Leveraging Local Food Incentive Policy to Benefit Children and Producers: Lessons from the D.C. Healthy Tots Act
Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

**Background:** The Washington, D.C. Healthy Tots Act (HTA) is a comprehensive bill that promotes increased participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and offers increased reimbursement for purchasing local foods (Local5) in early care and education (ECE) settings. The HTA is one of the first, and remains one of the few, local reimbursement incentive policies that specifically targets the ECE setting. Previous literature illustrates local incentive policies in K-12 offer multi-sectoral benefits, including economic benefits to local producers and local food systems. However, few studies have investigated the impact of local purchasing in the ECE setting on producers and food systems stakeholders, and no studies have assessed local food incentive policy in the ECE setting. As the number of state and municipal local incentive policies continues to grow, evaluation of these policies is vital to inform future policy development and implementation.

The research in this report examines how the HTA influences ECE site local food purchasing practices and impacts local food intermediaries and local producers, with a focus on impact for low-income children and children of color as well as Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) producers. Because educational and agricultural policy has historically discriminated against and has had disproportionately negative impacts and limited benefit to BIPOC communities, targeted assessment of policy is necessary to identify unintended consequences and inequities. This research will inform continued development of health policies and local food procurement policies that advance health, educational and economic equity in D.C. and across the nation.

**Methods:** Researchers used a mixed methods approach to assess implementation and impacts of the HTA Local5. Key HTA partners, including D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the state CACFP and HTA implementing agency, and FRESHFARM, a local food aggregator and partner in HTA Local5 implementation, informed the data collection and methodology process and agreed to contribute data to the evaluation. Data collection methods included collation and analysis of secondary data collected by D.C. OSSE and FRESHFARM. Secondary data collection was supplemented by qualitative and quantitative primary data collection. Primary data collection included a survey of CACFP participating ECE sites (including HTA Local5 participating and non-participating sites) and a series of semi-structured interviews with key HTA Local5 implementing organizations (D.C. OSSE and FRESHFARM) and relevant producer and food system stakeholders, as recommended by key project partners.
Findings: When it comes to the HTA’s impact on local food producers and food systems stakeholders, the unique aggregation and distribution model developed by FRESHFARM was vital for reducing barriers to participation for both producers and ECE sites. FRESHFARM received a grant through HTA to support development of the model, underscoring the importance of investing in local food systems infrastructures through local food incentive bills. Through the model, producers were able to sell their products wholesale to FRESHFARM and did not have to manage individual orders from or deliveries to ECE sites. FRESHFARM was also able to offer family CSA boxes at participating ECE sites, increasing the total volume of sales to each site and increasing volume demand for local producers. Producers were, overall, enthusiastic about their product going to children and families, but did acknowledge logistical limitations would make it difficult to sell to individual ECE sites without intermediary support. And, while more data is needed on ECE site local food procurement reach to BIPOC producers, key stakeholders and producers did acknowledge that the policy does not distinctly benefit BIPOC producers and changes in policy language and implementation are needed to support equitable reach to producers.

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Lack of awareness of Local5, administrative burden, and insufficient reimbursement were identified as barriers to participation in Local5 for ECE providers. Policy shifts, including increasing the reimbursement incentive and leveraging an incentive model that reduces paperwork and reporting, may be necessary to reduce barriers. In the short-term, expanding outreach and technical assistance for Local5 reimbursement claims could help increase participation under the existing model. Importantly, general barriers to purchasing and serving local food, including finding suppliers/farmers, accessing quality product, and knowing how to order, can all be overcome with the support of a third party aggregator like FRESHFARM.

The Local5 reimbursement may start to overcome the barrier of cost of local items, but as mentioned, five cents is insufficient to both cover cost and time of administrative reporting. A key limitation of comprehensively understanding reach and participation is lack of tracking and evaluation built into the policy implementation. Though CACFP in D.C. reaches large proportions of BIPOC families and children eligible for free- and reduced-price meals, a lack of disaggregated data makes it difficult to verify equitable reach of Local5 benefits.

Based on evaluation findings, researchers have developed a set of key policy and practice recommendations to drive development of equitable and impactful local incentive policies in ECE settings.
Key Policy and Practice Recommendations for Local Incentive Policy in ECE Settings

- Offer incentives sufficient to cover food and administrative costs and motivate behavior change.
- Prioritize reimbursement models that reduce paperwork and reporting requirements (e.g., lump sum payments, non-competitive grants).
- Include language and funding in legislation for outreach/promotion that is specific to the interests and priorities of the ECE community.
- Include language and funding in legislation for monitoring and evaluation. This may include new reporting systems and tracking mechanisms.
- Center racial equity in policy development and implementation. This includes prioritizing purchasing from BIPOC producers through “set asides” or other ways to transfer wealth (e.g., infrastructure, staff, time, land lease support) to BIPOC producers and requiring disaggregation of participation and outcome data by race.
- Target funding for third party aggregators and partners to facilitate purchasing and build more robust community food systems and relationships across ECEs and producers.
- Build in support for family engagement opportunities, such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or family farm share, which subsequently create additional market opportunities for producers.
Introduction

Farm to early care and education (farm to ECE) incorporates local food purchasing, on-site gardens, and food, nutrition and agriculture education into ECE settings to advance health and well-being, engage families and communities and enhance overall ECE quality. Farm to ECE initiatives advance health equity by increasing access to healthy local foods and creating opportunities for healthy food choices for children, families, and caregivers. These initiatives offer critical early exposure to new, healthy foods, influencing life-long taste preferences and food acceptance, thus affecting weight and health for a lifetime. There is limited data specific to farm to ECE programs impact on local food producers and food systems; however, data from the K-12 sector points to abundant opportunity for local purchasing to support producers and the local community food system. Farm to school studies have demonstrated that local purchasing can provide important long-term revenue streams for local agricultural producers, increase market diversification and economic growth opportunities for local farmers, and keep more food dollars in the local community.

The research in this report examines how Washington, D.C.’s Healthy Tots Act (HTA)—the first fiscally supported farm to ECE policy—influences ECE site local food purchasing practices and impacts local food intermediaries and local producers. Specifically, this report focuses on HTA impact on low-income children and children of color as well as Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) producers. Because educational and agricultural policy has historically discriminated against and has had disproportionately negative impacts and limited benefit to BIPOC communities, targeted assessment of policy is necessary to identify unintended consequences and inequities. This research will inform continued development of health policies and local food procurement policies that advance health, educational and economic equity in D.C. and across the nation.
Background

The Healthy Tots Act and Child and Adult Care Food Program

Washington, D.C.’s HTA, passed in 2014, promotes increased participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and offers increased reimbursement for purchasing local foods (Local5) in early care and education (ECE) settings. The CACFP is a federally funded child nutrition program that provides reimbursement to ECE providers for meals and snacks provided to children in their care. The CACFP is a wide-reaching program and a vital healthy food access point for low-income children. In fiscal year 2019, over 5 million CACFP meals were served in D.C., reaching over 30,000 children daily.9,10 Because of the reach of CACFP, the HTA presents opportunity to advance equitable access to local, nutritious food: nearly 81 percent of children reached by CACFP at D.C. ECE sites identify as Black, and 11 percent identify as Hispanic/Latino.11 These racial segments have higher rates of food insecurity and diet-related diseases (such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and type II diabetes).12,13 Increasing meal quality and opportunities for food-related education by integrating farm to ECE in CACFP addresses both immediate nutrition needs and long-term health behaviors, particularly for children in communities affected by historic and systemic oppression.

Washington, D.C.’s Healthy Tots Act

Modeled on Washington, D.C.’s Healthy Schools Act (HSA) of 2010, the HTA was developed with input and collaboration from multiple stakeholders including government representatives, nonprofits, and childcare providers. The HTA is composed of several different statute components. It expands participation in the CACFP by requiring sites to participate if more than 50 percent of enrolled children are eligible for the childcare subsidy, a program that helps families under a certain income threshold pay for childcare. For all CACFP participating sites, the HTA adds an automatic increased reimbursement for each meal served (10 cents per meal). Additionally, the HTA provides sites with reimbursements for an additional meal or snack served to children in a full day of care (“Full Day4”). It also includes three optional components to support farm to ECE:

- Higher reimbursement for local foods served in CACFP meals (“Local5” reimbursement)
- Development of Healthy Tots Wellness Guidelines for ECE sites, which include farm to ECE components
- Grant opportunities for gardening and nutrition education activities

The “Local5” reimbursement provides an additional five-cent reimbursement for each lunch or supper that includes an unprocessed locally grown or raised meal component. Local is defined as grown or processed within the seven state region around D.C., including Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. Sites “opt-in” to Local5 by submitting documentation along with their standard CACFP reporting.
The Healthy Tots Wellness Guidelines are a comprehensive list of best practices for healthier ECE environments that include activities related to farm to ECE such as gardening, food education, and serving local and seasonal foods. The D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) provides tools, including a self-assessment, to support implementation of these best practices in ECE settings.

