



SECTION 18

Influence of Participating in 10 Cents on Relationships and Collaborations

10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids and Farms (10 Cents), administered by the Michigan Department of Education, matches what participating schools, districts, and early care and education centers spend on Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans with grants of up to 10 cents per meal.

This brief is part of *10 Cents a Meal 2020–2021 Evaluation Results: Expanded Eligibility Increased Impacts*.

Key Takeaways

Nearly half of all responding grantees (47%) affirmed that **10 Cents allowed them to make new connections with farmers or local food suppliers.**

63% The majority of responding grantees (63%) responded that **yes, 10 Cents allowed them to improve existing relationships** with farmers or local food suppliers.

Grantees described **positive influences** of participating in 10 Cents on farm and food suppliers:

- 41%** Increased demand for local products (41%)
- 13%** Improved relationships (13%)
- 10%** Logistics (10%)
- 9%** Communication (9%)

47%

GRANTEES MADE NEW CONNECTIONS

26%

GRANTEES COLLABORATED WITH OTHERS

About one-quarter of all responding grantees (33, 26%) **collaborated with other schools, districts, centers, institutions, or organizations to support their efforts** to purchase and serve Michigan-grown products.

In the June evaluation survey, participating food program managers (FPMs) were asked several questions related to how participation in 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan’s Kids and Farms (10 Cents) impacted farmers or local food vendors/suppliers and new collaborations with external partners and organizations.

For questions with “yes” or “no” responses, grantees who responded “yes” were then asked to provide an open-ended written description for their responses. For analysis, open-ended responses from FPMs were categorized by themes.¹

Of the 127 grantees that took the June survey, 126 responded to the question, “Has participation in 10 Cents allowed you to make connections with new farmers or local food vendors/suppliers?” (99% response rate). Nearly half of all responding grantees affirmed that 10 Cents allowed them to make new connections with farmers or local food suppliers (59 grantees, 47%). Of these grantees, 50 provided written responses. Response themes included making new connections with food suppliers and farmers generally (18 responses), with some food suppliers and farmers specified by name (32 responses). Almost one-quarter of specified responses (13 responses) were about Cherry Capital Foods, a food hub that distributes Michigan-grown products to Michigan customers, including many 10 Cents grantees.

Next, 126 out of 127 grantees responded to the question, “Has participation in 10 Cents allowed you to improve existing relationships with farmers or local food vendors/suppliers?” (99% response rate). The majority of responding grantees responded “yes,” that 10 Cents allowed them to improve existing relationships with farmers or local food suppliers (79 grantees, 63% of all grantees). Of these, 77 provided written responses. Almost one-third of their responses were about making new, positive connections with (unspecified) suppliers and farmers (28 responses, 36%). The remaining responses from FPMs focused on different farmers and food suppliers: 17 responses (22%) named Cherry Capital Foods and nine responses (12%) specified Gordon Food Service.

There were 76 grantees who responded to the question, “In what ways has your participation in 10 Cents influenced farms, distributors, processors or other food businesses or service providers to better meet your district’s food service needs?” (60% response rate). Some grantees described positive influences on the farms and food suppliers, including increased demand for local products (41% of responses), improved relationships (13% of responses), improved logistics (10% of responses), and improved communication (9% of responses). Grantees also addressed challenges or barriers related to local food purchasing, including the COVID-19 pandemic (15% of responses), lack of local vendors (5% of responses), lack of frozen or minimally processed product options (3% of responses), seasonality of local agricultural products (3% of responses), and a lack of information about local products from vendors (1% of responses).

Finally, 125 grantees responded to the question, “Did you collaborate with any other schools, districts, centers, institutions, or organizations to support your efforts to purchase and serve Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans?” (98% response rate). About one-quarter of all responding grantees reported collaborations with other schools, districts, centers, institutions, or organizations to support their efforts (33 grantees, 26% of all grantees). Of these grantees, 13 collaborated with two partners (including schools, centers, institutions, or organizations) and four grantees collaborated with three or more such partners.

¹ See [Technical Notes](#) in the full report for a detailed explanation of open-text written response analysis.

Response Highlights

NEW CONNECTIONS



[We] got to get to know a local farmer and build a positive relationship by using their product to feed the students better items and better quality. [We] also got to help the farmer by promoting their products to the community.



We are now working with Cherry Capital Foods for the first time and look forward to continue to be able to purchase Michigan frozen produce throughout the school year for years to come. We are also working with a local hydroponic lettuce farmer...and have already made plans to continue purchasing with them for the 2021/2022 school year.



I have worked to develop new relationships with farmers and vendors that would have otherwise never considered schools as a viable partner. We have been able to work through how to make a relationship be beneficial for both parties.

IMPROVED EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS



We have been able to get more produce from our vendors and they are telling others about our program, and we are modeling using fresh produce for others.



We have been able to reconnect with Cherry Capital [Foods] after a very long hiatus, and it has been wonderful getting Michigan-grown things of this variety again!



Our relationship/communication has improved with Gordon Food Service. Since so many schools are now participating in this program, they have more and more Michigan produce options to choose from, and they are very willing to help work with us in finding what is best for our organization.

POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON FARMS AND FOOD SUPPLIERS



I think the big thing is the distributors. They are carrying more Michigan products and see it as a necessity to be competitive.



Many farmers have been helpful by letting us order bulk quantities or smaller quantities by the pound.



[Vendors] have created an online ordering system, and it is very user-friendly now. They have email reminders to order and feature products.

CHALLENGES TO PURCHASING LOCAL FOODS



With limited Michigan products for our current service model, we have not been able to use as many products as hoped...Based on that, we hope to increase our relationships with state producers.



Due to the pandemic and changing school schedules, we have not been able to participate as we would like to.



Unfortunately, there are no local farmers that we can order from. All our local spend is from GFS [Gordon Food Service].



...more individually packaged items would be wonderful to meet the needs of the grab-and-go.



The selection is still limited during the fall/winter months...



[Distributors] need to have a category or a thumbnail on online ordering that specifically outlines all the local products.

Evaluation of 10 Cents is led by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS). The work presented here is part of *10 Cents a Meal 2020–2021 Evaluation Results: Expanded Eligibility Increased Impacts* by Colleen Matts and Megan McManus of CRFS and was generously funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and 10 Cents administrative funds for partner organizations.

To learn more, visit tencentsmichigan.org, foodsystems.msu.edu/10-cents-a-meal, and mifarmtoschool.msu.edu.

