

**NORTHEAST IOWA FOOD AND FITNESS  
COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN  
2012-2016**

**BACKGROUND**

Six rural counties in the northeast corner of Iowa have a five-year history of collaborating to improve the health and well-being of children and their families through the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness initiative (NEI F&F). The counties include: Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek. Currently three institutional core partners provide a base for the work and are building sustainability: Iowa State Extension & Outreach—Region 4, Luther College Center for Sustainable Communities, and Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission.

Our capacity to implement the proposed strategies has been developed and tested through five years of work to create communities that support health for northeast Iowa's children and families. We have experiences, effective cross-sector relationships, expertise, a structure, and a history of working together that will support continued work. We have built an effective and committed regional leadership team that includes school administrators and staff, farmers, Department of Natural Resources, youth, community health professionals, parents, city engineer, early childhood agencies, community members, businesses, and more. We have developed a successful brand for our work, "Together We Grow Healthy Kids". We have had a small pilot project to create a messaging campaign aimed at parents of school children in K-3. In other words, we have proven that we can create systems change that will support healthy behaviors by children and adults.

***Past Successes and Current Reality***

By working as a rural six-county collaborative we have been able to achieve more than we could have in any one county or community. For healthy eating and active living work the six counties have become one community. Our successes in our first three years of implementation are many. A few successes that are most salient for our proposed work include:

- Increased the number of producers and sales of local food from about \$25,000 in 2006 to over \$3,512,000 in 2011. Institutional sales account for \$1.2 million, including over \$370,000 in purchases for Luther College. While many people assume that Iowa grows plenty of local food, the fact is that even Iowa does not grow enough food for human consumption to meet the demand if every Iowan ate the daily recommended servings of vegetables and fruits.
- Increased sales of local, healthy foods to schools. When we began, no local farmer was selling to schools; in the past year that number increased to 21 local farmers
- Established active school wellness teams in 18 of 20 public and private school districts throughout the region. While having a school wellness plan on paper was required of all schools beginning with the 2006 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act, in 2009 when we began focusing on school wellness, only one school in our region

had an active wellness team that supported implementation of the plan. We now have parents, school nurses, students, community members, cafeteria staff, teachers, and administrators beginning to identify policies and practices to create health-supporting school environments.

- Increased the focus on incorporating active living throughout the school day. In 2009 we established Safe Routes to School programs in six pilot schools. By the 2011-12 school year 20 schools in 14 districts participated.
- Established 14 youth leadership teams focused on food and fitness. Having youth engaged in leading changes in their schools and communities to support their own health benefits them as individuals, provides role models for same-age and younger peers, and is the most effective voice for implementing new policies and practices.

While current reality includes many successes, we still have a distance to go until we reach our vision and our region supports health and well-being for all children and families. We have increased the quantity of local food served in schools. Yet the total spent on local food for 16 reporting school districts is only about \$14,000 in the last school year, less than 1% of the food budgets in those schools. Even adding to this the food that was grown in school gardens and served in cafeterias, the total does not begin to reach the levels we need to improve school food and reach our most vulnerable children with healthy meals.

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System survey, inquiring about the self-reported consumption of vegetables and fruits by young people, shows they are still are not eating the needed servings. For example, we know that while we have seen improvement since 2008, still only 14% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders ate three or more servings of fruits and 20% ate three or more servings of vegetables in the prior **week**. Northeast Iowa youth are below the average for the state.

The state standards for physical education are minimal. Iowa mandates physical education in grades K-12, but it does not require daily recess at the elementary school level. High school students must participate in at least 45 minutes of physical activity per week, far less than what is needed for health. In addition, there are no standards for what constitutes physical education, and students in organized sports or JROTC are exempt. Clearly school policies above these minimums need to be set and programs implemented. Active living does not have to be through physical education, but frequently that is the only approach present in schools. Finding ways to integrate active living into schools and the community is still a significant challenge. Furthermore, adapting Safe Routes to School to a rural environment is complex. While we have made progress in some districts, the work is just beginning in most.

We are well-known for our local food system work. We acknowledge our significant progress. However, we are at a tipping point. We will either make significant progress through a food hub and expanded production, or our local food work will stall at current levels. We will either expand food processing and storage, or we will not increase local food served in schools and other institutions. Current levels of local food cannot meet demand. And demand is growing rapidly. Markets as far away as Chicago want to purchase food

from our region. We must have a more sophisticated, highly developed food system in order to both meet that demand and to assure that local foods are available at a fair and affordable price for all residents.

