

Let's get growing



PLAN

Planning and sustainability guide for school and child care center gardens



Commissioner Sid Miller with student at Kids "R" Fun child care center



TEXAS FARM FRESH INITIATIVE

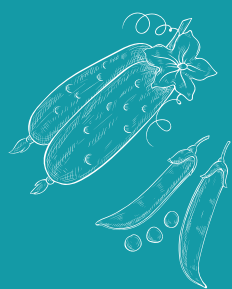
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE | COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



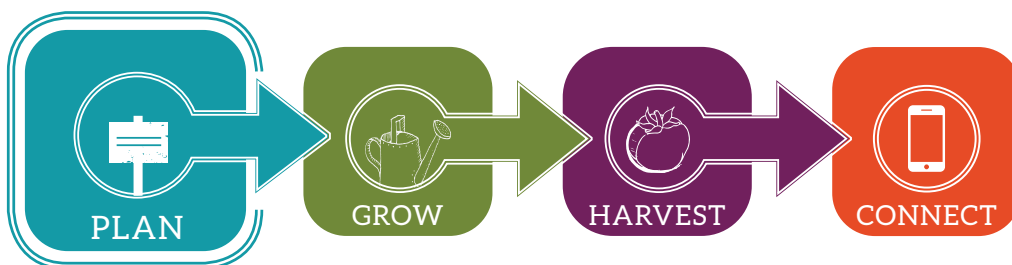
Across Texas, school and child care center gardens provide invaluable lessons in nutrition and agriculture. Whether it is in a major city, suburb or a quiet rural community, most successful and sustainable gardens start with a road map.

This guide, **PLAN**, will help a garden coordination team get off to a great start and prepare for long-term success.

Let's ^{get} growing



PLAN is the first tool in the Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) Let's Get Growing four part series. *Let's Get Growing: PLAN* is divided into five major steps: Prepare, Design, Communicate, Execute, Evaluate and Improve. Each step builds on the previous one.



ONE-STOP SHOP: GARDEN PROGRAM *support*

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BUILD-YOUR-OWN Garden Planner

AND COORDINATION TOOLKIT TEMPLATES



The following tools can help your team track information, hold productive meetings and implement effective early planning. Download all tools and templates at SquareMeals.org/Gardens.



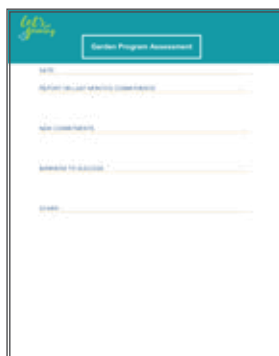
MISSION AND VISION BRAINSTORM TEMPLATE

This PDF template helps guide the development of a clear and impactful mission and vision that will assist teams to establish and communicate garden goals and set the stage for garden success.



GARDEN PROJECT TRACKER

This Excel spreadsheet helps teams track each step in the garden process. One spreadsheet can be used for the whole garden project or a spreadsheet can be created for each individual project.



PROJECT ASSESSMENT AND MEETING PLANNER

This formatted Word document can help keep teams on track with organized meetings.

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Evaluation is easier if you can show the garden is meeting goals established during planning.

BUILD A STRONG *Leadership Team*

STAGE 1: *Prepare*

COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING THE SAME GOAL IS A VITAL FIRST STEP IN ANY GARDEN PROJECT.

Why create a garden coordination team?

Many hands make for lighter work. A robust garden coordination team can tackle bigger projects. It also puts in place a safety net if one key member changes roles or leaves the program.

Build the Garden Coordination Team

Involve a diverse group of committed individuals ready to bring their knowledge and passion to the table. Recruit team members by getting the word out through as many avenues as possible. Consider leveraging social media channels, email campaigns, and one-on-one meetings to build awareness and excitement.

