

# State Policy Development for Oregon's Farm to School Grant Program: Successes and Lessons Learned

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This project was funded by Healthy Eating Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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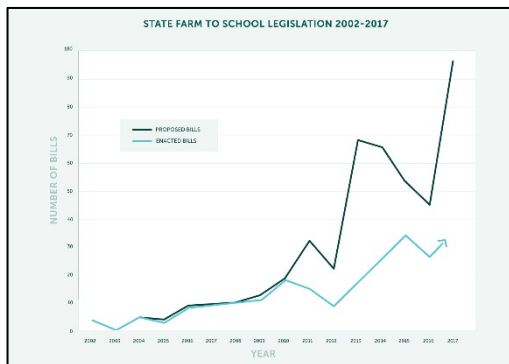
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## Executive Summary

Farm to school programs provide fresh, locally grown foods for school meals and educate children about food, agriculture. Multiple studies have demonstrated that farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and building vibrant communities.

With a growing awareness of the multiple benefits of farm to school activities,<sup>1</sup> legislatures in U.S. states and territories have proposed an exponential increase in farm to school policies over the last decade (Figure ES-1). Farm to school is a robust movement that operates in 42% of schools in the country, reaching 23.6 million students and moving approximately \$800 million worth of local products into schools annually.

**Figure ES-1. Change in Farm to School Policies**



Source: National Farm to School Network, 2017

In the last 3 years, over 200 farm to school policies have been proposed in state legislatures and territories with numerous types of farm to school policy options encouraging local procurement, gardens, or food and agricultural education (the three core elements of farm to school). Some examples include funding for grants or incentive programs, coordinator positions, and promotional activities. State farm to school policies are critical because they represent a move toward the institutionalization of farm to school by generating awareness, building coalitions, and taking ownership of farm to school growth and implementation in the state or territory. To extract best practices for state policy, an in-depth analysis

is needed to assess the impact on the intended outcomes. Oregon was one of the pioneers in trying to institutionalize farm to school programs. This report is aimed at documenting and analyzing the outcomes of state legislation in the state of Oregon.

### Farm to School Policy Development in Oregon

Oregon Representatives Brian Clem and Tina Kotek partnered with nonprofits Ecotrust and Upstream Public Health in 2006, making a commitment to use farm to school activities to improve child nutrition outcomes and support local agriculture. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) held its first statewide gathering of farm to school supporters, followed by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) hosting meetings between farmers and schools

<sup>1</sup> Benefits of Farm to School. Compiled research on the benefits of farm to school programs. [www.nfsn.org](http://www.nfsn.org). April 2007.

and commissioning a statewide needs assessment to identify opportunities and barriers to local procurement. In 2007, the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network was formed, resulting in the introduction of three farm to school bills in the legislature.<sup>2</sup> Two bills passed unanimously out of the House Education Committee but were not successful in the Ways and Means Committee. The third bill, passed through a budget note, created a full-time Farm to School Manager position in ODA. In 2008, the legislature approved a Farm to School and School Garden program with staff in ODE. Ecotrust began a pilot program with Portland Public Schools and the Gervais School District to examine the impacts of incentives for local purchasing. In 2009, advocates sought state funding for a farm to school and school garden grant program, but the Ways and Means Committee did not approve this proposed legislation. Ecotrust and Upstream Public Health published the results of their pilot program and a health impact assessment on farm to school, respectively, in 2011. Data from both these studies supported the benefits of farm to school for students and communities and facilitated a positive response from the Ways and Means Committee who approved HB 2800 to create the Farm to School and School Garden Grant Program as a pilot program with \$200,000 in state funding.

In 2012, ODA launched a "Celebrate Oregon Agriculture" campaign highlighting farm to school programs throughout the state. Advocates initiated a "Legislators to the Lunchroom" effort to encourage legislators to visit schools and see farm to school activities in the cafeteria and garden. HB 2649 passed in July 2013, which increased the funding for the farm to school pilot to \$1 million. HB 2649 specified the funds be allocated for both procurement and education activities—"at least 80% for procurement and at least 10% for education," leaving 10% up to the discretion of the school district with flexibility to spend on either procurement or education.

A significant milestone in Oregon farm to school policy efforts came in 2015 when the legislature approved Senate Bill (SB) 501, which allocated \$4.5 million in farm to school grant funding for school years (SYs) 2015–17 and made several changes to the grant program:

- Provided further guidance on procurement and education funding (80% for procurement and 20% for education funding)
- Changed the procurement funding from a competitive grant process to an "opt-in" process for all districts that agreed to follow the rules and reporting requirements
- Removed language that prohibited using grant funds to "supplant existing purchases"
- Removed the limit of 15 cents per student per meal, simplifying reporting and claims

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<sup>2</sup> House Bill (HB) 3307 created a position within ODA to ready the Oregon agricultural community to work with Oregon schools. HB 3476 created a farm to school program in ODE and reimbursed school districts that used Oregon agricultural products. HB 3185 provided grants to schools throughout the state to start or maintain school gardens.

- Removed the limit of use of funds “for lunch only,” simplifying reporting, claims, and storage and providing districts additional opportunities to use the funding
- Opened education funding to school districts, nonprofit organizations, and commodity commissions<sup>3</sup>
- Expanded education program criteria to include programs recognizing culturally appropriate foods

Farm to school stakeholders in Oregon led a massive effort to organize supporters and legislators to advocate for continued full funding for the grant program in 2017. HB 2038 passed unanimously in both the House and the Senate (funding maintained at \$4.5 million). The bill was revised to again specify that grant funds should not be used to supplant existing purchases of Oregon foods, and it expanded entities eligible for education grants to include education service districts, federally recognized Indian tribes, schools overseen by the Bureau of Indian Education, and soil and water conservation districts.

## **Policy Impact and Challenges**

Although stakeholders had different definitions of success, it was clear that ODE effectively implemented SB 501 to varying degrees. Designing and funding SB 501 to provide procurement grants to all interested districts, rather than as a competitive grant, was an important policy feature that made the program more equitable: ODE distributed funds based on the number of school lunches served, and many low-income districts were more likely to purchase locally than they did without funding. Further, mandating that education grants comprise 20% of legislation funding led to an increased awareness of and interest in where food comes from. Through farm- and garden-based education programs, students, parents, and teachers became more engaged with fruit, vegetables, and other local products. Creating more parity across Oregon with the opt-in legislation change with SB 501 also resulted in increased engagement in the grant program from producers, distributors, and other community members who otherwise would not have been involved. By participating in farm to school, these individuals found a market for unique or smaller products, as well as high-volume orders such as with Harvest of the Month.