During the next four years of our work we must find ways to build on the base of successes from the past five years, and move effectively toward our shared vision.

### **PURPOSE OF THE COLLABORATIVE**

Our collaborative of community members and organizations provides leadership to implement a shared vision that includes access to locally grown foods and active living opportunities for all in Northeast Iowa communities.

### **CORE VALUES**

We base our work together on these core values:

- The healthy choices we make today will benefit our families and communities of tomorrow.
- Youth and young adults are the future leaders of building healthy communities in NE Iowa.
- Healthy people make strong families and vibrant communities. Health is the link to a balanced system.
- Locally we have the power to influence/build places to be active, food, family, community relationships and resources, leadership and planning, and the economy.
- Making healthy choices today destines us to stronger people, land, communities, and economies.
- Building respectful relationships creates opportunities for everyone to make healthier food and active living choices to improve the quality of their life and community.

### **SHARED VISION**

The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative has brought people in northeast Iowa together to make our region a place where every day, all people have access to healthy, locally grown foods and abundant opportunities for physical activity in the places where we live, learn, work and play. We see NE Iowa as a unique place where all residents and guests experience celebrate and promote healthy locally grown food and engage in physical activity and play every day.

Picture, if you will, a region where schools, young people, and their resident partners on wellness teams lead a rebirth of rural communities that promote healthy living by all people. Schools are modeling healthy living through future-oriented policies and practices focused on eating local, healthy foods and on active living integrated throughout the school day. They buy and serve as many local foods as possible, fueling learners and the local economy. Community members use school buildings and grounds for recreation early in the morning, late in the day, and throughout the year. Young people engage adults and children in establishing the policies and practices that assure a healthy future for everyone. They organize FEEST events, preparing meals from local foods for peers and adults. Institutions and organizations throughout the region are active partners with schools and bring their resources to benefit children and adults.

Picture, if you will, communities where all children get a healthy start from birth and come to school ready to learn. Parents of children from birth to five prepare healthy food, engage with their children in active living, and expect their childcare providers and preschools to do the same. When their children reach school-age parents are ready to join school wellness teams. Parents are a force for health on behalf of all children. Organizations and programs that serve the youngest children collaborate to assure that community culture and structures support health and well-being.

Picture, if you will, a regional food system that is economically vibrant and growing. Farmers choose to work through the local food hub to assure that together they can meet commercial and institutional needs, while also assuring that every resident has access to affordable, healthy food. Local entrepreneurs are supported in establishing processing and storage facilities, and other value-added businesses, that make local food available all year round and attractive to buyers. We are nurturing a generation of new farmers. The number of farmers growing local food is expanding to meet growing needs. At the same time, leaders in the local food system have creatively implemented structures that assure community members with limited financial resources can afford to eat what is grown close to home.

Picture, if you will, a region where people of all ages walk, bike, and recreate in an abundant natural environment and in small towns. Adults accompany young people as they walk and bike to school. Whenever possible people use active transportation to get to work. Parks and waterways are alive with activity year-round. People are drawn to county and community parks through family active living programs. Young people lead events throughout the region that bring people together for fun runs, community walks, and other activities.

Picture, if you will, a six-county collaborative in which people of every income, age, ethnicity, race, education, and walk of life provide leadership together for creating a regional culture of health and well-being. In Northeast Iowa we work together because we believe healthier people make stronger families and vibrant communities. We make the healthy choice the easy choice. Together we grow healthy kids.

If you have pictured all that we do, you see the future we are creating in the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative.

## **THEORY OF CHANGE**

Achieving our shared vision requires a systems thinking/systems change approach to the work. The illustration on the next page depicts our theory of systems change, including mental models that we must activate in the region to support the change.



***Strategy A: Ensure that school district policies and practices support healthy living of children, families, and community members***

**Policy and practice change targets:**

- School wellness committees provide leadership for establishing and implementing school policies, practices, and system change that increase the access to local healthy food, opportunities for physical activity and active transportation to and from school; school wellness policy incorporated in School Improvement Plan
- Procurement policy allows for geographic preference for local foods in schools
- Identify and interpret existing policies that align and support geographic preference for local food