POSSIBLE PARTICIPANTS



PARENTS &
FAMILY MEMBERS



TEACHERS



ADMINISTRATORS



CHILDREN/STUDENTS



COMMUNITY
LEADERS



AGRICULTURALISTS

SPOTLIGHT STORY:

Lewisville Independent School District (LISD)

and Independence Garden, the nonprofit organization that leads the district's garden program, work hand in hand to promote local foods and garden-based learning to students of all ages in the district. The garden coordination team includes parents, teachers, administrators and community leaders. Each year, the group identifies goals for the upcoming year, while keeping an eye on long-term growth. During the first year, the group focused on identifying the campuses most interested in starting a garden through parent and teacher outreach. The next year, the garden coordination team set the goal of integrating the gardens more seamlessly into existing curricula. As more campuses came on board, the size of the garden coordination team grew to ensure adequate support at each garden site. Each year, they set a new strategic goal in line with LISD's mission and vision.

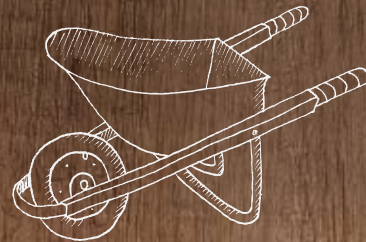
Students at LISD garden



8 KEY ROLES

of Garden Coordination Team Members

Each garden coordination team member should have a clear understanding of their role. A clear understanding of expectations and roles helps volunteers stay motivated and engaged for the long term. Use these descriptions as a starting point. The number of members on a garden coordination team can vary. Use these descriptions as a starting point to identify which roles are needed for your project. A volunteer can also serve in more than one capacity, depending on expertise and time availability.



01 *Garden Coordinator**

- Provide general program support including program evaluation and strategic planning.
- Plan meetings and coordinate garden team feedback.
- Facilitate group discussions and seek consensus.
- Assign tasks and maintain motivation.
- Work to keep projects on track and team members motivated and accountable.
- Serve as primary contact for internal and external communications. (Use the [Let's Get Growing: CONNECT](#) guide for resources to support communication to external partners).

* A green thumb is not required. This person should be a natural leader who can match resources to projects to get the job done.



02 *Program Administrator**

- Motivate staff and other members of the organization to promote participation.
- Provide final project and budget approval, as appropriate and necessary.
- Participate in planning sessions to offer solutions-oriented input for challenges.
- Provide guidance on selecting funding sources.
- Consult on funding and grant applications.
- Provide decision-maker level feedback.

* This role is best filled by a principal, vice principal, child care center director or a representative at another level of the organization. If this person is not a program decision maker, input from the organization's leadership will be necessary for final approvals. Refer to [STAGE 3: COMMUNICATE](#) for tips on preparing communication for administrator level leadership.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



*This person could be an agriculturalist or parent leader with garden experience.

03 Planting Leader*

- Work with other team members to schedule all planting activities.
- Ensure the communications plan includes garden workdays, planting and harvest schedules.
- Organize volunteer groups for work days. (Use the [Let's Get Growing: CONNECT](#) guide for a template Excel document to help track volunteer interest and contact information.)
- Act as point of contact for volunteer workdays and facilitate approval from administration and facilities departments as necessary.
- Provide guidance for site selection, construction materials, plant selection, and schedules for planting and harvesting.



*This role can be filled by the menu planner, food service director or other team member within the child nutrition program staff.

04 Child Nutrition Program Representative*

- Assist planting leader to develop harvest and planting schedule to align with program menu and special events.
- Coordinate with teachers and staff for discussions about taste testing or cooking demonstrations.
- Facilitate development of a food safety protocol if produce harvested from the garden will be served in program meals. (The [Let's Get Growing: HARVEST](#) guide includes a template to assist with the creation of a custom food safety protocol.)



*This person could be a teacher or curriculum coordinator.

05 Resource Leader*

- Act as the primary point of contact for all garden-based educational materials.
- Collect, evaluate and organize educational materials, ensuring they align with current curriculum standards.
- Communicate with educators to support the implementation of materials.

The garden team should be organized so there is a clear delineation of roles and each member feels valued for their contribution.



06 Parent-Teacher Liaison*

- Recruit parent volunteers and promote community engagement. (Use the information and templates included in [Let's Get Growing: CONNECT](#) for enlisting and tracking volunteers.)
- Communicate roles and responsibilities of garden coordination team members to appropriate parent groups.
- Organize approvals and background checks for volunteers prior to scheduled work days.

