

HARVESTING HEALTH **A UNIVERSITY OF IOWA WORKPLACE COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE PROGRAM**

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Travis Kraus, IISC



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About The Team

The team is made up of three, second-year, graduate students from the School of Planning and Public Affairs. As a part of attaining their Master's Degrees in Public Affairs, these students used their course-work knowledge and lived experience to complete this Capstone project over the past two semesters.



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The following acronyms and abbreviations are used throughout the report and are in this table for reference.

Acronym/ Abbreviations	Full Title
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
DTC	Direct-to-Consumer
FMPP	Farmers Market Promotion Program
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
IISC	Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities
РНА	(University of Iowa) Personal Health Assessment Survey
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assis- tance Program
UK	University of Kentucky
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Acronyms and Abbreviations Used in Report

Executive Summary

In partnership with Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development (Iowa Valley RC&D) and the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC), this capstone project explores the feasibility of implementing a Workplace Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program at the University of Iowa. This report investigates how a workplace CSA program can improve employee health and well-being, support local farmers, and build a more resilient local food system.

This study is guided by the Four Es of Public Administration—equity, economy, efficiency, and effectiveness—as well as the theories of administrative burden and positive externalities. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research includes a literature review, stakeholder interviews, a survey of local CSA farmers, policy analysis, and a review of case studies from institutions such as the University of Kentucky, Luther College, and King County, Washington.

Findings indicate that there is strong institutional alignment at the University of Iowa between wellness and sustainability goals and the objectives of a workplace CSA program. Stakeholders from the University of Iowa's Office of Sustainability and the Environment, the Benefits Office, and Well-Being at Iowa expressed enthusiasm for a pilot program and identified opportunities to support recruitment, education, and communications efforts. However, barriers such as administrative complexity, funding limitations, and logistical concerns remain, particularly around ensuring equity and access for lower-income employees.

The study also highlights challenges facing CSA farmers in the Johnson County region, including financial uncertainty and time constraints. Despite these barriers, farmers expressed support for the CSA model and interest in exploring a potential workplace CSA program.

Based on research, stakeholder input, and policy analysis, this report recommends piloting a small-scale, low-barrier CSA voucher program for university employees. By investing in this model, the University of Iowa can address employee nutrition concerns, bolster regional agriculture, and advance its commitment to sustainability and community well-being.

Recommendations Overview

Phase 1: Planning & Establishing Partnerships

The first phase of recommendations is intended to inform partnership development, recruitment, communications, funding, and program design principles. The recommendations included in this phase develop processes for identifying partners at the University of Iowa, engaging potential program participants, proposing a program funding model, and designing administrative processes. Ultimately, the recommendations in this phase will provide our project partners with guidance on designing an effective, equitable, economic, and efficient workplace CSA program that reduces administrative burdens.

Phase 2: Implementation

The second phase of recommendations cover pilot program design, program delivery, and participant engagement. These recommendations provide guidance on designing a pilot program at the University of Iowa, considering things such as the number of pilot program participants, designating share pick-up and drop-off locations, handling forgotten shares, setting clear expectations with participants, and keeping participants engaged throughout the program.

Phase 3: Evaluation

The third phase of recommendations seek to inform feedback collection methods and holistic program evaluation. Recommendations in this section include directions for implementing surveys to gather feedback from stakeholders and how to assess program impacts to support the overall proof of concept for a workplace CSA program.

Chapter 1: Project Background

Introduction

To begin the report, Chapter 1 provides an overview of the project including a statement on project purpose, guiding principles, community profiles, and political and social context. The guiding principles are defined in this chapter and referenced throughout the report to guide analysis of research and findings. Community profiles are also included in this chapter to provide background information on Johnson County, the University of Iowa, and our project partners, Iowa Valley RC&D. Finally, the chapter concludes with information about the social and political context of the food system at various levels, beginning with the state of Iowa and then narrowing in on the local level in Johnson County and the institutional level at the University of Iowa.

Statement on Project Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this feasibility study is to evaluate the potential for a Workplace CSA Program at the University of Iowa as a strategy to expand market access for local farmers. This study examines the technical, operational, and economic feasibility of such a program by assessing stakeholder interest, administration challenges, and financial sustainability to inform the future implementation of a Workplace CSA Program.

Through surveys, stakeholder interviews, and CSA policy analysis this report provides actionable insights into how a Workplace CSA Model could increase farmer revenue, strengthen local food systems, and enhance fresh food accessibility for employees. The findings aim to create strategies for CSA providers, policymakers, and stakeholders interested in scaling workplace-based food distribution models to support regional agriculture.

Guiding Principles

The Four Es of Public Administration

The Four Es of Public Administration identified by the National Academy of Public Administration are equity, economy, effectiveness, and efficiency (Norman-Major, 2011). Equity covers the accessibility of programs, considering who services are provided to and of what quality. Economy centers on the strategic use of resources to maximize outputs, while effectiveness measures the achievement of desired program goals and outcomes. Finally, efficiency explores the optimization of resources to accomplish goals while minimizing wasted resources. The Four Es are used to assess and inform the implementation and design of policies and programs in public administration.

Throughout this feasibility study, the Four Es are referred to as a guiding principle for analysis. The following research questions were created through the lens of the Four Es and inform the final recommendations in this report:

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

Administrative Burdens

Administrative burdens are defined as hardships disproportionately experienced by disadvantaged groups that can limit one's political and social rights (Moynihan & Herd, 2010). For example, administrative processes, such as compliance requirements, can place burdens on people through time-consuming application processes, complicated eligibility rules, and language barriers. Fitting into the 4 E's, administrative burdens can reduce the overall efficiency and improve equity of a program.

Throughout this report, the theory of administrative burdens is used to guide the creation of recommendations to prevent burdens for both program facilitators and participants. Approaching program design with an awareness of administrative burdens informs final recommendations that avoid burdensome processes to promote overall feasibility of the workplace CSA program.

The following research questions were created through the lens of this theory and inform the final recommendations in this report:

• What are the best practices for administering a workplace CSA program?

- What support do farmers need to participate in a workplace CSA program?
- What are best practices for engaging employees in a workplace CSA program?

Positive Externalities

Positive externalities are defined as benefits that accrue to a third party that is not a direct participant in the transaction that the benefits are a result of (Krugman & Wells, 2020). For example, when agricultural land is preserved through a conservation subsidy program, benefits accrue not only to the farmer but to the surrounding community due to improved environmental quality.

Positive externalities are important to consider through the creation of public programs to assess the potential scope of outcomes that will impact a community. The weight of positive externalities can be evaluated through a CSA policy analysis to gauge program feasibility. This economic theory is employed throughout this report to guide a comprehensive analysis of all possible benefits resulting from a workplace CSA program.

The following research questions were created with the consideration of positive externalities and inform the final recommendations in this report:

- How would a workplace CSA program impact the local food system?
- How would a workplace CSA program impact community health and well-being?

Background

Johnson County Profile

The University of Iowa is located in Johnson County, Iowa. As of 2023, the population of Johnson County was 157,528 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025). As seen in Figure 1.2, the majority of the population, 82%, in Johnson County identify as White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025). Displayed in Figure 1.3, the median household income in Johnson County is \$74,721 with 15.5% of the population living below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025). Of citizens 25 years and older, 96.2% are high school graduates and 54.6% have completed a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025). The majority of the

population in Johnson County is between the ages of 18 and 65, making up approximately 68% of the total population, seen in Figure 1.1 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025).



Figure 1.1- Johnson County Population (Census, 2020)



Figure 1.2- Johnson County Population by Race (Census, 2020)



Figure 1.3- Johnson County Income Groups (Census, 2020)

University of Iowa Profile

The University of Iowa is the largest employer in Iowa City, employing 20,927 full time faculty and staff with an additional 12,634 temporary employees including Medical Residents, Graduate Student Workers, and others (Information & Resource Management, 2024). The distribution of total employees by category can be seen in Figure 1.4. Of the 5,972 faculty employed at the University of Iowa, just 14.3% represent minority populations including Asian, Hispanic or Latinx, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander (Information & Resource Management, 2024). A breakdown of the percentage of employees by salary group can be seen in Figure 1.5¹. The salary group with the highest percentage of employees is the \$0 - \$50,000 group at 39%, followed by the \$50,001 - \$100,000 group at 38%, the \$150,000+ group at 12%, and the \$100,001 - \$150,000 group at 11%.

1 Merit employees include Clerical, Technical, Blue Collar, Security, and Supervisory employees.



Percent of Total University of Iowa Employees by Category

Figure 1.4- Information & Resource Management, 2024



Figure 1.5- Information & Resource Management, 2024

Iowa Valley RC&D Profile

Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development (Iowa Valley RC&D) is a well-established nonprofit organization in Amana, Iowa. Founded in 1998, the organization has been dedicated to building community partnerships to support farmers, bolstering local food infrastructure, and advocating for the positive impact of strong food systems. Through contributing to the creation of innovative markets and working to improve the accessibility of local foods, Iowa Valley RC&D has played an integral role in building a resilient food system to uplift healthier communities and more sustainable environments.

Iowa Valley RC&D Mission and Vision:

Mission: Iowa Valley RC&D inspires transformative change and leads in the development of farmers and food value chains toward a more collaborative, equitable, and resilient food system across Iowa's communities. Vision: An Iowa food system characterized by a vibrant ecosystem of farms, businesses, and the natural environment where thriving rural and urban communities are interconnected and sustained, and all individuals are nourished. The two main areas of Iowa Valley RC&D's work are within the development of farmers and supply or value chains. Iowa Valley RC&D has worked as a partner to distribute federal program funds throughout Iowa, such as funds from the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) and the Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) programs. Iowa Valley RC&D also oversees the coordination of other internal programs and services throughout the state of Iowa, such as the Food Hub Managers Working Group, Clean Start, the Farmers Toolshed, and many others.

Now, with funding from a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant, Iowa Valley RC&D is looking to strengthen farmer business stability and expand market access with the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program and Farmer Business Coaching Program. Iowa Valley RC&D has partnered with IISC to assess the feasibility of implementing the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program as a workplace CSA program at the University of Iowa.

Political and Social Context

Iowa's Food System

The state of Iowa is dominated by industrial agriculture. Small and medium sized farms growing horticultural crops or other food products through direct-to-consumer models play a very small role in Iowa's overall agriculture. Eighty-five percent of Iowa's land is in agricultural production, with 23 million acres dedicated to industrial row crop farming, and only about 12,650 acres dedicated to the production of table foods (USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service, 2022). Despite all the agricultural activity in the state, Iowa imports around 90% of its produce, and one in nine Iowans are facing hunger (Pirog et al., 2001; Feeding America, 2025).



From 2021 to 2024, the state of Iowa saw a rising effort to improve Iowa's food system. Increased involvement at the state level has included governmental agencies ranging from the Iowa Department of Education to the Iowa Economic Development Authority. Iowa legislators supported a commitment to expand local food marketing and other food system contributions to grow local food investment from \$1 million to \$2.8 million (Libbey et al., 2024). In 2024, another \$5.2 million was invested in the development of Iowa's food system through the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) (Libbey et al., 2024). These RFSI funds were dedicated to strengthening the middle of the supply chain through supply chain coordination and market development activities. Additionally, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) created the Choose Iowa program to promote Iowa produce and food products through branding and grants for farmers, businesses, and nonprofits.



