



Overview and Evaluation of 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids and Farms

10 CENTS A MEAL 2023–2024 EVALUATION RESULTS: DOUBLING INVESTMENT AND GROWING IMPACT

10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids and Farms, administered by the Michigan Department of Education, supplements funding for schools and other non-school sponsors to purchase Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans. This section is part of the [10 Cents a Meal 2023–2024 Evaluation Results: Doubling Investment and Growing Impact](#).

10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids and Farms (10 Cents a Meal) is a state-funded local food purchasing incentive grant program that reimburses 50% of the cost of fresh or minimally processed¹ Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans used in meals and educational activities for children.

Eligible grantees include schools, early care and education (ECE) centers, and other institutions that participate in United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs in Michigan. As a matching grant program, the impact of 10 Cents a Meal on Michigan's food and agriculture industry is double the state-issued grant reimbursement amounts.

Through the 2023–2024 program year, legislation outlined the core goals of the program: to improve the daily nutrition and eating habits of children within school and childcare settings and to invest in Michigan's agriculture and local food business economy.² Two additional program goals are: to build and expand farm to school partnerships—including between teachers, parents, vendors, and local growers—and to educate families and communities on meal preparation, nutrition, and agriculture.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) continues to administer the program with additional support from a core team consisting of staff members from the nonprofit Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS). CRFS leads the evaluation of the program.

1 The USDA geographic preference definition of minimally processed includes products that “retain their inherent character” and have not been cooked, heated, canned, or do not contain any additives or fillers. Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs, 60 Fed. Reg. 22603-22608 (April 22, 2011). <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-042211>

2 [State of Michigan Public Act 103 of 2023](#).

Launched as a regional pilot in 2016–2017, 10 Cents a Meal was one of the first state-funded local food purchasing incentive (LFPI) programs in the U.S., providing additional funding to Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) operators to directly offset or incentivize local food purchases.³ To find resources and learn more about LFPIs, visit farmtoschool.org and mifarmtoschool.msu.edu.

How 10 Cents a Meal Granting Works

Eligible applicants selected by MDE receive 10 Cents a Meal grant awards through a competitive application process. Applications are evaluated on the applicant’s capacity to purchase, serve, and market Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans in their food programs. Similar to previous years, other characteristics were also considered in the application review and selection process for the 2023–2024 program, such as the ability to provide related educational and promotional activities, the rates of free and reduced-price meals for school applicants (when applicable), and whether the setting was urban or rural. All applicants who submitted completed applications by the deadline were accepted to participate in 2023–2024.

The maximum award available for each grantee is the total number of federal Child Nutrition Program meals (breakfast, lunch, supper, and snacks) served the prior year multiplied by 10 cents. That same amount is then also required for the match. This means that 10 Cents a Meal reimburses grantees for 50% of the cost of eligible Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans up to their maximum grant award. For example, if a grantee is awarded a \$5,000 grant, they are expected to submit \$10,000 worth of purchasing information for Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans to use the full \$5,000 grant. Reimbursements are issued from MDE on a bimonthly basis (once every two months) after participating food program managers (FPMs) respond to a series of surveys and submit purchasing information, which is reviewed and validated by MDE staff. MDE referred to surveys completed by 2023–2024 grantees as “reporting surveys,” but for the sake of brevity, we will refer to them as “surveys” throughout this evaluation package. Responses to these surveys comprise a portion of the data CRFS uses for evaluation of the program, described further below.

State legislation for 10 Cents a Meal requires grantees to report the name and location of the Michigan farm that grew the food product reported for reimbursement.⁴ Eligible Michigan-grown produce can be purchased from any farm and food supplier, including federally funded programs such as the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD Fresh). This flexibility in allowable sources can help promote local foods across all market channels, including through customary school food suppliers and government-funded food programs that many grantees already use.

Overview of 10 Cents a Meal Evaluation

Evaluation provides insight into the program’s progress toward legislative goals and its impact, but program data continues to be limited to responses to evaluation surveys and food purchasing information provided by FPMs. There remains much more to learn about the full scope of the program’s impact on grantee food programs, the children reached through them, and the Michigan farms and food businesses participating in the 10 Cents a Meal supply chain, including over time since this state-funded, statewide program has now been in operation for five years as of 2023–2024.

3 Bull, C., & Matts, C. (2024) *Local Food Purchasing Incentives: An Introduction to Incentives*. Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems. <https://foodsystems.msu.edu/resources/introduction-to-incentives>

4 [State of Michigan Public Act 103 of 2023](#).

Data Sources

Surveys of Grantees

Evaluation of the program is led by CRFS, a 10 Cents a Meal partner. As in previous years, CRFS staff members developed and administered electronic surveys through Qualtrics that were distributed to participating FPMs via email by MDE. For this program year, applications were not available until October 2023, and award letters were finalized in November 2023. Due to the delay in the program start, the first survey was administered to grantees in January 2024, with the second in May, and the third and final survey in August 2024. Under ideal circumstances, the first survey would have been shared in the fall and closer to the beginning of the school year; though sharing the first survey in January allowed grantees to have at least some experience with the program before responding to these survey questions.

