

**Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative  
Annual Report**

**Submitted May 15, 2008**

**Submitted to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
Submitted by Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development Inc.  
with input from Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Conveners, Evaluators,  
Partners and Teams on behalf of the  
Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative Regional Team**

**Project Reporting Period  
April 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008**

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## **Narrative**

### ***A. Summary – Succinctly restate projects intended goals and the past years accomplishments and progress. Explain changes to goals, objectives, strategies or activities.***

Hundreds of Northeast Iowa residents and leaders have met monthly in each of the five participating counties and as a region during the reporting period to learn about, explore and plan for a vibrant community that supports families and children by promoting healthy food systems, physical activity and play. The Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative was implemented to maximize the community's planning capacity and opportunities for system change. Over the past year it has brought together passionate food and fitness community leaders from all levels of society. The Initiative provided an opportunity for community members to learn about the complexity of the food and fitness systems and how the political, health, environmental, social and organizational policies impact those systems. The Initiative started with three basic goals: 1) Promote and support the coordination and connections within the local food, health and active living fields. 2) Promote and support environmental and policy changes that promote the procurement and consumption of local health foods and active living. 3) Investigate funding sources and assist community planning learning teams and affiliates to seek private and public sector investment for the planning and implementation phases.

Over the course of the first planning year, the goals for the project were refined to reflect the learning that occurred through the project. They revealed the community's increasing understanding of the planning process and the complexity of the systems they are working to impact. They were developed using training, systems thinking and other learning models provided by the W.K.Kellogg Foundation. The new goals include the following:

- Develop *County Teams* that promote and support the coordination and connections within the local food, health and active living fields at the county level.
- Promote and support the coordination and *connections* within the local food, health and active living fields at the *regional level*.
- Develop a *Community Plan* through a process that reflects shared learning, systems thinking and use of the Hierarchy of Choices. Community planning reflects shared learning, systems thinking and use of the Hierarchy of Choices.
- Northeast Iowa's understanding of the relationships between the systems is reflected in the *community understanding of environmental and policy change opportunities*.

The objectives, strategies and activities related to the new goals also changed, becoming more detailed, goal oriented and inclusive of a broader number of project participants. Although some of the original project activities were limited in year one, alternative activities and strategies built project leadership, increased participation and strengthened community buy-in. As community leaders came together for learning and sharing they began to form bonds across traditional political, social and sub-project boundaries and partners contributed time and funding to planning. Although the community members continue to be passionate about specific areas of interest, they began to work as a team to convey a better understanding of all the system components and the relationships between health, food, infrastructure, systems, families and communities. They also began to provide leadership and take action across the food and fitness systems as a unified force for their region and the state of Iowa. The Food and Fitness Regional Team and Organizational partners worked together to develop a living vision for the project, to make Northeast Iowa a “unique region where healthier people are creating stronger families and vibrant communities. All residents and guests experience, promote and celebrate healthy, locally grown food and abundant opportunities for physical activity and play everyday.”

- B. Progress on Workplan – details regarding progress toward intended goals and objectives during the grant year formatted as per current workplan and specific benchmarks, milestones and outcomes.

**Goal I: Develop *County Teams* that promote and support the coordination and connections within the local food, health and active living fields at the county level.**

**Related Activities:**

- An ***Organizational Partners Team*** was developed. The Organization Partners Team was developed to provide technical support for planning and implementation of the county meetings and increase communication across fitness infrastructure, health and foods systems. The formation of this team was also expected to encourage regional thinking and planning across county and organizational boundaries. The Organizational Partners Team included one County Economic Development Director, one County Public Health representative, the ISU Extension County Directors and Co-Conveners and the Administrator. This team met at least once each month via teleconference with real-time computer and internet communication. One form of computer and internet communication support was provided by Luther College through the Luther College Round Table. The Luther College Round Table is a collaborative decision support tool that allows participants to anonymously communicate with the collective in real time through a Group Decision Support Software. This software was used on-site, at Luther College and remotely from throughout the region. The second form of computer and internet support was provided by ISU Extension using Adobe connect meeting software to facilitate discussion. The remote use of the software programs, along with teleconferencing allows the participants to reduce costs related to travel and time related to the rural nature of the project. It also stretches the funding allotted toward these partnerships. The remote use of the software would not be as effective if the time had not been invested in face to face relationship building at the beginning of the project. At the request of the NE IA Food and Fitness Regional Planning Team (Regional Team), any Regional Team member that wanted to participate in the monthly Organizational Partners Team meetings was encouraged to do so. The Regional Team also invited the Organizational Partners Team members to attend their monthly Regional Team meetings.
- ***County Planning Team meetings*** were organized and convened by the Organizational Partners Team including, Co-conveyers, ISU Extension, Economic Development, and Public Health, with assistance from the administrator and the evaluators through monthly web/teleconference meetings. The Organizational Partners Team implemented county meetings each month, except December, 2007. These meetings were well received and attended in all five counties. Although participation varied by month and by county, these meetings successfully drew hundreds of community members each month. The Organizational Partners Team used Web T-Casts and discussion to inform community members and build community understanding across systems. The Web T-Casts were prepared by the Co-Conveners with assistance from Organizational Partners and partners from state level organizations including Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa State University Extension, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and the W.K. Kellogg Technical Assistance Program Team. They included information about community health, fitness system components, and the food system. The Web T-Casts were discussed by the County Planning Team participants, who also provided input for discussion at the regional level. The Web T-Casts were also made available over the Internet for pre or post viewing by County Planning Team members or the general public. Each County Planning Team nominated three adults and one youth (and an alternate adult and youth) representatives to attend Regional Team meetings. These representatives

subsequently provided input from the county meetings to the region and reported back to the counties. The county meetings included representation from across fitness infrastructure, food and health communities. One county planned and held a community kick-off event and began infrastructure inventories.

August 28, 29 and 30<sup>th</sup> the County Teams and Organizational Partners hosted the Iowa TAP team. Each county was consulted to develop stops, site visits, presentations, local food and discussion surrounding their food and fitness environments. The subsequent tour validated the social capital invested by community members throughout Northeast Iowa. It provided the validation to build on the relationships and community investment and quality relationships and quality collective thinking. It provided a demonstration of the pride that the community member have in the Initiative. It was another example of the silos coming down as each stop provided information about more than one system and included illustrations and dialog from a cross section of community members. The tour ended with an event that encouraged policy makers to consider the Food and Fitness Initiative and educated them about the impact that policy has on food and fitness systems.

- Organizational Partners educated and encouraged County Planning Team members about the importance of engagement, including support for low resource, youth and minority leadership at the county meetings. The Organizational Partners also required each county include a youth community representatives and a youth alternate for the Regional Food and Fitness Team. To encourage youth attendance at the Regional Team meetings, the Regional Team approved a youth alternate slot for each county. The alternate youth was allowed to attend the meetings beside each county youth representative and the two were allowed to consult when voting. Additional effort was made by county team members to provide rides and encourage youth attendance at the county meetings. The youth attendance per county varied but the average attendance was two to four youth per meeting. Youth attendance at the regional level was more consistent with youth from each county attending regional meetings as well as youth meetings held via the internet and phone conference. Because the county level youth participation was minimal, the youth developed a plan to expand outreach into schools. The youth felt the plan, which would be implemented in year 2, would overcome the difficulties presented by multiple rural school districts and meeting times that were not conducive to youth attendance. ISU Extension Youth Specialists also provided assistance to the youth with meeting development, planning, project and other tasks. The youth were encouraged to attend the Arizona trip, which galvanized them and report to the County and Regional Teams. Their status in the meetings and other venues was equal to adult participants and encouraged by the adults who requested reports and discussion directly from the youth.