Sixteen districts opened new accounts with Oregon producers and 23 districts opened new accounts with distributors offering Oregon products. Overall, schools purchased produce from 74 Oregon farm businesses; purchased meat, seafood, and/or poultry from 27 Oregon businesses; and purchased dairy products from 15 Oregon dairy businesses.

The findings from this study reveal that the current legislation has been overwhelmingly successful in meeting intended impacts, especially as they related to the effectiveness of the farm to school grants in providing access to locally grown, nutritious foods to school districts,

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<sup>3</sup> For commodity commissions to apply, they must be recognized under ORS 576.051 to 576.455 or ORS Chapter 577 or 578.

principally low income. However, the process of conducting the study also revealed some challenges related to implementing the policy that are worth noting here:

1. **Logistical challenges (for procurement grantees, producers, and distributors):** Based on responses to the ODE Farm to School Progress Report survey, as many as 53 districts faced challenges with locating local producers and finding the time to implement farm to school activities. Most districts reported difficulties processing locally grown products in their kitchens, finding local products at the correct price and quantity, and finding local vendors.
2. **Purchasing strategy challenges (for procurement grantees, producers, and distributors):** The three main purchasing strategies used were forward contracting (a district makes an agreement in advance with a producer to buy a product), coordinated purchasing (multiple districts purchase the same product from the same vendor with delivery at the same time to one location to help overcome "minimum drop" requirements), and direct purchasing (a district purchases a product directly from a local farm, ranch, or processor rather than buying through a distributor). According to the ODE Farm to School Progress Report survey, most districts used direct purchasing methods (53 districts), and fewer districts used coordinated purchasing (20 districts) or forward contracting (8 districts). Forward contracting did not always serve producers and distributors well because the forecasting risk was challenging for producers. In larger districts, purchasing enough of the same local product for all the schools within the district was a challenge.
3. **Grant administration challenges (for state agency partners and procurement grantees):** Several challenges were related to reporting and information collection for the reimbursements. Baseline purchasing data may have been inflated because districts were not familiar with purchasing local products and were not aware of which local items they had been purchasing before participating in the grant program. Additionally, ODE did not require districts to use their local purchase tracking tools, creating incomplete progress report data. It was difficult to track and document the changes districts were making in procurement practices using the grant funds. Technical assistance was a significant need articulated by grantees, despite the 17 training opportunities conducted in SY 2015–16. With only two staff members at ODE managing the grant process for the whole state, capacity for technical assistance was limited. Our interviews revealed that more ODE staff are needed, at least one person each to focus on procurement and education/curriculum.

## Lessons Learned

This study highlighted design attributes in the Oregon farm to school policies that successfully leveraged the limited state resources for improving farm to school participation in school districts. Other states can learn from these findings and apply the lessons to their contexts. We offer four key lessons from the study:

- **Importance of Inclusion:** Not all school districts were able to participate in the Oregon Farm to School grant program when it was a competitive grant program. When the program was converted to an opt-in program and distributed grants to schools based on their number of school lunches served, participation increased among low-income school districts, distributors, and farmers.
- **Importance of Training:** Although school districts may be somewhat familiar with administrative processes related to grants, the claim process for accessing the



reimbursements through this grant program was significantly different, and districts would have benefited from additional training. Supplementary technical assistance on local food procurement, including food distribution and transportation; food handling; and food safety guidelines would have made implementation proceed more smoothly. Lastly, trainings on record keeping would also benefit the state by providing opportunities to collect and document data for validating such grant programs in the future.

- **Preparation of Implementing State Agencies:** State agencies that will be implementing the state policies must be on board and adequately staffed to ensure timely processing of claims and provision of technical assistance. State agencies would also benefit from adequate pre-implementation planning time to address tracking, reporting, and training needs.
- **Clarity in Bill Language:** Lastly, the language of any farm to school legislation must specifically target the intent of the farm to school policy. Through this study, we learned that during the early implementation phase school districts were purchasing milk and bread produced in the state using grant funds. Although these were local products, schools were already purchasing them before the grant was available. Evolution of the policy resulted in new language that restricts "*prior purchased processed or produced foods*," which now fully ensures that the grant funds go toward purchasing *new* locally grown and produced Oregon products, thereby stimulating the state's economy.

This study was conducted early in the implementation of the Oregon policy. With the resolution of several administrative, technical, and logistical challenges and a modification to the bill language, the grant program is now functioning more smoothly in achieving its intent. Additional follow-up research would be useful to assess the continued success of farm to school grants in Oregon.

## Conclusion

Evaluating the effect of policies on program implementation is important to understand policy successes and areas for improvement. Based on analyses of stakeholder interviews as well as Grantee Farm to School Baseline and Progress Report data, we identified farm to school state policy design attributes that have helped to successfully leverage limited state resources to improve farm to school participation among school districts in Oregon. We also identified specific challenges that provide areas of improvement for future farm to school policy in both Oregon and other states.

## **1. Introduction**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2015) reported that 55% of Oregon school districts participated in farm to school as of 2014. More recent data from the Oregon Farm to School Counts website (<http://oregonfarmtoschool.org/>) reported that of the lunches served in Oregon, the schools that opted in to the grant program represent 89% of those lunches (Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network & Ecotrust, n.d.). State policies such as those in Oregon have evolved to support farm to school growth with 46 states currently having proposed or passed farm to school legislation (National Farm to School Network [NFSN], 2017). The trend in state policies supporting farm to school is encouraging and has significant potential to move the needle on institutionalizing farm to school within states. With the increase in the number of state and local policies that direct state investment in farm to school programs, Oregon has been a leader in the farm to school movement and has provided innovative programming models and policy advocacy examples for other states to learn from. Oregon is unique in that through coordination of various partners advocates of farm to school were able to bring together the crucial components necessary for a successful farm to school policy. These components included substantial funding from the state over several legislative cycles for both procurement and education, statewide farm to school coordinator positions within state agencies, the facilitation of a database to aid local procurement, and a group of over 900 individuals in support of farm to school in Oregon. However, limited studies have examined the effects of such policies on program implementation. The purpose of this technical report is to describe Oregon's legislative process with regard to farm to school and identify Oregon's farm to school state policy design attributes that have successfully leveraged limited state resources to improve farm to school participation among school districts. This research responds to a need for information about the effectiveness of a state farm to school policy that supports healthy eating activities through a combination of targeted funding streams and state agency support.

