



The Big Picture: Outcomes, Impacts, Needs, and Feedback

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](#).

The top outcomes and impacts chosen by food program managers (FPMs) show that 10 Cents a Meal was working in 2023–2024, both to increase Michigan children’s access to a variety of Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans in school and child care settings and to invest in Michigan’s agriculture and local food business economy.¹

However, needs and program improvements remained to support local food purchasing for many grantees into the future, including 49 grantees who were brand new to the program this year. That means that over 80% of schools and early care centers participating in 2023–2024 were returning grantees from previous years, bringing with them experience in the program and with local food purchasing. Outcomes, impacts, feedback, and needs from participating in 10 Cents a Meal from the perspective of FPMs are outlined further in this section.

Outcomes of Participating in 10 Cents a Meal

In the final survey (August) of the 2023–2024 program year, 236 food program managers reported short-term outcomes that 10 Cents a Meal delivered for their food programs.

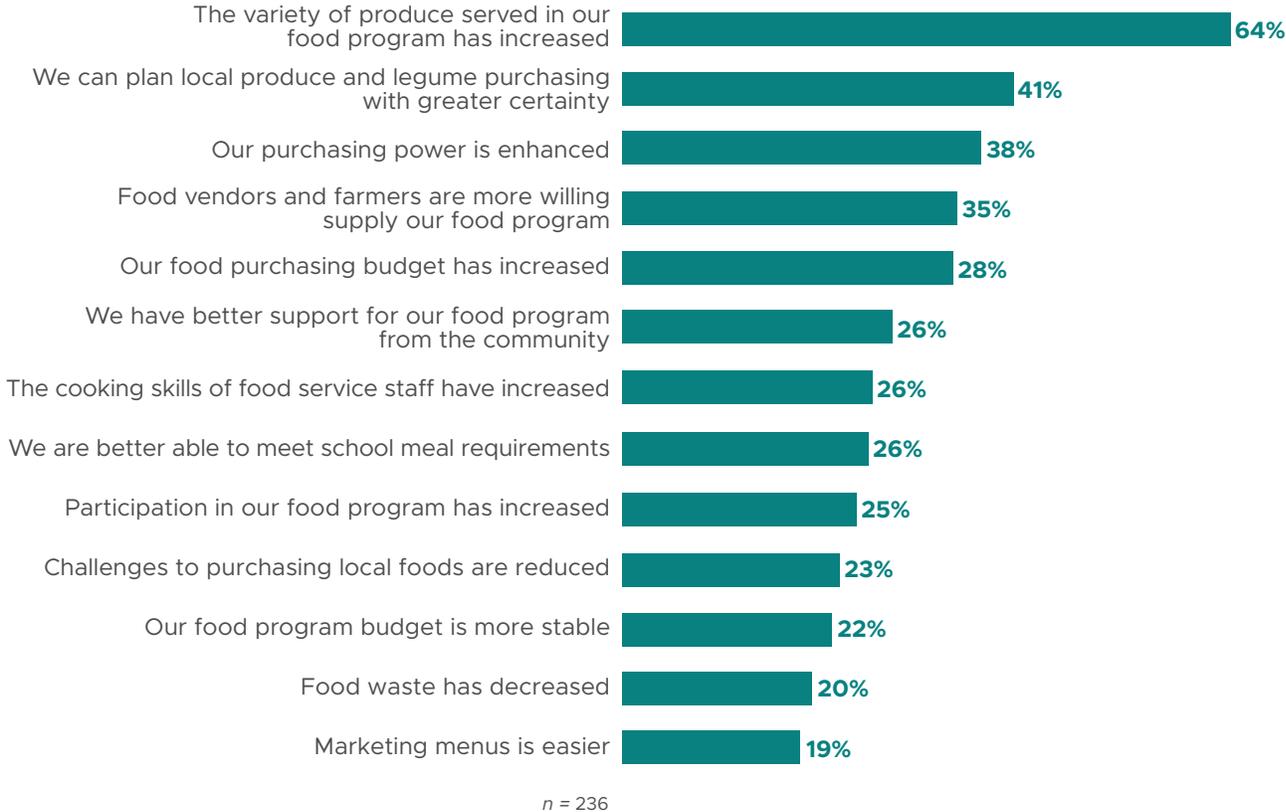
In the survey, FPMs were asked to select from a list of outcomes that 10 Cents a Meal helped them achieve. They could select all options that applied from a list of possible outcome statements, which are listed in Figure 1.

¹ [State of Michigan Public Act 103 of 2023](#).

For this evaluation summary, as with reports for previous program years, outcomes are defined as short-term actions or results achieved through participation in 10 Cents a Meal.