* Check to see if the school or child care center has a team member already identified for this role.



07 Fundraising Leader*

- Identify, research and present options for funding sources.
- Communicate with garden coordination team about funding opportunities.
- Collaborate with other team members to identify funding sources.
- Serve as the point of contact for writing and submitting applications or proposals for grant funding. Manage the receipt and reporting for external grant funding.
- Manage the receipt and reporting for external grant funding.

* If the school or child care center has a grants department, ask if a member of that team can serve in this role.



08 Student Communication Liaison*

- Provide a student perspective.
- Share garden communication between student groups and garden coordination team.

* Depending on the age of the children using the garden space, determine if this is an appropriate role to include on the Garden Coordination team.



VISION AND MISSION Statements



Vision and mission statements help guide the garden program to long-term success. The best statements are inclusive and cohesive. They are written to clearly communicate the purpose to those working in and supporting the garden. A vision statement should inspire people to dream and the mission statement should inspire people to take action.

Vision Statements

A vision statement represents the ideal conditions and outcomes for the garden and community. It clearly communicates the beliefs and principles governing the garden leadership team.

MAKE IT CONCISE – FOLLOW THESE TIPS

- **Comprehensive** – A strong vision statement includes diverse perspectives.
- **Inspiring** – A vision statement should inspire the reader and leave them feeling positive.
- **Shareable** – A vision statement should be easy to communicate. Think of it like a slogan.

USE THESE AS INSPIRATION

- Healthy kids, healthy communities, fresh garden produce
- Fresh produce and fresh perspectives
- Garden-based education for all

Mission Statements

A mission statement is more action-oriented and concrete, compared to the vision statement.

MAKE IT CONCISE – FOLLOW THESE TIPS

- **Succinct** – A mission statement should clearly communicate the point in one sentence.
- **Outcome-oriented** – A mission statement should explain the ultimate goal of the garden program.
- **Inclusive** – A mission statement should include everyone in the community.

USE THESE AS INSPIRATION

- Sowing garden seeds for strong families and a strong community.
- Collaboration and activation for strong bodies and minds through fresh, garden-grown produce.

...INSPIRE PEOPLE
TO DREAM
and take action



THESE ARE THE GOALS OF THE
VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT.



START THE Conversation

Use these **QUESTIONS** to spark the discussion. Everyone on the garden coordination team should provide input. Use the **Mission and Vision Brainstorm** template to capture ideas.

- How do we measure the success of our educational goals?
- What other purpose does this garden serve?
- What are the priorities?
- How do we want to involve the community?
- How can we make the garden inclusive, ensuring that all children feel welcome?

- What will children learn in the garden?
- What types of activities will children do?
- What current teaching topics could be enriched?
- What new topics could be taught?
- What are the educational goals?



DON'T LET HARD WORK *go to waste*

The vision and mission statements should be shared with all garden coordination team members and included in communication with community members. If your group has an official letterhead or email signature, consider including these statements as well.



STAGE 2: *Design*

DESIGN THE GARDEN *with Intention*



Garden design must balance site, soil and climate considerations with child participation accommodations. The design should allow plants to thrive and children, including those with disabilities, to access and enjoy the space. The garden coordination team should identify the most useable type of garden – based on the identified goals, available space, and resources and funds available.

A Few Garden Types



Raised beds in Elgin ISD



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Container gardens in Montgomery ISD

RAISED BEDS

Raised planter beds or boxes are great if space is hard to come by. Raised garden beds can also be Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant gardens. This means students of all abilities will be able to enjoy the garden. Many adults and taller children also like the ease of working in raised garden beds.

CONTAINER GARDENS

Container gardens are great because they can be mobile, flexible for space considerations and practical models for families to replicate at home.

INDIVIDUAL BEDS

Individual beds allow teachers to tailor the garden to their lessons. Children also feel pride and ownership over a garden plot. Maintaining multiple garden plots may increase resource needs.

