

University of Iowa Workplace Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program

University of Iowa
School of Planning and Public Affairs
MPA Capstone Presentation





Agenda

- Meet the Team
- Acknowledgements
- Project Purpose & Scope
- Guiding Principles
- Methods
- Analysis & Findings
- Recommendations
- Deliverables

Meet the Team



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Acknowledgements



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IOWA

School of Planning
and Public Affairs

IOWA

Initiative for Sustainable
Communities

IVRCD
Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development

Project Purpose & Scope

- Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development was awarded FMPP Grant from USDA in 2023 with the purpose to expand market access for farmers
- **Purpose:** Conduct a Feasibility Study of a workplace CSA voucher program at the University of Iowa
- **Scope:** Research similar programs at other Universities, engage with local stakeholders, and administer a policy analysis
- Provide recommendations based on findings, categorized into three phases



Guiding Principles



The 4 Es of Public
Administration



Administrative Burdens



Positive Externalities

Methods



Stakeholder Interviews



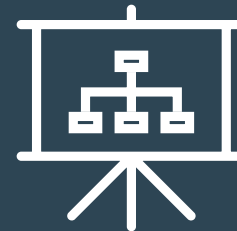
CSA Farmer Survey



Literature Review



Case Study Research



Policy Analysis

Analysis & Findings



Stakeholder Interview Analysis

Benefits Office

- No formal pilot process
- Benefit offerings for the following year are determined in Spring
- Implementing voucher or payroll deduction could be complicated
- No current benefits for local food or CSA shares
- Recommended working with Well-Being at Iowa