## **2. Background on Farm to School as a National Movement**

From only a handful of programs in the late 1990s, farm to school has rapidly grown into a robust movement operational in 42% of all schools in the country, reaching 23.6 million students and moving approximately \$800 million worth of local products into schools annually. Results from multiple studies show that farm to school helps empower children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. Farm to school is grassroots driven, and implementation differs by location but always includes one of three core elements: (1) procurement: local foods are purchased and promoted to serve as part of lunches, as a snack, or as a taste test; (2) education: students participate in educational activities related to agriculture, food, health, or nutrition; and (3) school gardens: students engage in hands-

on learning through gardening. The benefits of farm to school span multiple sectors including public health, education, economic development, agriculture, and the environment. Framed as the “triple win of farm to school,” programs primarily affect three key stakeholders: children, farmers, and communities (NFSN, n.d.).

With specific activities that connect children to the source of their food, farm to school creates healthy school food environments and supports the development of healthy eating habits while also improving family food security by boosting the quality of school meal programs (Green, Sim, & Breiner, 2013; White House Taskforce on Childhood Obesity, 2010; USDA, 2010; Turner & Chaloupka, 2010; Keener, Goodman, Lowry, & Kettle Khan, 2009).

From an economic development standpoint, farmers gain access to the school food institutional market, which is estimated at approximately \$31 billion per year (USDA, Food and Nutrition Service [FNS], n.d.). Research has shown that procurement of local products for school cafeterias generated economic benefits in Vermont (Roche, Becot, Kolodinsky, & Conner, 2016), New York (Office of the New York State Comptroller, 2016), and Oregon (Kane et al., 2010).



The community benefits from farm to school are less tangible but provide for greater family and community engagement in schools and local agriculture. In Vermont, a public survey revealed an increase in community awareness about and interest in the purchase of local foods and the foods served in school cafeterias (Schmidt, Kolodinsky, & Symans, 2006).

Developing a robust national network contributed to the rapid increase in the number of farm to school sites in the country. Since 2007, the NFSN has worked to connect stakeholders and expand farm to school activities. Subsequently, advocates, service providers, and farmers have established several state farm to school and farm to early care and education (ECE) networks. The NFSN includes Core

and Supporting partner organizations in all 50 states; Washington, DC; and U.S. territories; thousands of farm to school supporters; and a national advisory board and staff. Developing and disseminating best practices, facilitating peer-to-peer learning and networking opportunities, and leveraging the collective power of the network for policy advocacy have been the framework for the NFSN's operations.

### **3. The Passage of Oregon's Farm to School Legislation**

Before 2005, individuals in Oregon championed farm to school activities with no formal organizing body. However, in 2006, several crucial components necessary for a successful farm to school effort materialized: legislative support, advocacy through nonprofits, and increased interactions between farmers and schools. More specifically on the legislative side, Oregon elected Representatives Brian Clem and Tina Kotek to the House who took an interest in whether schools served produce from local farms in cafeterias. With regard to advocacy, two individuals working for nonprofit organizations (Ecotrust and Upstream Public Health) shaped the concept of using "farm to school" to improve nutrition of children in schools as well as support local agriculture. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) also held its first statewide gathering of farm to school supporters. Additionally, to support the engagement of farmers, the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) began hosting meet and greets between farmers and schools while ODE commissioned a statewide needs assessment to identify opportunities for and barriers to farm to school procurement.

Continuing the momentum, in 2007, a number of community organizations collaborated and formed the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network to improve the health and well-being of youth, families, farms, and the environment by supporting members of Oregon's farm to school and school garden community. This organization ended up being essential in the eventual passage of Oregon's legislation. Together with Brian Clem, Tina Kotek, Ecotrust, and Upstream Public Health, the group worked to develop a proposal for a three-part "Farm to School and School Garden" program introducing three bills to the legislature.<sup>4</sup> Two of the bills passed unanimously out of the House Education Committee but were not successful in Ways and Means. Ultimately, the legislature created a full-time Farm to School Manager position in ODA through a budget note. While the success was smaller than originally hoped for, the group used the energy to continue pushing for farm to school legislation in Oregon.

In 2008, the legislature created a parallel Farm to School and School Garden program in ODA with staff in ODE. Also in 2008, Ecotrust, began a pilot program with Portland Public Schools and the Gervais School District to examine the impacts of an additional seven cents per meal reimbursement for local purchasing. One of the purposes of the pilot was to gather data to support future legislation. In 2009, advocates sought an appropriation for a state-funded farm to school and school garden grant program, which passed unanimously out of committee but was not successful in Ways and Means because of poor economic conditions in Oregon at the time.

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<sup>4</sup> HB 3307 created a position within the ODA to ready the Oregon agricultural community to work with Oregon schools. HB 3476 created a farm to school program in the ODE and reimbursed school districts that used Oregon agricultural products. HB 3185 provided grants to schools throughout the state to start or maintain school gardens.

In 2011, Ecotrust published the results of its pilot program called "The Impact of Seven Cents," which examined the economic and health benefits from the additional reimbursement for local purchasing. Additionally, Upstream Public Health published a health impact assessment on the potential health, economic, environmental, and social impacts of a subsidy; both showed multiple positive benefits for students and communities. These reports contained the quantitative data the legislature needed to push a bill through Ways and Means approving House Bill (HB) 2800, which created the Farm to School and School Garden Grant Program as a pilot program with \$200,000 of state funding. ODE distributed funds from the grant based on competitive applications from school districts with 87.5% awarded for food procurement and 12.5% for educational activities. The legislation required that grantees use the procurement funds to purchase products "grown or processed in Oregon" and not use funds to "supplant" prior purchases (e.g., use the funds on products schools already purchased for meals). Education funds were for "food-based, garden-based, or agriculture-based educational activities."

To continue promoting farm to school outside of those districts receiving pilot funds, ODA launched a "Celebrate Oregon Agriculture" campaign in 2012 highlighting farm to school programs throughout the state to mass audiences. Advocates also established a "Legislators to the Lunchroom" effort to encourage legislators to visit schools and see cafeteria and garden programs in action. The endeavor reached over 20 Oregon legislators, and advocates felt that the effort contributed to successfully expanding the funding of the pilot by \$1,000,000 with HB 2649 in July 2013. Because of delays, ODE awarded the first farm to school and school garden grants from HB 2800 to 11 school districts in spring 2013, and the success of HB 2649 allowed ODE to increase the amount of the grants and include eight more districts in the first grant cycle for school year (SY) 2013–15. HB 2649 changed the allocation between procurement and education funds to "at least 80% for procurement, and at least 10% for education," which left 10% of spending up to the discretion of the district to be spent either on procurement or education.

