A CALL TO ACTION
FARM TO SCHOOL IN NEW MEXICO:
SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND
POTENTIAL WAYS FORWARD

Final Report
Developed for the Thornburg Foundation
Prepared and Submitted by Bryan Crawford-Garrett
February 2015
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Acronym List

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<tr>
<td>ACN</td>
<td>Agri-Cultura Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>AITC</td>
<td>Agriculture in the Classroom</td>
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<td>AFSC</td>
<td>American Friends Service Committee</td>
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<td>APS</td>
<td>Albuquerque Public Schools</td>
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<td>CWK</td>
<td>Cooking with Kids</td>
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<td>ERNEH</td>
<td>Empowering Ramah Navajos to Eat Healthy</td>
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<td>ESG</td>
<td>Edible School Gardens</td>
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<td>FANS</td>
<td>Food and Nutrition Service</td>
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<td>F2S</td>
<td>Farm to School</td>
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<td>FTT</td>
<td>Farm to Table</td>
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<td>LP</td>
<td>Local Procurement</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
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<td>NB3</td>
<td>The Notah Begay III Foundation</td>
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<td>Southwest Organizing Project</td>
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<td>USDA</td>
<td>United States Department of Agriculture</td>
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<td>ZYEP</td>
<td>Zuni Youth Enrichment Project</td>
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Acknowledgements
I would first like to acknowledge my deep appreciation and gratitude for all of those who shared with me their time, keen insights, and concrete experiences working in a range of Farm to School and other local food system initiatives in the state of New Mexico. The work simply would not have been possible without being able to learn from those with whom I met as part of this study. I would also like to thank the Thornburg Foundation for commissioning this important and timely report. While the sheer number of Farm to School activities and initiatives in the state meant that it was not possible to document them all, it is my sincere hope that the report accurately and sufficiently represents many of these experiences. Most importantly, I hope that the report can be used to spur greater action and investment with the ultimate aim of improving the overall health and well-being of New Mexican students as well as their families and communities.

As author I take full responsibility for the content of this work, and any errors or misrepresentations in the document are my own.
Executive Summary
The growth in Farm to School (F2S) programming in schools in the United States has expanded exponentially over the past two decades, as F2S activities are now found in all 50 states and in 44 percent of schools nationwide, reaching more than 21 million children in over 40,000 schools. Even since 2006, the number of school districts with F2S programming across the country has seen a 430 percent increase. Within this context, in September 2014 the Thornburg Foundation, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico (NM), commissioned a report on F2S type activities already occurring in schools in the state of NM, including federally managed tribal schools and preschools/early childhood learning centers. The Foundation was particularly interested in learning about: what current programs are in place, how they are being funded, the goals they seek to achieve, and the degree to which they are succeeding in achieving those goals, with an aim of providing preliminary findings related to characteristics that seem to typify high quality F2S programming in NM.

This study and report place F2S activities into three main categories: procurement of local and regional food products; gardening, based at schools and preschools; and education, food and farm-related. Considering F2S activities through the lens of these three main components is helpful in defining the key elements of F2S and is in line with the latest National Farm to School Network information as articulated in a recently released (August 2014) F2S evaluation framework document.

F2S in NM, like F2S around the country, includes an intricate web of activities and interventions, some of which are funded, managed, and implemented on a state-wide level whereas others are incorporated at the district, school or even individual classroom level. F2S in NM seems particularly relevant given that: NM is ranked 50th in overall poverty rates, nearly one-third of children ages 10-17 years old are obese, and almost 30% of children of all ages are considered food insecure. Poverty, food insecurity, and public health issues are dire concerns in NM. Activities such as those that are included in F2S programming are therefore critical to increase the quantities of locally produced, healthy foods available at schools; to promote healthier eating habits; and to teach hands-on skills related to food and nutrition. In addition, with the emphasis in F2S programming on strengthening local food systems, economies, and production of local foods, F2S can also help provide a link to NM community cultural traditions and historical ways of growing and relating to food.

Qualitative research methods were used to conduct the study that informed this report. The author conducted the desk review for the study and completed all primary data collection, including interviews and consultations with a total of 30 individuals representing 16 distinct organizations or agencies such as public school systems, non-profit groups involved in a wide variety of F2S activities, and the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension service.

A complete documentation of all F2S activities in the state was not feasible during this project, though the findings from this study did lead to identification of certain promising practices as well as a number


3 Source: http://www.povertyusa.org/the-state-of-poverty/poverty-map-state/#

4 Source: http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/overweightobese-children/

of implementation challenges. The study additionally allowed for development of several key recommendations to three main target groups: F2S implementing agencies; F2S donors/ funders; and policymakers. A number of the most important recommendations include:

To Policymakers:

- Establish a state-wide F2S program that includes funding and staff for resourcing all three main components of F2S – local procurement, education, and gardening – and the integration of activities within the three components. Such legislation should establish position(s) for full-time staff to be in housed in a state agency/or state agencies for coordinating all F2S activities state-wide, not just to manage local procurement.
- Establish an innovation fund grant program at the state level to finance smaller-scale innovative approaches that would be scalable and would include rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The state could seek matching funds from USDA F2S resources and/or other interested donors such as foundations or the private sector.
- Prioritize funding for a large-scale farmer training and support program to prepare significantly greater numbers of farmers to participate in local procurement for school meals; such a program could be based off successes of current / past programs that bring various stakeholders together to provide support for producers to lower the barriers to entry to the local procurement market. This capacity building program could also prioritize helping new and younger farmers get into farming.

To Donors:

- For all future F2S programming, consider investments that prioritize the following:
  a. Longer-term time horizons, with sufficient time included in project start-up for proper planning, relationship building, etc.
  b. Rigorous learning, research, and M&E on projects that have a clear goal, objectives, and targets for measuring progress and impact.
  c. Piloting initiatives in different contexts – such as urban, rural, and tribal areas.
  d. Offering flexible funding that depends on the needs in particular geographic areas, districts, and schools.
  e. An understanding of the cost-benefit tradeoffs in investment in different types of F2S activities.
- Continue to fund innovative and new approaches to F2S in NM, especially those that integrate multiple components of F2S, and do so in a way that recognizes the importance of starting small and including rigorous M&E and learning.
- Increase funding to scale up in-class hands-on classroom-based F2S educational activities in geographic locations of current implementation and to introduce them into new geographic areas.

To F2S Implementing Agencies:

- Improve F2S coordination across the state, specifically to bring together relevant stakeholders and F2S practitioners to:
  a. Provide a forum for sharing concretely what is being done across the state
  b. Establish a more comprehensive space online to store and access information about: i) F2S activities in the state; ii) relevant project and organizational documents and resources for programs in NM; and iii) national-level F2S resources.
  c. Become a formalized learning group – a space to share best practices, engage in joint learning and evaluation, etc.
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- Consider what F2S activities are and should be contributing to in terms of overall impact, how impact is/should be measured, and ways various stakeholders can collaborate/coordinate on program design, M&E, research, and learning.
- Develop: a best practices guide for local school procurement in NM; a separate guidance manual for using local procurement to source food needed for tastings, cooking, and other F2S educational activities; and guidelines for minimum standards for information to track related to local purchases.
- For larger districts, develop and establish a district-wide vision and strategy for school gardens.
- Explore possibilities with food distributors for the distributors to purchase fresh food locally from NM producers.

To F2S Implementing Agencies and Donors:
- F2S activities should have clearly defined overarching objectives and theories of change that consider direct and indirect beneficiary groups from F2S programs and the time horizons associated with different types of change anticipated for each of the beneficiary groups. These should be accompanied by robust M&E systems that include metrics for measuring longer-term impacts of F2S activities.
- Conduct additional feasibility studies to understand producer perspectives on the market for local food procurement for schools and the level of viability across the state. These studies would ideally include crop-specific analyses of production levels, local vs. out-of-state sales, and reasons for participating or not participating in the current market for locally produced fruits and vegetables. The studies should also include other possible products that schools could purchase locally in the future, such as milk and other dairy products, baked goods, legumes, etc.
- Introduce and incorporate tools and processes that attempt to measure longer-term outcomes from hands-on classroom-based F2S educational activities.

To Donors and Policymakers:
- Funding for local procurement provided by the state needs to be accompanied by investment in complementary F2S educational and gardening activities, supply-side support to producers, and demand-side support to local school districts to improve their procurement practices.
- Explore funding for increasing local procurement for initiatives that include summer meals, school snacks, and/or classroom tastings or cooking activities.

Today F2S stands at a crossroads – both here in NM and across the country. The panoply of F2S activities woven in, with, and for schools and their students throughout the US and this state is impressive. At the same time, there are a number of vital steps that can be taken in the next few years to ensure F2S is having the greatest impact it can on the lives of students and their schools, families, and communities, especially those living in poverty. The future of F2S in this state needs to be about collaboration, building and strengthening relationships, increasing levels of smart investments, and developing more lessons learned and evidence for what works and why and how and where it works.

Most importantly, future success in F2S in NM will require a shift in focus and investment towards a more integrated, holistic approach that articulates clearly the overall goals and objectives of F2S initiatives and emphasizes more completely the importance of education and gardening within F2S. With deep need comes significant opportunity: the food security and public health needs for children across the state are great, and yet so is the opportunity – for NM to become a leader across the country of integrated, evidence-based F2S initiatives that make a real and lasting impact. It is there for the taking.
I. Introduction
   a. Background

The growth in Farm to School (F2S) programming in schools in the United States has expanded exponentially over the past two decades, as F2S activities are now found in all 50 states and in 44 percent of schools nationwide, reaching more than 21 million children in over 40,000 schools.6 Even since 2006, the number of school districts with F2S programming has seen a 430 percent increase.7

Within this context, in September 2014 the Thornburg Foundation, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico (NM), commissioned a report on F2S type activities already occurring in schools in the state of NM, including federally managed tribal schools and preschools/early childhood learning centers. The Foundation was particularly interested in learning about: what current programs are in place, how they are being funded, the goals they seek to achieve, and the degree to which they are succeeding in achieving those goals, with an aim of providing preliminary findings related to characteristics that seem to typify high quality F2S programming in NM from the perspectives of combating poor dietary habits in children, sustainable funding availability to implement the programs, and/or increasing the local farm economy.

F2S programming can include a wide-ranging number of activities and is defined in different ways by different stakeholders; for the purpose of this report, F2S initiatives: “connect schools (K-12) and early childhood education settings (subcategorized as farm to preschool) with local food producers; aim to serve healthy and local food; improve student nutrition; provide agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities; and support local and regional farmers.”8 In this way, F2S includes some combination of the following three main components: i) purchase of local food to provide to students in school meals; ii) hands-on learning (mainly through school gardens); and iii) integration of food and nutrition into classroom curricula. While the Foundation expressed interested in all three of these components, its highest priority was indicated to be local food purchase for school meals. As such, the study examined most closely local food purchasing initiatives, including programs that have a combination of local purchase and one or both of the other main components. The study therefore placed lower priority on hands-on learning or integration of F2S into class curriculum in programs that do not also include local food purchase.

