



MASSACHUSETTS
FARM TO SCHOOL

Public Investment in Farm to School: Lessons from State Policies



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Introduction

This report explores opportunities to use state level policies to expand farm to school activity. While farm to school programs involve a variety of efforts to support schools in providing locally grown and produced foods and food education to students, they regularly consist of three main components: procurement, school gardens, and education. Procurement includes the purchase of locally grown foods by school nutrition services to serve in school meals and snacks. School gardens provide an engaging venue for students to explore and learn, while garden, agricultural and food-based lessons enhance existing curriculums and provide students with the skills to eat healthier.¹

Massachusetts has had a statewide farm to school organization, Massachusetts Farm to School, since 2004. While farm to school activity has grown considerably over this period, there is still significant room for expansion. In 2017, advocates in the state began exploring opportunities to utilize public policy to spur such farm to school activity. This report examines existing statutes from other states that were enacted with a similar goal. Advocates chose to explore two different models of policies to incentivize farm to school activity--state run grant programs and additional meal program reimbursement--to assess applicability of such policies in Massachusetts.

Recognizing that much research had already been completed on the reimbursement legislation, most notably VT FEED's "School Food Local Purchasing Incentive Report,"² this report primarily focuses on farm to school grant programs enacted at the state level. However, reimbursement legislation is included in the Key Findings section to provide a comprehensive legislative analysis. For the purposes of this report, "grant program legislation" refers to a state statute that establishes a grant for schools to use in support of farm to school activities. Grants may be competitive or non-competitive and funding is not guaranteed merely because a statute establishes the grant. The report is intended to provide an objective survey on state laws and regulations in order to prepare Massachusetts stakeholders for developing a state-level advocacy campaign.

Research Methods

Research began in March, 2018 with a review of the National Farm to School Network's "State Farm to School: Legislative Survey, 2002-2017" to locate grant program legislation.³ We proceeded to analyze these enacted statutes and any statutes enacted after the report's release. Ultimately, we reviewed state statute(s) and programs in seventeen states. A second phase of the research included interviews with stakeholders from California, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, Washington, D.C., and Wisconsin. These states were selected based on their grant program's history, expansiveness, and unique qualities. We spoke with at least one stakeholder from each state, and fifteen people in total. Interviewees included representatives from non-profits, state agencies, city councils, and state universities.

Report Structure

The report describes grant program legislation enacted in the seventeen states, outlines lessons learned from stakeholder interviews, and sets forth issues for stakeholders to consider when proposing legislation in Massachusetts. For the most part, legislation reviewed in this report is still "on the books". However, some legislatures repealed these statutes and others never provided funding for their grant programs. Accordingly, there is less information available on some programs than others.

By examining the successes and challenges of grant program legislation in other states, Massachusetts can better assess whether to propose similar legislation and, if so, how to best structure such a grant program to improve farm to school programming in the Commonwealth.

Executive Summary

States around the country have enacted legislation creating farm to school grant programs. While these programs have some unique elements, they are primarily designed to increase the procurement of products grown or produced in the state and may also support farm to school activity such as school gardens. These legislative efforts offer a number of lessons for states exploring grant programs to support farm to school expansion. The experiences of these states emphasize the following needs: establishing sustainable funding mechanisms for the program; providing clear responsibility for administration and oversight of the program including adequate financial support for this oversight; requiring regular reporting on program impacts; appropriately targeting funds to support the most needed activities and, where applicable, establishing tight eligibility requirements for supporting local food purchases to incentivize new purchasing; and making grant applications accessible to ensure full utilization of program funds. Valuable lessons have also been learned from the advocacy efforts that resulted in successful passage of the legislation, including the importance of a diverse advocacy coalition with consistent messaging that is attuned to unique political opportunities.

Components of Enacted Legislation

This section provides an overview of the key attributes of the legislation creating a grant program in each state, including when the statute was enacted, the amount of funds allocated, and whether the program has been sustained.

California



Components: Appropriates \$1.5M for the 2017-18 FY for a one-time program to encourage the purchase of local food by schools and to expand the number of freshly prepared school meals that use California-grown ingredients.

Funding conditions: California-grown food to be used for school meals in accordance with the federal National School Lunch Program or the federal School Breakfast Program. Grants capped at \$125,000 per school.

When started: 2017

How funded: Increasing funds in Proposition 98, mandated education spending.

How funding has continued: One-time funding.

Administered by: California Department of Education.

Program outcomes: 35 schools received funds in 2017, ranging from \$5,000 – \$125,000.⁴

Notable amendments: California has also implemented, inter alia, a “Breakfast After the Bell” grant program as a one-time fund through FY 2018-19.

Citation: Assembly Bill 99, Ch. 15, § 86

Colorado



Components: Creates the “Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) Healthy Food Grant Program”. BOCES are cooperatives that provide services across district boundaries to leverage power better than individual districts could.

