



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

Karen Ross, Secretary

August 6, 2024

The Honorable Scott D. Wiener
Chair, Joint Legislative Budget Committee
1020 N Street, Room 553
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program

To Chair Wiener and Members of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee:

I am pleased to present a report on the Farm to School Incubator Grant Program that includes a status and progress update, and a description of how the funds that the Legislature appropriated were expended. The report is in accordance with the Budget Act of 2021 (Item 8570-102-0001).

Farm to school programs are a vital way to improve the health and well-being of California schoolchildren through integrated food-based education and healthy food access. California schools serve hundreds of millions of meals each year, and expanding opportunities for local food procurement that is tied to food-based education is essential for establishing healthy eating habits that children can carry into adulthood. Procurement of more California grown or produced food also supports connecting California's agriculture and food production to California consumers.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) sees the Farm to School Incubator Grant Program as a catalyst to connect public health, economic development, and climate resilience by focusing resources where they matter most – our children, our food producers, and our schools. With California's Farm to School Incubator Grant Program, we are seeing a renaissance in the school food space. This includes economic growth for small, midsize, socially disadvantaged, and climate smart agricultural producers and food system workers, improved public health outcomes for students and school communities who are now accessing fresh local foods, and the climate benefits of leveraging climate smart agriculture to serve our state's largest restaurant chain.

The Farm to School Incubator Grant Program high level goals are:

- Cultivate Equity – Create opportunities for those who have been historically excluded to improve the health and well-being of the people, places, and communities that define California's food system.





- Nurture Students – Engage students with nutritious, delicious, culturally relevant meals that nourish their bodies and minds.
- Build Climate Resilience – Leverage school buying power to support California producers and incentivize agricultural practices that promote climate resilience and environmental sustainability, including organic systems, while educating students on the importance of environmental stewardship and agricultural sustainability into the future.
- Create Scalable and Sustainable Change – Implement policies and dedicate funding to create lasting impacts for local communities.

CDFA is pleased to report that the California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program has been making great progress and in November 2022, announced over \$25m in funding to support 120 farm to school projects across California. Attached is additional information that details how the state's investment is being implemented.

For more information on the Farm to School Program please click the link:

<https://cafarmtofork.cdfa.ca.gov/CaFarmtoSchoolProgram.htm>

For the Legislative Report click the link:

https://cafarmtofork.cdfa.ca.gov/docs/F2S_Eval_Leg_Update_Jan-24_10-20-23_Full_Report.pdf

If you have any questions or need more information please feel free to contact Deputy Secretary Rachael O'Brien at (916) 207-4574 or Rachael.Obrien@cdfa.ca.gov. This report can be viewed at <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ola/publications.html>. To order a hard copy of this report, please contact Constituent.Issues@cdfa.ca.gov.

Yours truly,

Karen Ross
Secretary

cc: Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel, Vice Chair
Joint Legislative Budget Committee Members
Hans Hemann, Consultant
Diego Lopez, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Christine Miyashiro, Assembly Budget Committee





CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program

2024 Report to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee

2021-22 Budget Package



Report prepared by:



CDFA OFFICE OF
FARM to FORK

CALIFORNIA FARM TO SCHOOL

California is on a mission to create a more sustainable and prosperous future for all through Farm to School.



IMPROVE CHILDREN'S HEALTH & WELL-BEING

California Farm to School helps school districts procure fresh and delicious produce from local farms to transform school meals.

Because children consume 75% of their daily nutritional intake at school, nutritious school meals are critical to nourishing students and ensuring they are both physically and mentally ready to learn.

Through school gardens, culinary classes, field trips to local farms, and more, California Farm to School supports hands-on learning of core subjects like math and science as well as nutrition, agriculture, and environmental science curriculum.

Such programs also support a variety of learning styles—boosting student engagement and increasing long-term academic success.

MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE

California Farm to School promotes gardening and composting programs in which students learn about and contribute to environmental protection.

California Farm to School also prioritizes partnerships between school districts and local farmers practicing climate-smart agriculture.

Additionally, these local connections shorten the distance food travels—reducing vehicle pollutants and waste in processing and packaging.

BOLSTER LOCAL ECONOMIES

California Farm to School partnerships between local farms and school districts keep local dollars within communities and ensure increased and more reliable profits for small and medium-sized California farms.

California Farm to School also supports school kitchen upgrades and culinary arts training for school food service workers—creating more career pathways and sustainable, fulfilling jobs in school food service.

