

2020 NC Farm to Early Care and Education Collaborative Framework

Section 1. Overview

What is the Collaborative Approach?

The 2020 NC Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE) Collaborative will build upon, spread, and sustain the successes of the 2017 & 2019 Farm to ECE Collaboratives. The Collaborative approach is a practice-tested model adapted from the evidence-informed Breakthrough Series Collaborative, developed in 1995 by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (www.ihl.org) as a way to accelerate local quality improvement efforts specifically around healthcare. The Collaborative model focuses on testing, adapting, spreading, and maintaining improvements across multiple settings and within organizations to promote the sustainability of desired outcomes. Participants in this Collaborative will have the opportunity to take Farm to ECE efforts to new levels, bringing new strategies and approaches back to their communities.

What is Farm to Early Care and Education?

Farm to ECE enhances the health and education of young children through the development of experiential learning practices and policies that connect children and their families to local food and farms. Farm to ECE includes all types of child care environments that incorporate local foods through meals and snacks, taste tests, lessons, farmer visits, cooking, growing food, and/or community and parent involvement.

Why a Farm to ECE Collaborative?

Because of initiatives such as the 2017 & 2019 Farm to ECE Collaboratives and Shape NC, child care sites across the state have made great strides in the overall health and wellness of children. The 2020 Farm to ECE Collaborative will build on these successes so that more children and their families will have access to fresh, local food. This Collaborative will provide space for child care directors/owners, child care staff, Local Partnership/Head Start/CCR&R staff, Child Care Health Consultants, Technical Assistance Specialists, Cooperative Extension agents, farmers, and parents/caregivers to gather as one community of practice to make improvements locally and share lessons learned. At the core of this work will be an increased understanding of how structural racism and racial inequity affect young children's learning outcomes.

As a community of practice, we commit to the following goals:

1. Increase access to healthy, local food for children, families, and child care staff.
2. Create a culture of health and wellness that extends beyond children to families, child care staff, and the wider community.
3. Promote community collaboration and skill sharing to accelerate and sustain progress across communities.

4. Connect local farmers, especially farmers of color and female farmers, with child care centers.
5. Increase the demand for farm fresh local food, expanding markets for farmers, especially farmers of color and female farmers.
6. Showcase effective Farm to ECE models.
7. Examine and address the root causes of food and education systems inequities that lead to children's health disparities, which are disproportionately high in communities of color.
8. Discover and advocate for systemic policy and practice improvements throughout North Carolina, reducing barriers to engaging in Farm to ECE.
9. Increase and enhance children's experiences in growing, cooking, and eating healthy food in child care settings and at home.

Collaborative participants will work toward these goals and cultivate the Farm to ECE movement in their communities by:

- 1) sharing the results of their successes;
- 2) working together to sustain gains made;
- 3) exchanging new ideas for addressing challenges;
- 4) learning from others' experiments; and
- 5) using the Farm to ECE module of Go NAPSACC.

What do we mean by Racial Equity?

Racial equity in the food and education systems will have been achieved when race and other socio-economic factors no longer determine an individual's educational outcomes and access to healthy and nutritious food. This initiative has committed to addressing the root causes of food systems inequities as a means of creating viable food systems solutions that combat children's health disparities. We know that these disparities are disproportionately high in communities of color.

We have enlisted the following set of guidelines for what it means for us to operate as a network with this racial equity framework in mind:

- Long-term commitment and focus on creating a racially equitable food system
- Acceptance of non-closure as there may not be immediate solutions
- Assumption of positive intentions from each other, stakeholders and community partners
- Commitment to engaging in racial equity trainings as those opportunities are made available
- Willingness to create a "sphere of influence" that engages people in our communities and builds a cohort of racial equity practitioners

Section 2. Collaborative Components and Benefits

Features and Components of the Collaborative

The 2020 NC Farm to Early Care and Education Collaborative is a year-long process with multiple full-day, face-to-face “learning sessions.” These sessions include a kick-off meeting, three Collaborative sessions, and a racial equity training. These learning sessions will bring together teams from across the state to share experiences, network, and learn from each other’s work in Farm to ECE. In between these multi-group sessions, participants will engage in regularly scheduled conference calls and team meetings to advance their goals.