The Organizational partners required that a minimum of three spots on the Regional Planning Team be reserved for minority liaisons from three of the minority communities in the region. These spots were filled by a respected Hispanic leader, a Russian leader and a leader from the Hasidic Jewish community that also serve as translators for communities. County team members also invited minority community members from their counties to the county team meetings, including Amish and Mennonite community members. The Regional Team also participated in Diversity Training, “Community Engagement from Multicultural Perspective.” This training, led by Visions, helped the Regional Team members with formation of the “Inclusive Team”, which was an expansion of the concept of including minorities. The Inclusive Team was developed to advise and assist the Regional Team with inclusion of minorities, low resource and other underserved community members in the planning process.

One of the counties conducted their county meetings in a different small communities each month to try to ensure that underserved, low-income community members would be more likely to be able to attend. Although this strategy helped them be more inclusive of low-income community member, especially with rising gas prices, it had other unintended consequences that are discussed later in this report.

By the end of the first year, the community members were consistently advocating for youth, minorities, low resource communities and regional thinking. This was demonstrated by funding shifted to the youth at the request of the youth in both year one and year two, increased funding to translators in year one and year two and funding shifts to the Inclusive Group for year two. It was also demonstrated not only by the Regional Team's request to have reports from the translators and the inclusive team but their request to have minority community members come before them to engage in discussion and make suggestions.

- The Organizational Partners had the team members identify who was not attending County Team meetings that should be, invite them to participate in the planning process and ask them to attend future meetings. This tactic was effective in provoking thought and discussion among participants at both the county and the regional levels. Dialog surrounding the question helped the community members better understand who should be involved in the planning process and why. Discussion included consideration for community verses rural representation, the importance of including existing leaders as well as underserved populations that have never had a voice. In the beginning, it also drew attention to the balance or imbalance of attendance related to the various silos of health, fitness infrastructure and food systems. As the year progressed and participants learned more about each of the silos, the silos broke down and the dialog about who was not attending became more and more focused on what the next meeting discussion would be and which community members should be personally invited to ensure by-in by both the community and the existing power structure.

The activities associated with Goal I were successful in developing multi-dimensional teams at the county and regional level. As the year progressed, the individuals that participated on the teams, and subsequently the greater community, developed a better understanding of the connections within and between health, the local food system, fitness and community infrastructure, daily life, families and policy. Participants that had joined the discussion to advocate for fitness infrastructure became just as passionate about the local food system and schools lunches. County team members that originally attended to advocate for a specific community within a county became strong proponents for regional action that would benefit the entire group. Some year-one bench marks for this Goal were recorded by each county and compiled by ISU Extension Allamakee County. (Please see this project's web site, [www.iowafoodandfitness.org](http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org), for specific bench marks. The county planning team link provides meeting minutes that include attendance. The regional meeting link provides the same information about the Regional Planning Team.) The web site includes the following benchmarks:

- Number of people attending meetings is available on the web site by meeting date.
- Number of organizations or groups represented was discussed at each meeting. Although the question "what is your affiliation" was asked at each meeting, the participants only provided their primary affiliation verses secondary and/or multiple affiliations and may not fully represent the collaborative thinking and representation.
- Number of youth representatives attending was evident at each meeting but although youth participated in each county, they did not increase participation over the reporting year. The

strongest participation was related to an adult ride. It was also seasonal and highly dependent on time of meeting. When questioned, the youth did not have a “good” meeting time. As a youth group they ended up meeting between 9:00 and 11:00 pm, which was not conducive to other community members being able to meet.

- Number of county youth planning projects was one planning project in each county, a concession stand survey. The results of the survey are included on the web site.
- Number of minority community representatives at the county meetings and contacted monthly by minority liaisons was originally intended to capture ethnic minority representation. Minority and low-income community representatives at the county meetings are not typically distinguishable, identified or singled-out by the Organizational Partners, except when they voluntarily provide information to the group, self identifying within their comfort zone. The participation by the low-income/limited resource community members is more pervasive and less obvious than other minority community members but this is indicative of the population breakdown within the defined community area of Northeast Iowa.
- Participation of county regional representatives in county and regional meetings is documented on the website by meeting date.

The work in year-one moved Northeast Iowa closer to achieving all the objectives for Goal I. As demonstrated by the tracking of county team attendees, the county teams have balanced representation and discussions across systems. The Regional Team has helped the county teams develop protocol to ensure participation by underserved/low-resource community members, including minority and youth, in decision making. An example of the progress is the Regional Team’s development of the Inclusive Team (subcommittee). The Regional team had previously reserved three Regional Team slots for ethnic and religious minority populations from the Hasidic Jewish Community, Hispanic Community and the Eastern European Community. These community liaisons were asked to attend county and regional meetings to listen to the presentations and then tell their communities about the meetings in their own language and methods. Each of them developed a plan for how they would disperse information from the meetings to their communities. Unfortunately, these reports were never shared with the Co-Conveners so the Regional Team rarely received input at the regional discussions. After discussions with project leaders at the end of 2007, these minority community liaisons, in cooperation with the Inclusive Team requested improved direction from the Regional Team. They specifically asked for the following opportunities, 1) Written instruction for what they could and should be doing outside the meetings 2) Increased financial resources to conduct the outside activities to reach their communities 3) Increased input to the Regional Team about what they felt would be opportunities to engage their communities in the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Project. In return, the minority community liaisons would provide monthly written reports for the Regional Team. Before the end of the reporting period, the regional team responded positively to all requests, providing increased funding and outreach opportunities and not only listening to the input but responding with invitations for greater participation and reporting. The underserved population capacity has also been increased through the training provided by Visions, the development of the Inclusive Team and the funding dedicated by the Regional Team to increase outreach and planning in four low-income communities. Although ethnic and religious minority and low resource leaders are working together as a subcommittee or group of the Regional Team, they purposefully selected the name *Inclusive Team* because they are passionate about creating a dynamic community plan that *includes* all segments of the population. The Diversity Training -“Community Engagement from a Multicultural Perspective” was well attended, not only by the Regional Team, but also by representatives from underserved communities and the Postville Diversity Council. The Inclusive Team members are also now integrated and participating on all of the Regional Food and Fitness Team Work Groups.

The Youth Work Group was formed in year-one. They worked together to implement a project titled “Iowa Action for Healthy Kids Mini-Grants 2008.” This planning project included a concession stand survey, surveys of elementary students and informational activities. The students used information from the survey to complete and report at the national Food and Fitness conference in Arizona. The following table details the county and associated youth actions.

County	Planned Actions
Allamakee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bring together youth groups from 3 communities</li> <li>2. Conduct a survey to learn more about the communities’ health knowledge and eating habits</li> <li>3. Survey middle school students about how much they know about healthful nutrition facts</li> <li>4. Take the information from the middle school survey and turn information into a game show to help get youth interested in nutrition.</li> </ol>
Clayton	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Concession survey to determine the healthy food wants of those making purchases.</li> <li>2. Assessment survey to look at the eating habits of high school students</li> <li>3. Based on assessment survey results, will educate elementary, HS and community by sponsoring a health fair showcasing healthier eating options and ways to create healthier lifestyles.</li> </ol>
Fayette	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Concession survey to determine the healthy food wants of those making purchases.</li> <li>2. Survey middle school students’ physical activity levels to measure overall group and individual activity levels.</li> <li>3. Education of middle school students around the needs identified in the survey. Creation of displays, promotional messages, and mini-lessons to this group.</li> </ol>
Howard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Concession survey to determine the healthy food wants of those making purchases.</li> <li>2. Survey elementary students about their nutrition knowledge.</li> <li>3. Use survey data to create a game show for elementary students regarding their nutrition choices including food tasting.</li> </ol>
Winneshiek	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Concession survey to determine the healthy food wants of those making purchases.</li> <li>2. Assess the fitness level of high school students to measure the amount of physical activity they engage in.</li> <li>3. Use table tents and other educational materials to inform high school students about healthy eating.</li> </ol>

The youth also developed a plan for year-two youth planning. The plan includes the youth expanding outreach down from the Regional Team to the school level. This decision is expected to increase participation back up to the county teams from each of the schools in the project area, engage more youth and build momentum for youth involvement in planning and implementation. Although there is still work to be done, the Regional Team’s request for youth reports, as well as their approval for funding for the Youth Work Group in year-one and year-two, demonstrate Northeast Iowa is making progress on the youth objectives.