The Foundation intended the report to be used in three main ways: first, to educate policymakers and F2S implementers on the state of F2S programming in NM; second, to identify key gaps or areas of weakness in program implementation and/or systems of measurement for current F2S programming in NM; and third, to inform the development of a small number of F2S pilot programs in NM. While the study initially planned to lead to the development of a number of recommendations specifically for the Thornburg Foundation, at the request of the Foundation all recommendations in this report have been generalized for any potential funders/donors, policymakers and/or implementers in NM.

b. Methodology
Qualitative research methods were used to conduct the study that informed this report. The author completed all primary data collection and conducted the desk review for the study. An overview of the methodology for the project and description of methodological limitations are offered here.

Methods used to complete the study include:

1) Desk review: The desk review consisted of a review of relevant F2S documentation and helped inform subsequent primary data collection exercises with key stakeholders. For a detailed list of documents reviewed and consulted during the desk review, please see Annex A at the end of this report. The desk review focused on the following:
   a. Relevant nation-wide literature on F2S programming
   b. NM F2S and local food system-related information
   c. Thornburg Foundation strategy documents related to food and agriculture

2) Interviews and consultations with key stakeholders in NM F2S programming. Interviews and consultations were conducted with a total of 30 individuals representing 16 distinct organizations or agencies. A total of 22 interviews/consultations were conducted – with seven being collective meetings (i.e. 2-3 participants) and 15 being individual meetings. Organizations included staff members of four public school systems, the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension service, and several non-profit agencies involved in a wide variety of F2S activities. Annex B (also at the end of this report) provides a full list of organizations consulted and the number of individuals met with per organization.

Nearly all consultations and interviews were conducted in-person in Albuquerque, Las Cruces, or Santa Fe, with two being conducted by phone. Organizations that were included for interviews and consultations were identified based on organizational knowledge and experience with F2S programs. An initial short-list of individuals/organizations to meet with was created at the start of the project with input from the Thornburg Foundation. Additional organizations and individuals to interview were identified using referrals from initial interviews (i.e. snowball sampling).

Interviews and consultations with key F2S stakeholders were used to gain an understanding of the following:
   a. Current F2S programs in NM:
      i. Key components and activities
      ii. Main strengths and key challenges of programming to date (in terms of design, implementation, and measurement)
   b. Potential for further F2S growth in NM: opportunities and challenges
   c. Measurement and evaluation of current and future programs
   d. Other important issues raised by the stakeholders

3) Site visits: Three site visits were conducted during the study: one at a school garden at a public middle school in Las Cruces; one at a school garden at a public elementary school in Santa Fe; and the third included observation of a cooking class for kindergarten students at a public elementary school in Santa Fe. The site visits were used to gain a more in-depth and first-hand experience of some of the successes and challenges of F2S implementation at the school-level.
4) Participation in/ observation of New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council meeting: The November meeting of the policy council included a number of presentations and discussions relevant to F2S activities, including:
   a. A summary presentation of The Power of Public Procurement report, which looked at NM institutional market opportunities for local NM producers (this document is discussed further below)
   b. Presentations on proposed legislative priorities for the 2015 NM state legislative session, including legislation related to NM grown produce for school meals
   c. Discussion of promotion of local procurement and F2S through the Love Local Produce of the Month initiative (a program developed and managed by Farm to Table (FTT)) and the work of the Albuquerque-based Kids Cook! organization
   d. An introduction to and overview of this study

5) Collective analysis: For a number of interviews conducted during the latter stages of the study, the interviews were used to discuss and analyze with interviewees the main preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations (i.e. collective analysis) based on the data that had already been gathered. This process was used during three interviews and allowed for a small number of key stakeholders to provide input and feedback on preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

6) Feedback on key deliverable: A draft version of this report was reviewed by the Thornburg Foundation, and feedback was provided that has been incorporated into the final version of the report.

In addition to the methods described above, this study also benefited from information gathered during the Spring of 2014 in meetings and discussions the author held with staff and farmers in the Agri-Cultura Network9 and the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) in relation to experiences to date with local produce purchased by APS (from Agri-Cultura and other suppliers). Moreover, the report entitled The Power of Public Procurement was released in September 2014 and used as a means of understanding more fully the opportunities and challenges on the producer as well as buyer sides related to local procurement for schools and other state-run institutions in NM. For that report, FTT staff, NMSU faculty, and NMSU Cooperative Extension agents conducted surveys and interviews with “a sample of Farm to Institution practitioners, state and local directors of procurement and food service departments, farmers and farmers marketing organizations, and other relevant state and county agencies.”10

As with any research initiative, there are a number of limitations of this study to bear in mind. First, the majority of information gathered about current F2S activities is from the state’s more urban areas – including Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe and surrounding vicinities, as well as a number of the state’s tribal areas. As a result, F2S activities in smaller towns and villages in more rural areas not on tribal lands are less well-documented in this study, though many of the agencies that participated in

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9 The Agri-Cultura Network (ACN) is a cooperative network of small farms (the largest of which is approximately 1.5 acres) in the Albuquerque South Valley. The Network was formed in 2009 through support from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) with the explicit initial purpose of selling salad greens to APS. ACN now sells to APS; local groceries/food cooperatives; a number of local restaurants; and its own Community Supported Agriculture program, La Cosecha.

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interviews and consultations work state-wide and have programming in areas outside of the geographic areas that were most heavily emphasized during this study. A second limitation, which is related to the geographic constraint, is that the sheer number of F2S activities throughout the state is too vast to be able to document all of them during a 4-month study, especially given the lack of any centralized system of documentation for various F2S activities in the state combined with the more inclusive definition of F2S detailed above that is being used in the study. These limitations should be kept in mind when reading this report, though data collection was triangulated through speaking with key stakeholders with multiple F2S experiences in different parts of the state, review of F2S activity documentation from work in many areas of the state, and the collective analysis exercise with a small number of interviewees.

A main task in the study was to document F2S work in NM – including a landscaping of F2S activities as well the strengths and challenges of current practices. Because of the number of distinct F2S projects and programming in the state, it was not possible to conduct a detailed analysis of the quality of implementation of various interventions or programs. Consequently, the successes and challenges that were illuminated through the research are based more on the successes and challenges articulated by implementers during interviews than any thorough assessments or evaluations of particular programs or programming models. While this can be seen as a limitation of sorts, at the same time it is a strength of the study in the sense that many of the successes and challenges presented represent the voices of the interviewees based on their direct experiences.

c. Organization of the report

The rest of the report proceeds as follows: Section II presents the current state of F2S programming across the country, including activity implementation as well as research and evaluation. Section III provides details related to F2S in NM, including current activities, key actors and donors, promising practices, and challenges in implementing F2S activities. Section IV offers main findings, conclusions, and recommendations for F2S in NM – including for each of the three main F2S components of procurement, education, and gardening, as well as more general overall findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Section V concludes.
II. The Current State of Farm to School

a. What is Farm to School?

In August 2014 the National Farm to School Network released an evaluation framework document to guide practice, research, and policy for F2S programming across the country, which is the first F2S framework of its kind. The main aim of the framework is to guide future research and evaluation, as rigorous learning, research, and evaluation in the F2S sector as a whole has been limited to date. The evaluation framework document also puts F2S activities into three categories: 1) Procurement of local and regional food products; 2) Gardening, based at schools and preschools; and 3) Education, food and farm related. Considering F2S activities through the lens of these three main components is helpful in defining the key elements of F2S and is in line with the latest National Farm to School Network information. This study and report accordingly utilize the same lens (see figure).

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12 Note that “local” procurement can have a number of definitions depending on the context in which it is used. For this report, local food is defined as food produced within the state where it is purchased.

13 As described in the F2S Evaluation Framework document, procurement includes: “the buying, preparing, serving and promoting of local foods and food products in schools or early childhood centers.” P.10.

14 As described in the F2S Evaluation Framework document, gardening includes: “the planting, tending, harvesting and eating of foods that takes place in outdoor garden spaces or indoors (such as through vertical gardening). Includes experiential or hands-on learning, direct food experiences, healthy food promotion, classroom curriculum and environmental education activities. It may also include garden-based food production to sell foods to the cafeteria or give to families or community members.” P.10.

15 As described in the F2S Evaluation Framework document, education (food and farm related) may include the following: “classroom curriculum assigned to local, state and national standards in math, science, health, nutrition, language arts and social studies; activities and lessons about food, food production, food systems, agriculture, how food contributes to human health, how the food system affects natural ecosystems, etc.; experiential learning such as farm tours, farmers’ market trips, visits from chefs, ranchers, farmers, producers, and distributors, taste tests, recipe development, food preparation and cooking; skill development related to food production, food preparation, nutrition and cooking.” P.10.
In addition to the three core F2S programming components, the Framework identifies six “supplemental elements of F2S” that support and complement activities in the three core components. These “supplemental” elements are listed in Table 1 below. The Framework also specifies four sectors that F2S activities fit within – including public health, community economic development, education, and environmental quality – and notes that all F2S work should ultimately contribute to improvements in community health outcomes. The Framework further identifies six “touch points” for where F2S activities can reach participants, along with six groups of key actors (see Table 1 below). Finally, the framework has been structured to provide information at the program, research, and policy levels, recognizing the importance of each in F2S. Table 1 summarizes the various categorizations presented in the Evaluation Framework document.  

Table 1: Key Areas of F2S Programming Categorized in the F2S Evaluation Framework

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<th>Core components of F2S Programming:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Procurement</td>
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<td>- Gardening</td>
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<td>- Education</td>
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<th>Supplemental Elements:</th>
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<td>- Training and professional development (for food service staff, educators, volunteers, etc.)</td>
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<td>- Promotion and media</td>
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<td>- Planning, coordination, and evaluation</td>
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<td>- Outreach and community engagement</td>
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<td>- Policy alignment</td>
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<td>- Funding</td>
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<td>- Public health</td>
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<td>- Education</td>
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<td>- Community economic development</td>
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<td>- Environmental quality</td>
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<th>Touch points:</th>
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<td>- Farms and other food production and processing facilities</td>
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<td>- Cafeterias</td>
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<td>- Classrooms</td>
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<td>- School gardens/ outdoor learning spaces</td>
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<td>- Home and family</td>
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<td>- Community</td>
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<th>Actors</th>
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<td>- Food producers, processors and distributors</td>
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<td>- Food service staff</td>
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<td>- Teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Garden coordinators, volunteers, community members, and teachers in school gardens / outdoor learning spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Community organizations and individuals, including program implementers, local leaders/ decision makers, and policy makers</td>
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<th>Levels of analysis</th>
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<td>- Research</td>
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16 Information in this paragraph and Table 1 can be found in: Evaluation for Transformation: A Cross-Sectoral Evaluation Framework for Farm to School. The National Farm to School Network. August 2014.
While the above categorization is quite useful in helping organize F2S initiatives, it also points to the complexities inherent in F2S programming: in terms of thinking about pathways toward long-term impact and change, there are numerous higher-level goals and objectives of F2S activities, and there is no single overarching theoretical framework or theory of change that can succinctly demonstrate the desired results of F2S programming and what is concretely necessary to lead to those results. For example, local procurement simultaneously helps strengthen local economies, stimulates local food production and sales, and provides local produce to school children. It is highly unlikely, however, that local procurement in and of itself can lead to shifts in student food preferences, choices, and healthier eating, which points to the importance of integrated F2S activities across the core components. An additional complicating factor is that there are numerous environmental, socio-economic, and other factors and influences outside of F2S activities that have an impact on the higher-level goals and objectives of F2S activities. Table 2 below attempts to introduce potential medium and longer-term outcomes of F2S activities for each of the three core components. Presenting the information in this way helps illustrate the varying objectives of F2S programming and confirm the complexities of F2S.