Core components of the Collaborative model include:

- Participation in a Community of Practice
- Interaction and sharing of ideas, improvements, and lessons learned
- Use of Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles (PDSAs)— this method allows for teams to create and test changes on a small scale, encouraging ideas to be tried immediately. Instead of spending more time on the abstract process of planning, more time is spent learning from ideas and action
- Use of data and other feedback to identify and address barriers to implementing best practices
- Implementation of strategies for sustaining and spreading improvements

The Collaborative project team, content experts and other consultants will provide the coaching, training, and train the trainer activities.

Benefits of Participation

- Free high-quality training, coaching, and consultation support to assist with implementing Farm to ECE with a racial equity lens
- Technical assistance on Go NAPSACC’s Farm to ECE module
- Access to a team of content experts for in-depth understanding of health and nutrition best practices as well as racially equitable food systems work
- Support in developing a sustainability plan for Farm to ECE gains achieved
- A \$500.00 stipend paid to each core team member to support participation—can be used to cover costs of participation such as child care, substitute teachers, or travel to sessions, and will be provided incrementally based on continued involvement in face-to-face sessions, team meetings, and conference calls
- A \$600 mini-grant will be offered to each child care site in addition to the stipend to perform any variation of the following on-site activities:
 - Update kitchen infrastructure for processing fresh food
 - Develop new or upgrade existing garden infrastructure
 - Off-set fresh food purchasing while implementing Farm to ECE procurement strategies

- A \$2,000 stipend will be offered to each Lead Agency for TA time spent organizing their team, providing coaching to child care sites, and facilitating the monthly team meetings.
- A Food Literacy Kit, a culturally appropriate resource toolbox for storytelling, given to each child care site and Lead Agency office
- Selected Farm to ECE curriculum, promotional materials, and parent engagement tools
- Direct Technical Assistance in procuring local produce for meals and snacks
- Lunch during the full day, face-to-face sessions and trainings

Resources, Curriculum, and Training

Selected trainings and resources available for Farm to ECE Collaborative team members:

Racial Equity

- Racial equity and the food system
- Food literacy and gardening program (based on Every Child Ready to Read) on culturally appropriate storytelling on food and foodways

Farm to ECE Resources + Curriculum

- Using the Go NAPSACC Farm to ECE Module
- Integrating edible gardens, classroom cooking, taste tests, and farm field trips/farmer visits into curriculum
- Maintaining and producing food using on-site edible gardens
- Designing an outdoor classroom
- Parent & community engagement around Farm to ECE
- Aligning suggested Farm to ECE activities with the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)

Local Food Purchasing

- Purchasing local food through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Training about successful local food purchasing models and assistance identifying the right model for each center
- Incorporating fresh, local produce into meals and snacks and learning about seasonality of fruits and vegetables

Section 3. Team Composition

Establishing a carefully selected Collaborative Team at the beginning of the project is key to achieving and sustaining goals. County teams opting into the Farm to ECE Collaborative will be passionate about providing fresh, healthy, local foods directly to children by incorporating them into meals and snacks, taste tests, lessons, farmer visits, cooking, gardening, community outreach efforts, and child care center culture. All team members must be open to learning from others, experimenting and making adjustments along the way, and testing out new ideas! Described below, each team will consist of at least one child care site, the Lead Agency, and Cooperative Extension and/or an entity representing local agriculture.

The Core Collaborative Team members must include (those that attend the face-to-face Learning Sessions):

At least 2 staff from the Lead Agency:

- Executive Director, Lead Staff, and/or Program Director
- At least one Technical Assistance Specialist

At least 1 person representing local agriculture from any of the following entities:

- Agriculture Agent from local Cooperative Extension office
- Farm Bureau
- Non-profit organization working with local growers
- Farmer

At least 2 representatives from the Child Care Site:

- Director/Owner
- At least one other team member who may include a teacher and/or a cook

1 Cooperative Extension Agent (Optional but Highly Encouraged):

- Family & Consumer Sciences Agent (for help with nutrition education, taste tests, cooking skills, menu planning)
- Horticulture Agent (for help with gardening)