**Sample tactics and activities for Strategy A:**

- Support regional school district learning communities that nurture quality relationships, lead to policy successes, and advance the Food and Fitness Initiative vision, strategies, policy targets.
  - Provide food service workshops, coaching, and other forms of assistance in menu planning to meet new federal guidelines, procuring, safe handling, and cooking local foods
- Encourage and support school districts to develop an active school wellness committee to align with the Food & Fitness Initiative vision, strategies, and policy targets.
  - Provide a Resource Contact (AmeriCorps or FoodCorps member) to each district in the region. The Resource Contact provides coaching and resources to the School Wellness Team and teachers or others working with the Farm-to-School and Safe Routes to School programs, as well as integrating active living and healthy eating (for example, nutrition education, procurement practices) throughout the work.
  - Advocate for diverse membership on wellness committees, including a significant youth presence
- Incorporate healthy local foods into school food environments, while teaching people about nutrition and the local food system
  - Incorporate local foods into school lunches, snacks and concession stands
  - Introduce curricula for growing food and benefits of eating health-promoting foods
  - Link local farmers with those who procure and prepare foods in schools
  - Start or expand school food gardens and build capacity for use of garden produce in school cafeterias

- Regionally communicate and support comprehensive state and federal school food and beverage policy implementation by serving as a resource/support for school wellness teams
  - Continue to address policy barriers at local, state, and national levels that interfere with schools procuring and serving local foods
- Expand the FEEST program throughout the region. Pilot the potential for FEEST and a youth-led vehicle for future community forums.
- Engage partners as advocates and messengers for policy and system change
  - Sponsor educational speakers and workshops for target groups: youth , coaches, county leaders, community health members, parents of children K-3
  - Train youth to be cross-age teachers and role models for younger students
  - Encourage target groups to participate in school wellness teams and FFI Work Groups
  - Provide training opportunities for target groups to be effective communicators and advocates
  - Develop opportunities for young adults to serve the initiative through AmeriCorps and FoodCorps

***Strategy B: Ensure that caregivers (family and others) of children from birth to age five provide health-promoting food and active play***

**Policy and practice change targets:**

- Assure implementation of existing health related policies that address nutrition and physical activity within agencies that serve children birth to five years old
- Head Start centers throughout the region establish the practices of serving healthy local food and incorporating age appropriate levels of physical activity throughout the day for all children
- Early childhood settings and parents of vulnerable children implement the 5-2-1-0 combination with their children

**Sample tactics and activities for Strategy B:**

- Engage Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) as a partner. NICC offers a childcare curriculum leading to an Associates degree, and could offer significant expertise for working with regional agencies, childcare providers, parents, and children in our target age range for this strategy. Many of NICC's students are low income, single parents of young children. NICC will be a high leverage partner for reaching those parents and their kids.
- Convene agencies and organizations that provide out-of-home childcare for children and those that administer programs for vulnerable families [e.g. WIC, Head Start, HAWC-Iowa Partnerships for Children (Howard, Allamakee, Winneshiek, Clayton)] Engage them in messaging campaigns and delivering educational programs for those families.
  - Establish Farm to Preschool programs in centers serving our most vulnerable children (Head Start and others)

- Develop and expand the Safari program to children ages birth to five and their families
- Incorporate healthy eating and active living into the NICC childcare curriculum and their childcare center
- Identify and expand learning communities focused on birth to age five children and parents; stay connected to work of NEIFFI Active Living focus on young children and families playing outdoors
- In conjunction with National Institute of Child Healthcare Quality – Healthy Weight Collaborative, work initially with regional WIC parents to design and implement a behavioral messaging campaign and then expand to early childhood care providers, parents, and community primary care health care providers based on the “5-2-1-0” every day framework: 5 servings of vegetables and fruits, no more than 2 hours of screen time, 1 hour of physical activity, and 0 sweetened beverages.
- Design and implement a parent engagement program for parents of vulnerable children ages 0-5.
  - Bring selected and interested participating parents onto the NEIF&F leadership team.
  - Engage these parents in developing programs for their peers.
  - Work with schools to recruit these parents to be members of school wellness teams.