Funding conditions: Authorizes BOCES to maintain, equip, and operate a food-service facility as a school food authority. Eligible foods for procurement and distribution include locally grown and produced food and beverages.

When started: 2010.

How funded: Fund established in state treasury.

How funding has (or hasn’t) continued: Repealed in 2015.

Administered by: Colorado Department of Education.

Notable amendments: Repealed.

Citation: Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-5-121 (2010), but repealed July 1, 2015

District of Columbia (D.C.)



Components: Provides grants to schools to build school gardens, increase physical activity in schools, and help alleviate logistical farm to school issues. Also encourages schools to serve locally-grown and unprocessed foods whenever possible by providing – notwithstanding reimbursement legislation – an additional \$.05 for meals with locally grown, unprocessed foods and \$.10 for meals that meet nutrition requirements.

Funding conditions: Defines “locally-grown” as grown in Washington, D.C. and seven surrounding states. Milk is not applicable for the additional \$.05 reimbursement. “Unprocessed foods” means agricultural products (e.g., fruits, vegetables, dairy products) that retain their inherent natural character. Food can be cooled, refrigerated, peeled, ground, dried, dehydrated, etc. so long as it still meets the USDA definition of “unprocessed”.

When started: 2010.

How funded: Funds collected on sales tax from soda sales are deposited into Healthy Schools Act Fund, approximating \$6,000,000.

Administered by: Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).

Program outcomes: In 2017, 13 schools received farm field trip grants and there were 128 active school gardens.⁵

Notable amendments: Healthy Tots Act

Citation: D.C. Code § 38-821-828.01 et seq.

Illinois



Components: Establishes competitive grant program to implement farm to school programs to reduce obesity, improve nutrition and public health, and strengthen local agricultural economies.

Funding conditions: The first 6 grants must be awarded in 6 different counties, including 3 urban counties and 3 rural counties with a significant agricultural economy.

When started: 2009

How funded: Farm Fresh School Fund within the State Treasury

Administered by: Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Citation: 105 Ill. Comp. Stat. §§ 124/1–25

Kentucky



Components: Establishes the Kentucky Proud Promotion Fund to provide grants to promote state-grown products. This encourages state institutions, including schools, to purchase local foods.

Funding conditions: Food must be source-verified grown or raised in Kentucky.

When started: 2009.

How funded: Establishes fund in the State Treasury.

How funding has (or hasn't) continued: Permitted to issue grants “if funds are available”.

Administered by: Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

Citation: KY Rev. Stat. § 260.019

Michigan



Components: Appropriates \$250,000 for a pilot program to help schools purchase local food.

Funding conditions: Eligible foods include whole or minimally processed fruits, vegetables, and legumes grown in Michigan. Each region cannot receive more than \$25,000 and MDE cannot retain more than \$15,000 for administration. MDE must give competitive advantage to projects that educate students about healthy eating, involve the community, and include farm to school procurement activities. MDE must also consider the percentage of children receiving free or reduced-price school meals, the variety of school sizes and geographic locations, and existing or future collaboration opportunities between more than 1 district in a region.

When started: 2016-17.

How funded: \$250,000 appropriation

How funding has (or hasn't) continued: Funding increased to \$375,000 for 2017-18 and \$575,000 in 2018-19

Administered by: Michigan Department of Education.

Program outcomes: Helped schools serve 80 products from 112 different farms⁶

Citation: Senate Bill 801

Minnesota



Components: Supports school districts processing Minnesota agricultural products with funds for equipment purchases that will help increase the use of Minnesota grown and raised foods in nutrition programs.

Funding conditions: Funds may be used to purchase equipment to allow schools to purchase, prepare, and serve more Minnesota grown and raised food.

When started: 2017

How funded: Part of the Agriculture, Growth, Research, and Innovation Program established by MDA. Up to \$400,000 total, with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota committing an additional allocation of up to \$125,000 to help schools meet the requirement for matching funds for equipment or physical improvement projects.

Administered by: Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Program outcomes: 20 districts received awards in 2017.⁷

Citation: Minn. Stat. 41A.12

Missouri



Components: The Missouri “Value Added” Farm to School Grant Program provides grants, loans, or loan guarantees to small businesses for procuring and processing locally grown food to be served in school meals in Missouri.

Funding conditions: If half of the business is farm to school, funds may be used to purchase coolers, freezers, washing equipment, bagging equipment, packing equipment, professional services for good agricultural practices / good handling practices and hazard analysis and critical control analysis plan development.

When started: 2014.

Administered by: Missouri Department of Agriculture, Agricultural and Small Business Development Authority.

Citation: Mo. Rev. Stat. § 262.960 (2014)

New York



Components: Provides awards to school districts and educational organizations that serve students in grades K-12.