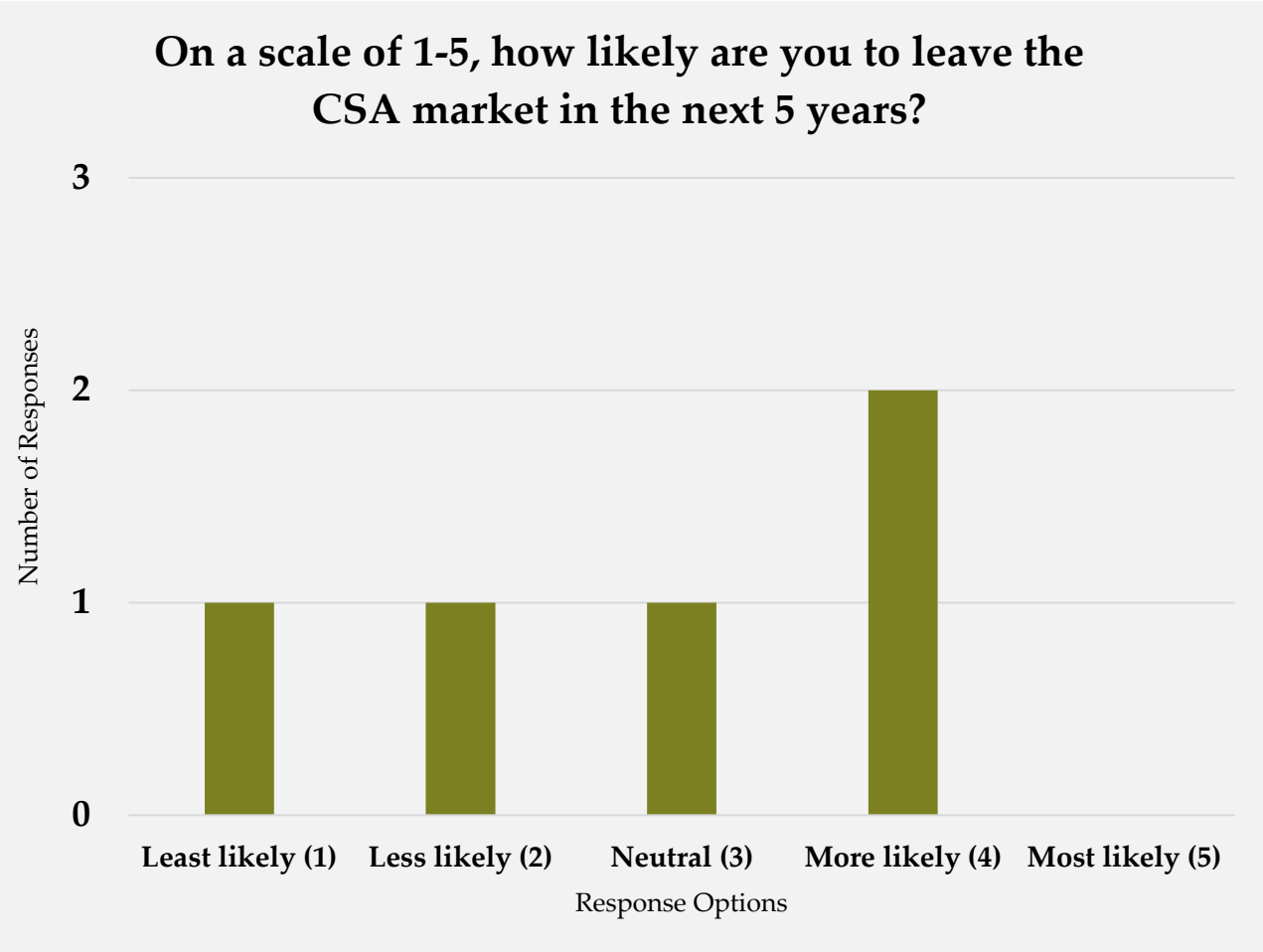
Well-Being at Iowa

- Oversees all wellness related benefits
- Key partner
- PHA survey results
- Interested in CSA program
- Pilot required
- Offered to assist with marketing and recruitment

Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE)

- Key partner and program champion
- Fits into existing sustainability initiatives
- Offered to assist with marketing and recruitment
- Plan to provide an intern

CSA Farmer Outreach Analysis



Positives and Opportunities	Challenges and Limitations
Providing Community Connection to Local Foods	High, Up-Front Costs to Consumers
Better Market Stability for Farmers; Recycling Local Dollars Through the Local Economy	Lack of Accessibility of Pickup Times and Locations
Opportunity of Choice for Consumers on Share-Type	Limited Choice of Items in Each Share Box
Possibility to Diversify One's Diet	Higher Challenges for Households with a Variety of Dietary Needs

CSA Policy Analysis for the University of Iowa

- Recommends University of Iowa Well-Being Services implement an **income-based workplace CSA voucher program**



Analysis Criteria	Impact Categories	Status Quo	Workplace CSA Promotion Program (No Voucher)	Income-Based Workplace CSA Voucher Program	Universal Workplace CSA Voucher Program
<i>Equity</i>	Access to benefits	Low access	Moderately low access	Highly accessible	Moderately high access
<i>Effectiveness</i>	1. Improvement of individual health	Very low effectiveness	Low effectiveness	Avg increase of 0.39 vegetable servings/day (per participant)	Avg increase of 0.21 vegetable servings/day (per participant)
	2. Healthcare cost savings	Very low effectiveness	Very low effectiveness	\$93,324 – \$132,209	\$95,133 – \$134,772
<i>Cost</i>	1. Monetary cost	\$0	\$0	~\$52,454 @ 289 vouchers (per year)	~\$100,541 @ 554 vouchers (per year)
	2. Administrative cost	0 FTE	0 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE

Recommendations



Recommendations Overview

Phase 1: Planning and Establishing Partnerships

Phase 2: Implementation

Phase 3: Evaluation

Phase 1: Planning and Establishing Partnerships



Partnership Development



**Recruitment and
Communication**



**Funding and Feasibility
Planning**



**Design Principles and
Administrative Preparation**

Phase 2: Implementation



Pilot Program Launch



Program Delivery



Participant Engagement

Phase 3: Evaluation



**Ongoing Feedback
Collection**



**Program Impact
Assessment**

Deliverables



Google MyMap

Eastern Iowa CSAs (2025 Season)
54 views
Last edit was on March 14

Layers:

- ☒ **CSA Farm/Business Locations**
 - Individual styles
 - Trowel & Error
 - Bountiful Harvest CSA
 - Echollective Farm
 - Kroul Farms
 - Local Harvest CSA
 - Wild Woods Farm
 - Garden Oasis Farms
 - Rhubarb Botanicals Farm
 - Buffalo Ridge Orchard
- ☒ **Pick-Up Locations**
 - Uniform style
 - All items (19)
- ☒ **Base map**

Rhubarb Botanicals Farm

<https://rhubarbbotanicals.com/>

Farmer(s): Emma Barber
Email: emma@rhubarbbotanicals.com
Contact: 507-202-8525
Address: Springville

Cost: CSA (16 weeks) - \$375; month shares for \$100

Products: FLOWERS

Season: 15 weeks - June-September

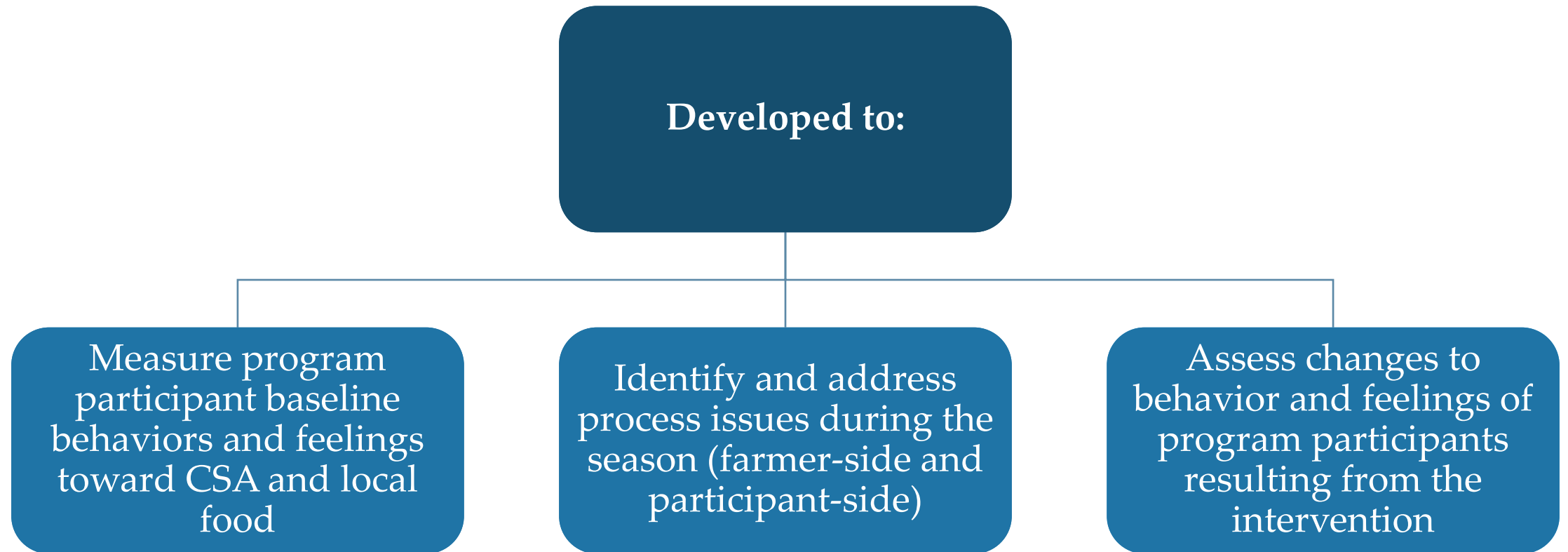
Logistic Offerings:

- Mount Vernon - Rhubarb Botanicals Flower Farm, 681 IA-1 on Thursdays from 4-6pm
- Iowa City - The Green House, 505 E Washington St on Wednesdays after noon
- Cedar Rapids - New Pioneer Co-op, 3338 Center Point Rd NE on Wednesdays after 2pm

