

# SEEDING THE MOVEMENT:

Materials for starting your own farm to preschool mini-grant program



Photo courtesy Shawn Linehan



In 2014, Ecotrust awarded \$17,500 to 13 early care and education sites around Oregon in the form of mini-grants ranging from \$500-\$2,000. Combining seed funding with hands-on support and networking, this project, known as the **Farm to Preschool Learning Community**, aimed to grow the farm to preschool movement by directly addressing two needs heard from programs on the ground:

## **1) SEED FUNDING TO SUPPORT INNOVATIVE LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT, AND FARM TO PRESCHOOL IN GENERAL.**

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State and federal funding is more widely available for K-12 school districts that are interested in farm to school. Equivalent funding specifically for preschool programs has only recently been made available through a small handful of agencies and organizations.

*“[This] grant gave legitimacy to our program and helped move it to the next level by putting more effort into local procurement.”*

- Oregon grant recipient

## **2) OPPORTUNITIES TO COLLABORATE AND LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER.**

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Child care providers at the forefront of the farm to preschool movement work in diverse settings and may be geographically dispersed. Cultivating supportive peer-to-peer networks helps to connect, inspire, and build capacity among farm to preschool leaders.

*“The networking component is one of the hardest to get funded, but those are the dollars I appreciate the most. They’re worth their weight in gold. The ability to quickly make decisions, to overcome challenges – you have to invest in relationships to be efficient that way. That takes time.”*

- Oregon grant recipient

## GRANTS LIKE THESE ARE THE NEXT STAGE IN AN EVOLVING MOVEMENT TO ESTABLISH FARM TO PRESCHOOL AS THE NEW NORMAL FOR CHILD CARE ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Like Oregon, a handful of other states are responding to the need for seed funding by offering farm to preschool grants to early child care settings. Issuing agencies, partnerships, and program administration varies, but the goals are largely the same.

What follows is a collection of documents developed by Ecotrust to implement the Farm to Preschool Learning Community, a project that grew from our state and national farm to preschool work over the past eight years. These documents have been gathered together as a toolkit, making them accessible and adaptable by other programs.

It is important to note that as a non-profit organization, with private foundation funds secured specifically for this project, we had a certain degree of flexibility in how funds were administered. We worked with a diversity of early care and education settings ranging from family child care to center-based, Head Start, and relief nurseries. Participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) was not a requirement (though most did participate in CACFP), and several sites had little to no experience with grant writing and reporting.

**WE HOPE THAT SHARING THESE DOCUMENTS WILL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS IN DEVELOPING THEIR OWN MINI-GRANT PROGRAMS SO THAT FARM TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS CAN THRIVE IN EVERY COMMUNITY, FOR EVERY CHILD.**

*"This was an awesome opportunity to leverage a little bit of money into a big impact project."*  
- Oregon grant recipient



### ABOUT ECOTRUST

At the Portland, Oregon-based nonprofit Ecotrust, we work to build a resilient food system that offers fresh, healthy food to all residents, living wages and expanded opportunities for farmers, producers, and food workers, and methods of food production that renew our resources. Ecotrust is the Western Regional Lead for the National Farm to School Network (NFSN) and has helped NFSN to build a robust national farm to preschool movement.

Learn more: [ecotrust.org](https://ecotrust.org) and [farmtoschool.org](https://farmtoschool.org).



# Toolkit Materials

*For ease of editing, all components of this toolkit are made available as downloadable Word documents:*

[www.ecotrust.org/media/Toolkit-Materials.zip](http://www.ecotrust.org/media/Toolkit-Materials.zip)

## APPLICATION AND SELECTION

*Template documents related to developing the grant application and selecting grantees.*

**Tip:** Keeping the application process and grant requirements fairly simple and straightforward makes the grant more accessible to a diverse array of child care providers.

### 01 INSTRUCTIONS & GUIDELINES

### 02 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

### 03 REVIEWER RUBRIC

### 04 AWARD LETTER

### 05 DECLINE EMAIL

### 06 GRANT AGREEMENT

## LEARNING COMMUNITY

*An overview of how to establish a peer-to-peer network among grantees.*

### 07 LEARNING COMMUNITY GUIDELINES & RESOURCES

## REPORTING AND REFLECTION

*Documents related to grantee evaluation and reporting.*

### 08 TRACKING TEMPLATE FOR GRANTEE ACTIVITIES

### 09 MID-POINT CHECK-IN TEMPLATE

### 10 FINAL REPORT SURVEY FROM GRANTEES

### 11 SHARING RESULTS WITH GRANTEES

### 12 EXPERT TIPS