Funding conditions: Funding may be used to hire Farm-to-School coordinators, train food service staff, provide nutrition education in classrooms and cafeterias, purchase equipment to support food preparation, and increase the volume and variety of local farm products used in school lunches.

When started: 2018

How funded: State budget

How funding has (or hasn’t) continued: 2018-19 budget was third consecutive year of funding, where the total amount increased to \$1.5 million.

Administered by: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Program outcomes: Awarded to 12 projects and benefits 219,471 students⁸

Citation: NY State Enacted Budget, FY 19

Oregon



Components: Grant program provides funds for procurement and education to school districts, education service districts (ESDs), federally recognized Indian Tribes, nonprofit organizations, commodity commissions, or soil and water conservation districts.

Funding conditions: Noncompetitive grants may cover costs for food produced in the state while competitive grants may cover food-based, agriculture-based, and garden-based educational activities.

When started: 2011

How funded: State budget

How funding has (or hasn't) continued: Funding has increased incrementally since 2011. Most recently, Oregon appropriated \$5.6 million for the biennium 2017-2019.

Administered by: Oregon Department of Education.

Program outcomes: Farm to school grants for food literacy reach 32,000 students.⁹

Notable amendments: Oregon's farm to school act has been amended numerous times. See, e.g., HB 2800 (2011); HB 2649 (2013); SB 501 (2015).

Citation: OR Rev. Stat. § 336.431

Pennsylvania



Components: Creates state-wide program to provide grants to expand farm to school activities in kindergarten classrooms.

Funding conditions: Program activities may include nutrition and agriculture education for students, training for staff, educational activities for parents, and educational experiences that teach young children about sources of food. Grants are limited to covering up to 75% of a school's costs or \$15,000.

When started: 2006

Administered by: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Program outcomes: In 2017, thirty schools received funding of up to \$1,000.¹⁰

Citation: PA. SB1209, 2006

Texas



Components: Allocates grant funds to help schools establish demonstration agricultural projects or other projects designed to foster an understanding and awareness of agriculture.

Funding conditions: To receive funding, the school must be located in a district with at least 49,000 students. Nonprofits partnering with schools are also eligible to receive funds.

When started: 2011

Administered by: Texas Department of Agriculture

Citation: TX. SB 199

Vermont



Components: The grant program's purpose is to enhance student's educational experience, improve their health, and support the state's local economy.

Funding conditions: Funds must be used to expand and improve food programs and/or create or expand farm to school programs by integrating the classroom, cafeteria, and community.

When started: 2006

How funded: State budget

How funding has (or hasn't) continued: From 2007 – 2014, grant program funding ranged from \$75,000 – \$140,000. In 2018, up to six applicants will receive up to \$15,000.

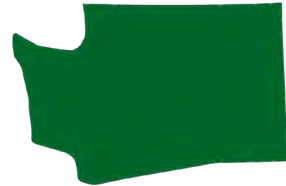
Administered by: Vermont's Agency for Agriculture, Food, and Markets

Program outcomes: In 2017, 13 schools received over \$121,000 in grants and technical supports, which increases the total number of students in Vermont with access to this program to 40,000.¹¹

Notable amendments: Vermont's legislative framework has seen numerous amendments since 2006. See, e.g., H 456 (2006); H 91 (2007); H 537 (2008); H 192 (2009)

Citation: VT SB 63, 2018

Washington



Components: Created a Washington-grown fresh fruits and vegetable grant program for schools and provided procedural provisions to support the purchase of Washington-grown foods for schools.

Funding conditions: Funding must be used to facilitate school snack programs that offer Washington grown, packed and processed fresh, dried and/or frozen fruits and vegetables in schools with greater than 50% free or reduced lunch eligibility.

When started: 2008.

How funded: State budget.

How funding has (or hasn't) continued: In FY 2009, the legislature appropriated \$570,000, however, it cut funding in 2011.

Administered by: Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Department of Agriculture.

Program outcomes: In 2009, 26 schools received grants to purchase local produce, totaling \$226,000.¹²

Notable amendments: Repealed

Citation: WA. Rev. Code § 15.64.060, 2007

Wisconsin

Components: Creates a farm to school grant program to provide funds to school districts, nonprofit organizations, farms, and other entities for the creation and expansion of farm to school programs.



Funding conditions: Eligible projects include promoting production, processing, marketing, and distribution of food produced in Wisconsin for sale to local schools, improving facilities and capital to facilitate school's serving local food, providing professional development, and expanding nutritional and agricultural education in classrooms.

When started: 2009

How funded: State budget.

How funding has (or hasn't) continued: Never received funding.

Administered by: Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Citation: WI Stat. § 15.137 & WI. Stat. § 93.49, 2009

Wyoming

Components: Establishes a pilot project to increase the availability of Wyoming meat products in school lunches.



Funding conditions: Provides \$25,000 in grants to increase the quantity of Wyoming poultry, lamb, pork, beef or bison in school lunches. Funding is limited to pay for the processing costs of donated meat. Instructs WDE to equally match funding across school districts and fund as many as possible.