In 2015, Oregon farm to school reached another milestone when the legislature approved Senate Bill (SB) 501, which allocated \$4.5 million in farm to school funding for SY 2015–17. This legislation included several significant changes to the grant program:

- Separated procurement funding from education funding with the split changing to 80% for procurement and 20% for education.
- Changed the procurement funding from a competitive grant process to an "opt-in" process for all districts that agreed to follow the rules and reporting requirements.
- Removed the language that prohibited using grant funds to "supplant existing purchases."
- Removed the limit of 15 cents per student per meal, which simplified reporting and claims.

- Removed the limit of “for lunch only,” which simplified reporting, claims, and storage and provided districts with additional opportunities to use the funding such as for other meals and/or snacks during the day.
- Opened education funding, while still a competitive process, to school districts, nonprofit organizations, and commodity commissions.<sup>5</sup>
- Expanded education program criteria to include that programs should be “culturally appropriate for the students they serve.”

ODE also conducted a formal rule-making process for the first time regarding the education grants of which they awarded 24 in 2016.

In 2016, ODA received a USDA farm to school support services grant to provide technical assistance and professional development to FoodCorps Oregon to support farm to school programming around the state. ODA also sponsored Oregon Farm to School Producer Awards in 2016 and 2017 that recognized 11 producers around the state for their contributions to farm to school in their communities.

In 2017, reductions in state funding threatened to severely cripple this pioneering grant program. Stakeholders in the state led a massive effort to organize supporters and legislators to advocate for continued full funding. HB 2038 passed unanimously in both the House and the Senate with funding maintained at \$4.5 million. The bill was revised from the previous version to specify that grant funds should not be used to supplant existing purchases of Oregon foods, and it expanded entities eligible for education grants to include education service districts, federally recognized Indian tribes, schools overseen by the Bureau of Indian Education, and soil and water conservation districts.

## **4. Methods**

The purpose of this project was to assess the evidence that Oregon's farm to school state policy design resulted in greater participation in farm to school through grant funds for school districts. This technical report describes both the state agency's and districts' experiences implementing the farm to school legislation and examines the successes and challenges of the landmark policy. It concludes with lessons learned on Oregon's farm to school state policy design.

Our data collection for this analysis consisted of two components: (1) qualitative data from 19 interviews with representatives of five stakeholder groups involved with the success of the legislation (procurement grantees, education grantees, producers/distributors, nonprofit and policy advocates and state agency partners, and ECE staff) and (2) quantitative data from the ODE Farm to School Baseline and Progress Reports.

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<sup>5</sup> For commodity commissions to apply, they must be recognized under ORS 576.051 to 576.455 or ORS Chapter 577 or 578.

Each of the stakeholder groups offered a unique perspective on how Oregon's policy benefits children, districts, producers, and distributors, as well as the challenges faced by each of the stakeholders in implementing the policy. Furthermore, we gathered recommendations from each of these groups for improving the policy in the future and for disseminating to other states interested in enacting similar legislation. We scheduled 16 in-person interviews and three telephone interviews across the state of Oregon (**Table 4-1**). Although ECE providers are not yet benefitting from a state policy related to farm to school in Oregon, we conducted interviews with ECE providers for future potential legislation.

**Table 4-1. Interviews Conducted by Stakeholder Group and Location**

Stakeholder Group	Number of Interviews	Locations
Procurement grantees	2	Beaverton, Rockaway Beach
Education grantees	2	Milwaukie, Astoria
Producers/distributors	6	Portland, Eugene, Talent, Medford, Parkdale
Nonprofit and policy advocates and state agency partners	6	Portland, Salem, Eugene, Ashland
ECE farm to school participants	3	Central Point, Portland, Newport

The research team conducted semistructured interviews that followed interview guides and audio-recorded the interviews with permission from the interviewees. The interviews provided qualitative data on the coalitions and champions that aid in policy implementation, public-private partnerships, the integration of new work into schools' existing programming, technical assistance for both districts and producers/distributors, children's acceptance of new foods, and administrative challenges.

Following the interviews, the research team identified themes using a grounded theory approach within and across the different stakeholder groups and linked the themes to the research questions. Grounded theory is a systematic methodology that begins with a research question and/or the collection of qualitative data (Rhine, 2014). During the analysis, the research team tagged repeated ideas, concepts, or elements that emerged from the data with codes. Researchers then grouped the codes into concepts and themes.

The ODE Farm to School Baseline and Progress Reports, which were submitted by procurement and education grantees as a requirement for receiving grant funds, provided additional insights to the analysis particularly related to implementation challenges.

We explored the following research questions:

- (1) What were the successes and challenges of implementing SB 501?
- (2) What were the successes and challenges of implementing farm to school in ECE settings?

- (3) What coalitions, champions, and public-private partnerships aided in the success of Oregon's farm to school legislation?
- (4) What was the availability of technical assistance to school districts during implementation of SB 501?

Below we address these research questions through the themes that emerged from our qualitative analysis.

## **5. Successes of Oregon's Legislation**

The stakeholders we interviewed had different definitions of success; however, it was evident that ODE effectively implemented SB 501 to varying degrees with respect to equity, awareness, and engagement with the community. Sections 5.1 through 5.4 provide four lessons on the successes of Oregon's legislation for states considering a similar policy.

### **5.1 Define Success**

The definition of success is crucial to the implementation of a policy because it determines the outcome variables by which to measure that success. Although SB 501 did not have a unified definition of success, stakeholders defined what a successful farm to school initiative would be to them. The definitions that emerged from our qualitative analysis included an institutionalized program with Oregon districts finding and buying local foods and understanding their importance, children understanding where food comes from, increased awareness and growth of farm to school in the community, and the integration of school gardens and education within the curricula. Below are exemplary comments on this topic.

For the procurement component, success to me would be if more than half the districts in Oregon are finding and buying local foods, being thoughtful about where that food comes from. I want the grant program to be institutionalized into Oregon's food service and education. We want it to be just something that schools do—that they have the resources to do that, systems to track it. We want them to care about it and know why it's important. For the education, we want school gardens and education integrated. — State agency partner

My definition of success is having a fully functional farm to school program and maintenance for the gardens during the summer months. It is having a staff member devoted to the grant program. It is watching the kids cultivate, and try it, and learn, and then have the food available. — ECE provider

Our goal is for kids to have an understanding of where food comes from and to have a connection with land, food, and environment. We're all about creating environmental stewards. It's difficult to measure. We want kids to have new and positive experiences. — ECE provider



Developing a definition of program success is important for the Oregon farm to school effort to continue receiving state funding as stakeholders work toward sustainability. For other states considering similar legislation, defining success from the beginning will aid in measuring progress toward program outcomes. Even without having a unified definition of success, Oregon stakeholders found SB 501 to be successful regarding equity, awareness, and engagement with the community.

