



Farm to Early Care and Education Learning Collaboratives: **Gardening Facilitator Guide**

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Learning Collaborative Materials and Resources

The Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Learning Collaborative facilitation and support materials can be found on the Farm to ECE Learning Collaborative Basecamp page. Registered users of the Basecamp page can access the page with this link. To log back into Basecamp, go to <https://basecamp.com> and click “Customer Log-in.”

To be added to the Farm to ECE Learning Collaborative Basecamp page, please email info@healthykidshealthyfuture.org, and you will be sent an email within 2 business days inviting you to join the page. Alternatively, you can download the Gardening Learning Collaborative materials using the links found below.

Gardening Learning Collaborative Links

- [Gardening Resource Guide](#)
- PowerPoints with detailed notes and Agendas
 - [Farm to ECE Learning Collaborative Orientation \(optional\)](#)
 - [Learning Session 1: Introduction to Gardening](#)
 - [Learning Session 2: Benefits of Gardening with Young Children](#)
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- [Sample Evaluation](#)
- [Indiana Grown Toolkits:](#)
 - Farm to ECE Toolkit
 - Gardening Toolkit

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Learning Collaboratives! This Learning Collaborative is included in the three-part Farm to ECE Learning Collaborative series that can be offered separately or in any combination that you would like. This Facilitator Guide is designed to support you as you plan, prepare, and deliver your Learning Collaborative. In this guide, you will find an overview of the Learning Collaborative process and a guide to all of the materials you can use to offer a Gardening Learning Collaborative. The presentations and activities are customizable, and you will find prompts throughout to remind you to add information specific to your region/area. It is important to connect with local and state partners and to highlight any state-specific Farm to ECE resources or materials. We hope this guide is a useful tool as you lead ECE programs on a journey of discovery to improve the health and wellness of children, families, and program staff through Farm to ECE.

Overview

Learning Collaboratives bring together staff from different ECE programs to increase knowledge and make policy, practice, and environment changes to promote healthy habits. They provide an opportunity for programs to share experiences with each other, try out new strategies, and equip participants to engage all ECE program staff in the process.

The Farm to ECE Learning Collaboratives include content on three topic areas: **Gardening**, **Food and Farming Education**, and **Local Food Purchasing**. This Learning Collaborative focuses on **Gardening** and includes various types of activities and tasks that can be completed with participating ECE programs.

ECE program staff will participate in Learning Sessions where discussions and activities enhance learning. Learning Sessions are followed by Action Periods, a period of time between the Learning Sessions where ECE programs assess current activities using a self-assessment, educate fellow staff on their learning, and lead staff through a process of change to increase healthy habits. Throughout the Learning Collaborative, connections are made to show how Farm to ECE activities contribute to all domains of children's development.



Purpose

The purpose of this Facilitator Guide is to provide you with the roadmap and resources you need to successfully implement the Gardening Learning Collaborative. We developed this Facilitator Guide based on our experience implementing ECE Learning Collaboratives for more than a decade.

The aim of the Farm to ECE Learning Collaboratives is to promote healthy development in young children through integrating locally grown foods into meals and snacks served in ECE settings, educating children on how food is grown, and providing hands-on experiences for them to learn to grow their own food in ECE settings. Through this approach ECE program environments, practices, and policies will be improved.

As mentioned on [page 2](#) of this Facilitator Guide, the materials for all three Farm to ECE Learning Collaboratives can be found on the Farm to ECE Basecamp Page. These materials include the PowerPoint presentations for each Learning Collaborative content area, editable Learning Session agendas, timeline templates, and the Resource Guide to share with ECE programs in your Learning Collaborative.

Who is the Facilitator Guide Designed for?

This Facilitator Guide was created for ECE technical assistance providers or training organizations, such as Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies or Head Start Associations, that are interested in increasing healthy habits in ECE settings through a peer-learning, action-oriented Learning Collaborative model. This Facilitator Guide is specifically created for the individuals leading and facilitating the Learning Collaboratives, such as ECE trainers, technical assistants, consultants, or coaches. It incorporates a quality improvement process throughout the Learning Collaborative. Additionally, a Resource Guide is available to share with participating ECE program staff.

Flexible Use

While we designed this Toolkit based on our experiences and learnings from previous projects, it is not a one-size-fits-all guide. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt the guidance, tools, and resources provided to their implementation reality and the needs of their participants. Hidden slides and notes are included throughout each PowerPoint presentation for Coaches to consider and to make modifications as needed.



