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Impact Snapshot: Local Food & Farm Initiative Program Outcomes and Impacts, 2011–2014

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Abstract

In July, 2011, the legislature passed Senate File 509, creating the Iowa Local Food & Farm Initiative (LFFI). The LFFI was created to strengthen local food economies that promote self-sufficiency and job growth in the agricultural and allied sectors. The legislature allocated \$150,000 to LFFI in 2012 and 2013 (\$75,000 each year), of which 30 to 35 percent was applied to a competitive grants program in 2012 and 2013.

The LFFI has funded seven local foods projects focused on the areas of business development; beginning, minority, and transitioning farmers; and development of farm to institution sales. This impact brief shows how modest investments can leverage additional funds, create economic opportunity, benefit youth, increase awareness of local foods, and prompt new partnerships and projects.

Disciplines

Agricultural and Resource Economics | Agricultural Economics | Economics

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Local Food & Farm Initiative Program Outcomes and Impacts 2011-2014

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THE NUMBERS:

The Local Food & Farm Initiative (LFFI) invested **\$36,879** in seven one-year food system projects in 2012 and 2013. For every dollar of LFFI investment, another \$17.92 was leveraged by project leaders and their partners, totaling **\$660,732** with 89 percent of leveraged funds from the USDA (\$587,882). The remainder came from private national funders, local foundations and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

Project title and end date	LFFI investments	Leveraged funds
Harvesting our Potential on-farm mentorship program (July 2012)	\$2,000	\$401,802
Scaling vendor-managed inventory systems to further leverage the competitive advantage of local foods (December 2013)	\$9,400	\$208,000
Working to grow more: A community-based approach to food hub development (July 2012)	\$1,700	\$40,480
Small farm field and business apprenticeship (October 2013)	\$6,824	\$8,000
School gardens at Kate Mitchell and Sawyer- Ames Elementary Schools (December 2012)	\$9,470	\$2,450
Scaling up study (October 2012)	\$5,000	\$0
The Faces of Iowa's farm to school movement (January 2014)	\$2,485	\$0
Total	\$36,879	\$660,732

PEOPLE REACHED BY LFFI PROJECTS

LFFI projects impacted Iowans through an educational workshop, on-farm learning, internships, school garden activities and participatory research.

Students	784
Others (farm to school collaborators, presentation attendees, seasonal workers)	238
Educators	43
Established farmers	39
Service providers	15
Food buyers	15
Beginning farmers	11
Total	1,145

LFFI PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

An integrated network of farmers, local food service providers, schools, and businesses creates economic opportunities for farmers and small businesses alike.

- Twelve new partnerships were created as a result of the LFFI projects.
- A total of **39 unique organizations** participated in LFFI projects (including groups that received LFFI funding).
- On average LFFI grant recipients worked with 5 other civic, private or public sector organizations to accomplish the goals of each project.

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS:

"The [Wallace Centers of Iowa] apprenticeship gave me a more realistic perspective about the work that is involved [in vegetable farming]. I was very excited initially to do the work, but was also developing a conviction that this wasn't something I could do by myself[...] It informed my decision to find a partner."

"The grant we [at the Wallace Centers] got from the [LFFI] is moving us to a new level regarding our internships, so it has become more than just a working experience. It really is an apprenticeship."

"We have a whole series of meetings going on as a result of [the Working to Grow More workshop]. We are in the process of establishing an LLC with our [collaborative marketing] group."

"[The vendor managed inventory system] is cutting edge[...] I have high expectations. It's basically a communication tool, but I think the way and speed we'll communicate sales data will be key to making [local foods] competitive."



LEOPOLD CENTER

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IMPACTING SCHOOLS AND YOUTH

- 13,750 square feet of garden space was created at two elementary schools in Ames, Iowa.
- Twenty-five Ames elementary teachers are partnering with AmeriCorps members to teach core curriculum using elements from school gardens.
- Seven parents of Ames Elementary students indicated their child has become more involved in buying and eating healthy foods.
- One food service director is sharing her experiences after she participated in creation of the new Farm to School website.



Ames Middle School students plant potatoes in the garden.



Kate Mitchell elementary students sell produce from their garden.

INCREASING COMMERCE AND JOB CREATION

- 12 new jobs were created as a result of LFFI investment.
 - Three new full time, year-round jobs were created, including a food hub coordinator and delivery truck driver for the Iowa Food Hub in Decorah, Iowa, and a garden assistant at the Wallace Center in Orion, Iowa.
 - 9 other jobs created include 4 new farm apprentice positions (full-time, temporary), and 5 paid positions for a collaborative marketing farmer team (part-time, temporary).
- 6 aspiring farmers received on-farm training in local food production through two programs: 1) the Wallace Centers of Iowa Small Farm Field and Business Apprenticeship Program and 2) the Women Food & Agriculture Network Harvesting Our Potential Mentorship Program.
- Six farmers in north central Iowa are collaborating to market their products through package deals sold directly to consumers and sales to a grocery store and school. This collaboration resulted from the Working Together to Grow More workshop hosted by Healthy Harvest of North Iowa.
- Two chefs are buying more local food after participating in the food hub workshop.
- One Iowa dairy now guarantees its product with grocers—meaning the grocer doesn't pay for product that gets outdated—as a result of participating in local foods marketing research conducted through a vendor-managed inventory system project. The dairy is enjoying record sales and continued growth.



The 2013 garden crew and apprentices at the Wallace Centers of Iowa

RESOURCES DEVELOPED BY LFFI PROJECTS

- Iowa Farm to School website, available at: www.lowafarmtoschool.org
- A Snapshot of Local Food Hub Activity in Iowa, available at: <http://www.northiowafood.org/food-hub-resources>
- Wallace Centers apprenticeship handbook
- *Scaling-Up: Perspectives from Growers and Buyers on Barriers and Benefits to Wholesale Marketing of Local Fruits and Vegetables*, available by title: www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs
- Vendor-managed inventory system software
- Kate Mitchell Elementary garden videos, available at: <http://vimeo.com/77166184> and <http://vimeo.com/79133104>

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