### Table 2: Desired Outcomes per Key Component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Component</th>
<th>Medium-term outcomes</th>
<th>Ultimate long-term desired results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Local Procurement  | - Stimulate smaller-scale and marginalized producer incomes  
|                    | - Connect students to local food systems                                             | - Increase economic vitality within the local food system  
|                    |                                                                                        | - Increase access to and consumption of local foods for school children and their families         |
| Gardening          | - Provide hands-on active learning and skills for students in growing a variety of foods  
|                    | - Promote a healthier diet                                                            | - Improve student eating preferences and behaviors, specifically preference for and consumption of fruits and vegetables |
| Education          | - Increase student knowledge related to food systems, agriculture, and nutrition  
|                    | - Shift student attitudes and behaviors around food, cooking, and fruits and vegetables  
|                    | - Increase student self-efficacy                                                       | - Improve student and family eating preferences, behaviors, and overall health                     |

At the level of implementation, no two F2S programs are exactly alike, as F2S activities are highly decentralized and designed and executed according to locally contextualized needs, realities, and solutions. Many F2S interventions also cut across two or more of the main F2S components of procurement, gardening, and education. The wide variety in programming at the activity level combined with the numerous higher-level outcomes that F2S activities are supposed to lead to means that while a single F2S activity at one particular school or in one specific classroom might (or might not) seem simple or straightforward, the overall world of F2S is incredibly complex. It is accordingly critical to understand that F2S supports improvements in community health and well-being through multiple sectors, as noted above. Because of the complexity and the contributions to multiple linked but distinct sectors, it would be useful to have basic general guidance and common understanding for how F2S is defined, as well as generally shared acceptance of what activities and results should be tracked and monitored in a consistent manner, and what higher-level outcomes would be worthwhile to measure. In this way, it would be an immense benefit to have an overarching broad theoretical framework with accompanying key metrics and tools for measuring impact that still allows for decentralized and flexible programming. The recent F2S Evaluation Framework was developed with this in mind but acknowledges that it is only an initial step in moving towards more cohesive understanding, research, and evaluation in F2S.
b. Farm to School across the country

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducted a “Farm to School Census” in 2012, at which time it was found that 44% of the nearly 10,000 school districts completing the Census\(^1\) stated their districts were engaged in F2S activities.\(^2\) Purchase of local products during the 2011-2012 school year totaled over $385 million (with fruits and vegetables by far the most common local purchase with over 75% of districts that purchased locally buying each of these items; milk was third most common and sourced by less than 40% of districts that bought locally). The Census data also found that 42% of responding districts stated they promote locally produced foods at school in general and 38% reported holding tastings of locally produced foods; finally, approximately 65% of school districts that participate in F2S activities purchase local foods through a food distributor.\(^3\) In 2012 USDA also changed its requirements for what had to be included on a plate for a lunch, which included an increase in the amount of produce required (though USDA does not require produce to be fresh). Therefore the requirement for more produce on a lunch plate has coincided with the increase in enthusiasm for local procurement and F2S.

While F2S activities rarely look exactly the same across program sites, there are several types of F2S activities that are most common or typical to be implemented in schools. The table below provides an illustrative list of the most common F2S activities.

**Table 3: Illustrative List of Common F2S Activities\(^4\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Element</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td>School districts/ school authorities purchase locally produced food products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local foods and local producers are promoted in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food service staff receive training and professional development in preparing and promoting locally procured foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food service staff use preparation and promotion strategies to increase local food appeal in the cafeteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local food products are offered through the school meal program – for breakfasts or lunches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School children participating in the school meals program consume locally produced foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual schools and/or community organizations purchase locally produced food products for F2S activities such as tastings, cooking demonstrations/ lessons, summer meals, school snacks, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local purchase activities are connected to garden and/or educational activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based Gardening</td>
<td>Schools establish and maintain school gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Districts develop district-wide strategies/ plans for school gardens and provide technical assistance and other supports to schools to establish and maintain school gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students, parents, staff, and community members participate in various types of gardening activities – during school hours as well as after school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Garden activities are incorporated into classroom lessons in subject areas such as math, science, language arts, social studies, health, art, integrated project-based learning, etc., and lessons are aligned with content area standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Garden activities engage with local farmers/ food producers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Note: the Census survey was completed by district Food Service Directors.


\(^3\) Ibid.

Garden activities engage with school cafeterias
Garden activities connect with educational activities in home, school, or community
Garden activities connect with local food procurement

Classroom teachers incorporate F2S activities and topics (food systems, food preparation, agriculture, nutrition) and align those activities to core content standards in relevant subjects (math, science, language arts, etc.)
Community organizations provide educational lessons in the classroom (cooking, tastings, demonstrations, etc.) and use locally sourced foods for the lessons, when possible
Educational activities are linked to promotion of local foods/ local producers and more nutritious eating habits that occurs in school cafeterias
Educational activities connect with gardening activities
Community organizations provide teacher training and professional development in F2S activities and topics for teachers to use in classrooms
Farmers receive training in presenting to students in the classroom
Field trips to local farms

These activities are also often complemented by community promotion, outreach, and engagement. In addition, F2S activities will be influenced by school and school district policies as well as state and federal legislation. At the policy level, F2S programming typically enjoys strong bi-partisan political support that is generally backed by public support for local agriculture and strengthening local food systems. Local procurement of food products, for instance, is seen as advancing three broad goals that are important for legislators: first, it provides healthy and local produce to schoolchildren; second, it offers local economic benefits; and third, it supports local agriculture. Certain policies will have a direct impact on F2S, including at the federal, state, and school district levels. Examples of policies that support F2S at each level include:

**Federal:**
- Geographic preference: the 2008 Farm Bill allows school food purchasing authorities to apply a ‘geographic preference’ when purchasing unprocessed or minimally processed locally grown or raised agricultural products, leaving school purchasers with the ability to determine the local area to which the geographic preference applies.
- Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization: In 2010 this act provided $5 million/ year in funding for a USDA F2S grant program; the act also required school districts that receive federal funding to develop and adopt local wellness policies.
- In 2012 USDA also changed its requirements for what had to be included on a plate for a lunch, which included an increase in the amount of produce required (though as noted above USDA does not require produce to be fresh).

**State:**
- Legislation that supports F2S activities: while ‘supportive legislation’ is not accompanied by actual resources, F2S programs are likelier to occur in states with supportive F2S legislation.21
- Legislation providing resources for F2S: many states including NM have provided state-level funding for F2S activities; in addition, as of 2014, eight states had created state-wide F2S staffing positions (housed in state agriculture, education, or health departments).

**District:**
- Policies supporting F2S: school districts can also enact policies that support F2S and encourage local food procurement as well as other F2S activities.

Wellness policies: all school districts receiving federal funds are now required to adopt district-wide wellness policies, which can be used to promote/encourage F2S activities and overall better student health and well-being.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Farm to Preschool model is a recent but growing extension of typical F2S programming, working with preschools and other early child care education providers. Objectives of Farm to Preschool include: serving locally grown, healthy foods to children, improving child nutrition, and providing related educational opportunities. Farm to Preschool is an important consideration given that children develop many food habits and preferences prior to age five. Farm to Preschool also has a number of advantages as compared to F2S in K-12 settings: first, preschools and early childcare centers that serve meals do their own purchasing, and small purchasing volumes can be beneficial for smaller farmers who do not produce enough to meet district-wide local procurement orders; second, experiential education is more accepted standard practice in preschool and early childcare settings, which is good for promoting F2S activities such as gardening, food preparation, tastings, etc.; and finally, parental involvement tends to be strong during preschool years, which can help support F2S activities.

c. Current research and evidence base
In general, the field of F2S has been under-researched and under-evaluated. The growth of F2S programming over the last several years, for instance, has focused on developing and implementing programs and activities much more so than on research and evaluation. As a result, learning has been anecdotal and building evidence of what works and why and how it works has not been done in a systematic way. The existing literature on the effectiveness and impacts of F2S programming is more robust related to public health and nutrition outcomes as compared to economic, educational, or environmental outcomes. There have been limited assessments of economic impacts from local food purchases by schools or other local buyers, and net economic benefits are quite uncertain when considering costs associated with public investments in developing and supporting local markets. Even the literature focused on public health and nutrition outcomes typically does not look at longer-term impacts of F2S activities. For example, many evaluations of F2S educational activities designed to improve food preferences and eating habits only look at shorter-term outcomes of a particular intervention (using pre and post surveys) and have not looked at potential longer-term impacts one or more years beyond the end of participation in the activity. There is consequently a significant gap in programming practice and evidence and research into impacts of F2S interventions — in the short, medium, and longer-term. Such limited evidence to date presents a challenge to current implementers and researchers, as well as a substantial opportunity to make noteworthy strides toward building more robust, rigorous evidence of the efficacy and impacts of F2S interventions on students and their families, schools, and communities.

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22 Information provided in this paragraph on Farm to Preschool comes from: Getting Started with Farm to Preschool (April 2014) and Navigating Early Care and Education: A Roadmap for National Farm to School Network Leads (November 2014), two documents produced by the National Farm to School Network.


III. Farm to School in New Mexico

F2S in NM, like F2S around the country, includes an intricate web of activities and interventions, some of which are funded, managed, and implemented on a state-wide level while others are incorporated at the district, school or even individual classroom level. This section presents an overview of F2S programming in NM, a state ranked 50th in overall poverty rates\(^25\) where nearly one-third of children ages 10-17 years old are obese,\(^26\) and almost 30% of children of all ages are considered food insecure.\(^27\) Poverty, food insecurity, and public health issues are dire concerns in NM. In this context, activities such as those that are included in F2S programming are critical to increase the quantities of locally produced, healthy foods available at schools; to promote healthier eating habits; and to teach hands-on skills related to food and nutrition. In addition, with the emphasis in F2S programming on strengthening local food systems, economies, and production of local foods, F2S can also help provide a link to NM community cultural traditions and historical ways of growing and relating to food.

With deep need comes significant opportunity – an opportunity for F2S in NM to build on current and prior experiences to provide programming that is more robust, well-coordinated, contextually relevant, and ultimately more impactful for students and their schools, families, and communities.

a. Current activities
i. Overall

The table below provides a snapshot of actors implementing F2S activities in the state. This table was completed using information gained during the study through the desk review and primary data collection, though it must be acknowledged that it is not a complete documentation of all actors working on F2S activities in the state. That type of documentation was simply not feasible during this project. As the table illustrates, there is a very wide variety of actors working in numerous parts of the state in/ across all three of the main F2S components of procurement, gardening, and education. While there is a significant amount of information about F2S activities on various organizations’ websites, there is no central repository of F2S activities for NM or location where key documents/ resources are housed in one place and easily shared among the various implementing agencies. Moreover, certain local food procurement data is either very difficult or not possible to obtain.

