agricultural world and school nutrition world.”

“Transport to small counties and food deserts.”

“Delivery and processing infrastructure.”

“Not enough medium-sized farms for production capacity.”

“Amount of local products available, lack of processing facilities available, and distribution are some of the other barriers.”

“

Another barrier is:  
**"Pressure from other organizations that work against us."**

”

## OTHER RESEARCH

[2015 USDA Farm to School Census](#)

[2018 National Farm to School Network Farm to Early Care and Education \(ECE\) Survey](#)

EXAMPLES OF  
FARM TO SCHOOL  
AND ECE  
BEST PRACTICES



# BEST PRACTICES

The following section details some of the farm to school and ECE best practices that stood out during two months of research into the USDA Southeast Region. This list is not exhaustive, nor does it reflect the vast range and diversity of farm to school and ECE activities being conducted. However, it is meant to highlight some of the strongest aspects that came to the fore from the questionnaire, interviews, and online research.

The best practices have been separated into four broad sections:

- Collaborative Networks
- Nonprofit Involvement
- School District Programs
- Special Programs

Among the highlighted work, there will be some crossover between sections. For example, the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Program (ASAP), is highlighted in both the Collaborative Networks and Nonprofit Involvement section because of its expansive farm to school and ECE work in North Carolina.

Each of the four sections will feature a brief introductory explanation about its larger importance to farm to school and ECE work.



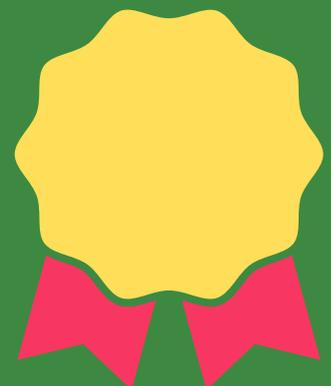
Collaborative Networks



Nonprofit Involvement



School District Programs



Special Programs



# COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS

# COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS

---

The concept of collaboration is ingrained in the structure of how we often describe farm to school and ECE work. Collaborative networks and partnerships appear in many different forms which emerge from aligning the shared values and goals of farm to school and ECE activities. Some are more large-scale like a collaborative network of 20-plus stakeholders spanning state agencies, nonprofits, local business and other partners, or something as small as a direct partnership between a school district and a local farm.

The importance of collaborative networks toward the sustained presence and growth of farm to school and ECE work is demonstrable as partnerships and collaboration lead to an expanded capacity and reach, engagement from different public sectors, and a greater probability of diverse funding streams. Collaborative networks also provide the opportunity for different partners to take the lead on different aspects of farm to school and ECE work - facilitating projects and work toward a shared goal with a balanced distribution of responsibility.

Featured in this section are:

- Alabama Farm to ECE Coalition
- Georgia Farm to ECE Coalition
- Farm to School Coalition of NC
- North Carolina Farm to Preschool Network



# ALABAMA FARM TO ECE COALITION

The Alabama Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition (ECE) took its roots from earlier collaborative work done by the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC). APC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that was created in 2000 to develop, design, and implement a unified approach for improving outcomes of children from birth to 5 years old in Alabama. This public-private partnership is an initiative to develop and strengthen systems and strategies, and increase awareness for all early childhood programs. The APC has a 28-member board of directors, including 18 members selected by the Governor of Alabama, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the APC Executive Committee. The other 10 board seats are occupied “ex officio” by heads of many state agencies in Alabama.

As part of an early childhood obesity project from 2015-18, APC served as an implementation partner for the National Early Care and Education Learning Collaboratives (ECELC) program managed by Nemours and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As a project lead, APC identified areas with high rates of obesity, and with several partners, trained more than 100 ECE providers, center- and home-based programs, on how to implement strategies to create environments that foster healthy growth and development.

In addition to the ECELC program, APC was selected in 2015 for a two-year Healthy Child Care, Healthy Communities (HCCHC) Project, a technical assistance program led by Child Care Aware of America (CCAoA) to focus on health, nutrition, and obesity prevention in Alabama ECE settings.



“We participated in two different technical assistance (TA) programs through Child Care Aware. We started to find that partners were interested in farm to ECE ... I don’t know if we would be where we are right now without those opportunities,” a coalition member said.

# ALABAMA FARM TO ECE COALITION

As part of this program, APC focused on engaging an advisory team with partners to work on health-focused activities in ECE, including convening a farm to ECE coalition to provide technical assistance and support to ECE providers interested in farm to ECE activities.

After its initial development, the coalition was awarded an additional technical assistance opportunity through the HCCHC Project to continue Alabama's farm to ECE work. As part of the expanded project in 2018, new partners like the [Food Bank of North Alabama/Farm Food Collaborative](#), [REV Birmingham](#) (an economic development nonprofit), the [Alabama State Department of Agriculture and Industries](#), and the [Jefferson County Department of Health](#) joined to be part of the coalition. The coalition was able to conduct further needs assessments and focus groups with both ECE providers and local farmers to better determine the types of assistance partners would be able to provide to help grow farm to ECE efforts.

## PRO TIP

According to one member, the coalition conducted monthly meetings for several years to develop trust and understanding of each other's work.

"We've been on our journey for about the last three years and it's been really interesting trying to figure out the partners and making sure they have voices and are heard," a coalition member said. "...We still have a lot of work to do and we are being meaningful about the conversations we have and the relationships we're building."



## Alabama Farm to ECE Coalition

Strategic Plan 2019-2021

Made in partnership with 

[Read the Alabama Farm to ECE Coalition Strategic Plan 2019-2021.](#)

## RESOURCES

[Alabama Farm to Early Care and Education Strategic Plan 2019-2021](#)

[Nemours Alabama Case Study](#)

# GEORGIA FARM TO ECE COALITION

A year following the inaugural Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Summit and state Farm to ECE survey in 2014, members of Georgia's nascent Farm to ECE Coalition summarized major goals for the statewide strategy and developed a strategic plan shaped by national and state programs and policies. By the end of 2016, the coalition - which consists of more than 20 partners spanning state agencies, nonprofits, ECE providers, universities, and private enterprise - published its initial strategic plan for the period spanning 2017-20.



Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education

One of the early leaders of the coalition - Georgia Shape - is a statewide, multi-agency and multi-dimensional childhood obesity initiative that grew out of a 2009 bill, the Student Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) Act. This legislation was the springboard that led to the Shape program at Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). Along with Georgia Shape, nonprofit Georgia Organics, and the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), are three entities that have helped lead different aspects of the coalition.

In 2017, Voices for Georgia's Children, along with Georgia Organics, Quality Care for Children, Inc., The Common Market, and Little Ones Learning Center received funding for two years from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to design and build a "Farm to Early Care and Education" program that could be replicated across the state.



"We are now developing the next strategic plan (2021-24). We will build off the first strategic plan. Some of it has a vague feel so we're getting more specific. It starts off with a steady progression," a coalition member said.



## RESOURCES

[Getting Started: Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Guide](#)

[Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Strategic Plan 2017-20](#)

[Local Food for Little Eaters in Georgia](#)

# GEORGIA FARM TO ECE COALITION

---

The funds allow several key stakeholders in the coalition to take the lead in supporting different aspects of farm to ECE efforts in the state. For example, in the coalition's logic model, Georgia Organics takes the lead role in partnership development and coalition coordination; The Common Market takes the lead on local procurement in the Atlanta area, as well as awareness building with local farmers, implementation of strategies to support farmers of color, and increased equity in local food access; and Voices for Georgia's Children is the lead in advocacy and education.

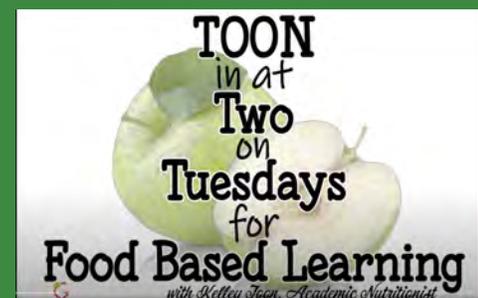
Georgia's coalition model and grant funding help stakeholders enhance the quality of ECE programs in target communities by supporting local and state systems and building partnerships to grow access to healthy local food. As part of the Kellogg grant, Quality Care for Children, Inc., expanded its "learning collaborative" model through a series of mini-grants available to ECE providers wanting to grow their garden-based curriculum. Fifteen providers from across the state were selected to receive grants up to \$2,500, and benefit from free resources and materials, training, and professional development.