## **5.2 Establish an Opt-In Grant Program**

Before passage of SB 501, the pilot program under HB 2649 provided limited funding through a competitive grant program for farm to school. Being competitive made the grant program exclusive; it was not providing the opportunity to participate in farm to school for all students. Furthermore, many smaller and/or lower-income districts did not have the resources to prepare the grant application. With the funding allotted to SB 501, the procurement aspect of the grant program became open to all districts interested in participating, which our qualitative analysis found was one of the biggest successes of the legislation. ODE dispersed funds according to the number of school lunches served, making the grant program more equitable across districts. Our research found that many low-income districts began purchasing produce locally when they would not have otherwise. Below are comments from stakeholders on this topic.

That's been a big success with the opt-in change to farm to school—there's more parity, more equity to give all districts the opportunity to be part of the grant program ... The success with the expansion has been bringing schools on that haven't had the opportunity to do farm to school. — State agency partner

141 school districts<sup>6</sup> in Oregon are engaged in farm to school and buying local food. I would guess that 130 have been successful at using state dollars to find and buy local food and they wouldn't have done it otherwise. And we know they didn't do it before because they couldn't tell us about it. They learned to engage with Oregon farms and producers and processors. There were a lot of new vendors and distributors on board, so schools are buying product like Bornstein's Seafood, which they couldn't have purchased otherwise. Lots of education wouldn't have happened that did happen because there weren't resources before. — Policy advocate

As one of the state agency partners noted, SB 501 made locally produced products available to all districts in the entire state if they chose to participate, increasing the equity among districts. For other states considering similar legislation, providing all districts with some funding without a competitive process will likely increase interest in the initiative and encourage participation.

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<sup>6</sup> An additional 15 districts joined the grant program for SY 2016–17, bringing the total number of participating districts to 141.

### **5.3 Include Education Grants**

More awareness of and interest in where food comes from for students, parents, and teachers is another success of SB 501 that emerged from our qualitative analysis. Our analysis showed that much of the awareness emerged through the education grants. Often organizations provided the education through these grants in an interactive way that engaged students and encouraged them to eat the foods they worked with in a garden or were learning about in an outdoor classroom. The progress reports submitted by education grantees provided insight into how their initiatives increased awareness about fruit and vegetables among students. Below are comments on this topic.

It feels like most students don't have any knowledge. We've been here 5 years now and kids have become more educated. At the high school level, they did not know the difference between a beet and a radish—educating kids on what fruit and vegetables look like is a big thing. It's surprising how many kids don't know. — Education grantee

The head cook at our elementary school told me that on Wednesday the first-grade classes had harvested tomatoes from the school garden. On salad Thursday, a young student came up to get his tray and wanted to make sure that he was getting the tomatoes he picked the day before because his were the "biggest and reddest." He also wanted the seeds to take home and plant so he could have them all summer long. — Education grantee

Teachers didn't realize how many students had a connection to seafood ... Teachers didn't realize how many parents and relatives are employed [by the seafood industry]. It's been neat to watch the teachers realize how big the seafood industry really is. — Education grantee

Furthermore, ECE is in a unique position to affect the youngest children, and from our stakeholder interviews, we found that many Oregon ECE centers are choosing to participate in farm to ECE even without funding from the state. Some ECE centers received funding from USDA grants and others relied on donations for their gardens. For example, one center put a monetary donation toward an apple tree, strawberry plants, and raised beds to start their garden. After seeing the success of the garden, another donor provided them with 15 blueberry plants. These ECE centers chose to focus on educating children on where their food comes from and often used school gardens to do that.

However, awareness of the grant program is still growing. One stakeholder noted that the state needs to continue funding the education aspect of the grant program to continue raising awareness of farm to school. For other states considering similar legislation, incorporating funding for farm to school education and activities is crucial even if this process remains competitive.

## **5.4 Encourage Engagement in the Grant Program**

Engagement from producers, distributors, and other community members is also a success of SB 501 that emerged from our qualitative analysis. Many producers and distributors were seeing sales that they would not have seen otherwise, and producers were thinking about schools when they prepared for the upcoming planting season. Sixteen districts opened new accounts with one to five Oregon producers, and 23 districts opened new accounts with one to five distributors offering Oregon products. Overall, schools purchased produce from 74 Oregon companies; purchased meat, seafood, and/or poultry from 27 Oregon businesses; and purchased dairy products from 15 Oregon dairy companies. Two of the themes that emerged from our qualitative analysis were that farm to school provided a market for unique and/or smaller produce and that Harvest of the Month provided an opportunity for high-volume orders.

### **Portland Public Schools Nutrition Services staff visit Kiyokawa Family Orchards in 2014**



Source: The photo is courtesy of Randy Kiyokawa.

Both producers and distributors had also gone to schools to do taste tests of local produce, and some had students come to their farms or distribution centers for tours.

I tell farmers that schools always like cool, unique items that are different and increase participation in vegetable consumption. Like a kumquat or a kiwi

berry, rhubarb, things that would get students excited and talking about it. — Distributor

Furthermore, when we asked producers how farm to school has contributed to the growth and expansion of their business, their praise of the grant program was resounding. Not only did the producers keep track of quantitative metrics such as sales, but they also considered qualitative measures of success. Farmers taking pride in providing food to the community was another theme that emerged from our analysis. Below are exemplary comments on this topic.

We probably sell \$5,000 worth of product a year to schools. It's unlikely to ever be 5 or 10% of our business, but it's an important component because you're building your future. It's having kids understand it's safe to eat U.S. seafood and having them learn about the seafood industry. — Producer

It's not that we have had a waterfall of sales, but what sales we have are almost completely due to the legislation. We had zero, so only because they can afford it because it's an Oregon grown product. We got sales we wouldn't have gotten otherwise—it's at an entry level. — Distributor

We delivered almost 20,000 pounds of food to the schools. But we also base our success on the enthusiasm from school nutrition supervisors and cooking staff, the morale of kids and staff when we deliver better produce from farms they drive by every day, and empty school lunch trays versus full trays with processed foods. — Producer

Sales have gone up exponentially in the last few years. This year, it's 10% of my direct sales market. In 2016, we sold 81,600 pounds. It's substantial and has a ripple effect. When a school orders from me, they might order 300-400 boxes in a week. Then I have my crew pick and pack it, so they're making \$12 to \$14 an hour. They make more money and then they spend it reinvesting that money into the economy. — Producer

For other states considering similar legislation, increasing both awareness and engagement in the community is essential. Examples of engagement from Oregon include holding gatherings of farm to school supporters, hosting meet and greets between farmers and schools, and encouraging legislators and parents to visit schools and see cafeteria and garden programs in action.