- **For the fourth consecutive year, grantees have identified an increased variety of produce served in food programs as the leading outcome of participating in 10 Cents a Meal. These results over time underscore the program’s sustained role in expanding access to a wider range of fruits and vegetables for the children served.**
- **The top five outcomes** (in rank order) chosen by FPMs were:
 - 1. the variety of produce served** in the food service program has increased (151 grantees);
 - 2. we can plan local produce and dry bean purchasing** with greater certainty (97 grantees);
 - 3. our purchasing power is enhanced** (89 grantees);
 - 4. food vendors and farmers are more willing to supply** our food program (83 grantees), and
 - 5. our food purchasing budget increased** (82 grantees).
- The FPMs who responded to this question selected an average of four positive outcomes of participating in the program, an increase of one positive outcome over the previous year’s results (2022–2023).
- Only 10 grantees who responded to this question reported that no outcomes were achieved.

Figure 1. Outcomes of Participating in 10 Cents a Meal as Selected by FPMs



Of the six grantees who reported “Other” outcomes, only one was negative: “not enough local vendors.” One grantee who chose an “Other” response seemed to be offering context: “I’m a new director this year.” This likely alludes to farm to school and local food procurement experience being helpful to the success of 10 Cents a Meal at any participating site, as mentioned in the summary on [Food Program Managers Participating in 10 Cents a Meal](#), as well as the time it can take to get oriented in either, including working with vendors to purchase local food. The remaining four grantees who reported “Other” responses offered positive outcomes, such as,



Our [school meal] participation has increased due to improvements in our overall nutritional quality of the meals served.

Impacts of Participating in 10 Cents a Meal

For this evaluation report, we consider impacts as broader and more long-term results that can be achieved through participation in 10 Cents a Meal.

In the final survey (August), 231 FPMs responded to the question, “To what extent are each of the following impacts true for your food service operation since participating in 10 Cents a Meal?” As with surveys for previous years, FPMs were provided with a list of statements and asked to choose their level of agreement ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

- A majority of grantees agreed (either strongly or somewhat agreed) that their food program was positively impacted through participating in 10 Cents a Meal, including that:
 - **They offered more local fruits** (86% of grantees, an increase of 4% from 2022–2023 survey results);
 - **Their students/children are eating more fruits** (81% of grantees, an increase of 8%);
 - **They offered more local vegetables** (79% of grantees, an increase of 7%);
 - **Their students/children are eating more vegetables** (70% of grantees, an increase of 4%); and
 - **They have identified new Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans that are accepted/eaten by the children they serve** (65% of grantees, an increase of 12% from the previous program year.)
- Grantees agreed the most with the impact statements “we offered more local fruits,” “we offered more local vegetables,” and “our students/children are eating more fruits” in their food programs due to 10 Cents a Meal grants (with agreement levels of 4.3, 4.2, and 4.1 respectively).
- Similar to previous years, the two impact statements offered about dry beans—“we added more dry beans to our menus” and “our students/children are eating more dry beans”—had the lowest levels of agreement (2.8 and 2.7, respectively, with a .2 increase for each from 2022–2023 results).

Eight grantees offered “Other” responses about impacts for their food programs since participating in 10 Cents a Meal. One expressed a need for more delivery access. Another indicated the reasons for limited positive impacts to their food program:



[Impacts were] limited due to the vendor providing good local produce and the availability of true local produce without having to travel a long distance.

(Both of these responses came from food program managers at public school districts.) The remaining six “Other” responses named positive impacts.

As further described in the summary, [Michigan Farmers and Vendors Participating in the 10 Cents a Meal Supply Chain](#), FPMs were also asked questions related to their participation in 10 Cents a Meal and its perceived influence on farmers or local food vendors/suppliers. **This year's survey results showed 59% of responding grantees (n=231) agreed that participation in 10 Cents a Meal allowed them to both make new connections with farmers and local food vendors and to improve existing relationships with them.**

Needs to Support Purchasing and Serving Michigan Foods

Needs to support purchasing and serving Michigan foods as reported by FPMs through surveys should continue to be used, including by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) staff team that administers the program, to guide assistance, training, and program improvements in future years of 10 Cents a Meal. Similarly, evaluators also point to them in the [Recommendations](#) summary of this report package.

In the final survey (August), 230 FPMs responded to a question about what they need to support their efforts to purchase and serve Michigan foods (of any kind) in the future. This was an open-ended question, and responses were categorized into general themes. Of the grantees who responded to this question, 39% (89 grantees) reported that they had no unmet needs at this time. Other responses were categorized into general themes, but some grantees' responses included more than one theme, so the total number of responses (237) is more than the number of respondents (230). Needs by category were: programmatic support related to the 10 Cents a Meal program itself and participation in it (30%, or 70 grantees reporting), local food supply chain related (23%, 52 grantees), and food program operation needs (10%, 24 grantees). Two grantees (1%) had responses categorized as other, which mentioned community collaborations or partnerships. See Table 1 for a summary of some of the types of needs by category as reported by FPMs for the 2023–2024 program year.



