

News Release

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AmeriCorps Farm to School grant to boost nutrition, local economies

MADISON — The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction received a one-year federal AmeriCorps Farm to School grant that will place 28 AmeriCorps members in 16 host sites to build capacity for farm to school programs in local communities, provide nutrition education, and increase access to local foods.

“When kids have a chance to grow their own food in a school garden or learn about nutrition by making their own snacks, amazing things happen not just in the classroom but at home and across the community,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “We’re really excited to bring the AmeriCorps Farm to School program to DPI and continue this great economic development effort that touches so many.”

Farm to school programs bring local or regionally produced foods into school cafeterias and classrooms, offer hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits, and culinary classes; and integrate food-related education into the classroom curriculum. For example, a fourth-grade lesson has students identify the parts of plants that people eat: roots, such as carrots, potatoes, and beets; flowers, such as broccoli and cauliflower; stems, such as celery, asparagus, and leeks; seeds, such as corn, peas, and lima beans; leaves, such as kale, lettuce, and turnip greens; and fruits, such as peppers, cucumbers, and pumpkins. Another lesson, “Dirt Made My Lunch,” traces foods that children eat back to the soil through American Sign Language, song, and other activities.

By using food to build connections between

schools and local farmers and food producers, farm to school programs have boosted economies by creating new

Wisconsin AmeriCorps Farm to School Sites

Ashland School District
Bayfield School District
Beloit School District
Crawford County UW-Extension, Prairie du Chien
Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson
Milwaukee - 16th Street Community Health Center
Oregon School District
REAP Food Group, Madison
Spooner Area School District
Stevens Point YMCA
Tri- County Health Departments
(Adams, Marquette, Juneau Counties)
Viroqua Area School District
Washburn School District
Waupaca County UW-Extension
Winnebago County Health Department, Oshkosh
Wisconsin Rapids School District

(more)

jobs and providing crucial support to farm incomes. By some estimates, each dollar invested in farm to school programming stimulates an additional 60 cents to \$2.16 in economic activity. Additionally, farm to school programs increase student meal participation and decrease school meal program costs. The \$402,694 grant requires an in-kind match from participating communities and provides a stipend to AmeriCorps members, who serve in nutrition education and community outreach roles.

AmeriCorps nutrition educators will help teachers and school nutritionists by developing and implementing nutrition programs that will educate children about the benefits of making healthy eating choices. AmeriCorps members will assist with creating and implementing healthy food curricula, including school or community garden development, taste-testing programs, cooking classes, and farm field trips.

The community outreach members will serve as the main liaison between the schools and the community. They will educate food service directors about sourcing local, healthy foods for the school districts they serve and will create an action plan, laying out the steps necessary to procure local food for their programs. They will also be responsible for recruiting and mobilizing volunteers to enhance and increase the capacity of the AmeriCorps Farm to School program. This will include organizing a Farm to School Task Force within the school or community to promote program sustainability.

The AmeriCorps Farm to School program was previously administered by the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. The program is in its 10th year of operation.

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NOTES: [More information about Farm to School programs is available online.](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2017_64.pdf) This news release is available electronically at https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2017_64.pdf.