## **6. Challenges of Oregon's Legislation**

Although the legislation has been successful in many ways, both the procurement grantees and ODA and ODE experienced challenges that indicate areas of improvement for future legislation and implementation. Three main challenges emerged from the analyses of our stakeholder interviews and the procurement grantee baseline and progress report surveys that other states considering similar legislation can learn from:

- (1) logistical challenges for procurement grantees, producers, and distributors
- (2) purchasing strategy challenges for procurement grantees, producers, and distributors
- (3) grant administration challenges for state agency partners and procurement grantees

In terms of education grantees, most did not report having any challenges.

## 6.1 Logistical Challenges for Districts, Producers, and Distributors

The ODE Farm to School Progress Report survey asked procurement grantees about the challenges they faced in purchasing Oregon foods; many of the challenges were logistical.

**Table 6-1** displays the survey responses from the procurement districts, which support the findings from our interviews with stakeholders. The challenge that most districts faced (53 districts) was finding the time to do research to locate local producers. Three other top challenges that 40 to 44 districts noted were not having the time to process locally grown products in their kitchens (44 districts), not finding local products at a price or in a quantity that worked for the district (42 districts), and having difficulty finding local producers to buy from (40 districts).

**Table 6-1. Challenges to Purchasing Oregon Foods for All Districts**

Reason	Districts (N=121)
We don't have time to do the research to find local producers	53
We don't have time to process locally grown products in our kitchens	44
Oregon products are not available at a price or in a quantity that works for us	42
It's hard to find local producers to buy from	40
We need help finding Oregon producers and/or products	36
Challenges with delivery	3
Insurance coverage of farmers	3
Other	10
None	13

Notes: Grantees could select multiple reasons.

Source: Data are from the ODE Farm to School Progress Report survey.

The challenge most frequently mentioned in our stakeholder interviews was the logistics of participating in farm to school for both the districts and producers/distributors. From providing products in a size, form, and quantity at an affordable price to delivery and storage of products, logistics were complicated and a time-intensive effort for both parties. School kitchens and warehouses often are not optimized for all types of food processing and

delivery. Additionally, as a food safety issue, trainings are required of kitchen staff if they handle raw meat. Below are comments from stakeholders on this topic.

Last year I was trying to procure buffalo meat, but it was too expensive. We also ran out of time. The farmer was very willing, but a beef patty meeting 2 ounces of protein and frozen was complicated. We could freeze it ourselves, but it had to be in packaging to freeze. — Procurement grantee

Our central warehouse is not set up for food other than a freezer. The only thing we've had dropped there was Hermiston watermelons because that's how he could do it. We had staff use trucks to deliver them to schools, and it took a lot of time. We paid a lot in staff time. — Procurement grantee

Historically, logistical issues particularly impact rural, small schools, especially in remote or Eastern Oregon. Sometimes these schools aren't on the distribution routes of distributors. — State agency partner

Another logistical challenge for districts was finding the time to do the research to locate producers. Many of the procurement grantees had no knowledge of how to find and buy Oregon products, and they had minimal time to devote to this task. Although a list of producers by food product who were willing to do business with districts did exist ([www.oregonharvestforschools.com](http://www.oregonharvestforschools.com)), either school districts did not know about it or districts reported challenges using this list. Below are comments on this topic.

School districts weren't as motivated as we assumed. Just giving money doesn't make them more motivated to buy local foods—they need to know how to find, how to buy, how to process them in the kitchen. Distributors also have trouble telling us what are Oregon products. — Policy advocate

Administratively, it's not a perfect process. It is challenging because Oregon farm to school has a low threshold for procurement—it can get grown here and processed in Washington. There's more slaughter facilities in Washington, Idaho, and California. There's so many ways for products to qualify. There's not enough specificity for school districts to give them guidance. There's no path for them to follow. That's been challenging. There hasn't been a real campaign to educate entire districts about farm to school—from principals to school boards. Business offices may submit claims for bread just because it's easy to submit even though they did not do something innovative. — State agency partner

Producers and distributors also found the lack of time school nutrition directors had to devote to farm to school to be a challenge and had a hard time connecting with districts.

It's been a challenge in that trying to find the customers and develop a communication relationship has been a roller coaster of effort due to the lack of response. It's hard to keep the information flow without steady income coming in. I started off doing weekly updates, then monthly updates, then when someone asked. Now, I do a more targeted approach. — Distributor

Another challenge that I don't have an answer for is to give school nutrition specialists some focused, paid time to pursue [farm to school] goals where they have guidance and approval to stop what they're doing and pursue these goals. The time has been the biggest challenge. Me to catch them when they have time, and them just to have time. — Distributor

Paperwork associated with the grant program was a logistical challenge for some districts more than others, particularly tracking local purchases for procurement grantees. Seven interviewees acknowledged that tracking local purchases was a challenge. Reimbursements required that the districts show proof that they purchased local Oregon products. Administratively, this paperwork was time consuming, especially at the beginning of the first grant cycle. Because of the legislation and districts' interests in local products, many distributors now provide information on local purchases in their monthly reports to districts, making tracking and reimbursement manageable for more districts. Below are exemplary comments on this topic.

The first year we were part of the grant program and never got a reimbursement. I didn't know where to get the information to fill it out. How do I know what on this invoice is Oregon? We found out that Duck Delivery and Sysco will send us that information in a spreadsheet. Then I can highlight, copy, and paste into a spreadsheet for ODE. If it wasn't for getting these electronic reports from our vendors, it would be next to impossible. — Procurement grantee

There's a fair amount of administrative work that you won't get reimbursed for. Sometimes I feel like for the amount of time I have to spend doing this and that, is it worth it? Are they providing sufficient incentive to make up for the time it takes to prepare the paperwork? — Procurement grantee

We run reports for school districts that are participating in farm to school. They get a recap of what they purchased that was local and/or processed. We started doing that when someone said, 'If I'm going to do this, I need to know what's local.' They get the report by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. — Distributor

Comparatively, for the producers, distributors, and education grantees, the paperwork and administrative tasks were not challenging.