The Extended Collaborative Team members can include (those that only attend the face-to-face local team meetings, Learning Sessions optional):

- Parent/caregiver from participating child care sites-- highly recommended to include one on each Extended Team!
- Other key stakeholders, such as Local Food Policy Council representatives, local community leaders and government officials

All members of the **Core Collaborative Team** will:

- Remain consistent and participate for the duration of the Collaborative

- Participate in a Mid-Point Consultation site visit from the NC Farm to Early Care and Education Initiative Spring/Summer 2020
- Consider the impact of race on health outcomes when testing practices and policies, attend racial equity in the food system trainings, and plan ongoing sustained efforts to ensure racial equity in their program
- Participate in all activities, including those prior to Learning Session 1 and those in between the Learning Sessions
- Attend and actively participate in all four day-long, in-person Learning Sessions
- Attend and actively participate in monthly local team meetings to ensure continued progress in Farm to ECE goals
- Attend and actively participate in affinity group activities (webinars, meetings, phone calls, site visits, etc.) that occur between participants with the same role in their team (for example, all child care site directors will be in one affinity group)– these group activities focus on key issues, and are meant to share successes, ask questions, address challenges, and exchange ideas with other Collaborative members
- Collect and share monthly information and data to note progress, identify areas in need of improvement, and help tell their story (data tools include site-selected Go NAP SACC best practice indicators that they would like to address and action plans)
- Explore and address his/her own values, attitudes, and biases and how those impact policies, practices, and relationships with colleagues, families, children, and communities
- Own a willingness to learn about racial inequity in our food and education systems and work toward eliminating these inequities

All members of the Extended Collaborative Team will:

- Remain consistent and participate in the duration of the Collaborative
- Own a willingness to learn about racial inequity in our food system and work toward eliminating these inequities
- Attend and actively participate in monthly local team meetings to ensure continued progress in Farm to ECE goals
- Be invited to participate in trainings and Collaborative meetings throughout the year as they are available

Participating child care facilities commit to:

- Implementing small changes and sharing the results of those trials
- Hosting an information sharing visit from the NC Farm to ECE Collaborative planning team in Spring/Summer of 2020 (the Mid-Point Consultation Site Visit)
- Exploring and using culturally relevant curriculums
- Taking photos of project activities and ensuring center/home has photo release forms as needed
- Working directly with the NC Farm to ECE Local Food Purchasing team to develop and test potential models

- Receiving technical assistance from local service providers around gardening, curriculum development, and/or purchasing local food

Section 4. Key Dates

Please hold these dates, we will confirm upon acceptance into the Collaborative.

Date	Title	Details
Wed., Nov. 6, 1:00-2:00 pm	Informational Webinar #1	Join Zoom Meeting: https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/708010754 Meeting ID: 708 010 754 One tap mobile: +19292056099,,708010754# US (New York)
Fri., Nov. 8, 10:00-11:00 am	Informational Webinar #2	Join Zoom Meeting https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/775420652 Meeting ID: 775 420 652 One tap mobile: +19292056099,,775420652# US (New York)
Friday, December 6, 2019 5:00 pm	Deadline for submission of Sections 1, 2, and 3 of Application, to be completed with input from full team.	E-mail completed form to Caroline Stover (cmstover@ncsu.edu) You will receive a confirmation of receipt within one business day of submission.
Friday, December 13, 2019	Notification of acceptance into Collaborative!	
Tuesday, January 28, 2020	Statewide Farm to ECE Collaborative Kick-off!	Greensboro area, NC
Tuesday, February 25, 2020	Western Regional Racial Equity Training	Location TBD
Thursday, February 27, 2020	Eastern Regional Racial Equity Training	Location TBD
Tuesday, March 24, 2020	Learning Session 1	Eastern NC
Tuesday, May 12, 2020	Learning Session 2	Raleigh, NC
Wednesday, September 30, 2020	Learning Session 3	Statesville, NC

***If your team is unable to have a representative attend one of the two informational webinars but are interested in joining the Collaborative, please email Caroline Stover (cmstover@ncsu.edu) to set up a separate session.**