Through two USDA grants, coalition member Georgia DECAL was able to distribute sub-grants to ECE providers and support the biannual statewide Farm to ECE/School summit that aimed to connect community partners, farmers, and vendors to institutions and sponsors participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The ongoing project has shifted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but still looks to provide accessible statewide training - most likely virtually - on the implementation of successful farm to ECE programs, curate dialogue on local procurement between Child Nutrition Program (CNP) purchasers, vendors, and farmers, create a database of Georgia's farm to ECE initiatives, tell success stories, and foster partnerships with farm to ECE stakeholders.

The [Georgia Department of Education](#), another member of the coalition, has developed virtual lessons to help at-home learners continue to increase their knowledge about Georgia-grown foods and nutrition education.



["Harvest with Holly"](#)  
[Georgia's Harvest of the Month videos](#)



["Toon in Tuesdays" Food-based learning for home or school](#)

# FARM TO SCHOOL COALITION OF NC

The state of North Carolina has a well-integrated farm to school procurement model that stemmed from the early collaboration of the [North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services \(NCDACS\) Food Distribution Office](#), NCDACS Marketing Division and the [US Department of Defense Produce Merchandising Office](#) to develop a system to get fresh, local food into public schools. After successful trials, the farm to school procurement program has been operated solely by NCDACS for the last 12 years with local North Carolina food distributor [Foster-Caviness](#) serving as the prime vendor in the state.

Despite the early success of local procurement projects, gaps remained. [The Farm to School Coalition of NC](#) began in 2011, with several planning meetings conducted in 2012. Through these initial meetings, the coalition identified areas of need to further the reach and impact of farm to school efforts around the state. Notably, there was a significant gap in communication between organizations involved in farm to school activities.

A USDA Farm to School grant in November 2013 helped the Farm to School Coalition of NC and provided resources for the coalition to increase its capacity to handle network development, strategic planning, and expansion of statewide programming around farm to school.



The coalition brings together a diverse group of farm to school stakeholders from across the state, including representation on the steering committee from the [North Carolina Department of Public Instruction](#), [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services](#), [NCDACS](#), [NC State CEFS](#), [ASAP](#), child nutrition directors, and farmers.



Read more about the Farm to School Coalition of NC's goals on the next page.

# FARM TO SCHOOL COALITION OF NC

A strategic plan was published in 2015 which included five overarching goals of the coalition:



In developing the strategic plan, the coalition noted that despite the extensive knowledge and successful implementation strategies for farm to school efforts in the state, there wasn't a network connecting individuals, schools, state agencies, and organizations to share work and collaborate on ideas.

Although there is crossover in membership among the Farm to School Coalition of NC and the North Carolina Farm to Preschool Network, the two entities are separate, with distinct goals. Yet, they can - and sometimes do - collaborate more broadly, according to members.

## RESOURCES

[Farm to School Coalition of NC](#)

[NC State Center for Environmental Farming Systems Farm to School](#)

[North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Farm to School Program](#)

# NORTH CAROLINA FARM TO PRESCHOOL NETWORK

The North Carolina Farm to Preschool Network was convened in May 2015 by the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program). Since its inception, the network has grown to involve members including:

- State agency public health consultants
- A county health department consultant
- Technical assistance providers from Shape NC
- Two nonprofits
- A farmer
- A child care owner
- A researcher
- A consultant from Go NAPSACC

The network developed a definition for farm to preschool work, which is: “Farm to preschool enhances the health and education of young children by developing systems and experiential learning that connects children and their families with local food and farms. Farm to preschool includes any type of childcare that incorporates local foods through: meals and snacks, taste tests, lessons, farmer visits, cooking, growing food, and/or community and parent involvement.”

Additionally, the network distributes a monthly newsletter to child care programs and stakeholders.



One of the first major collaborative projects by the Network was a document called Reach for the Stars with Farm to Preschool, which “aligns the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, revised edition (ECERS-R) and the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, revised edition (ITERS-R) with the four core Farm to Preschool activities.”

**NC FARM to  
PRESCHOOL  
NETWORK**

# NORTH CAROLINA FARM TO PRESCHOOL NETWORK

A further boon to the network is the [North Carolina State University Center for Environmental Farming Systems \(CEFS\)](#) that received a grant to implement farm to ECE activities throughout the state. The [CEFS NC Farm to Early Care and Education](#) project manager helped create a learning collaborative model where people learn from each other on how to grow farm to ECE. The grant funding allows the manager to focus full time on that project. Over the years, ASAP also has sought and received grant funding for the network several times. And yet, amidst the successes of the network, challenges still remain.

“One thing that’s tough is to keep up with what’s happening and ensure partners are communicating in a timely way so that other partners aren’t duplicating work,” a network member said. “In communities and in our network, there’s always more communication we can do to stay on the same page.”

“One of the things that we are always thinking about as a network is the sustainability of the network,” a member said. “The network is more fluid and ... the workgroups are functioning and helping move the work of the network forward, but we don’t [yet] have a strategic plan.”

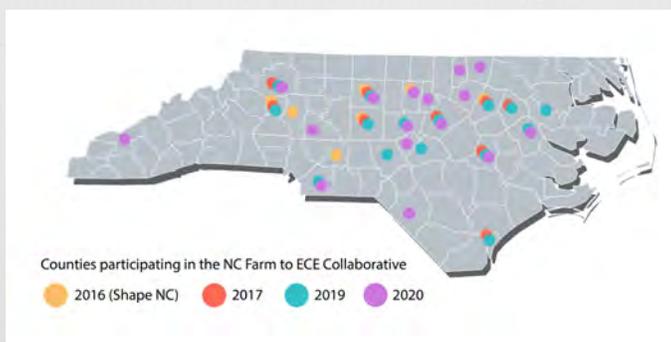


Image courtesy of [cefs.ncsu.edu](#)

“I think creating that [Reach for the Stars Farm to ECE document] early on really brought us some cohesiveness and we created a valuable resource together,” one network member said, adding that the network meets every other month and includes workgroups such as “resources, outreach, systems change, and steering that also meet every other month.”

## RESOURCES

[Reach for the Stars with Farm to Preschool](#)

[ASAP Farm to Preschool Toolkit](#)

[NC State CEFS Farm to Early Care and Education Initiative](#)

[NC State Extension Farm to Childcare](#)

[NC State CEFS Racial Equity Resources](#)

[North Carolina Farm to Preschool Network Facebook](#)

**N  
P**

**NONPROFIT  
INVOLVEMENT**

# NONPROFIT INVOLVEMENT

---

Nonprofits engaged in farm to school and ECE activities have shown a pronounced strengthening effect in areas they serve. A drawback to nonprofits is that they typically are not able to span a full state, so that leaves gaps in coverage when it comes to facilitating farm to school and ECE work. However, in the areas they are able to serve, nonprofit involvement lends additional capacity, diverse funding streams, and varied engagement across farm to school target areas.

Oftentimes farm to school and ECE is just one aspect of a certain nonprofit organization's portfolio of work, but that doesn't detract from the overall net positive benefit. Whether it is building school gardens, assisting with procurement of local foods, or targeting agriculture, garden-based, and nutrition-related curriculum, nonprofits have been shown to enhance farm to school and ECE work in many different areas.

Nonprofits can also act as a fiduciary agent in a collaborative network and help amplify and diversify farm to school and ECE work.

Featured in this section are:

- Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)
- Florida Agriculture in the Classroom
- Georgia Organics
- Jones Valley Teaching Farm
- Our Daily Bread CACFP / Taking Root Tennessee



# APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT (ASAP)

The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) is a nonprofit based in Asheville, North Carolina, serving the southern Appalachian region. The nonprofit's mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. Beginning in the mid-1990s as an effort to reverse farm loss in western North Carolina and to help farmers transition from tobacco production, ASAP incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in 2002 and became the Southeast Regional Lead Agency for the National Farm to School Network in 2007.

