



Canada Digs In!

2020 Grants by the numbers



\$300,900 given directly to schools

In total, between 2017-2022, the Canada Digs In! Initiative provided \$1,558,500 in grants and reached 62,000+ K-12 students in 166 schools.

Farm to School: Canada Digs In! has been a pan-Canadian multi-sectoral chronic disease prevention initiative from 2017-2022. The goal has been to scale up Canada's farm to school movement and embrace the farm to school approach by:

1. Increasing the procurement, consumption and awareness of healthy, local foods in schools.
2. Increasing students' food skills and knowledge by providing them with hands-on learning opportunities.
3. Building and strengthening connections with farmers and other local food providers, community members, and support organizations.

"Local Food to School" is a term that may be used interchangeably with "Farm to School" to reflect a broader range of food systems unique to each community, which can include much more than farms.

About the Farm to School Canada Grants Program

Developed in partnership with Whole Kids Foundation in 2016, the [Farm to School Canada Grants program](#) has been central to Farm to School: Canada Digs In! To date, 3 cycles of grants have been completed: 2016, 2018 and 2020. Highlights from the 2020 cycle are shared here.

Despite school disruptions and other challenges brought about by COVID-19, 2020 grant recipients served students local and healthy food, engaged them in hands-on food literacy activities, and made connections to their local food systems.

Schools were awarded up to \$10,000 each and were asked to:



Develop a team with diverse knowledge and skills.

Team members included principals, educators, students, Elders, local food suppliers, meal service providers, parents, public health inspectors, farmers, other schools and community partners.

Join and participate in knowledge sharing and training activities, provincially and nationally.



Establish a self-serve salad bar to provide foods as locally grown, fresh, nutritious, and culturally appropriate as possible.

Ensure that all students had access to the salad bar, regardless of means.



Develop and implement a strategy to engage students in experiential and classroom learning around growing, harvesting, preparing, serving, and eating healthy local foods.



Promote awareness about the farm to school activities and encourage participation at the school.

“Students have increased pride in their school and its property. They have also built their deep learning in that classes have been learning more about the growing process, calculating the size, and placement of raised beds and greenhouse.

Sustainability of foods, food insecurity, and what foods can grow in our climate have helped students grow more understanding and appreciation of growing foods. Students are willing to TRY new foods.”

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, NL

“The funding for the school horticulture program was cut during COVID-19. Having the farm to school grant allows us to continue working on larger food projects where other funding isn't available from the school.”

HIGH SCHOOL, MB

Grant Activities

With the advent of COVID-19, schools rose to the challenge of adapting their programs to continue to meet the goals of serving local and healthy food, engaging students in hands-on food literacy activities, and connecting these activities with their surrounding communities.



85%

of schools engaged students in hands-on learning.

74% of school were able to integrate food literacy learning activities into the curriculum.



43%

of schools were able to host the salad bar.

Farm to school is a flexible approach that meets schools where they are at, and it looks different in every community. This flexibility proved especially important in the 2020 grant cycle while Covid restrictions were in place, allowing schools to take a variety of creative approaches to implementing their programs.

While some schools were unable to host the salad bar due to the pandemic, many are on track to kick-off their salad bar services in the fall of 2022.



93%

of schools indicated that they would continue the salad bar past the grant period.

92%

of schools indicated that they would continue food literacy activities past the grant period.

During the 2 year grant term, students:

- Tasted local foods
- Gardened at school or in a community garden
- Cooked / preserved local food
- Ate local foods from the salad bar
- Composted food waste
- Visited a farm, fisher, forager, or other producer
- Visited a Farmers' market visit or other location to purchase local foods

“ This learning experience opened up important dialogue in our classroom spaces about how tasty nutritious food can be, how cooking amongst others is such a connective experience and how ingredients can be locally sourced for greater freshness and sustainability. This amongst other experiential learning opportunities at KCI this year, has made the entire school community that much more excited for the official opening of our salad bar in September of 2022.”

HIGH SCHOOL, ON

Impact of the grants program 2020-2022

Our 2020 Farm to School Canada Grants recipients reported the following impacts of the program. A full list of their responses, which reflect the indicators in the [Farm to School Evaluation Framework for Canada](#), can be found at the end of this document.

Public Health

92% of schools reported an increase in students' WILLINGNESS TO TRY new vegetables and fruits.

82% of schools increased the AMOUNT OF HEALTHY FOOD that their school procures and provides to students.

51% of schools increased the AMOUNT OF FOOD GROWN and/or SERVED at the school that reflect the cultural backgrounds and traditions of the student population.

Education & Learning

85% of schools increased students' hands-on FOOD LITERACY SKILLS (e.g. growing, harvesting off the land, preserving and cooking, and composting food).