The Healthy Tots Act Wellness Grant Program is a competitive grant program for organizations that provide technical assistance to CACFP participating sites to implement health and wellness initiatives, including gardening and farm to ECE. Organizations may receive up to $100,000 through the grant program (awarded on an annual basis) to support ECE sites to begin or expand health and wellness initiatives.

**Farm to ECE and Local Producers**

While there is no information about the economic impact for producers selling to ECE sites specifically, the farm to school data that does exist points to significant economic potential for local producers. According to the 2019 USDA Farm to School Census, 83 percent of school food authority (SFA)—the entity or person responsible for managing school food service operations—respondents in D.C. reported participating in farm to school activities in the 2018-2019 school year including local procurement, school gardens and food and agriculture education. Notably, in the 2018-19 school year, $897,543 was invested in local food in D.C. with the average D.C. SFA spending 24 percent of their budget on local products, indicating substantial market potential for local producers. According to the 2017 USDA Agriculture Census, there are 314,982 active producers in the seven-state region around D.C. While nearly 98 percent of these producers identify as white, there is opportunity for ECE sites to target their purchasing power through Local5 toward the nearly three percent of local BIPOC producers. More data is needed on the economic impact of institutional procurement on BIPOC producers.
Local Food Incentive Policy for Schools and ECE

Supported by the documented multisectoral benefits of farm to school and ECE, the number of farm to school and ECE supportive policies continues to grow. Between 2002 and 2020, 61 state-level local food procurement incentive bills for schools or early care sites were introduced and 22 passed. Like the HTA, all these local procurement incentives are designed to encourage, or incentivize, school buyers to purchase local food products and fall under one of several main funding mechanisms and structures:

- A matching reimbursement up to a certain amount per student per meal for those who win competitive grants
- Non-competitive reimbursement grants
- An additional reimbursement issued during each claim period, as in the HTA
- Increased reimbursement when schools reach a threshold percent of purchases
- Lump-sum reimbursement upon application

While local procurement policies inherently impact local producers, farm to school policies that provide additional targeted support for producers or intermediaries (such as training, technical assistance, business planning, or infrastructure grants)—and that specifically aim to support BIPOC producers—are very limited. In 2018, however, some HTA funding was awarded to a local food intermediary, FRESHFARM, to facilitate direct deliveries of local produce, purchased through the Local5 incentive, to ECE sites.

HTA is one of the few policies that prioritizes ECE and also includes state funding for local food purchasing. Similar legislation in Michigan (10 Cents a Meal for Michigan’s Kids and Farms) and Oregon (Farm to School Grant Program) have been evaluated with positive results, including increases in access to locally grown, nutritious foods, particularly in low-income settings. Both the Michigan and Oregon programs have recently expanded to include CACFP, though data is not yet available on CACFP participation. Even with rapid growth in supportive farm to school policies and promising preliminary data, research assessing impacts of these policies is limited and no known studies assess the impact of this type of legislation on ECE site local food purchasing practices and local food system stakeholders (local intermediaries and producers).

States and jurisdictions continue to seek cost-effective ways to increase the quality of ECE, support family and community food security, and close gaps in health and education inequity, while supporting local producers and strengthening local economies. This research supports advances and priorities in ECE and addresses a significant gap in knowledge about the design and effectiveness of farm to ECE policies. This knowledge will help demonstrate the value of such policies and improve subsequent policy design and implementation.
Methodology

We used a mixed methods approach to assess the implementation and impacts of the HTA Local5 reimbursement, centered around three key research questions (Table 1). As key partners in the project and process, D.C. OSSE, the state CACFP and HTA implementing agency, and FRESHFARM (formerly known as Community Foodworks), a local food aggregator and partner in HTA Local5 implementation, informed the data collection and methodology process and contributed data to the evaluation. Data collection methods included collation and analysis of secondary data collected by D.C. OSSE and FRESHFARM. Secondary data collection was supplemented by qualitative and quantitative primary data collection. Primary data collection included a survey of CACFP participating ECE sites (including HTA Local5 participating and non-participating sites) and a series of semi-structured interviews with key HTA Local5 implementing organizations (D.C. OSSE and FRESHFARM) and relevant producer and food system stakeholders, as recommended by key project partners.

Table 1. Key Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Collection Method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How has the HTA local food reimbursement incentive (Local5) impacted local food system stakeholders (including local producers and intermediaries)?</td>
<td>Local food system partners; ECE providers</td>
<td>FRESHFARM data collection; Implementation and Food System Stakeholder Interviews; ECE Provider Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How has the HTA Local5 influenced ECE providers local food serving purchasing practices?</td>
<td>ECE providers; D.C. OSSE</td>
<td>ECE Provider Survey; D.C. OSSE Data Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the potential for HTA Local5 impact in the local food economy and what are the barriers to achieving the full potential impact?</td>
<td>D.C. OSSE; FRESHFARM; ECE provider reports; Local food system partners</td>
<td>FRESHFARM data collection; OSSE Data Report; Implementation and Food System Stakeholder Interviews</td>
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HTA: Healthy Tots Act; ECE: Early Care and Education; OSSE: Office of the State Superintendent of Education

Key research questions focused on both current HTA impact on local food system stakeholders (including local producers and intermediaries) and purchasing practices of ECE providers as well as potential impact of the HTA on the local food economy. Researchers also aimed to examine how HTA participation and reach differed for ECE sites serving BIPOC children or children from low-income families and for BIPOC producers. Exploring these research questions identified HTA impact on ECE providers’ purchasing practices and local producers and provided insight on key resources and drivers for successful and equitable local procurement incentive policy implementation.
Primary Data: ECE Provider Surveys

For the ECE provider survey, we obtained two lists that we used to distribute the survey: a list of licensed childcare providers in the D.C. area and a list from D.C. OSSE with contact information for CACFP participating ECE sites located in Washington, D.C. After combining and deduplicating the two lists, we distributed the survey via email in April and May 2021 to 483 contacts, of which five email addresses were no longer valid. We programmed the ECE provider survey using REDCap and estimate it took participants approximately 20 minutes to complete. Initially, the survey incentive offered to participants was being entered into a random drawing to win a food and nutrition education curriculum kit; after seeing low response rates, we offered participants entry into a random drawing to win one of five $50 Amazon gift cards as an incentive for completing the survey. We received 48 complete or partial responses to the survey.

See “Appendix A. Early Care and Education Provider Survey” on page 34 to review the survey questions.

Primary Data: Key Stakeholder Interviews

We interviewed five implementation partners who were involved with different components of the development and implementation of the HTA and three producers whose products were included in Local5 meals and snacks at ECE sites. Researchers used a semi-structured interview protocol to explore stakeholders experience with and perspectives of the HTA, specifically ECE provider and producer impacts of the Local5 component. Interview protocol included questions designed to assess policy fit and implementation across racial and cultural backgrounds, including opportunities for inclusion of culturally-relevant foods and food-related activities. Questions also include assessment of family food access and community partnerships that support sustained healthy, local food access for sites and families.

See “Appendix B. Healthy Tots Act Key Stakeholder Semi-Structured Interview Guide” on page 38 to review the Interview Guide.

Secondary Data: D.C. OSSE and FRESHFARM

FRESHFARM provided data to better understand the role of local food intermediaries and local producers in the implementation of the HTA and Local5. This data (2017-2019) included the number of childcare centers FRESHFARM worked with and the number of children attending each center; the number of deliveries each center received per year and the total number of produce servings delivered to each center; the number of times each produce variety was delivered to childcare centers each week for the Local5 program; and the total dollars of produce purchased by FRESHFARM from local farms specifically for ECE use. Demographic data was not available for participating farmers.

D.C. OSSE provided data to help us better understand to what extent ECE sites are participating in the Local5 component of the HTA. The data provided were child development facility level for 2018 and 2019. Variables included facility name, participation in Local5, total enrollment, race and ethnicity (2018 only), and numbers of free-, reduced-price, and paid meal children (2019 only). D.C. OSSE also provided sponsor-level invoice amounts for the HTA for 2018-2020.
Analysis Methods

Our analysis aimed to determine the reach of the HTA, if and how the HTA has impacted local food systems stakeholders and producers, explore strengths and limitations of the policy and identify policy and practice recommendations for future policy development and implementation. When we were able, we disaggregated information by child race/ethnicity and free- and reduced-price meal status to better understand the opportunities and barriers that may be specific to ECE sites serving low-income children and children of color. Our analysis aimed to provide insight on if and how the HTA is facilitating farm to ECE implementation for settings serving low-income children and children of color and if farm to ECE is positively and equitably impacting local food system stakeholders, including intermediaries and BIPOC producers.

For the qualitative analysis, the research team identified themes using a grounded theory approach within and across the implementation partners and producers. We then linked the themes to the research questions. Grounded theory is a systematic methodology that begins with a research question and/or the collection of qualitative data. During the analysis, the research team tagged repeated ideas, concepts, or elements that emerged from the data with codes. Researchers then grouped the codes into concepts and themes. For analysis of the survey data, we report summary statistics on serving foods from scratch, types of local products served, barriers to accessing Local5, barriers to procurement, and changes in local food purchases.

