

FFI Regional Impacts



The Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI) began its planning phase in 2007 in six counties in Iowa: Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek. Implementation began in 2009.

Job creation has become the yardstick by which such efforts are measured. However, other equally essential change indicators are important to track such as: local and statewide leadership capacity,

community and institutional engagement, the inclusion of vulnerable children, increase in local food sales and increased capacity of local food producers, funds leveraged, and policy and infrastructure changes.

This report shares FFI's impact on the region in each of these areas in its first three years of implementation, from 2009-2012.

Leadership

Youth Leadership

- Many schools include youth-led activities on their School Wellness Action Plans.
- Interviews youth conducted with each other suggest they have formed healthier habits.
- 15 young people served with FFI as a Resource Contact, Safe Routes to School Liaison, or intern from 2008 to 2012. They developed skills to promote wellness including communication, teaching, and community organizing.

Statewide Leadership

- FFI leaders serve on the state Regional Food Systems Working Group; FFI is used as a model for many of the 17 regional sub-groups
- An FFI and NIFF Coalition leader was appointed by Governor Branstad to serve on the Local Food and Farm Council, to guide state food and farm policy and funding
- Two of the NIFF Coalition team members were contracted by the Iowa Local Food and Farm Initiative Coordinator as section leaders to lead planning and documentation of progress on food safety and processing policy

Community and Institutional Engagement

Experts agree that significant improvements in health will be made only through multi-sector collaboration to make the healthy choice the easy choice at home, work, and school.¹ FFI's partners include food producers, schools, businesses, non-profits, and governmental agencies. The growth of FFI's partner base is displayed in Figure 1. Partners are divided into core, ongoing, and strategic partners, ranging, respectively, from most to least involved in a daily basis

Schools are not the only institutions engaged.

Oneota Community Food Coop and Luther College,



are among the 20 institutions that purchase local food and cooperate to provide records on those purchases to the project.

¹ Woolf, S.H., Dekker, M.M., Byrne, F.R., & Miller, W.D. (2011). Citizen-Centered Health Promotion: Building Collaborations to Facilitate Healthy Living.

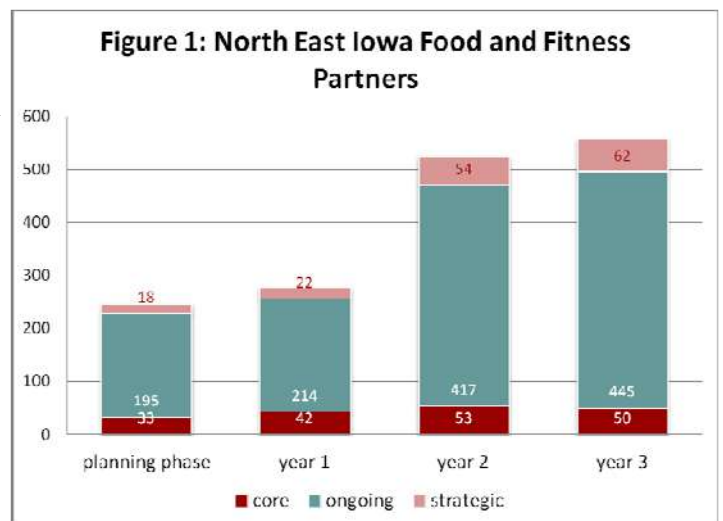
In year three, **59** of FFI's partners were youth.

Since its beginning in 2007 FFI has engaged **651** unique partners.

FFI has had considerable success in engaging **schools**:

- 16 of 20 schools in the region have an active school wellness team
- 17 school districts have an FFI Youth 4-H Team
- 16 school districts are sourcing local food for their school breakfast and lunch programs
- 14 schools have participated in a variety of active living education opportunities

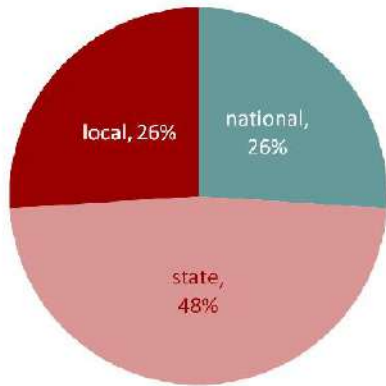
Figure 1: North East Iowa Food and Fitness Partners



Funds Leveraged

FFI leveraged **4,066,639.70** from 2008 to 2012 for food and physical activity-related work in Northeast Iowa. The total includes a W.K. Kellogg grant, other direct grants, and funds brought to the state and region for closely related work.

Figure 2: Source of Funds Leveraged by FFI, 2008-12



Policy and Infrastructure Changes

School policies and practices have changed through FFI's work.:

- More schools are taking advantage of education, training, and networking to support the use of local food in school food programs.
 - School gardens and policies for using school garden produce in the school lunch program have been established.
 - Schools have added healthy options to concessions.
 - More schools offer salad bars.
 - Schools have added time for walking and other physical activities to their schedules.
 - Two schools hired new food service directors and included Farm to School in the job descriptions.
- Area **business** and **non-profit** customs, practices, and policies have also changed:
- Food distributor Sysco of Iowa is training more local growers to produce for them.

Estimated number of vulnerable children reached by FFI through schools: **4,600**

Vulnerable Children

44.8% of children below the poverty line were obese in 2007!

- The Northeast Iowa Business Network has identified local food production as a priority economic development goal.
- Area food pantries distribute coupons, funded by donations secured by the NE Iowa Funders Network, to low income families for the purchase of locally grown food at area farmers' markets.
- New gardens have been established at Cresco Medical Center and Spectrum Industries for staff and clients.

Local Food Sales and Producer Capacity

The Initiative is increasing the capacity of local producers to meet local demand.

- **46** jobs have been created in the past three years as a result our food systems work.
- The number of farmers who were food safety GAP certified increased by **13**.
- The number of farmers supplying a local food cooperative/aggregator increased from 16 to **26**.
- Two local farms hired **5** new full time employees.
- **29** new local food producers/food enterprises were created in the past three years.
- Producers have access to a new source of credit through a microloan program that was started to finance new farming enterprises.

Local food sales for 10 of the same producers tracked both last year and this year report an increase in local food sales of **\$1.5 million**

Local food purchases by institutions in the region were **\$1.2 million** in 2011

16 schools purchased **\$14,400** of food from NE Iowa farmers in the 2011-12 school year.

Infrastructure changes have occurred through FFI's work:

- 3 miles of trail were built to connect the communities of Elgin and Clermont to Valley School.
- In Decorah, the Trout Run Trail connects the community of Freeport to Decorah Community School District.
- Riceville continues to build their Wildcat Trail that will connect the school to the Wapsi Trail. Just constructed, it is a loop around the school playground.
- Decorah school reconfigured an intersection for the walking school bus and the school agreed to plow the route in winter.
- Postville youth planned, designed and constructed a Frisbee golf course at a city park.
- 7 streets in Decorah became "bicycle friendly" when 400 bicycle emblems were painted on them to allow bike traffic on roads.
- Starmont Community School built a fitness trail on school grounds.



The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative is grounded in the work of these core partners:



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