**Goal II: Promote and support the coordination and *connections* within the local food, health and active living fields at the *regional level*.**

**Related Activities:**

- Regional Team members were selected by each County Team to represent all systems, minorities/low resource, and youth from each county. Alternates were also selected. These representatives have been dedicated volunteers. They have not only attended all regional meetings but have dedicated additional time to trainings, conferences and subcommittees. Their attendance at the Regional Team meetings and subcommittees was documented and is available on the website. Once the Regional Team was formed, regional meetings were held at least monthly (except in December) and sometimes twice/month. Although they were originally asked to attend Regional Meetings in the absence of their county team members, many of the alternates have been attending meetings regularly as well. The Regional Team and alternates are community leaders that represent a diverse cross section of Northeast Iowa including a county supervisor, a city mayor, school superintendent, minority leaders, youth, local food growers, health care workers, a park and recreation director, trail volunteers, and an engineer. Some of the Regional Team members have never served on a board or been considered community leaders; others are well respected community leaders and policy makers.
- Several Regional Leadership Development training opportunities were provided by the Directing Team for Regional Leadership Team, Organizational Partners and partnering agencies. These team members also attended learning and planning conferences conducted by partnering organizations. The first training session was on May 3, 2007 by Claudia Fernandez. It was titled, *Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative Leading and Managing Teams: Building a Team Culture, A Soft Skills Workshop*. The workshop included the maximum number of participants that were allowable. Although the Regional Team was not yet formed at the time of the conference, participants included many of the eventual Regional Team members as well as some Organizational Partners and state partners. Participants were required to complete Fibro-B and Meyers Briggs tests before the training and then learned about their individual results and the group dynamics at the meeting. Ms. Fernandez drew attention to the importance of avoiding “Group Think” and advised the group that they were low on “P” personalities and should make an effort not to lose that segment of the community as they were needed for visioning, communication with like minded community members, and to help the group not get bogged down in the process. She also commended the group on having detailed oriented “J” members that would complete the tasks at hand and take care of the details. She noted that one of the strengths of the group was that participants demonstrated a wide distribution of communication and thinking styles. She noted that if the group listened to the various ideas from throughout the group their outreach to the general public would be more effective since not all the community members would be reached in the same way. The feedback from participants was very positive. The training generally educated the participants to understand and value all planning members.

Two grants training/conferences were contributed by the Iowa Department of Public Health, Wellmark, the Winneshiek County Community Foundation, Iowa State University Extension and numerous partners that contributed their speaking fees on May 25, 2007 and October 4, 2007. These conferences provided a forum for all Northeast Iowa community members to learn about the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative, the planning structure associated with the Initiative and the funding opportunities related to planning and community collaboration. Several speakers provided insight into food and health systems including representatives from the Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa State University Extension, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and others. The local project leaders also presented information. Large group discussion and small group breakouts completed the conference schedules. Local food was served and the community members were encouraged to participate in County Planning meetings. The second conference was

lead by the Iowa Department of Public Health and multiple partners including the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative. It was designed primarily for the food and fitness partners and planning team to help the partners leverage funding for the food and fitness initiative. An outside grant writer was brought in to educate the group. Both conferences were well attended by participants from throughout Northeast Iowa.

A regional conference, Organizational Learning and Systems Thinking for Northeast Iowa, lead by Kathy Zurcher and Kara Werner on November 28 and 29, was attended by all the Regional Team members and the majority of the Organizational Partners and regional youth representatives (nine youth). A total of fifty three participants learned about organizational learning and systems thinking including creative tension model, core theory of success and the hierarchy of choices model. They also participated in and learned about World Café discussion. They worked as a team to establish their Core Values, their purpose and the beginning of a vision. The workshop was a key turning point for the group. It helped them establish their identity and merged the thought across organizations and institutions and other barriers. They began to work less in silos and take greater ownership of the project. Other notable interactions included youth participation as equals and committed and enthusiastic engagement by all participants.

One Women, Land and Legacy Conference titled WAVA – Women Adding Value to Agriculture was sponsored by North Central Risk Management Education Center- A Women Outreaching Women Program, local banks and agri-businesses. The conference was planned and supported by multiple partners including Northeast Iowa women involved in agriculture, Iowa State University Extension, the Farm Service Agency, Iowa Farm Bureau's from the five county area, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Northeast Iowa Community College, Iowa State University Extension five county region, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development Inc. Over 100 women attended this conference on February 2008. It included several sessions concerning the Food and Fitness Initiative and the system components.

Additional meetings attended by the project leaders and community leaders included the 2007 Food and Society meeting and the Food and Fitness Networking meeting April 2007. Five community members attended the Networking Conference in Chicago June 2007 and a project leader and evaluator attended the Evaluator meeting in Chicago in June 2007. In October 2007, one Convener and Evaluator met in New York for the National Evaluator meeting and another project leader attended via phone conference. Project Conveners and team members attended the Organizational Learning and Systems Thinking meeting in October in Battle Creek and two community leaders and the Co-conveners attended the Miami, Florida Food and Fitness meeting. One Convener and an Extension employee attended the Food and Society meeting.

- Regional Team meetings were planned and implemented monthly by Co-conveners. These meetings provided an opportunity for the Regional Team members to bring information from the county level to share with their peers from the other counties. They also provided opportunities for greater learning about the systems, inclusion of all community members and the planning process. These meetings were originally scheduled for two hours but the Regional Team members requested increased meeting time for greater discussion and dialog between team members. Although many of the Regional Team members traveled between one and two hours to attend the meetings, the increased time was unanimously approved and attendance did not decline. At the beginning of the reporting period the meetings were largely planned by the Convener but at the end of the reporting period the Regional Team was requesting agenda items and increased decision making. The

Conveners directed the meeting more at the beginning of the reporting period than at the end of the reporting period, as Regional Team members better understood their roles and purpose for the project. The cohesiveness and control of the Regional Team was demonstrated by their participation in work groups and the subsequent development of the year-two budget. It was also demonstrated by their request for a “job description” for everyone that is being paid out of the project funds, including conveners, evaluators, translators, and all the new assistance proposed for year-two.

- Regional Team members from each county shared county input with each other at each meeting. This input was related to various issues including general narrative from each county about what was happening, what planning studies each county favored, and how the County Teams had responded to County Team learning and web-t-casts. This sharing occurred at various times during the meeting, some of it structured and some of it occurring spontaneously as Regional Team members responded to questions and agenda items.
- The Directing Team, minority liaisons from three minority populations, and two low resource communities worked with the Regional Team to develop the Inclusive Team. The Inclusive Team worked with VISIONS Inc. to broaden the definition of diversity and provide training for the entire Regional Team and additional partners. They also worked with VISIONS Inc. to incorporate suggestions for the development of a new plan to better engage minority/low resource communities. The Regional Team adopted and funded the plan. The Regional Team also attended the Visions Training to gain a multicultural perspective.

The activities associated with Goal II successfully helped Northeast Iowa develop a diverse regional food and fitness leadership team that is functioning to build the capacity and integration across food and fitness systems. This was demonstrated by the following benchmarks.