We also collated and analyzed secondary data collected by the D.C. OSSE and FRESHFARM. For both of these data sets, we provided summary statistics of the participating sites and providers.

These findings will aid researchers in making recommendations for both child nutrition and local economic development policy that meaningfully addresses drivers of farm viability and health equity, including children and family access to healthier foods as well as farmer access to intermediary and direct to ECE markets.
Challenges and Limitations

COVID-19 impacted the overall HTA evaluation timeline as well as outreach efforts to key stakeholders for interviews, data collection from D.C. OSSE and FRESHFARM and the ECE provider survey response rate. We suspect that many ECE sites may be operating with a reduced number of children and staff, and some may be permanently closed due to COVID-19 impacts.20,21 As of September 2020, records show that thousands of child care centers in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia had to permanently close.22 It is important to note that amid the COVID-19 pandemic, overall CACFP participation fell dramatically, with just half as many meals served in fiscal year 2020 as in fiscal year 2019.9 Producer capacity and models also transitioned dramatically during this time. For that reason, research questions and data collection focused on practices and implementation prior to the spring of 2020 to better understand policy implications absent of COVID-19 pandemic impacts. Additionally, available CACFP participation data (including Local5 specific reimbursement numbers, race/ethnicity data, and free- and reduced- meal eligibility rates) was incomplete, limiting the potential quantitative analysis. Data is also not available on participating producer demographics. The available data is used to supplement the more robust qualitative data available through stakeholder interviews.
Interview Findings

Implementation Partners

We interviewed five implementation partners who were involved with different components of the development and implementation of the HTA. Interviewees included two representatives from D.C. OSSE, each working in different positions related to HTA implementation at the state agency; two representatives from FRESHFARM supporting HTA Local5 programming; and one former ECE provider who was integral to development of HTA policy and one of the original participants.

Successes related to local food and local food purchases

Implementation partners described several positive outcomes of the HTA legislation related to local food purchases: bringing together organizations and entities across the food sector (e.g., ECE sites, local food intermediaries, CACFP administering agency) around local food, involving families and community members in the HTA implementation process, creating a successful distribution model for local food, and crafting the HTA legislation to better serve community members.

In implementing the HTA, many organizations worked collaboratively around the issue of local food, including developing coalitions that diversify organizational representation in the farm to ECE space and fostering working relationships among organizations that were previously competitors.

I think it kind of gave a reason for the local food community to come together. In the past it wasn’t a priority and wasn’t seen as feasible and mutually beneficial – the HTA launched those conversations. It helped drill down why the childcare centers weren’t able to access local foods and use the food to prepare, store, all those things and bring up what kind of funding we need in place to address those. And the conversations were all due to the HTA. I think we’ve been able to scale pretty nicely... I see a lot of people commit together that a year ago may not have wanted to come together because they compete for funding, but the landscape has shifted.

Implementation partners also noted that a success of the legislation was the ability to bring in members of the community to be engaged with local food work. One implementation partner’s organization, FRESHFARM, employed two parent caregivers as representatives for the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, a role which includes managing the CSA pick-up site and being a community food educator. Another implementation partner noted that FRESHFARM paid people from the community to serve as promoters of the program which creates trust in the program at the community level.

FRESHFARM did start a community program associate program. That means they bring on people from the neighborhood to serve as program promoters and help with program administration as well... Community program associates are tasked with going to the sites and... answering questions about challenges [families] are having. FRESHFARM pays them a stipend to serve as a local voice of the program.
The “take-home” CSA model offered to parents and providers in parallel with the local food offering at ECE sites was particularly beneficial for multiple stakeholders, including families, providers, and producers.

**Offering the market share as a take-home option to both parents and staff of the ECEs that we work with has encouraged product familiarity for the children that are now being served local produce items in school and at home. It has also facilitated interest from ECEs who have staff now able to actually try out the produce we are distributing, rather than just receiving and serving it to the children. For ECEs that we work with who have smaller enrollment (10 kids or less) it also really helps boost the local sourcing from our program when we are delivering food for 10 families to these ECEs each week, instead of just food for 10 children.**

Implementation partners mentioned another success was leveraging the power of the farmers markets in proximity to the D.C., Maryland, Virginia (DMV) areas. Having points of aggregation and distribution let many ECE sites participate and created a diverse offering of local food. Farmers markets also allowed farmers to supply children with produce, a motivating factor for participation.

**Having so many early learning centers (ELCs) allowed us to purchase more from local farms. The aggregation model was vital to making it work for both sides. Working with ELCs, they are open to trying new produce items – they weren’t very restrictive, really just asking for heads up so they could have time to prepare. This gave us a lot of flexibility.**

**Initially, three to four farms had to adjust their operations to serve us in a different capacity. This was a big conversation with them - they really wanted to supply kids with their produce. That resonates with producers more than really any other aspect of the program.**

Implementation partners noted that the flexibility in the legislation was a success because it allowed for the policy to better serve people in the community and cater to how organizations would be spending the grant funds.

Specific to the Full Day4 component of the policy, the legislation was tweaked to fit the needs of ECE sites: it allowed for reimbursement for all meal and snack options after seeing that reimbursement for only an additional supper did not work for many ECE sites that did not stay open for supper or that had limited staff in the evenings.

**It was useful for me to talk to community organizations that were going to implement the grant, to ask them how they could actually spend the money. Sometimes funding programs are written in a way that doesn’t make sense, so programs can’t actually spend the money, or it would take so much effort to spend it that it’s not worth it. One of the keys to success is that we had some flexibility with our legal and policy team, who were great in working with us and finding avenues to tweak the legislation – it’s a cyclical process and only happens a few times a year. Flexibility inside OSSE was important. And then actually talking to the community about how would this work for them.**
Successes for ECE sites and producers
Implementation partners stated that ECE sites have increased local food purchasing since the initiation of the HTA policy. Additionally, FRESHFARM is appealing to ECE sites because it has a low barrier to participation and is available to everyone at the site, unlike other community food resources such as SNAP or WIC which have qualifiers for participation.

I’m going to say yes, we know there were facilities that were [purchasing local food] already and now they’re able to be reimbursed or maybe they’ve expanded, and there’s some that maybe they weren’t purposely making it a continuous part of their purchasing. But it has definitely increased, and the definition of what we mean by local has increased too. When I first started having training about it, people thought it meant organic, so just little things like that.

One implementation partner noted that the HTA allows for professional development of staff and that they are working to incorporate more professional development programming to create better outcomes for staff and students.

One of the things outlined in the HTA – extended to professional development. For childcare centers where the staff were well and invested in their own outcomes, you saw better outcomes. We wanted to develop what staff wellness looks like. We saw those areas of the grant where grantees were working with staff on their own wellness – interest skyrocketed. We’re still figuring out what programming is going to look like this year in terms of engaging. We recognize this is a time to shift focus onto caregivers – how they are will directly impact how the children are.

For producers, implementation partners stated that working with FRESHFARM offers producers an additional market to distribute their product, and as the number of ECE sites participating in HTA increases, the more opportunities there will be for producers to participate and supply ECE sites with local food. Similarly, it gives farmers a market for their processing grade peaches, tomatoes, and apples, among other types of produce. Some ECE centers also provided families with vouchers to go to the farmers market.

I know it’s an extra stream of income or a new customer. I do know during the pandemic at the beginning, March through May, everything was shifting and FRESHFARM did have produce they needed to distribute because of places closing and they were able to reach out to the childcare facilities and distribute some of those foods.
Barriers for ECE sites

Implementation partners noted that a barrier for ECE sites in serving local foods is they do not have the capacity to incorporate procurement and preparation of local foods into their schedules. A variety of factors contribute to this barrier, including lack of familiarity about the produce provided and how to use the items, insufficient kitchen infrastructure, nuance in understanding what type of produce works for young children and what does not work for them, and seasonal considerations in types of local produce that are available and ready to eat for ECE sites (e.g., potatoes, onions, and squash throughout the winter).

There’s nuance - big fan of kale salad but kale is a little rough for ages five and under; but baby kale is softer and good to share with farmers (bagged baby kale vs. bunched kale). Small ping-pong red radishes are great for kids but winter radishes are a little too spicy.

Lack of knowledge around how to identify local foods or what to even think about. How to identify seasonal and what is a local item. Another thing that came up was ability to process foods. If it’s like a big sweet potato or squash, centers might not have that great of knives or the ability to process it.

In addition to the smaller enrollment numbers of ECE sites making it more difficult to buy local food at a volume to make it cost effective, implementation partners also mentioned that the small size of ECE sites makes it difficult for them to have time and capacity to arrange for procuring local food.

Another barrier is time. If they are purchasing food from a Sysco or going to BJ’s for bulk purchases, going to the farmers market adds to their schedule. That’s a burden for smaller facilities in particular, where they’re the director and cook. Cost was a barrier, but at the end of the day that wasn’t the biggest barrier. I think it was more access, time, and the processing.

Implementation partners also noted that even if an ECE site is increasing their use of local food, they may not have used the Local5 reimbursement.