CALIFORNIA'S MOVEMENT

2019

First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom launches the movement to establish a statewide California Farm to School initiative

2020

The [California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program](#) is established

2021

California begins to provide every public school student in California with two free school meals a day

California awards \$8.5M to selected school districts across the state to fund California Farm to School projects

2022

First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom and California Department of Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross release "[Planting a Seed: Farm to School Roadmap for Success](#)"

California triples its investments in California Farm to School projects, awarding \$30M to school districts, farmers, and early childhood centers

2023

State funds available for California Farm to School projects doubles to \$60M as the third round of [grant applications](#) opens in the fall

BY THE NUMBERS



1.5 million
public school students
are benefiting from
California
Farm to School



163
educational entities—
including California's **five**
largest school districts—
are grantees



Over 1/2
of farmer grantees
identify as women, and
42% as people of color



100%
of farmer grantees
use climate-smart
practices



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Impact	6
Section 1: The total number of grants and amount of funding awarded	7
Section 2: The number of schools and students served	8
Section 3: The number of schools and students served by applicable community need metrics (such as free/reduced meal rates)	9
Cohort 1	9
Cohort 2	9
Section 4: The geographic distribution of awarded grants	10
Section 5: An assessment, to the extent feasible, on the degree to which the funded activities resulted in improved outcomes, such as increased awareness and consumption of healthier food options and improved academic outcomes	11
Food System Equity	11
Local Economic Activity	11
Cohort 1 data:	11
Cohort 2 data:	11

Executive Summary

In accordance with the Budget Act of 2021 (Item 8570-102-0001), the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is required to submit to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) a report on key programmatic outcomes achieved by the California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program.

At minimum, this report shall include:

- (1) The total number of grants and amount of funding awarded
- (2) The number of schools and students served
- (3) The number of schools and students served by applicable community need metrics (such as free/reduced meal rates)
- (4) The geographic distribution of awarded grants
- (5) An assessment, to the extent feasible, on the degree to which the funded activities resulted in improved outcomes, such as increased awareness and consumption of healthier food options and improved academic outcomes.



To stay up to date on Farm to School Incubator Program grantees, activities and successes, subscribe to the monthly Farm to School Network newsletter at the top right of the [CDFA California Farm to School Program webpage!](#)

Impact

California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program grantees are hard at work implementing grant projects and transforming the school food system! The following Grant Project Highlights were featured in CDFA's [monthly CA Farm to School Network newsletter](#):



Morongo Unified School District in San Bernardino County is utilizing grant funding for students to learn about hydroponic gardening by utilizing an indoor growing tower. Once the produce is fully grown, students can help harvest items such as green lettuce, romaine and basil to be included in the fruit and veggie bar in the school cafeteria.



Apple Creek Vineyard Farm in Galt is using grant funds to deliver educational seminars, such as the pictured field trip, to promote fresh and nutritious food while emphasizing the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for the future.



Alhambra Unified School District is using grant funds to partner with current food vendors to procure locally grown fruits and vegetables to incorporate into school meals. Also, Harvest of the Month teachers are receiving local produce for classroom activities and sampling, such as the pictured carrots, to promote healthy eating by incorporating locally grown produce at schools.

Section 1: The total number of grants and amount of funding awarded

The California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program has successfully implemented two rounds of grant funding and is in the process of distributing awards to a third cohort of grantees.

- In 2021-22, CDFA awarded \$8.5 million to 60 projects.
 - https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/docs/Summaries_of_Submitted_Project_Narratives_2021_CDFA_F2S_Incubator_Grant_Program.pdf
- In 2022-23, CDFA awarded \$25.5 million to 120 projects.
 - https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/caf2sgrant/docs/final_project_summaries_2022_ca_f2s_incubator_grant_program.pdf
- In 2023-24, CDFA will award \$52.8 million to approximately 200 projects.



CDFA Home | CA Farm to School Incubator Grant Program

CA Farm to School Incubator Grant Program

<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/caf2sgrant/>

Section 2: The number of schools and students served

In total, grant programs have impacted 163 local educational agencies, including California public school districts, county offices of education, charter schools, early care and education organizations, and childcare centers.

99 of the 163 local educational agencies are being directly funded by the California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program. These 99 educational agencies represent more than 1.3 million students, or 23% of all CA School Children.