When started: 2017

How funded: Allocates \$25,000 of existing appropriations to WDE for 2017-18

Administered by: Wyoming Department of Education

Citation: WY LSO-0445, 2017

Key Findings

Research on the statutes and conversations with stakeholders provided several insights related to the content or structure of farm to school funding legislation as well as the advocacy strategy and legislative process undertaken to enact the statutes. This section includes lessons learned from grant program and additional reimbursement legislation (some of which are one and the same), as stakeholders shared experiences with both types of statutes. The section concludes with key lessons about advocacy strategies used in different states. Summaries of the conversations with individual state stakeholders, as well as state specific recommendations can be found in the Appendix.

Grant Programs

Inclusion of technical assistance in grant programs can help build more robust and longer lasting farm to school programs.

Some grant programs, most notably Vermont and Washington, include funding for technical assistance for grant recipients in the legislation itself. Stakeholders from other states noted that the lack of technical assistance has prevented full utilization of grant funds and recipients may not have the time or expertise to apply for the grant or carry out the targeted activities. For example, a grant program to fund farm field trips in DC has been underutilized due to an onerous application process. While non-profit organizations may be best suited to provide this technical assistance, both DC and VT emphasize that legislators should not expect this assistance to be provided pro-bono.

Including clear reporting requirements and defining administrative roles in the legislation supports program outcomes and sustainability.

Annual or bi-annual reports may provide a basis for “grading” the program, quantifying outcomes and holding stakeholders accountable. This transparency requirement also establishes an incentive for stewardship and success. For example, in DC, the legislation created two commissions that facilitate oversight, reporting, and recommendations to the legislature. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education must submit an annual report to policymakers detailing the farm to school initiatives and recommendations for improvement. Conversely, the lack of reporting and accountability mechanisms in the Washington program resulted in difficulties demonstrating program impact and was cited as contributing to the program’s termination. The research suggests that legislation should statutorily require that the relevant executive agency or Food Policy Council publish a bi-annual report regarding program outcomes and related policy suggestions. It must be clear which agency or person will administer each component of the legislation, for failure to do so may result in inadequate funding for administration.

The ability to sustain grant program funding may depend on the legislative process used to enact the statute and the funding mechanism for the program.

Grant programs may be established through the state budget or as a stand-alone bill. Each type has its tradeoffs. Funding is not guaranteed merely because a law establishes a fund. During the annual budgetary process, policymakers may never appropriate funds, reduce funding, or eliminate it altogether. Although statutes in WA and WI established grant programs, policymakers cut funds three years later.

Grant programs established through the state budget, such as in California and New York, appear to have a higher likelihood of being funded initially and continuing to receive funding than a stand-alone bill, such as in Washington and Wisconsin. The amount of funds allocated for grants may also snowball

over time. For example, funds allocated for grant programs in CA, D.C., NY, and VT have increased over time.

What appears to be most successful at sustaining program funds is to create a funding mechanism that guarantees money will be available independent from political processes. For example, in D.C., all sales tax collected from soda sales goes into a fund for farm to school meal program reimbursements and grants.

Grant programs can target specific obstacles to farm to school success

The state must first determine specific challenges at institutions and attach conditions to grant funds that address these challenges. If grants are competitive, the administering agency may prioritize schools meeting other prerequisites or priorities. For example, recognizing the obstacles to increasing scratch cooking in ill-equipped kitchens, the NY program prioritizes infrastructure investments such as new kitchen equipment. Strong programs permit flexibility with the use of grant funds, but require applicants to outline specifically how funds would be utilized.

Encourage grant proposals to require a school team approach

Grant programs may be able to address two common problems in successful implementation of farm to school activities: high turnover in school staff and siloing of staff in their respective roles. Requiring or encouraging grant proposals to come from a school team representing different roles within the school, as the program in Vermont does, promotes understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by different school staff and ensures no single individual is responsible for the program. This helps programs weather the challenge of high staff turnover.

Reimbursement Legislation

Consider the scope of foods eligible for reimbursements

Different reimbursement programs have different eligibility criteria. This includes processed versus unprocessed foods, geographic boundaries for food origins, and types of food (i.e. fruits, vegetables, meats). Some states, such as Oregon, have shifted criteria over time to avoid unintended consequences and this criteria should be informed by the program's objectives and unique geographic considerations.

While the reimbursement programs incentivize purchases of whole, local foods, many schools lack the equipment, labor, or staff skills to work with such items. Many schools are accessing other public and private funds to increase food service staffing or improve kitchens. Providing public funds for these improvements can help schools better utilize more local foods.

