2019 Farm to Early Care and Education Working Group  
Vision and Key Strategies to Advance Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE)

Vision for the future of farm to early care and education (farm to ECE)

- Access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant local foods; gardening; and food, nutrition, and agriculture education is the expected standard in ECE environments in all communities.
- Farm to ECE initiatives are a key leverage point to advancing racial and social equity.
- Comprehensive farm to ECE initiatives are communicated as a tool to enhance the quality of ECE settings, engage families and communities, support comprehensive child development, and meet learning and programmatic standards.
- Farm to ECE initiatives support development of the next generation of responsible food consumers and contribute to sustainable, equitable, and just local food systems.
- Sufficient information, resources, and supports are available to empower all ECE providers to implement culturally relevant and reflective farm to ECE initiatives.
- A wide variety of stakeholders and sectors are engaged in collaboratively advancing and institutionalizing farm to ECE programs and policy at the local, state, tribal, and national level.

Strategies for advancement of farm to ECE vision

- **COMMUNICATION, PROMOTION, AND AWARENESS BUILDING** - Establish farm to ECE as an evidence-based strategy aligned with broader ECE priority areas, including, but not limited to:
  - Increasing quality of education environments
  - Meeting regulatory, early learning, quality improvement, and programmatic standards
  - Empowering families through partnership
  - Enhancing family and community engagement
  - Improving health, wellness, nutritional quality, and food access for children, families, and providers
  - Elevating and celebrating cultural diversity and encouraging culturally relevant environments
  - Prioritizing equity and inclusion
    - Demonstrate integration of farm to ECE activities into existing ECE structures, standards, and programs (as outlined in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Spectrum of Opportunities for State-Level Obesity Prevention Efforts Targeting the Early Care and Education Setting)
    - Elevate the role and importance of food (quality, taste, connection to source, cultural significance) in ECE settings and child development
    - Promote farm to ECE research and evaluation by compiling and disseminating evidence based information on the benefits of farm to ECE and convening partners to advance farm to ECE research
- **POLICY AND PROGRAMS** — Support integration of farm to ECE language/initiatives in federal, state, and local education and nutrition policies and related programs
  - Coordinate with strategic partners, including government agencies (e.g., Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services) and ECE stakeholder groups (e.g., National Association for the Education of Young Children, CACFP Forum, National CACFP Sponsors Association), to identify and capitalize on policy leverage points
Leverage potential for ECE policy to increase capacity for farm to ECE initiatives: e.g., Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act), Head Start Program Performance Standards

**STRATEGIC COLLABORATION** - Strengthen national and state level collaboration/coordination among diverse stakeholders (e.g., ECE providers, families, producers, policy makers, state agencies, advocacy and professional development organizations) and sectors (e.g., food systems/supply chain, public health, ECE systems)

- **National initiatives:**
  - Develop and nurture partnerships with national organizations with a priority focus on federal agencies (e.g., Office of Head Start, Department of Education, Office of Community Food Systems), ECE provider advocacy and support organizations (e.g., National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Association of Family Child Care, National CACFP Sponsors Association), and organizations representing and serving diverse communities and stakeholder groups (e.g., Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Collaboration Office, National Indian Child Care Association, National Black Child Development Institute)
  - Support and facilitate connections between farmers/farmer support organizations and ECE partners
  - Facilitate coordination of farm to ECE movement with other community building and health movements (e.g., obesity prevention, community development, family engagement/empowerment, food systems)
  - Collaborate with national partners to identify and pursue funding streams to support activities to advance the farm to ECE movement at the national, state, and programmatic level

- **State level initiatives:**
  - Build capacity for NFSN’s Core and Supporting Partners and other strategic ECE partners (e.g., state ECE advocacy organizations, state agency representatives, community partners) to engage in and provide leadership for farm to ECE initiatives
  - Facilitate collaboration among existing farm to school (K-12) networks and ECE networks and organizations
  - Identify effective state level collaboration and coordination efforts that enhance health and wellness and increase overall quality of ECE settings (e.g., farm to ECE/school, childhood obesity task force, early childhood coalitions) and lift up success stories and best practices
  - Capitalize on existing state coordinator positions and provide support to increase number of states with farm to ECE coordinator positions

**PROGRAMMATIC CAPACITY BUILDING** - Increase access to farm to ECE resources and information, training and technical assistance, funding, and networking opportunities for all types of ECE providers and community partners

- Identify, develop, and disseminate resources
- Support programs in identifying and leveraging new and existing funding streams to support farm to ECE initiatives
- Capitalize on existing communication channels and utilize strategic partnerships to enhance targeted outreach
- Prioritize unique needs and opportunities of broad array of ECE settings (e.g., family child care homes, child care centers, Head Start/Early Head Start, private preschools, state preschools)
- Enhance access to high quality training for ECE providers by integrating farm to ECE training into existing continuing education opportunities and required ECE professional development
- Identify scalable models to broaden impact and advance reach of farm to ECE initiatives
- Support development of regional, state, and local food systems infrastructures that maximize opportunity for participation and benefit to producers
- Identify and promote opportunities to broaden community-based connections amongst multiple stakeholder groups (e.g., families, providers, producers, community leaders)