In March 2025, the USDA cut \$1 billion in funding for local food initiatives, including \$11.3 million in funds that were dedicated to the state of Iowa for the Local Food Purchasing Assistant Program (LFPA) and the Local Food for Schools (LFS) programs (Pope & Rossi, 2025). Farmers, food pantries, and schools depended on this funding to be able to afford to sell and purchase local foods.

Despite the state of Iowa's increased efforts to bolster local food systems, these major cuts to federal funding will hinder the progress the state has made to strengthen food systems.

Johnson County's Food System

According to the Johnson County website, the County Board of Supervisors is dedicated to supporting a local food system where the "environment flourishes, businesses succeed, and everyone has access to diverse and culturally relevant food" (n.d.). In 2012, the Johnson County Board of Supervisors approved the creation of the Food Policy Council. For the past 13 years, the Johnson County Food Policy Council (JCFPC) has worked to improve local dialogue on food and agriculture, provide advice on food issues, address food system challenges, and educate the community on local food efforts.





Johnson County has invested in the local food system through successful programs such as the Community Food and Farm Grant (CFFG). With funds from the American Rescue Plan Act, Johnson County has provided \$735,376 in grants to small farms and food businesses through the CFFG program. The CFFG program is a clear example of Johnson County's dedication to strengthening the local food system.

There are 10 local farmers' markets in Johnson County where community members can purchase local foods, with the largest being the City of Iowa City's Farmers' Market. Other options for purchasing locally grown food in Johnson County include the Field to Family Online Farmers' Market, the New Pioneer Co-op, and local CSA farms. As of April 2025, there are around sixteen local and regional organizations doing food systems-related work in Johnson County including Table to Table, Feed Iowa First, Backyard Abundance, and more.

Johnson County Political Profile

Johnson County holds a reputation for being the most Democratic county in the state of Iowa. Within Johnson County, 33.7% (53,125) of the population are registered as Democrat, 12.6% (19,808) are registered as Republican, and 23.3% (36,652) do not report a party affiliation (VoteRef, n.d.). For the past seven presidential election years, Johnson County has set a new turnout record for voting in the county. This record was set at 87,107 voters in the most recent 2024 presidential election (Johnson County, n.d.). Very few Republican candidates and officials have won elections in Johnson County throughout history. The most recent Republican candidate to hold a county office in Johnson County was County Supervisor John Etheredge in 2013. The next most recent Republican-held offices date back to the and early 2000s and the 1960s – 1990s (Johnson County, n.d.).

Although both major political parties advocate for agriculture, Democrats tend to support more food system-friendly policy initiatives. Food systems encompass everything that happens from farm to plate, including food production, processing, distribution, purchasing, and more. Plans for the next Farm Bill display the different priorities between the two political parties. In plans for the 2023 Farm Bill, Democrats are calling for funding for conservation programs to address climate change, continued support for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP), and new support programs for fruit and vegetable farmers (Elbein, 2024). Republicans are calling for cuts to SNAP, cutting environmental regulations, and privatizing services ranging from crop insurance providers to forest management. Additionally, due to federal funding cuts from the current Republican Presidential Administration, the USDA has had to lay off thousands of employees and revoke millions of dollars in funding from grant programs supporting resilient food system efforts (Szalinski, 2025).

University of Iowa

The University of Iowa is the largest and oldest university in the state of Iowa, making it the flagship university of the state. As previously mentioned, the university employs over 20,000 people, with a significant percent of employees within the University of Iowa Health Care Medical Center, which is the top hospital in the state.

IOWA

Looking at the specific political and social context for local food at the University of Iowa, the Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE) are champions for sustainable local food purchasing. The OSE was actively involved in the creation of the FMPP grant application funding this project and agreed to partner with Iowa Valley RC&D to help carry out a potential workplace CSA program at the university.

The OSE tracks the university's food purchases for the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), a program of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. Within the Food & Dining STARS category, the University of Iowa only scored 0.67, out of six points possible for Food and Beverage Purchasing (AASHE, 2024). The scoring for this category is determined by the percent of total annual food and beverage purchases considered to be spent on sustainably or ethically produced items, such as local foods. This low Food and Beverage Purchasing score is an example of where the university has room to improve local food purchasing and food system support.

The University of Iowa also has room to improve when it comes to employee nutrition. According to results of the 2024 Personal Health Assessment (PHA) survey conducted by the university's Well-Being Services, 83% of university employees responding to the survey reported poor nutrition due to low fruit and vegetable intake (liveWELL, 2025). As seen in Figure 1.6, the percent of employees reporting poor nutrition due to low fruit and vegetable intake has increased by 7% since 2019. The annual PHA survey is conducted by Well-Being Services, a department within the University of Iowa's Human Resources. The PHA is sent out to all university faculty and staff to track self-reported health indicators such as smoking, sleep quality, stress levels, exercise, and more. The PHA has been an institutional priority since 2006 and last year collected just over 10,000 responses, reaching 48% of all faculty and staff (liveWELL, 2025).



Figure 1.6: liveWELL 2024 Health Behaviors, 2024

Local CSA Market

As a beginning farmer, there are many barriers to becoming established in a local CSA market. Farmers who have operated a farm for 10 years or less are defined as beginning farmers by the USDA (Robertson, 2023). Operating a CSA model requires farmers to specialize in a wide variety of crops, all with different levels of success due to varying quality of labor, weather, and market conditions (Iowa Valley RC&D, 2023). According to the National Young Farmers Coalition, market access is the third ranked category out of six top challenges for young farmers (Ackoff et al., 2022). When it comes to smallscale farming, the stability of CSA markets is imperative for the success of local farmers. Of young farmers in the U.S., 53% sell through a CSA model (Ackoff et al., 2022). As of January 2025, there are 15 farms in the local Johnson County CSA market. Three local CSA farmers recently left the market, one stating that "the amount of support we are given by the USDA, local government, and local/ regional agriculture NGOs is not good enough" (Scholz, 2024). In February 2025 we sent out a survey to the 15 local CSA farmers to gather information on the local CSA market from the perspective of the producers. When asked how likely the farmers were to leave the CSA market in the next five years on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least likely, 5 being most likely), two of the five survey respondents reported a 4, meaning they are likely to leave the market. Of those two survey respondents, one reported that the reason they are likely to leave the market is due to the complex and strenuous work of growing vegetable crops. Of the three survey respondents who reported being less likely to leave the CSA market, they emphasized how important operating a CSA has been to their farm business model. A more detailed summary of survey results can be found in Chapter 5.

Summary

Chapter 1 provides comprehensive background information on the University of Iowa Workplace CSA Program Feasibility Study, outlining the project purpose statement, guiding principles, community profiles, and political and social context. Guided by the Four Es of Public Administration, the theory of administrative burdens, and the concept of positive externalities, the chapter introduces key research questions that shape the report's analysis. It also presents community profiles of Johnson County, the University of Iowa, and Iowa Valley RC&D, offering demographic, economic, and institutional context. The political and social environment is examined across state, local, and institutional levels, highlighting both opportunities and challenges for local food systems, including funding shifts and gaps in employee nutrition. Finally, the chapter outlines the fragile state of the local CSA market and the barriers faced by beginning farmers, reinforcing the importance of expanding sustainable market opportunities.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 2 of this report provides an in-depth literature review to establish an understanding of existing research and findings pertaining to local food systems and the overall benefits and equity of community supported agriculture. Specifically, this chapter explores the benefits, challenges, and equity considerations of CSA programs in institutional settings to apply findings to the University of Iowa. Several existing Workplace CSA Program Toolkits are identified in this chapter, along with a table highlighting the resources provided in each toolkit. Overall, Chapter 2 establishes key definitions and concepts referenced throughout the report and used to inform final recommendations.

Local Foods & Food Systems

Many different definitions exist for what constitutes "local" when it comes to local foods and food systems. This report will follow definitions used by the USDA. The USDA generally defines local foods as products sold within the same State, US territory, or Tribal land where they were produced (USDA, 2023). This can be anywhere from 100 to 400 miles that a food can travel to be considered "local". Food systems, rather, are defined as the complex networks of people who grow, harvest, store, distribute, transport, sell, consume, dispose, and recover food. The cycle of the food system elements can be seen in Figure 5. To establish a local food system, all the elements of the system, from production to consumption, must take place in the locality or region (USDA, 2023). Operating a CSA model is an example of how both producers and consumers can participate in, and strengthen, the local food system through a direct-to-consumer (DTC) market.

Food systems are important for many reasons due to the impact that they have on local communities. Studies have found that strong local food systems have the potential to create positive impacts on local economies, public health, equity, and the environment (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999; Pinchot, 2014; Martinez et al., 2022; USDA, 2023).

Economy

Local food systems can have positive impacts on the local economy through the creation of jobs in the food sector and by encouraging spending at the local level (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999). Depending on income, Americans spend anywhere from 5% to 35% of their income on food (Sweitzer & Davidenko, 2024). Increasing the capacity of the local food system could harness a greater share of individual spending on food within the local economy. In states like Iowa with high levels of food imports (90%), increasing the capacity of local food systems can replace food imports with local foods, diverting dollars from import costs and cycling them in the local economy (Pirog et al., 2001; Pinchot, 2014). Additionally, with shorter supply chains, local food systems allow producers to receive a larger share of profits when selling foods in local markets (USDA, 2023).

Public Health & Equity

Our diets are determined by the foods made available within the food system, which contributes to the health and well-being of our communities. The local food system can positively impact public health by making fresh fruits and vegetables more available to the community to promote healthier diets. However, many factors influence consumption patterns beyond availability of foods such as financial accessibility, housing stability, cooking skills, nutrition knowledge, employment status, and more (Pettinger et al., 2023). Therefore, for local food systems to truly improve public health, the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables must also be paired with initiatives to make local food more accessible to all members of the community. Mechanisms of the local food system that promote both public health and equity can include things like food assistance programs, local food education in schools, opportunities to connect farmers with consumers, and initiatives to restore indigenous foodways and grow culturally relevant crops (USDA, 2023).

Environment

Finally, local food systems promote more sustainable methods of production and consumption of food. The shorter supply chains of local food systems reduce the physical distance that food must travel to get from farm to plate, therefore reducing energy use and carbon emissions generated within the food system (Martinez et al., 2010, as cited in Martinez et al., 2022). Smaller farmers in the local food system also tend to utilize sustainable farming practices that avoid fertilizers, pesticides, or other inputs that can harm the environment (Martinez et al., 2010, as cited in Martinez et al., 2022).

The Conventional Food System

The alternative to the local food system is the conventional food system, which is displayed in Figure 2.1. Unlike local food systems, the conventional

food system relies on global supply chains, exploitative labor practices, and large-scale industrial farming (Eriksson et al., 2019; Rotz & Fraser, 2015). The shift from small scale to large scale industrial farming in the US occurred due to advancing farming technologies, consolidation of markets, and influence from US agricultural and trade policies throughout the 1900s (Food System Primer, n.d.). Industrial agricultural practices have critically altered the land-scape through deforestation, application of chemical fertilizers that pollute the air and water, and the use of other energy-intensive inputs that harm the environment (Horrigan et al., 2002). Under the conventional food system, markets have become extremely consolidated, pushing out small farmers, creating barriers for local processing and distribution, and making healthy, locally grown foods less accessible to consumers (Frerick, 2024).