- The Regional Team members were elected by county teams and met monthly (except for December.) These meeting minutes are available on the web-site.
- The Regional Team adopted protocol that incorporated county input to support regional action. All the counties agreed to parliamentary procedure as a method to carry information back and forth from the county to regional meetings, with consensus for agreement on decision making. The related dialog and decisions are detailed on the web site for each meeting. The regional team also agreed to parliamentary procedure and adopted Roberts Rules of Order. They also felt that each voter’s votes should be recorded to ensure the County Teams had a way to track the voting and accountability of their Regional Team members.
- The Regional Team set aside a number of seats from each county for youth and minorities and integrated them into the regional planning process. They also developed youth and minority (Inclusive) work groups or teams for Regional Team members to work on issues in greater depth outside of the meetings.
- Minorities, low resource, and youth attended, reported, engaged, and participated. The Regional Team formed the Inclusive Team. They increased funding to the translators in year one to increase the number of hours spent engaging the minority communities. They requested improved participation and feedback from the translators in the form of written and oral reports during year one for year-two. They also dedicated funding to the Inclusive Team for increased minority, low resource and youth planning in year-two. These funds were allocated for activities and planning assistance as requested by each of these teams.

- The Regional Team collaborate with Organizational Partners and they have begun cross attending meetings with them. Regional Team members listen in on Organizational Partner meetings and Organizational Partners are invited and attend Regional Team meetings.
- Regional Team and Organizational Partners attended several regional training opportunities together including those previously mentioned in this report.

**Goal III: *Develop a Community Plan*** through a process that reflects shared learning, systems thinking and use of the Hierarchy of Choices.

### **Related Activities:**

- Thirteen web-t-casts were developed by Co-conveners with assistance from ISU Extension specialists and presented for County Team discussion to include background information on the project concepts, community built environment, workplace wellness activity opportunities, school wellness policy, local food systems, and other topics. Handouts related to these web-t-casts were also distributed during the meetings. Web-t-casts, which can all be viewed and are available to the public on the website, included the following:
  - #13 Building a Local Food System, Part 3: Planning Our Future
  - #12 Building a Local Food System, Part 2: What Have We Learned
  - #11 Building a Local Food System, Part 1
  - #10 LUI: Go the Distance youth Programs
  - #9 Lighten Up Iowa
  - #8 School Wellness Policies
  - #7 Worksite Wellness
  - #6 Community Mapping Tools
  - #5 Mark Fenton on Walkable Communities
  - #4 Why Safe Route to School Matter
  - #3 Safe Routes to School
  - #2 Active Living by Design
  - #1 Fitness as a Personal Ideal
- Attendees learned about the current reality, best practices, and opportunities based on assets of fitness, health and food systems independent and across systems from local, state and national experts through the web-t-casts, which included dialog and discussion by local, state and national experts. They also learned through written materials and through discussion at the meetings. Web-t-casts and discussion questions were posted on the website prior to monthly County team meetings so that citizens unable to attend meetings could participate and provide feedback on-line by using a survey monkey. Comments from these citizens were incorporated into the County team meeting discussions.
- County teams discussed the information presented to them and then made recommendations to the regional team based on the web-t-casts, discussion and direction from the Conveners. These recommendations included input on how to spend funds within each county to maximize learning opportunities as well as what each county was already doing related to the various learning sessions. County Team members were also involved in recruiting and selecting partners within their counties for learning opportunities including schools, workplaces and communities.

- The regional team selected communities for learning about system changes in each county within the food and fitness environments based on input from county teams. Two of these learning opportunities included working with ISU Extension Landscape Architect faculty member, an Upper Iowa University Geoscience faculty members and students from both schools to work with local community members to conduct sidewalk barrier assessments and walkable/bikable mapping studies with community members in six communities within the region as requested by the county teams. It also included school wellness and workplace wellness policy analysis, which are discussed under Goal IV of this report.

The regional team also requested a regional safe routes to school grant be developed to maximize learning related to the policy, infrastructure and programming that was impacting students within the project area. Northeast Iowa RC&D submitted the grant, which was subsequently awarded. The RC&D will work to complete the study in year-two of the project so that the learning can be applied in the implementation phase of this project. The goal of the effort is to complete a study and develop a regional Safe Routes to School plan for Northeast Iowa. The process of completing the study is also expected to raise awareness of the benefits of a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, improve the participating schools and communities understanding of what can be done to increase the number of students that walk or bike to school, and to build local and regional understanding and support for policy and infrastructure changes or improvements that will encourage SRTS. The study includes behavior, attitude, environmental and policy audits. These audits will inform participating schools and regional partners. It will also provide a forum for input for development of a Safe Routes to School regional plan for a five county area of Northeast Iowa and prioritize SRTS solutions based on nonbiased rankings including cost and other factors such as “hot spots” or high impact opportunities and solutions. The regional safe routes to school grant provides the resources for an analysis of the regions infrastructure in twenty communities encompassing over forty schools. The students and parent in those schools will be surveyed not only to determine the number of students that walk or bike to school but also to understand why specific methods of transportation are selected by the students and parents, perceived barriers and opportunities. A national expert will conduct three Safe Routes to School Design Charrettes in the most engaged communities or the schools with the highest participation. The understanding of the impact that policy has on transportation for youth will be furthered through a deeper look at how policy relates to the numbers of youth walking and biking and what changes could be made to increase walking and biking. Specific questions that were proposed to be explored include the following.

- Bussing policy – Does the school have in-town bussing and how many students ride the ‘town’ busses?
- Is/has the school considered eliminating in-town busing? Were any barriers to this policy change identified?
- Are walkable/bikable school buses used and what are the associated policies, costs and participation in the program?
- Safety education – Does the school include walking or bicycle safety in their curriculum and for what age group? What is the cost of implementing the program?
- Does your school have other policies that you feel impact walking/biking students?

The findings will be presented to the Regional Team for discussion, recommendations and prioritizations for development of a regional SRTS plan.

- The Regional Team will share information about the county team's discussions and learning to gain and understand the regional perspective.
  - Regional Team work groups were formed in the reporting year. Regional Team members selected to participate on various work groups based on their interests. Those work groups then began to gather information and develop plans for work in year-two of the planning. They also developed requests for planning funds to be distributed to further the work of the effectiveness of their groups through gathering of additional baseline data, or to increase information and tools that would help them assess current reality in the food and fitness environments. They developed the following work groups:
    - Built Environment (Assessments) Work Group;
    - Youth (Assessments) Work Group,
    - Vision Deployment Matrix and Systems Thinking Work Group,
    - Communications Work Group,
    - Community Health Assessments Work Group,
    - School Wellness Work Group,
    - Inclusive Team,
    - Northeast Iowa Food and Farm Coalition, and
    - Human and Financial Resources Work Group
  - The Regional Team began identifying environmental and policy opportunities for increased access to local healthy food and physical activity in our food and fitness environments. School wellness, workplace wellness, community sidewalk policy, food policies, city and county policy related to farmers markets and community garden development were also explored. Minority liaisons/translators were also asked to prepare information concerning cultural and social restrictions and trends related to policy and environmental issues within their communities.
  - Regional Team/Vision Deployment Matrix work group began development of their *Draft* Community Action plan through team visioning. They worked with the W.K. Kellogg TAP team members to understand and apply mental models for development of the region's vision. The Northeast Iowa Regional Team and Organization Partners began working through the hierarchy of choices. Regional Team's Vision Deployment Matrix work group are currently working through the vision deployment matrix and creating the mental models that need to be activated. With continual input from the Regional Team, they are also exploring the gaps between the vision and current reality that will lead to the development of strategies and tactics that fit the vision. The Regional Team will also explore local, state and national policy as part of their work in year-2 as they select strategies and tactics that will activate the vision . They will develop policy targets and create activities.
  