What is a Learning Collaborative?

A Learning Collaborative brings together program leadership and staff from different ECE programs to accomplish a common goal: making their ECE program healthier. Learning Collaboratives encourage participants to work together over a period of time to test, share, and implement improvement strategies. This Learning Collaborative serves as the foundation to promote positive changes that will improve the physical activity and nutrition practices, policies, and environments of ECE programs.

Development of this curriculum was guided by standards from:

- [Caring for Our Children, 4th Edition](#),
- [Child and Adult Care Food Program meal requirements and recommended practices](#),
- [“Farm to Early Care and Education Self-Assessment” published by ASPHN \(Association of Public Health Nutritionists\) and the National Farm to School Network \(NFSN\)](#), and
- [The Nemours Children’s Health Wellness Workbook for Early Care and Education](#).

A Learning Collaborative uses an empowerment model designed to support the growth of leadership, as well as the collaboration and confidence of ECE providers as they learn, change, grow, and become champions for children’s health, development, and learning.

Why is this Model Effective?

Learning Collaboratives are effective because they:

- Bring together a community of learners.
- Create a network for sharing ideas and building mutual support.
- Includes a regularly recurring training structure where providers engage regularly with trainers and one another.
- Offer evidence-based guidance about ECE practices and policies.
- Provide access to high-quality resources for quality improvement.
- Offer opportunities to build important knowledge and skills: being leaders and champions of change, nurturing collaboration among ECE program staff, and implementing best practices successfully.
- Support long-term, sustainable improvements by engaging ECE programs and families as partners in support of children’s health, development, and well-being.
- Provide a model for ECE programs to examine current practices and implement changes that can be used after the Learning Collaborative.

Components of a Learning Collaborative

Leadership Teams

Center-based or school-based ECE programs are asked to identify two to three program staff members to serve as a **Leadership Team**. This team approach allows for greater buy-in and feedback from staff with a variety of jobs and skill sets. Leadership Teams should include the center or program director, as well as teaching staff and anyone involved in the content areas being covered.

For family child care home (FCCH) programs, most often run by an individual, usually only the owner/director attends the Learning Sessions. However, they are welcome to have a second person join them if that meets the needs of their program. This might be a family member of an enrolled child or a second staff member.

The Leadership Team attends the Learning Sessions, completes the Action Period tasks, and facilitates change in the ECE program.

Learning Sessions

Learning Sessions offer participants a chance to increase their knowledge and skills. The goal of each Learning Session is to foster a supportive, adult learning environment that encourages trust and relationship building between staff of ECE programs.

Each Learning Session highlights recommended practices and strategies for implementation in ECE programs while highlighting state/local initiatives. The Learning Sessions are presented live and can be delivered virtually or in-person. The content is primarily delivered through large group presentations, small group activities, and breakout sessions. To learn more about the Learning Session components, please review [this resource](#).

Self-Assessments

Self-assessments guide the action planning process. Leadership Teams complete a self-assessment before the collaborative begins and again after it ends. ECE programs review the assessment results to determine their strengths, identify potential areas for improvement, and create action plans their program will work towards. Completing the assessment again once the collaborative concludes helps Leadership Teams measure the progress they made to implement healthy environments, practices, and policies. This Learning Collaborative utilizes the National Farm to School Network and Association of State Public Health Nutritionist's [Farm to ECE self-assessment](#). The Farm to ECE self-assessment includes specific sections to assess program practices, environments, policies, and professional development related to Farm to ECE.

Action Periods

Throughout the Learning Collaborative, the ECE programs engage in **Action Periods**. During this time, typically three weeks, the Leadership Team shares what they learned at Learning Sessions with program staff and families and completes specific tasks. The Action Period includes reviewing the program assessment results for that content area, writing action plans, and beginning to work on areas of improvement. Each Action Period also includes a meeting with a coach. Below is a description of the various activities Leadership Teams will complete during the Action Periods.

Technical Assistance (TA)

Coaches provide on-going TA to each of their ECE programs. To foster trust and relationship building, each coach should provide on-going TA to the same ECE programs throughout the Learning Collaborative. Coaches should facilitate conversations with their assigned programs during small group discussions and activities during the Learning Sessions. They also provide TA via site visits, virtual meetings, phone calls, emails, and texts between Learning Sessions.