Farm to Table (FTT) is the state lead for NM within the National Farm to School Network and is currently developing an interactive map that will allow F2S implementers to upload information directly to describe their F2S activities and in turn allow users of the map to view the information that has been uploaded. The FTT mapping exercise should begin to help the F2S community have a better understanding of the various F2S initiatives in the state, presuming data and information is uploaded and there is enough information for organizations to gain a better understanding of the various F2S activities being implemented in NM. Deeper sharing of lessons learned, joint collaboration around program design, research and evaluation, and other more interactive levels of coordination will likely have to happen through other means.

Regarding the table below, please note that school districts are presented together as one “actor,” and information on producers/ suppliers for local food procurement in schools is provided in the next section after the table.


**Table 4: NM F2S Actors and Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Main activities/ projects</th>
<th>Benefiting populations</th>
<th>Geographic areas of activities</th>
<th>Key Donors/ Funders</th>
<th>Means of measurement// Key resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)</td>
<td>Supply-side production and marketing support to smaller-scale farmers, mainly via an aggregation model that helped establish Agri-Cultura to be able to sell to APS; AFSC is now working to establish two other coop. networks (in the Espanola area and Las Cruces/ Gadsden area) based on ACN model</td>
<td>Local smaller-scale farmers</td>
<td>South Valley of Albuquerque Santa Fe-Espanola Las Cruces area</td>
<td>USDA (2009-12, for grant that established ACN) AFSC private funds Kellogg Found.</td>
<td>Qualitative evaluation of USDA grant A Community Guide to Organizing Small Farms: <a href="http://www.afsc.org/resource/community-guide-organizing-small-farms-stories-atrisko">http://www.afsc.org/resource/community-guide-organizing-small-farms-stories-atrisko</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC)</td>
<td>Provide resources and training to classroom teachers for agriculture and food/ nutrition-related lessons that are linked to content standards – includes professional development trainings as well as in-class presentations directly to students; AITC typically gets most interest from elementary teachers</td>
<td>Teachers and students (771 teachers and 13,000 students in 2013)</td>
<td>Statewide, including K-12 public schools, tribal schools and Pre-K classrooms; AITC has staff in ABQ and Las Cruces</td>
<td>NM Farm and Livestock Bureau</td>
<td>Track # of teachers, students, volunteers reached annually Workshop evaluation forms with teachers Numerous resources for teachers online: <a href="http://www.nmaitc.org/">http://www.nmaitc.org/</a> Logic model for agricultural literacy: <a href="http://www.agclassroom.org/affiliates/docs/logic_model.pdf">http://www.agclassroom.org/affiliates/docs/logic_model.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking with Kids (CWK)</td>
<td>Hands-on experiential nutrition education program - cooking classes and tasting lessons with elementary students; CWK educators work with/ through teachers and classroom volunteers (who are parents mostly) to deliver lessons; use local produce as available for classroom lessons.</td>
<td>Students, Pre-K through 7th grade (approx. 5000 students in 2013-14 year) Parents: 1500 unique volunteers in 2013-14 year</td>
<td>Santa Fe – 13 elementary schools</td>
<td>USDA SNAP-Ed. Local foundations/ businesses Private donors</td>
<td>Work with Kids Cook! and other SNAP-Ed recipients to use same survey re. fruit/ vegetable consumption questions, currently this survey reaches approx. 30,00 students across all of these agencies Recent evaluations in NM and non-NM setting using pre-post surveys to measure impacts on cooking attitudes, fruit and vegetable preferences, and self-efficacy Nationally developed curriculum tied to common core standards Curriculum available online: <a href="http://cookingwithkids.net/">http://cookingwithkids.net/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### A CALL TO ACTION

**F2S in NM: Successes, Challenges, and Potential Ways Forward**  
*February 2015*

| Earth Care NM | Support school garden and other F2S activities by placing AmeriCorps service members at local schools and other service sites (such as Cooking with Kids and other non-profits)  
Work with youth leaders around sustainability issues | Students and other community members that are recipients of services provided by Earth Care | Santa Fe area | AmeriCorps McCune Found.  
Host of Sustainable Santa Fe site: [https://sustainablesantafe.wordpress.com](https://sustainablesantafe.wordpress.com) |
| Empowering Ramah Navajos to Eat Healthy by Using Traditional Foods (ERNEH) | Program implemented by the Ramah Navajo (also known as Tlochini’ Dine’) that is: providing locally grown food for community members and students and staff with the K-12 Pine Hill School; reintroducing traditional foods; re-establishing a sustainable dry-land agriculture system through family gardens; and increasing opportunities for physical activity, social support, and policy change | Ramah Navajo community members | Ramah Navajo land – rural northwestern NM | Centers for Disease Control |
| Farm to Table (FTT) | Advocacy / policy around F2S; Local procurement – coordinate purchase from 19 producers, sell and distribute to 63 school districts / school food authorities;  
Love Local Produce of the month initiative, which combines local purchase, promotional materials of local foods in schools, and aligning educational materials and curriculum with F2S-related lessons;  
Provide small grants to F2S implementers through F2S Educational Activities program;  
Work with school districts on improving bids and local procurement;  
Exploring options for Farm to Pre-school initiatives | Local producers that sell through FTT to schools Students in Love Local participating schools  
F2S organizations that receive grant funds School district staff working on bidding processes | Statewide, including K-12 public schools and tribal schools  
Staff based in Santa Fe | USDA (via F2S federal grants) Foundations (McCune, Kellogg, etc.) | Surveys with farmers involved in selling to schools via FTT and Food Service Directors that purchase local food  
Track purchases from local producers and sales to school districts (type of product, quantity, sale value)  
Program descriptions and resources at: [http://www.farmtotablenm.org/programs](http://www.farmtotablenm.org/programs)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Evaluation Methodologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Corps</td>
<td>Service members work in service sites – schools and non-profits – to provide direct implementation of F2S activities and other food systems and public health-related initiatives; Food Corps in NM is housed jointly between Univ. of New Mexico and FTT</td>
<td>Students and other community members that are recipients of services provided by Food Corps members</td>
<td>Tribal areas Silver City Albuquerque and South Valley Las Cruces</td>
<td>AmeriCorps Kellogg and other foundations USDA</td>
<td>Landscape assessment tool for Food Corps service members to use to help measure state of school food and garden environment help convene stakeholders and plan activities Fruit and vegetable preference survey Overall organizational theory of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health</td>
<td>Feast for the Future program that includes: edible school garden (ESG) program for 3rd-5th graders; traditional foodways education taught by farmers/elders to youth age 5-18; community gardens, orchards, greenhouses, and family gardens; and farmer outreach and training and markers markets</td>
<td>Students, farmers and other community members</td>
<td>3 tribal communities – 1 in NM and 2 in Arizona</td>
<td>Kellogg Foundation Christensen Foundation Private donors</td>
<td>Detailed tracking of ESG activities: for each class: date, time, location, topic covered, # of staff and students, whether curriculum content was completed, staff comments, and individual youth attendance ESG rigorous evaluative pre, mid, and post-survey to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors around nutrition and gardening In-depth interviews with project participants Photo voice evaluation to gain a deeper understanding of impact of ESG and traditional foodways program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids Cook!</td>
<td>Similar model as Cooking with Kids, offering hands-on cooking and tasting classes in K-8 classrooms; incorporate nutrition and physical activity into classes. Use local produce and/or school garden produce as available for classes.</td>
<td>All students in targeted schools</td>
<td>Albuquerque (12 elementary schools, 2 charter middle schools)</td>
<td>USDA-SNAP Ed Individual donations Other sources</td>
<td>Using common fruit/vegetable consumption survey Conduct end of year parent survey (63% return from parents last year) Conducted three year pre and post-studies for students in grades 3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Semilla</td>
<td>Advocacy/ policy around F2S Edible Education program uses Food Corps service member to help provide: in-class activities (garden and culinary based); after school garden and cooking clubs; family cooking nights (&gt;1/month); and cafeteria tastings with local food</td>
<td>Edible Ed: students at 4 elementary schools and 3 middle schools</td>
<td>Edible Ed: Anthony, Las Cruces</td>
<td>USDA SNAP-Ed USDA F2S grant Kellogg Found. McCune Found. Other foundations</td>
<td>Pre and post surveys for students (re. fruit and vegetable consumption); teachers (re. educational gains and classroom improvements); and food service staff (re. food waste, student consumption of local products, change in own knowledge of F2S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>La Semilla (Cont’d)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mountain View Market Cooperative</strong></td>
<td><strong>New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>NMSU Cooperative Extension</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot USDA-funded project with middle schools incorporating local purchase (1 menu item/month) with in-class education (with tasting and science lesson)</td>
<td>Partner with La Semilla on USDA pilot project, playing role of broker/buyer/seller, aggregator, and distributor for local products going to the individual schools; the co-op also has cold storage and kitchen facilities as well as a small farm that is aggregating some of its production with farmers supported by AFSC</td>
<td>Provides oversight to the funding and administers a contract to APS for APS to purchase NM grown fresh fruits and vegetables for the North Valley cluster</td>
<td>Agricultural extension services to producers around the state; Health educators throughout the state provide health and nutrition information; Bernalillo County: support to 80 school gardens at APS schools; New F2S project in Shiprock / Farmington area on Navajo reservation, in partnership with the University of Arizona and Diné College, designed to provide training and capacity building support to farmers to enable them to sell to reservation schools; Provide services to youth outside of school through 4-H, summer camps and other initiatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA Pilot: students at 4 middle schools</td>
<td>Producers selling through La Semilla USDA pilot and Students at 4 middle schools served by the pilot</td>
<td>2400 students at 12 schools</td>
<td>Students, producers, community members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA Pilot: Las Cruces</td>
<td>Las Cruces</td>
<td>North Valley cluster of APS schools</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Education Department (PED)</td>
<td>Manage state funding for local procurement passed through state legislation in 2013 and 2014. Current level of annual reoccurring funding that PED manages is $240,000</td>
<td>Suppliers Participating producers/suppliers, school districts, and students</td>
<td>Statewide, for 2014-15 school year, districts had to submit applications to receive funding</td>
<td>State budget</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School districts</td>
<td>Local procurement for school meals and some nutrition education activities via a number of mechanisms (described in the next section below); Wellness policies that promote health and nutrition; Nutrition education; A number of district school boards actively support F2S initiatives and local purchase in particular</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>Federal and state funding</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP)</td>
<td>Food Corps service member placed at SWOP, and Project Feed the Hood is a F2S initiative run by SWOP that supports urban and school gardens in Albuquerque. SWOP has developed curriculum and campaigns focused in the areas of school gardens, student engagement and awareness building, and local and state policy work to support healthy school environments</td>
<td>Students participating in Project Feed the Hood</td>
<td>Albuquerque</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Project Feed the Hood community garden and sustainable agriculture resources: <a href="http://www.projectfeedthehood.org/sample-page/resources/">http://www.projectfeedthehood.org/sample-page/resources/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP)</td>
<td>School gardens at both elementary schools on Zuni Pueblo and at the Zuni Head Start preschool program that use hands-on training about nutrition and Zuni agricultural traditions; ZYEP also has a number of other community gardens on the Zuni Pueblo. Zuni is also participating in the FTT Love Local project</td>
<td>Head Start and elementary students</td>
<td>Zuni Pueblo students and community members</td>
<td>The Notah Begay III (NB3) Foundation Nike N7 Fund Other foundations Businesses Private donations</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ii. Local Procurement

A very detailed explanation of relevant policies and regulations governing local procurement by school districts and school food authorities is provided in *The Power of Public Procurement* (September 2014), a report prepared by FTT and NMSU. The FTT-NMSU report also offered details on opportunities and potential barriers to increasing local purchasing in NM public schools and included information on current and potential future availability of a targeted number of NM grown fresh fruits and vegetables for sale to NM institutions. As such, this report will summarize a number of the key points that were identified in that report and provide a few additional findings from the research conducted for this study.