They have told us they don’t want to put in more work claiming Local5 because the amount of money isn’t enough to justify them processing more paperwork. Because of that the Local5 reimbursement is low... Can we make them see that it’s worthwhile to do this extra step, or do we give it to them automatically?

Food system and producer barriers

Implementation partners discussed several barriers related to the food system and producers. For producers, selling to ECE sites is an expensive process, particularly if producers do not yet have connections with ECE sites. The transportation of delicate items is also difficult. FRESHFARM struggled with storing and transporting strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries since some items need to stay fresh over the weekend or for several days. Timing of delivery is also dictated by the timing of area farmers markets.
Another barrier mentioned was the small quantities that ECE sites need and that not all food items work for young children (e.g., cherries are a choking hazard).

We heard from the supplier community that I’d love to help but they need such small quantities that it doesn’t really make sense. With the CACFP meal pattern, even if they’re serving 50 kids, the portion size is so small that I’ll tell them to come to the market, it doesn’t make sense for me to make this a special drop off.

Administrative barriers

One administrative barrier cited by implementation partners was the narrow scope of the HTA legislation language in how it frames its definition of “healthy” for children and the types of activities that can be included under this definition.

The legislation in and of itself can be really limiting... they missed a lot of opportunities to offer resources and programs that really support other aspects of health – especially the social, emotional, mental health, community supports. HTA provided a specific and narrow definition of what a healthy tot is and that limits what we do – it has to go toward gardening, getting local apples in the classroom, but it can’t provide a mental health consultant for families in the middle of COVID.

The fiscal benefits of claiming Local5 is reduced when CACFP administration for sponsored ECE sites is managed by third party organizations. For sponsored ECE sites, the food purchasing and reimbursement process is managed by an outside organization (and not the individual ECE provider) and thus gets a portion of the reimbursement. D.C. OSSE is currently considering how to address this barrier. In addition, the lack of money set aside to evaluate the HTA policy was cited as another barrier.

To get the Local5 reimbursement, sites have to provide proof they are utilizing local food. We have tried to make it as simple as possible. A lot of these sites are sponsored sites, meaning the CACFP administration of the program – they don’t do it in-house, they do it with an organization that’s tasked with it. A lot of the childcare centers don’t have the capacity, so it’s great, but the downside is they can take a cut, about 10% of the total claim meals in order to pay their admin fees.
The future of HTA and Local5

Some implementation partners had concerns about program sustainability of the HTA and Local5, noting that D.C. OSSE has not engaged in conversations about continuing the work after the HTA expires. Other implementation partners felt confident that D.C. OSSE is committed to the program because they are engaged in the grant program and are actively making connections in communities. All implementation partners had thoughts on changes for the HTA and Local5 to continue operating successfully.

Implementation partners noted that trust and relationship building with communities and ECE sites was important for future success of the program, but that this is a process that takes time. They suggested that the process of building trust should include engaging with CACFP specialists on the front line to ensure their understanding of the importance and value of their work for ECE sites.

I think, taking a step back, listening to my CACFP specialists because they are the front line on this internally, training them better on it, making sure they have a full understanding of the concept and the program. We are health and wellness so most people on our team just eat healthy and go to the farmers market anyway, so there is that baseline understanding, but helping them understand it from the childcare facility perspective and helping them understand the work that’s going into it from our partners would be great.

Implementation partners also suggested cultivating partnerships, scaling up family CSAs, and private funding partners to ensure the HTA and Local5 can continue. They mentioned this would also require encouraging providers to be more dedicated to broader farm to school values and goals.

It would be fantastic if every institution was taking advantage of Local5. I do think that would be possible... But we definitely cannot do it without external partners. A group like FRESHFARM is really unique in that the approach actually fits early learning facilities. It’s going to have to be someone who understands these are the quantities they need to buy for it to make financial sense for them, they don’t have the refrigeration space to have a lot of perishable items. We definitely need more external partners but they need to be willing to tailor their offerings to this community.

Recommendations for policy language and implementation change

Implementation partners had several suggestions on ways to change the policy language and implementation process of HTA moving forward. Regarding policy development, implementation partners felt that since the HTA was modeled after the Healthy Schools Act, it could have been better adapted to the ECE setting.

If the HTA is modeled after the Healthy Schools Act, we need to ask who were the advocates that shaped the HSA and what were their interests? Early learning centers are not schools.
Furthermore, one suggestion is to have a system in place to help ECE sites get local food at a more affordable price, such as a co-op.

There have to be programs that help these places to get food at good prices, like a co-op. Or get farmers who will sell. The most important part with early childhood centers is the great majority are very small places and that makes a difference compared to schools with 200 or 400 who are buying in bulk. Distribution and getting access, that’s the biggest thing. There has to be some other way to provide support. The other part is educating people to eat local food.

Another suggestion is including educational resources on the benefits of farm to ECE and eating local foods in the legislation as part of the implementation process, as well as materials on processes that would make it easier for more ECE sites to participate.

Find money to educate people and give incentives. Sit with FRESHFARM, with the early care centers. We have to spend time educating people on the impact of local food and 0 to 5 before you can even buy local. Educating people about local food is very simple. When I give them local peaches to taste, it’s delicious – selling that part is not difficult. The local component per se is not as important as whole foods and eating well. I would have money to educate and money to incentivize.

In addition to funding for education, several implementation partners felt the current policy did not have adequate incentives, so they suggested determining what incentives would be motivating as well as increasing the incentive to motivate behavior change. This may also help alleviate the burden placed on ECE sites for the administrative work associated with getting a reimbursement.

I think one of the big mistakes in the drafting of this policy is they didn’t do a great cost analysis of local food reimbursement and how much money is needed to incentivize people to purchase food – five cents is not it. An analysis said 12 to 15 cents might make a dent. But if the sponsors were not doing the administration. I think we need to ask how much to process this paperwork and claim the reimbursement.

Diversified funding sources and use of funding was an additional area for future policy change to help it be more equitable and relevant to the needs to ECE sites.

Approaching with an equity lens: requiring a grantee to have a participant task force/council on what that professional development looks like, where the barriers actually are, where there are needs for additional funding (e.g., infrastructure).
COVID-19 impact on HTA and Local5 participation
Implementation partners agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted ECE sites and all their operations, including the implementation of the HTA. Among sites that stayed open, the number of children enrolled decreased, and many grantees had to use a virtual platform for education.

Food pickup and distribution was a focus for many sites and partner organizations, although one implementation partner noted that only about 30 percent of parents picked up food when offered by schools. Organizations also expanded CSA delivery and pickup options and experienced a significant increase in the number of community-based organizations interested in food box distribution.

Diversity, representation, and equity of the HTA
In conceptualizing how diversity and representation play into local food in the D.C. area, implementation partners noted that local food can bring up an elitist perception. They mentioned that organizations such as Black Food Justice and Farmers Movement are helping with outreach around local food and that it is necessary to have conversations about representation and assumptions about what farmers or suppliers look like.

“They see local food and they think Whole Foods, and that’s the death of a neighborhood here in D.C., the neighborhood will be displaced.”

“What kinds of flexibility could you put in place to make sure your suppliers are diverse, especially if we’re working with children, everything is an educational opportunity? So, it would be cool if people looked like the community they’re serving.”

Most implementation partners agreed that it is difficult to determine if there has been a substantive net benefit for BIPOC producers, or they think more work done to make sure there are benefits for producers of color within the HTA.

“It’s difficult to parse out or disaggregate the Local5 distribution from the rest of it - I don’t know if there was a substantive net benefit for producers of color.”

“I guess that’s something I would change... I was thinking about that with the grantees and making sure they were representing the community they were working with. I was aware that I was the only black person or person of any color when I was in the room with food aggregators and whatnot. But I guess I didn’t know what to do with that. Now I’m very aware of it, and that’s something I would hope to change and would press a little bit.”

One implementation partner noted that the organizations they are working with to represent farmers and vendors have missions around Black and Indigenous food sovereignty.

“Even though one of them might not produce food itself as an entity, their mission is food resilience. I’m confident the people we’re bringing to the table will be able to offer a lot of support in this area.”
One implementation partner said they are still trying to figure out what role they can play in the conversation and movement around opportunities for BIPOC producers; right now, they see themselves as helping to expand and increase equity through market participation of producers and consumers. Another implementation partner suggested having financial incentives to work with BIPOC producers or have a better way to transfer wealth (e.g., infrastructure, staff, time, land lease support) to BIPOC producers.

Implementation partners also said that it is important to consider what motivates a community to care about serving local food. For example, leading with language in the legislation around supporting the local economy may not be the most effective for ECE providers in urban areas.

When HTA first came about, a lot of talk around Local5 was about supporting the local economy, but that’s a really broad concept for this population. It almost sounds manipulative or I was never comfortable with that angle because now we’re putting the fate of the economy on these small childcare facilities? That makes no sense. I would keep that language but wouldn’t lead with it, unless it’s an agricultural area, but in an urban area where people are dealing with so many other issues it was not the top benefit they care about.