Another important aspect of TA is providing the ECE programs with resources to use when making program improvements. Coaches can share curriculum guides, program supplies, resource books, handouts, or links to online information. TA should also include connecting the participating programs to state and local community resources related to Farm to ECE. Bringing community providers into the Learning Sessions as guest speakers or connecting them with ECE providers helps sustain program change. View [this resource](#) to learn more about providing TA.

Storyboards

Leadership Teams create and present a Storyboard to share their program's successes and progress made to implement action plans. Sharing these changes can educate and motivate other ECE programs, as well as their own program staff and the families of children in their care. Often, the sharing of Storyboards inspires additional healthy change in other ECE programs. Storyboards can come in many forms, including tri-fold poster boards, PowerPoint presentations, and videos. Coaches and Leadership Teams should decide together how this information should be documented and presented.

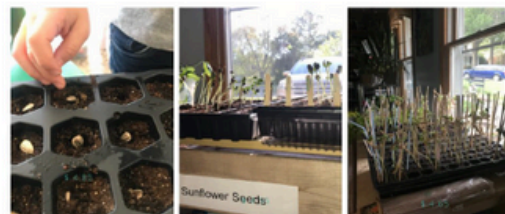
Encourage ECE programs to include:

- The change(s) they made and how they were made
- Their successes and challenges
- Photos of the process including before, during, and after the change(s)
- Documents including lesson plans, activities, menus, or children's artwork that demonstrate changes
- Quotes and stories from teachers, families, children, and support staff
- How participants reacted to the change(s)
- Changes to program policies
- Next steps to sustain changes and continue supporting the development of healthy habits



Example of Tri-fold Storyboards

GROWING SUNFLOWERS
Sunflowers are an easy, fast-growing flower that can add much fun to the garden.



Example of PowerPoint Storyboard

Farm to Early Care and Education

This series of Learning Collaboratives focuses on Farm to ECE practices and strategies for ECE programs. Farm to ECE is a set of strategies and activities that increase: gardening opportunities, access to healthy, local foods, and food and farming education. Farm to ECE is applicable to children ages birth to five and adapts to all ECE settings.



Farm to ECE uniquely includes many opportunities to partner with different types of industries that few other early childhood activities do. These potential partnerships include organizations and institutions focused on public health, education, economic development, and the environment. Farm to ECE provides a triple win: 1) Kids who participate in Farm to ECE eat more servings of fruit and vegetables, 2) by shortening supply chains, farmers keep a bigger share of the dollar and 3) communities win when farmers reinvest in their local communities and kids take what they learn home with them.

The chart below provides more information about the specific topics that are covered.

Gardening	Food and Farming Education	Local Food Purchasing
Teaching children about how food and plants are grown and giving them the opportunity to experience growing themselves.	Teaching children about food, where our food comes from, how it is grown, how farms and gardens work, and other concepts about how our world works.	Purchasing local foods, such as fruits, vegetables, proteins, dairy, and grains, from a local farmer or producer and serving these items in meals and snacks.

Gardening Learning Collaborative

Overview

This Gardening Learning Collaborative focuses on the role gardening can play in ECE settings to support healthy habits, improve language and literacy skills, relationships, and overall child development. There are six Learning Sessions and three Action Periods that are used to guide participants through a quality improvement process. During the Learning Sessions, participants will increase their knowledge and skills around gardening recommended practices and identify goals for healthy change that their ECE program will work towards.

Key content includes:

- Recommended practices for gardening
- Benefits of gardening in ECE programs and ways to implement changes within your program
- Using a self-assessment and action planning tools to make healthy changes
- Strategies for engaging children and families in gardening activities
- Helpful resources and materials created specifically for ECE programs
- Guidance to help sustain healthy changes made through the Learning Collaborative



Identify and Collaborate with Community Stakeholders

Farm to ECE offers many opportunities to facilitate connections between ECE programs and the broader community. Prior to launching the Gardening Learning Collaborative, research community stakeholders who directly or indirectly provide gardening support to other organizations or entities. These organizations and contacts should know about your Learning Collaborative so they can offer services and support to the participants. These groups may also provide complementary resources or linkages to other initiatives.

Before starting the Gardening Learning Collaborative, consider hosting a planning meeting and invite ECE program staff, community members, and others that have gardening expertise. You can discuss the planning of Learning Collaboratives and what ECE programs need the most to install and maintain their ECE program garden. These organizations can be tapped for funding, in-kind support of supplies, trainers, resources, and/or guest speakers at Learning Sessions.

