



Background

Access to affordable healthy food is a challenge for many programs that serve participants with limited incomes. Senior congregate and home-delivered meal programs and child care programs report that their food budgets limit the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables that can be purchased through existing channels. In addition to cost, concerns about storage, preparation and menu planning are some other perceived barriers to using local produce.

Project Description

In an effort to make healthy foods more affordable for senior meal and childcare programs, the Farm to Table partnership identified and developed sustainable purchasing models for fresh local produce. Models explored included direct farm to meal site purchases, CSA produce box deliveries to home and center-based childcare providers, and program-based “food-hubs” or distribution sites. The project included an education and training component for meal program providers.

The Farm to Table partners and their roles included:

- Seattle Human Services Department: Aging & Disability Services (HSD/ADS) and Youth & Family Empowerment (HSD/YFE) coordinated the project and identified senior meal and childcare programs to participate in the pilot.
- Puget Sound Food Network (PSFN), a program of the Northwest Agriculture Business Center, provided the key linkages to local farmers, recruiting farmers to participate, and building relationships.
- The Farm to Schools Program, Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA F2S), conducted assessments and made recommendations to meal program providers to improve their capacity to receive, store, and prepare more fresh produce.
- King County Housing Authority coordinated a CSA delivery pilot for home-based childcare providers in their subsidized housing communities.
- Senior meal providers participating in the pilot included: Catholic Community Services; Chicken Soup Brigade; Senior Services Community Dining; and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe.
- Thirty childcare providers, ranging from small home-based childcare centers to large multi-site center-based programs, participated in the pilot.



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What We Accomplished

Farm to Table was successful in improving access to affordable local produce for some of King County's most vulnerable citizens, providing them with the opportunity to increase their fruit and vegetable intake and improve their health. Senior meal and childcare providers and participants appreciated the quality of produce and the relationships they built with farmers, and many of them are now committed to purchasing local produce whenever possible.

Specific accomplishments include:

- Thirty childcare sites provided fresh local produce to 600 children.
- Congregate and home delivered meal providers serving 6,000 older adults increased their use of fresh local produce and incorporated more scratch cooking into their meal programs moving away from a reliance on catered or reheated processed foods.
- Recipe Bank: WSDA developed the [Washington Grown Toolkit](#), an online resource for recipes, menu samples and nutrition facts for local produce.
- Seasonal Produce Charts: WSDA/F2S developed a [produce chart](#) with nutrient analysis information to help meal programs identify what type of local produce is available throughout the year.
- Training: In addition to hands-on training sessions for pilot sites, WSDA produced a [training video](#) to help meal programs incorporate fresh local produce into their menus.
- On-line Procurement Process: PSFN trained 3 senior meal providers and one childcare provider to use a new web-based tool for Farm to Table purchases. The tool will simplify the ordering and invoicing process for both providers and farmers.
- Good Food Boxes: Modeled after a similar program in Vancouver, BC, a local childcare site serves as a food distribution hub for families. Volunteers distribute a variety of bulk produce into smaller \$5 family size bags providing an affordable and convenient way for families to access fresh local produce.



Media Coverage:

- [National Recognition of Health Champions](#), Tukwila Reporter, February 23, 2012
- Mapping Our Voices, Farm to Table Digital Stories
 - [A Matter of Taste](#), by Emma Brewster
 - [The Policy of Obesity](#), by Onika Shabazz
- [Chicken Soup Brigade Cooking Demo](#), New Day NW, King 5 TV, October 2011
- [PSFN Farm to Table Blog](#)



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- [Puget Sound Food Network Connects Locally Grown Food to Institutional Markets](#), Center for a Livable Future, June 23, 2011
- [Students Eating Up Lessons on Healthful Food](#), Seattle Times, June 16, 2011
- [Lets Move! Cities and Towns Celebrate One Year of Promoting Healthy Living, White House](#), Office Of Intergovernmental Affairs, June 10, 2011
- [From Farm to Table: Connecting Farmers with Senior Meal and Childcare Programs](#), Seniors Digest/AgeWise King County, May 2011
- [Healthy Eating, Healthy Lives](#), Muckleshoot Monthly, May 15, 2011 (p. 2, Muckleshoot Tribal Council Update)
- [Farm to Table: Bringing Healthy Food From Local Farms to Local Kids](#), Green Acre Radio, April 14, 2011

Contact:

- Website: www.agingkingcounty.org/healthy_aging.htm
- Senior Meal Programs, Maria Langlais, City of Seattle, HSD/ADS, 206-684-0651, Maria.Langlais@seattle.gov,
- Childcare Programs, Natalie Thomson, City of Seattle, HSD/YFE, 206-684-0651, Natalie.Thomson@seattle.gov
- Puget Sound Food Network, Karen Mauden, karen@psfn.org, 425-466-8722
- WSDA Farm to Schools, Shoko Kumagai, skumagai@agr.wa.gov, (206) 256-1874