GARDEN FEATURES

Make the garden naturally inviting to encourage children to learn and play all year. The following elements help make the space enjoyable all year long:

- A compost bed can provide science lessons as well as a source of rich soil.*
- Greenhouses may help save money after the upfront cost. They extend the growing season and make seed starting easier.
- Shade awnings enable children, parents and teachers to enjoy the garden and offer lessons out of the sun.
- Rainwater catchment tanks or barrels teach children important lessons about the water cycle. The captured water may be used on surrounding landscapes, but may not be an allowable water source for edible plants.*



*Refer to [Let's Get Growing: HARVEST](#) for composting and water use tips for school and child care center gardens.



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Peppers at Cypress-Fairbanks ISD



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VERTICAL GARDENS

If garden space is limited, consider planting a vertical garden. This technique encourages plants to extend upward rather than along the ground surface of the garden. Edible plants such as peas and cucumbers are a perfect fit because they naturally climb and grow upward.

THEME GARDENS

A theme garden can highlight a specific purpose. Three sisters gardens, salsa gardens and pizza gardens are three examples of theme gardens that are popular with young participants. Be creative, there is no limit to the type or theme of the garden.

SHADE GARDENS

A garden can still thrive in partial shade. Just choose plants wisely. If the fruit or vegetable is grown for the root, like potatoes or beets, it needs full sun. If it's grown for the leaves or the buds, like lettuce or squash, a little shade will be just fine.



PLAN THE *Layout*

ONLINE TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP PLAN THE GARDEN.

Easy Gardening- Texas A&M Agrilife Extension's Easy Gardening guide helps with questions such as, what size garden is best, how much to plant based on total number of participants and site selection.

Estimate Garden Expenses

Garden programs include upfront investment expenses and ongoing maintenance costs. The garden coordination team should plan for both types of expenses.

EDIBLE PLANTS

Contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agents for local information. They are experts on what grows best in every corner of Texas. Also, volunteers in Agrilife's Texas Master Gardener Program can help pick the plants most suited for a location's climate and soil type.

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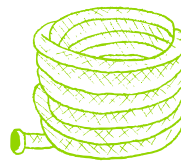
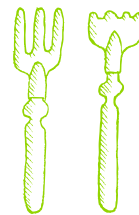


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TOOLS

Determine whether the garden will supply both adult and child size tools for maintenance activities. Refer to **Let's Get Growing: GROW** for best practices in labeling and storage.

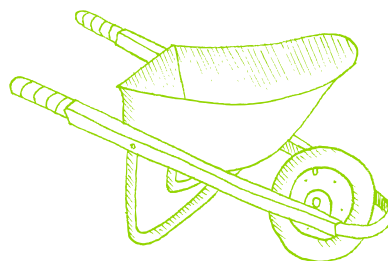
- Hoes
- Rakes
- Shovels
- Hand trowels
- Cultivators
- Pots
- Soaker hoses
- Watering cans
- Outdoor bulletin board
- Bench for classroom activities
- Tool shed
- Greenhouse
- Garden cart or wheelbarrow
- String and tape measure
- pH soil test kits
- Rain water catchment barrels



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BUILDING MATERIALS AND SOIL INPUTS

- Edging/raised bed framework
- Garden cart/wheelbarrow
- Garden stakes/row markers
- String
- Compost
- Mulch
- Fertilizer
- Organic pesticides
- Netting/chicken wire



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Complete a Site Analysis

Every landscape design project begins with a site analysis. The information guides plant selection and permanent feature decisions. The garden coordination team may not have flexibility to choose the exact garden site, but the team can be aware of all assets and barriers for a particular location and plan accordingly.



FOOTPRINT – Start by determining the basic dimensions of the property.



EXISTING FEATURES – Make a list of what is already there. Note which features are assets and which features are challenges.



TOPOGRAPHY – Identify the high and low points.



HYDROZONES – Analyze the drainage patterns and water sources. This information can help identify areas where certain plants can be grouped according to their water needs.



SHADE AREAS – Are natural sources of shade adequate for lessons in the garden or for volunteers and children who need to take a break? Consider the changing angles of the sun during various seasons and how this will affect plant selection.



UNDERGROUND UTILITIES – Always know what's below the ground surface before digging. Call "811" or visit www.Texas811.org for more information on getting your local utility company to mark buried lines so you can dig safely around them.