Timing: 16 weeks

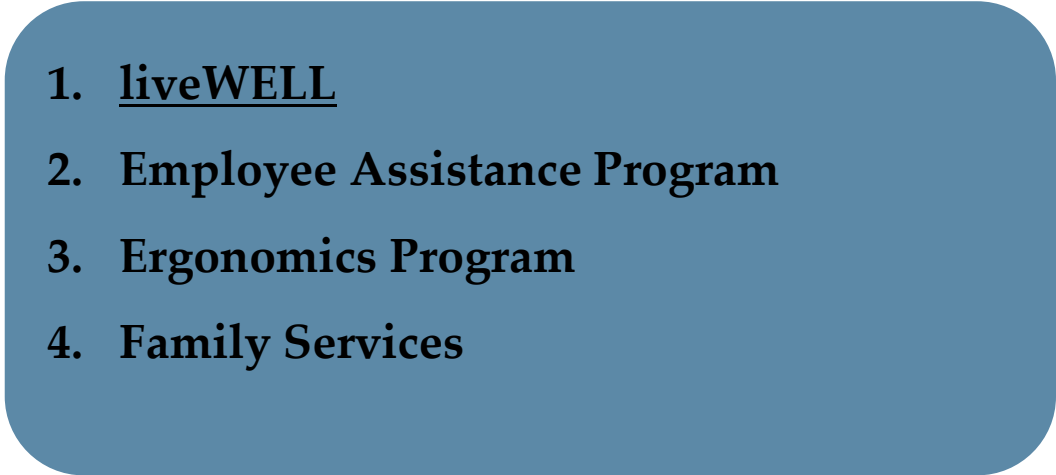
Details from Google Maps [Remove](#)
650 Martelle Rd, Springville, IA 52336
[View in Google Maps](#)

Pre- Mid- and Post-Program Surveys



University Employee Benefits Overview

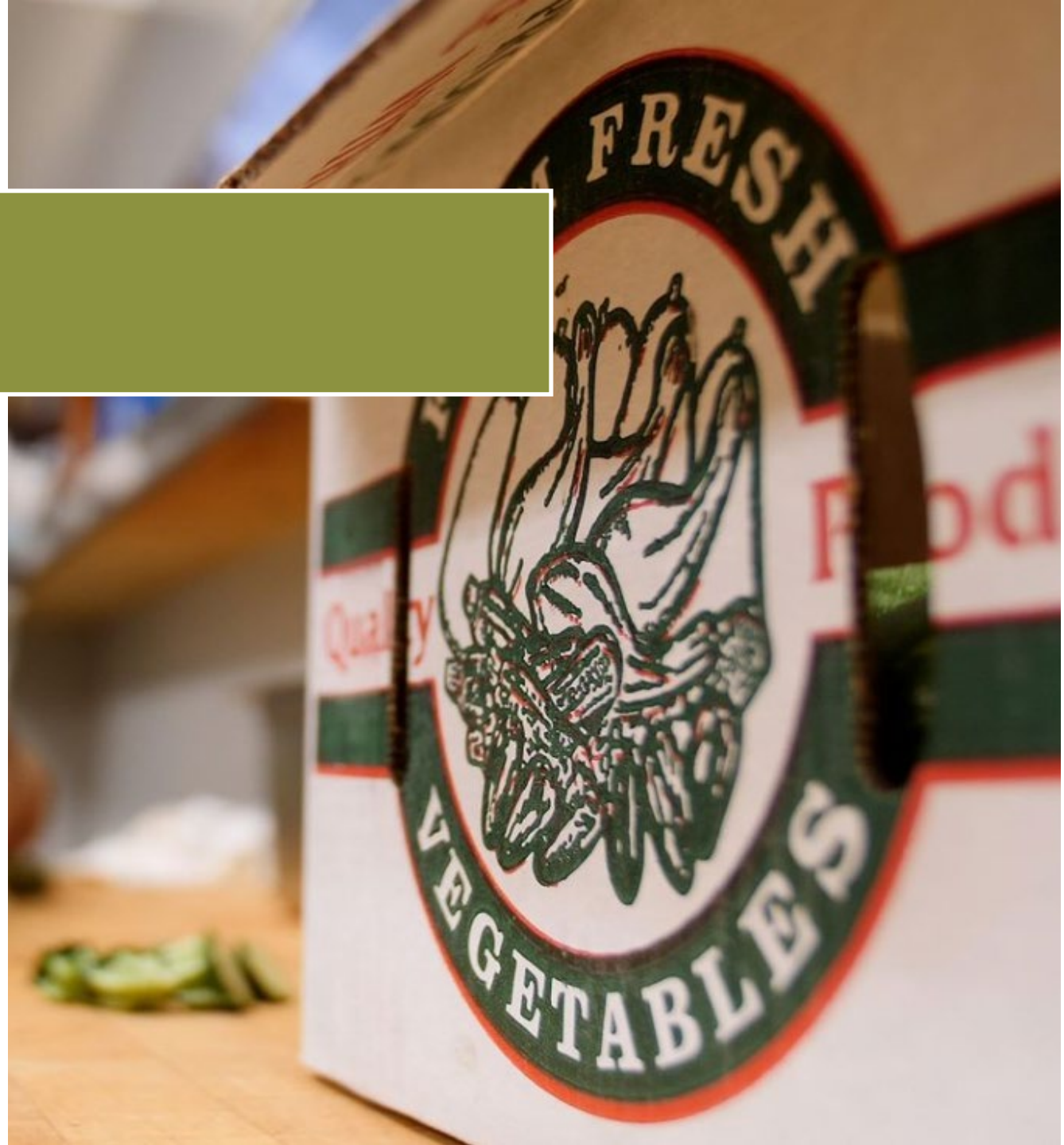
- Health Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Retirement Plans
- Life, Disability & Accident Insurance
- Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)
- Voluntary Benefits
- Time-Off Benefits
- Employee Discounts
- **Well-Being Programs**
- Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)