It really hasn't been painful. We already had an invoicing system with QuickBooks selling to restaurants and stores. If I didn't already sell direct, it would be a hurdle. I've had a great group of administrators or school contacts; they walk me through it. — Producer

That was a change and an added value. I came up with a report to create a query to pull locally sourced items based on the zip code using our current software. We were glad to help. — Distributor



It's all been straightforward. It's a reimbursable grant. As a small nonprofit, that's been harder on us. The reporting—we did a mid-report. It was all straightforward. It hasn't been that challenging. — Education grantee

## **6.2 Purchasing Strategy Challenges**

With the logistics of procurement being a challenge for districts, we also examined the purchasing strategies that school districts used to purchase Oregon products. The three main purchasing strategies were forward contracting, coordinated purchasing, and direct purchasing. Forward contracting is when a district makes an agreement in advance with a producer to buy a product at the time it is ready. Coordinated purchasing is when multiple districts purchase the same product from the same vendor (either a distributor or a producer) with delivery at the same time to one location to help overcome “minimum drop”

requirements (e.g., a distributor that will only deliver to rural areas if the order is at least \$500) or to help address a district's storage limitations or transportation challenges. Direct purchasing is when a district purchases a product directly from a local farm, ranch, or processor, for instance, rather than buying through a distributor.

According to the ODE Farm to School Progress Report survey, most districts used direct purchasing methods (53 districts), and fewer districts used coordinated purchasing (20 districts) or forward contracting (8 districts). Producers and distributors also had some challenges with districts when it came to procurement. Forward contracting did not always serve producers and distributors well as noted in the comments below.



Yeah, I've done forward contracting and the district sends me a purchase order with a quantity. Some districts will give a heads up that they are going to buy a certain amount, roughly. The weather was bad here in December, and especially in January when schools opened up. One district was going to buy 300 boxes [of produce] but ended up not needing as much because schools were closed 3 out of 5 days and the next week. The order was dropped. There wasn't a commitment that they had to purchase. — Producer

We currently have potatoes in our facility going bad because the districts didn't buy what they said they were going to buy. – Distributor



Harvest of the Month also presented purchasing challenges for both districts and producers/distributors. Although districts liked the idea of Harvest of the Month, five of our interviewees familiar with the model commented on the issue of coordination as well as the risks associated with Harvest of the Month. For larger districts, purchasing enough of the same local product for all the schools within the district was sometimes difficult.

We don't do Harvest of the Month. We would love to, but it does take some coordination. It would be more challenging for us to get that product at all schools. Our labor is expensive and we got rid of equipment that we could be using. Like butternut squash, you have to cut and prepare it. — Procurement grantee

Forecasting risk was an issue for producers and distributors. Producers must decide months in advance how much to plant of each crop without knowing what products districts will actually purchase. Furthermore, if some or all the crop fails after promising it to a district, then the district either has to find the product elsewhere or change the focus of Harvest of the Month.

We've only done forward contracting with [one district] and it was two months ahead of time for Harvest of the Month ... The schools haven't promised us year to year, but farmers see sales and plant the same things hoping the schools will come through. There's shared risk if it doesn't go well. We have substitution options in advance; if the asparagus fails, we can look at rhubarb. — Distributor

However, several interviewees agreed that Harvest of the Month has a lot of potential once districts begin planning. We found that distributors tried to help with planning and that producers enjoyed being involved.

I send out a mass email to my schools ... and it gives a snapshot of what the produce is looking like in the area. It's a document that our produce manager puts together. — Distributor

### **6.3 Grant Administration Challenges**

SB 501 has also experienced several challenges regarding administration of the grant program for both the grant managers and the districts. Some of the challenges stemmed from going from a competitive grant program to an all-inclusive program. Challenges also stemmed from the short transition time of going from supporting 22 to 124 districts in a matter of months without additional ODE staff. The following main challenges emerged from our qualitative data analysis:

- (1) reporting and collecting the information needed on reimbursements (e.g., completing administrative paperwork and verifying that the food is local)
- (2) determining changes districts are making in purchases using grant funds

(3) providing technical assistance

The pilot program authorized under HB 2649 allowed ODE to roll out the grant program on a much smaller scale. Grant administrators had time to develop the reimbursement claims process and trainings for the 22 participating procurement grantees. Furthermore, because it was a competitive grant program, the districts that applied were the “farm to school rock stars.” These districts were the innovators and driving change related to procurement.

The success stories were specific and innovative. The boat to school where Bend-La Pine was purchasing fish from Bornstein Seafood and bringing kids from high desert to the fishing docks to tour. It was such a big hit. Not only with what kids were seeing in the kitchen line, but also the commodity commissions love it. Future Farmers of America [FFA] students in the district raised hogs and worked with a culinary group and got a smoker with farm to school funding. — State agency partner

However, initially reporting and collecting reimbursement claims for 124 districts was a challenge for ODE administratively. Approximately 65 districts had neither participated in farm to school before nor intentionally purchased local food; therefore, reporting on local purchases was completely new to these districts.

We're doing a lot better with reporting and asking for a lot more information. Under the pilot, we had grantees send us a Word document for claims, which worked for 11 districts, but not for 141. Reporting has evolved—we're now asking questions for outcomes we want to demonstrate so now we will be getting the data we need. The pilot districts had a lot less problems because they were the rock stars. To be eligible, they had to demonstrate what they were going to buy. They knew how. — State agency partner

Because districts were not familiar with purchasing local products and had no method for tracking purchases, districts did not know what local items they had been purchasing before participating in the grant program. This lack of information led to inflated baseline purchase numbers. Additionally, ODE did not require districts to use the tools ODE created to track all local purchases; therefore, many districts chose not to use them, which created incomplete progress report data. Districts likely made additional local purchases that ODE did not capture through its data collection process.

They guessed. They didn't understand the question and responded with all their food purchases and said 100% Oregon purchases. They estimated low when they didn't know they had bought Oregon products and high when they were unsure and made up a number. They didn't have any method for tracking before. They also didn't have good methods for tracking during the first year of the grant period. We gave them tools and tracking documents and they didn't use them because they weren't required to. — Policy advocate

We have spent hundreds of hours making calls and sending emails to get more accurate data. — State agency partner

Because of incomplete data, determining the changes districts made in purchases using grant funds after the first year has been difficult for ODE, ODA, and policy advocates.

A huge challenge is not understanding accurately whether we're making shifts because we don't have the grant program procedures set up that way. When the grant was competitive, there was a report grantees had to write up and submit that was far more helpful to see how dollars were contributing to procurement changes. — State agency partner

What's causing me stress now is ODE wants to know everything we're purchasing local even if it's not being reimbursed. Our distributor doesn't have a good record of that. We could look up every single product but we don't have time for that. — Procurement grantee

Furthermore, another challenge was that with only two people at ODE managing the grant process for the whole state, the technical assistance capacity at the beginning of the grant cycle was insufficient to ensure districts felt comfortable with the process. Interviewees mentioned that more ODE staff are needed, specifically at least one person whose focus is the procurement side and one person whose focus is the education/curriculum side.