***Strategy C: Ensure that local, health-promoting food is available and affordable in all communities, neighborhoods and institutions***

**Policy and practice change targets:**

- Policies, practices, and systems support investment in new and existing producers who produce food for local food systems
- Policies, practices, and systems support investment in processing and aggregation of local food products

**Sample tactics and activities for Strategy C:**

- Establish a regional food hub to aggregate orders and food
- Support regional food system learning communities:
  - Local level – Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition
  - State level – Regional Food System Working Group
  - Multi-state level – Driftless Region collaboration
- Create opportunities for value chain partners to engage in food system planning
- Support and facilitate local food value chain development
- Work with local entrepreneurs to develop and maintain storage and processing capabilities for local food
- Promote opportunities for existing and new producers to engage in the local food system
  - Convene local food producer entrepreneurial learning and networking events

- Provide technical assistance for producers to meet food safety requirements
- Assist with marketing of local food and farms
- Provide consultation and education to school food service staff to build capacity for procuring and using local foods
  - Develop regional, seasonal, local food-based menus to make procurement and planning easier and more effective for schools
  - Build food preparation skills of cafeteria staff through workshops

***Strategy D: Ensure that people use the natural and built environment for physical activity, play, and active transportation***

**Policy and practice change targets:**

- Policy, system, practice, and infrastructure changes in support of walking and bicycling to and from schools in rural communities
- Resources allocated to programs that attract families to existing spaces and engage them in physical activity and play
- Promote organized active living throughout the day in schools

**Sample tactics and activities:**

- Support a regional active living learning community.
  - Bring together groups whose missions support active and healthy living
  - Distribute information on the health benefits of active living
- Encourage and support school districts to develop an active school wellness committee to align with the Food & Fitness Initiative vision, strategies and policy targets.
  - Provide suggestions and support for school activities that promote physical activity
  - Motivate the school wellness teams to initiate active living programs
- Foster relationships between schools and communities around opportunities to support school wellness committees and active transportation to and from school.
  - Speak to community groups throughout the region to build support for SRTS
- Regionally, promote youth (ages Birth to 5) and family participation in physical activity and play every day.
  - Develop partnerships that offer Safari programs in each county

**TIMELINE**

***Ensure that school district policies & practices support healthy living of children, families and community members***

**Year 1:**

- > Continue to focus on deepening the capacity of school wellness teams, diversifying membership on those teams, and expanding the team scopes of work to include parent engagement. (November 2012 – June 2013)
- > Convene regional school wellness learning communities (January 2013- October 2014)

- > Document value of the School Resource Contacts to districts

**Years 2-4:**

- > Phase in school district support for Resource Contact stipends and negotiate partnerships among districts that will share a Resource Contact
- > Document policies and practices that have changed
- > Provide capacity building as appropriate to support implementation of policies and practices
- > Create sustainability for school wellness teams

***Ensure that caregivers (family and others) of children from birth to age five provide health-promoting food and active play***

**Year 1:**

- > Form a partnership with Northeast Iowa Community College focused on integrating local food and active play into curricula and their childcare center
- > Explore the potential of NICC joining NEIF&F as a core partner to sustain the regional birth to age five work.
- > Form working relationships with and among organizations and programs that serve vulnerable children from birth to age five, and their parents
- > Explore and seek funding for a formal parent engagement program; pilot the program
- > Expand the messaging campaigns targeted to families and caregivers of vulnerable children

**Years 2-4:**

- > Expand the parent engagement program
- > Actively recruit parents from the engagement program as members of the NEIF&F Leadership Council, school wellness teams, and design teams for parent education programs.
- > Pilot parent education programs with parents who are part of the WIC program. Expand the program based on feedback, results, and redesign.
- > Pilot 5-2-1-0 messaging educational campaign, under the NEIF&F regional brand of, "Together We Grow Health Kids", with the medical community through primary care (e.g. pediatrics, family medicine; physicians, physician assistances, certified nurse practitioners)
- > Expand implementation of messaging campaigns and educational programs based on pilot program results, feedback, and redesign.
- > Assure sustainability beginning in year 2 by embedding the work in ongoing organizations and programs who see children birth to age 5 as central to their mission

***Ensure that local, health-promoting food is available and affordable in all communities, neighborhoods and institutions***

**Year 1:**

- > Continue to focus on creating opportunities for local food producers to engage in the local food system.

- > Continue to offer educational and networking opportunities for producers and processors.
- > Create a learning community for local food buyers.
- > Pilot at least one new marketing and distribution strategy for local healthy foods in established local retail markets
- > Assist six schools with development of a seasonal, cycle menu to incorporate more local food and facilitate food procurement.

**Years 2-4:**

- > Continue to support local food learning communities.
- > Plan, create and nurture a strong non-profit framework for a food hub, which will allow local food producers to market, process and distribute healthy food to vulnerable children and their families.
- > Strengthen and expand the Farmers Market Coupon Program for Food Pantries to serve more families
- > Within a food hub, create a sustainable model for a rural CSA including one or more of the following emerging markets: online model; worksite model; or school-based model.
- > Assist additional schools with implementation of the regional cycle menu.

