



# WHAT WORKS IN MONTANA

PROJECT  
15

## Montana Healthy Food and Communities Initiative (MHFCI)

### GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

The MHFCI initiative aims to improve healthy food access and reduce childhood obesity.

**Activities include:** providing nutrition education to school staff, parents and students, developing and maintaining school gardens, connecting institutions to local producers, creating market opportunities for Montana farmers and ranchers, and engaging in food policy.

### POPULATIONS SERVED

Statewide training and outreach, with targeted efforts in Anaconda, Big Fork, Boulder, Bozeman, Butte, Columbia Falls, Crow Reservation, Ennis, Flathead Reservation, Hardin, Kalispell, Livingston, Missoula, Philipsburg, Polson, Red Lodge, Ronan-Pablo, and Somers.

Target populations include: low-income families and children who are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits and institutional food service staff and producers interested in local food procurement.

### MAJOR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), Montana State University, Montana Team Nutrition, Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana Health Care Foundation, The Food Trust, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 24 Montana farmers markets, 13 Montana school districts, Crow and Flathead Reservation advocates, Montana Farm to School Leadership Team, and numerous community-based organizations

### MAJOR OUTCOMES

- Increased participation in farm to school programs
- Increased participation in SNAP (food stamps) by eligible households
- Increased awareness of the benefits of healthy food consumption
- Increased purchases of fresh food at local farmers markets by low-income families
- Increased purchasing of local foods by K-12 schools

### INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

- Established shared goals, and a cross-sector leadership team committed to carrying out those goals.
- Engaged parents and community members in the development and revitalization of school gardens.
- Identified local champions and collaborated with them to design and implement program activities.

### ADVICE FOR OTHERS

“1) Changing cultures takes time and resources. For school environments we suggest considering at least a 4- to 6-year window. 2) Let the local school community determine what constitutes success, as it will look at least slightly different in every school. 3) Find a champion within the organization that can aid in creating change from the inside out. 4) Collaboration is key, find partners who are willing to share ideas, funding sources, successes, and perhaps more importantly, failures.”

— Al Kurki, National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)