Farm to ECE Stakeholders

Below is a list of suggested stakeholders that may help you recruit and support ECE programs for your Learning Collaborative:

- Health departments, SNAP-Ed Local Implementing Agencies, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) chapters, pediatricians, and/or child health advisory groups
- Organizations working on nutrition, physical activity, and gardening initiatives targeting children/families
- Agencies that administer Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), ECE subsidy programs, and professional development for child care providers
- Cooperative Extension Programs and Professional Gardeners
- State licensing agency and/or local licensing offices
- Departments of Education, local school systems, state Pre-K office
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) state agency, sponsoring organizations
- Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) or the organization that oversee CCHCs
- Nonprofit organizations serving young children and families
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) and other groups that provide training and TA to ECE providers
- Community colleges and universities with ECE related degree/certificate programs
- Local offices/branches or staff of any of these organizations
- Families of children in care
- ECE providers (FCCH and center-based)
- Local/regional/state child care associations

Gardening Learning Collaborative Timeline and Objectives

Below is the suggested timeline and objectives for this Learning Collaborative. These items should be reviewed and adjusted to fit your project plan prior to implementation.

Orientation Session *optional	Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Learning Collaborative Orientation & Farm to ECE self-assessment orientation
Program Assessments	ECE Program Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Farm to ECE self-assessment.
Learning Session 1	Introduction to Gardening
Learning Session 2	Benefits of Gardening with Young Children
Action Period 1	Coach Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Participation Agreement with participants. Review self-assessment results. Support programs to develop two Farm to ECE action plans related to Gardening.
	ECE Program Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First TA session. Inform teachers, staff, and families about ECE program's participation in the Learning Collaborative. Review self-assessment results. Work with teachers and staff to create 2 action plans related to Gardening Decide how program will keep track of progress and how successes will be documented for Storyboards.
Learning Session 3	Gardening in ECE Programs
Learning Session 4	Getting Started with Gardening
Action Period 2	Coach Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical assistance. Check-in on strategies for completion of action plans. If programs have completed their first two action plans, collaborate on the creation of 2 additional action plans.
	ECE Program Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to reach goals with the help of the resources shared during this Learning Collaborative. If programs have completed the first two action plans, they should collaborate on the creation of 2 additional action plans. Keep tracking program's progress and prepare program's Storyboard. Share your Storyboard with your Coach before the "Celebrating Success" Learning Sessions.
Learning Session 5	Maintaining Your ECE Program's Garden
Learning Session 6	Celebrating Success and Sustaining Your Garden
Action Period 3	Coach Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical assistance. Check-in on strategies for implementation of action plans. Brainstorm support needed for final implementation of action plans and discuss remaining tasks.
	ECE Program Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to complete action plans with the help of the resources shared during this Learning Collaborative. Share Storyboard with families and staff. Celebrate all successes and thank those who helped!
Program Assessment: One month after last Learning Session	ECE Program Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete second Farm to ECE self-assessment.
Final Evaluation	Coaches should request for participants to complete a final evaluation to gain feedback on what went well and where improvements can be made. This can be a paper evaluation or an electronic evaluation. You will find suggested questions in this document .

Learning Collaborative Materials and Resources

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- PowerPoints with detailed notes and Agendas
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 - [Learning Session 5: Maintaining Your ECE Program’s Garden](#)
 - [Learning Session 6: Celebrating Success and Sustaining Your Garden](#)

Timelines

- [Timeline for Coaches](#)
- [Timeline for ECE Providers](#)

Additional Resources

- [Learning Collaborative Management Resources](#)
- [Gardening Key Learnings](#)
- [Sustaining Your ECE Program’s Garden handout](#)
- [Sample Evaluation](#)
- [Indiana Grown Toolkits:](#)
 - Farm to ECE Toolkit
 - Gardening Toolkit

Learning Collaborative Materials

The materials below are available to help you plan and implement the Gardening Learning Collaborative.

Learning Session PowerPoint: A PowerPoint slide deck for each Learning Session is provided with detailed notes. The notes include a suggested script for each slide and ideas on how to facilitate each section. Once downloaded, the PowerPoint can be personalized. Coaches may add an agenda, their contact information, and a “next steps” slide with Action Period tasks. It will be more meaningful if information about state/local resources, ECE community, and regulations are added. Additionally, each coach should share their own personal and professional experiences. Brief sharing can assist ECE providers in seeing opportunities for change in their own program. The PowerPoint can be saved as a handout and provided to Leadership Team members as a guide to the Learning Sessions. This, along with the Resource Guide, will be their training manual.