***Ensure that people use the built environment for physical activity, play, and active transportation***

**Year 1:**

- > Begin SRTS plans for 24 public/private school districts in the five counties
- > Conduct education and encouragement events to promote walking and biking to and from school
- > Develop networks to recruit walking school bus drivers in the region
- > Assist communities with planning that supports active transportation
- > Engage youth leaders as participants in planning, advocating and implementing active transportation activities and community efforts
- > Expand the regional interest in the Safari program

**Years 2-4:**

- > Implement relevant aspects of SRTS plans
- > Expand active living activities to non-participating parts of the region
- > Develop a rural model for SRTS

**ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

Internal and external communications will continue to play a key role in moving the Food & Fitness Initiative forward. Our goals are to maintain transparency, to keep people actively engaged, to ensure access to information for collaborators and key stakeholders, and to keep the public informed of our work. We have built and will continue to use an internal communications system relying heavily on technology (e.g., listservs, email, teleconferences, website). By using these media we have reduced the impact of working across a large geographic area, enhanced integration of work teams and maintained transparency. Sample tactics:

- Galvanize our regional brand, “Together We Grow Health Kids”
- Target school decision makers, school wellness teams, primary care providers, producers and local/regional decision makers
- Extend the brand to early childhood care providers and parents of children ages birth to five
- Continue to tell the stories that engage people with the work and attract resources

## **ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS AND RESULTS—BY STRATEGY**

### ***Ensure school district policies and practices support healthy living of children, families, and community members***

#### **Indicators and measures for increasing healthy, local food served in schools**

- School spending on local food
- Percent of schools achieving the bronze or above level in the Healthier US Schools Challenge
- Fruit and vegetable consumption in the schools, based on data in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System survey.

#### **Indicators and measures for school wellness teams**

- Engagement and capacity of internal/local school wellness committees using a survey and scorecard we developed in 2012
- Increased capacity of school wellness committees to engage the community in parent education about healthy lifestyles and active transportation to and from school using a survey and scorecard we developed in 2012;
- Presence of a youth NEIF&F 4H team and youth coach in schools in NE Iowa;
- Youth have significant leadership roles on 75% of school wellness teams (using the School Wellness Team survey and scorecard developed in 2012).

### ***Ensure that caregivers (family and others) of children from birth to age five provide health-promoting food and active play***

#### **Indicators and measures:**

- The number of early childhood care providers participating in workshops to build capacity to make environmental, policy and curriculum changes to promote wellness and engage parents
- The percent of Head Start centers in the region that incorporate local healthy food and appropriate daily minutes of physical activity
- The number of Head Start centers in the region who participate in Farm to Preschool programming (building on the NEIF&F Farm to School model)
- The number of participants in parent outreach education
- The number of parents of vulnerable children who assume leadership roles on school wellness teams, the NEI F&F leadership team, or other teams promoting health and wellness for children

- The number of families with young children participating in the Safari (outdoor physical activity) program

***Promote opportunities for existing and new producers to engage in the local food system***

**Indicators and measures:**

- The number of institutions purchasing local food in 4 years and the value of local food purchased
- The number of new local food producers (including youth or youth organizations) selling food to local markets
- The number of businesses or organizations that increase aggregation, storage and processing capacity for local foods in the region
- The number of venues implementing programs or infrastructure to increase affordability and accessibility of local food
- The number of local food producers participating in a food hub

***Ensure communities have a built environment that supports abundant opportunities for physical activities***

**Indicators and measures:**

- The percent of children that walk or bike to school in communities/districts where it is practical
- The number of walking school buses in communities already hosting them, as well as new communities
- The number of communities within the region that incorporate elements that support active transportation into significant infrastructure projects
- The number of communities within the region engaged in community planning and development efforts that incorporate active transportation as a central consideration in their strategies
- The number of youth leaders participating in planning, advocating and implementing active transportation activities and community efforts

**Racial Equity**

***Specific indicators related to racial equity will include:***

- The number of community members from marginalized groups participating in Food and Fitness work and related projects
- The number of community members from marginalized groups participating on Food and Fitness leadership and work teams (Regional Leadership Council, school youth teams, work groups, design teams)
- The number and type of activities and events sponsored by the Postville Youth Team
- Number of activities/events with people from the community involved so that a language translator is not needed. This indicator will help us determine the extent to which the work around the strategies has become embedded within the community as well as the degree to which the Initiative is truly inclusive of others at all levels.