During the 2013-14 school year more than 60 school districts and school food authorities in NM purchased fresh fruits and vegetables produced in the state for school meals. Understanding the context of school meal programs in NM is a challenge, however, given that “the landscape of school meal programs is complex and difficult to navigate due to the numerous agencies, policies, programs, and funding streams that exist to feed children in public schools.” Funding for school meals comes from the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and state programs including Breakfast After the Bell and the local purchase initiative, NM Grown Produce for School Meals. School food authorities also receive federal commodity entitlement dollars from USDA that can be used to procure a number of diverse, domestically produced foods and/or fresh produce through the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program. On a policy level, federal policies mentioned above have an impact on local procurement, specifically the new guidelines introduced in 2012 that require an increase in the amount of produce on a lunch plate as well as the geographic preference bill introduced in 2008.

At the state level, since 2007 $85,000 has been allocated each year to NMDA to provide APS with funds to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from local producers to serve 12 schools in the North Valley. The program currently reaches 2,400 students at these schools. During the 2013-2014 school year APS purchased approximately $65,000 of fresh fruits and vegetables from five local suppliers (including Agri-Cultura, FTT, Wagner Farms, and two other farms). In 2013, $100,000 was approved for a state-wide local procurement program during the state legislative session and included in the budget signed by the governor. This funding was allocated to the NM PED and was reportedly divided evenly among all school districts and school food authorities in the state, which turned out to be less than $750 per district/authority. During the 2014 state legislative session, the House and Senate both introduced bills to provide nearly $1.5 million in state funds to purchase New Mexico-grown fruits and vegetables for school meals. Of this amount, $240,000 as an annual appropriation was approved by the legislature and the governor and made available starting with the 2014-15 school year. PED introduced a competitive process for school districts to access these funds, and award letters were released in November 2014 during the research for this study. The timing of the process was a constraint, however, given the funding is being provided after the school year had begun and after producers had already planned their production for the spring harvests. Apart from these measures, a number of school districts procure food locally (and have been doing so for many years) through the general federal funding they receive via school meals. These districts typically have school boards that support and encourage local food procurement, though for most districts that do purchase from local suppliers, the local purchases still

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28 The most relevant information from that report related to F2S can be found on P.9-28, 45-57, and 60.
30 The remainder of the $85,000 in funding goes to overhead and administrative costs.
only account for an extremely small proportion of overall food purchases (around 1% or less in many cases). A final way that local food is being procured for F2S activities that does not go through standard school district/food authority procedures is for sourcing food for in-class F2S programming, such as tastings, food preparation and cooking classes.

According to *The Power of Public Procurement*, “Currently, 19 growers are selling produce to our public schools, demonstrating that farm to institution is not only possible, it is viable.”\(^{31}\) This figure actually represents the growers that have sold to public schools specifically through FTT’s Farm to Cafeteria program, and they are primarily small farms producing specialty crops (i.e. fruits and vegetables) mainly located along the Rio Grande corridor and in Rio Arriba County. The total number of local producers and suppliers selling to school districts and school food authorities across the state (via: districts purchasing from: their general funding, the PED funds, or the North Valley cluster funds (for APS)), however, is not currently tracked and is therefore unknown as of the time of this writing. Even without knowing the exact numbers, the proportion of small and medium-scale farms participating in selling to schools is extremely small when considering that the USDA Census of Agriculture conducted in 2012 found that across the state of NM there are nearly 25,000 farms, over 50% of which are farms that are less than 50 acres; and that fresh fruits and vegetables in the state are produced primarily on small farms – of averages of 0.5 acres and less for products such as cucumbers, spinach, carrots, bell peppers, leaf lettuce, tomatoes, and cantaloupes; up to averages of approximately 20-40 acres for lettuce – head, onions, and potatoes.\(^{32}\) While onions and potatoes are mainly sold to out-of-state buyers, the majority of many other NM-grown fresh fruits and vegetables are sold locally at farmers’ markets, to restaurants, local groceries, and community supported agriculture initiatives, with a small amount being sold to schools. Therefore local procurement for school meals represents a significant opportunity for small-scale farmers in NM, and those who take advantage of the opportunity and participate in the market seem by and large quite satisfied. The Agri-Cultura Network (ACN), for example, has sold salad greens to APS since 2010; ACN was established with the express purpose of selling to APS because the APS funding for local procurement for the North Valley cluster of schools was not being fully spent in the initial years. ACN currently has a contract to sell 144 pounds of salad greens to APS weekly during the school year, and for this current school year, ACN is the only supplier that is supplying throughout the school year. Interviewees noted that for the 2014-15 school year, FTT and Wagner Farms are the only other suppliers to the APS market for the North Valley cluster. Wagner Farms has sold to schools since 2010, and in the 2013-14 school year Wagner grossed $85,000 from sales to schools.\(^{33}\)

Local procurement for school meals in NM is a growing, guaranteed market for small and medium-size farmers that produce fresh fruits and vegetables; furthermore, school districts that purchase locally for the most part pay what producers feel are fair prices for their production. The market also allows producers to serve schoolchildren, many of whom are food insecure and live in poverty, representing a different clientele than selling to local restaurants and/or the majority of consumers at farmers’ markets and local groceries.

Interviews conducted during this study along with documents reviewed for the desk review all, however, confirmed that the current local procurement market is significantly under-supplied, with all

\(^{32}\) Ibid. P. 48. Note that this data is based on calculations by one of the report authors using 2012 New Mexico agriculture census data.
\(^{33}\) Ibid. P. 50.
interviewees who discussed local procurement pointing to the growing demand and an inability at this time for local producers to meet the demand, given many of the challenges inherent in selling to schools. In short, there seem to be significant barriers to entry for local producers in accessing the local procurement market for school meals.

On the supply side, the most significant challenges seem related to:

i) **Buyer requirements that require supplier investment, training, or shifts in the way they typically do business** – for example, school districts typically require product liability insurance, completion of food safety training, specific types of labeling, packaging, and invoicing, etc. These are important requirements that schools must have in place to ensure food safety and quality but are often difficult for farmers to adhere to when their current market outlets do not have the same requirements. In addition, school district purchasing volumes often exceed what smaller-scale producers are able to supply, but smaller farms lack what is necessary to augment production or aggregate with other producers to participate in the market.

ii) **Transport** – some districts require transporting produce to individual schools, whereas others have central warehousing where farmers can deliver. A significant amount of the quantities that have been produced locally, however, have been facilitated through FTT, as FTT acts in some ways as a broker/ market facilitator, with FTT purchasing food from producers and then selling it to school districts (at the same price as it purchased from producers). FTT has also worked with the USDA’s commodity entitlement program to get locally produced food on USDA trucks that deliver food from a central warehouse operated by the NM Food and Nutrition Services (FANS) Bureau to all schools within the state, as those trucks often are not completely full. FTT brokered these sales and facilitated the USDA transport. Without this possibility, the amount of local food going to school districts and school meal programs the past few years would likely have been significantly less.

iii) **The typical growing season for fruits and vegetables in the state is not in sync with the school year.** Some participants in the local procurement market for school meals are finding ways around this through investing in infrastructure that helps extend the growing season (such as hoop houses, green houses, etc.), but these are often costly investments.

Local procurement is also often much more difficult for the school districts/ food authorities purchasing food than their standard processes. Food service directors that have purchased locally note that at times suppliers have not been able to provide contracted quantities. In addition, it takes additional time and effort to conduct the bidding process to procure fairly small quantities; low spending thresholds that allow school districts to purchase without a competitive bid were also cited as a constraint to purchasing more food locally.

Classroom-based education activities (cooking, tastings, nutrition education, etc.) that are not part of the formal school food procurement system and try to source local produce also have difficulty fulfilling those quantities. One additional potential source of local procurement would be through food distribution companies to begin to source a certain percentage of their food needs from NM-based producers – through more intentional incorporation of geographic preference into the bid systems. This type of arrangement has not yet been undertaken in NM.

Given that current demand is unmet and markets for local procurement for school meals and classroom-based education activities function in many ways as distinct markets (each with its own specifications, ways of purchasing, etc.), it seems that there is currently a real risk in all of these markets going after
the same limited levels of production from an extremely small number of suppliers. Unless the market can entice greater numbers of suppliers or current suppliers can significantly increase levels of production, this problem will only worsen as more districts and other stakeholders attempt to purchase greater quantities of food locally.

Finally, it is worth noting that monitoring systems for a number (though certainly not all) of school districts that purchase local food do not track local or non-local purchases, nor do they track for produce what is fresh compared to what is frozen or canned. Furthermore, the number of schools as well as a listing of which specific schools within a particular district receive local produce are often not tracked (though again, there are exceptions). Finally, little information is tracked about the profile of who is selling to the schools – in terms of farm size, commodities and volumes produced on the farms, etc.

Information related to local procurement and its integration into other F2S activities are provided in the next two sections, and additional details on local procurement are included in Section IV below on findings/ conclusions/ recommendations.

iii. Education
F2S-related activities in education include activities that happen at the classroom or school-wide level and use educational lessons or materials that incorporate food, agriculture, and nutrition into the school experience. At a school-wide level, this could include the use of promotional materials such as posters with messages about health and nutrition or local food. The “Love Local” FTT project is a good example of this type of educational activity. Education can also include working with food service workers in schools to help them promote F2S-related messages in the cafeteria or having family nights with cooking demonstration and nutritional messages. These types of educational activities can help students and their families (as well as teachers, leaders, and other school staff) better understand the source of some of the food in school meals and linkages between local production, local food systems, and community health.

Examples of classroom-based F2S education include: food preparation, cooking classes, and tasting demonstrations (e.g. Cooking with Kids, Kids Cook!, and the La Semilla pilot project among others). Individual classroom teachers also incorporate F2S into individual lessons in subjects such as math, science, language arts, etc. Teachers can get content-related materials through attending workshops on relevant F2S workshops such as those offered by AITC.

Most F2S educational activities are initiated by an implementing agency or the school district and have funding to implement the activities in a certain number of schools within a district. As noted above, for classes that use food for cooking, tasting, or some other demonstration, project implementers often try to source food locally for these lessons to the extent that they can.

