

10 CENTS A MEAL PILOT: 2018–2019 EVALUATION RESULTS



Reflections and Recommendations: Program Design and Implementation

Promotional and educational activities

If the legislature continues to have interest in promotional and educational activities supporting Michigan foods purchased and served through 10 Cents, we recommend additional funding be provided to grantees to conduct some of these activities. Tasting activities could be recommended to FSDs participating in the program in future years as an ideal promotional activity to conduct, given limited funds and resources as well as the prevalence of these activities per survey results.

Tracking local food purchases

The Michigan Department of Education worked with FarmLogix, a Chicago-based firm that supplies technology solutions, to support an electronic platform for FSDs to track their purchases of Michigan-grown foods used for the program. Based on feedback from FSDs, FarmLogix's platform, while improving, is still challenging to use. It would be beneficial to FSDs, in terms of saving time and maintaining the integrity of purchasing data for program evaluation, to work toward having local food vendors, especially the largest and/or most frequently used by FSDs, supply purchasing data for participating districts directly to FarmLogix.

Connecting to local food suppliers

Some FSDs seek additional information to connect with farmers and food vendors who supply local foods. This type of technical assistance will be required for grantees in future years who may have less experience with local food purchasing prior to participating in the program, but additional administrative or in-kind funding would be needed

to support the staff capacity to effectively offer it. In the meantime, we recommend space be made within future program years for more experienced FSDs to share their farmer and vendor partners, tips, and even recipes with grantees newer to purchasing and serving local foods.

Equity

Staff members at the National Farm to School Network have suggested that 10 Cents and similar incentive programs could be implemented with a preference for sourcing food from farms and businesses that are owned by women or people of color as one way to further social equity on the food supply side of these programs.¹ Health equity, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation website, “means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.” In order for 10 Cents to promote racial and health equity with intention, grant applications should be reviewed with sharper focus on student population data, including race/ethnicity data combined with free and reduced rates, and the program should be available first in communities where it can have the greatest opportunity to improve school meal quality, increase students' access to good food, and contribute to health equity.

¹ Dombalis, H. (February 2019). NFSN Resource Roundup Webinar. National Farm to School Network. Available at <http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/webinar-series-resource-roundup?A=SearchResult&SearchID=10817209&ObjectID=17244269&ObjectType=35>.