Resource Guide: A Resource Guide is available for you to share with ECE programs participating in the Learning Collaborative. It includes handouts needed for Learning Session activities and for follow-up in the ECE program. If your budget allows, you can print the Resource Guide and provide a copy to each Leadership Team member. You can also email it as an electronic document.

Key Learnings Handout: A Key Learnings handout is located in the Resource Guide. This handout helps Leadership Teams to share the Learning Session materials with the full staff of the ECE program and families. It may be helpful to email this handout to all staff, as it includes links to videos and other resources.

Sustaining Your Program’s Garden Handout: During the Final Learning Session, ECE programs will have the opportunity to review the Sustaining Your Program’s Garden Handout (included in the Resource Guide) to consider how they can continue their program’s garden across the seasons and years.

In-person vs. Virtual Considerations for Trainers

Technology Needs: In-person Learning Sessions require laptops, speakers, LCD projectors, microphones, Wi-Fi access, and panel tables with microphones (if you choose to have guest speakers and/or a panel discussion). You may need access to a printer if you’d like to provide handouts for participants.

Virtual Learning Sessions require a screen sharing platform (e.g., Zoom or Teams), a laptop, and internet access. Trainers usually find it easiest to conduct virtual sessions if they have multiple screens, as they will be presenting content, managing the chat, and looking at the participants. The [Facilitating Adult Learning](#) resource contains specific tips for virtual and in-person sessions.

I liked the one on one time. It was nice to have someone care enough to say, "hey, are you okay? Do you need any support? You are doing great! Take it a little at a time."

Additional Notes for Coaches

- Hidden slides are included throughout the PowerPoints to support coaches' implementation and to bring attention to certain details. Additionally, be sure to review the slide notes for "Note for Coaches" that provide further guidance and prompts to customize your Learning Sessions.
- All information can be modified and adapted to meet the needs of the ECE programs and providers that are participating in the Gardening Learning Collaborative.
- Coaches must review and prepare for facilitation before Learning Sessions. If paired with another coach, determine who will lead each section of material. Share the responsibility of leading sessions, so participants get comfortable with both trainers and see them both as support. In virtual trainings, the other person should provide technical support (e.g., monitoring the chat, muting participants with background noise, adding links to resources in the chat).
- The PowerPoints and Learning Sessions are strengthened when they are customized to include state and local resources. While many resources are included, please add any information about local resources or partnering organizations that you are aware of. It is helpful to do outreach prior to the beginning of the collaborative to gain a better understanding of what local resources are available.
- Feel free to update or change any of the icebreakers and physical activity breaks. However, we do not recommend removing them entirely, as they are an opportunity for participants to get to know one another through icebreakers or share and practice physical activity breaks that providers can do with their children. We recommend always providing modifications for physical activity breaks for people with different abilities. Some Learning Sessions may be held during nap times at programs, but we still recommend talking through the activity breaks and how they can be used in programs.
- The pictures found in the PowerPoints include images we have permission to share and include. Coaches may change the images to better represent the providers and families in the communities served. Microsoft stock images are available at no charge. Additional sites to access free images include the following:
 - [Public health image library from the CDC](#)
 - [Pexels](#)- Free stock photos, attribution required
 - [Snap-Ed Photo Gallery](#)
 - [Nappy](#)- Beautiful photos of Black and Brown people, for free
 - [Burst by Shopify](#)- Free stock photos.

I loved how they [Coaches] treated me as a person, not just a project. I have a lot going on, and they took that into account as I tried to balance and juggle it all.

Farm to ECE Learning Collaborative Orientation Agenda

The agenda below is based on the “Sections” included in the Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Learning Collaborative Orientation. This Learning Session, as well as the Farm to ECE self-assessment Orientation, are optional. You can choose whether to offer these Learning Sessions or not based on the experiences of the ECE programs participating in your Learning Collaborative. If participants have never participated in a Learning Collaborative, it will be helpful to offer this orientation. If participants have participated in a Learning Collaborative before, such as the Better Together Learning Collaboratives, you can skip this session and use the abbreviated slides in Learning Session 1 that recap the highlights of a Learning Collaborative.