Table 1. Summary of FPMs’ Needs to Support Efforts to Purchase and Serve Michigan Foods (of any kind) in the Future

Needs Categories	Types of Needs
<p>Local Food Supply Chain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More farmers and local food vendors in their area, and/or increased access to them ● Greater availability of Michigan-grown foods generally, including those related to seasonal availability ● Greater availability of frozen local fruits and vegetables and other value-added/minimally processed Michigan-grown products ● Improved delivery and distribution, including through food hubs ● Increased supplier identification and promotion of local products and their farm sources for them
<p>Food Program Operations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More staff and staff time to prepare local foods ● More and specific types of equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Salad spinners — Washing stations — Mobile cooking units for a non-school sponsor that has many sites ● More funding, including through 10 Cents a Meal, and increased buying power
<p>Programmatic related to 10 Cents a Meal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education, including on the following specific topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — 10 Cents a Meal for contracted food service vendors² — Procurement of local foods — Seasonal availability — Freezing and drying seasonal products for extended availability — Using dry beans in ways that students accept — Maximizing the percentage of labor and transportation costs that are set to be part of 10 Cents a Meal eligible costs for the next program year (2024–2025) ● Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Lists of farmers and local food vendors in grantees’ areas and/or that participate in 10 Cents a Meal sales and products they have available, including in the summer season³ — Best practices from other grantees — Promotional materials — Educational activities — Recipes for Michigan-grown foods — Dry beans recipes and tips — Winter seasonal planning — Summer seasonal planning, including for using the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) — Guidance specifically for smaller schools/districts that need to purchase local foods in smaller quantities

2 A contracted food service management company is an external management company that is contracted by a food program to prepare the meals and/or manage the food service operation, sometimes including personnel. Refer to the [2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal Evaluation Report Appendices](#) for more Key Terms and Definitions.

3 In response to this need reported by FPMs, a [Farm to Program Directory](#) was created by MDE staff in spring 2025 and shared with grantees in the 2024–2025 program year.

Needs Categories	Types of Needs
Programmatic related to 10 Cents a Meal (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — More advanced notice about grant awards to aid in planning for the coming year, including related to the seasonal availability of Michigan-grown products — Improved payment processes — Simplified reporting, specifically including invoice submission and farms of origin for purchased products — Expanded eligible products to include meats — Expanded eligible costs to include equipment as well as staff training and farm field trips

n=230

Food Program Managers in Their Own Words⁴

NEEDS TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO PURCHASE AND SERVE MICHIGAN FOODS (OF ANY KIND) IN THE FUTURE

Related to local food supply chain needs, four grantees specifically mentioned missing Cherry Capital Foods distributor as this program year marked its closure. Three grantees reported that food hubs would help with local food sourcing and/or distribution.



We really miss Cherry Capital Foods! It was a great place to buy so many different local foods. We're working on purchasing more from our other sources.
— Early Care and Education (ECE) Center Grantee



Support would be welcome around starting a local food hub.

By the time of this survey in August 2024, grantees were aware of a significant programmatic change for the coming (2024–2025) year that would allow them to use up to 25% of their grant funds on staffing and/or transportation costs.⁵ Four grantees mentioned anticipated programmatic needs related to these new eligible costs—and enthusiasm for them.



Just how to maximize my dollars to better utilize the grant. I am not sure what the answer is, but I might need more guidance with the transportation and labor piece and how to organize that, because that is a great added feature!



I feel like adding funds to help cover some staff hours and transportation will help in the future.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted in this and other related summaries, quotes from survey responses are from participating FPMs at public school districts because they represent the largest proportion of 10 Cents a Meal grantees.

⁵ See Section 31j of the [FY25 Education Omnibus Bill, Public Act 120 of 2024](#), for these updates to the allowable expenses as part of grant funds that allows grantees to “pay for labor and food transportation of locally grown fruits, vegetables, and legumes that directly support the activities and goals of the program described in this section. The amount paid under this subdivision must not exceed 25% of the grant award.”



I would like more support in maximizing my 10 Cents dollars to now utilize the transportation and labor piece. I think we can greatly benefit from this and might need more support on navigating that.



Love that the grant next year included 25% for delivery fees, labor, and more. Would love to see equipment purchases, training, and field trips to farms for staff covered.

Of the grantees that reported that they had no specific needs, some opted to share about their programs through positive feedback, as demonstrated below.



We just started this year, and I love this program. We are now tied into a close farm, and it helps promote the farm through social media.



This has been a great program for our small district, and we appreciate the funds.



We are currently working with several other school districts in the area to pool resources. We are working directly with the 10 Cents team for resources as needed.