Based on the literature as well as interviews conducted for this study, in-depth F2S educational activities seem to have the greatest potential for having impacts on students’ food preferences and choices, even though these activities are resource-intensive as they often use an external educator/ facilitator (who is not part of the school staff). The greatest current challenge to these activities that emerged from this study is the current educational climate – both nationwide as well as in NM – that focuses so heavily on testing in a limited number of subject areas. As a result, F2S educational curriculum that is incorporated

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34 Multiple interviewees noted that many school staff – including principals and teachers – are unaware of the fact that school districts are purchasing local food.
into the classroom has been designed to meet current content area standards in a number of subjects; otherwise, these types of initiatives would be difficult to ‘sell’ to schools and teachers who are under immense pressure to achieve certain standardized testing results.

Additional details related to education are provided in Section IV on findings/ conclusions/ recommendations below.

iv. Gardening
School gardens provide hands-on experiential learning about food and can be used during the school day for outdoor classroom activities and/or as after school activities. School gardens are implemented at the individual school level in NM and they can provide rich learning experiences especially for students who have little access to fresh produce and students who have little to no prior experience growing food. As an outdoor classroom, gardens can be effective in teaching lessons through hands-on experiences in subjects such as science, language arts, math, social studies, art, health, physical education, and others while simultaneously meeting subject content standards. While some teachers feel it is difficult to use school gardens to address content that students will be tested on, others are more effective at integrating the outdoor classroom with their curricular needs. At a school garden visited during this study, for example, a middle school science teacher stated that she uses the garden on a regular basis to teach the scientific method and that she feels extremely confident that students working in the garden is actually more effective in helping students learn than being confined to the classroom.

There are also creative ways that school gardens are using their production, as another school garden that was visited uses the fall produce for a harvest festival, which has become a significant school-wide community event since it was begun five years ago. Garden produce is also at times used for educational-based activities such as tastings, cooking classes, demonstrations, etc. School gardens are a growing phenomenon in certain parts of the state. In Albuquerque, for instance, there are now 80 school gardens in APS schools whereas there were approximately 20 gardens in place in 2010.

While there are numerous benefits to school gardens, there are also a number of challenges to their development, management, and maintenance. In most parts of NM the growing season is a challenge since the peak gardening season is in the summer when school is not in session. School gardens also require fairly significant, sustained resources, including time and energy to manage the garden, appropriate infrastructure (water, etc.), and technical know-how. Some interested teachers are able to receive professional development trainings on gardening and incorporating school gardens into different content areas.

The success of a school garden ultimately relies on individuals (teachers, other school staff, community members, etc.) who will ensure proper support and maintenance. Such sustained support over time can also be difficult given school leadership and teacher turnover. Funding for school gardens can also be a constraint, as most districts have little funding for gardens at their disposal and therefore schools with school gardens access resources for them in a variety of ways. Funding and/or direct inputs can be provided by local foundations, businesses, or Cooperative Extension services (through small grants from companies such as Lowe’s, Target, Whole Foods, etc.; through donations of seeds and tools; etc.). School gardens that have dedicated staff such as those supported by Earth Care NM, Food Corps, La Semilla, etc., also seem to have a greater chance for success.

Growing and preparing garden food at school is linked to increases in children’s preferences for fruits and vegetables, and there is also evidence that a combination of gardening with nutrition education
results in voluntary changes in diet.\textsuperscript{35} In this way, school gardens can serve as a strong complement to other F2S activities being implemented in schools.

\textit{b. Examples of promising practices}

During the research conducted for this study a number of promising practices emerged from F2S programming in NM. A shortlist of the practices that seem to have the most potential to improve F2S in the state is provided here.

1) \textbf{Local procurement:}
   a. Currently and for the foreseeable future, significant supply-side support for producers is/will be necessary if greater numbers of NM farmers are going to participate in the market for local procurement for school meals. Continued production and marketing support provided by agencies such as AFSC, FTT, NMSU Cooperative Extension, and others is critical to increasing producer participation in this market.
   b. Building relationships between buyers and sellers in the market for local procurement for school meals helps strengthen the market and allows for better planning for both buyer and seller.
   c. It is very useful to provide support to districts to improve local procurement bidding processes in terms of: the timing for the bids, the conditions and specifications contained in the bids, the type of contracting to be provided, and timing of payment.

2) \textbf{Integration:} An increasingly greater number of F2S initiatives in NM are working across multiple components of F2S (such as the Feast for the Future project, the La Semilla pilot, etc.) to integrate more intentionally and holistically local procurement, education, and gardening.

3) \textbf{Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):} F2S educational activities especially (e.g. Cooking with Kids, Feast for the Future, etc.) are including more rigorous M&E designed to measure activity effectiveness and outcomes.

4) \textbf{Coordination and Collaboration:}
   a. A number of school districts that purchase locally are now holding production planning with interested suppliers so that producers can plan in advance for sales to schools. This type of coordination is critical to developing more robust, well-functioning markets for local procurement for school meals.
   b. Collaboration related to evaluation and measurement of impact of a number of organizations receiving USDA SNAP-Ed funding is a very promising practice.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{A New Deal for School Gardens.} The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. 2010. P. 3.
IV. Key Farm to School in New Mexico findings, conclusions, and recommendations

This section presents the report’s key findings, conclusions, and recommendations related to F2S in NM. As noted previously, local procurement was prioritized in the research and therefore greater detail is provided for the section on local procurement. The section first provides overall findings, conclusions, and recommendations, which are then followed by findings, conclusions, and recommendations for each of the three core F2S components of procurement, education, and gardening. The recommendations are targeted towards one of three groups: F2S implementing agencies (i.e. school districts, state agencies, non-profits, suppliers, and other entities that are involved in managing and/or implementing F2S activities); F2S donors/funders (i.e. foundations, private sector companies, and federal, state, and local government entities that fund F2S activities); and policymakers (i.e. NM legislators).

a. Overall

**Overall Finding 1:** An incredible amount of work is going on with F2S in many districts and schools (including in a diversity of contexts) and being implemented by a wide array of actors throughout the state, as Table 4 above illustrates. Furthermore:

- Some of this work is well-integrated across F2S components, some is more stand-alone
- Interviewees noted a general lack of coordination among different F2S actors, both in terms of activities being implemented as well as overall planned impacts on children and their families, schools, and communities

**Overall Conclusion 1:** At the strategic and visionary as well as operational levels, there is a gap in coordination as well as knowledge management and sharing. F2S is very complex and needs clearly articulated overarching visions, theories of change, ways of measurement, etc. Such strategic components of projects are often not present. At the same time, there seems to be a growing recognition among some key F2S actors of the importance of linking and integrating various F2S components – especially local procurement with food and nutrition-related education.

Thus there is a real need for greater coordination and information sharing around:

- Activities: who’s doing what where with what resources and to what effect
- Theories of change and measurement systems used in various F2S activities
- Learning from existing programs throughout NM and the country

**Overall Recommendation 1:**

- **F2S Implementing Agencies:** Improve F2S coordination across the state, specifically to bring together relevant stakeholders and F2S practitioners to:
  - Provide a forum for sharing concretely what is being done across the state
  - Establish a more comprehensive space online to store and access information about: i) F2S activities in the state; ii) relevant project and organizational documents and resources for programs in NM; and iii) national-level F2S resources.
  - Become a formalized learning group – a space to share best practices, engage in joint learning and evaluation, etc.
- **F2S Implementing Agencies:** Consider what F2S activities are and should be contributing to in terms of overall impact, how impact is/should be measured, and ways various stakeholders can collaborate/coordinate on program design, M&E, research, and learning.
**Overall Finding 2:** Every F2S program at the level of implementation is unique, and the three main components of F2S are each complex in their own rights and often have varying and at times competing objectives as well as different time horizons for expected change. Relative costs and benefits when thinking about a per student basis for implementing activities within each component (i.e. the cost of reaching one student with a particular activity and benefit accrued by the student from the activity) also seem to differ.

**Overall Conclusion 2:** It is important that F2S initiatives continue to have the flexibility to adapt to local realities, needs, and context. In this way, there is great value in the fact that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach for F2S. At the same time, there is also value in being able to articulate overarching visions, strategies, and longer-term desired outcomes for F2S even if activities and their implementation in the field remain unique. While marrying and integrating various F2S activities and components and their theories of change is complicated it does seem possible and is of vital importance for thinking about longer-term impact of F2S interventions – especially if the sum total of impact is going to be greater than its individual parts. In addition, combining and integrating different F2S components at a school/operational level seems beneficial and necessary.

**Overall Recommendation 2:**
- **F2S Implementing Agencies and Donors:** F2S activities should have clearly defined overarching objectives and theories of change that consider direct and indirect beneficiary groups from F2S programs and the time horizons associated with different types of change anticipated for each of the beneficiary groups. These should be accompanied by robust M&E systems that include metrics for measuring longer-term impacts of F2S activities.
- **Donors:** Undertake an analysis to understand clearly the cost-benefit tradeoffs in investment in different types of F2S activities.

**Overall Finding 3:** There is strong political and public support for F2S and especially local purchase, and local procurement is now legislated as part of the annual NM budget (receiving recurring funding). For instance, during the 2015 legislative session two bills related to additional funding for local procurement are being introduced, one of which proposes a full-time position in a state agency to coordinate and manage the local food procurement program. There seems to be less political support at the state-level for F2S activities that go beyond funding for local procurement.

**Overall Conclusion 3:** Some of the learning from program implementers in terms of the importance of integrated F2S approaches, producers needing supply-side support, etc. does not seem prioritized by state-level legislators, as there seems to be less political support and appetite for providing NM state funding for activities that go beyond strict local purchase. Maintaining a singular focus at the state level for funding on local procurement is a huge missed opportunity for F2S in NM.

**Overall Recommendation 3:**
- **Policymakers:** Establish a state-wide F2S program that includes funding and staff for resourcing all three main components of F2S – local procurement, education, and gardening – and the integration of activities within the three components. Such legislation should establish position(s) for full-time staff to be in housed in a state agency/or state agencies for coordinating all F2S activities state-wide, not just to manage local procurement. This/these position(s) could take on the role of enhanced coordination and learning in F2S activities in NM detailed above under Overall Recommendation 1 and be modeled on similar positions created in other states.
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(such as Oklahoma (since 2006), Oregon (since 2007), etc.). Legislation establishing a more
integrated state-wide F2S approach could be based off models in Washington state (enacted in
2008 and which also included local procurement for school snacks as well as minimal
requirements for data to be collected and reported on) and Oregon (which was started in 2011
with $200,000 and the state legislature recently approved $1.2 million for the 2013/14 and
2014/2015 school years in new funding that is set to re-occur annually).

➢ **Policymakers:** Establish an innovation fund grant program at the state level to finance smaller-
scale innovative approaches that would be scalable and would include rigorous M&E. The state
could seek matching funds from USDA F2S resources and/or other interested donors such as
foundations or the private sector.

**Overall Finding 4:** F2S initiatives are funded through an array of public funds via state and national-level
mechanisms, as well as through foundations and other mechanisms (e.g. local volunteer involvement
such as PTAs, Food Corps, community groups, etc.).

**Overall Conclusion 4:** Donors (government, foundations, others) providing funds for F2S activities should
also have clearly articulated overarching visions and theories of change for considering impact of F2S
investments, the necessary steps to achieve impact, and how impact should be measured. In addition,
for local procurement, the complexity of the funding mechanisms can lead to variations in bid language
and requirements, which is confusing for producers, and also seems to detract from stronger
coordination among F2S implementers.

