

**Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative**  
**Role of County Planning Teams**  
**Implementation Year 1: November 2009 – October 2010**

**Our Vision:**

NE Iowa is a unique place where all residents and guests experience celebrate and promote healthy locally grown food with abundant opportunities for physical activity and play every day. Healthier people make stronger families and vibrant communities.

**Purpose:**

- 1) Work with school wellness committee members, youth and community leaders to develop and implement our shared vision in Northeast Iowa that includes access to locally grown foods and wellness opportunities for all, while having fun!
- 2) Promote key messages to community members.
- 3) Recruit needed community members to support Year 1 Activities and Policy Targets
- 4) Build capacity as community advocates for policy and system change to increase the access to local healthy food and safe places for children and their families to be physically active.
- 5) Allocate \$600 in funding to support food and fitness opportunities within the county that are connected to our milestones for Year 1.

**Key County Team Members:**

- School Wellness Committee members from all schools within the county (including an administrator, teacher, school food service staff member, youth, and parent, etc.)
- Food producer(s) and entrepreneurs
- Public Health and Community Health Leaders
- Economic Development Director/Leaders
- Mayor and/or City Council member
- County Conservationist/Staff
- Park & Recreation Directors/Staff
- Media
- Other Community Leaders identified by your County Team

**Tentative Meeting Schedule & Topic Focus (approx. 2 hours per month):**

Nov. Focus: NE Iowa Funder's Network & Community Foundations  
Jan. Focus: Farm To School & Local Food Production  
Feb. Focus: Youth and School Wellness Committees Leading the Change  
March Focus: Safe Routes To School

April Focus: NE Iowa Food & Fitness Spring Conference  
May: Focus: Taking the Message Out to the Community  
June: Focus: TBD  
Sept.: Focus: TBD  
Oct: Focus: NE Iowa Food & Fitness Fall Conference

### **Activities and/or milestones for Year 1:**

**1) Design, Implement, Expand, and Sustain a Farm-to-School Program:** This comprehensive program will integrate numerous activities, e.g.:

- Link local farmers with those who procure and prepare foods in schools
- Introduce food service providers to safe handling of local foods
- Incorporate local foods into school lunches, snacks, and **concession** stands
- Introduce school curricula for growing food and the benefits of eating health-promoting foods and being physically active
- Start or expand school gardens
- Have high school youth team members teach the curriculum to K-3 students
- Address incentives to increase production of local foods for schools
- Address policy barriers at local, state, and national levels

**Milestones:** Year 1--curricula **identified**, all 6 selected schools implementing the comprehensive program, and 4 additional schools building readiness to participate in year 2.

Year 2--sustaining the first six schools, expanding to 4 additional schools, and building readiness in 4 schools. In year 3, the same pattern will continue.

**2) Develop producers of local, health-producing foods:** Creating increased demand for local foods will only cause frustration if an adequate supply is not available. Developing producers is a major project activity, e.g.:

- Convene and support local food producer entrepreneurial learning and networking events
- Award mini-grants to growers for startup and expansion. A pilot program \$10,000 of mini-grants leveraged \$745,965 in food and fiber resources for the region.
- Develop a Quality Assurance Seal of Approval for local foods. A Seal of Approval will assure institutional buyers that foods are handled safely and open more markets for local growers.
- Implement a NE Iowa Micro-Loan Affiliate program providing \$100,000 in funding to support food and fiber enterprises in need of capital, including business planning assistance

**Milestones:** New producers participate in all programs; the quality assurance program enacted.

**3) Develop food storage and processing capacity:** Storage and processing are challenges since we cannot raise large quantities of fresh food throughout the year. FFI activities include:

- Study feasibility of aggregation hubs to serve local growers
- Study feasibility of small scale processing facilities
- Develop an action plan

**4) Develop readiness for walking and biking:** Rural walking and biking provide special challenges. We will:

- Complete Safe Routes to School assessments in 6 target schools
- Develop capacity in local walking and bicycling champions
- Convene school-community Safe Routes to School teams
- Determine readiness of teams to conduct Safe Routes to School community workshops
- Support teams to create plans for their school-communities
- Provide Safe Routes to School mini-grants for 6 additional schools