Consider the scope of the reimbursement

Some states have found schools plateau with their local purchases. One way to address this is to consider increased reimbursement rates for purchases from producers that meet "good food purchasing values" to incentivize more ambitious procurement. Setting the reimbursement high enough can also help demonstrate state support for the initiative and ensure it is attractive for schools. In D.C., some advocates stated that the reimbursement rate of \$.05 per meal was not sufficient to encourage full participation.

Enforce policy without penalizing schools

Many of these policies are precatory (i.e., they encourage purchases of local food) and do not penalize for misuse of funds. Requiring transparency and providing positive recognition of schools can help address this issue. For example, a bill in D.C. would require schools to post online where the local food

originated and would rely on non-profits to be watchdogs. California rewards schools that excel at serving eligible foods, rating a school's performance.

Advocacy Strategy

Build a coalition with a diverse group of stakeholders

Advocates emphasized the importance of their coalitions in successful campaigns. New York advocates realized how their message would have been stronger and more effective had they built a coalition earlier. While many organizations support farm to school programming, it is imperative to go out and find them. NY advocates explained that some legislators would endorse a policy merely by seeing the Farm Bureau's logo attached. State level councils or commissions can also be particularly persuasive. In Wisconsin, a statutorily authorized Farm to School Council has been successful because it convenes leaders from various spheres to discuss farm to school initiatives. In D.C. a similar commission's recommendations are trusted and often adopted by the legislative branch.

Messaging must be continuous and comprehensive

Advocacy efforts must be constant over time to raise awareness and support among policymakers. Advocates emphasized mentioning farm to school when speaking about related issues. For example, in NY, during the budget season, advocates would mention farm to school when testifying on an environmental bill. They knew no money would come from the environmental budget but saw value in spreading awareness about farm to school with legislators. For this reason, an effective strategy can be to track bills related to education, nutrition, agriculture, and economic development and, where appropriate, testify on behalf of the coalition at hearings.

Recognize political opportunity

Advocates in different states recognized the power that individual legislators can exert in championing or obstructing a bill. Recognizing the personal side of policy makers can prove effective. The political ambitions of individual legislators and whether they are up for re-election can provide opportunities. For example, the New York Governor's race provided a great opportunity for a substantial increase in funding. Changes in leadership of state agencies can also provide new opportunities to advance policies. When legislative champions retire or pass on, an opportunity may present itself to create new policies to carry on their legacy, as happened in Vermont.

Choose words carefully in regulations

Experience from additional reimbursement legislation demonstrates the need to be very careful about legislative wording to protect the intended impacts of the program. In Oregon, the bill initially did not have strict parameters on eligible foods, resulting in funds being allocated to products such as milk and bread that the schools would have bought regardless of receiving grant funds. When attempting to address this issue, a proposal explicitly mentioned excluding milk, which caused the milk industry to contest the bill even though the impact would have been negligible or nonexistent. In this case, the language used in advocacy materials inadvertently created political opposition.

Look across the (state) border

Some states pride themselves on being progressive leaders, and messaging can be persuasive if it points out how the state lags behind other similarly progressive states. For example, in New York, legislators were inspired by progress in Michigan and Vermont and wanted to be on the forefront of farm to school issues. Informing legislators how other states are excelling could prove persuasive.

Considerations for Policy Development

Based on the data collected and detailed analysis of the legislative process in other states, it may be beneficial to consider the following issues before drafting legislation that authorizes farm to school grant program funding at the state level.

How would a grant program fit into the larger regulatory regime?

- Would this bill be a stand-alone program, or would it include a reimbursement component?
- Which agency would administer the program? Would they be required to designate a specific officer to administer the program?
- How would recipients be held accountable?
- Would the law require reporting or measurements of outcomes? Who would be responsible for this and how frequently?

What would be the scope of eligible foods?

- Type of food: Would processed or minimally processed foods be permitted? What about local foods already purchased by schools, like milk and bread? Does it include meat or fish and, if so, how is "local" defined?
- Geographic boundaries: Must a certain percent of the meal or ingredients be grown in-state? Grown regionally? Is fish eligible?
- Must food meet criteria for being culturally appropriate?

Who would be eligible recipients of grant funds?

- Schools: public only or also private and charter schools? K-12, or also early childhood education and higher education institutions?
- Equity: Must the agency administering funds ensure recipients represent a diverse mix of communities? If so, is that defined by geographic location (eastern, central, western), population density (urban, metropolitan, rural), district size (large, medium, small), income level?

What component of farm to school infrastructure is most in need of improvement?

- Is the main issue lack of coordinated statewide activities? If so, would establishing a farm to school coordinator in an agency help facilitate statewide issues?
- If support for local farmers is needed, would it be beneficial to enact reimbursement legislation, provide TA to facilitate procurement, or amend contract procedures to give local producers a competitive advantage?

What funding situation will support the program?

- Are funds available to support a grant program?
- What safeguards can ensure continuous funding?
- If not, is there an alternative source (e.g., collecting sales tax on soda)?