- Stories about how the Food and Fitness Initiative is making a difference for traditionally marginalized groups and how their participation increases the effectiveness of FFI

In addition to tracking these indicators, we will work with the University of Michigan team to streamline and revise the cross-site tool to ensure reporting expectations are met while taking into account reduced evaluation budgets. We will work more closely with the University of Michigan team to conduct joint analysis and interpretation of evaluation results, which was not a strong component of the work in the past. We will build on and document the evaluation capacity of the region—in particular the resource contacts working in the schools and the School Wellness Teams they are advising. In 2012, the resource contacts were critical in helping design, pilot, and complete the School Wellness Team Survey and Scorecard, which gathers comprehensive data about school wellness team activities and progress in the region's 18 school districts. We plan to further build the capacity of the resource contacts and the school wellness teams to evaluate their work by conducting training sessions on survey, interview, learning circle, and participatory evaluation techniques.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE COLLABORATIVE**

The illustration on the next page shows the high-level relationship among the components of the initiative, core partners, key messengers, and beneficiaries of the work. Articulating these relationships and the complexity of the work have led us to consider the structure and leadership we will need to move our work from here forward, and to sustain it beyond the next four years of funding.

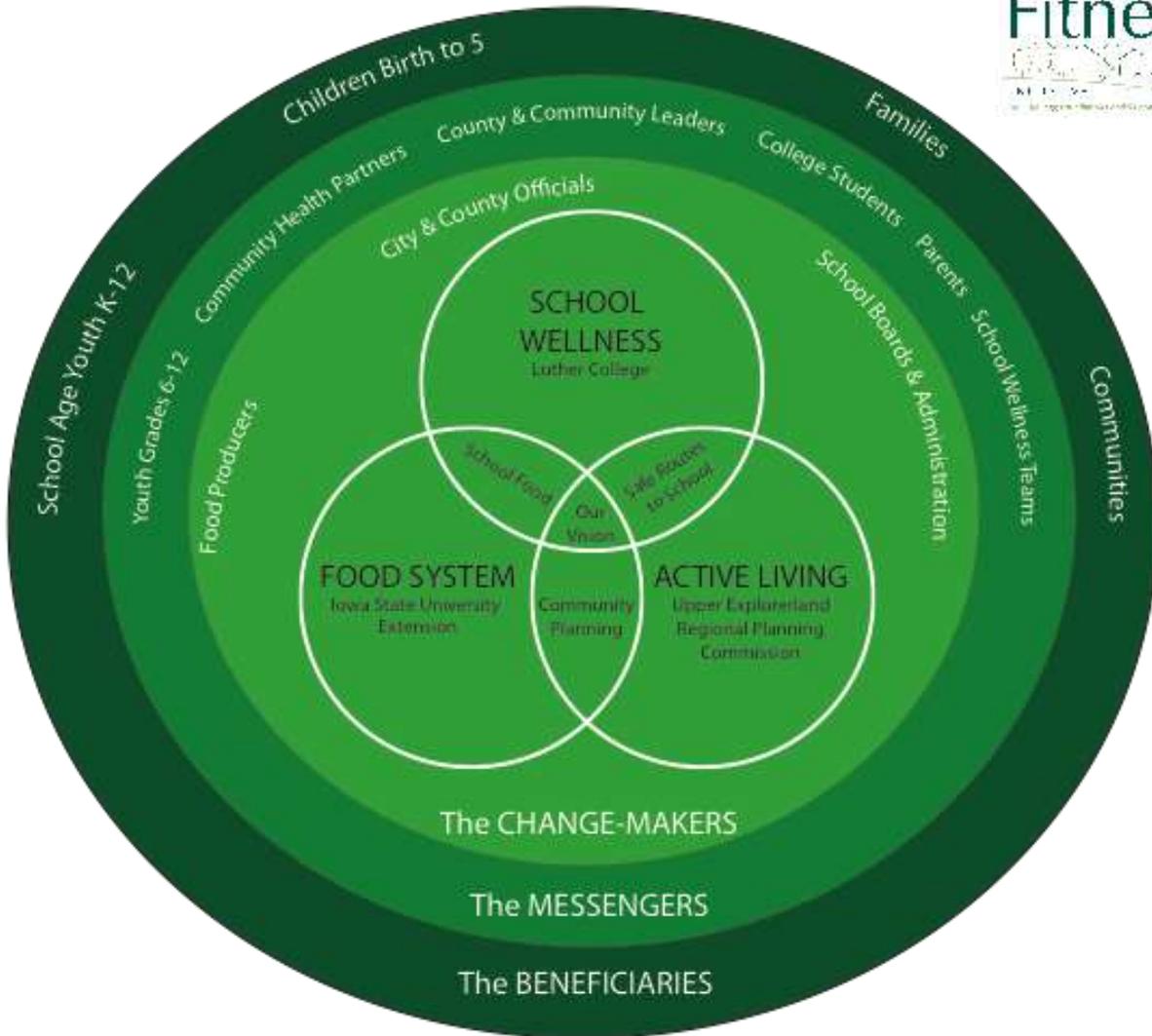
We have had a complex structure with multiple components of community engagement through regular meetings and work sessions: co-conveners (one of whom was the project coordinator), core partners, the Vision Work Group, county teams, youth teams, regional work groups focused on particular strategies, tactics or groups, an operations team, and a Regional Leadership Team. For the first five years of our work, this structure served us well because it facilitated building widespread ownership, awareness of the initiative, and momentum.