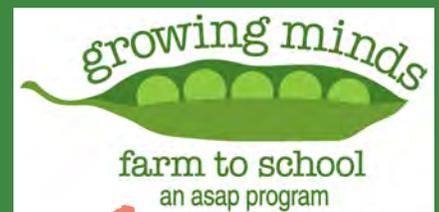
One of ASAP's main focal points is farm to school and ECE activities through its Growing Minds Farm to School Program. This project began in 2002 and provides training and resources to educators, health and wellness professionals, and others to create positive local food and farm experiences that promote health and education for children, farms, and communities.

Growing Minds, which is partially funded by The Biltmore Company and Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, seeks to provide support for farm to school and preschool activities in a number of different ways. For example, in its training sessions, Growing Minds works with teachers and child nutrition staff to understand how to use the school garden, cook in the classroom, incorporate and promote local food in the cafeteria, and use farm field trips and farmer visits as instructional tools.

Other support comes in the form of a lending library on site at ASAP's Asheville office, which is full of children's literature and curricula for preschools and elementary schools, and a selection of free seeds that grow well during the school year. Seeds are available for public and private schools in the region. Growing Minds also provides presentations, promotional materials and labeling for local foods, mini-grant funding for school gardens, and newsletters to stay up-to-date.



When ASAP printed its first Local Food Guide, the listings included 58 local farms, 32 farmers markets, 19 restaurants sourcing local ingredients, and 12 CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) programs. Today, the Local Food Guide has more than 1,200 listings.





ASAP Growing Minds also produces videos like "Meet Your Farmer" where kids can learn where locally grown food comes from.

In collaboration with Appalachian State University, Lenoir-Rhyne University, and Western Carolina University, Growing Minds has made local food and farm to school training part of the Dietetic Internship programs at those respective institutions.

"We train them and act as a preceptor and support them with resources," an ASAP representative said. "The core competencies that [the interns] have to address in their rotations are national and we took those and showed how you could check those requirements off by doing farm to school activities. We refer to those competencies because that's what they care about."

On the farm to ECE side, Growing Minds has worked toward integrating local food activities and farm to preschool methods into the training of future early childhood educators. The project began with a pilot, in partnership with Blue Ridge Community College, and is now expanding to community colleges throughout North Carolina.

## RESOURCES

[Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project \(ASAP\)](#)

[Growing Local Radio Series](#)

[ASAP Growing Minds](#)

[ASAP Growing Minds Farm to Preschool Toolkit](#)

[Reach for the Stars with Farm to Preschool \(2nd Edition\)](#)

[ASAP Farm to School Bookshelf \(Children's Literature\)](#)

[Growing Minds Day-by-Day educational activities](#)



"With the ECE program, we didn't make a new class, we just looked at their community college curriculum and we slotted farm to ECE into certain classes. It is easy to get into a rut as a teacher, you spend a lot of time and energy and want to continue using the same resources. People can get set in their ways. So, if we can go upstream a little bit and plant seeds [for farm to ECE], that's good."



# FLORIDA AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

Florida Agriculture in the Classroom, Inc. (FAITC) is a nonprofit organization that provides educational resources, grants, and other programs to help Pre-K through 12th grade educators incorporate agricultural concepts into their core subject area classes. FAITC is part of the National Agriculture in the Classroom network, which supports state programs by providing a network that seeks to improve agricultural literacy — awareness, knowledge, and appreciation — among Pre-K to 12th grade teachers and their students. The goal of FAITC is to expand youth awareness and understanding of Florida agriculture and natural resources by integrating agricultural concepts into core educational disciplines and supporting programs.

FAITC uses an innovative funding mechanism, gaining proceeds through a portion of the sales of specialty agriculture license plates, or “Ag Tags,” that help fund Florida’s Agriculture Literacy Day, teacher and volunteer grant awards, workshops, and sending teachers to the national Agriculture in the Classroom conference.

The organization also provides school garden grants of up to \$500 which are “meant to supplement FAITC’s *Gardening for Grades*, *Gardening for Nutrition*, and *STEMming Up Gardening*, three books that take Florida teachers through the process of developing a school garden. The books include lessons to help teachers use the garden to teach health, science, language arts, math, technology, engineering, and other subjects.”



## RESOURCES

[Florida Agriculture in the Classroom, Inc.](#)

[2019 FAITC Annual Report](#)

[National Agriculture in the Classroom Network](#)

# GEORGIA ORGANICS

Georgia Organics is Georgia's oldest statewide nonprofit providing direct support to small-scale and organic farmers since the 1970s. In 1997, Georgia Organics formally incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and hired its first full-time leader and CEO in 2004.

The nonprofit has nationally-recognized Farm to School and Farm to Early Care programs, and as the National Farm to School Network Core Partner in Georgia, works with many statewide public and private partners to expand the engagement of children with local, healthy food in their cafeterias and classrooms. Georgia Organics is also a critical partner in both the Georgia Farm to School Alliance and Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition, working with various stakeholders to host events, trainings, workshops, and summits to support farm to school and ECE activities and initiatives throughout the state.

With a 17-member team, including two full-time farm to school staff, Georgia Organics helps champion “organic agriculture and healthy families by prioritizing farmer prosperity, engaging children with good food in their cafeterias and classrooms, and convening local leaders to address their own food access issues by making organic and local food accessible to all.”

The nonprofit provides extensive resources for farmers, teachers, and consumers to help further growth in farm to school and ECE work, and opens avenues for dialogue among



[Explore some of Georgia Organics' school lessons.](#)

# GEORGIA ORGANICS

key stakeholders and decision makers by working with statewide agencies in food, farming, and nutrition areas.



You can find more information and news about Georgia Farm to School and ECE through Georgia Organics' newsletter, "[The Dirt.](#)"

## RESOURCES

[Georgia Organics](#)

[Georgia Organics Farm to School](#)

[Georgia Organics Farm to Early Care and Education](#)

[Georgia Farm to School Alliance 2017-2020 Strategic Plan](#)

[Georgia Farm to School Alliance Annual Report 2018-19](#)

[Georgia Farm to Early Childcare and Education Coalition Strategic Plan 2017-2020](#)

# JONES VALLEY TEACHING FARM

Founded in 2002, Jones Valley Teaching Farm (JVTF) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) located in Birmingham, Alabama. In 2012, JVTF established Good School Food (GSF), a food education model grounded in academic standards and implemented in partnership with Birmingham City Schools.



Through its GSF model, full-time JVTF instructors collaborate with teachers to help Pre-K through 12th grade students connect food, farming, and the culinary arts through standards-based, cross-curricular lessons. Since starting in 2012, GSF has expanded to seven partner schools, including five school sites in the greater Woodlawn community of Birmingham. The program reaches more than 3,500 children each year, with 25 percent of the organization's staff currently made up of graduates who have gone through the GSF program.

JVTF has been the recipient of previous USDA Farm to School grants to grow the GSF program and has been a grant collaborator with Birmingham City Schools.

One hallmark of the JVTF program is the Woodlawn High School teaching garden. The farm and greenhouse are managed by Woodlawn students as part of an innovative apprentice program. The centerpiece of the site is a 1,500-square-foot state-of-the-art greenhouse, which provides staff the space needed to produce more than 35,000 seedlings each year for all the partner school sites.

The Woodlawn site is similar in scale and production capability to the original JVTF Downtown Farm Campus and is operated with the support of the Woodlawn paid apprenticeship program.



## NUMBER OF TEACHING FARMS



- Downtown Farm and John Herbert Phillips Academy
- Glen Iris Elementary
- Henry J. Oliver Elementary
- Avondale Elementary
- W.E. Putnam Middle School
- C.W. Hayes K-8 School
- Woodlawn High School

# JONES VALLEY TEACHING FARM

Each afternoon, students in the apprenticeship program head to the farm and prepare to care for crops and tend to the space.