Building Resilient Local Food Systems

Resilient local food systems support healthier vibrant communities and build strong urban-rural connections (Custot et al., 2012).

The strength of a local food system can be a strong indicator of the overall resilience and sustainability of a community. When global supply chains were disrupted due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the health and prosperity of local economies and communities depended on the ability of local food systems to fill the gaps (USDA, 2023).

Efforts to make local food systems more resilient include but are not limited to:

- Promoting land access for beginning farmers
- Supporting local food markets
- Improving access to local and culturally relevant foods
- Advocating for policies to support small farmers
- Investing in local supply chain infrastructure



Figure 2.1- Food System Diagram (Texas Center for Local Food, n.d)

Background on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs are a direct-to-consumer (DTC) model of production and consumption of local foods as seen in Figure 2.2 (Allen et al., 2016). Consumers pay farmers at the beginning of the growing season to become shareholders in the production of local food and receive a share of that farm's products often on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. Allen et al. (2016) explains that in this DTC model of consumption, more capital can flow through and stay within local economies due to the shortening of supply chains (Brown & Miller, 2008). Apart from economic benefits, CSA programs also offer positive social and environmental outcomes. Participation in CSA programs can strengthen communities by connecting consumers directly with growers, promote health through increased fruit and vegetable consumption, and support more sustainable agriculture methods for the betterment of the environment (Allen et al., 2016). Collaborative CSA models can build upon these baseline social benefits of CSA programs by creating stronger connections within communities between producers and consumers. In a collaborative CSA model, volunteers assist with the collection and distribution of produce for CSA shareholders to promote accessibility (Taste the Local Difference, 2021). The average cost of a CSA share in Eastern Iowa ranges from \$475 - \$620 (Iowa Valley RC&D, 2023).



Figure 2.2- CSA Model (Community Alliance with Family Farmers, n.d.)

Background on Workplace CSA Programs

Workplace wellness programs are a popular method for employers to incentivize employee wellbeing. Focusing mainly on promoting physical activity, workplace wellness programs tend to offer gym memberships, fitness trackers, or fitness app subscriptions. Integrating a workplace CSA program is a way for employers to also promote the nutritional habits of employees by making healthy local foods more accessible.

Studies have shown that promoting a healthy workforce supports higher levels of productivity, employee satisfaction and retention, and lower direct healthcare costs (Southwest Washington Food Hub, 2024). The costs that employers can face due to diet-related health conditions can be seen in *Figure* 2.3.

Workplace CSA programs are an effective way for employers to provide convenient access to local produce and support employees as they gain the knowledge and skills to encourage healthier dietary habits. There are a variety of ways that workplace CSA programs can be designed. In general, workplace CSA programs include an incentive provided by the employer, such as a monetary voucher, payroll reimbursement, or insurance benefit for employees. Then, the employer either designates an internal employee, or partners with an external organization, to oversee the administration of the program. Weekly or monthly CSA shares are either delivered directly to the workplace, or employees can arrange alternative CSA pick-ups. The case studies in the following section of this report go into further detail about the design of workplace CSA programs.

Numerous Workplace CSA Toolkits exist to provide guidance on creating and implementing workplace CSA programs:

- CSA Innovation Network, <u>"CSA to University Toolkit"</u>
- Fairshare CSA Coalition, <u>"Workplace CSA Toolkit"</u>
- High Desert Food and Farm Alliance (HDFFA), <u>"HDFFA's Workplace CSA</u> <u>Toolkit"</u>
- Sustainable Connections, <u>"Farm Fresh Workplace Toolkit"</u>
- Siouxland District Health Department (SDHD), <u>"Fresh Produce Benefits</u> <u>Toolkit"</u>

The following table includes a summary of the common elements found in workplace CSA program toolkits and indicates which of the toolkits listed above contains.

Category	CSA In- novation Network	Fairshare CSA Coali- tion	King County	HDFFA	Sustainable Connections	SDHD
Back- ground of	X	x		X	x	X
CSA Ben- efits and						
FAQs						
Case Stud- ies	X	X				
Sample	X	X	X	X		X
Timelines						
tor Imple- mentation						
Gathering	X	X	X	X	X	X
Informa-						
tion / As-						
sessment						
Criteria						

Table 1: CSA ToolKit Summary

Category	CSA In-	Fairshare	King	HDFFA	Sustainable	SDHD
	novation	CSA Coali-	County		Connections	
	Network	tion				
Outreach	X	X	X			X
Language						
and Mar-						
keting						
Materials						
Tips for	X	X	X	X		X
Approach-						
ing Part-						
nerships						
Farmer	X	X	X		X	X
Selection						
Criteria						
Sample	X			X		
Budgets						
and/or						
Financial						
Consider-						
ations						
Recruit-	X	X	X	X	X	X
ment and						
Retention						
Tips						
Equity	X					
Consider-						
ations						
Potential		X	X	X	X	X
Chal-						
lenges &						
Proposed						
Solutions						
Program	X	X	X	X	X	X
Admin-						
istration						
and Policy						
Recom-						
menda-						
tions						

Category	CSA In- novation Network	Fairshare CSA Coali- tion	King County	HDFFA	Sustainable Connections	SDHD
Data col-	X	X	X	X		X
lection						
and evalu-						
ation re-						
sources						
Page	32 pages	88 pages	32 pag-	11 pages	7 pages	36 pag-
length			es			es



Figure 2.3- Impact of Diet-Related Conditions For Employers (Southwest Washington Food Hub, 2024)

Positive Outcomes Associated with CSA Participation

Studies of workplace CSA programs reveal the potential for these programs to be transformative at the individual, social, and economic level (Allen et al., 2016). Allen et al.'s 2016 study found CSA participation can have immense public health benefits by improving food lifestyle behaviors and influencing shareholders to adopt healthier eating habits. In Izumi et al.'s 2020 study, workplace CSA program participants reported increased vegetable intake, improved food security, increased ability to afford to eat healthy meals, and improved general health status.

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).

CSA participation addresses three primary areas of concern for local communities: economic development, environmental quality, and social benefits. Economic benefits of CSA participation include shorter and more efficient supply chains due to the DTC model of local food purchasing. Supporting local farmers bolsters the local economy and creates a more stable market for farmers. Funding from CSA voucher programs or other food assistance programs also serves to increase the purchasing power of lower income consumers which can contribute to economic revitalization in underserved areas (Martinez et al., 2022). CSA participation also allows for more capital to stay and flow through the local economy. In terms of environmental benefits, CSA participation lowers the carbon footprint of diets because it decreases the miles food must travel from farm to plate, shown in Figure 2.2. CSA participation also supports more sustainable farming practices having less of an impact on the environment than industrial-farmed and highly processed foods (Martinez et al., 2022). Finally, the social benefits of CSA participation include stronger connections between consumers and farmers, increased accessibility to local foods, and healthier more resilient communities (Martinez et al., 2022).

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).

Equity Considerations of Workplace CSA Programs

Despite the many benefits associated with workplace CSA programs, several equity limitations exist. Numerous studies have found that CSA members tend to be demographically homogenous, falling under the categories of female, White, highly educated, older, and affluent (Izumi et al., 2020) (Allen et al., 2016). Becoming a CSA shareholder has many barriers, not only due to price, but also because of the commitment required for picking up shares, preparing food, and preserving food-- among other things. Individuals with lower incomes, unreliable transportation, and less time and resources to access and utilize CSA shares face the most barriers to participating in CSAs. To break down potential barriers for CSA participants, some workplace CSA programs have found success through including recipes, farm newsletters, information about share contents, farm tours, and cooking and tasting demonstrations (Izumi et al., 2020). Farmers can also reduce financial barriers by allowing CSA participants to purchase shares with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits, or setting up payment plans (Izumi et al., 2020). SNAP and WIC are two programs funded by the federal government through the USDA to provide food benefits to qualifying low-income families, mothers, and children to help them afford food that is essential to health and well-being (USDA, 2025). To make the purchasing of local foods more accessible, CSA farmers, farmers market vendors, farm stands, and other small food producers are all eligible to accept SNAP and WIC payments through the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) (Johnson County, n.d.a).

These additional resources and educational opportunities help to engage CSA participants and equip them with the skills they need to utilize their CSA shares and maximize positive health outcomes. However, an equity limitation of workplace CSA programs is that they hold health benefits conditional to employment status. Therefore, people facing unemployment who may stand to benefit the most from such a program have no way to access the benefits of a workplace CSA program. Also, although providing educational opportunities has proven to break down some barriers for CSA participants, the issue of time and the lack of flexibility with traditional CSA shares is still a main factor challenging the equity of workplace CSA programs.

Benefits of a Workplace CSA Program for a University

Research suggests that universities are ideal settings for workplace CSA programs. Universities offer a large employee base with access to existing employee wellness programs and resources that facilitate the adoption of positive health behaviors. Urban public universities can contribute to the growth of sustainable food systems through encouraging innovative scholarship, implementing programs in campus dining halls, supporting local food markets, and leading civic engagement activities (Pothukuchi & Molnar, 2014).

At the institutional level, creating the infrastructure to offer a CSA pro-

gram for employees could have numerous benefits to both the institution and surrounding community. Higher levels of social wellness, community engagement, and capacity building could be achieved through a CSA program based in civic engagement with local agriculture (Niewolny et al., 2012). Community-university partnership models are emerging, breaking down the "town and gown divide" to achieve sustainable local agriculture through shared resources (Niewolny et al., 2012). Providing the opportunity for employees to participate in a local CSA empowers employees to feel connected to the community through contributing to the local food system.

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

Other benefits of workplace CSA programs at universities include:

- Improved social responsibility
- Positive public perception
- Employee satisfaction and retention
- Increased workplace productivity
- Healthy workforce and healthcare savings
- Community relationships

Summary

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review exploring the benefits, challenges, and equity considerations of CSA programs, especially within institutional and workplace settings. It begins by defining local food systems and CSA models and examining their economic, environmental, and public health benefits. Following the establishment of key terms and concepts, this chapter includes a comparison of existing Workplace CSA Toolkits to identify key components that inform program development. Chapter 2 also emphasizes positive outcomes linked to CSA participation, including improved dietary habits, enhanced community connections, and economic and environmental gains. However, it also addresses equity challenges such as financial and logistical barriers to participation and the limitation of access based on employment. Lastly, it presents universities as ideal sites for workplace CSA programs, noting potential institutional benefits like improved employee wellness, public perception, and stronger university-community partnerships.

91% of participants in the University of Kentucky's CSA voucher program reported a more favorable view of the university (CSA to University Toolkit).
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Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Chapter 3 outlines the methods used to complete this feasibility study. This chapter begins with a reiteration of the research questions guiding our work and is followed by an explanation of the data collection methods that were utilized. Following this, we provide information about the stakeholder interviews, farmer surveys, case study research, and policy analysis that we conducted. This chapter concludes with a description of our overall analysis approach which was designed to inform the creation of final program design recommendations.