Objectives for this Learning Session are to:

- Introduce participants to the Learning Collaborative
- Explain the expectations of participation in the Learning Collaborative
- Orient participants to the three focus areas of Farm to Early Care and Education

Training Component/Content	Estimated Time (60 minutes)
Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Introductions • Establishing Group Norms • Participant Expectations • Learning Collaborative Incentives 	10 minutes
Intro to ECE Learning Collaboratives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Collaboratives Overview • Discussion Prompt: Have you ever participated in a learning collaborative? • What is a Learning Collaborative? • Learning Collaborative Content • Learning Collaborative Structure • Learning Collaborative Core Components 	20 minutes
Intro to Farm to ECE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Prompt: What does Farm to ECE mean to you? • Three Focus Areas • Digging into the Focus Areas • Why Focus on Farm to ECE? 	20 minutes
Resources and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Next Steps • Key Dates • Questions • Coach Information 	10 minutes

Self-assessment Orientation: After the Farm to ECE Learning Collaborative Orientation, Coaches should provide a presentation on the self-assessment tool that is being used throughout the Learning Collaborative, especially if participants are not familiar with the tool.

You can find an editable version of the agenda [here](#).

Learning Session 1: Introduction to Gardening Agenda

The agenda below is based on the “Sections” included in Learning Session 1: Introduction to Gardening. If you are offering the optional Farm to ECE Learning Collaborative Orientation, you can omit the slides in the “Learning Collaborative Orientation” Section of the Learning Session 1 PowerPoint. If you are not offering the Farm to ECE Learning Collaborative Orientation session, it will be helpful to use the “Learning Collaborative Orientation” Section to remind participants about the framework and expectations of the Gardening Learning Collaborative.

Objectives for this Learning Session are to:

- Review expectations of the Learning Collaborative
- Introduce participants to gardening

Before beginning Learning Session 1: Participating ECE Program staff should complete the Farm to ECE self-assessment.

Training Component/Content	Estimated Time (60 minutes)
Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Introductions • Group Norms (If you have already established Group Norms, paste those into the chat as a reminder for participants.) • Learning Objectives 	10 minutes
Learning Collaborative Orientation (Omit Section if you offered the Farm to ECE Learning Collaborative Orientation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Team Model • Gardening Learning Collaborative Structure • Learning Collaborative Components 	15 minutes
Introduction to Gardening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Focus Areas of Farm to ECE • Gardening in ECE Programs • Discussion Prompt: What are some ways that you have introduced gardening concepts to the children in your ECE program or classroom? 	25 minutes
Resources and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Next Steps • Key Dates • Questions • Coach Information 	10 minutes

You can find an editable version of the agenda [here](#).

Learning Session 2: Benefits of Gardening with Young Children

Agenda

The agenda below is based on the “Sections” included in Learning Session 2: Benefits of Gardening with Young Children. The purpose of this Learning Session is to share the many benefits of gardening in ECE programs. Gardening has the potential to impact the children being served by ECE programs, their families, ECE program staff, and the broader community.

Objectives for this Learning Session are to:

- Discuss the benefits of gardening in ECE settings, including benefits for children, ECE programs and staff, families, and the community.
- Review strategies for identifying goals and creating action plans related to gardening in ECE programs.

Training Component/Content	Estimated Time (60 minutes)
Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Group Norms • Icebreaker • Learning Objectives • Gardening Learning Collaborative Structure 	10 minutes
Gardening Benefits	15 minutes
Physical Activity Break	5 minutes
Gardening Benefits Continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits for the ECE Program • Supports CACFP Best Practices • Benefits for Staff • Benefits for Families • Benefits for the Community 	10 minutes
Action Period 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying Goals and Planning for Change • Action Period Tasks • Your Self-assessment results • Brainstorm the Possibilities: What practices do you want to work on? 	15 minutes
Resources and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Action Period Tasks • Key Dates • Questions • Coach Information 	10 minutes

You can find an editable version of the agenda [here](#).

Learning Session 3: Gardening in ECE Programs Agenda

The agenda below is based on the “Sections” included in Learning Session 3: Gardening in ECE Programs. The purpose of this Learning Session is to reflect on the Action Period 1 tasks, share recommended ECE program gardening practices, and to explore some simple, hands-on activities to get ECE programs to start thinking about gardening in their program.

Objectives for this Learning Session are to:

- Reflect on the first two Learning Sessions and progress to work through the Action Period Tasks.
- Discuss recommended gardening practices.
- Explore ideas for gardening with children.