Previously, a grant from the [Nature Conservancy](#) and a partnership with [Petals from the Past](#) in Jemison, Alabama, allowed students an opportunity to study, plan, and execute the installation of an orchard that includes pear, apple, peach, Asian persimmon, and fig trees. The Woodlawn site also features processing and storage facilities, office space, restrooms, a tool and equipment barn, and a teaching pavilion that is suspended above a large pond.

In addition to being a teaching site, the Woodlawn High farm opened up a farm stand in 2019 as an access point for community members to purchase fresh produce. The area of east Birmingham, where the school is located, is impacted by food insecurity, so in addition to learning about agriculture and growing food, students are providing for their community.

JVTF has a robust network of funding partners and community partners that have contributed much to the growth and impact of the nonprofit over the years.

WATCH THE FILM



*Photo courtesy of [jvtf.org](#)*

[Watch a short film about the Woodlawn High School teaching garden.](#)

## RESOURCES

[Jones Valley Teaching Farm](#)

[JVTF 2019-20 Annual Report](#)

[University of Alabama Birmingham Good School Food Qualitative Report](#)

# OUR DAILY BREAD CACFP/TAKING ROOT

Our Daily Bread CACFP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit child nutrition advocacy organization that operates primarily in Tennessee, but also has expanded into Kentucky. The nonprofit, which is headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee, is contracted with the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS), Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), and funded by the USDA to administer the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Through child nutrition advocacy and education programs, taste tests and technical assistance to daycare homes and childcare centers, Our Daily Bread CACFP helps provide meals for over 12,000 children per day.

Our Daily Bread CACFP has a 25-year track record of child nutrition advocacy work and has expanded in the last five years to include a companion program called "Taking Root" which focuses on providing raised-bed gardens and garden-based education to child care facilities.



Since 2015, Our Daily Bread CACFP/Taking Root has constructed 61 raised beds for child care facilities - the vast majority of which are sites where 70 percent or more of the students qualify for free or reduced price meals.



Launched in 1995, its “primary goal is to inform the public about making healthy food choices and to educate adults and children about the importance of proper nutrition. This information is another step in fighting the epidemic of childhood obesity.”

[Watch how Taking Root brings gardening experiences to child care settings.](#)

# OUR DAILY BREAD CACFP/TAKING ROOT

---

Our Daily Bread CACFP/Taking Root developed a partnership with [Beardsley Community Farm](#), a local farm in Knoxville, for garden education and greenhouse space. Taking Root sponsored child care providers to attend some of Beardsley Farm's garden classes as part of the growing collaboration and the [University of Tennessee agriculture extension](#) agents assisted with on-site garden education for providers. Additionally, Home Depot provided materials and grant funds for building the raised beds. The program has grown in the last five years due to sustained interest and additional grant funding through various health foundations as well as in-kind donations. Originally focused on gardens in Knoxville and eastern Tennessee, the program has grown to have gardens in most parts of the state, including about 20 gardens in Memphis, on the far western edge of the state.

Many child care facilities are on a waiting list to receive raised beds through Taking Root, and an emerging challenge is continued upkeep and maintenance.

**“Some of the challenges are that everyone wants a garden, but not everybody wants to garden,” a representative said. “There’s maintenance involved. You have to have some buy in from the sites. It's not just a one-time thing for us when we go in.”**

## RESOURCES

[Our Daily Bread CACFP](#)

[Taking Root Tennessee](#)

[Beardsley Community Farm](#)



# SCHOOL DISTRICT PROGRAMS

# SCHOOL DISTRICT PROGRAMS

---

Farm to school and ECE work often begins at the grassroots level - in classrooms, schools, and school districts with dedicated champions or teams of educators. Sometimes school districts apply for, and receive, USDA Farm to School grant funding in addition to other grants in support of their farm to school and ECE efforts. This grant funding helps further the gains made by different schools and districts.

The number of schools and school districts implementing various farm to school and ECE activities is growing; following is a small snapshot of some of the work being accomplished in school districts throughout the Southeast.

Featured in this section are:

- Alachua County Public Schools (Florida)
- Florence One Schools; Briggs K-6 (South Carolina)
- Murfreesboro City Schools (Tennessee)
- Tupelo Public School District (Mississippi)



# ALACHUA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS) encompasses the city of Gainesville, Florida, and the surrounding area and serves approximately 27,000 students across 44 schools and centers.

ACPS has been participating in farm to school activities since 2014. A USDA Farm to School grant aided the start of a collaboration between the district's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) and the Exceptional Student Education departments to create a 'Farm to School to Work Hub' where students with disabilities learn about a healthy, local food system by participating in one.

The planning grant awarded in 2014 helped establish the program, while an implementation grant in 2016 helped it flourish and grow.

Components of the program included a school garden demonstration site, a state-of-the-art greenhouse, and a food hub. Students are afforded the chance to learn to grow food in-ground and hydroponically.



Top: Howard Bishop Middle School;  
Bottom: Wiles Elementary School (photos courtesy of [farm2schoolalachua.com](http://farm2schoolalachua.com))

# ALACHUA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

---

Produce grown at the hub, in additional school gardens, and by local farms is collected, sorted, and packed for use in taste tests and in the school lunch program.

Students throughout the district visit the hub to learn more about the food system and their role in it. Further support has been provided by the local nonprofit, Working Food, while nutrition education is provided through the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Family Nutrition Program.

More than two-thirds of the district's student population participate in farm to school activities, and the district hopes to expand production and create more opportunities for local farms to sell to the school system. Their goal is to increase access to the healthiest food the region has to offer.

In November 2020, Maria Eunice, ACPS Director of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Department, was awarded the Golden School Foodservice Director of the Year Award, the highest honor in the Food Service Achievement Management Excellence (FAME) Awards competition from the School Nutrition Association.

Eunice has led the district's FNS department since 2006. She spearheaded the implementation of several major initiatives, including the Your Choice Fresh program, which uses student input to provide healthy meal options and promote attractive food presentation, serving lines, dining areas, and a recycling initiative.



## RESOURCES

[Alachua County Public Schools Farm to School Program](#)

[ACPS Your Choice Fresh](#)

[Alachua County Public Schools Farm to School Hub](#)

[Growing for School Lunches Program](#)

# FLORENCE ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT: BRIGGS K-6



In 2015, Briggs Elementary was awarded a \$4,000 grant from the [South Carolina Department of Education \(SCDE\)](#) and the USDA to establish a farm to school program at the school. [Briggs is a K-6 school](#) serving residents in the heart of Florence, South Carolina, with an enrollment of 600 students.

Briggs teacher Jeff Murrie assumed the responsibilities of executing the grant and coordinating the farm to school program. Murrie, who used to teach social studies, but now focuses solely on farm to school, graduated from the [South Carolina Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom](#) program and earned [Good Agricultural Practices \(GAP\) certification](#) from [Clemson University extension](#) and the [Carolina Farm Stewardship Association](#) as part of his education and preparation to lead the school's program.



[Watch Briggs Farm to School program leader Jeff Murrie explain how farm to school serves students and families.](#)



# FLORENCE ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT: BRIGGS K-6

---

As the farm to school champion, Murrie has developed relationships with private businesses and nonprofits in the region to grow the program since the original grant. The school now has two gardens, a chicken coop, a goat pen with two Nigerian Dwarf goats, an observation beehive, a pollinator garden, a composting station, a fruit orchard, and a demonstration plot that was planted with indigo, a historic South Carolina crop which will be used to make dyes.

Under Murrie's stewardship, the Briggs farm to school team developed the following goals:

- Build the Farm to School program across Florence One Schools
- Increase local food offerings at each school
- Increase the healthfulness of meals
- Build a more sustainable food system
- Provide all students with opportunities for physical engagement and interaction with the environment

Briggs also has hosted an annual "Taste of Briggs" event that helps raise several thousand dollars for the school, while also providing a chance for local farms to feature their produce and exposing families to healthier eating options.

Through grants, local assistance, and partnerships over the last five years, the Briggs farm to school program has evolved into a model for other schools to follow. It serves as an example of what can be done with a dedicated farm to school champion and with buy-in from faculty, staff, and families in the community.