To maintain consistency in evaluation and allow for more rigorous analyses of responses across years, similar survey questions were asked across program years. Question types ranged from multiple choice to written open responses. Some questions were asked of FPMs in every survey in the 2023–2024 year, including the following related to their 10 Cents a Meal activities:

- Which Michigan-grown foods they served in the food program for the first time;
- Which Michigan-grown foods they wanted to use but could not find and buy;
- Promotional and educational activities they implemented in the school or childcare setting to support Michigan-grown foods (to the best of their knowledge); and,
- Any needs and feedback (positive and negative) they had related to their participation in the program.

Other questions were designed to capture specific information during the program year. For instance, the first survey includes several questions to gauge FPMs' experience, motivations, and perceived barriers with purchasing and serving local foods. For more information about the survey questions and overall response rates throughout the program year, refer to the Technical Notes in the [10 Cents a Meal 2023–2024 Evaluation Report Appendices](#). Since response rates to individual questions within surveys varied, the number of responses are shared with corresponding survey results in summaries for this 2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal evaluation package.

Grantees' Demographic and Purchase Data

MDE program administrators supply extensive data (when available) about schools and other non-school sponsors participating in 10 Cents a Meal to help us understand children potentially reached and served by the program. This includes data from the MDE Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) for K–12 enrollment, lunch claim enrollments, free and reduced-priced meal counts, as well as license capacities for some childcare centers. The license capacity is an ECE site's maximum number of children served, and it includes all possible sites or locations under the management of each grantee. Demographics for K–12 schoolchildren, including race and ethnicity, are sourced from the [MI School Data](#) website, Michigan's official education data source.

Purchase data are first submitted by grantees through an online reporting system. Then they are reviewed and validated by MDE staff and supplied to CRFS evaluators. Grantees self-report their purchases of Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans for 10 Cents a Meal reimbursement. This self-reported information must be separated by purchase month to confirm seasonality and

includes the product, cost, its farm and county of origin, and, when applicable, additional vendors and suppliers involved in transporting the product from the farm of origin to the grantee site(s).

It should be noted that the purchase data have some limitations. First, the findings shared in this report are representative of 229 grantees, as not all 269 grantees who participated in the 2023–2024 program provided information about their food purchases. Like previous years, errors in submissions of purchase information by some grantees, as determined by MDE staff review, resulted in underreporting of total dollars spent on foods. Additionally, FPMs may not always have the capacity to report every transaction, or they may have received incomplete product or farm of origin information from some suppliers, such as through their traditional school food suppliers.⁵ These instances can result in data that underrepresent the sum of purchases made, total farms utilized, and aggregate Michigan-grown foods purchased during the year for the program. Lastly, FPMs may purchase more Michigan-grown products than their maximum grant award. This could even include Michigan-grown or raised products that are not eligible for 10 Cents a Meal reimbursement (eggs, meat, honey, grains, highly processed products, etc.), so the potential influence that 10 Cents a Meal participation can have on local food purchasing may extend well beyond data available for evaluation purposes.

Structure of This Evaluation Report Package

THE FOLLOWING SUMMARIES ARE INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT PACKAGE:

- Evaluation Summary of the 2023–2024 Year of 10 Cents a Meal
- Overview and Evaluation of 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan’s Kids and Farms
- 2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal Grantees
- 2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal Grantees by Prosperity Regions
- Children Reached Through 10 Cents a Meal: Geographic Distribution and Demographics
- Food Program Managers Participating in 10 Cents a Meal
- Michigan Farmers and Vendors Participating in the 10 Cents a Meal Supply Chain
- What Foods Are Served Through 10 Cents a Meal?
- The Big Picture: Outcomes, Impacts, Needs, and Feedback
- Recommendations for Future Years of 10 Cents a Meal
- 2023-2024 10 Cents a Meal Appendices
 - Appendix A: Technical Notes
 - Appendix B: Key Terms and Definitions
 - Appendix C: 10 Cents a Meal Survey Questions in 2023-2024

5 Refer to the summary [Michigan Farmers and Vendors Participating in the 10 Cents a Meal Supply Chain](#) for more information about local food suppliers used by grantees.

Participating FPMs make 10 Cents a Meal work at different types of facilities and grantee sites across the state, connecting Michigan children with Michigan-grown foods purchased from Michigan farms and food businesses. Their perceptions are critical to program evaluation. They can offer first-hand feedback from both children served through food programs and local food vendors supplying to them, while they also seek to meet and even optimize tight budgets within the framework of federal reimbursements and nutrition standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs. Throughout these report summaries, the voices of participating FPMs are represented through anonymous feedback from surveys during the program year. Unless otherwise noted, direct quotes were provided by FPMs from public school grantees, as that group represents the majority of grantees. See the [2022–2023 evaluation report](#) for highlights of interviews with previous program participants, and find full versions of these interviews conducted by the Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities through the [Who's Feeding Our Kids series](#) on the 10 Cents a Meal website.



Evaluation of 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids and Farms is led by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS). The work presented here is part of the [10 Cents a Meal 2023–2024 Evaluation Results: Doubling Investment and Growing Impact](#) by Colleen Matts, May Tsupros, Eva Nyerges, and Megan McManus, and was generously funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and 10 Cents administrative funds for partner organizations.

To learn more, visit tencentsmichigan.org, foodsystems.msu.edu, 10-cents-a-meal.msu.edu, and mifarmtoschool.msu.edu.