To ensure a nuanced, dynamic approach to this feasibility study, it was important to use multiple forms of data collection regarding workplace CSA programs and exploring pathways for success with the University of Iowa. This included gathering first hand accounts through interviews, exploring similar projects through case studies, engaging with peer reviewed literature on the effects of CSA models in workplace dynamics, and surveying relevant stakeholders within the greater Iowa City Area. Guaranteeing a streamlined process, our team has used a guiding principle (the Four E's of Public Administration) and two supplemental theories (Administrative Burdens & Positive Externalities) to establish key research questions to be answered throughout our findings and subsequent recommendations.

Four Es of Public Administration

- 1. Which University of Iowa employees would benefit 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?

Throughout this feasibility study, our team focused on gathering thoughtful and practical perspectives from stakeholders who will play a key role in creating and implementing a Workplace CSA Program at the University of Iowa. Before beginning outreach efforts, we identified stakeholders within the University, the local community, and our partner organization, Iowa Valley RC&D.

Main Stakeholders

- **Employees of the University of Iowa**
- ♦ *Farmers who participate in CSAs*
- **♦** The Office of Sustainability and Environment at the University of Iowa
- **Well-Being at Iowa at the University of Iowa**
- Iniversity of Iowa Benefits Office
- ♦ Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development

Research and Data Collection Methods

There were four main methods of data collection throughout this feasibility study:

- **& Key University of Iowa Stakeholder Interviews**
- ♦ Survey of CSA Farmers
- ♦ Case Study Research
- ♦ CSA Policy Analysis

Key Stakeholder Interviews

Our team conducted interviews with key stakeholders from the University of Iowa. The university stakeholders include the Director of the Office of Sustainability and the Environment, Stratis Giannakouros, the Senior Director of Benefits in the Benefits Office, Rebecca Olson, and the Senior Director of Well-Being Services for Well-Being at Iowa, Erin Litton. We also held a virtual meeting over Zoom with Jon Jensen from Luther College who serves as the Director of Luther's Center for Sustainable Communities and oversees Luther's workplace CSA program.

Before each meeting, we collaborated to compile relevant questions tailored to each interview. These questions were informed by the research we conducted on existing workplace CSA program literature, as well as specific details about each interviewee. Additionally, we identified follow-up questions during the interviews based on the stakeholders' responses.

The goals of these interviews were to establish connections, identify potential champions for a University of Iowa Workplace CSA Program, understand perceived barriers to engaging with this type of program, and learn more about the current landscape of employee benefits. The team found these interviews to be highly insightful and a valuable contribution to this feasibility study.

Surveys

At the beginning of this feasibility study, our capstone group identified two groups to survey: CSA Farmers and University of Iowa Employees. We aimed to use surveys to gather relevant information for the study in a way that offered flexibility and ease for the stakeholders so as to prevent administrative burdens.

Roadblocks

While Iowa Valley RC&D initially provided a list of CSA Farmers from their network, the team conducted further research to add more names, businesses, and contact information to ensure comprehensive outreach. Despite our thorough efforts, we cannot guarantee that every CSA Farmer in the greater Iowa City area was included on this list. Additionally, after multiple attempts to share the survey, we received only a 33.3% response rate. This low engagement could be due to various reasons, such as lack of interest, trust, or time. Although we kept the survey under ten minutes and sent it during a time of year when farmers typically have more capacity, January and February, the response rate remained low.

As a result, we cannot make major claims based on the survey response data. Instead, we used the data to verify CSA offerings and pull direct quotes about the farmer experience for this report. At no point does this report claim to provide a complete understanding of the CSA Farmer landscape in the greater Iowa City area.

For University of Iowa Employees, we aimed to use a survey to assess interest in joining a Workplace CSA Program, identify product preferences, and understand current food-buying habits. This information would have helped Iowa Valley RC&D plan a pilot program and assist farmers in preparing for their growing seasons. However, due to mass email restrictions at the University of Iowa, we were not able to access a method of sending a survey to all employees to collect a representative sample. Although we could not conduct a survey, the team used research from past LiveWell surveys conducted by the Wellness Center as evidence of general employee interest.

Case Study Research

This research used a comparative case study approach to examine workplace CSA programs at three institutions: the University of Kentucky, Luther College, and King County, Washington. Cases were selected to reflect diverse geographic regions, program sizes, funding models, and levels of institutional support. The University of Kentucky was identified as a case study due to their extensive work on building a successful workplace CSA program. Luther College was selected as a case study due to its proximity to the University of Iowa, their willingness to participate in an interview, and the interwoven responsibility between multiple departments who oversee their CSA program. The King County, WA case was selected to provide a perspective on workplace CSAs outside of a university setting, as an example of a program that was not extended past its pilot phase, and to better understand the challenges of operating a workplace CSA program in a siloed setting like the University of Iowa.

Data was gathered from institutional reports, publicly available toolkits, and final evaluations published between 2017 and 2023. These sources provided detailed insights into program structure, employee benefits, outreach strategies, and documented outcomes. An original interview was conducted with Luther College's Director of the Center for Sustainable Communities, Jon Jensen. A cross-case matrix was developed to systematically compare key program features, including funding sources, benefit structures, CSA selection processes, and outreach methods. This matrix helped identify common challenges and notable practices across cases. While the findings offer valuable lessons for program design and implementation, the analysis is limited to publicly reported information and may not reflect the full scope of participant experiences or internal program data.

Policy Analysis

This policy analysis evaluates three alternatives for addressing employee nutrition challenges at the University of Iowa: maintaining the status quo, implementing a workplace CSA promotion program, and launching a workplace CSA voucher program. Each alternative was assessed using three evaluation criteria: effectiveness, cost, and administrative feasibility. These criteria were selected based on their alignment with the University's wellness goals and operational constraints. Effectiveness was determined through a review of literature and case studies examining the impact of CSA participation on fruit and vegetable consumption, healthcare utilization, and employee satisfaction. Cost estimates were calculated using available budget data from comparable programs, including the University of Kentucky's CSA voucher initiative, and included program expenses such as staffing, marketing, and voucher disbursement. Administrative feasibility was analyzed through interviews with stakeholders at the University of Iowa and Iowa Valley RC&D, as well as a review of implementation models from other institutions. Each alternative was rated on a 1 to 5 scale for each criterion based on its projected impact, affordability, and scalability within existing university structures. This mixed-methods approach allows for a holistic and evidence-based comparison to inform strategic decision-making.

Analysis Approach

After collecting all forms of data and information used for this feasibility study, it was analyzed through cross-comparison of other case studies using a thematic approach. By aligning with the goals of specific deliverables, we aimed to gain a clearer understanding of general themes of interest from University of Iowa offices, farmers, and the barriers that exist within these groups. This approach allowed us to provide comprehensive recommendations that are not only grounded in public administration theory but also validated by proven workplace CSA models.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to conduct a feasibility study for implementing a workplace CSA program at the University of Iowa. The chapter details a mixed-methods approach that includes key stakeholder interviews, a farmer survey, comparative case study research, and policy analysis. Interviews were conducted with University of Iowa officials while surveys targeted local CSA farmers. Farmer response rates were limited, and an employee survey was not conducted due to institutional barriers. Three case studies—University of Kentucky, Luther College, and King County, WA were selected to identify and analyze best practices and challenges. Finally, a policy analysis was conducted to evaluate three alternatives for improving employee nutrition through CSA engagement, considering cost, effectiveness, and equity. All data were analyzed thematically and comparatively to inform final recommendations that are evidence-based and contextually relevant to the University of Iowa.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

Introduction

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of three case studies at the University of Kentucky, Luther College in Iowa, and King County in Washington. These three case studies were selected to analyze the key challenges, successes, and design mechanisms of existing workplace CSA programs. This chapter concludes with a table summarizing the key elements of each case study and the main takeaways from this analysis.

University of Kentucky

The CSA Voucher Program at the University of Kentucky (UK) was first piloted in 2015 by researchers at the UK Department of Agricultural Economics, funded by a FMPP grant from the USDA (University of Kentucky CSA Voucher Program Summary, 2023). The pilot included three farms and 95 employee participants, showing promising health benefits and support for local farms. In 2016, UK Health and Wellness funded a second pilot with a \$40,000 budget, and by 2017, the program became an official employee benefit. The program now subsidizes the overall cost to join a CSA with vouchers of \$100-200 (an entire CSA share can range from \$500-800) per customer. The voucher is applied to the initial sign-up cost.

Initially, participation was determined by lottery due to high demand, but by 2019, the program expanded to offer 1,000 vouchers annually. Participation has steadily increased to 714 redeemed vouchers of the 1,000 available in 2023. Additional support programs like cooking classes and nutritional education enhance the experience. The program's current operating budget is \$181,500 annually.

In 2023, UK began a peer promotion pilot program where 8 existing UK employees in the voucher program were selected to be advocates for the program in exchange for a higher voucher amount (University of Kentucky CSA Voucher Program Summary, 2023). The 8 employees would act as "Peer Promoters," spreading the word about the voucher program and providing additional resources and experiences to new members. This pilot was started in response to findings at UK that peer support helped retain first-time CSA members.

The CSA Voucher Program has had a measurable impact on household health, local agriculture, and potential employer cost savings. Since 2015, it has provided 4,360 CSA shares to UK households and engaged over 2,000 community members in local food events (University of Kentucky CSA Voucher Program Summary, 2023). CSA members report increased fruit and vegetable consumption, improved cooking skills, and reduced processed food intake, along with better health indicators like lower systolic blood pressure and higher carotenoid levels. Employers may benefit from reduced healthcare costs, as pilot participants showed a significant decrease in diet-related med-ical claims within two years. Additionally, the program strengthens engagement with local farmers and organic products.

Luther College

Luther College, located in Decorah, Iowa, launched a workplace CSA program in 2014. The Luther CSA program provides financial support to employees for purchasing fresh, local produce while strengthening connections with regional farmers. The program is available to employees working at least 0.75 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) and provides a 50% reimbursement on CSA shares, up to \$100 per season (Geurkink et al., 2024). Reimbursements are issued in the fall after the CSA season ends. Initially funded by grants, the program transitioned to institutional funding from the Center for Sustainable Communities, the Nena Amundson Lifetime Wellness Program, and the Luther Healthcare Fund. The program's design emphasizes simplicity and low administrative burden, allowing employees to sign up directly with CSA farms and receive reimbursement through their paycheck. Over the years, the program has evolved to eliminate prior educational requirements, making participation more flexible.

Luther's CSA program aims to promote healthy eating and foster community engagement. To enhance accessibility and satisfaction, the program partners with three local farms that have adapted their offerings to meet subscriber needs. These adaptations include providing home delivery, customizable shares, shorter-season options, and market shares (Geurkink et al., 2024). Additionally, the college hosts educational and food preparation events throughout the CSA season, many of which are organized by the student-run edible gardens.

The workplace CSA program has demonstrated benefits for employees, the college, and local farmers. Employees report improved eating habits and increased access to fresh food, while the college has seen boosts in workplace morale and employee retention. Farmers benefit from stable CSA subscriptions and increased engagement with the community. To sustain and expand the program, Luther College recommends securing diverse funding sources, improving outreach—especially to lower-wage employees—and providing

flexible reimbursement options. Additional strategies, such as optional educational programming and stronger farmer partnerships, can further enhance the program's impact on sustainability, health, and community engagement.