## RESOURCES

[Florence One Farm to School](#)

[The Farm at Briggs Elementary](#)

[Taste of Briggs](#)

# MURFREESBORO CITY SCHOOLS

Murfreesboro City Schools (MCS) initially developed a farm to school team in 2014 and was awarded a USDA Farm to School planning grant in 2015 and an implementation grant in 2019. MCS encompasses approximately 9,200 students across 13 schools in a city with an estimated population of 142,000 residents.

The MCS farm to school program's goals are:

- Integration of locally grown food into the school lunch program
- Education of students and staff about agriculture and food systems
- Building and expanding school gardens
- Conducting healthy food preparation classes and taste tests
- Developing plans to address food insecurity in the city

Over time, the MCS farm to school team has grown to include:

- Members of the school nutrition department
- Coordinated school health
- Farmer educators and master gardeners
- Teachers and volunteers to enrich the connections students have to healthy food, garden-based education and the local agriculture community

Three full-time gardeners help keep the school gardens up and running during the year, and the program is also supported by the following community partners: Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) Department of Agriculture, Farm Credit Mid-America, University of Tennessee-Tennessee State University Extension, and the Rutherford County Health Department.



MCS has several outdoor teaching gardens that are being used for curriculum integration and hands-on learning. MCS students participate in garden activities during the school day and during the summer through the district's extended schools program.

# MURFREESBORO CITY SCHOOLS

---

Over the last five years, several MCS schools have built greenhouses, which help produce vegetables for school cafeterias. There are plans for expanding greenhouses to more schools through the latest grant. Hydroponic growing systems are also in use for growing vegetables and providing students with a look at alternative methods of production.



Between January to October 2020, MCS farm to school team members harvested **more than 2,000 pounds** of produce from school gardens for use in meals and for distribution during the coronavirus pandemic.

## RESOURCES

[Murfreesboro City Schools Farm to School Program](#)

[MCS Facebook](#)

[MCS 2019 USDA Farm to School Grant Announcement](#)

# TUPELO PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT



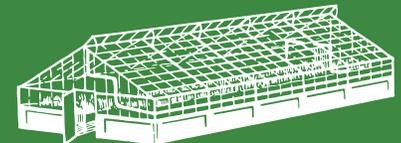
Tupelo Public School District, which serves approximately 7,000 students across 14 schools (Pre-K through 12th grade), formed a farm to school partnership in collaboration with FoodCorps, a nation-wide nonprofit and AmeriCorps grantee, in 2014 and has continued to foster growth in farm to school activities over the years through its “Growing Healthy Waves” initiative.

Through the program, Tupelo Public Schools and the “Growing Healthy Waves” program introduced salad bars (pre-COVID-19) at several schools and school gardens or greenhouses at a number of Pre-K and elementary schools.

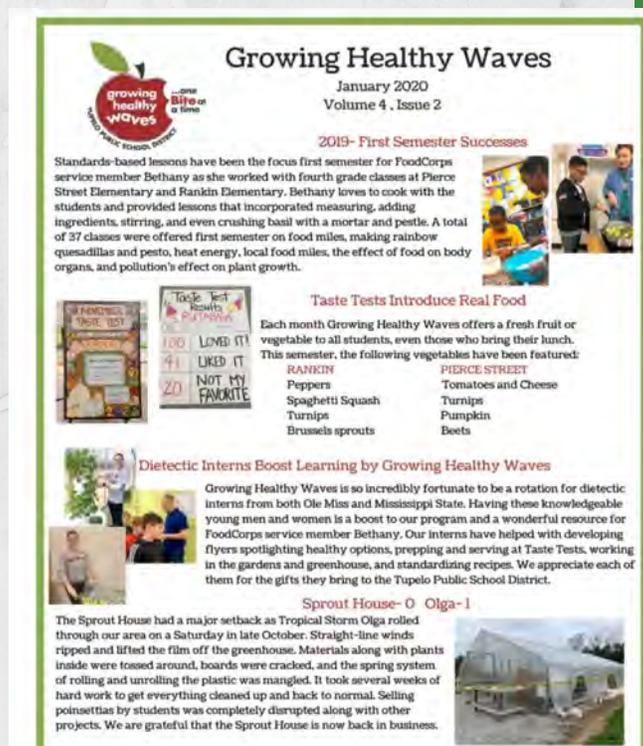
A further partnership with an area farm, Native Son Farm, helped supply fresh fruits and vegetables for schools on a near-monthly basis and introduced new foods to students by featuring a “Harvest of the Month” fruit or vegetable.

Occasionally, Tupelo Public Schools also purchased fresh produce from St. Bethany Fresh in Pontotoc and Topashaw Farms in Vardaman, Mississippi.

The Mississippi Farm to School Network has provided support and encouragement, while educational consultant and former teacher Donna Loden has led the “Growing Healthy Waves” initiative since its inception as the program coordinator. Loden has developed partnerships and found continued funding through various grants.



Lawndale Elementary, one of the district's schools, installed the district's first greenhouse on its campus in 2017 through community grants from Boerner Be Wild and Toyota.



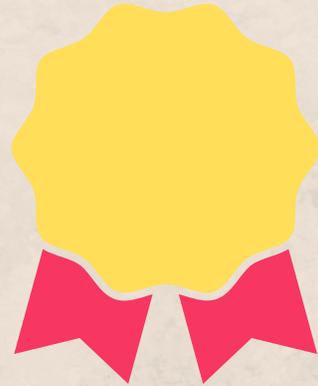
## RESOURCES

[Tupelo Public School District Initiatives](#)

[Growing Healthy Waves Facebook](#)

[Growing Healthy Waves Instagram](#)

[FoodCorps Mississippi](#)



SPECIAL  
PROGRAMS

# SPECIAL PROGRAMS

---

Special programs have been developed out of various partnerships to address a variety of areas of farm to school and ECE work, from local procurement to promotion and education. In many cases, versions of these programs have been developed throughout the region and the country, but it is important to continue to recognize the variety of approaches to farm to school and ECE initiatives in the region.

Featured in this section are:

- Alabama Farm to ECE Procurement
- Golden Radish Awards
- Kentucky Junior Chef Competition
- South Carolina Palmetto Pick of the Month



# ALABAMA FARM TO ECE PROCUREMENT

The Alabama Farm Food Collaborative (FFC), a food hub housed in the Food Bank of North Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama, has been working with farmers and distributors to provide locally grown food to restaurants, grocery stores, and schools since 2014. More recently, the FFC began a pilot program focused on local food procurement for ECE centers.

As part of its program, FFC has helped farmers work their way toward becoming Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified so they can sell produce in wholesale markets, grocery chains, and school sites in the region. Additionally, the FFC program works with ECE centers that participate in CACFP and helps educate providers about using local foods within the CACFP meal pattern. FFC also provides educational resources for providers to use when introducing new foods to familiarize children with the food by teaching them how crops are grown and harvested.

The concept for the farm to ECE procurement pilot began in 2017 when FFC connected with the Alabama Partnership for Children and started working as part of Alabama's Farm to ECE Coalition. The coalition assisted the planning by hosting focus groups and developing a needs assessment to determine the interest level of ECE providers. The ECE procurement pilot launched in Spring 2018 with weekly deliveries of strawberries to five ECE sites, and it expanded to include a larger variety of fruits and vegetables as the harvest season wore on.

"We've developed marketing materials for the farmers so the kids can get to know the farmers," the FFC representative said, adding that the pandemic has hindered their planned growth to more centers. "We usually try to work deliveries into existing routes. A driver goes and does a pickup or two and delivers to locations. Or we drop off to a location and the provider figures out the logistics of the rest. We communicate with the farmer, we tell ECEs what's available and facilitate orders. It's a lot of planning and sometimes you have to work on the fly."



"We now have nine centers that we work with and it's been great seeing the pictures of the little kids enjoying produce and fruit that they maybe haven't been able to try before."

## RESOURCES

[Farm Food Collaborative](#)

[Farm Food Collaborative Impact Report \(Fall 2018\)](#)

[Food Bank of North Alabama](#)

# GOLDEN RADISH AWARDS

One of the best drivers of farm to school and ECE work in Georgia is the annual Golden Radish Awards, presented by the Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Department of Agriculture, Georgia Department of Public Health, the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), and Georgia Organics. The Golden Radish Awards are given to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) in Georgia who are doing extraordinary work in farm to school and ECE. The winning LEAs are typically recognized every October during National Farm to School Month.