Producers

We interviewed two producers located in Maryland and one producer located in Pennsylvania. All interviewed producers sold their product wholesale to FRESHFARM, who then distributed product to ECE sites participating in Local5. They ranged from having less than two acres of land to nearly 200 acres. These producers also differed in their mix of wholesale and market revenue, ranging from 20 percent to 70 percent of revenue derived from wholesale sources. The producers grow a wide range of products, including apples, peaches, nectarines, romaine lettuce, peppers, tomatoes, cabbage, carrots, and potatoes.

Benefits of working with FRESHFARM and food hubs

Producers described positive experiences working with FRESHFARM. In terms of process, the producers tell FRESHFARM what products they have available, and FRESHFARM tells the producers how much of the product they want. One producer noted that their farm has been working with FRESHFARM since FRESHFARM started buying for different programs in 2014 or 2015.

What we have available is what they are interested in. Not much that they would want that we don’t have. We would be happy to plant what they want, but mostly they’re willing to work with whatever we got - which is nice because sometimes we might have one variety available or are heavy on one type of fruit.

One producer sold $70,000 to FRESHFARM this year and was the highest seller to FRESHFARM for fruit. The producer received a lot of positive feedback and people continue to buy from them; their goal moving forward is to sell $100,000 to FRESHFARM and be the highest selling farm for all products.
Overall, producers seemed pleased with their experiences of selling to food hubs or ECE sites. They noted that food hubs helped them to feed a larger volume of people with their food and to expand their business with new outlets. As a result of this business, one producer will be hiring an additional employee and expanding the farm’s growth of sweet corn to a neighbor’s land.

Food hubs are very good at working with us on substituting, flexibility, not being real rigid, which is nice because most wholesale won’t or can’t do that. The volume of production is in wholesale, that’s where the opportunity has been. Never set out to do it, but that’s where the growth has been. Working with one person who can aggregate is really awesome. Wholesale has picked up over the past few years. The first few years were slow but in the last couple of years wholesale has jumped up significantly.

What I like most is to see folks who can’t afford food to be able to get that food through [FRESHFARM]. Would not be able to get to the volume of people I’m able to help feed without FRESHFARM. For wholesale, it’s easier for us, we put it on the truck and people at [FRESHFARM] take care of everything, makes our life a lot easier.

Producer goals and aspirations
Although no producer was directly aware of the HTA or Local5, they were all enthusiastic about the program after learning about it and expressed that the goals of the program align with their own values in terms of providing children with local food that they have grown and helping children grow up healthy.

For me, that’s what I want, I want kids to get fresh stuff, that flavor, that taste, that feel that they are having for lunch. That’s something that we could talk about, a lot of farmers like that but some just want to sell it and get it moved. I want to know where my food goes. The hard work that I’m doing, I want to know where’s it going.

In addition, some producers have partnerships with organizations such as the Maryland Food Bank and Maryland Manna. One producer noted that even though the partnership is not very profitable, he is happy that they are able to provide the organization with food for those who need it.

Facilitators to working with ECE sites in the future
One producer said that she would be able to work with ECE sites in the future if the site was close to a farmers market she was already selling at so there would not be an added delivery cost for the customer.

They’d be like any other customer and they’d call ahead. Like restaurants would call us and ask what we had and they’d come to the market and pick it up. Any customer, even buying something for $2, is a valuable customer. It’s only if the cost of serving that customer becomes prohibitive, like if I have to deliver. But if they just come to pickup, it makes sense.
Barriers to selling to food hubs
Producers noted some minor barriers to selling their products through food hubs, including added labor costs and increased expenses from increased production, but they noted that they think additional sales through the food hub may cover the additional costs. Another barrier mentioned was the challenge of not getting boxes back since not having boxes makes their processes more complicated. Another challenge mentioned was not getting orders done on time, although the producer implied that this issue has been addressed and is no longer a significant challenge.

Lack of information sharing between ECE sites, intermediaries, and producers
One barrier noted by producers is not knowing where and to whom their products are sold when working with FRESHFARM. Producers only had vague information about where their products are sold or had only learned anecdotally by meeting recipients of their produce at farmers markets. At least one producer expressed interest in learning more about where his food goes, especially for schools. Another producer who has sold to restaurants noted that she felt supported when one restaurant named dishes they made with her food after the farm.

COVID-19 impact on producers
Two producers detailed the impact of COVID-19 on their business. Although it was a hard time for both, they ended up being successful during this time. One producer developed relationships with FRESHFARM during COVID-19 and expanded into markets FRESHFARM was in. The other producer saw an increase in their grocery business but a decrease in food “instrument” sales at farmers markets (e.g., WIC). Producers also saw home delivery increase and believe this will be a lasting effect, but selling to an organization like FRESHFARM rather than selling through a CSA is easier for them.

Producer diversity, representation, and equity
One producer described her view on diversity as a Black producer. She noted that she wants to see more happen for Black producers, since most of the farmers she knows are white men.

The person who controls the land, controls the farms. We’d like to expand but we don’t have the land to do so. If we think about diversity in agriculture, what is the existence of women farmers or black farmers who have the capital or the network to get land. We farm on someone’s private property. This land was practically given to us for free. But not everybody is that lucky.

She also noted that her farm was able to get into a large farmers market in the Washington, D.C., area when the Black Lives Matter movement was gaining traction, and the market was called out for not being diverse. They were approved in the middle of the season to join the market, and they will also be at the market next season. In addition, she said that when people ask how they can support Black farmers, she tells them the best way is to buy from them.
Provider Survey Findings

Overview of Respondents
A total of 29 ECE sites that participated in CACFP provided complete responses to the survey. Of these sites, most sites (n=19) participated in CACFP for five years or longer, five sites participated in CACFP for three to five years, and three sites participated in CACFP for one to two years. For program model of the site, most sites (n=22) were child care centers; some sites were family child care (n=4) and Head Start/Early Head Start (n=3), and one site each reported being a tuition-based program model and a non-profit program model. Respondents also reported full-time and part-time enrollment. The majority of sites had no part-time enrollment (n=19); six sites had less than 10 children enrolled part-time and two sites had more than 10 children enrolled part-time. Full-time enrollment varied among sites, from less than 10 children (n=8) to 11 to 25 children (n=4) to 26 to 50 children (n=11) to more than 50 children enrolled (n=4). All sites but one had 50 percent or more of children eligible for free- and reduced-price meals, with 7 sites reporting 100 percent eligibility, nine sites reporting 75-99 percent eligibility, and eight sites reporting 50-74 percent eligibility.

Local5 Participation and Serving Foods from Scratch
A few ECE sites reported participating in Local5: three sites participated in 2018, four sites participated in 2019, and one site participated in 2020. Five sites that do not receive Local5 did report serving local food.

Sites also reported on their frequency of serving foods from scratch. Three sites reported never serving food prepared from scratch and six sites reported that they have no on-site food preparation. In contrast, 20 sites reported serving food prepared from scratch: 10 sites reported doing this daily, six sites serve food from scratch a few times per week, two sites serve food from scratch once per week, and two sites serve food from scratch once per month.

Local products served
The most reported local products that sites purchased and served were apples (n=4), carrots (n=3), and cucumbers (n=3). Two sites reported purchasing and serving bread/baked goods, chicken/poultry, milk, potatoes, salad greens/lettuce, squash, and tomatoes. One site reported purchasing and serving eggs.

ECE sites reported four different sources from which they obtain local food. Three sites reported that they obtain local food from grocery stores/retail outlets. One site each reported obtaining local food from a food service management company, direct from farmers, and from a food bank.

Barriers to Accessing Local5
A few sites reported experiencing barriers to accessing Local5. Two sites reported that tracking and record keeping takes too much time, and one site each reported they did not know about Local5 and that information about Local5 is difficult to find.
Barriers to procurement
Sites reported on several barriers to purchasing and procuring local products. See Table 2 for complete responses. The most reported major barriers to purchasing and procuring local products were reliability of local product supply (n=9), cost/price of item (n=8), finding suppliers/farmers to provide local food (n=7), and limited on-site storage (n=6).

Sites also reported which factors they did not consider to be barriers; the most common factors that sites did not consider to be barriers were lack of staff interest in preparing local foods (n=15), lack of skilled/trained staff to prepare local foods (n=15), concerns about food quality (n=13), challenges with payment arrangement (n=13), lack of staff time in preparing local foods (n=12), lack of kitchen equipment to process/prepare local foods (n=12), and concerns about food safety (n=12).

Table 2. Number of Sites Reporting Barriers to Purchasing and Procuring Local Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Major Barrier</th>
<th>Minor Barrier</th>
<th>Not a Barrier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding suppliers/farmers to provide local food</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability of local product supply</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining information about product availability</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing how to order local items</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges with payment arrangement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery challenges</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonality of fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/price of items</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaging/size of packaging</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited on-site storage</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about food quality</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about food safety</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of kitchen equipment to process/prepare foods</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of skilled/trained staff to prepare local foods</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staff time in preparing local foods</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staff interest in preparing local foods</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of processed/precut products</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Changes in Local Food Purchases

When asked how much they anticipate local food purchases will change in the next two to three years, most sites reported they think their local food purchases will increase some (n=12) or increase greatly (n=6).