- The Directing Team partnered with Kellogg to identify, fund and foster learning opportunities and inform the community members about policy and system change. This work will be expanded on in Year 2. The learning around policy and system change included the workshops detailed earlier in this report. Significant learning occurred at the beginning of each county and regional meeting as participants shared policy changes and policy learning that occurred in the month previous to meeting. These sharing opportunities lead all participants not only to learn from each other but to take information back to their communities and organizations related to policy change in other organizations and communities. One example of this learning was related to the City of Decorah, city council working to develop and enforce

policy related to inclusion of sidewalks in all new developments. Sharing and newspaper coverage of this effort spurred policy discussion in other communities in the region.

- Regional Team members and Organizational Partners also engaged in learning opportunities including organizational learning and systems thinking. Participation at the organizational learning and systems thinking workshop included all but three Regional Team and Organizational Partners, including the Regional Team youth. The training was not only well received but the Regional Team requested additional assistance and subsequently agreed to create a Vision Deployment Matrix Team to explore further work with TAP team members and Co-Conveners.
- Community partners worked themselves and through partners to gather and plan for the gathering of additional baseline data, information and tools that will help them understand the current status and potentially lead to systems change. Several communities began mapping parks, playgrounds, trails and other infrastructure formally and informally because of the project. Some completed the mapping themselves and others hired entities through the project. Several cities also began evaluating walkable/bikable infrastructure through outside grants and as part of city projects that were influenced by this project. Work in the food system included completion of the following food system related surveys for which the results were initiated by and presented to the Northeast Iowa Food and Farm Coalition members and then presented to the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness County Teams.
  - **Institutional Survey** – to identify current and future purchasing patterns of institutions (schools, hospitals, care centers, restaurants, etc.) within Northeast Iowa.
  - **Household Consumer Survey Update** – to identify current and potential purchasing patterns of local food products on household consumers in our region.
  - **Asset Mapping** – to identify what fruits, vegetables, dairy, poultry and meat products are produced and sold in Northeast Iowa and where?
    - 1<sup>st</sup> – Map of Institutions in 5 county region that currently sell or are potential sites to purchase local foods (restaurants, schools, colleges, hospitals, etc.)
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> – Map of Farms currently producing and selling food directly to vendors/consumers in 5 county region
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> – Map of Processing Centers (light processing; meat lockers, etc.) in region
    - 4<sup>th</sup> – Map of Trails/RV Parks where tourists would travel, consume food --- opportunity for food institutions to make connection to local foods from producers, healthy foods, safe foods, etc.
    - 5<sup>th</sup> – Location of current distributors of food that serve our region to discuss how to market excess produce.
  - **Economic Analysis** – What economic impact does growing these fruits, vegetables, dairy products, poultry and meat products have on Northeast Iowa? 3 scenarios:
    - adult and oldest child current;
    - adult and oldest child consuming 5 servings a day (including meat and dairy);
    - adult and oldest child 7 servings a day (including meat and dairy).
  - **Base-Line Survey** – What is the base-line sales of dollars locally grown food in Northeast Iowa?
    - Data was collected from Institutions through the Institutional Survey.
  - **Barriers/Challenges/Policy Committee** – A committee was formed to start looking at barriers (local, state, and national) to growing and distributing food. Meetings

regarding the barriers were held within the region. These meetings revealed a common disconnect between schools, care centers and hospitals and local food purchase. The schools, care centers and hospitals were being told by the food inspectors that it was illegal to purchase local food. The food inspectors also worked for a large vendor that serviced all schools, care centers and hospitals except those in less than a dozen counties, which included the project area. The restriction against the purchase of local produce was a policy of the vendor and not an actual law. After several local and state inquiries and insistence the state finally acknowledged that there is no such restriction concerning the purchase of local produce by schools for the Northeast Iowa counties included in the project area. The issue was carried to the state level after a presentation by this project's conveners at a Regional Food Systems Working Group meeting in Ames, where Angie Tagtow and Rich Pirog, and other group members were informed of the discrepancy in law and policy.

The results of these surveys, as well as input from county and regional food and fitness partners and participants, documented Northeast Iowa's demand for affordable, locally grown and healthy foods and established the market for area producers, investors and consumers interested in developing the local food system.

County Health Departments also began working with the Iowa Department of Public Health and project leaders to develop surveys that would better assess current health conditions and engage the public in identifying health goals and community health vision. Although proposals were submitted to fund these surveys by outside sources, they were not funded in year-one. The Regional Team did propose some funding to start the process in year-2.

- Several community partners provided additional learning opportunities related to the project, including the community members themselves and the participating city and county entities. Regional entities also provided some assistance including Northeast Iowa RC&D, which completed trail mapping and local food vendor mapping at no cost to the project, the NIFF Coalition completed the surveys as previously mentioned and Luther College contributed substantially through student surveys and projects.

The activities associated with Goal III successfully helped Northeast Iowa community members move closer to their objectives and outcomes. They helped them have a better understanding of the current reality, benefits (assets), and opportunities for change in local food, fitness environments and health systems. They also helped them develop a common language, and a purpose, vision and understand what a healthy community looks like with regard to food and fitness systems and why the collaborative has been formed.

This movement toward the objectives and outcomes was demonstrated by the following benchmarks.

- Not only did county and regional teams identify opportunities for change in the local food and fitness environments, other community members and organizations identified opportunities.
- The greater community participated through increased discussion surrounding policy, increased learning opportunities related to local food systems and healthy living and attendance at county meetings and other related meetings.
- Ten workplaces participated in workplace wellness learning or activities.

- At least one of those workplaces adopted workplace wellness activities.
- Not only did five school districts review school wellness policy and consider them in relation to the project, several additional districts requested information and learning about the policy review
- Several Food System Assessments were completed by NIFF and reported to the community and regional and state partners as previously mentioned.
- Built environment assessments were considered and completed as previously mentioned.
- IDPH developed and proposed a new assessment of the region based on learning through the project.
- Libraries began related book discussions
- Churches, city councils, boards of supervisors and civic organizations requested presentations and or had discussions about the project.
- The Regional Team identified Core Values and a purpose for their work
- The Regional Team and Organizational Partners developed a Vision statement
- A Vision Deployment Work Group began working with the Co-Conveners, the Regional Team and the Kellogg Foundation TAP team members to identify mental models that will help the community understand the gaps between Vision and Current Reality.

**Goal IV: Northeast Iowa's understanding of the relationship between system change is reflected in environmental and policy change.**

**Related Activities:**

**Several activities were related to work place wellness including the following:**

- The Co-Conveners developed and presented a web-t-cast for workplace wellness policy.
- Two workplaces in each county were selected identified by county team members and then participated in workplace wellness education.
- Co-Conveners explored and presented information on school wellness policy and coordinated workplace wellness and school policy learning opportunities.
- Luther students worked with Luther College partners to complete workplace wellness health risk assessments and do comparative analysis on those assessments.

These activities are further detailed in the attached workplace wellness report.

**Several activities were related to school wellness review and discussion including the following:**

- County and Regional team members identified school districts within each county to participate in wellness policy review,
- School liaisons and their wellness committees in the selected district of each county worked with Co-Conveners and an ISU Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist to review school wellness policy and identify opportunities.
- The review occurred and was shared with the Evaluators and Organizational partners. Due to a growing overwhelming interest from other school districts an informational learning session/meeting was scheduled for May 2008.

These activities are further detailed in the attached summary and report.

- Luther students use input from county meetings to identify and complete assessment projects in each county to gather and share assessment information about the communities. These assessments provided input on areas of specific interest to each county.

The activities associated with Goal IV helped the community members move closer to achieving objectives and outcomes. This positive impact was demonstrated by the benchmarks noted in the workplan including the participation of the workplaces and the schools in the activities. Northeast Iowa subsequently had a greater understanding of policy related to the access of healthy food and physical activity in schools, the workplace and neighborhoods.