The awards program has a variety of levels to recognize schools and ECE providers that have been sustaining farm to school work or who are just starting out. According to the program information, LEAs are recognized at a number of award levels: Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Radishes are awarded to recognize LEAs with varying levels of farm to school programs, and Honorary Radishes are awarded to programs that are just getting started. An additional award, the Outstanding Award, is given to the district/LEA with the most outstanding farm to school program. For exemplary farm to ECE work, an ECE provider is honored with the Baby Golden Radish award.

Some of the criteria on which schools and districts are judged include taste tests with students, the garden curriculum included in the teaching standards, and the level of community and parental stakeholders taking an active role in student nutrition activities.

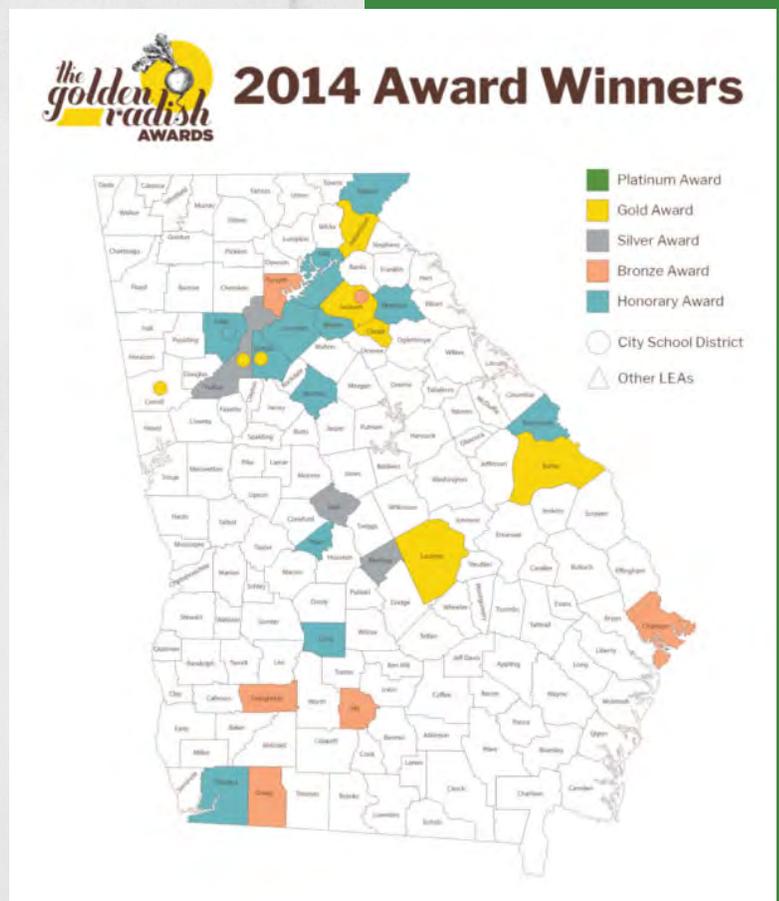


Image courtesy of [georgiaorganics.com](http://georgiaorganics.com)

# GOLDEN RADISH AWARDS

---

The Golden Radish Awards were created in 2015 by nonprofit Georgia Organics to raise awareness for Georgia's emerging farm to school programs and to share the best practices among awardees. Georgia Organics chairs the Golden Radish Committee and facilitates the awards process annually to recognize farm to school and ECE excellence across Georgia.

LEAs must submit an application detailing how their farm to school program satisfies the different criteria considered for the award levels. Applications are collected and judged by different stakeholders prior to awards being handed out during a special ceremony.

## RESOURCES

[Georgia Golden Radish Awards](#)

# KENTUCKY JUNIOR CHEF COMPETITION



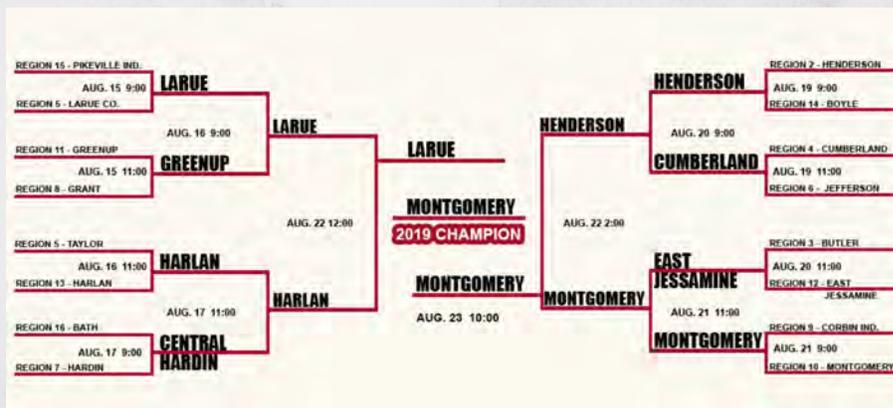
Kentucky Junior Chef is an annual, statewide high school cooking competition designed to offer students the chance to learn skills in recipe development, food preparation, marketing, public presentation, organization, teamwork, and community involvement. Founded in 2013, the program is sponsored by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and helps generate interest in local agriculture, creates additional market diversity for Kentucky producers, and increases the quality of products available to school cafeterias and the consumption of produce by students.

## RESOURCES

[Kentucky Junior Chef Competition](#)

[Kentucky Department of Agriculture Farm to School](#)

[Sullivan University News Release](#)



The Kentucky Department of Agriculture has partnered with Sullivan University's National Center for Hospitality Studies to offer scholarships to the top finishers of the annual competition. Other partners include the Kentucky Department of Education's Division of School and Community Nutrition, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension, Family and Consumer Sciences, and the USDA. The program has been a resounding success and has been replicated in states throughout the region, even spawning a regional Junior Chef competition in the Southeast in 2018.

In 2019, Apex High School from North Carolina, won the second annual regional competition at Sullivan University in Louisville, Ky. Harlan County High School, the Kentucky state champion, was the regional runner-up.

# SOUTH CAROLINA PALMETTO PICK OF THE MONTH

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture Palmetto Pick of the Month is a program that highlights a crop in season each month to help schools target fresh produce for use in school cafeterias or in taste tests to promote healthy, locally grown foods. Running for more than five years, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, along with partners like Certified SC Grown, the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, Clemson University Extension, and South Carolina Ag in the Classroom, developed resources that can be used when creating classroom taste tests or as a guide for food service buyers.

The pick of the month is coordinated with South Carolina's growing season and features a different fruit or vegetable each month with educational information, planting, harvesting, and nutritional information, reading materials, and snack ideas.

“When it was being developed, we went to wholesalers and food service staff to get their input on where to put what fruit or vegetable in which month,” a South Carolina Farm to School representative said. “We wanted to make sure there was going to be enough of something and that child nutrition directors could work with it. That was really helpful.”



## RESOURCES

[Palmetto Pick of the Month](#)

[South Carolina Farm to School](#)

[Certified SC Grown](#)

**PALMETTO PICK OF THE MONTH**

*Greens*

**JANUARY**

**GROWING GREENS**  
Sun Exposure: Full Sun  
Soil Type: Loamy  
Soil pH: Slightly Alkaline  
Plant greens, such as kale before the last frost by placing seeds an inch deep and 1 inch apart in loose soil. These plants like moist, cool soil with good sunlight. Begin harvesting around 2-3 months after planting. Simply cut the whole plant or in pieces as it grows.

**PREPARING**  
Always wash greens properly before cooking or eating them raw, but never wash with soap! If you have loose leaves, use a bowl or salad spinner filled with cold water. Toss the greens around in the water for at least 30 seconds. After your greens are washed, pat them dry to remove to the liquid.

**HEALTH BENEFITS**  
Greens are excellent sources of vitamins A, C, and K, along with other important nutrients such as calcium, iron, and fiber. They are also known to work as an anti-inflammatory, which help reduce the risk of cancer.