King County, Washington

King County, Washington, home to the City of Seattle, launched a pilot CSA program for its government employees in 2014, with the goal of strengthening its local food system. The pilot took place from 2014 to 2017, and was funded by the King County Conservation district. Over this timespan, the program grew from 49 employees at 3 worksites to 130 employees in 12 municipal government departments and a part-time staff member to facilitate the program (King County, 2017). Employees in the program did not receive a direct voucher or discount on CSA subscriptions but were instead eligible for a credit toward reduced out-of-pocket medical expenses through employer-sponsored insurance. This model was developed in collaboration with the public employees' labor union and aimed to lower healthcare claims by promoting healthier behaviors. However, it was discontinued after the pilot phase as part of a broader wellness initiative reformulation.

King County's CSA program was uniquely designed to accommodate its 6,000 employees spread across 180 geographically dispersed worksites, some with logistical and security challenges, such as courthouses and transit stations (King County, 2017). Additionally, King County's procurement policies required use of a Request for Proposal (RFP) to ensure fair selection of CSA partners and that each potential program was evaluated on the same criteria and information. The RFP criteria and forms are available in their final report on the program.

King County's experience implementing a workplace CSA program provided valuable insights into planning, outreach, implementation, and evaluation. One key lesson from King County (2017) is the importance of strong leadership approval and cross-departmental coordination. Gaining buy-in from facilities management, worksite supervisors, and senior leadership helped organize logistics and promote broader employee participation. Additionally, engaged site coordinators played a crucial role in recruitment and retention. These on-site champions had credibility among colleagues and helped facilitate communication, manage weekly deliveries, and answer employee questions, significantly boosting participation rates (King County, 2017). Another major takeaway was that flexibility in CSA options enhances participation. Employees preferred having choices regarding box sizes, pricing, and payment plans, and CSAs that offered installment payment options saw higher engagement (King County, 2017). Outreach strategies also mattered: multi-channel promotion, including email, posters, and in-person events, was more effective when personalized by site coordinators or CSA farmers rather than coming from HR or wellness departments.

Major Takeaways

These case studies from the University of Kentucky, Luther College, and King County show different ways employers can run CSA programs to improve health, support local farms, and boost employee satisfaction (see Table 2). Major takaways include:

- Funding models vary. Kentucky gives direct subsidies, Luther reimburses 50% of CSA costs, and King County offered health insurance credits.
- Outreach matters. Programs with peer promoters or site champions (Kentucky and King County) had stronger engagement than those using only HR emails.
- Flexibility helps. Custom shares, delivery options, and payment plans made it easier for employees to join and stay involved.
- Health and morale improved. Workers reported better diets and habits. At Kentucky, medical claims related to diet dropped.
- Lasting programs need support. Luther and Kentucky now use internal funds. King County's ended when leadership priorities changed.

Category	Luther College	King College	University of Ken- tucky
Location	Decorah, Iowa	King County, Washington	Lexington, Kentucky
Funding Sources	Center for Sustain- able Communities, Wellness Program, Healthcare Fund	King County Con- servation 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 ex- penses (insurance benefit)	\$100-\$200 subsidy on CSA membership
Program Size	100 employees annu- ally (~20% of faculty)	130 employees at 12 municipal depart- ments (at peak)	714 redeemed vouch- ers (1,000 possible) (2023)

Table 2: Overview of Case Studies

Category	Luther College	King College	University of Ken- tucky
CSA Selection Process	Direct partnerships with three local farms	Request for Propos- al (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 out- reach	Emails, posters, in-person events, multi-channel out- reach	Emails, wellness website, in-person events, peer promo- tion
Key Challenges	Ensuring funding sustainability, reach- ing lower-wage em- ployees	Geographic disper- sion, security/lo- gistical challenges, program sustain- ability	High demand re- quired lottery sys- tem, funding sustain- ability
Notable Features	Home delivery, customizable shares, shorter-season op- tions	On-site coordina- tors, installment payment options, flexible box sizes	Peer promotion program, cooking classes, nutritional education
Lessons Learned	Diverse funding sources, flexible re- imbursement, farm partnerships	Leadership buy- in, site coordina- tors, flexible pric- ing, multi-channel promotion	Flexible funding, peer support for retention, expanded access over time

Summary

Chapter 4 analyzes three workplace CSA program case studies—University of Kentucky, Luther College, and King County, Washington—to identify effective design elements, common challenges, and best practices. Each case highlights different funding structures: direct subsidies at Kentucky, reimbursements at Luther, and insurance credits at King County. Findings show that programs with strong outreach strategies, such as peer promoters or site coordinators, achieved greater engagement. Flexibility in share options, payment plans, and delivery logistics also proved critical to success. Health benefits, including improved diets and lower medical claims, were reported across programs, along with increased employee morale and stronger local farm connections. This case study analysis offers valuable guidance for designing a tailored, effective workplace CSA program at the University of Iowa.

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Chapter 5: Stakeholder Interviews & Survey Findings

Introduction

Chapter 5 outlines the main findings from interviews with University of Iowa Stakeholders and farmer survey results. These results include in-depth takeaways of interviews with the University's Benefits Office, Well-Being at Iowa office, and the Office of Sustainable and the Environment (OSE). This chapter also includes a summary of the responses to our CSA farmer survey, outlining the benefits and burdens of operating a CSA model and other farmer insights.

Stakeholder Engagement Analysis

Benefits Office

A Zoom interview with Rebecca Olson, Senior Director of Benefits, from the University of Iowa Benefits Office, was conducted in February 2025. The University of Iowa Benefits Office is an office within the Human Resources Department. This meeting with the Benefits Office focused on understanding the process and feasibility of establishing a Workplace CSA Pilot Program as an employee benefit.

The Benefits Office clarified that while they collaborate with the Office of Well-Being at Iowa on initiatives, wellness-related programs like a Workplace CSA Program would primarily fall under Well-Being at Iowa's purview. They explained that creating a pilot program, such as the recent GLP-1 Pilot Program at the University of Iowa, does not follow a specific formal process. This is a beneficial insight into the formal, or lack-there-of, of a pilot process through the university. Funding for such pilots is determined on a case-by-case basis, and if a pilot were to be conducted within a single college, it would require approval and funding from that college's leadership before moving through the chain of command.

Rebecca noted that employees are generally satisfied with existing core benefits, and major changes or additions to benefits are rare. Changes to benefits are made during the Spring Semester to go into effect for the following calendar year. Rebecca also mentioned that there may be **challenges with implementing a payroll deductions or vouchers for a workplace CSA program** as these would require involvement from **Payroll and Information Technology Services.**

While there are no current funds or stipends specifically for local food or CSA purchases, the Benefits Office suggested that such an initiative would

align more with Well-Being at Iowa programs rather than traditional insurance benefits. They recommended exploring existing discount programs and Well-Being at Iowa initiatives for potential overlaps.

Overall, the meeting underscored the importance of aligning the Workplace CSA program with wellness goals and navigating administrative and funding challenges to move the initiative forward.

Well-Being at Iowa

A Zoom interview with Erin Litton, Senior Director of Well-Being Services from Well-Being at Iowa, was conducted in February 2025. Well-Being at Iowa is an office within the Human Resources Department at the University of Iowa. The intention of the meeting with Well-Being at Iowa was to gain a better understanding of the employee benefits landscape and assess if there were potential champions within the Well-Being at Iowa department for a Workplace CSA Program.

Throughout this meeting, Erin shared insights from Well-Being at Iowa's Personal Health Assessment (PHA) survey, revealing that 83% of employees report inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption, with lower-wage and merit staff disproportionately affected (liveWELL, 2025). Challenges such as **logistical barriers** (e.g., space for CSA pickups) and legal concerns (e.g., preferential treatment of vendors) were raised, along with past efforts to promote CSAs and farmers' markets.

Importantly, Erin expressed interest in Well-Being at Iowa supporting a pilot program through **targeted outreach and education** but emphasized the need for clear data on the program's impact on employee well-being, retention, and engagement for the long-term sustainability of a Workplace CSA Program. In terms of avenues for promoting a program, they suggested hosting informational events, leveraging existing wellness programs, and exploring discounts or grants to make CSA shares more accessible. While Well-Being at Iowa is willing to assist with recruitment and communication, they prefer not to manage the program directly, citing increased administrative costs and time away from other projects.

This meeting highlighted the potential for support

from Well-Being at Iowa for a Workplace CSA pilot program to address employee nutrition and well-being, provided it is carefully designed, evaluated, funded, and administratively driven by another entity.

Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE)

An in-person interview with Stratis Giannakouros, Director of the OSE, and Beth MacKenzie and Brinda Shetty, OSE Program Managers, was conducted in February 2025. This interview was held to gain a better understanding of the current local foods programming offered from the University of Iowa and assess if there were potential champions within the OSE for a Workplace CSA Program.

Throughout this interview, the OSE discussed potential synergies of a Workplace CSA Program with existing sustainability initiatives, such as food tracking systems, composting, and local sourcing commitments, while acknowledging challenges like labor shortages and the need for targeted outreach. The OSE suggested starting small by offering one product, such as an apple CSA, to increase participation and avoid issues with unfamiliar produce.

The OSE expressed interest in supporting the program through **promotional efforts, sustainability education, and connecting with local farmers,** though they emphasized that **Iowa Valley RC&D would oversee implementation.** They also highlighted the potential to integrate CSA participation into sustainability events, newsletters, and workshops.

The OSE showed enthusiasm for the project and offered to assist with marketing and recruitment, including the use of an intern out of their office, while recommending further exploration of funding opportunities and partnerships to ensure the program's success.

Table 3: Overview of Opportunities and Challenges with Universi-ty of Iowa Stakeholders

University Stake- holder	Opportunities	Challenges
University of Iowa Benefits Office	 Will provide guidance navigating University if Iowa approval processes 	 Complexities with payroll and IT CSA voucher does not align with traditional benefits
The Office of Sustainability and the Environment	 Enthusiastic support for sustainability tie- ins Willing to help with marketing, education, and farmer connections Can provide intern hours 	 Limited capacity to manage program Labor shortages could impact outreach needs for engagement
Well-Being at Iowa	 Willing to support through outreach, education, and promotion Can collaborate to add survey questions to their yearly, LiveWell Employee Survey 	 Will not manage the pro- gram directly Needs clear data on impact before full partnership

CSA Farmers Outreach

In February 2025, we sent a survey to local CSA farmers in the Iowa City area. The goal of this survey was to:

- 1. Gain a deeper understanding of the local foods market from the producer perspective
- 2. Assess interest in CSA flexibility to consumer needs
- 3. Ensure correct information of business models compared to online information
- 4. Understand preferred distribution methods

Out of 15 businesses contacted, there was a 33 percent response rate, with five submissions. While this data cannot claim to be representative of the Iowa City area CSA landscape, it can provide insights into the concerns and burdens of local producers. Due to the small sample size of this survey, the results are interpreted qualitatively rather than quantitatively. For the purposes of anonymity, all farmer answers will remain anonymous.