- 
1. liveWELL
 2. Employee Assistance Program
 3. Ergonomics Program
 4. Family Services

“liveWELL is here to support your personal health and well-being. Employee success and well-being are at the heart of the University of Iowa strategic plan.”

(University of Iowa Human Resources, n.d.)

Thank you!



Research Questions

Four Es of Public Administration

1. Which University of Iowa employees would benefit the most from a Workplace CSA program?
2. What are the projected costs of a Workplace CSA program and how do these costs compare to anticipated economic and social benefits?
3. What are the best practices for implementing a Workplace CSA program?
4. How can we measure an effective Workplace CSA program?

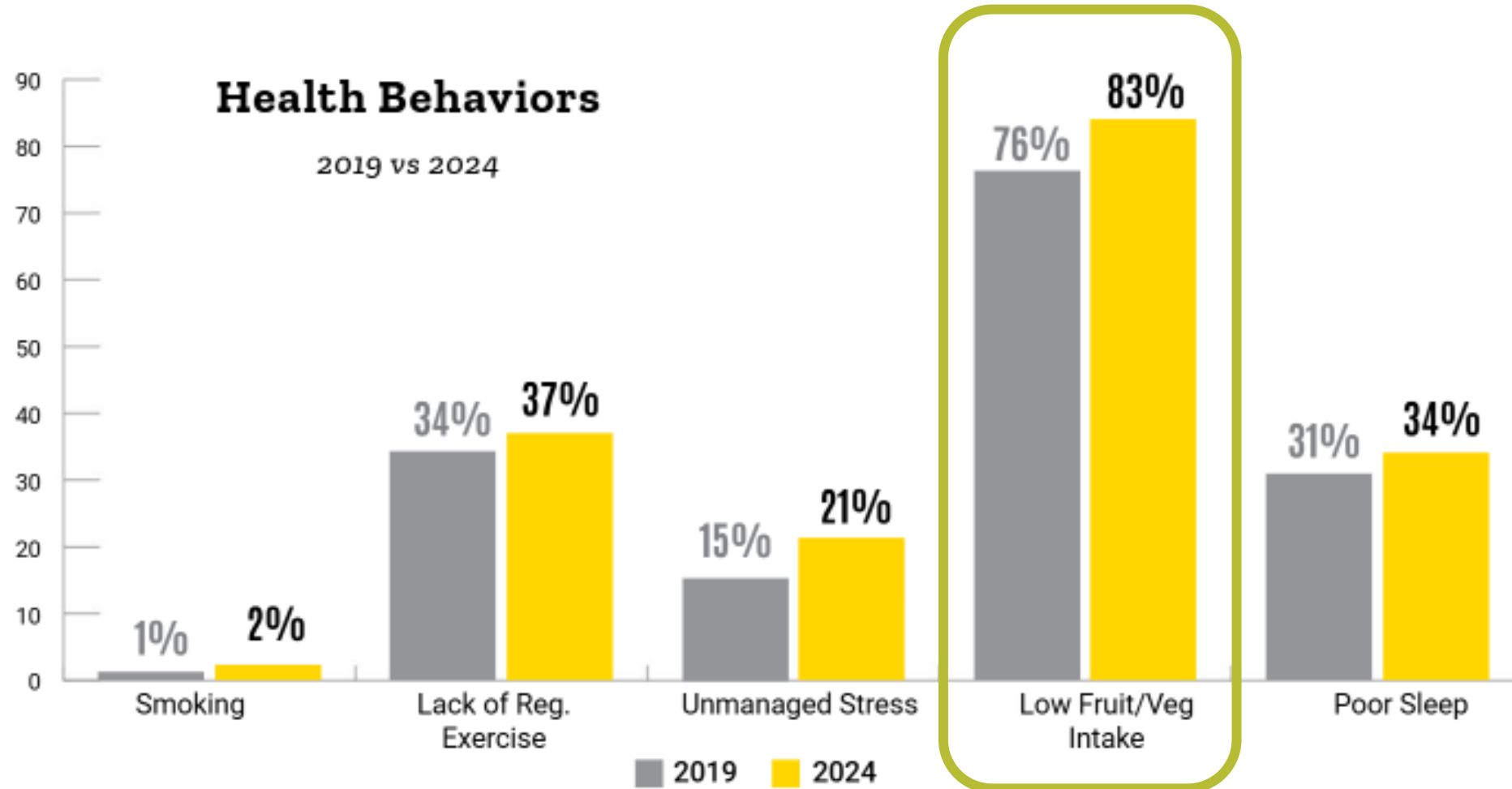
Administrative Burdens

1. What are the best practices for administering a Workplace CSA program?
2. What support do farmers need to participate in a Workplace CSA program?
3. What are best practices for engaging employees in a Workplace CSA program?

Positive Externalities

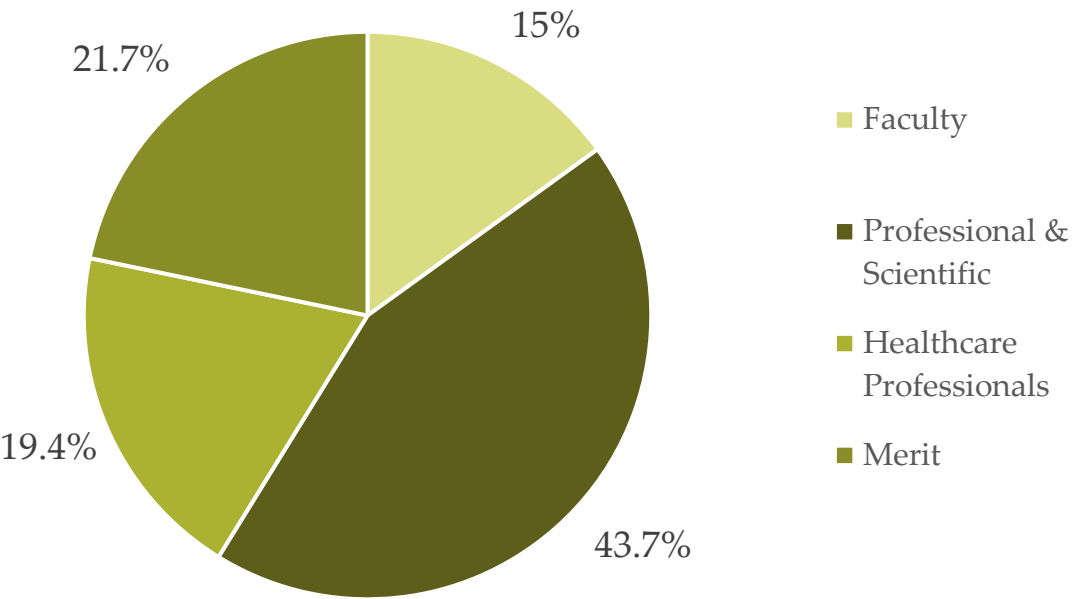
1. How would a Workplace CSA program impact the local food system?
2. How would a Workplace CSA program impact community health and well-being?