For the 12 sites that anticipate their local food purchases to increase some, unedited responses are highlighted below.

**REASONS ECE SITES ANTICIPATE LOCAL FOOD PURCHASES TO INCREASE SOME**

- To have access to fresher items and to stimulate the local agricultural / food producers.
- Local food turns out to be cheaper.
- We have been working with FRESHFARM Market Share and anticipate participating this year—they make it easy for us to buy local because they give us info on where the items came from.
- Due to the virus—and anticipation of it becoming extinct—enrollment will then increase.
- The cost of living is going up.
- We want to support local food growers.
- I anticipate growing the size of the Center.
- Not always aware of what the vendors will have access to and the cost going up.

For the six sites that anticipate their local food purchases to increase greatly, several unedited responses are highlighted below.

**REASONS ECE SITES ANTICIPATE LOCAL FOOD PURCHASES TO INCREASE GREATLY**

- We will ask our caterer to purchase local produce.
- To be additionally safe, we’re serving more already prepared meals instead of home cooked.
- Increase due to grant deliverables, Farm to ECE Coalition best practices, strengthen partnerships.
- We are hoping as COVID-19 ends our student population will increase.
- That’s the goal to increase my center with children.

Four sites reported that they anticipate their local food purchases will stay the same in the next two to three years with unedited responses highlighted below.

**REASONS ECE SITES ANTICIPATE LOCAL FOOD PURCHASES TO STAY THE SAME**

- Unless accessibility is addressed, it will stay the same.
- We currently work with a vendor that purchases meals and follows their own guidelines along with CACFP.
- We are and have been in contract with an outside vendor. We are not purchasing products for the foods served.

One site reported they anticipate local food purchases to decrease greatly, and four sites reported not knowing how their local food purchases will change.
Secondary Data Findings

FRESHFARM Data Results

ECE sites procuring produce from FRESHFARM
FRESHFARM helped procure fresh produce for ECE sites from 2017-2019 (Table 3). The organization had a large increase in site participation from 2017 to 2018 while participation remained stable from 2018 to 2019. Of the 444 individual ECE sites in D.C., FRESHFARM worked with 21 in 2017 and 36 in 2018 and 2019. Eighteen new sites participated in 2018 that did not participate in 2017, and three new sites participated in 2019 that did not participate in 2017 or 2018.

Participating sites served 1,077 children in 2017, 1,192 children in 2018, and 697 children in 2019. The decline in the number of children served without a decrease in the number of participating sites comes from CentroNia and Happy Faces choosing not to participate in 2019. CentroNia’s decision was budget-related and Happy Faces was staffing-related, but both sites had served a large number of children in 2017 and 2018. With the decrease in the number of children participating also came a decrease in the total servings of product delivered by FRESHFARM (59,690 servings in 2017; 116,170 servings in 2018; and 56,055 servings in 2019).

Table 3. ECE Sites Procuring Produce from FRESHFARM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of...</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating ECE Sites</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Served</td>
<td>1,077</td>
<td>1,192</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce Deliveries</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Servings of Product</td>
<td>59,690</td>
<td>116,170</td>
<td>56,055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participating Farms and Types of Produce Procured for ECE Sites

As a local food aggregator, distributor, and Healthy Tots Act Wellness Grant Program grantee, FRESHFARM worked with local farms to obtain and deliver produce to ECE sites. FRESHFARM spent approximately $10,975 with five farms in 2017, $29,350 with nine farms in 2018, and $15,275 with 13 farms in 2019 on product to distribute to ECE sites. In 2019, the dollar value received by the participating farms ranged from $51 to $3,460. Of the farms working with FRESHFARM, four participated all three years and one participated for two years in a row; others participated only for one year. Because FRESHFARM aggregates product at farmers’ markets, not coming to market is one reason why farms choose not to participate again. In 2020, FRESHFARM shifted their model due to the COVID-19 pandemic to sell directly to families instead of ECE sites, so data from that year is not comparable.

The types of produce procured for ECE sites was extensive: 59 varieties of produce in 2017, 56 varieties in 2018, and 53 varieties in 2019. For example, ECE sites received 12 varieties of apples and four varieties of tomatoes from 2017-2019. Table 4 displays the top 10 items by the number of weeks distributed to ECE sites each year. Apples were the most common type of produce provided followed by tomatoes across all three years. FRESHFARM delivered cucumbers and peppers frequently in 2018 and kale and peaches in 2019.

Table 4. Top 10 Items by the Number of Weeks Distributed to ECE Sites Each Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Produce</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beets</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackberries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucumbers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kale</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melons</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaches</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pears</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watermelon</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D.C. OSSE Data Results

ECE sites participating in CACFP

Data from D.C. OSSE provided information on the number of ECE sites participating in the HTA, including Local5 and Full Day4. Table 5 shows that the number of sites participating in the CACFP increased by 44 from 178 sites in 2018 to 222 sites in 2019. Through the HTA, more staff was devoted to helping eligible sites participate in the program. However, the increase in CACFP participation was not reflected in Local5 participation. Our contact at D.C. OSSE noted that this data may not accurately reflect site participation because the specificity of the question on Local5 and Full Day4 participation changed between these two years. Furthermore, while we have incomplete 2019 data on race/ethnicity and free- and reduced-price meal eligibility for participating childcare centers, based on the 2018 data, the racial makeup of children reached by Local5 is similar to that of overall reach of CACFP.
CACFP ECE sites participating in Local5 and Full Day4

D.C. OSSE also provided data on the HTA invoice totals at the sponsor level for 2018, 2019, and 2020. The CACFP sponsors can each have one or more sites that they support. According to this data, 64 sponsors invoiced for Local5 and/or Full Day4 reimbursements in 2018, 59 in 2019, and 63 in 2020. While the total amount invoiced to D.C. OSSE increased from nearly $497K in 2018 to $607K in 2019, indicating that a fewer number of sponsors were invoicing for a larger dollar amount of local product, the total dollar amount decreased to $357K in 2020, due to the pandemic. Total invoices by sponsors for the year ranged from $8 to $128K in 2018, $250 to $147K in 2019, and $98 to $62K in 2020. Furthermore, six new sponsors participated in 2020 that had not participated in 2018 or 2019. We also examined whether the sponsors that received smaller reimbursements in 2018 or 2019 tended to drop from the program since some of our other data found the administrative burden of HTA participation to be high. However, most sponsors continued to participate. Five of 64 participating sponsors in 2018 chose not to participate in 2019 and 2020, and three of 59 participating sponsors in 2018 and 2019 chose not to participate in 2020.

Table 5. CACFP ECE Site Participation in Local5 and Full Day4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of...</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-Home-Based CACFP Sites</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Children at Non-Home-Based Sites</td>
<td>11,555</td>
<td>14,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sites Participating in Local5*</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sites Participating in Full Day4*</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sites Participating in Local5 + Full Day4*</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: For 2018 data, 36 sites had no data for Local5 participation, and 30 sites had no data for Full Day4 participation. For 2019 data, two sites had no data for Local5 participation.

*Data may not accurately reflect site participation because the specificity of the question on Local5 and Full Day4 participation changed between these two years.
Discussion

While a lack of legislatively mandated data collection makes it difficult to assess quantitative impacts and outcomes of the HTA and the Local5, partner, producer, and provider experiences provide insight into benefits and limitations of the legislation. Key stakeholders involved in implementation see short and long term benefits across their community, including: bringing together organizations and entities across the food sector (e.g., ECE sites, local food intermediaries, CACFP administering agency) around local food, involving families and community members in the HTA implementation process, creating a successful distribution model for local food, and crafting the HTA legislation to better serve community members. Stakeholders also see limitations of the current model. A primary limitation is the minimal level of reimbursement. Five cents is insufficient to change purchasing behavior or to cover the cost of food or staff time for the administrative reporting process. Limited resources for outreach and awareness building of the program may also limit participation. Stakeholders also see greater opportunity for the legislative language to prioritize purchasing from and supporting BIPOC producers. From the producers’ perspectives, they were enthusiastic about their product getting to ECE sites and feeding young children. However, the primary financial and business benefit for producers was being able to sell wholesale to FRESHFARM and have their product aggregated and delivered by this third party. From the ECE provider perspective, the reporting process as well as a lack of awareness of the program were barriers to participation. FRESHFARM, a vital partner to facilitating local purchases for ECE sites, worked with up to 15 producers each year selling both a wide range of products to sites and purchasing a wide range of volume from producers. Though limitations in the data exist, HTA seems to have achieved its aim of increasing CACFP participation. According to submitted invoices, the level of sponsor participation in Local5 and Full Day4 remained relatively steady in 2018 and 2019.