ACCESSIBILITY – Individuals of all ability levels, ages and heights should have access to the garden. Map out any hazards that reduce or prevent access.



SITE HISTORY – Conduct a soil test to get a snapshot of what makes up the soil. Contact the local [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension](#) agent to locate a soil-testing facility.

Plan for Maintenance

The excitement of planting day is hard to top, but it is the continual care that really makes a garden flourish. Use TDA's template to start a [Garden Project Tracker](#) for maintenance tasks that need to be completed on an ongoing basis.

GET A HEAD START:

- List particular tasks that will be ongoing (clean-up, watering, weeding, harvesting, etc.)
- Draft the year-round planting schedule
- Identify necessary approvals
- Plan for all upcoming communication to maintenance teams
- Schedule work day reminders
- Plan ongoing worker appreciation

CONTINUAL CARE
Makes a Garden Flourish





FUNDING SOURCES are key to success



Funding diversity can be a key to success when planning a sustainable garden program. The amount of funding needed to start and maintain a garden can vary greatly, depending on the size, type, features and stage of development. Typically, startup costs are highest and sustaining costs can be kept lower.

Some funds may support material purchases while others fund staff support. Keep in mind that some funds may not be available on a renewable basis. Once resource needs are identified, consider the following support opportunities:

- Ask local hardware stores about donations or discounted prices.
- Contact volunteer agencies about providing staff and manpower.
- Consider using child nutrition program funds to pay for allowable costs.
 - Program participants are responsible for ensuring that all expenses are allowable according to program regulation before using child nutrition program funds.
 - Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) should refer to the Farm to School and School Garden Expenses Memo ([SP 06-2015](#)), the School Garden Q&As Memo ([SP 32-2009](#)) and the school garden section of the [Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs](#) for additional information.
 - NSLP participants can access Section 14 of the Administrator's Reference Manual, [Financial Information Concerning School Nutrition Funds](#) for additional information.
 - Child care centers participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) should refer to Local Foods in the CACFP with Questions and Answers ([CACFP 11-2015](#)) for more information.
 - CACFP participants can access [Section 7000 of the Handbook, Financial Management](#) for additional information.
 - Summer sites participating in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) should refer to Local Foods and Related Activities in Summer Meal Programs, with Questions and Answers ([SP 07-2016, SFSP 07-2016](#))
 - SFSP participants should review all [USDA and TDA Handbooks](#) for information related to allowable costs.
 - A local Education Service Center office is also available to answer questions. View a map of regional offices [here](#).
- Federal, state and local grant funds can be used to support garden supplies, equipment and staff. TDA maintains a list of both public and private sources at [SquareMeals.org/Funding](#). The grant landscape is ever changing.
- Parent associations, healthy fundraisers and local nonprofit organizations may be able to supply resources to start and sustain the garden.

THE SOURCE OF FUNDS *has an Impact*

When NSLP or CACFP funds are used to support gardens, produce grown in the garden must first be used to support the nutrition programs. Anything that cannot be used or is left over from this effort may be sold or donated, and proceeds are to be returned to the child nutrition program. Planning and collaboration can make these projects very successful.

Before using federal child nutrition program funds for any of the suggested practices in this guide, ensure that all expenses are allowable according to program regulation. TDA provides detailed guidance for all programs on www.SquareMeals.org.



Garden Support

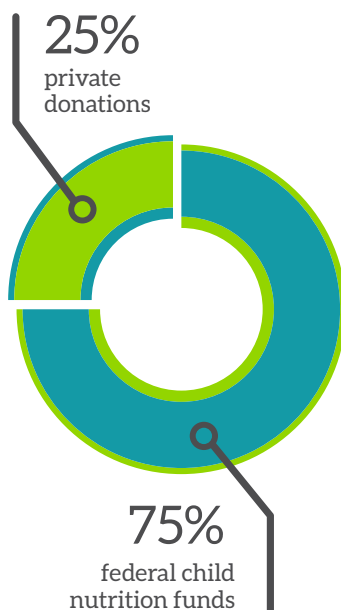
Students with tomatoes at Cypress-Fairbanks ISD