UI liveWELL 2024 Annual Report

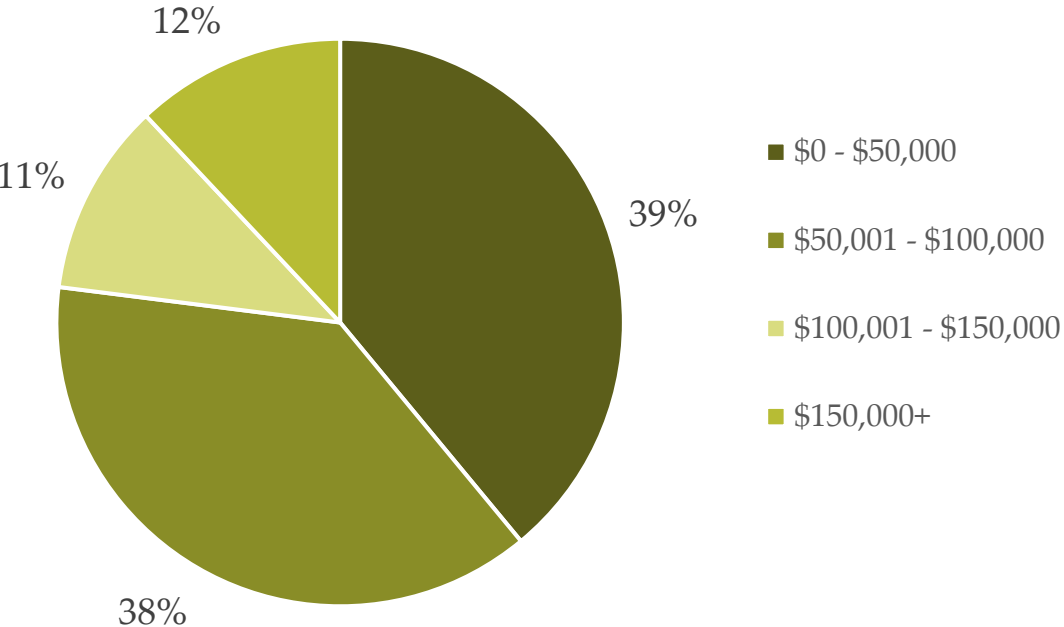


University of Iowa Employee Data

Percent of Total University of Iowa Employees
by Category



Percent of University of Iowa Employees by
Salary Group



Iowa vs. Kentucky CSA costs

CSA cost range in Eastern Iowa:

\$475 - \$620

(Iowa Valley RC&D)

CSA cost range in Kentucky:

\$345 - \$999

(University of Kentucky)

Workplace CSA Program Benefits

A national study done on food incentive programs found that for every \$1 invested in a healthy food incentive program, we can expect to see up to \$3 in economic activity generated as a result (Thilmany et al., 2021).

A study conducted at the University of Kentucky found that for every \$1 invested in CSA vouchers \$2.47 was saved on diet-related medical expenses for employees who started CSA in a poorer place of health (Rossi & Woods, 2018).

91% of participants in the University of Kentucky's CSA voucher program reported a more favorable view of the University (CSA to University Toolkit).

\$3 to \$1 potential return on investment to employers (Southwest Washington Food Hub, 2024).