HTA Impact on Producers and Food Systems

Based on researchers’ exploration and data collection, FRESHFARM is the primary vehicle for local food purchasing for ECE sites participating in Local5. The diversity of producers, products, and range of dollar values of sales of each producer indicate that FRESHFARM’s role is important for creating accessibility to the ECE market for producers working at multiple production scales. The FRESHFARM model aggregates producers’ product via “pop-up” food hubs located at existing farmers markets and then distributes the exact amount of product each participating ECE site needs directly to the ECE site. Additionally, FRESHFARM distributes CSA boxes for families to ECE sites, significantly increasing the volume of product and sales related to the program. It is this wholesale model with a third party aggregator and opening up of new market opportunities with families that makes sales to ECE sites feasible and beneficial for participating producers. More than one interviewed producer was increasing production to meet the wholesale demand opportunity through FRESHFARM.

The diversity of producers, products, and range of dollar values of sales of each producer indicate that FRESHFARM’s role is important for creating accessibility to the ECE market for producers working at multiple production scales.
Though producers are enthusiastic about their product reaching young children and families and would like to be better informed on where their product ends up, the barriers of small ordering volumes and delivery would likely prevent most producers from selling directly to ECE sites. This investment in the local food system partner through the HTA was integral to Local5 implementation and to building relationships across food systems partners and the ECE sector. While the HTA clearly benefits some producers, implementing agencies and producers alike saw a gap in targeted support and opportunities for BIPOC producers. Key stakeholders would like to see a greater emphasis in the legislation language and implementation on supporting and prioritizing BIPOC producers and are also evaluating how they can better center and support BIPOC producers in the policy implementation. Specifically targeting support for beginning BIPOC producers could help grow the number of BIPOC producers in the region, increasing the likelihood that children can see farmers and receive produce from producers that look like them. An important step in implementing an equity priority is tracking sales and disaggregating data by producer race to better understand who is benefiting from (or being excluded from) the opportunities of the HTA.

Impact on ECE Provider Purchasing Practices

Implementing agencies working directly with ECE providers report increased frequency and volume of local purchasing. Though available data demonstrates a potential decrease in HTA Local5 participation in 2019, some sites may have continued to purchase local food without submitting for reimbursement from the Local5 incentive. This potential is reflected in the ECE provider survey and reports of administrative burden being a barrier to utilizing Local5. However, the number of sponsors submitting for reimbursement for Local5 and Full Day4 remained steady, indicating that once sponsors participate, they are likely to continue to do so. Notably, the primary barriers to purchasing local food, including reliability of supply, cost, and finding suppliers, could be addressed through the FRESHFARM model and HTA Local5 reimbursement. However, cost as an ongoing barrier does suggest that the additional five cents is not sufficient to change ECE providers purchasing practices. Much as it was with producers, the ease of the model developed by FRESHFARM, which removes the guesswork on purchasing and delivery, as well as some of the reporting burden is a significant factor in enabling site participation.

Interestingly, some of the barriers that ECE site respondents noted as “not barriers” were primary barriers reported by implementation partners. This includes lack of staff time and knowledge, kitchen space and infrastructure, and food safety concerns. This may come down to the self-selected group of ECE providers that provided survey responses. That is, those that had capacity to respond to the survey had fewer barriers. An interesting limitation to serving more local food noted by several respondents was utilizing a caterer or vendor that makes the decisions about purchasing. This may point to an untapped opportunity to significantly increase local purchasing and serving through these vendors and caterers.
However, this would require a different approach to building awareness in this audience, providing technical assistance and support both for the food purchaser and for the ECE site reporting to obtain Local5. Importantly, ECE sites would need to vocalize their interest and demand to the vendor for local foods.

HTA Local5 provided additional benefits to ECE sites. The model developed by FRESHFARM to offer family CSAs not only elevated a new market for producers, but created a pathway for family engagement and an opportunity to increase access to local fruits and vegetables in the home. The model also increased accessibility to and knowledge of local food systems for participating ECE providers and parents. However, implementing agencies would like to see greater funding and emphasis on this educational opportunity related to the value of local foods.

**Future Potential for HTA Local5 Impact**

With the dramatic decline in attendance and child participation for ECE sites due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many sites are still in recovery and many have closed their doors permanently. FRESHFARM’s ability to pivot their programming amid the COVID-19 pandemic helped preserve relationships between ECE providers, families, and producers. This important relationship building and facilitation will be integral to reinvigorating local purchasing as ECE providers return to full operation. As enrollment increases, ECE providers anticipate that their local purchasing will increase as well, hopefully moving the ECE market opportunity back to pre-pandemic levels and beyond. An additional untapped opportunity for Local5 growth is the ECE providers who are purchasing local food, but not submitting for the additional reimbursement. Outreach and technical assistance in reporting might be key to maximizing reach with this specific sub-segment. A number of barriers embedded in the legislation may prevent the policy from achieving its full potential. First, the limited promotion to ECE providers about Local5 has resulted in little awareness. Additionally, the messaging related to what promotion has been done may not resonate with the target audience. As noted, the perception of administrative burden may also be a limiting factor to participation. Finally, the uncertainty of continued support to the vital food systems partners may hamper growth and sustainability of the valuable procurement model developed through HTA support.

The model developed by FRESHFARM to offer family CSAs not only elevated a new market for producers, but created a pathway for family engagement and an opportunity to increase access to local fruits and vegetables in the home.
For future policy amendments and for municipalities considering local food incentive programs for ECE, examination of the HTA offers a number of lessons for policy and practice.

**Key Policy and Practice Recommendations for Local Incentive Policy in ECE Settings**

- Prioritize reimbursement models that reduce paperwork and reporting requirements (e.g., lump sum payments, non-competitive grants).
- Include language and funding in legislation for monitoring and evaluation. This may include new reporting systems and tracking mechanisms.
- Center racial equity in policy development and implementation. This includes prioritizing purchasing from BIPOC producers through “set asides” or other ways to transfer wealth (e.g., infrastructure, staff, time, land lease support) to BIPOC producers and requiring disaggregation of participation and outcome data by race.
- Target funding for third party aggregators and partners to facilitate purchasing and build more robust community food systems and relationships across ECEs and producers.
- Build in support for family engagement opportunities, such as CSA or family farm share, which subsequently create additional market opportunities for producers.
- Include language and funding in legislation for outreach/promotion that is specific to the interests and priorities of the ECE community.
- Offer incentives to cover food and administrative costs and motivate behavior change.

The HTA has abundant potential to benefit producers and strengthen the local community food system in D.C. The model developed by FRESHFARM is one key to maximizing this potential impact, however key shifts in the policy would allow for more expansive and equitable reach of the benefits of the policy. The HTA sets an important precedent and the many states and municipalities considering local purchasing incentives will be able to build better policy thanks to the experience and learnings of HTA stakeholders.


8. Kane D, Kruse S, Marksten Ratcliffe M, Sobell SA, Tessman N. The Impact of 7 Cents. [https://ecotrust.org/media/7-Cents-Report_FINAL_110630.pdf](https://ecotrust.org/media/7-Cents-Report_FINAL_110630.pdf)


Appendices

Appendix A. Early Care and Education Provider Survey

ECE Provider Survey Questions

Site Information
1. Please provide the name of your center/site: (will not be associated with your responses)
2. Zip code

CACFP Participation Information
3. How long have you participated in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?
   a. Less than 1 year
   b. Between 1 and 2 years
   c. More than 2 but less than 5 years
   d. More than five years
   e. Other
4. Are you required to participate in the CACFP (you enroll 50% or more children who are eligible for the child care subsidy program)?
   a. Yes (go to 11)
   b. No (skip to 12)
   c. I don’t know (skip to 11)
5. Did you participate in CACFP before it was required (before February 2015)?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don’t know
6. How many meals do you serve per child per day (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and supper = 3 meals)?
   a. Before COVID (February 2020):
   b. Currently:
7. On average, please estimate the total number of snacks you provide PER DAY for all children at your site (e.g. number of snack times multiplied by number of children)? Please enter 0 if you provide none.
   a. Before COVID (February 2020):
   b. Currently:
8. How many snacks do you serve per child per day (e.g., morning snack and afternoon snack = 2 snacks)?
   a. Before COVID (February 2020):
   b. Currently:
9. On average, please estimate the total number of meals you provide PER DAY for all children at your site (e.g. number of meal times multiplied by number of children)? Please enter 0 if you provide none.
   a. Before COVID (February 2020):
   b. Currently:
10. How often do you serve food prepared from scratch (i.e., without using ready-made ingredients) at your site?
    a. Daily
    b. A few times per week
    c. Once per week
    d. Once per month
    e. Never (0)
    f. We have no on-site preparation of foods
    g. I don’t know
    h. Other (please specify)

Local Foods Purchasing Practices and Local5

For the purposes of this survey and the Healthy Tots Local5 Program, local is defined as unprocessed and grown/raised in one of the following states: District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Delaware, or New Jersey. Read more about the definition here.