We have partnered with MSU to help us with educating our kids on nutrition and getting them involved with our wellness committee.



Thank you for providing all the help, and we certainly hope it continues!



General Program Feedback

Lastly, FPMs were asked about general program feedback about participating in 10 Cents a Meal in all three surveys (January, May, and August 2024).

While these questions were intended to be specific to the program itself, the themes of FPMs’ responses were similar to those for their needs to support efforts to purchase and serve Michigan foods. They are broadly summarized in categories in Table 2.⁶

Table 2. Categories and responses for general program feedback reported by FPMs across all surveys

	Survey 1 (January n=142)	Survey 2 (May n=245)	Survey 3 (August n=232)
Response category	Number of FPMs reporting (percentage of total responses per survey)		
None/no feedback	41 (29%)	160 (65%)	90 (39%)
General positive feedback	51 (36%)	40 (16%)	83 (36%)
10 Cents programmatic support improvements	40 (28%)	30 (12%)	41 (18%)
Food service/program operations barriers	7 (5%)	8 (3%)	14 (6%)
Supply chain barriers	19 (13%)	20 (8%)	29 (13%)
Other	5 (4%)	4 (2%)	11 (5%)

The following specific programmatic supports or improvements were suggested by FPMs in their feedback. They are provided here as examples and not listed in any particular order.

- Earlier notification of applications and awards to aid in planning, earlier food purchasing, and tracking spending.
- Making the application easier or more simplified, and providing training for completion.
- Easier reporting/invoice/claims submission to track purchases for reimbursement, including earlier availability to do so.
- Vendor support with invoicing, including related to farms of origin and Michigan-grown product identification.
- Increased and more consistent communication from MDE with grantees, including about program reminders, approved grant reimbursement amounts on a monthly basis, and 10 Cents as a “drawdown” grant to share with their respective leadership.
- Timelier reimbursement payments.⁷
- Ways for grantees to share more with each other, including mentorship from more experienced FPMs, or more communication from MDE about what other grantees are doing to make the program work in their respective settings (ECE centers and schools of different sizes).
- Simpler and fewer program surveys, potentially just one year-end survey.

⁶ Refer to the [2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal Evaluation Report Appendices](#)’ Technical Notes to learn more about the response rates and analysis for survey questions.

⁷ Reimbursements are issued from MDE on a bimonthly basis after participating food program managers (FPMs) respond to a series of surveys and submit purchasing information, which is reviewed and validated by MDE staff members.

- Expanding eligible products, such as specifically including Michigan-raised meats, proteins generally, or breads.
- Expanding eligible expenses to include equipment.
- Sharing lists of farmers and vendors and their available products.
- MDE staff making available downloadable and printable flyers/posters rather than printing and sending them.

Some FPMs shared positive feedback about program improvements that had already been made, including around submitting invoices for reimbursement payments as well as training, and that will be made in the upcoming year, namely related to using a portion of grant funds for transportation and staff labor to support the program. Some others commented on the MDE staff team’s responsiveness or helpfulness. Several FPMs also mentioned their interest in the program being continued with state funding, and their continued participation in it.

Food Program Managers in Their Own Words

POSITIVE PROGRAM FEEDBACK



Streamlining the process for invoices and payment has allowed [us] to utilize saved time in sourcing and promoting Michigan produce within our program.



The program is great and very appreciated! The training portion has also improved a lot since the start of this program. Thank you.



I am looking forward to being able to use some of the funds for labor to prep.



Even though we are a local food-forward organization, it was wonderful to have the added financial support to continue making local food a priority for our students and community. Thank you! Great support from the administrators to get me up to speed on the reporting process when I had some hiccups after my initial submission. I appreciated the phone call and guidance.



The support offered by the [MDE] Farm to Program Team has been phenomenal. Any time I have a question, I have a quick response, and if they don’t know, they find someone who does. I appreciate the effort that they put forth and the support and encouragement they give.



This program is so beneficial to our students and local farm families! Our grant award has grown exponentially over the time I’ve been at [my school district]. This is due to lots of hard work behind the scenes at MDE. Thanks for all you do!



Participating in 10 Cents has helped get the word out about our program. Hopefully, we can continue to spread the word about our program to gain more support and continue to grow our Farm 2 ECE work as well!

— ECE grantee



It is imperative that we continue to participate in such a nourishing program not only for our children but for our farming communities. It is essential to give back and take advantage of the bounty of this earth and all that it has to offer.



Please bring it back for all of us, and a huge thank you for making it possible in the first place. I only hope this program is able to continue for all of us. It is so nice knowing the students are eating their fruits and vegetables, and we are able to provide them a nutritional component that they may not be able to afford at home.



This is a great program, and [I] am hoping it continues.



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