*Books*  
*I Love Greens* by Victoria Boutenko  
*The Tale of Kale* by Lisa Borden

**PALMETTO PICK OF THE MONTH SNACK**

Drizzle kale with olive oil and sea salt. Cook at 350 degrees for 10-15 minutes. Enjoy!

**CERTIFIED SC GROWN**

For more information about other fruits and vegetables available in South Carolina each month, please visit [CERTIFIEDSCGROWN.COM](http://CERTIFIEDSCGROWN.COM)

*Palmetto Pick*

SCFARMOSCHOOL.COM

# CONCLUSION

---

After reading this document, it should be evident that there is no "one size fits all" approach to implementing farm to school and ECE activities. However, there are a few points that stand out when looking through the examples in the Southeast.

The first main point is funding. Without access to diverse grant opportunities, the point remains clear that without dedicated funding farm to school and ECE work will struggle to make an impact. Not only does funding provide the necessary capital for building a school garden, it also can provide for a wide range of sustainable strategies such as a dedicated, full-time farm to school coordinator position within a school district.

The second standout point is the strength of teams. Farm to school and ECE work is not something that can be addressed in a silo. It takes a team. It can be a dedicated team of teachers, administrators, and staff at a school or early care facility or a collaborative network of state agency staff, nonprofit leaders, and commercial businesses. Time and again, the strongest programs have put together a team of diverse stakeholders that can weather turnover in personnel and other potential challenges. A team brings a diversity of skill sets and backgrounds that can tackle different priority areas within farm to school and ECE work.

Thirdly, farm to school and ECE work is adaptable. Not only is it able to be tailored to fit different state and local rules and regulations, it can also be adjusted to fit the priorities of particular schools or districts. Furthermore, it is adaptable to achieve the goals of various public health initiatives. By promoting physical activity and healthy eating through garden-based education, farm to school and ECE is illuminating concepts that fit more broadly with desires for better public health outcomes while also increasing knowledge of local agriculture and the natural environment.

There is a point of emphasis in farm to school and ECE work about it being a triple-win: a win for schools and students, a win for local farms, and a win for communities. After researching farm to school and ECE work throughout the Southeast, it is evident that there is a lot of truth in that sentiment. There are many challenges to surmount in the goal of achieving vibrant, sustainable farm to school and ECE programs that become ingrained in the culture of a school, yet the potential positive impacts outweigh any short-term difficulties. While farm to school and ECE work is not a new phenomenon, it is clearly one that has started growing in prominence in the last five years and the potential of sustained future growth and innovation is very strong.

Please direct any questions, comments, or corrections regarding this document to:



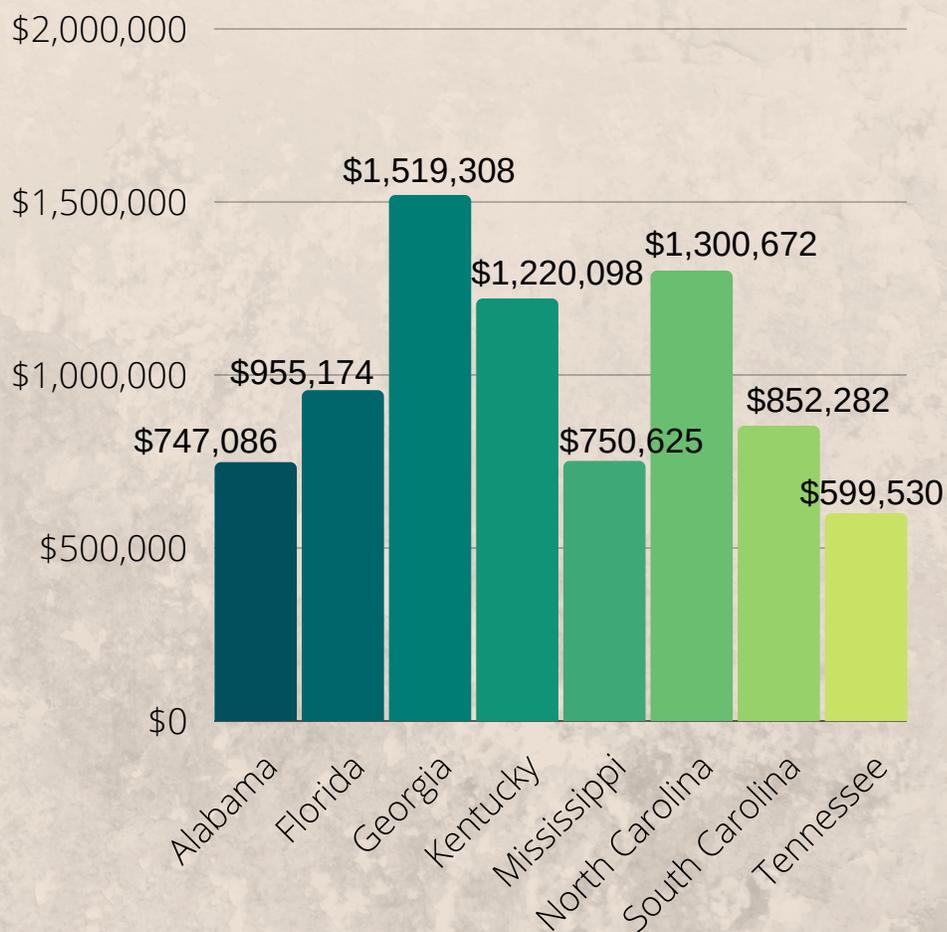
Mark Nelson  
Farm to School Innovation Lead; AmeriCorps VISTA  
Arkansas Department of Agriculture  
1 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205  
(501) 442-5710  
mark.nelson@agriculture.arkansas.gov

# APPENDIX

# FEDERAL FUNDING

The following pages present a state-by-state breakdown of USDA Farm to School Grant awardees by year from 2013 to 2020.

These funds arose from Section 243 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 which provided \$5 million per year in mandatory funding for the Farm to School Grant Program. The legislation and funding were major victories for many relatively new farm to school programs across the country.



# FEDERAL FUNDING

---

## **Alabama Total: \$747,086**

**2013 (\$0)**

**2014 (\$100,000)**

Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries - \$100,000 - Montgomery, Ala.

**2015 (\$100,000)**

Birmingham City Schools - \$100,000 - Birmingham, Ala.

**2016 (\$100,000)**

Food Bank of North Alabama - \$100,000 - Huntsville, Ala.

**2017 (\$100,000)**

Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries - \$100,000 - Montgomery, Ala.

**2018 (\$25,707)**

Alabama Department of Education - \$25,707 - Montgomery, Ala.

**2019 (\$228,761)**

Feeding the Gulf Coast - \$81,200 - Theodore, Ala.

Homewood City Board of Education - \$47,561 - Homewood, Ala.

Jones Valley Urban Farm - \$100,000 - Birmingham, Ala.

**2020 (\$92,618)**

Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries - \$92,618 - Montgomery, Ala.

## **Florida Total: \$955,174**

**2013 (\$0)**

**2014 (\$145,000)**

Sarasota County Schools, Food and Nutrition Services - \$100,000 - Sarasota, Fla.

Alachua County Schools - \$45,000 - Gainesville, Fla.

**2015 (\$0)**

**2016 (\$80,179)**

Alachua County Schools - \$80,179 - Gainesville, Fla.

**2017 (\$43,550)**

Putnam County Public Schools Food Services - \$43,550 - Palatka, Fla.

**2018 (\$150,000)**

Leon County School District - \$50,000 - Tallahassee, Fla.

School Board of Sarasota County - \$100,000 - Sarasota, Fla.

**2019 (95,532)**

School Board of Orange County - \$95,532 - Orlando, Fla.

**2020 (\$440,913)**

The BloominThyme Collaborative, Inc. - \$26,325 - Leesburg, Fla.

Florida Agriculture in the Classroom - \$100,000 - Gainesville, Fla.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services - \$64,588 - Tallahassee, Fla.

Florida Impact, Inc. - \$50,000 - Tallahassee, Fla.

Leon County School District - \$100,000 - Tallahassee, Fla.

The Education Fund, Inc. - \$100,000 - Miami Lakes, Fla.