11. Have you purchased and served local food (in the past 5 years) and NOT received the additional Local5 reimbursement?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don’t know
12. Have you ever received additional reimbursement for purchasing local foods for use in the CACFP program (Local5)?
    a. Yes
    b. No (skip to # 31)
    c. I don’t know (skip to # 31)
13. What year did you start participating in the Local5 reimbursement?
   a. 2020  
   b. 2019  
   c. 2018  
   d. 2017  
   e. 2016  
   f. 2015  

14. Did you purchase local foods before you started participating in the Local5 reimbursement?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  
   c. I don’t know  

Local5 reimbursement impact on food purchasing and serving practices

15. Approximately how many meals and snacks per week include a local food component:
   a. Before participation in Local 5:  
   b. After starting Local5, but before COVID-19 (February 2020):  
   c. Currently:  

16. From how many sources (number of different producers, food hubs, distributors, etc.) do you purchase local foods:
   a. Before participation in Local 5:  
   b. After starting Local5, but before COVID-19 (February 2020):  
   c. Currently:  

17. Approximately how much money do you spend on local foods each year:
   a. Before participation in Local 5:  
      i. Percent of total food budget:  
   b. After starting Local5:  
      i. Percent of total food budget:  

18. What are the top five products that you most frequently purchase and serve locally (Choose up to five)
   a. Milk  
   b. Apples  
   c. Salad Greens/lettuce  
   d. Chicken/poultry  
   e. Carrots  
   f. Bread/baked goods  
   g. Tomatoes  
   h. Eggs  
   i. Cucumbers  
   j. Squash  
   k. Potatoes  

19. Over the last 18 months (since September 2019) did your site obtain local food from any of the following sources? Please check all that apply.
   a. Direct from individual farmers/producers (i.e., farmers, fishers, ranchers)  
   b. Direct from farmer, rancher, or fisher cooperatives  
   c. Direct from farmers markets  
   d. Farm share or community supported agriculture (CSA)  
   e. On-site or community garden  
   f. Food processors or manufacturers  
   g. Distributors  
   h. Grocery stores/retail outlets  
   i. Food buying cooperative  
   j. Food hub  
   k. Food service management companies  
   l. Caterer  
   m. Food bank  
   n. I do not know  
   o. None of the above  

20. Please list (by name) sources of local food that you have purchased from in the past 18 months (Since September 2019):  

21. How has your local food purchasing changed as a result of the pandemic?
   a. Increase greatly  
   b. Increase some  
   c. Decrease some  
   d. Decrease greatly  
   e. Stay the same  
   f. I don’t know  

22. How likely are you to continue purchasing local foods if the Local5 incentive goes away?
   a. I am likely to continue but will likely purchase less local foods  
   b. I am likely to continue and my local foods purchasing will not change  
   c. I am likely to continue and my local foods purchasing may increase  
   d. I am not likely to continue purchasing local foods  
   e. I don’t know  
   f. Other (please specify)
23. What barriers did you experience in accessing Local5 reimbursement? (Check all that apply)
   a. I did not know about Local5
   b. Hard to find information about Local5
   c. Tracking and record keeping requirements are unclear
   d. Tracking and record keeping takes too much time
   e. Reporting and claiming is difficult
   f. Other (Please specify)
   g. No barriers to accessing Local5

24. How has Local5 and local food purchasing impacted the families you work with? (check all that apply)
   a. It has not impacted families with our program
   b. It has increased families’ interest in local foods
   c. It has increased families’ knowledge of local foods
   d. It increased families’ engagement
   e. It has increased families access to local foods
   f. It has increased families purchasing of local foods
   g. Other (Please specify)

Local 5 Participants and Non-Participants
25. How do you anticipate your local food purchases overall will change in the next 2 to 3 years? Please check one.
   a. Increase greatly
   b. Increase some
   c. Decrease some
   d. Decrease greatly
   e. Stay the same
   f. I don’t know

26. Why do you anticipate your local food purchases to increase/decrease/stay the same?

27. How significant are these barriers to purchasing/procuring local products? Please check a level for each barrier listed.

| Finding suppliers/farmers to provide local food | Major barrier | Minor barrier | Not a barrier | Not applicable |
| Reliability of local product supply |
| Obtaining information about product availability |
| Knowing how to order local items |
| Challenges with payment arrangement |
| Delivery challenges |
| Seasonality of fruits and vegetables |
| Cost/price of items |
| Packaging/size of packaging |
| Limited on-site storage |
| Concerns about food quality |
| Concerns about food safety |
| Lack of kitchen equipment to process/prepare local foods |
| Lack of skilled/trained staff to prepare local foods |
| Lack of staff time in preparing local foods |
| Lack of staff interest in preparing local foods |
| Availability of processed/precut products |
| Any other barriers? (please specify): |
28. Your primary language:
   a. English
   b. Spanish
   c. Amharic
   d. Somali
   e. Mandarin
   f. Cantonese
   g. other (please specify)

29. Which of the following best describes your program model? Please check the one that best applies, but check all that apply if your program falls under multiple categories.
   a. Family child care
   b. Child care center
   c. Head Start and/or Early Head Start Center
   d. State preschool (all public preschool programs)
   e. Private preschool (family pay, tuition based)
   f. Preschool or child care through a K-12 school district
   g. Other (please specify)

30. What was your average enrollment during the last 12 months?
   a. Full-time children
   b. Part-time children

31. Please estimate the percentage of your enrollment accounted for by children eligible for free and reduced-price meals (below 185% of the federal poverty line)
   a. 0%
   b. 1-9%
   c. 10-24%
   d. 25-49%
   e. 50-74%
   f. 75-99%
   g. 100%
   h. Don’t know

32. Please estimate the percentage of your enrollment accounted for by children who identify as Hispanic or Latino (ethnicity) (must add up to 100%)
   a. % Hispanic or Latino
   b. % Not Hispanic or Latino

33. Please estimate the percentage of your enrollment accounted for by children of each race? (note: you will need to check applicable responses and enter text)
   a. % American Indian/Alaska Native
   b. % Asian
   c. % Black/African American
   d. % Native Hawaiian/Other
   e. % White
   f. % Multiple races
   g. % Other
Appendix B. Healthy Tots Act Key Stakeholder Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Stakeholder Interviews

Implementation Partner Interview

Name, role, and background information
● Please tell me your name, your organization and role, and a little bit about your involvement in Healthy Tots Act implementation.

HTA Implementation Successes
● From your perspective, what do you see as successes or positive outcomes of the Healthy Tots Act, specifically as it relates to local food, local food producers, and the Local5 incentive?
  o Do you think ECE sites have increased local food purchasing (number of ECE sites purchasing local foods, amount spent on local foods at participating ECE sites)?
  o What benefits have you seen for local food producers and local food systems?
● What were key contributors to successful implementation?

HTA Implementation Barriers
● From your perspective, what do you see as barriers or challenges to implementing the Local5 incentive?
  ○ Barriers or challenges for your organization?
  ○ Barriers or challenges for ECE sites?
  ○ Barriers or challenges for local producers/food systems stakeholders in connecting with ECE sites?

COVID Impact
● How did the COVID crisis impact HTA and Local5 participation?

Anticipation for HTA growth/future of HTA
● What do you see as the maximum growth potential for Local5 (highest potential number of ECE sites, maximum expenditures)?
● What are barriers to reaching that maximum?
● Where do you see HTA and Local5 going in the next 1-2 years (increasing participation, decreasing participation, etc.)?

Recommendations for future policy implementation
● What limitations do you see in the policy language/framing itself?
● What do you recommend for other states/municipalities who are interested in implementing local incentive reimbursement policies?
● What might you do differently in implementation if you had to do it again?
● How did HTA particularly impact producers of color or historically marginalized producers? Are there opportunities for HTA (or future legislation) to more directly impact producers of color?

Producer and Food Systems Stakeholders
Name, role, and background information
● Please tell me your name, your organization and role, and a little bit about your farm or food related business.
● Would you be comfortable telling us what race you identify as?

Connection to HTA Local5
● Do you sell to or work with early care and education (ECE) sites in the D.C. area?
  ○ Or do you sell to an intermediary/aggregator that you know sells to ECE sites?
● How long have you been selling to/working with ECE sites (or selling to the aggregator that works with ECE sites)?
● Are you aware of the Local5 incentive reimbursement program that provides increased funding for ECE sites that purchase and serve local foods?
  ○ If yes, how did you learn about it?
  ○ If no, what are your initial thoughts about that program?
For sites selling to ECE or to intermediary/aggregator that you know sells to ECE sites:

Benefits/Opportunities to Working with ECE Sites

- Why do you choose to sell to ECE sites (or connect to ECE sites in other ways)?
- How has your work with ECE sites changed in recent years (increase number of ECE sites, increase in volume sold to ECE sites)?
  - Do you think this change is associated with Local5?
  - What other factors would you associate this change with?
- What percent of your business is ECE sales? What other markets do you sell to (and approximate percent of your total market)?
- How has selling to ECE sites impacted your business overall?
  - Request specific dollar amounts if available:
    - How much did you sell to ECE sites in the past year?
    - How has this changed in the past five years?

Challenges to Working with ECE Sites

- What were/are barriers to selling to ECE sites or accessing ECE sites as a market opportunity?
- Are you interested in starting/expanding work with ECE sites?
- What would help you work with ECE sites?
  - E.g., partners facilitating communication, going through food hub or aggregator, large orders from sites