Health Costs for Employers

The Impact of Diet-related Health Conditions on Employers¹⁻²

Adult Americans who
are Overweight or Obese



Percent of adults age 20+
with obesity = 42.5%;
adults age 20+ who are
overweight, including
obesity = 73.6%

Direct Health
Care Costs



46% increase in inpatient
costs; 27% increase
in outpatient costs;
80% increase in Rx
costs (vs those of
normal weight)

Lost Productivity
Costs



Estimated impact beyond
medical claims and health care
utilization in U.S.; costs are a result
of work loss related to absenteeism
and presenteeism, disability and
Workers' Compensation

Greatest Contributor of
Chronic Diseases in U.S.



At least 60 comorbidities
and 13 cancers are
attributed to obesity
accounting for 47% of total
costs nationwide

Case Study Table

Category	Luther College	King County	University of Kentucky
Location	Decorah, Iowa	King County, Washington	Lexington, Kentucky
Years in Operation	2014 – Present	2014 - 2017	2015 – Present
Funding Sources	Center for Sustainable Communities, Wellness Program, Healthcare Fund	King County Conservation District	USDA FMPP grant (initial), UK Health and Wellness, Fees
Employee Benefit Type	50% reimbursement on CSA shares (up to \$100)	Discount on out-of-pocket medical expenses (insurance benefit)	\$100-\$200 subsidy on CSA membership
Program Size	100 employees annually (~20% of faculty)	130 employees at 12 municipal departments (at peak)	714 redeemed vouchers (1,000 possible) (2023)
CSA Selection Process	Direct partnerships with three local farms	Request for Proposal (RFP) process for farm selection	13 farms, specific criteria (3+ years experience, 20+ week CSA, 100% sourced from Kentucky-based farms)
Outreach Strategies	Newsletters, faculty meetings, direct outreach	Emails, posters, in-person events, multi-channel outreach	Emails, wellness website, in-person events, peer promotion
Key Challenges	Ensuring funding sustainability, reaching lower-wage employees	Geographic dispersion, security/logistical challenges, program sustainability	High demand required lottery system, funding sustainability
Notable Features	Home delivery, customizable shares, shorter-season options	On-site coordinators, installment payment options, flexible box sizes	Peer promotion program, cooking classes, nutritional education
Lessons Learned	Diverse funding sources, flexible reimbursement, farm partnerships	Leadership buy-in, site coordinators, flexible pricing, multi-channel promotion	Flexible funding, peer support for retention, expanded access over time

Policy Analysis Findings

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Phase 1: Planning and Establishing Partnerships

Partnership Development

- Partner with the OSE to plan and design a workplace CSA program to be implemented at the University of Iowa.
- Partner with the Well-Being at Iowa Office to plan and garner support for the adoption of a workplace CSA program at the University of Iowa.

Recruitment & Communication

- Conduct community engagement events to recruit participants, inform design, and generate program buy-in.
- Collaborate with Well-Being at Iowa to recruit program participants.
- Develop a communications and marketing plan with Well-Being at Iowa and the OSE.
- Provide guidance for promoting and sustaining program participation.

Funding & Feasibility Planning

- Emphasize the benefits of the CSA voucher model when proposing funding options to business partners.
- Promote the use of SNAP and WIC benefits for purchasing CSA shares.
- Conduct a pilot workplace CSA program at the University of Iowa.

Design Principles & Administrative Preparation

- Review existing Workplace CSA Toolkits.
- Design the program based on the employer's existing infrastructure and tools.
- Enhance program accessibility through design elements.
- Create mechanisms for program evaluation.
- Avoid administrative burdens in program design and implementation.
- Develop accountability and operational processes for participants and farmers.

Phase 2: Implementation

Pilot Program Launch

- Start small before scaling up to the entire University.
- Survey employees to gauge interest and current CSA participation.

Program Delivery

- Assist business partners and farmers in coordinating pick-up and drop-off logistics.
- Track CSA share pick-ups and redistribute or donate forgotten shares.
- Establish clear expectations for program participants.

Phase 3: Evaluation

Ongoing Feedback Collection

- Engage all stakeholders through surveys and opportunities for direct feedback.

Program Impact Assessment

- Collect data to assess program impacts.
- Maintain financial records to support proof of concept.

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