### **C. Additional Unplanned Objectives or Activities – not included in original Workplan**

Although dozens of unplanned activities within the community occurred throughout the project period, the majority of the activities that occurred during this reporting period were included in the revised work plan. One additional workshop not detailed in the work plan arose out of a need identified by the minority liaisons and project leaders. It was the Community Engagement from a Multi-Cultural Perspective workshop held on March 26, 2008 led by VISIONS Inc. The same group, VISIONS Inc., also lead a smaller workgroup session on the 25<sup>th</sup>, which resulted in the ultimate formation of the “Inclusive Team.” On the 26<sup>th</sup> the VISION Inc. led training for the Regional Team and some Organizational Partners followed by additional training for interested parties. Approximately twenty Regional Team and interested community members stayed for the additional training.

### **D. Additional Information - Responses to the evaluation questions.**

- **What types of partnerships have developed at the local, state and national levels to support the development of action plans to promote environmental and policy change strategies?**

Local – County Departments of Public Health are working together on regional planning as they never have before. They are also working with partners they have never worked with (except on homeland security.) This is their first regional approach and the first to engage economic development and public health in the same discussion and planning.

State – ISU Extension has allowed the local level to shift how they work rather than follow typical patterns, the state and area specialists have been allowed to work on the project and they have hired staff to work on related work including a small and mid-sized farm management specialist. ISU Extension is also developing a single point of contact and then dispersing questions and information and requests for allocation of state resource to the county level. Iowa Department of Public Health has indicated that they are creating alignment with community health initiatives. The Regional Food Systems Working Group and Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture – have engaged in discussion about the project at quarterly meetings. Rich Pirog had been able to take information concerning the project to the National Network of University Programs in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, which includes academic leaders from across the U.S.

National –The Urban Design Lab Institute in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Columbia University developed a focus group in Iowa and requested participation by Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness project leaders. Their work will explore the epidemic of childhood obesity in the U.S and potential community based solutions. Project leaders agreed to participate in a round table in Iowa to discuss potential interventions for the state. Northeast Iowa Conveners have led discussion with the other eight Food and Fitness Initiatives. Northeast Iowa Co-conveners presented to the Sustainable Ag Food Systems Funders in June 2008, a group of legislators and private

philanthropists interested in investing public and private funds in sustainable agriculture and food systems across the United States.

- **Describe the partnerships in the community collaborative that are being established to reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the community.**

The county and regional teams are working to be inclusive. The Regional Team has dedicated funds and invested time and resource in developing the racial and ethnic diversity of the community leadership and input. The Inclusive Team was formed, is functioning and funded by the Regional Team. The Co-conveners are promoting the reestablishment of Postville Diversity Team.

- **To what extent and how have youth leaders been engaged and participated in the community action planning process?**

Youth have been very engaged in this project as evidenced in their participation in county and regional planning, the youth team, their research, development of a year two plan of action, development of a budget for their work, realignment of youth participation to focus on participation from each school and work back to the regional team and through their attendance and presentation at a national meeting. These details are further captured earlier in this report.

- **To what extent have grassroots community –based organizations and leadership been involved in decision-making regarding the community action plan?**

Grassroots community members have been involved in county and regional meetings, workgroups and learning sessions as described earlier in this report.

- **What concrete efforts illustrate the bridging of the local food system, physical activity and built environment, and public health sectors in the action planning process?**

- Community projects related to infrastructure for fitness now include food systems components. Example: Riceville development of a permanent farmers market next to their community trail in the center of the community and their vision for development of sidewalks between the school and trail and farmers market.
- Community gardens are being planned near walking trails.
- Permanent farmers markets are being established in central, easily assessable locations near trails, sidewalks and other non-motorized community infrastructure.
- City and County policy makers and boards include discussion of all sectors.
- The Regional Team work group members serve on multiple work groups across sectors.
- School administrators and policy makers are discussing all the systems and are in discussion with the cities and the food growers. Example: Clayton Ridge Food and Consumer Science Teacher aligned her efforts with the school nurse, food service and students to change the vending machine selections, create a walking day and hold a health fair about food production, health and nutrition. A Food and Consumer Science student leader group was formed to advocate and plan activities.
- Decorah planning for the future includes a collaborative of community members advocating for a community center that includes a community kitchen.

- **How is the collaborative addressing the social and health inequities related to access to local healthy foods and safe environments for physical activity?**

The liaisons/translators from the Jewish, Eastern European and Hispanic communities are hired to increase the project partner's contact with the minority communities. They not only attended meetings,

they translated ideas and concepts into other languages. Toward the end of the reporting period, the Inclusive Team and Regional Team finally requested that the liaisons/translators present that information to the Regional Team. These liaisons/translators were excited to comply. The liaisons/translators took information from the initiative to their communities and then gathered information concerning food, fitness, culture and customs from their communities over the reporting period. Their engagement in year-two was secured when, with the encouragement of the Inclusive Team, the Regional Team provided funding for them to increase their community's involvement and the ultimate success of the initiative. The increased participation and support for the liaisons/translators is expected to improve two way communications between the initiative and minority communities and increased opportunities for information and input to and from those communities.

The Inclusive Team also proposed increased funding for multi-lingual radio spots to the minority communities to be implemented in year 2. They felt that language barriers could be overcome through translation but culturally appropriate communication tools would be vital to the success of the initiative. On the recommendation of the Jewish, Eastern European and Hispanic communities, the Inclusive Team and ultimately the Regional Team supported the use of radio and print media to communicate with minority populations in Postville and Northeast Iowa during year two. Information will be distributed via the Postville radio station during culturally appropriate programming to the Jewish, Eastern European and Hispanic communities. It was agreed that the radio spots would include information about the Food and Fitness initiative, how community members can participate, etc. The liaisons/translators agreed to work with the Communications work group to ensure that major messages were communicated. The expected outcome is increased opportunities to provide information in an appropriate manner and engage a greater number of the non-English speaking populace in the learning, discussion and planning.

During the reporting period the Inclusive Team requested and the Regional Team approved targeting communities that qualify for the Horizon and BASIC's programs to help Northeast Iowa address social inequities related to income and builds on the previous planning that has occurred in the limited resource communities. The Inclusive Team discussed various methods of targeting communities to insure the Food and Fitness Initiative includes all types of underserved community members. After careful consideration, the team agreed that selection of target communities would be based on community poverty levels as determined by previous programs, the BASICS and Horizons programs. The Team felt that these programs used appropriate guidelines and also provided the background research and planning that would be helpful for the Food and Fitness Initiative. The communities identified by the programs overlapped each other as well as meeting other underserved community criteria. Therefore, the target communities include Elma, Oelwein, Postville and Waukon. The Inclusive Team recommended to the Regional Team that the communities be targeted by the Regional Team to ensure their needs, related to the Initiative, were met. The Inclusive Team also requested and received \$5,000 for outreach activities and initiatives within the communities to encourage their community participation in the planning phase of the Food and Fitness Initiative. The expected outcome is increased buy-in and participation by target community members.

- **What types of strategies are in the community action plan to strengthen family and community interaction?**

At the time of this report a Vision Deployment Matrix work group, with assistance from the Kellogg TAP team and participation of the Regional Team, is delving into the mental models of the region's vision. They are scheduled to, within approximately two months, be working in tandem with the Regional Team to develop strategies that will lead to tactics and activities. So the strategies have not

yet been identified by the Northeast Iowa Regional Team or Organization Partners as they work through the hierarchy of choices. Team members are currently working through the vision deployment matrix and creating the mental models that need to be activated and exploring the gaps between the vision and current reality that will lead to the development of strategies and tactics that fit the vision. The Regional Team will look at local, state and national policy to develop policy targets and creating activities.