# FEDERAL FUNDING

---

## **Georgia Total: \$1,519,308**

### **2013 (\$230,667)**

Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education, Inc. - \$100,000 - Albany, Ga.

Healthcare Georgia, Inc., dba Community Health Works - \$99,992 - Macon, Ga.

Carrollton City Schools Nutrition Department - \$30,675 - Carrollton, Ga.

### **2014 (\$199,700)**

Georgia Department of Agriculture - \$100,000 - Atlanta, Ga.

Athens Land Trust, Inc. - \$99,700 - Athens, Ga.

### **2015 (\$139,947)**

Tift County School System - \$39,947 - Tifton, Ga.

Georgia Organics, Inc. - \$100,000 - Atlanta, Ga.

### **2016 (\$96,580)**

Food Bank of Northeast Georgia - \$96,580 - Athens, Ga.

### **2017 (\$178,731)**

Georgia Organics, Inc. - \$25,000 - Atlanta, Ga.

Forsyth County Board of Education - \$91,106 - Cumming, Ga.

Carrollton City Schools Nutrition Department - \$62,625 - Carrollton, Ga.

### **2018 (\$42,750)**

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning - \$18,750 - Atlanta, Ga.

Georgia Department of Education - \$24,000 - Atlanta, Ga.

### **2019 (\$194,345)**

Baldwin County Board of Education - \$100,000 - Milledgeville, Ga.

Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice - \$20,000 - Decatur, Ga.

Winder Housing Authority - \$74,345 - Winder, Ga.

### **2020 (\$436,588)**

Flint River Fresh, Inc. - \$49,832 - Albany, Ga.

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning - \$63,408 - Atlanta, Ga.

Georgia Department of Education - \$100,000 - Atlanta, Ga.

Newton County School System - \$99,976 - Covington, Ga.

Savannah-Chatham County Public School System - \$100,000 - Savannah, Ga.

Ware County School Nutrition - \$23,372 - Waycross, Ga.

## **Kentucky Total: \$1,220,098**

### **2013 (\$145,000)**

Jefferson County Public Schools - \$100,000 - Louisville, Ky.

Fayette County Public Schools - \$45,000 - Lexington, Ky.

### **2014 (\$78,589)**

Greenup County School District - \$42,960 - Greenup, Ky.

Perry County Schools - \$35,629 - Hazard, Ky.

# FEDERAL FUNDING

---

## **2015 (\$312,707)**

Kentucky Department of Agriculture - \$16,734; \$71,223 - Frankfort, Ky.  
The Food Literacy Project at Oxmoor Farm, Inc. - \$100,000 - Louisville, Ky.  
Taylor County School District - \$45,000 - Campbellsville, Ky.  
Owsley County School District - \$79,750 - Booneville, Ky.

## **2016 (\$97,047)**

Perry County Schools - \$97,047 - Hazard, Ky.

## **2017 (\$97,601)**

Metcalfe County Schools - \$97,601 - Edmonton, Ky.

## **2018 (\$199,913)**

Kentucky Department of Agriculture - \$99,913 - Frankfort, Ky.  
Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government - \$100,000 - Louisville, Ky.

## **2019 (\$0)**

## **2020 (\$289,241)**

Fleming County Schools - \$50,000 - Flemingsburg, Ky.  
Frankfort Independent Board of Education - \$39,343 - Frankfort, Ky.  
Nelson County School District - \$100,000 - Bardstown, Ky.  
The Kentucky Horticulture Council - \$99,898 - Lexington, Ky.

## **Mississippi Total: \$750,625**

## **2013 (\$38,145)**

Oxford City School District - \$38,145 - Oxford, Miss.

## **2014 (\$133,183)**

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians - \$43,339 - Choctaw, Miss.  
The Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi - \$89,844 - Flowood, Miss.

## **2015 (\$25,000)**

My Brother's Keeper, Incorporated - \$25,000 - Ridgeland, Miss.

## **2016 (\$79,596)**

Oxford City School District - \$79,596 - Oxford, Miss.

## **2017 (\$99,726)**

The Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi - \$99,726 - Flowood, Miss.

## **2018 (\$140,000)**

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians - \$100,000 - Choctaw, Miss.  
Mississippi Association of Cooperatives - \$40,000 - Jackson, Miss.

## **2019 (\$0)**

## **2020 (\$234,975)**

Earth Island Institute - \$85,214 - Jackson, Miss.  
Delta Health Alliance, Inc. - \$99,761 - Stoneville, Miss.  
Scientific Research (SR1) - \$50,000 - Ridgeland, Miss.

# FEDERAL FUNDING

---

## **North Carolina Total: \$1,300,672**

### **2013 (\$240,381)**

Beaufort County Schools - \$98,526 - Washington, N.C.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) - \$97,571 - Asheville, N.C.

Stokes County Schools - \$44,284 - Danbury, N.C.

### **2014 (\$159,356)**

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools - \$74,448 - Chapel Hill, N.C.

N.C. Public Health Foundation - \$84,908 - Raleigh, N.C.

### **2015 (\$223,978)**

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDACS) - \$24,978 - Raleigh, N.C.

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians - \$99,000 - Cherokee, N.C.

Working Landscapes - \$100,000 - Warrenton, N.C.

### **2016 (\$50,940)**

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) - \$26,150 - Asheville, N.C.

NCDACS - \$24,790 - Raleigh, N.C.

### **2017 (\$94,100)**

Beaufort County Schools - \$94,100 - Washington, N.C.

### **2018 (\$0)**

### **2019 (\$100,000)**

Cabarrus County Schools - \$100,000 - Concord, N.C.

### **2020 (\$431,917)**

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) - \$99,553 - Asheville, N.C.

Central Park School for Children - \$32,374 - Durham, N.C.

North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Juvenile Justice Educational Services - \$100,000 - Raleigh, N.C.

Real School Gardens dba Out Teach - \$100,000 - Charlotte, N.C.

Working Landscapes - \$99,990 - Warrenton, N.C.

## **South Carolina Total: \$852,282**

### **2013 (\$100,000)**

South Carolina Department of Agriculture - \$100,000 - Columbia, S.C.

### **2014 (\$99,933)**

School District Five Lexington and Richland - \$99,933 - Irmo, S.C.

### **2015 (\$20,588)**

Clemson University - \$20,588 - Clemson, S.C.

### **2016 (\$174,799)**

School District Five Lexington and Richland - \$99,861 - Irmo, S.C.

South Carolina Department of Agriculture - \$74,938 - Columbia, S.C.

# FEDERAL FUNDING

---

## **2017 (\$174,540)**

Spartanburg County School District Six - \$100,000 - Roebuck, S.C.

Dorchester District Two/Ashley Ridge HS - \$74,540 - Summerville, S.C.

## **2018 (\$0)**

## **2019 (\$0)**

## **2020 (\$282,422)**

Charleston County School District - \$99,965 - Charleston, S.C.

School District Five Lexington and Richland - \$99,957 - Irmo, S.C.

South Carolina Department of Agriculture - \$82,500 - Columbia, S.C.

## **Tennessee Total: \$599,530**

## **2013 (\$40,286)**

Board of Education, Memphis City Schools - \$40,286 - Memphis, Tenn.

## **2014 (\$0)**

## **2015 (\$40,000)**

Murfreesboro City Schools - \$40,000 - Murfreesboro, Tenn.

## **2016 (\$38,682)**

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools - \$38,682 - Nashville, Tenn.

## **2017 (\$14,581)**

The Florence Crittenton Agency - \$14,581 - Knoxville, Tenn.

## **2018 (\$100,000)**

Shelby County Schools - \$100,000 - Memphis, Tenn.

## **2019 (\$248,801)**

Morgan County Schools - \$100,000 - Wartburg, Tenn.

Murfreesboro City Schools - \$100,000 - Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Northwest Tennessee Local Food Network - \$48,801 - Martin, Tenn.

## **2020 (\$117,180)**

Humphreys County Department of Education - \$72,650 - Waverly, Tenn.

Trenton Special School District - \$44,530 - Trenton, Tenn.



**ARKANSAS**  
**FarmtoSchool**