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COMBINED SOURCES OF FUNDING

Child nutrition funds and funds from other sources such as grants or fundraisers may be combined to support garden projects. In this scenario, a proportionate percentage of garden harvest and/or proceeds should be returned to the child nutrition program account, according to federal policy. When a combination is used, the proportionate percentage of garden harvest and/or proceeds should be returned to the child nutrition program account, according to federal policy. For example, if a garden project is supported 75 percent by federal child nutrition funds and 25 percent by private donations from another source, at least 75 percent of the items harvested and/or income generated by the garden should be used by or credited to the child nutrition program. In this example, it is okay for all of the harvest to be used by the child nutrition program. **Let's Get Growing: HARVEST** outlines several models for how to use garden harvest to support the child nutrition program.



SET MEASURABLE GOALS

Before the seed is in the ground, the team should have a plan for how they will measure the success of the garden. Goals should align with the mission and vision of the program the garden serves.

QUANTITATIVE GOALS

These are goals that can be measured objectively. Typically it is a quantity of something such as the number of taste-testing events. Track the progress toward these goals using metrics.

QUALITATIVE GOALS

These goals are based on observations more than measurements. One way to track progress is using satisfaction surveys.

Use the following for inspiration

QUANTITATIVE:

Strive to provide a specific number of garden-based learning opportunities.

Example: Garden-based learning activities reached more than 90 percent of the student population in the program.

QUALITATIVE:

Support educational goals and values.

Example: Teachers felt supported when seeking garden-based educational opportunities for their students.



Use Let's Get Growing: GROW

to develop a safety in the garden checklist so that each activity is educational, fun and conducted with safety as a priority.

QUANTITATIVE:

Set a measurable and reasonable volume of produce to provide for meals and snacks in the program.

Example: Provide 25 pounds of fresh garden produce for taste-testing events.

QUALITATIVE:

Provide access to fresh produce for meals and snacks.

Example: Items grown in the garden support the development of healthy eating habits for children and adults in the program.



Use Let's Get Growing: HARVEST

to develop a food safety protocol and a garden harvest tracking receipt template

QUANTITATIVE:

Set a goal for the number of external communications to be distributed about garden opportunities.

Example: Distribute one garden newsletter per month.

QUALITATIVE:

Promote active participation by administrators, teachers, participants, parents, neighbors and volunteers.

Example: The garden newsletter contained up-to-date information about learning and volunteer opportunities.

A newsletter is one way to connect back to the community and external stakeholders. Share information about nutrition and what's new in the garden.



Use *Let's Get Growing*: **CONNECT**

to build a coordinated communication plan for both internal and external stakeholders.



BUILD SUPPORT INTO THE *Local Wellness Policy*

Every school that participates in NSLP must have a local school wellness policy. The Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 expanded the team of collaborators to include community members, parents, students, physical education teachers, child nutrition team members, school board members, school administrators and members of the public.

School gardens are a great fit for wellness policy writers and for the garden program. Garden-based learning and taste-testing opportunities can help meet local wellness policy goals. TDA's online resource [database](#) has many research driven tools to help develop an effective wellness policy.

CACFP participants are not required to maintain a wellness policy, but may still keep a record on their own.



STAGE 3: *Communicate*

SPREAD THE WORD *about the Garden program*

SUPPORT MAY BE FOUND IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

A rule of thumb is that messages should be shared in at least three different ways and three different places. This may even be one of the garden coordination team's goals. Plan to communicate to each different group in the program in a way that is relevant to them.

PARENT ORGANIZATIONS

Parent organizations are great sources of support and motivated volunteers. Use the [parent flyer](#) provided in [Let's Get Growing: CONNECT](#) to capture contact information. Use the [volunteer campaign Excel template](#) to create a schedule and keep contact information organized. If the program does not have parent organizations, make an effort to participate in parent outreach nights if they are available.



ADMINISTRATORS AND DIRECTORS

When working with administrators and directors, be prepared with facts and figures that prove the garden's value. They often become champions for the garden when they understand the positive impact it has on health and education. It does not hurt to come prepared for each meeting with a clear "ask."