Introduction to The Farmers

As Iowa Valley RC&D stated in their grant proposal for Fresh Connect, farmers more recently to enter the market are more likely to experience burdens related to business development. Of our five respondents, three have been farming for exactly five years, while two joined the career path 12 years

ago. The respondents reported having similar paths into the farming profession, including growing up on a family farm or finding a passion for agriculture as young adults.

CSA Offerings

The respondents of this survey offer a range of goods including:

- Vegetables
- Herbs
- Fruits
- Baked goods
- Flowers
- Value-added products (sauces, jams, ferments, etc.)
- Eggs
- Meat products
- Honey/maple syrup
- Non-food products like wood carved ornamentals

All respondents stated that they would be willing to offer new or different products if they perceived the demand from consumers. The majority of respondents offer their CSA shares in the summer and fall, with some offering shares through other times of the year. According to survey results, CSA farmers use a variety of price structures, whether that be for shorter or longer seasons, add-on products, or price reduction options. Three out of the five respondents currently support a price reduction model, and four out of five respondents participate in food assistance payment programs like WIC, SNAP, or Double-Up Food Bucks. All but one of the respondents stated that they have the capacity to increase their offerings if given time to prepare. With a variety of delivery options, farmer respondents indicated they offer home delivery, pickup at local markets, shipping, or farm pick up.

Positive Perspectives on the CSA Model

1. Connection to Food, Farming, and Community Building

CSA farmer respondents emphasized that their models help people understand the realities, risks, and challenges of farming, fostering a deeper appreciation for the work involved in growing food. By creating a direct connection between consumers and the source of their food, CSA participation bridged the gap between rural producers and more urban consumers, strengthening local networks and relationships. Farmers note that this model builds trust and camaraderie within the community, as members often visit the farm, meet the growers, and learn about sustainable practices. Additionally, CSA participation introduces people to new types of produce and farming methods, expanding their culinary horizons and deepening their understanding of seasonal eating. For farmers, this connection is not just transactional—it is a way to build a loyal, informed community (and customer base) that values their work.

2. Support for Local Agriculture, Shared Risk, and Market Stability

From the farmers' perspective, CSA models provide critical financial stability and security through upfront payments, which help cover early-season costs and reduce financial uncertainty. This model encourages sustainable food systems by supporting local farms and practices, ensuring that small-scale agriculture remains viable. Survey respondents explained that CSA members share the risk of variability in farming harvests, such as crop failures or unpredictable weather, which can otherwise devastate small operations. This shared risk model not only stabilizes income for farmers but also fosters a sense of collective responsibility among consumers, who feel invested in the success of the farm. For farmers, this system is a lifeline that allows them to focus on growing quality food while maintaining economic resilience.

3. Convenience, Empowerment, and Choice for Members

Respondents recognized that CSA models offer convenience and empowerment for their members. Upfront payments mean members do not have to worry about food costs throughout the CSA season, in addition to regular shares creating a predictable routine for accessing fresh, local produce. Farmers also highlighted the importance of giving members a voice in the process, whether through input on growing practices, crop selection, or other decisions. This collaborative approach supports the kind of food systems consumers want to see sustained, aligning farmer and member values. Additionally, CSA participation encourages habits around choosing local, seasonal foods, which these farmers see as a win-win for both the environment and the community. For farmers, empowering members with choice and convenience is a key part of building long-term relationships and ensuring the success of the CSA model.

Challenges and Limitations of the CSA Models

1. High Costs for Consumers

Farmers acknowledged in the survey that CSA models can be financially out of reach for individuals with restricted incomes, which limits the diversity of their customer base. The requirement for upfront payments, while beneficial for farmers, can be a significant barrier for some potential members. This financial hurdle often means that CSA participation is skewed toward those with more disposable income, excluding lower-income households who might also benefit from fresh, local produce. Farmers express a desire to make CSA participation more inclusive but recognize the challenges of balancing affordability with the need to cover their own costs.

2. Inconvenience, Rigidity, and Time Commitment for Consumers

From the farmers' perspective, the CSA model's structure can be inconvenient for some consumers. The locked-in quantity and schedule may not suit people with busy lifestyles, frequent travel, or unpredictable routines. Farmers note that picking up shares and incorporating them into meal planning requires time and effort, which can be a deterrent for those with limited free time. While some members appreciate the routine, others find it inflexible, making the model less viable for a broader audience. Farmers recognize that convenience is a key factor for many consumers and that CSA participation may not always align with modern, fast-paced lifestyles.

3. Limited Control Over Produce and Risk of Dissat-isfaction

Respondents are aware that CSA members have less control over the specific items they receive, which can lead to challenges. The variability of seasonal produce means that members might receive unfamiliar or unwanted items, potentially resulting in food waste or dissatisfaction. While some members enjoy the surprise and opportunity to try new things, others may find it frustrating if the shares do not align with their preferences or dietary needs. Farmers emphasize that this lack of control is an inherent part of the CSA

model but acknowledge that it can be a drawback for some consumers.

4. Suitability for Households

Farmers highlight in their survey responses that CSA shares may not align with every household's size, dietary preferences, or stage of life. For example, smaller households might struggle to use the quantity of produce provided, while families with specific dietary restrictions may find the shares less useful. Meat CSAs, in particular, face the added challenge of finding customers whose eating and cooking habits align with offerings. Farmers recognize that the one-size-fits-all approach of many CSAs can limit their appeal and are exploring ways to offer more flexible options to better meet the needs of diverse households.

Positives	Challenges and Limitations
Providing Community Connection to	High, Up-Front, Costs to Consumers
Local Foods	
Better Market Stability for Farmers	Lack of Accessibility of Pickup Times
and Recycling Local Dollars Through	and Locations for Both Farmers and
The Local Economy	Consumers
Oppertunity of Choice for Consum-	Limited Choice in Actual Items in
ers based on Share-Type	Each Share Box
Possibility to Diversify Ones Diet	Higher Challenges for Households
	with a Variety of Dietary Needs

Table 4: Main Community Impacts of a CSA Model

Summary

Chapter 5 of the feasibility study presents findings from stakeholder interviews at the University of Iowa and a survey of local CSA farmers to assess opportunities and challenges for implementing a Workplace CSA Program. Interviews with the University's Benefits Office, Well-Being at Iowa, and the Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE) revealed general interest in supporting a pilot program, with a shared emphasis on aligning the initiative with wellness and sustainability goals. However, each office expressed limitations regarding administrative capacity, funding, and legal considerations, underscoring the need for a clearly defined organization to lead the program. Farmer survey responses highlighted both the strengths and barriers of CSA models; benefits included community connection, shared risk, and financial stability for producers, while challenges centered on affordability, convenience, and inflexibility for consumers. Together, these insights point to a strong foundation of institutional and producer interest, balanced with practical concerns that must be addressed to ensure program feasibility and long-term success

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Chapter 6: CSA Policy Analysis and Findings for the University of Iowa

Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed policy analysis of how a workplace Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) voucher program could help address employee health and nutrition challenges at the University of Iowa. It outlines the current wellness concerns facing university employees and introduces four policy alternatives designed to improve fruit and vegetable consumption and reduce health-related costs: maintaining the status quo, offering a workplace CSA promotion program, launching an income-based CSA voucher program, and launching a universal CSA voucher program. Each alternative is evaluated on equity, effectiveness, and cost, drawing heavily on data and outcomes from a comparable program at the University of Kentucky. The analysis aims to guide university decision-makers on the most practical and impactful strategy for improving employee well-being while supporting the local food economy.

Executive Summary

The University of Iowa faces several workforce health and satisfaction challenges: 83% of employees report poor nutrition, up from 79% in 2019. Poor nutrition generates negative externalities such as fatigue, lower productivity, and increased healthcare utilization, which impact not only individual employees but also the broader effectiveness of the University. This policy analysis evaluates four alternatives to address these concerns: maintaining the status quo, implementing a workplace CSA promotion program, launching an income-based workplace CSA voucher program, and launching a universal workplace CSA voucher program. Each alternative was assessed using three criteria: access to benefits, effectiveness, and cost. Based on the analysis, the income-based workplace CSA voucher program is the most promising option to enhance employee well-being, reduce healthcare costs, and support a more resilient and inclusive food system at the University of Iowa.

The status quo maintains existing wellness offerings but does little to reverse declining nutrition trends or increase employee engagement. The promotion-only CSA program improves access to information and local food education, but without financial support, it is unlikely to significantly increase CSA participation among lower-income employees. The income-based CSA voucher program, modeled after successful programs at the University of Kentucky and elsewhere, provides targeted financial assistance to employees earning under \$60,000 annually and offers the strongest potential to improve fruit and vegetable consumption, individual health outcomes, and healthcare cost savings for those most in need. The universal CSA voucher program provides similar benefits across the entire employee population, increasing overall participation but at a higher total cost and with a lower return on investment per participant.

Though both voucher programs entail greater costs than the other alternatives, the income-based program remains within a manageable range and can be piloted on a small scale to evaluate its effectiveness and scalability. of the missing nutrients, but also because the foods people eat instead are often low in nutrition (McClain, 2022). Poor nutrition is extensively linked to chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension, contributing to an estimated \$1.72 trillion in annual costs from obesity-related conditions, approximately nine percent of the U.S. GDP (McClain, 2022). Additionally, UI employees increasingly cite health and physical conditions as barriers to productivity (liveWELL, 2025). These trends signal not only declining employee well-being but also rising risk for long-term health-related costs and staff retention issues.

Analysis Criteria	Impact Categories	Status Quo	Workplace CSA Promotion Program	Icome-Based Workplace CSA Voucher Program	Universal Workplace CSA Voucher Program
Equity	Access to benefits	Low access	Moderately low access	Highly accessible	Moderately high access
Effectiveness	1.1 Improve- ment of indi- vidual health	Very low effective- ness	Low Effective- ness	Avg increase of 0.39 vegetable servings/ day (per partici- pant)	Avg increase of 0.21 vegetable servings/day (per participant)
	2. Healthcare cost savings	Very low effective- ness	Low effective- ness	\$93,324 – \$132,209	\$95,133-\$134,772
Cost	1. Monetary cost	\$0	\$0	~\$52,454 @ 289 vouchers (per year)	~\$100,541 @ 554 vouchers (per year)
	2. Administra- tive cost	0 FTE	0 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE

Policy Problem

The University of Iowa is experiencing a growing wellness crisis among its employees. In 2024, 83% of employees reported low fruit and vegetable intake, up from 76% in 2019—a 7 percentage point increase in just five years (liveWELL, 2025). Diets that lack fruits and vegetables can lead to health problems, not just because of the missing nutrients, but also because the foods people eat instead are often low in nutrition (McClain, 2022). Poor nutrition is extensively linked to chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension, contributing to an estimated \$1.72 trillion in annual costs from obesity-related conditions, approximately nine percent of the U.S. GDP (McClain, 2022). Additionally, UI employees increasingly cite health and physical conditions as barriers to productivity (liveWELL, 2025). These trends signal not only declining employee well-being but also rising risk for long-term health-related costs and staff retention issues.