74% of schools reported increased CONNECTIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND PARTICIPATION within the school and the broader community (e.g. with the Parent Advisory Council, community groups, growers or harvesters, chefs, local authorities, community organizations etc.).

Environment

72% of schools increased student KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND INTEREST about environmental and ecological issues.

62% of schools decreased the amount of FOOD WASTE produced by students at the school.

Community Economic Development

59% of schools increased the amount of LOCAL food that their school procures and provides to students.

41% of schools increased the number of hours that food service workers and providers are engaged in the school's food activities (e.g. planning menus, supporting local supply chains, supporting a school garden, training students in knife skills, etc.).

“I'll use what I've learned to hopefully build my own garden and be able to eat fresh salads and give my friends vegetables and fruit.”

GRADE 11 STUDENT

“It's fun to learn where we can find local food for our snack program!”

GRADE 5 STUDENT

The momentum continues!

33 more schools
(9,745 students)
in
9 provinces
and
1 territory
begin their
Farm to School
Canada Grants
journey in
September 2022.

Farm to School: Canada Digs In! is a pan-Canadian multi-sectoral chronic disease prevention initiative.



Public Health Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé publique du Canada



MEAL EXCHANGE



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Appendix: complete list of program impacts as reported by recipients of the 2020 Farm to School Canada Grants

This section provides a fuller set of evaluation data using the indicators in the [Farm to School Evaluation Framework for Canada](#).

[Brackets] after a statement reflect a specific Framework indicator that has been determined to be a “priority” indicator, and therefore assigned a unique identifier.

The Framework, along with other evaluation tools and resources can be found at <https://www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca/get-started/evaluation-framework/>

Public Health

92% of school increased students' WILLINGNESS TO TRY new vegetables and fruits

90% of schools increased students' AWARENESS of nutrition and healthy eating

90% of school increased students' EXCITEMENT about healthy eating

82% of schools increased the amount of HEALTHY food that their school procures and provides to students

79% of schools improved the SCHOOL FOOD ENVIRONMENT to better promote healthy foods and make them easy to access [PH 2.5]

77% of schools increased students' ability to ACCESS healthy food in a dignified way regardless of their ability to pay [PH 2.8]

77% of schools increased the NUMBER OF HOURS that students spend on garden and other land-based activities [PH 4.1]

74% of schools increased the amount of HEALTHY food CONSUMED by students

69% of schools increased the amount of FOOD PRODUCED OR HARVESTED by members of the school community and served at school [PH 2.4]

51% of schools increased the amount of FOOD GROWN and/or SERVED at the school that reflect the cultural backgrounds and traditions of the student population [PH 2.9]

49% of schools increased the amount that students' CULTURAL FOOD TRADITIONS are respected and celebrated at school [PH 3.3]

Education & Learning

87% of schools increased the NUMBER AND QUALITY of opportunities for students to learn and demonstrate food skills (ex. gardening, food preparation, etc.) [EDU 1.4]

87% of schools reported they had created a greater SENSE OF VIBRANCY AND EXCITEMENT in the school

85% of schools increased students' hands-on **FOOD LITERACY SKILLS** (e.g. growing, harvesting off the land, preserving and cooking, and composting food)

74% of schools reported increased **CONNECTIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND PARTICIPATION** within the school and the broader community (e.g. with the Parent Advisory Council, community groups, growers or harvesters, chefs, local authorities, community organizations etc.)

67% of schools increased students' understanding of their **LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM**, local foods, local food providers and foods in season [EDU 3.3]

56% of schools increased students' understanding of **FOODS BELONGING TO DIFFERENT CULTURES** [EDU 4.1]

44% of schools increased the number of students who share their **CULTURAL FOOD TRADITIONS** at school [EDU 4.2]

41% of schools increased students' understanding of **DIVERSE TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS** [EDU 5.2]

38% of schools increased how often **CULTURAL CEREMONY IN RELATION TO FOOD** is demonstrated within the school community [EDU 4.3]

Environment

82% of schools increased the amount of students that are **ENGAGED** in their local food system while at school [ENV 1.1]

72% of schools increased student **KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND INTEREST** about environmental and ecological issues

69% of schools increased the number of school events and activities that **RAISE AWARENESS** about sustainable food system practices

64% of schools increased students' understanding of how the **FOOD SYSTEM** and their own **PERSONAL CHOICES** influence planetary health

62% of schools **DECREASED** the amount of **FOOD WASTE** produced by students at school [ENV 1.3]

Community Economic Development

59% of schools increased the amount of **LOCAL** food that their school procures and provides to students

56% of schools recognized themselves as a leader among other institutions in the procurement of healthy, sustainable, local foods

41% of schools increased the number of hours that food service workers and providers are engaged in the school's food activities (e.g. planning menus, supporting local supply chains, supporting a school garden, training students in knife skills, etc.) [CED 3.2]

41% of schools **INCREASED** **FOOD SALES**