SPOTLIGHT STORY:

Smithville Elementary School

The principal at Smithville Elementary School in Smithville Independent School District became a garden champion after seeing the change in student attitude, attendance and academics following the implementation of the garden program.

INCLUDING THE GARDEN in multiple learning disciplines









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PLANTING THE Seeds

TEACHERS

There are endless opportunities for teachers to use gardens in active learning. Science may seem like the most obvious use of the garden, but lessons can also include math, writing, art, social studies and more.

Possible examples of interdisciplinary learning in the garden include:

-  Drawing plants at their different life stages (science and art)
-  Journaling about plant and garden lifecycles (English)
-  Art installations that add function and beauty to the environment (art)
-  Mulching and decomposition (science)
-  Composting (science)
-  Measuring the distance between seeds (math)

Strive to integrate the garden into as many disciplines as possible. [STAGE 4: EXECUTE](#) includes more examples of free curriculum tools that can assist with communication to educators.

CHILD NUTRITION TEAM MEMBERS

The child nutrition team works hard to plan menus and teach children healthy eating habits. Work with the menu planner to align menus with the garden's planting schedule so children get twice the exposure opportunities. Use [Let's Get Growing: HARVEST](#) to develop a food safety protocol that works for both parties. Child nutrition funds may also be used to support school and child care gardens. More information on using these funds to support a garden program can be found in [STAGE 2: DESIGN](#).

SPOTLIGHT STORY:

The Austin Independent School District (AISD)

The child nutrition director works in tandem with the school garden coordinators across the district to support garden projects and incorporate garden harvest into cafeteria meals. During the fall and winter months all school gardens are encouraged to grow spinach for a special event. As a result of this collaboration every cafeteria in the district will be able to serve spinach grown at an AISD garden on a special celebration day!



STAGE 4: Execute

IMPLEMENTING your Garden project

Use the lists and schedules developed during stages one through three to identify the implementation plan suited for your garden project. The following tips can help keep the team on track and maintain momentum.

Team Member Accountability

The [Garden Project Tracker](#) template can be used as a visible accountability tool. Track major milestones and celebrate completed projects. Keep the [Project Tracker](#) in a visible place, either digital or physical.

KEEP COMMUNICATION CURRENT AND CONSISTENT

Consistent – Use the vision and mission statements developed in [STAGE 1: PREPARE](#) to keep messaging consistent. Consistent messaging helps to create an identity for the garden project.

Current – Timely messaging is critical to a garden program because seasons change and each season brings new opportunities for educational lessons and volunteer work day activities. The resource leader and child nutrition representative will play key roles in making sure teachers and other members of the food service team stay up to date with what is happening and what is coming up in the garden.

Seasonally Focused Culinary Resources for Child Nutrition Programs

These resources from TDA make it easy to think seasonally for meals and snacks.

INTERACTIVE SEASONALITY WHEEL

Every fruit and vegetable has a season – the time of year when locally grown options are easier to find and when fresh flavors are at their peak. Menu planners can use the interactive seasonality wheel at SquareMeals.org/SeasonalityWheel to plan ahead and build menus that support the garden harvest.

COOKING FOR THE SEASONS: SUMMER

This [cookbook](#) includes more than 30 menu-ready recipes focused on fresh produce available in Texas during the summer months. The recipes are tailored to child nutrition programs and can be incorporated into a seasonal cycle menu or weekly menus.



Seasonally Focused Lessons for Educators

Each season brings new garden-based learning opportunities. Educators can take advantage of the many learning tools created to match each seasonal change.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR K-12 SETTINGS

The Great Garden Detective Adventure

This 11-lesson curriculum, developed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Team Nutrition, guides third and fourth grade students through a series of investigations that connect the school garden to the classroom, cafeteria and home.

Got Veggies?

Got Veggies is a garden-based nutrition education curriculum developed by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program that targets second and third graders. Got Veggies? includes seven full lesson plans with an overview, list of objectives, directions and a list of needed materials for each.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR EARLY CHILD CARE SETTINGS

Grow It, Try It, Like It

This garden-themed nutrition kit was developed by USDA's Team Nutrition to introduce children to three fruits – peaches, strawberries and cantaloupe, and three vegetables – spinach, sweet potatoes and crookneck squash.