This situation reflects a market failure in the form of negative externalities. A review article by Drewnowski (2020) finds that poor dietary nutrient density can cause fatigue, reduced mental clarity, and lower stress resilience. This results in more absenteeism, presenteeism (being at work but underperforming), and long-term health problems, all of which create costs for the employer and reduce organizational effectiveness (Drewnowski, 2020). These negative externalities reduce the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the University. Lower-income employees are more likely than higher-earning peers to consume cheap, nutrient-poor foods due to cost barriers, compounding these health and performance disparities. By addressing these problems head-on, positive benefits are likely to accrue throughout the University as a result of a healthier and more alert workforce. Without intervention, the market will continue to underprovide the conditions necessary for a well-nourished and productive workforce (Drewnowski, 2020).

Policy Goals

The first criterion we assess is equity. Specifically, we evaluate how well each option reaches and serves employees across different income levels at the University of Iowa. While all employees may technically participate in wellness programs, financial and logistical barriers often prevent lower-income staff from accessing the same benefits as their higher-earning colleagues. For example, employees with lower wages may be less likely to afford upfront CSA costs or have flexible schedules to pick up produce. Each alternative will be rated based on the extent to which it reduces these barriers and promotes equitable participation.

While effectiveness will capture overall improvements to health and behavior, these benefits are not uniformly distributed. As both Rossi et al. (2017) and Andreatta et al. (2008) illustrate, effectiveness is dependent on equitable participation. Thus, equity is treated as a distinct criterion, assessing not just outcomes, but whether program design enables access to those who stand to benefit most.

The second criterion we use to assess the alternatives is effectiveness. For the University of Iowa, the effectiveness of a workplace CSA program will be measured by the potential for improvement in individual health and healthcare savings from improved diets of employees who purchase a share through the workplace CSA program. An improved diet can be measured through vegetable consumption, which increases dietary nutrient density. These measures of effectiveness were chosen as they match the problems the University of Iowa is currently facing related to their employees and expected outcomes of CSA participation shown in research. Izumi et al., (2020) found that participants in workplace CSA programs report increased vegetable intake and reduced food insecurity and the Southwest Washington Food Hub (2024) reports higher levels of productivity and employee satisfaction as result of a healthier workforce. Angelino et al., (2019) found that increased fruit and vegetable consumption is shown to provide substantial benefits toward human health, with the strongest evidence supporting a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease.

Potential savings from improved health and lowered healthcare expenses when low-health employees join a CSA are shown by Rossi & Woods (2018). The potential savings will be estimated using literature on claims reductions because of CSA participation and estimated program participation.

The final criterion we use is cost, which includes both monetary cost and administrative cost. Monetary cost refers to the direct financial expenditures needed to implement each alternative, including the cost of CSA vouchers and spending on marketing materials. This component helps UI stakeholders understand the budget implications of each option. Administrative costs include staffing needs, interdepartmental coordination, procurement processes, and the ability to scale the program across campus. Programs requiring new infrastructure, complex oversight, or extensive coordination are rated as more administratively costly. Programs that fit into existing workflows and use current partnerships are rated as less costly.

Policy Alternatives

Status Quo

The Well-Being at Iowa office currently offers a range of benefits for employees including health coaching, weight management programs, recreation memberships, ergonomics support, resources for family care, and mental health services through their liveWell initiative. In 2024, 11,493 faculty and staff participated in a liveWell service, program, or event (liveWELL, 2025). The Well-Being at Iowa office encourages departments and other offices across campus to participate in different wellness challenges that encourage exercise, fruit and vegetable consumption, drinking water, and developing other healthy habits. There are no programs at the University of Iowa to promote or subsidize local foods for employees.

Workplace CSA Promotion Program (No Voucher)

A workplace CSA promotion program at the University of Iowa, primarily administered by Iowa Valley RC&D with in-kind support from the OSE and Well-Being at Iowa office, will provide a platform for local CSA farmers to advertise their shares directly to UI employees. Employees at the University who sign up for a share through the pilot program will cover the whole cost of their chosen share.

This alternative is expected to bridge an information gap between local farmers and employees at the University of Iowa about CSA shares, leading to more UI employees purchasing shares. Gusto et al. (2024) found that while employees were confident in their ability to cook healthy meals and snacks, they knew little about their local food systems and how or where to purchase local food. Iowa Valley RC&D and the Well-Being at Iowa office will work together to provide information about the health benefits of CSA shares, the variety of shares available, how to purchase a share, where to pick up their share, and currently provided classes and services to help make the most of their share. As a result, employees who can afford a CSA but lack information will have the knowledge, resources, and confidence they need to purchase a share and fully benefit from its offerings.

An example of this alternative is the workplace CSA promotion program administered to government employees of King County, Washington through its "Healthy Incentives" wellness program (King County, 2017). King County's experience highlights three key lessons for successfully promoting a workplace CSA program at the University of Iowa. First, employees need clear and timely program details; promotion should begin only after farms are confirmed so that pricing, offerings, and logistics can be communicated upfront (King County, 2017). Second, King County (2017) found setting a shared deadline that works for both employees and CSA farms helps balance the need for early commitments with employees' need for time to decide. Lastly, outreach must be sustained and multi-channel, combining centralized messaging with grassroots, site-specific efforts and peer advocates to build trust and visibility across campus.

Income-Based Workplace CSA Voucher Program

A workplace CSA voucher program at the University of Iowa, jointly administered by Iowa Valley RC&D, the Well-Being at Iowa office, and the OSE would provide a voucher covering a set portion of the cost of a CSA share (\$100 for a small share, \$200 for a large share) as a benefit for full-time employees with University of Iowa salaries below \$60,000 a year. This design would allow the University of Iowa to target employees with higher need levels, potentially lower starting health points, and get a larger health effect from the same level of money spent on vouchers. This program will provide a platform for local CSA farmers to advertise their shares directly to UI employees and increase access to information about local foods and how to purchase them. It also creates a financial incentive for lower-income employees to join a CSA, enticing participation. The University of Iowa would be directly involved in the administration of this program, transferring voucher funds to either employees, Iowa Valley RC&D, or CSA farmers.

This alternative is expected to close the information gap and motivate more employees, who weren't ready to purchase before, to buy a share by offering a subsidy. Offering a subsidy should increase participation in the program and lead to a more widespread and positive employee nutrition outcome by targeting a lower-income employee subset who are more likely to benefit. A subsidy will help attract employees who are not sure if a CSA share is for them, who are hesitant about the price of a share, and people who are not familiar with the region's local food system. The goal of this alternative is to reach employees who are more likely to benefit from the voucher amount and create the biggest ROI for the University of Iowa. This alternative will cost more money but potentially have greater results.

Universal Workplace CSA Voucher Program

A universal workplace CSA voucher program at the University of Iowa would function similarly to the income-based version but be available to all full-time employees, regardless of income. Jointly administered by Iowa Valley RC&D, the Well-Being at Iowa office, and the Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE), the program would provide a set-value voucher toward the cost of a CSA share. It would support local farmers, close the information gap around local food, and encourage healthier eating. While not targeted by income, this broader version aims to increase participation across the board and promote wellness throughout the university workforce.

This alternative is expected to close the information gap and motivate more employees, who may have been unsure or unfamiliar with local CSAs, to participate by offering a subsidy to all full-time staff. Providing a universal voucher should increase overall participation and promote healthier eating habits across the workforce, supporting both employee wellness and local farmers. By expanding access, the program is also expected to bring more business to local farmers, strengthening the local food economy. It aims to attract those who are hesitant about the cost or unaware of CSA benefits, creating widespread engagement and potential positive returns for the University of Iowa. Although this approach involves higher overall costs than a targeted program, it has the potential to deliver broader and more consistent improvements in employee nutrition and well-being.

Evaluation

Most of the estimates in this analysis are based on data from the University of Kentucky's Workplace CSA Voucher Program. As a large, public, research university with a comparable employee population and workplace wellness structure to the University of Iowa, the University of Kentucky provides a strong reference point for evaluating potential participation rates, health impacts, and costs. Their program offers well-documented outcomes that serve as a practical benchmark for estimating the likely effects of implementing a similar CSA voucher program at the University of Iowa.

1. Status Quo

1.1 Equity

The status quo does not actively address barriers faced by lower-income employees when purchasing local and healthy food.

1.2 Effectiveness

1. Improvement of Individual Health

In 2024, 83% of UI employees reported low fruit and vegetable intake (LiveWELL, 2025). This number has grown 7 percentage points since 2019 when 76% of UI employees reported low fruit and vegetable intake. This demonstrates that with the status quo, fruit and vegetable consumption is worsening over time. Additionally, UI employees increasingly cite health and physical conditions as barriers to productivity (liveWELL, 2025). These findings provide evidence of a decline in individual health, and it is likely that this trend will continue without major changes.

2. Healthcare Savings

In addition to low fruit and vegetable intake, employees have increasingly reported health/physical conditions as a productivity barrier, unmanaged stress, and smoking (LiveWELL, 2025). A study by Jardim et al., (2019) found that annual diet-related cardiometabolic disease (CMD) costs were roughly \$301/person with suboptimal fruit and vegetable intake making up 24% of the cost. With fruit and vegetable intake continuing to worsen over time, it is likely that UI's insurance premiums will rise as well as the cost to treat diet-related diseases increases.

1.3 Cost

1. Monetary Cost

The status quo would not incur any additional budget cost to the Well-Being office.

2. Administrative Cost

The status quo has low administrative cost.

2. Workplace CSA Promotion Program
2.1 Equity

This program does not meaningfully address the financial or logistical barriers that prevent lower-income employees from joining a CSA. Andreatta et al. (2008) found that even with targeted outreach, low-income households are unlikely to participate without subsidies or assistance with transportation and time constraints. A study by Allen et al., (2016) surveying 151 CSA members around Fayette County, Kentucky measured that 94% of CSA shareholders had a Bachelor's degree or higher and the average shareholder had an annual household income of \$110,000. CSA shareholders are typically individuals with higher incomes and education levels, which doesn't reflect the broader UI employee base. Only 23% of UI employees earn \$100,000 or more annually (Iowa Legislature, 2024), meaning most fall outside the typical CSA demographic. While promotion may do important work of informing and engaging employees, it does little to expand access to lower-income groups. Therefore, equity remains limited.

2.2 Effectiveness

The effectiveness of a CSA share in improving individual health and creating healthcare savings at the University of Iowa is dependent on employee participation in the workplace CSA promotion program year-afteryear. Findings from Gusto et al. (2024) suggest that while respondents are confident in preparing healthy meals with seasonal ingredients, they lack knowledge about local food systems, specifically where and how to purchase directly from farmers. This highlights the need to promote local farmers and educate employees on how to purchase and pick-up shares, which this alternative would do. However, mitigating this effect is the finding that 88% of employees in University of Kentucky's CSA voucher program said they would join again the following year with a voucher, only 39% said they would join again without a voucher (Rossi & Woods, 2020).

Lastly, survey data from employees at Clay County District Schools and the University of Florida found that around 50% would either "definitely" or "probably" be willing to join a combined CSA and education program at their workplace (Gusto et al., 2024). 70% of these employees identified "price" as their primary barrier to joining the combined CSA and education program.