- **Describe the leadership development and community capacity building activities that are emerging in the work. What are the future plans?**

The leadership development and community capacity building was previously described. The future plans include supporting the Regional Team, building their capacity to secure resources, identifying system components and structure for the future. Determine how the Regional Team relates to the County Teams and the role for those teams, structural support and creation, how they relate to the community, how their work educates policy makers, provides increased understanding through deeper dives in assessment, determines the legal structure of the Regional Team and then getting out of their way.

- **What activity has occurred to assess opportunities for local and state policy change?**

Dozens of local policies are being evaluated by project participants and community members. These are documented in the county meeting minutes on the web site. They include simple everyday examples from City Council, local work projects, schools, trail projects and local organizational food policies. Significant progress related to the local food system as it related to the local institutional purchase of local fruits and vegetables has also been documented following a six month discussion that encompassed several agencies, organizations and policy makers. The end result increased the capacity of institutions throughout the project area to purchase local fruits and vegetables and producers to sell to these institutions. The Cattlemen, at both the county and state level, also adopted new policy related to development of the local food system. These activities are further detailed in the evaluator's report.

- **How is communication being used as a tool to support system change?**

Everything related to the project is very transparent. Every meeting and presentation is posted on the Internet. All work is open to everyone and anyone can join at anytime. No one has to be elected to be on County Teams and if anyone can not attend a meeting they can view the meeting information via the internet.

Local and state policy makers at the table – face-to-face discussion with Supervisors, Mayors, School Administrators, City Council Persons, state legislators and senators, School Board members, city engineers, city councils, NrCS, conservation Boards, DNR, school nurses, food service workers, food producers and processors, hospital personnel, social workers, minority leaders, youth, coaches, bankers workplace.

Below is the technology currently being used and supported by the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative:

- **Webpage:** The NE IA Food & Fitness Initiative will also have a web presence at [www.iowafoodandfitness.org](http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org). The NE IA Food & Farm Coalition (NIFF) has a web presence

at [www.niffcoalition.org](http://www.niffcoalition.org). The web pages contain information on the history of the project, initiative news, resources, and upcoming events.

- **Listserves:** A listserv is a collection of emails under a similar email address. The advantage of using a listserv is that a group can easily be contacted without the need for each member to continually keep their email lists current. For example, by sending an email message to [allamakeeff@iastate.edu](mailto:allamakeeff@iastate.edu), you are sending a message to all 44 members of the Allamakee County Planning Team.

Our initiative currently has several listserves:

- [Allamakeeff@iastate.edu](mailto:Allamakeeff@iastate.edu): >40 members of Allamakee County Planning Team
  - [Howardff@iastate.edu](mailto:Howardff@iastate.edu): >30 members of Howard County Planning Team
  - [Claytonff@iastate.edu](mailto:Claytonff@iastate.edu): >30 members of Clayton County Planning Team
  - [Winneshiekff@iastate.edu](mailto:Winneshiekff@iastate.edu): >45 members of Winneshiek County Planning Team
  - [Fayetteff@iastate.edu](mailto:Fayetteff@iastate.edu): >40 members of Fayette County Planning Team
  - [FFStatePartners@iastate.edu](mailto:FFStatePartners@iastate.edu): 15 members, state partners with interest in the initiative
  - [FFPartners@iastate.edu](mailto:FFPartners@iastate.edu): Partner members of the county support teams: ISU Extension, Public Health and Economic Development.
  - [nefoodandfarm@iastate.edu](mailto:nefoodandfarm@iastate.edu): >40 members of the NE IA Food & Farm Coalition
  - [FFdirectors@iastate.edu](mailto:FFdirectors@iastate.edu): 3 co-directors of the Initiative
  - [FFworkshie@iastate.edu](mailto:FFworkshie@iastate.edu); 9 work sites contacts involved in Fall 2007 workplace programming
- 
- **Adobe Connect Meetings:** Adobe Connect is a software package that allows meetings and presentations to occur over the internet. Anyone with an internet connection is able to participate. The participants are able to watch a presenter discuss a slide presentation, ask questions through a chat window, participate in polls, and share documents. Several presenters can be viewed. The meetings occur in real time and can be recorded for future viewing.
  - **Adobe Presentations:** Adobe Presenter is a software package that allows us to add audio to a powerpoint presentation and package it into a stand-alone piece. These presentations will be posted online to be viewed by the County Planning Teams at their monthly meetings. The presentations can also be recorded to a CD.
  - **Community Portal** (through NE IA Community College-NICC): This shared on-line space is a member-only place where initiative members can record events, thoughts, post documents, chat and start discussion threads.
  - **Blogs:** A blog is a public web site where users post informal journals of their thoughts, comments, and philosophies, updated frequently and normally reflecting the views of the blog's creator. Initiative members will contribute discussion topics to the blog which can then be reviewed commented by people all over the world.

**In addition, if not already addressed, please respond to the following:**

*Please note: The following are the responses of the Co-Conveners.*

**1. What unanticipated outcomes did you experience?**

The amount of time it took to develop relationships with and between community members and the time to keep community members involved. Changing the participant's tendency to come to the table to problem solve and develop projects versus visioning and planning for systems change at the local and the state level. Keeping the participants at the table for planning rather than implementation was a challenge when a sense of urgency had been developed to get them to the table. The need to continually explain the theories and processes that were being used to ground the work took more time than originally anticipated. The amount of reliance on technology to do the work and to keep people engaged was also unanticipated.

**2. What lessons have you learned from this year's experience?**

The experience of grounding the work in theories kept Conveners focused in working toward the vision. The lessons learned in the evaluation process and working along side the evaluators to inform the work, has been significant. We learned not to rush the process. At first the Regional Team was trying to make decisions on assessments before they had developed trust with one another. Visioning prior to assessment work was important before going into a deeper assessment dives otherwise the assessment process was too overwhelming. The importance of bringing VISIONS to broaden our perspective of diversity and the process. The appreciative inquiry process that is being applied was also new learning we applied to our work.

**3. If some planned activities were not accomplished, please note them and explain why.**

Workplace wellness activities did not result in the intended outcomes. Although all the activities were completed, the workplace participation did not expand as hoped and may impact year two and future work with workplaces. Details of the workplace wellness programming and activities are attached.

Although several conferences and workshops were held, the policy development conference was not held because the Co-Conveners and Regional Team's work groups felt it was premature for where the community planning was at during the reporting period. The Regional Team is now exploring options for what and when to draw the partners and the community into a policy gathering.

Evaluators were not present at every Regional Team meeting. Because the local evaluator that was selected did not feel it was appropriate because the meeting content was more focused on learning. He was also more of an assessment expert rather than participatory evaluator. Evaluation reports did occur with the remote evaluator over the phone and quarterly summary reports were provided to the Regional Team. These evaluations resulted in project change and informed the collaborative – example of the minority community participation was not optimal, we needed direction, advocacy and increased buy-in from the Regional Team and so the VISIONS training occurred.

The Food, Fitness and Fun project and the Dairy Mentoring project was not completed because it was more project oriented versus planning and the planning focus changed because of the visioning.

**4. What have been the greatest disappointments or obstacles to achieving your progress and how are they being addressed?**

There was alienation of potential partners through the process because it is a planning process rather than a project. These partners came with the idea that there were funds available. Exp – Howard county who had a press release that said the W.K.Kellogg Foundation had awarded \$500,000 with \$100,000 for each county to use.

**5. Describe how collaborating with other organizations or institutions are helping or hindering your progress toward your goals.**

- ISU Extension, IDPH, Refer to previous in work groups, teams, partners etc.

