



# Arkansas Farm to School Coordinator Health Impact Assessment

## The Project

The primary objective of this Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is to learn about the potential impact of a state Farm to School (F2S) Coordinator position on the health of Arkansas public school children. Decision-making regarding the efficacy of F2S programs for impacting children's fruit and vegetable consumption, and therefore child health, in AR requires a comprehensive, structured evaluation process.

Health Impact Assessment is a rigorous, structured process for assessing the health impacts of specific proposals, projects, and plans like F2S programming and child health. This HIA is funded by the Arkansas Biosciences Institute, coordinated by Childhood Obesity Research Prevention Program at Arkansas Children's Research Institute, which serves as the state lead agency for the National Farm to School Network, and is supported by the HIA expertise of Upstream Public Health.

## HIA Goals

The goal of this project is to use the HIA process for evaluating the potential health impact on childhood obesity rates, and other nutrition related health impacts, of establishing a state Farm to School Coordinator position in Arkansas. The three objectives for achieving this goal are:

1. Develop capacity in the HIA process;
2. Establish a core of HIA expertise in Arkansas for addressing the potential health impacts of other decisions;
3. Inform and improve the planning and decision-making process around farm to school programs in Arkansas;
4. Engage external local partners who work on childhood obesity / nutrition-related conditions to help identify the linkages between farm to school and health.

## Participants and Methods

The Project Team will build an Advisory Board composed of key stakeholders with expertise and interest in Farm to School, as well as those who will be impacted by the decision. The Advisory Board will guide the development of each phase of the HIA and the final report. Technical assistance and data will be requested from various organizations, key informant interviews will be conducted with special populations, and a literature review will be conducted in order to identify the possible health impacts of a Farm to School Coordinator position in the state of Arkansas.

## Final Working Scope

Based on input from stakeholders, the Advisory Board and the Project Team, the following research questions have been identified.

1. Does F2S programming (via the Coordinator) impact *childhood obesity, overweight, and healthy weight*?
2. Will the creation of this position increase overall *fruit and vegetable consumption* in Arkansas school-aged children regardless of source?
3. Will the creation of this position increase the *number of active F2S programs* in Arkansas schools?
4. Will the F2S Coordinator position increase the *capacity of, or move barriers to, the local food value chain* to serve F2S?
5. Will the creation of this position increase the *amount of F2S procurement, nutrition education, and school garden training* available in Arkansas?
6. Would the F2S Coordinator position impact the *amount of Arkansas fruits and vegetables purchased* by schools?

## Timeline

Preliminary findings will be available in November and the final report will be ready in December.