**Overall recommendation 4:**

➢ **Donors:** For all future F2S programming, consider investments that prioritize the following:
   a. Longer-term time horizons, with sufficient time included in project start-up for proper
      planning, relationship building, etc.
   b. Rigorous learning, research, and M&E on projects that have a clear goal, objectives, and
targets for measuring progress and impact.
   c. Piloting initiatives in different contexts – such as urban, rural, and tribal areas.
   d. Offering flexible funding that depends on the needs in particular geographic areas,
districts, and schools (such as funding for: training food service workers, upgrading
school kitchens, in-class cooking and nutrition education, school gardens, summer meal
programs and complementary gardening and/or education initiatives, etc.).
   e. An understanding of the cost-benefit tradeoffs in investment in different types of F2S
activities and investment in F2S in different geographies (for example, future F2S
investment in geographic areas that already have a large number of F2S initiatives will
likely be different than investment in places where F2S has not been as prevalent).

➢ **F2S Implementers:** To the extent possible, make bidding language, content, and requirements
consistent across school districts/ food authorities.

**Overall Finding 5:** There is an appetite for risk, innovation, and trying new approaches among F2S
implementers, such as incorporating programming ideas from other states for local procurement or
better integration across F2S core components. At the same time, there seems to be a tendency to want
to introduce and grow F2S programs quickly.
Overall Conclusion 5: The most successful initiatives reviewed during this study started on a smaller-scale and included a clearly articulated vision and rigorous evaluation and means of measurement.

Overall Recommendation 5:

- **F2S Implementers:** Start small in order to build more evidence-based, locally contextual models prior to scaling them.
- **Donors:** Continue to fund innovative and new approaches to F2S in NM, especially those that integrate multiple components of F2S, and do so in a way that recognizes the importance of starting small and including rigorous M&E and learning.

b. Local Procurement

**Local Procurement (LP) Finding 1:** LP without a strong educational component will likely have minimal impacts on child food preferences, health, and well-being.

**LP Conclusion 1:** The clearest and most direct benefits of LP in and of itself are primarily on farmers and secondarily the local economy. The causal or logical link between LP on its own leading to healthier food preferences and consumption by kids, families, and communities is an extremely indirect causal pathway. LP therefore should be complemented by other F2S activities (classroom tastings, cooking activities, garden-based learning, etc.) to lead to improved food security and health and nutrition outcomes. In this way, increasing LP by schools can complement efforts in education and gardening and help provide a comprehensive strategy for improving access to and consumption of healthier foods.

**LP Recommendation 1:**

- **Donors and Policymakers:** Funding for LP that is already provided needs to be accompanied by investment in complementary activities as discussed under Overall Recommendation 3 and 4.
- **Donors and Policymakers:** Explore funding for increasing LP for initiatives that include summer meals, school snacks, and/or classroom tastings or cooking activities.

**LP Finding 2:** LP in theory represents a huge opportunity for NM farmers, but the LP ‘market’ for school purchase has relatively few farmer participants, as there are numerous challenges and what seem to be binding constraints that producers/sellers face to market participation. *Simply put, the school market seems more difficult for local producers to participate in, so they opt instead for selling to restaurants, at farmer’s markets, etc., which are currently easier markets for most local producers to access.* However, the small numbers of producers that do sell to schools seem very satisfied with the market.

Main supply-side challenges include:
- Individual farmers are not able to provide production levels that meet school needs
- Seasonality: the school year runs opposite to growing season
- Transportation of product to delivery points
- Often significant price-point differences between local and non-local options (which is why having distinct ways to purchase locally is critical – through separate funding mechanisms, using geographic preference, having a higher threshold for purchase orders that do not have to be bid competitively, etc.)

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36 In this section (and this section only), Local Procurement has been abbreviated as LP because of the frequency with which it is used.
Meeting food safety and quality requirements: often requires investments that other markets that fruit/vegetables suppliers access do not require (such as liability insurance, training in food safety, specific packaging, etc.). LP for schools also requires more advance planning, and if bid system is not done enough ahead of time, farmers cannot plan appropriately.

- Payment processes often take more than a month, as compared to other local produce buyers that pay much more quickly.
- Some small-scale growers in NM may be adverse to participating in a market where a school district official or other government official would have the right to inspect their farms.

Opportunities include:

- Guaranteed market and the ability to plan production, harvest, and sales in advance (if bid system provides adequate time).
- Working through a cooperative approach, which allows for pooling costs (to meet food safety requirements; for transport; for extending the growing season, etc.), aggregating product, minimizing risk (e.g. the model that has been used by Agri-Cultura).
- Schools often pay fair prices.
- Demand is on the rise, and supply is not keeping up. There is significant opportunity here for greater sales for local producers and especially smaller, less well-off producers.

LP Conclusion 2: In the NM context, it seems that any LP initiatives need accompanying supply-side support, as the introduction of demand from schools/school districts as institutional buyers does not seem sufficient on its own to incentivize many farmers to participate (there seem to be too many barriers to entry that are not present in other markets in which small and medium-scale fruit and vegetable producers already participate). Such initiatives would include working with smaller-scale producers to help them aggregate their product to meet volume requirements; providing food safety requirements; and helping when needed serve as a broker/facilitator between the producer and buyer for a certain period of time, until the producer is ready to sell directly to the schools. In addition, it is important for funding to be set aside and treated separately from traditional procurement mechanisms (as has been set up through legislation for the APS North Valley Cluster and now the statewide funding being managed by PED).

Finally, further research could be extremely useful in helping to provide a more in-depth and full understanding of why more producers have not participated in the LP market to date and the feasibility of greater levels of participation in the future – including for products that have already been purchased by schools as well as exploring the possibility of purchasing other types of fruits or vegetables and/or other products (which could include milk and dairy products, baked goods, herbs, legumes, etc.). Otherwise, increasing the market for LP too quickly without understanding why many producers are not participating will likely result in unspent funds, unmet demand, and/or a very chaotic market.

LP Recommendation 2:

- F2S Implementing Agencies and Donors: Conduct additional feasibility studies to understand producer perspectives on the LP market for school procurement and the level of viability across the state. These studies would ideally include crop-specific analyses of production levels, local vs. out-of-state sales, and reasons for participating or not participating in the LP market for a number of locally produced fruits and vegetables that schools area already purchasing. Barrier analysis could be used especially to understand producer reasons for participating or not in the LP market. The feasibility studies should also include other products that could be part of LP, such as milk and other dairy products, baked goods, herbs, legumes, etc.).
Policymakers: In addition to current funds available for local purchase and depending on the results of the feasibility studies, it will presumably be important to prioritize funding for a large-scale farmer training and support program to prepare significantly greater numbers of farmers to participate in LP for school meals; such a program could be based off successes of current / past programs implemented by AFSC, FTT, NMSU Cooperative Extension, etc. that bring various stakeholders together to provide support for producers to lower the barriers to entry to the local procurement market. This capacity building program could also prioritize helping new and younger farmers get into farming.

LP Finding 3: LP mechanisms and specifications matter, as there are also numerous challenges on the procurement/ buyer side. For one, timing matters, and the timing of the bid process has often been difficult for producers to respond to as it has not adhered to the growing season. Secondly, safety and liability requirements are important but may need to be phased in over time for local producers to participate. Thirdly, the process of purchasing locally has often meant buying smaller quantities and dealing with greater logistical challenges, which discourages school districts from wanting to buy local given the extra work involved. Some districts have central warehouses that producers can bring their products to, whereas others require producers to deliver produce to individual schools. Fourthly, differing requirements and systems across different districts makes it difficult for producers to participate. Fifthly, purchase order thresholds in certain districts were reported to be too low. And finally, little progress has been seen with what has been done with the state funding allocated through the 2013 and 2014 legislation.

Simply put, purchasing locally is often more difficult for school districts to do, so they opt instead to purchase from major non-local distributors.

LP Conclusion 3: On the buyer side, support is needed as well for school districts in terms of developing bid systems that are sensitive to local producer needs. In addition, current regulations around buying thresholds make it difficult to purchase locally if it is not through separate funding. Other stakeholders on the buyer side – food service workers, business managers, etc., might need training and support for LP to be successful.

LP Recommendation 3:

- Donors and Policymakers: In addition to current funds available for LP, additional funding is needed for demand-side support to local school districts to improve their procurement practices.
- F2S Implementing Agencies: Develop a NM best practices guide for local school procurement (to include bidding information, what to purchase, how to purchase, food safety assurances for local producers, timing of bids and planning meetings, etc...). Distinctions in the guide should be made based on size of district, whether a district is urban vs. rural, etc. This guide can build off of similar guides that have been produced in other states.
- Donors and F2S Implementing Agencies: Increase funding for trainings for food service workers and for creating greater linkages between the cafeteria and food/ nutrition classroom education.
- F2S Implementing Agencies: Advocate with PED for better management of local procurement funding – management should be based on best practices for bid systems, timing of bids and funds dispersals, etc.
**LP Finding 4:** Related to points 2 and 3 above, there are real concerns across the board about producer abilities to meet current and future school local purchasing needs.

**LP Conclusion 4:** Demand currently outstrips supply, especially from participating producers, and there is a risk that the increase in funds available for LP will lead to competing “markets” for a very limited supply (this may even be the case already). Without significant supply-side support, improved bidding processes, relationship-building among buyers and potential sellers, and a better understanding of the LP market and why many producers are not participating, farmer interest/participation levels in F2S will likely remain low.

**LP Recommendation 4:**
- See LP recommendations 2 and 3 above.

**LP Finding 5:** Most school districts that are purchasing locally track very little information on local purchases, and there is little documentation of desired longer-term results and ways to measure such impacts for LP.

**LP Conclusion 5:** If little information is being tracked, limited conclusions can be drawn about LP.

**LP Recommendation 5:**
- **F2S Implementing Agencies:** Develop guidelines for minimum standards for information to track related to local purchases. This should include at the least: quantities purchased for each product ($ value and tonnage); # of schools that benefit from the purchase; and # of students at the benefiting schools that receive school meals. Buyers should also track some basic information on participating producers such as farm size and commodities and volumes produced to gain a better understanding of the profile of participating producers.
- **F2S Implementing Agencies and Donors:** Link overall desired impacts of LP to broader F2S objectives (see Overall Recommendation 2 above).

**LP Finding 6:** There are untapped possibilities to strengthen LP, especially in relation to: i) training and/or building awareness of and knowledge about LP and its purposes with school staff (food service workers in particular); ii) incorporating the private sector into LP through food distributors (distributors working with NM schools include: Affiliated Foods, Ben E. Keith, Shamrock, and Sysco/ US Foods, among others37).

**LP Conclusion 6:** Without support to staff in schools the benefits from LP for students will likely be minimal. In addition, collaborating with private sector distributors to source locally would be another way to increase the amount of locally procured food in schools. According to the USDA F2S Census in 2012, nearly two-thirds of school districts nationwide that purchase local foods do so through a distributor, yet this is not something that is currently practiced in NM.

**LP Recommendation 6:**
- **F2S Implementing Agencies:** Analyze needs for schools related to LP in terms of training, awareness raising, etc., for different school staff positions (leaders/administrators, food service workers, teachers...).