**6. What critical incidents had major impact on the work of the collaborative this year?**

- Jan. – April 2007: Brenda and Ann conducting focus group meetings with a five counties to determine assets and opportunities in the built environment area before funding was secured from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for the FFI.
- April 2007: Lois Wright Morton, ISU Extension Sociologist, teleconferenced with the co-conveners on more than one occasion to share the theory and book of Shared Leadership by Meg Wheatley that grounded our work and helped think through the webcasts and county/regional meeting structure and process. She recommended opening up the County FFI meeting to all citizens versus just those that were nominated by stakeholders. This has been very important to the process and we've engaged many more people and organizations in our planning phase.
- May 2007 - Claudia Fernandez led the first leadership training session for partners and future regional team members titled, *Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative Leading and Managing Teams: Building a Team Culture, A Soft Skills Workshop*.
- May 2007 - Regional and Community Planning Conference was held for 120 community leaders in the region to kick off the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative. Speakers included, Lois Write Morton, ISU Extension Sociologist, Rich Pirog, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Jane Schadle, Iowa Department of Public Health and Angie Tagtow, Nutrition Consultant. .
- August 2007 – W.K. Kellogg Technical Assistance Team visited the region and we observed the social capital and the assets in the built environment and food environment throughout our region that had been identified as strengths when we began the planning process.
- November 2007 - A regional conference, Organizational Learning and Systems Thinking for Northeast Iowa, lead by Kathy Zurcher and Kara Werner, was attended by all the Regional Team members and the majority of the Organizational Partners and regional youth representatives (nine youth). Here we integrated the Core Theory of Success, the Creative Tension Model and Hierarchy of Choices theories into our work and it was shared with the all Regional Team members and Organizational Partners. We developed a common language for our work around these theories. We also established our Core Values, our Purpose and began the development of the key elements for our Vision around this work
- Jan. 2008 – We received the FFI Assessment Models and Guide from the TAP Team and started integrating it into our work.
- Jan. – Feb, 2008 – Regional team began to form work groups within the FFI Regional Leadership Team and started taking greater ownership.
- Feb – VISION, Inc. training – the Inclusive Team was formed, target communities were identified, we recognized the need to work with existing coalitions and organizations build their capacity and we saw Regional Team members advocating for each other and people with “less than” that are not at the table. It broadened our definition of diversity.

**7. What information from your project has been made available to the field or general public and how? Website – all of our work; county teams, regional team, organizational partners, workgroups, tools/inventories,data, surveys,etc.**

- FFI website

- Post all County & Regional Team, Regional Work Groups upcoming meetings, news releases, dates, agenda and minutes for public review
- Webcasts are put on-line with a survey monkey tool to gather input on questions from those viewing on-line
- Assessment tools and results are on-line
- E-Newsletter
- Related events
- NIFF Coalition website
  - Post all upcoming meetings, news releases, dates, agenda and minutes for public review
  - Assessment tools and results are on-line
  - E-Newsletter
  - Related events
- Media
  - News releases have been written for newspapers, magazines, etc. and tv coverage has occurred
- Public presentations requested by groups:
  - churches,
  - women's clubs,
  - civic organizations,
  - professional organizations (UIDDA)

#### **8. Overall, what has worked well for your project and what has not worked so well?**

- Using the Cycle of Knowledge Creation model has allowed us to take researched theories, apply them to our work using methods and tools that translate the theories into new capabilities and practical results, eventually leading to practical knowledge that allows our citizens to make knowledgeable decisions for the future of the FFI overall.
- A support structure in each county of IDPH, Economic Devevelopment, & ISU Extension to coordinate, facilitate, and follow up on county meetings.
- The shifting of ISU Extension to align with this initiative has worked well. Also, the IDPH and others such as DNR, hospitals, park & recreation departments, etc. that are having their people attend these meetings on work time
- Keeping our work grounded in the theories and holding the Vision and Purpose for our work.
- Organizational Learning & Systems Thinking – it helped all the Regional Team and Partners understand the process of planning, develop a common language for our work and then we could better articulate the timeline. It was a real turning point!
- VISION, Inc. training in February. Inclusive Team was formed, target communities were identified, we recognized the need to work with existing coalitions and organizations build their capacity and we saw Regional Team members advocating for each other and people with “less than” that are not at the table. It broadened our definition of diversity.
- Work groups work well.
- County and Regional Planning Structure with web casts technology to facilitate learning and discussion each month.

Overall, what has not worked so well?

- Originally the translators lacked direction and felt unsure of their role.

- Youth have difficulty attending county meetings due to busy activities and our Youth representatives did not like sitting through Regional Team meetings with lots of discussion and dialogue.
- Howard County media began by announcing the FFI in their news paper and it stated that each county would receive \$100,000, thus people came to the meetings thinking of projects to fund. They also varied the meeting dates and locations each month to build interest, but they did not seem to build a strong core group. They're trying to rebuild now.
- Lost some people/organizations because they were very project oriented and seeking immediate funding for projects vs. learning and planning. We hope to bring them back to the table in Year 2.

**9. What contributions has the collaborative made to the Food and Fitness learning network?**

- June 2007: Served on the June 07 Networking Conference Planning Committee (Lora and Brenda)
- Jan. 2008: Presentation with Kara on organizational learning & systems thinking at the National Co-Convener's meeting in Miami (Ann)
- March 2008: Youth presented at the Youth Conference on their concession stand survey results. (Hannah & Clint)
- April 2008: Led Co-Convener & TAP Team Teleconference on Assessments
- April 2008: Presentation on the Local Food Assessments at the Food and Society meeting in AZ (Brenda)
- June 2008: Served on the June 08 Networking Conference Planning Committee (Ann)
- June 2008: Kate Mansfield is going to co-present with Kara Werner at the June 08 Networking Conference Planning Committee on Org. Learning & Sys. Thinking
- Other: Teleconferenced and shared lessons, e-mails, & planning process with several FFI sites (Boston, Seattle, Holyoke) interested in setting up the Organizational Learning & Systems Thinking workshop.
- Other: Shared website and assessment tools, NR , etc. with other FFI sites.

**10. What else should we understand about the work over the past year?**

- Creating the Learning Organization using the Shared Leadership, Cycle of Knowledge Creation Model and the Systems Thinking with the Core Theory for Success, Creative Tension Model and Hierarchy of Choices Model for planning have been fundamental to our work.
- Process and growth of the Regional Leadership Team is going really well. We are learning and adapting as they continue to take on more ownership and provide more direction for the FFI work.
- The resources provided by the WWKF have been GREAT and extremely valuable!!
- Developing a relationship with our Evaluators to maximize our learning and inform our work as Co-convener and a regional initiative has been critical.
- Our communication, youth and diversity needs continue to increase and the demand for information is growing.
- People are wanting to know how to "plug-in". Our work with the food system continues to evolve at the local, state and multi-state levels.

**11. What are the guiding principles for new and future work.**

- Continued use of Models & Theories described in 10. Continue to understand and develop in our role as servant leaders to this project; increasing the FFI capacity to develop ownership and leadership necessary to further this work.
- Continue grounding our work in the theories of:
  - Shared leadership
  - Core Theory of Success
  - Creative Tension Model
  - Hierarchy of Choices (Core Values, Purpose, Vision, (Mental Model Work & Gaps), Strategies, Tactics and Activities that have the most promise for system and policy change to activate our VISION!
  - F&F Assessment Model
- Expand out to additional partners and align resources for our work. Ground our work with Institutional support so we build capacity and sustainability for our region to activate the vision.
- Continue to adapt and learn to meet the needs of the NE Iowa FFI Regional Leadership Team in order to build their capacity.

I. Financial Report

II. Proposed Workplan for Year 2 (April 1, 2008 – March 31, 2009)

III. Evaluation Report