California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program grantee North Coast Resource Conservation & Development Council (NCRC&DC) is using grant funds to collaborate with partners to provide Sonoma County school with local food sourced from micro farmers and farmers using climate-friendly, regenerative practices. NCRC&DC will revitalize school gardens with plantings, infrastructure, and education; identify solutions to barriers to farm-to-school models; and provide farm trips and classroom modules.

Section 3: The number of schools and students served by applicable community need metrics (such as free/reduced meal rates)

"Community Need" is the highest prioritized scoring element of the California Farm to School Incubator grant program. In Cohort 1, it accounted for 50 out of 100 points available on the scorecard, and in Cohort 2, it accounted for 40 out of 100 points available on the scorecard. Below, you'll read how Cohort 1 prioritized community need, as well as updated data on how Cohort 2 reaches underserved demographics of California school children.

Cohort 1

- Cohort 1 prioritized projects with high free and reduced meal eligibility rates, CalEnviroscreen scores, food insecurity rates, and unemployment rates, as well as projects located in USDA Promise Zones, communities impacted by recent natural disasters like wildfires or floods, and additional "other" data applicants submitted to highlight unmet or significant need in their communities.
- The Cohort 1 scorecard also aimed to serve diverse communities by providing additional points for projects that serve or were conducted in partnership with American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and/or Hispanics.

Cohort 2

- Cohort 2 maintained and refined priorities from Cohort 1. Of the second cohort's 1.3 million students served:
 - 81% of projects directly served Title I schools
 - 71% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals compared to 60% of students statewide
 - Project serves disproportionately more Hispanic/Latino students (65% project-wide compared to 56% statewide) and non-white students (89% project-wide compared to 80% of statewide population)

Section 4: The geographic distribution of awarded grants

The geographic distribution of awarded grants has grown to cover the entire state in farm to school projects. Cohort 1 highlights challenges engaging with more rural areas in the northern part of California, and Cohort 2 showcases how the CDFA Farm to School Network has grown to encompass additional parts of the state.

CDFA Farm to School Region Name + Counties	# of Cohort 1 Grantee Projects + dollars invested	# of Cohort 2 Grantee Projects + dollars invested
Superior Region (Siskiyou, Modoc, Shasta, Trinity, Tehama, Lassen, Plumas, Butte, Glenn, Colusa, Sutter, Yuba, Sierra, Nevada, Placer)	5 projects, \$435,759	29 projects, \$3,640,039 awarded
North Coast Region (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Lake)	6 projects, \$736,432 awarded	8 projects, \$1,207,452 awarded
Bay Area Region (Marin, Sonoma, Napa, Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda, Santa Clara, San Mateo, San Francisco)	9 projects, \$1,138,826 awarded	28 projects, \$4,466,860 awarded
Central Region (Yolo, Sacramento, El Dorado, Amador, San Joaquin, Calaveras, Alpine, Tuolumne, Stanislaus, Merced, Mariposa, Mono)	11 projects, \$1,255,278 awarded	19 projects, \$3,077,530 awarded
San Joaquin Region (Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Inyo, Kern)	4 projects, \$1,150,768 awarded	5 projects, \$1,244,885 awarded
Central Coast (Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura)	14 projects, \$907,594 awarded	25 projects, \$3,525,819 awarded
Greater Los Angeles (Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino)	9 projects, \$1,683,801 awarded	19 projects, \$4,700,476 awarded
Greater San Diego (Riverside, San Diego, Imperial)	5 projects, \$1,187,541 awarded	16 projects, \$3,637,003 awarded

Section 5: An assessment, to the extent feasible, on the degree to which the funded activities resulted in improved outcomes, such as increased awareness and consumption of healthier food options and improved academic outcomes

While existing research already clearly connects farm to school programs with increased awareness and consumption of healthy foods and improved academic outcomes, the California Farm to School incubator grant program has seen evidence of additional positive impacts on food systems' equity and local economic activity.

Food System Equity

- Cohort 2 funded 50 farms and four food hubs in addition to educational agencies and farm to school partnerships
- 42% of producers funded are at least 50% owned by people who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and 50% are owned by women. 94% of producer grantees are small to midsize.
- All food producers funded by the Farm to School Incubator Grant Program report using or planning to use Climate Smart Agricultural Practices