What is the political feasibility of enacting this program?

- Will the legislature or Governor support the use of funds?
- How can this bill be crafted to receive bipartisan support?
- Are the political circumstances such that bullish advocacy may be feasible, or would an incremental approach (i.e., pilot program) have a higher likelihood of success?
- How can advocates use the success of programs in neighboring states, to persuade policymakers?

Appendix

The following appendix includes expanded lessons and recommendations from interviews and written correspondence with stakeholders in states with existing farm to school grant legislation. See the references for a list of contributing organizations.¹⁴

California

Multiple laws govern farm to school grant programs in California, though our conversations focused on the two most recent statutes. The “California-Grown Fresh School Meals Grant Program” (2017) provided \$1.5 million in one-time funding from 2017-2019 to expand farm to school programming across the state. This appropriation permitted schools to purchase locally-grown food and equipment or to administer professional development to food service employees. Grant amounts may range from \$50,000 – 125,000. The legislature established two other grant programs in 2005 and 2006, respectively.

In California, infrastructure and advocacy appears robust and diverse and includes a California Farm to School Network (CFSN). The Network is hosted by the California Department of Food and Agriculture Office of Farm to Fork and is supported by staff from various organizations, including the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Life Lab, the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute, and other regional organizations. CFSN holds semi-annual conferences convening stakeholders and policymakers. For instance, leaders from Oregon and local food policy experts discussed policy at a recent conference, then distilled lessons and used it to formulate a bill for the legislature, which was then enacted as the California-Grown Fresh School Meals Grant Program (2017).

Anecdotally, advocates mentioned the following barriers to farm to school expansion. For one, schools struggle with procurement and need the help of centralized kitchens to process local foods. Moreover, even high-performing schools plateau in terms of the amount of “good food” they can purchase. To prevent this, organizations in California are advocating for increased reimbursement rates

for purchases made from sellers that meet five core values: local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutrition. In addition, large districts, like Los Angeles, sometimes struggle to implement programs, since equity mandates state that a pilot program in a few schools must be extended to most or all other schools. When a district consists of over 600 schools, this poses a large barrier to initiating a program.

Also, advocates mentioned problems related to procurement. To help remedy problems with procurement, a local non-profit created an online marketplace to connect buyers and sellers. Grower identification may be a beneficial way to verify that food is indeed “local”. However, commercial distributors may resist investing in tracking systems.

Advocates also discussed the legislative process, stating that California normally passes enabling legislation and then funds it. However, this takes at least a few years. When the enabling legislation is not going anywhere, activists try to effectuate policy through the annual state budget process but short-circuiting the process by advocating for a line-item does not always work. Moreover, it is hard to get much language into the budget, so it requires a stand-alone bill if you want legislative language spelling out how an agency must act. Sometimes you can attach one line of text to the budget that you cannot get enacted another way, and sometimes there are trailer bills to the budget that will accommodate a lot of text if you can persuade the right people. Ultimately, however, the budget process is an insider game and not transparent. Thus, in California it is mandatory to have the right people advocating for you.

Recommendations from stakeholder interviews:

1. Incentivize values-based purchasing that goes

beyond local.

2. Recognize the unique challenges of large districts.
3. Be strategic about your legislative strategy when the process is slow.

District of Columbia (D.C.)

Despite its small geographical size, Washington, D.C.'s farm to school infrastructure is among the nation's strongest. Many advocates attribute a particular legislator, Mary Cheh, as providing the impetus for the passage of the 2010 Healthy Schools Act (HSA). This landmark statute provided, among other things, a \$.05 reimbursement per meal for schools that use locally grown, unprocessed products in their school meals. Given the size and lack of rural land in D.C., food from certain neighboring states is eligible for reimbursement.

HSA also established a grant program that funds school gardens and field trips to farms. As of 2018, approximately 128 school gardens exist. Notably and, perhaps, uniquely, funding is almost guaranteed because HSA diverts sales tax collected from soda drinks into the HSA fund. Moreover, it created two commissions that facilitate oversight, reporting, and recommendations to the legislature. Anecdotally, the legislature respects recommendations by the councils. Interestingly, the initial messaging for this law focused on childhood obesity and one stakeholder expressed surprise at how much the "conversation" has changed in the past eight years.

While stakeholders commended the HSA's effectiveness at targeting low-income schools through incentives and provisions focused on equity, advocates mentioned that the grant program has faults. There is a large amount of money eligible, but applications can be difficult for schools to complete. Moreover, because schools may not want or be able to implement the targeted programs, some schools abstain from applying altogether. In addition, some schools find gardens too difficult to fund and implement, even with grant funding. Oftentimes gardens are not adequately staffed since funding is limited to \$30,000 over two years and that is insufficient to support staff. For this reason, the Advisory Council has stressed that a farm to

school coordinator is a necessary position.