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c. Education

**Education Finding 1:** There are a variety of education-based F2S activities being implemented in NM, including in-class lessons primarily in: cooking/food preparation; food, nutrition, and agriculture; and food tastings. Other educational activities come through promotional informational materials in school buildings and cafeterias and to a very limited extent through food service worker communications with and messaging to students about local and/or nutritious food choices in the cafeteria.

**Education Conclusion 1:** F2S educational activities that seem to be having the most success and impact in NM include the food and nutrition-related hands-on education activities in the classroom (tastings and cooking/food preparation primarily), which provide rich hands-on experiences to students and can result in shifts in knowledge, attitudes, and practices around food and nutrition. There is fairly solid evidence of these types of shorter-term changes to support this conclusion. While typically intensive in terms of time and resource requirements, these types of activities also seem like they could have significant longer-term benefits. Research to date has tended to focus on shorter-term effects of these activities (through use of pre, mid, and post-surveys) but has looked less at programming impacts in years beyond the end of the period of intervention. In-class activities that are linked to local procurement, gardens, or other complementary educational activities (family cooking demonstration nights, for example) can be mutually reinforcing and are a good practice. Finally, there seems to be a missed opportunity in linking F2S with food service and kitchen staff, who could be much more involved in food and nutrition education.

**Education Recommendation 1:**
- **Policymakers:** As noted above under Overall Recommendation 3, establish a state-wide integrated F2S program with resources for staffing and funding that would include implementation of F2S educational activities.
- **Donors:** Increase funding to scale up in-class hands-on classroom-based educational activities in geographic locations of current implementation and to introduce them into new geographic areas.
- **Donors:** Consider funding that provides professional development to food service staff at school to enhance F2S linkages to and messages in the school cafeteria.
- **F2S Implementing Agencies and Donors:** Introduce and incorporate tools and processes that attempt to measure longer-term outcomes from hands-on classroom-based educational activities.
- **F2S Implementing Agencies and Donors:** Seek complementarity between these activities, LP, and school gardens.
- **F2S Implementing Agencies:** Develop a guidance manual for using LP for sourcing the food needed for tastings, cooking, and other classes. Important considerations would include: advance planning so producers can plant accordingly; contracting mechanisms that are favorable for producers; building buyer-seller relationships; how to link LP to the educational activities (through farmer visits to classes for example); etc.
**Education Finding 2:** The biggest challenge to implementing F2S components that are done during class time is the current educational climate/environment, and nutrition/food/agriculture education curriculum must therefore be incorporated as part of a core subject (such as math, science, language arts, etc.). Teachers and schools may otherwise not be interested in these given the emphasis on core subjects and pressures on testing in those subjects.

**Education Conclusion 2:** In-class activities do seem to be doing a good job of adapting curriculum to current standards (i.e. the Common Core). Continuing to build more rigorous evidence that shows how the activities have an impact on children’s food choices and ultimately their health and well-being would help ensure long-term support even in a test-driven climate.

**Education Recommendation 2:**

- **F2S Implementing Agencies and Donors:** Invest in rigorous evaluation and learning around hands-on in-class F2S education activities

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d. **Gardening**

**Gardening Finding 1:** School gardens have mixed results – with proper support, leadership, funding, and upkeep/maintenance, they are a great hands-on learning tool for students (in core subjects such as math and science as well as learning more about food, agriculture and nutrition). They can also be excellent complements especially to in-class cooking and tastings. Most school districts, however, do not have any documented strategy/vision for school gardens and how they should be incorporated into the school setting. Data collection related to school gardens in terms of usage as well as higher-level outcomes seems limited, with certain exceptions (such as the Johns Hopkins Feast for the Future project and La Semilla’s activities).

**Gardening Conclusion 1:** There is a body of evidence that links school gardens to positive outcomes for participant food preferences and eating habits. While there are challenges to maintaining gardens, a key ingredient for long-term garden success seems to be those that can have dedicated staff supporting them.

**Gardening Recommendation 1:**

- **Policymakers:** As noted above under Overall Recommendation 3, establish a state-wide integrated F2S program with resources for staffing and funding that would include implementation of F2S gardening activities.
- **F2S Implementing Agencies:** For larger school districts, develop and establish a district-wide vision and strategy for school garden, which could be based off the model Denver has used in which the Denver Public Schools’ Sustainability Office provides oversight and technical support to school gardens at local public schools and also coordinates the Denver School Garden Coalition, which also includes Denver Urban Gardens, Slow Food Denver, and Learning Landscapes.
- **F2S Implementing Agencies:** Future school garden efforts should have minimum M&E standards as well as a clear sustainability and management plan.
- **Donors and F2S Implementing Agencies:** Consider attempting to measure impacts on students of a combination of school gardens and F2S education components for those schools that have activities in both of these components.
V. Concluding thoughts

F2S programming has made immense strides in NM in recent years. The landscape of F2S activities today is significantly different than it was 15 years ago, thanks to the dedication and diligence of numerous key F2S stakeholders across the state.

Today F2S stands at a crossroads – both here in NM and across the country. The panoply of F2S activities woven in, with, and for schools and their students throughout the US and this state is impressive. At the same time, there are a number of vital steps that can be taken in the next few years to ensure F2S is having the greatest impact it can on the lives of students and their schools, families, and communities, especially those living in poverty. The future of F2S in this state needs to be about collaboration, building and strengthening relationships, increasing levels of smart investments, and developing more lessons learned and evidence for what works and why and how and where it works.

Most importantly, future success in F2S in NM will require a shift in focus and investment towards a more integrated, holistic approach that articulates clearly the overall goals and objectives of F2S initiatives and emphasizes more completely the importance of education and gardening within F2S. The food security and public health needs for children across the state are great, and yet so is the opportunity – for NM to become a leader across the country of integrated, evidence-based F2S initiatives that make a real and lasting impact. It is there for the taking.
### Annex A: List of Sources Consulted and Reviewed

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document/ Source</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
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<td><strong>Overall F2S Programming</strong></td>
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<td>Advocacy Over the Long Haul: Eight Years of Farm to School and School Garden Legislative Victories in Oregon - Presentation</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>A New Deal for School Gardens</td>
<td>United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
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<td>Cooking with Kids Positively Affects Fourth Graders' Vegetable Preferences and Attitudes and Self-Efficacy for Food and Cooking</td>
<td>Cunningham-Sabo and Lohse</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Childhood Obesity journal</td>
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<td>Economic Implications of Farm to School for a Rural Colorado Community</td>
<td>Gunter and Thilmany</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Rural Connections: A Publication of the Western Rural Development Center</td>
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<td>Getting Started with Farm to Preschool</td>
<td>National Farm to School Network</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>National Farm to School Network</td>
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<td>Navigating Early Care and Education: A Roadmap for National Farm to School Network Leads</td>
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<td>2014</td>
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<td>Rethinking School Lunch: A planning framework from the Center for Ecoliteracy, Second Edition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Substitute Senate Bill 6483, State of Washington (related to local food production and F2S)</td>
<td>Washington State Legislature</td>
<td>2008</td>
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### A CALL TO ACTION

**F2S in NM: Successes, Challenges, and Potential Ways Forward**  
**February 2015**

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<th>Title</th>
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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Using Legislative Advocacy to Institutionalize Farm to School – Presentation</td>
<td>Gray and Qazi</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Washington Sustainable Food &amp; Farming Network</td>
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### New Mexico F2S Programming and Local Food Systems

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<td>A Community Guide to Organizing Small Farms: Stories from El Valle de Atrisco</td>
<td>Patrick Staib and the American Friends Service Committee</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>American Friends Service Committee</td>
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<td>Agricultura - nos da mas que solo comida (bi-lingual English and Spanish lesson book)</td>
<td>Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom and New Mexico Ag in the Classroom</td>
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<td>Agricultural Production Capacity in New Mexico - A Report Prepared for the Thornburg Foundation</td>
<td>Uchanski</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Unpublished - used as part of The Power of Public Procurement report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albuquerque Public Schools and Local Produce: Presentation at MRCOG Meeting</td>
<td>Carleton</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>Can We Feed Ourselves? An Exploration of New Mexico Agricultural Production</td>
<td>Uchanski</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>UnitySW Press</td>
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<td>Healthy Kids - Healthy Economy: School Meals Using New Mexico-Grown Produce</td>
<td>Farm to Table and New Mexico School Nutrition Association</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>Impact of a School-Based Cooking Curriculum for Fourth-Grade Students on Attitudes and Behaviors Is Influenced by Gender and Prior Cooking Experience</td>
<td>Cunningham-Sabo and Lohse</td>
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<td>Interim Report: Small-scale farmer participation in the Albuquerque Public Schools market for local food</td>
<td>Crawford-Garrett</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Unpublished</td>
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<td>Procurement Experience</td>
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<td>New Mexico 2012 Agricultural Statistics</td>
<td>NMDA and USDA</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>New Mexico Grown Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for School Meals - New Mexico Local Produce Resource Guide 2014-15</td>
<td>Woodworth and Paisano (Farm to Table)</td>
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<td>New Mexico School Nutrition Association, Farm to Table, New Mexico Public Education Department, Human Services Department Food and Nutrition Services, and NMSU Cooperative Extension</td>
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<td>NMSU Report for Thornburg Foundation - New Mexico Institutional Food Procurement Study</td>
<td>Patrick and NMSU Cooperative Extension Service</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Unpublished – used as part of The Power of Public Procurement report</td>
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<td>New Mexico School Districts and Schools Purchasing New</td>
<td>Farm to Table</td>
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# A CALL TO ACTION

_F2S in NM: Successes, Challenges, and Potential Ways Forward_  
February 2015

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<td>Partnering with Teachers for Innovative Nutrition Education Programs</td>
<td>Cathey and Berger</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Las Cruces Public Schools and School Nutrition Association</td>
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<td>Planning Santa Fe's Food Future - Querencia - A story of food, farming and friends</td>
<td>Santa Fe Food Policy Council</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>Project documents, materials, and monitoring and evaluation tools - <em>AFSC-Agri-Cultura Network; Farm to Table: Love Local Produce of the Month; La Semilla: F2S USDA Pilot; Johns Hopkins American Indian Center: Feast for the Future; Food Corps; Zuni Youth Enrichment Project; Cooking with Kids; Kids Cook!</em></td>
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<td>Raices de Tradicion y Salud - A Food Systems, Garden, and Cooking Lesson Manual for Middle School Students</td>
<td>La Semilla Food Center</td>
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<td>La Semilla Food Center</td>
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<td>Resolution No. 12-203, Las Cruces, NM (supporting F2S programs)</td>
<td>Las Cruces City Council</td>
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<td>Sampling of School District Bid and Procurement Documents for Local Procurement of NM Fruits and Vegetables</td>
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<td>New Mexico State University and Farm to Table</td>
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<td>Toolkit: Food Safety in School Gardens - A Guide for Assuring Fresh Produce Food Safety from the Garden to the Cafeteria, Classroom, and Community</td>
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**Thornburg Foundation**

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Annex B: List of Organizations Consulted

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**Total:**

16 organizations  
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7 Collective  
15 Individual