Local Economic Activity

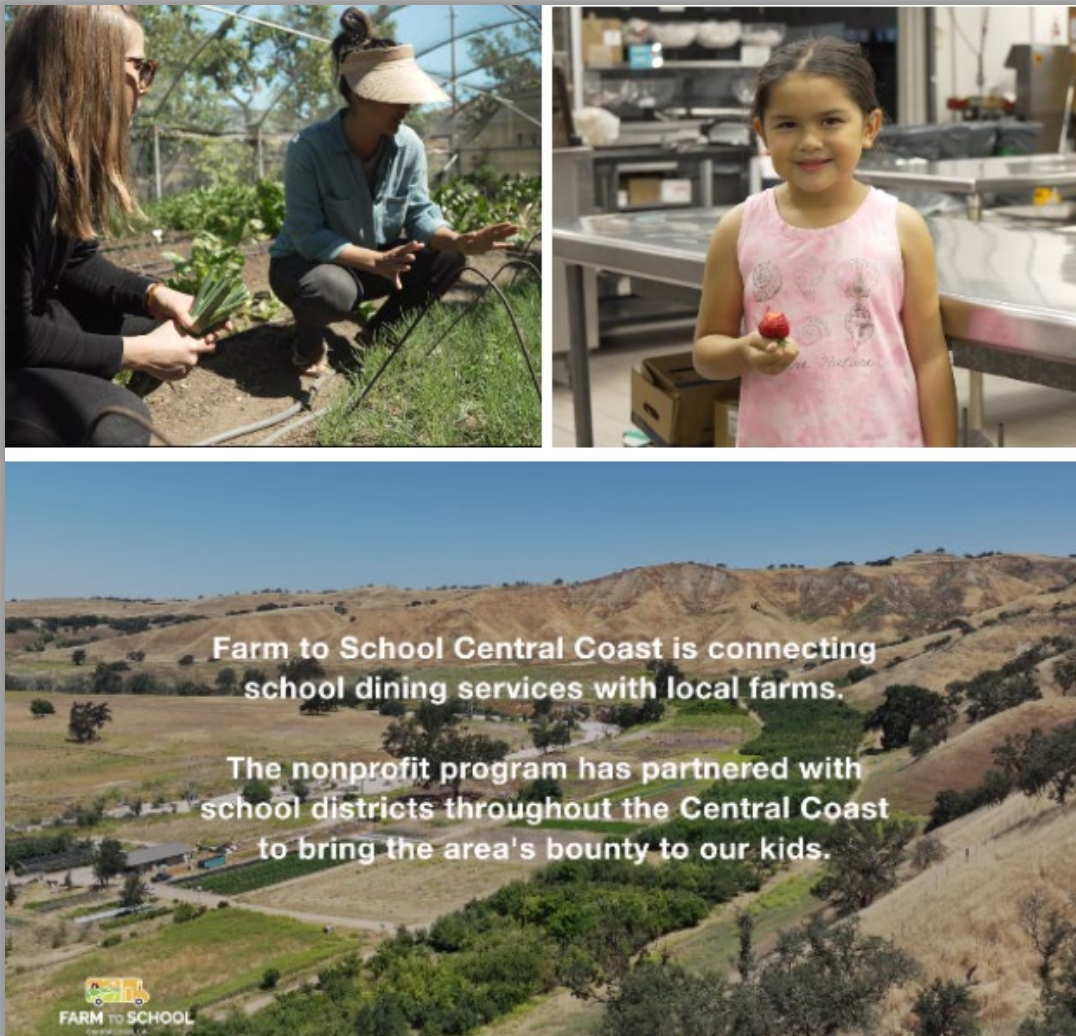
Cohort 1 data:

- As of January 2023, School Districts requested \$760,833 in local food procurement.
- Direct farm purchases accounted for 46% of purchases
- Purchases from food hubs were valued at 10% of total spending
- Purchases from small to midsize food producers totaled 42% of grant-funded purchases

Cohort 2 data:

- Grant program budgets fund at least 360 staff positions, both new and existing, which include full and part time salaries, hourly wages, and stipend payments for activities such as professional development.
- Other grant spending categories included:

- Infrastructure, equipment, materials, and supplies (27% of budget funds)
- Grantee staff and labor (25% of budget funds)
- Contractual costs (20% of budget funds)
- CA Food Procurement (18% of budget funds)



California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program grantee Slow Money San Luis Obispo is using grant funds to facilitate procurement of local food at five regional school districts; educate students, families, and the community about the benefits of farm to school programming; and build a support team to enable program sustainability. This past summer, grant funds were utilized to create a video to hear from farmers, school food and nutrition services departments, and the students themselves! Visit <https://www.slowmoneyslo.org/farm-to-school> to watch this video on the grantee's homepage.