Recommendations from stakeholder interviews:

1. A \$.05 incentive reimbursement for school purchases is insufficient and states should aim for a higher amount, perhaps \$.25/meal. Doing so sends notice to schools that the state supports this program.
2. Include in legislation staff position(s), such as a Farm to School Coordinator, at the Department of Education or another agency.
3. When drafting the law, consider including public and charter schools, to ensure they are placed on equal footing. Also, consider whether early child-care services should be included in legislation or eligible grant recipients.
4. Be clear which agency or person will administer each component of the legislation, for failure to do so may result in inadequate funding for administration. This presents a problem for intergovernmental affairs and stakeholders.

New York

For forty years, New York schools that participated in the USDA school meal program for free and reduced-price lunches received an additional \$.06 from the state. The most recent budget (FY 2018-19) raised this to \$.25 cents. To qualify, schools must spend at least 30% of their total food purchases on local ingredients. In addition to reimbursements, currently \$750,000 is available in grant money, and that increases to \$1.5 million next year. To help ensure long-term results, these funds must be used for capital investments, such as hiring a farm to school coordinator, paying for training, or purchasing equipment. Recipients are selected based on the quality of their proposal and outcomes, and both wealthy and low-income districts have received funding. Schools may receive up to \$100,000 over a two-year period.

Recommendations from stakeholder interviews:

1. The advocacy coalition must include a broad base of stakeholders.
2. Continue spreading awareness for farm to school programs whenever speaking with policy-

makers and especially during budget season.

a) For instance, mention farm to school whenever advocating for a tangentially related issue (e.g., environmental issues or rural economic development). This helps inform policymakers and keeps the program on their minds.

b) This includes before, during, and after a law is passed. Now that the legislature passed the recent law, advocates continue to aid the administration with its implementation (e.g., defining “processed foods”).

3. Hired lobbyists may have insights that help advance the campaign. In New York, advocates learned that contacting legislators through phone calls and personal letters is more advantageous than emails. Relatedly, they benefited from creating an action alert page online that connected people to their legislator’s and permitted them to contact them directly. This page included suggested talking points.

4. Recognize opportunity. In 2018, advocates capitalized on the Governor’s political ambitions and saw that every elected official was up for re-election. Because all the cards came together, it was easy to secure a huge increase in grant funding. Similarly, changes in elected office or bureaucratic positions may create opportunities otherwise ignored. For instance, the appointment of an agency director with a background in farming may create a new agency policy regarding farm to school.

Oregon

Oregon’s farm to school program is one of the country’s oldest and most comprehensive. As a result, it has undergone numerous changes and seen a gradual increase in funding. The current regime features a competitive and noncompetitive grant program. It should be noted, however, that the latter appears to be reimbursement legislation in kind, as it merely requires schools to opt-in for funds reimbursing purchases of food grown or processed in-state. Nonetheless, the Oregon Department of Education is allocated \$4.5 million, 80% of which goes towards noncompetitive grants. The other 20% is designated for competitive grants for schools, non-profit organizations, commodity

commissions, federally recognized Tribal organizations, and educational service centers. These entities may use funds for educational purposes relating to farm to school, such as school gardens or field trips.

While Oregon enacted farm to school legislation to spur local economic development, by incentivizing the purchase of local produce, an unintended consequence of “supplanting” occurred. Noncompetitive grants were intended to help schools purchase more local, fresh produce, since that tends to be relatively more expensive than produce sold through conventional distribution methods.. However, as schools began opting in for these funds, it became clear that approximately 40% of funds were not being used as the legislation had intended. Funds were being used to reimburse food provided by a third-party vendor or food produced or processed in Oregon that would have been bought even without grant funds, like bread and milk. Thus, noncompetitive grants had a minimal impact on economic development, contravening the very purpose of the legislation.

To prevent supplanting, policymakers amended the scope of foods eligible for noncompetitive grants. In order to prohibit these funds from being used to purchase food that schools had bought already. In other words, an explicit prohibition against supplanting. Moreover, prior to receiving noncompetitive grant funds, recipients must watch a webinar that describes allowable and prohibited purchases. As a final safeguard, the Department of Education reviews budget spreadsheets that schools submit and will require revision for those listing ineligible purchases.

Recommendations from stakeholder interviews:

1. Oregon’s farm to school legislation has never provided technical assistance (TA) and advocates believe this is necessary and should be provided for by the state. Without TA, schools struggle to locate products to purchase and find the time to process local food.

2. TA funding should be in a pot of money separate from education spending, as occurs in Vermont, because schools do not need money for this. Rather, it is organizations like non-profits that need this

funding to help schools implement farm to school programs.