Now we are ready to transition to governance by a Regional Leadership Council that will provide oversight for NEIF&F, and an Operations Team that will meet to coordinate work at the tactics and activities levels. The Regional Leadership Council will reflect the broader make-up of the community, including members who give voice to the thinking of traditionally marginalized groups and youth. We will also need members who can bring access to resources for sustainability. We will intentionally recruit members. For example, as we sponsor parent engagement workshops we will identify and recruit parents of vulnerable children to be members of the Council. We will spend the next six to 12 months making the full transition to the Regional Leadership Council. Making this transition thoughtfully and carefully will be critical to our success.

We expect that we will continue to convene work groups to implement plans. The work groups are under the direction of core partners, but members come from a wide range of communities and organizations. Work groups hold the relationships needed to accomplish food and fitness work most effectively, and have a central role in identifying and pursuing funding opportunities. Parents from our engagement workshops will also be recruited for work groups.

# Sustainable, Healthy Communities

Policy & System Change Drives Our Work



## Our Vision

Northeast Iowa is a unique place where all residents and guests experience, celebrate and promote healthy, locally grown food and abundant opportunities for physical activity and play EVERY DAY. Healthier people make strong families and vibrant communities.

## Together, We Grow Healthy Kids

## **IMPLEMENTATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Project Director**

The purpose of the Project Director role is to provide overall leadership for engaging people throughout the region in achieving the vision of the initiative.

#### **Project Director: Ann Mansfield (.6 FTE)**

*Key responsibilities include:*

- Assure that the Community Action Plan is implemented through integrated, aligned action across all work groups and teams, in partnership with staff, leadership teams, and work groups
- Serve as primary communication liaison with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and other funders as appropriate
- Plan and facilitate Regional Leadership Council and Operation Team meetings
- Primary liaison for relationship management, overseeing related grants, communication, and questions with:
  - Core Partners
  - Evaluators
  - Regional Leadership Council and Operations Team
  - Work Group Leaders
  - Key national, state and local partners
- Provide leadership for teams planning regional Food and Fitness conferences
- Oversee the overall initiative budget with the Core Partners and review expenditures submitted by above groups and approve for payment by the appropriate grant administrator
- Oversee work of selected contracted resource people, as appropriate
- Strategic planning and communication for sustainability

### **Core Partner**

Core partners provide community-based organizational homes to sustain NEIF&F work beyond any grant period. Core partners share a passion for the vision we are pursuing, and their mission is aligned with our purpose. They have made a commitment to collaborate to achieve F&F long-range systems change outcomes.

#### **Core Partners:**

*Key responsibilities include:*

- Serve as a member of the core partner/Project Director team to oversee initiative direction and the overall budget from all sources of funding
- Serve as a member of the NEIF&F Regional Leadership Council
- Assign an appropriate member to the Operations Team
- Oversee the work embedded in the core partner organization
  - Assure that strategies are implemented with fidelity according to agreed on timelines

- Propose a budget for the work and monitor expenditures against the funds according to the Memorandum of Understanding for that work
- Assure that significant work and issues are communicated to other core partners and work groups
- Primary liaison for relationship management, overseeing related grants, and communication with
  - The FFI project director
  - Other core partners
  - Key state and national partners
  - The grant administrator (financial and summary reports)
- Oversee work of selected contracted resource people or staff, as appropriate

### **Regional Leadership Council**

The Regional Leadership Council is accountable for a regional, integrated approach to NEIF&F work that achieves the highest quality results for children and families in Northeast Iowa. The Council ensures that implementation of the Community Action Plan is creating the intended results, adjusts strategies as needed to better achieve the NEIF&F shared vision, and ensures that all strands of the work are woven together into coherent policy and systems change. The Regional Leadership Council works under the guidance of the Project Director.