Training Component/Content	Estimated Time (60 minutes)
Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Group Norms • Icebreaker • Learning Objectives 	5 minutes
Action Period 1 Check-In <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Period 1 Task Review • Your Self-Assessment Results • TA Group Discussion (Split into small group when possible) 	15 minutes
Recommended Gardening Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended Gardening Practices for ECE Programs • Garden Education for Children • Cultural Relevance and Reflection 	15 minutes
Physical Activity Break	5 minutes
Ideas for Gardening with Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardening Options • Indoor Gardening Activities • Seed Balls • Living Necklace • Ideas for Small Spaces • Discussion Prompt: What ideas for gardening with children stood out to you? <p><i>Note: If offering Learning Session virtually, choose one activity to demonstrate on camera. If offering in-person, choose at least one hands-on activity for participants to complete.</i></p>	15 minutes
Resources and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Tasks to Complete • Key Dates • Questions • Coach Information 	5 minutes

You can find an editable version of the agenda [here](#).

Learning Session 4: Getting Started with Gardening Agenda

The agenda below is based on the “Sections” included in Learning Session 4: Getting Started with Gardening. The purpose of this Learning Session is to walk ECE providers through steps to plan and install a garden in their program. Step by step guidance and resources for each task are provided.

Objectives for this Learning Session are to:

- Explore considerations for gardening with children.
- Discuss gardening step by step.
- Review Action Period 2 Objectives.

Training Component/Content	Estimated Time (60 minutes)
Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Group Norms • Icebreaker • Learning Objectives 	~5 minutes
Step by Step: Gardening with Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garden Preparation • Safety • Use Resources and Guides • Gardening Planning Steps • Location • Selecting Plants • Plants to Grow with Children • Reading Seed Packets 	25 minutes
Physical Activity Break	3 minutes
Step by Step: Gardening with Children cont. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil • Choosing appropriate containers • Documentation 	10 minutes
Engaging Families in the Garden <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas for Engaging Families 	5 minutes
Action Period 2 Reminders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardening Learning Collaborative Key Learnings 	5 minutes
Final Reflection: What ideas were shared today that you want to try at your program?	5 minutes
Resources and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources- Phone Apps and Other Trainings • Next Steps • Action Period Tasks • Key Dates • Questions • Coach Information 	2 minutes

You can find an editable version of the agenda [here](#).

Learning Session 5: Maintaining Your ECE Program’s Garden Agenda

The agenda below is based on the “Sections” included in Learning Session 5: Maintaining Your ECE Program’s Garden. The purpose of this Learning Session is to provide important information about ways to maintain an ECE program garden. This session offers guidance on necessary tasks that need to be completed to nurture a garden and to keep it safe from pests.

Objectives for this Learning Session are to:

- Reflect on progress to work through the Action Period tasks.
- Explore ways to maintain your program’s garden.
- Discuss the importance of pollinators.

Training Component/Content	Estimated Time (60 minutes)
Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Group Norms • Icebreaker • Learning Objectives 	~5 minutes
Action Period Check In <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Period 2 Task Review • TA Group Discussion (split into small groups when possible) 	12 minutes
Maintaining Your ECE Program’s Garden <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watering • Fertilizer • Pest and Insect Control • Companion Planting • Keeping Animals Out of the Garden 	15 minutes
Physical Activity Break	5 minutes
Pollinators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are pollinators so important? • How Pollination Works video • Common pollinators • Discussion Prompt: How would you share about pollinators with the children in your program? What are some activities you can do? 	12 minutes
Reflection: What other challenges are you facing with your garden right now? What additional information would you like to learn about?	5 minutes
Action Period Reminders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storyboards 	3 minutes
Resources and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Next Steps • Key Dates • Questions • Coach information 	3 minutes

You can find an editable version of the agenda [here](#).

Learning Session 6: Celebrating Success and Sustaining Your Garden Agenda

The agenda below is based on the “Sections” included in Learning Session 6: Celebrating Success and Sustaining Your Garden. The purpose of this Learning Session is to provide participating ECE providers with an opportunity to share about the successes they have achieved and activities they have tried during the Learning Collaborative. We will encourage participating programs to continue making progress to sustain and expand their gardens over the seasons and years.

Objectives for this Learning Session are to:

- Participants to share Storyboards, including successes and lessons learned.
- Explore ways to sustain ECE program gardens.
- Discuss next steps to finish up the Gardening Learning Collaborative.

After Learning Session 6: Participating ECE Program staff should complete the Farm to ECE self-assessment again.