Vermont

The history, innovation, and success of Vermont's Farm to School program make it an outlier. Its first key statute, the Rozo McLaughlin Farm to School Act, was passed in 2007 with the intent to increase the use of local foods in school meals. It awarded grants to help local schools develop relationships with local farmers and producers. To that end, it permitted schools to use funds for equipment, resources, and training. Further, schools could purchase local farm products and provide professional development to support hands-on education about nutrition and farm to school connections. This Act was amended in 2017 to refocus the grant program on initiatives related to child health, education and the local economy. Among other things, it expanded the scope of eligible recipients to include early childcare providers. Moreover, it expanded how schools could use grant funds, including gardening supplies, field trips to farms, gleaning on farms, and stipends to visiting farmers. Funding may also be used for technical assistance (TA) and awards cannot exceed \$15,000.

Vermont's infrastructure may be successful because of its team-focused, comprehensive approach. For instance, a school applying for grants will not receive funding unless they provide an action plan explaining how their team-based program involves various school staff members. Schools will not receive funding without this, and it appears action plans have become a procedural safeguard that ensures program longevity. Relatedly, however, turnover at schools presents a major barrier, though stakeholders deemed this as an issue outside the realm of regulation. Further, the state provides, in tandem with grant funds, a third-party coach to aid schools with program implementation. This is outsourced and, though stakeholders believed this component is not necessary, it has certainly helped build robust programs.

Vermont is also rare in that when the most recent farm to school bill was being considered, advocates used one singular message; namely, univer-

sal meals. Although "social" issues tend to mobilize liberals more than conservatives, both supported this bill – to the surprise of some advocates – because childhood hunger is such a severe, ubiquitous problem in Vermont.[x] There does exist, however, an apparent similarity between Vermont and other states with robust programs, like Oregon and Washington, D.C. That is, in all three states an individual legislator spearheaded the farm to school campaign. Here, it was State Senator Sally Fox, a Vermont legislator for almost thirty years. After she passed away in 2014, her husband, Mike Sirotkin, assumed her seat and continued her legacy.

Recommendations from stakeholder interviews:

1. Technical assistance can be quite helpful to schools, but it must be customized to their individual needs, especially for the standout schools that are continually awarded funding.
2. Require applicants to explain how their program is team-based. This facilitates the program's success and helps ensure longevity.
3. Even though it is not statutorily required, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture publishes reports on program outcomes. This holds stakeholders accountable and provides a basis for why the agency is spending money.

Washington

Washington's grant program was founded in 2008 and funding was cut in 2011, but we were able to learn from their program's history. The legislation did not explicitly create a farm to school coordinator but the statute directs the Department of Agriculture to help schools procure Washington-grown foods. Nonetheless, such a position was created by the agency and it still exists, with a focus on providing technical assistance to schools procuring local foods.

The legislation deems processed foods as eligible for funds and defining that presented an interesting debate. Food processed in Washington supports the local economy, and rural economies especially. On the other hand, that may not directly support ingredients grown in-state. Ultimately, the agency barred highly processed foods and permits

minimally processed foods. Whether minimally processed food is cheaper or easier to store varies food by food, it is clear it saves time on preparation, requires less preparation equipment, and bypasses issues of seasonality.

Recommendations from stakeholder interviews:

1. Schools struggle with procurement and an online marketplace, broker, or directory could help connect buyers and sellers.
2. Survey districts every few years to investigate their needs.
3. While it is beneficial that parts of the legislation “encouraged” the purchase of local foods when appropriate, with no enforcement or accountability mechanism it is not possible to tell whether there is an impact.
4. Accordingly, non-profits are working to implement a reward or recognition for schools that buy local.
5. This would provide a positive incentive, and the legislation should provide stronger wording, though a penalty may not be appropriate.
6. Be careful on how this is implemented, though, for many schools serve in-state processed food but that is not what you may be trying to monitor or encourage.

Wisconsin

Unfortunately, since the dairy state passed farm to school legislation in 2009, advocacy has focused on facilitating the statute’s rollout and preventing its repeal. Indeed, it took years for the executive branch to hire a farm to school coordinator to administer the statutorily authorized Farm to School Council (“the Council”). As a result, the Council was ineffectual at first, since the person selected to administer meetings had this burdensome duty placed on top of their other responsibilities and was thus unable to devote enough time. This caused members to delegate their duties to inferior officers, thereby changing the true purpose of the meetings. The Council, which consists of fifteen

members representing different stakeholders, is now operational and has become instrumental, albeit mostly through its unofficial capacity. That is, though the Council cannot implement policies, members bring assets of their institutions to the group, which benefits the whole group. Moreover, after meetings members return to their organizations, which may be unrelated to farm to school, and advocate for these programs.

Recommendations from stakeholder interviews:

1. A farm to school council can be quite beneficial and the ideal makeup is one where stakeholders have the ability to create change in their own organization, even though most of them are not doing farm to school work in their jobs.
2. Legislation should specify which stakeholder groups must be represented, and how many seats each is allocated.
3. If there is a farm to school council, ensure there is sufficient staffing capacity or else it will lose momentum.

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