We did regional trainings where I learned [the districts] didn't know what they were doing. At the beginning, we didn't have the capacity to provide technical assistance but that has changed. By this fall [year 2 of the grant], I feel we reached all regions of the state. — Policy advocate

Additionally, training and technical assistance are necessary components of programs and policies that aid in their success, and farm to school is no different. Procurement grantees were more in need of training and technical assistance than the education grantees, producers, and distributors. The grant managers did their best to make opportunities available, but 6 of our interviewees (out of the 10 participating in one of the grants) noted that more training and technical assistance were necessary. When asking one of the procurement grantees whether she took advantage of training and technical assistance opportunities for farm to school, she responded, "Oh absolutely. ODE is super." Specifically, state agency partners or the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network held 17 training opportunities around the state in SY 2015–16.

Eight interviewees mentioned that they did not have a need for technical assistance and that they had a contact at the school district or the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network if questions arose.

My contact person, if I had a question, would get the answer. It's just getting feedback—does your district mind bigger apples? Do they have to be medium size or can they be larger? Talking to my contact would answer those questions. — Producer

I haven't come across a situation where I had any questions, but ODA would probably be my go-to if I had a question. — Distributor

## **7. Sustainability**

Sustainability of a program is always of utmost importance to building initiatives. Advocates want their policy or program to have continued success. Sustainability depends on many factors including coalitions, champions, and public-private partnerships that are involved, as well as funding.

Oregon's farm to school advocates spent nearly 10 years garnering the support needed to eventually achieve SB 501. This bill would not have been possible without individual champions, coalitions, and public-private partnerships that devoted time and effort to the cause. One of the themes that emerged from our analysis of stakeholder interviews was

confirmation of the conventional wisdom that having a legislative champion is crucial for states looking to pass a policy like this one. In Oregon, Representatives Clem and Kotek led the charge and passed a bipartisan bill unanimously.

We live in an ag state and we have a farmer legislator who has carried the torch on this. I can't underscore that enough in how helpful that has been. He's on an ag committee, that's been huge. My advice to other states is getting someone on the inside. — State agency partner



The Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network also had a listserv of 900 individuals from education and agriculture that they could call on for support and advocacy efforts. Public-private partnerships were not as strong as individual champions, but the effort did have a lot of small farms signed on as endorsers of the grant program.

We discussed the issue of sustainability with our stakeholders who were optimistic about the future of farm to school and the grant program. Seven individuals believed that local purchasing and school gardens would continue without state funding, while four interviewees thought farm to school would suffer unless it has state funding. The overall mindset was that farm to school and school gardens were not going away but that some districts would choose not to continue with local purchasing without funding. Some individuals hoped that districts eventually would incorporate funding for the education piece into their annual budgets. One individual described that achieving sustainability has a tipping point and Oregon likely will not hit that point in the next 5 years, but if solid state funding were present for a decade, then farm to school would be more sustainable. The

grantees also expressed the desire to continue purchasing local products and purchasing the best products for their students. Exemplary comments on this topic are below.

When the grant first came out, one of the questions was, 'If the grant wasn't still here, would you be able to do it?' And I think that we would move forward with local purchasing because our district wants it and we can do it and it's good for the local economy and kids. I don't think we'd be able to purchase from Adelante Mujeres, and that would be a shame. But there are quite a few things I can think of that are the same price, maybe a little more expensive, maybe we could negotiate. — Procurement grantee

Even if they didn't have farm to school, we'd continue to try to get the best produce because that's our mindset. And we have parents who have that mindset as well. — Procurement grantee

The ideal is to get the school district to fund [the school garden and education] on a permanent basis and be part of the budget. Then this movement can thrive and grow. — Education grantee

Different people have different motivations. School gardens don't see themselves as a subset of farm to school. The majority of school gardens in the state aren't supported through this grant program; they are supported by school employees or university extension, so the school gardens will continue unabated. In terms of what schools buy and do, the school districts that have gotten really on board will continue—they are motivated and passionate. If the money goes away, others will not pay attention to [farm to school]. — Policy advocate

## **8. Lessons Learned**

Based on qualitative analysis of stakeholder interviews and quantitative analysis of the grantees' Farm to School Baseline and Progress Report data, we identified farm to school state policy design attributes that have helped to successfully leverage limited state resources to improve farm to school participation among school districts in Oregon. Many of these lessons are applicable to other states considering legislation. Below we discuss lessons learned.

- Grant managers should provide more trainings, tips, and assistance on the logistics of a successful program to new districts and potential producers at the beginning of the grant cycle.
- Grant managers should require all new procurement grantees to take a training on how to locate producers; simply providing money does not increase motivation to buy local foods.
- New procurement grantee districts need a great deal of technical assistance at the beginning of the grant cycle.

- The reimbursement claims process needs to be as simple as possible. New grantees need step-by-step instructions, and the person submitting the claims must attend a training.
- For large grant programs, the state agency requires more staff for management, technical assistance, and evaluation; however, to achieve initial state funding, it may be necessary to include minimal overhead costs.
- Legislation language or administrative rules should include training and technical assistance needs listed above for nonprofits and state agencies to address gaps.
- Implementing agencies should determine outcome measures and the best data collection methods early in the grant process.
- Implementing agencies and farm to school policy advocates need cohesive messaging to engage legislators and highlight community-wide benefits of farm to school policy.
- A compelling economic stimulus component is critical when advocating for making a state investment.
- Engage supporters around the state in contacting their representatives more often and more effectively.
- Build a diverse space and have a diverse coalition—"lunch ladies," farmers, engaged parents, school gardens.
- Invest in time and equipment to optimize school warehouses and kitchens to receive and process locally grown products.
- To compensate for the additional time it takes to find and buy local foods, cover staff time to find local foods using grant funds.

## **9. Conclusion**

Evaluating the effect of policies on program implementation is important to understand policy successes and areas for improvement. Taking into consideration viewpoints from multiple stakeholders provides a more holistic perspective on the legislative qualities and best practices that should guide improvements in current policy and provide insight to future state and local farm to school policies elsewhere. Based on analyses of stakeholder interviews as well as Grantee Farm to School Baseline and Progress Report data, we identified farm to school state policy design attributes that have helped to successfully leverage limited state resources to improve farm to school participation among school districts in Oregon. We also identified specific challenges faced by each of our stakeholder groups (school districts, farmers, distributors, and state agencies). Without the involvement of all these actors, successful implementation would not be possible. Therefore, through this research we provide suggestions for areas of improvement for future farm to school policy in both Oregon and other states.

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