**Regional Leadership Council Members** (to include, for example, members from Core Partners, schools, parents, youth, producers, informal community leaders, policy makers, and businesses)

*Key responsibilities include:*

- Hold the vision of the whole, and communicate that vision effectively to community members and organizational partners
- Monitor progress on the Community Action Plan
  - Review information coming from work groups, pilot programs, and evaluators
  - Monitor changes in current reality, progress toward the vision, what's working, what's not, and which strategies and tactics should be revised, strengthened, or eliminated in service of achieving the vision.
  - Monitor and document progress toward policy and system change
  - Make adjustments to the Community Action Plan as needed
- Reflect on the fit and timeliness of opportunities in light of the Community Action Plan and theory of change
- Vet new ideas and emerging opportunities for funding
- Advise and oversee the project director on emerging issues
  - Oversee the high level initiative budget with the project director and core partners
- Create synergy and learning across the region and beyond
- Serves as the decision-making body for NEIF&F
- Serve as liaisons for relationships and communications
- Encourage and advise local policy, organizational, and environmental changes and projects that create healthy food and fitness environments

## **NEIF&F Work Groups**

Regional Work Groups are learning communities that implement FFI work in a specific area of focus and align with one another as well as the Community Action Plan. (Current; School Outreach, NIFF, Active Living, Community Health focused on Early Childhood)

### **Work Groups:**

*Key responsibilities include:*

- Recruit and build high quality working relationships among institutional and individual partners to support policy and systems change
- Implement Community Action Plan strategies and tactics, including pilot projects as appropriate
- Propose, plan and carry out specific activities and events
- Assure that all work is integrated with other Regional Work Groups into a coherent regional program
- Develop capacity for leading policy and systems change within an area of focus
- Prepare and deliver one quarterly education component for Regional Leadership Council
- Participate in FFI initiative evaluation

### **Messengers and Partners of Work Group/Strategy Areas**

- Youth
- Funders Network
- Parents

*Key responsibilities include:*

- Recruit and build high quality working relationships among institutional and individual partners to support policy and systems change
- Propose, plan and carry out specific activities and events
- Develop capacity for leading policy and systems change within an area of focus
- Participate in FFI initiative evaluation

### **Operations Team**

*Purpose of Operations:*

- Facilitate effective communication and work between Strategy areas
- Increase efficiency & effectiveness of our time
- Internal communications coordination
- Provide a coordinated, comprehensive approach in schools, food system and active living work.
- Clarify the “FFI Network” of support for the work in schools; support for the RCs, understand each of our roles in supporting the RCs and Liaisons
- Shared leadership – Decision making for implementation of Community Action Plan
- Strategically thinking ahead, prepare for the transitions and changes

- Work to achieve role clarification as things are evolving; as we stretch for the FFI work to go deeper and be sustainable

### ***Technical Resources***

Technical resources support the overall initiative by providing specialized expertise. Specific responsibilities are negotiated as needed. Access to technical resources is through the project director. Current technical resources include communications, evaluators, ISUE

### ***Grant Administrator and Fiscal Agent***

The Grant Administrator is responsible to funders for the fiscal administration of grant funds. Beyond this basic purpose, the Fiscal Agent works toward the long-term sustainability of the FFI initiative.

#### **Grant Administrator & Fiscal Agent: Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque**

*Key responsibilities include:*

- Issue Memoranda of Understanding to core partners and others, as requested by the FFI Project Director; issue payments on the memoranda
- Pay approved invoices forwarded from FFI Project Director
- Keep accurate records of receipts, expenditures, contracts and subcontracts.
- Prepare monthly budget reports
- Prepare fiscal reports as required by funders
- Provide assistance in leveraging resources for FFI initiative work
- Convene the NE Iowa Funder's Network
- Seek funding partners to support the process of embedding the initiative's work in the region

### ***Other Roles***

In addition a variety of full and part-time staff members of the core partner organizations have roles in implementing our Community Action Plan. The budget identifies these positions and who is funding them.