Seed Sprouting

Teach children that they can grow their own food with this educational tool. The resource is organized by age and by season to help target activities appropriate at any time and for any aged child.



VISIT THE
Educational
Resources page

on www.SquareMeals.org for more educational resources and activity ideas appropriate for both school and early child care settings.

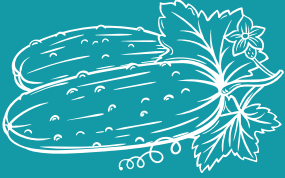


EVALUATING your Garden

EVALUATION IS EASIER IF YOU CAN SHOW THE GARDEN IS MEETING GOALS ESTABLISHED DURING PLANNING.

STAGE 5:

*Evaluate
& Improve*



When it is time for an evaluation, look at the goals established in [STAGE 2: DESIGN](#) and determine if they were met. Goals that are met can be evaluated for the results and unmet goals can be used to determine areas for improvement.

Garden goals

MAINTAINING RECORDS FOR FUTURE FUNDING REQUESTS

Grant funding often includes an evaluation or reporting requirements. Collect and maintain data about the garden development, implementation and success to make preparing reports at the end of a grant simple and accurate.



Evaluation Frameworks and Assessment Tools

USE ANY OF THE TOOLS LISTED BELOW TO STRENGTHEN GARDEN PROJECT EVALUATIONS.

EVALUATION FOR TRANSFORMATION: A CROSS-SECTORAL EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR FARM TO SCHOOL

This tool, developed by the National Farm to School Network, defines the potential outcomes for achievement offered by farm to school and farm to child care. It offers a common language, guidelines and metrics to understand those outcomes. It is organized around four key sectors: public health, community economic development, education, and environmental quality; and three levels of action: program, research and policy.

SCHOOL GARDEN ASSESSMENT TOOL

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education in the District of Columbia developed this tool to assist school garden coordinators in evaluating their programs and guiding conversations. It can be used for an existing program or to plan a new program.

COLORADO FARM TO SCHOOL TASK FORCE EVALUATION TOOLKIT: OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

This tool provides both outcomes and measurement tools for students of different age groups.

COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECT EVALUATION TOOLKIT FOR ADULTS

These two surveys were authored by the USDA Community Food Projects Program. The sample evaluation survey can be customized for the garden's needs. The questions target student behaviors before and after interacting with the garden.



SHARE YOUR
success today

Inspire others with your best practices and learning opportunities. Share your garden program successes by emailing LocalProducts.SquareMeals@TexasAgriculture.gov.



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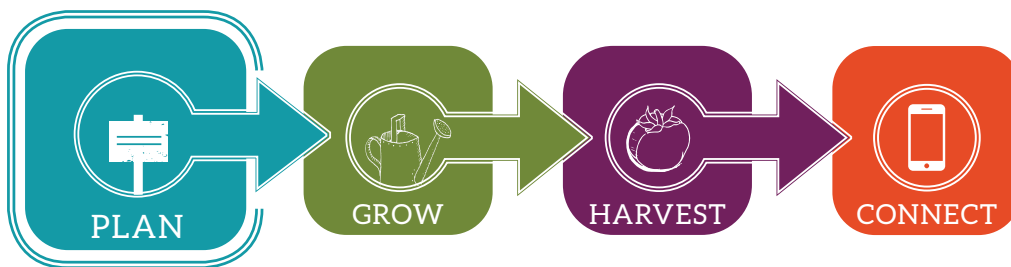
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Let's ^{get} growing

PLAN TODAY!



PLAN guides schools and child care centers in developing a blueprint for gardens that are built for long-term sustainability and success. From creating the right team to developing a strong communication plan, this guide outlines the steps needed to make an educational garden flourish.

Your partners at the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) support your efforts to increase young Texans' connections with local products and agriculture. Learn more about TDA's Farm Fresh Initiative at SquareMeals.org/TexasFarmFresh and access additional resources and training materials. You may also connect with your local Education Service Center office for technical assistance.



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

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Food and Nutrition Division
Farm Fresh Initiative

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