Training Component/Content	Estimated Time (60 minutes - 2 hours)
Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Group Norms • Icebreaker • Learning Objectives 	~2 minutes
Storyboards	40 minutes to 1.5 hours
Sustaining Your Garden <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your key takeaways? • How can you sustain your program’s garden? • What went well with your program’s garden this season? • What challenges did your program face? • What would you like to continue growing in the future? How do you think you can expand? • What does your program need to sustain and/or expand your garden? 	10 minutes
Reflection: How will you use this handout to share your key learnings and to develop a plan to sustain and expand your ECE program’s garden?	5 minutes
Action Period Reminders	3 minutes
Resources and Next Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Final Action Period • Action Period Tasks • Key Dates • Questions • Coach Information 	2 minutes

You can find an editable version of the agenda [here](#).

Program Incentives and Implementation Funds

ECE providers have many priorities and responsibilities. By providing incentives you can support the participation of program staff in the Learning Collaborative. Incentives may include licensing or professional development training hours, Continuing Education Units (CEUs), classroom materials, or monetary incentives (gift card or check to ECE program). Budgeting for incentives is essential. To ensure provider participation, be sure to clearly communicate the expectations that must be met to receive incentives and consider having programs sign a [participant agreement](#).

Closing

As you plan and launch your own Learning Collaboratives, be sure to continuously listen and respond to the needs of your participants. We welcome hearing your innovations and adaptations as we are always interested in improving this model.

Share Your Success

Please share your Success Stories with us by emailing us at info@healthykidshealthyfuture.org, and increase your impact by sharing with other interested state organizations.

For More Information and Resources

[Nemours Children's](#) has numerous resources for trainers and ECE programs on nutrition and physical activities topics at www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org.

Questions? Email info@healthykidshealthyfuture.org.



Glossary

Action Period	A period between Learning Sessions during which Leadership Teams lead a variety of tasks. Leadership Teams share information learned with staff and families and complete self-assessments and action plans. They also engage others in implementing changes and documenting progress.
Action Plan	List of tasks to guide an ECE program to implement a new recommended practice.
Coaches	Individuals responsible for leading the Learning Sessions and providing ongoing technical assistance to participating ECE programs.
Early Care and Education (ECE)	The field, sector, or industry that includes care and learning experiences for children from birth to age five.
Early Care and Education Program (ECE Program)	A business or organized service that provides care and learning experiences to groups of children from birth to age five. ECE centers and family child care homes (FCCH) are common types of ECE programs.
Early Childhood	A developmental period of time, typically birth to age five.
Facility	The physical place where an ECE program is offered.
Leadership Team	ECE program staff that are committed to leading the work of the Learning Collaborative – attending the Learning Sessions and guiding the Action Periods. For ECE centers, the Leadership Team is usually composed of three people (e.g., owner/director, lead teacher, food service personnel, or other staff). A FCCH may have a Leadership Team composed only of the owner/teacher or may include additional personnel or family members of children in their care.
Learning Collaborative	A learning community of ECE programs brought together to increase their knowledge, create networks of support, and equip programs to make healthy changes to their practices, policies, and environments.

Facilitator Guide

Learning Session	Learning Sessions provide the curriculum content. Most sessions are held live and offer active learning on nutrition, breastfeeding support, physical activity, or screen time, as well as their impact on children's health and development. Live sessions provide opportunities to build relationships, develop leadership, increase collaboration, and plan for healthy change. All Learning Sessions can be conducted in-person or virtually.
Project Coordinator	The individual responsible for administering and providing overall coordination of the Learning Collaboratives in the state. To support delivery of Learning Collaboratives, this individual leads the recruitment of coaches and ECE programs, provides ongoing oversight and technical support for coaches, and facilitates communication about the project. This could be a separate staff member when multiple Learning Collaboratives are being coordinated simultaneously, or the coach may serve as the project coordinator if implementing independently.
Recommended Practices	In ECE, recommended practices are strategies, standards, methods, and techniques that provide guidance to ECE professionals and families on effective ways to improve health and learning outcomes of young children.
Resource Guide	An accompanying guide for Leadership Team members that includes activities and handouts used in the Learning Sessions or should be shared with ECE program staff and families.
Self-assessment	A questionnaire designed to help ECE providers identify which recommended practices they are and are not meeting in order to select relevant goals regarding program environments, practices, and policies.
Technical Assistance (TA)	Encouragement, support, information, and resources provided by coaches to help Leadership Teams develop and implement action plans for healthy change ensuring the involvement of all staff members.

Notes