1. Improvement of Individual Health

Research on CSA share consumers suggests that this alternative could

have an impact on employee individual health. In a study of both CSA members and CSA nonmembers, Cohen et al., (2012) found statistically significant differences in surveyed fruit and vegetable consumption. CSA members consumed 2.2 more servings of fruits and vegetables per month than CSA nonmembers (Cohen et al., 2012). Another study by Allen et al., (2016) found that CSAs increased a shareholders' fruit and vegetable consumption by 2.7 servings per day on average. While CSA membership is associated with improved fruit and vegetable intake, there is limited evidence that promotion-only efforts, without financial support, significantly shift consumption patterns. Education and exposure may encourage healthier choices among employees who already have the means and motivation to join a CSA. However, without subsidies, lower-income employees remain unlikely to participate, limiting the overall health impact of this alternative.

2. Healthcare Savings

The number of employees to be brought on through solely promotion, especially those who have high pre-CSA diet-related medical expenditures, is likely to be insignificant for overall cost savings.

2.3 Cost

1. Monetary Cost

The workplace CSA promotion program would incur minimal monetary costs. Most expenses would involve in-kind contributions, such as marketing materials and staff time. Interviews with the University of Iowa Well-Being office indicate they are willing to support outreach efforts but not take on administrative responsibilities, further limiting financial costs.

2. Administrative Cost

Administrative costs are primarily tied to staffing and coordination. While existing communication channels can be used for outreach, there is no dedicated staff to manage the program. Any administrative work would likely fall to current employees as an additional responsibility, making it a lower priority and increasing the risk of inconsistent implementation. Challenges also include coordinating outreach across all departments and organizing on-campus pick-up logistics without incentives for organizers. An intern provided by the Office of Sustainability and the Environment would cover a lot of the necessary administrative costs making no FTE necessary for the Uni-

3. Income-Based Workplace CSA Voucher Program

In 2023, the University of Kentucky had 714 participants in their CSA voucher program of roughly 26,000 full-time staff (2.75%) (University of Kentucky, 2023). Based on available University of Iowa employee data, approximately 50 percent of its 21,000 full-time employees, or around 10,500 individuals, earn less than \$60,000 annually and would be eligible for a CSA voucher under an income-based model (Iowa Legislature, 2024). Using University of Kentucky's rate of 2.75%, it can be predicted that ~289 employees would participate in the income-based CSA voucher program.

3.1 Equity

The voucher program is uniquely positioned to address inequities in CSA participation. By subsidizing shares, it removes a primary barrier to entry for lower-income employees. Andreatta et al. (2008) found that when shares were subsidized and logistical barriers addressed, low-income house-holds not only participated but improved cooking and eating habits. This alternative mirrors that approach by specifically subsidizing shares for a low-er-income subset of the University of Iowa employee population.

3.2 Effectiveness

The effectiveness of a workplace CSA voucher program is largely dependent on reaching employees whose behavior will be most affected by a voucher and who have the most health benefits to gain. In a study by Rossi et al. (2017), the lower health (LH) segment of shareholders through the voucher program had average household incomes \$20,000 lower than the higher health (HH) shareholders. The lower health segment of shareholders is identified as having scored themselves "extremely poor," "poor," or "average," in a question asking them to assess their health.

1. Improvement of Individual Health

A CSA voucher program is associated with several positive changes in participants' food behaviors. According to Rossi et al. (2017), first-time LH CSA shareholders in the pilot reported a statistically significant increase of 1.3 servings of vegetables per day, while the 0.8 serving increase for the HH group was insignificant. The LH group also spent less on restaurants, improved their cooking skills, and increased purchases of local and organic foods outside the CSA.

The same findings from general CSA usage in the workplace promotion program section also apply here as a potential effect. An income-based CSA program focused on individuals with household incomes under \$60,000 is expected to enroll a higher proportion of Low Health (LH) participants, estimated at 29.9% of the group based on CDC data and University of Iowa salary information (Rhubart & Monnat, 2022). Given that prior analysis has shown LH participants experience an average increase of 1.3 servings of vegetables per day after CSA participation, this program design would generate an estimated total increase of 112 servings of vegetables per day across all participants. The average servings increase per person would be 0.39 servings per day, indicating a strong potential for greater per-participant health impact within an income-targeted approach.

2. Healthcare Savings

Rossi and Woods (2018) found that high medical expenditure CSA voucher participants, employees at the University of Kentucky, saw significant annual reductions in diet-related medical (\$900-\$1,300) and pharmacy (\$180-\$230) expenses after joining a CSA, while those with lower initial expenses saw no significant change. In an income-based CSA program targeting individuals with household incomes under \$60,000, approximately 29.9% of participants are expected to be classified as Low Health (LH). Applying the same estimated reductions in diet-related medical (\$900-\$1,300) and pharmacy costs (\$180–\$230) per LH participant, the program is projected to achieve total healthcare cost savings ranging from \$93,324 to \$132,209. Despite serving nearly half as many participants as the universal program, the income-based approach is expected to yield comparable or even greater overall savings, underscoring the potential efficiency of targeted CSA interventions in addressing healthcare costs. It is important to note that these figures represent estimated annual expense reductions for participating employees, and the exact effect on overall University of Iowa insurance costs or premiums is unknown.

3.3 Cost

1. Monetary Cost

At the University of Kentucky, the average cost of a CSA voucher, including administrative expenses, was \$181.50 (University of Kentucky, 2023). If every one of the University of Iowa's 10,500 income-eligible employees enrolled, the program would cost up to \$1.9 million annually. However, actual participation rates are much lower. At Kentucky, only 714 of 26,000 full-time employees participated, resulting in a participation rate of approximately 2.75 percent (University of Kentucky, 2023). Applying that same rate to the University of Iowa's eligible employee population suggests around 289 participants. At \$181.50 per voucher, this results in an estimated annual cost of approximately \$52,454.

2. Administrative Cost

Implementing a workplace CSA voucher program at the University of Iowa would be a moderate to significant administrative cost. First, the process for transferring voucher funds, whether directly to employees, CSA farms, or through Iowa Valley RC&D, would need to align with UI's procurement and payroll systems. Establishing a reliable and auditable payment method that complies with university financial policies may require new administrative processes and oversight.

Additionally, accountability mechanisms would need to be developed to ensure employees who receive vouchers are actively participating and picking up their CSA shares. While the University of Kentucky initially used a lottery system to manage high demand, replicating such a system at UI would require coordination between multiple departments (e.g., Human Resources, Well-Being at Iowa, and Iowa Valley RC&D), and potentially IT support for managing the lottery platform and eligibility tracking. As participation increases, UI may need to consider on-site logistics such as designating secure pickup locations across campus buildings or departments, like King County's approach of identifying accessible worksites with site champions (King County, 2017).

Finally, while this program could be aligned with existing UI wellness services and courses (e.g., cooking classes, nutrition education), doing so would involve close coordination and scheduling across different units. Incorporating peer promoters, like those used in the University of Kentucky's 2023 pilot, could reduce some outreach burden but would still require staff training and oversight (University of Kentucky, 2023).

4. Universal Workplace CSA Voucher Program

4.1 Equity

While the universal model removes income-based eligibility, it still helps reduce access barriers by subsidizing CSA shares and offering education and outreach. However, unlike the targeted version, it does not focus benefits on employees with the greatest financial or health needs, potentially reducing equity impact per dollar spent.

4.2 Effectiveness

1. Improvement of Individual Health

Research shows that CSA voucher programs lead to improved food behaviors, including increased vegetable intake, reduced processed food consumption, and better nutrition awareness (Rossi et al., 2017). These benefits would still apply under a universal program. The program would likely reach more people having a bigger impact on health effects overall. However, the impact may be less concentrated, since higher-income employees may already have healthier diets and less room for improvement.

Based on modeled participant health status, an estimated 15% of individuals in the universal program would be classified as Low Health (LH), which is comparable to the University of Kentucky's universal program and represents the group shown to experience significant increases in vegetable consumption following CSA participation (Rossi & Woods, 2021). Applying the observed program effect of an average increase of 1.3 servings of vegetables per day for LH participants, the universal program would produce a total increase of approximately 114.51 servings per day across all participants. The average servings increase per person would be 0.21 servings per day, reflecting the relatively lower proportion of LH individuals in a general population approach.

2. Healthcare Savings

Based on the published estimates of \$900 to \$1,300 per person in reduced diet-related medical costs and \$180 to \$230 in reduced pharmacy costs for LH individuals (Rossi & Woods, 2018), the universal program is projected to generate total healthcare cost savings ranging from \$95,133 to \$134,772. These findings highlight the potential of CSA programs to contribute to population health improvements and healthcare expenditure reduction even within a general population approach. It is important to note that these figures represent estimated annual expense reductions for participating employees, and the exact effect on overall University of Iowa insurance costs or premiums is unknown.

4.3 Cost

1. Monetary Cost

If CSA vouchers were made available to all 20,150 full-time salaried employees at the University of Iowa, total costs would depend on participation rates. At the University of Kentucky, where 714 of ~26,000 employees participated in 2023, the program reached about 2.75 percent of the workforce. Applying this rate to the University of Iowa would yield approximately 554 participants. At an average cost of \$181.50 per voucher, the estimated annual program cost would be roughly \$100,541. While the universal model reaches more employees overall, it also includes individuals who may already have access to healthy food, potentially reducing return on investment per participant.

2. Administrative Cost

Administrative needs remain similar to the income-based program: coordination with departments, voucher distribution, compliance with procurement policies, and communication with farms. A universal program may require expanded infrastructure and communication efforts to handle broader participation and ensure equitable access across campus locations. It can be estimated that roughly 0.5 FTE would be needed.

Analysis Criteria	Impact Categories	Status Quo	Workplace CSA Promotion Program	Icome-Based Workplace CSA Voucher Program	Universal Workplace CSA Voucher Program
Equity	Access to benefits	Low access	Moderately low access	Highly accessible	Moderately high access
Effectiveness	1.1 Improve- ment of indi- vidual health	Very low effective- ness	Low Effective- ness	Avg increase of 0.39 vegetable servings/ day (per partici- pant)	Avg increase of 0.21 vegetable servings/day (per participant)
	2. Healthcare cost savings	Very low effective- ness	Low effective- ness	\$93,324 – \$132,209	\$95,133-\$134,772
Cost	1. Monetary cost	\$0	\$0	~\$52,454 @ 289 vouchers (per year)	~\$100,541 @ 554 vouchers (per year)
	2. Administra- tive cost	0 FTE	0 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE

"Targeting employees earning under \$60,000 annually ensures that the program reaches those most likely to benefit from improved nutrition and addresses the access barriers that prevent lower-income employees from participating in CSA programs."

Based on the analysis of equity, effectiveness, and cost, the income-based workplace CSA voucher program offers the strongest potential to improve employee health and deliver long-term healthcare savings at the University of Iowa. Targeting employees earning under \$60,000 annually ensures that the program reaches those most likely to benefit from improved nutrition and addresses the access barriers that prevent lower-income employees from participating in CSA programs. Evidence from the University of Kentucky and related research shows that these employees report the greatest health improvements and cost reductions when provided with a CSA voucher. While the universal voucher program would engage a larger number of employees, it would do so at nearly double the cost and with a lower return on investment per participant. With the status quo, negative trends around health behaviors and outcomes may continue. The workplace CSA promotion program offers limited improvements and may not meaningfully address the university's growing wellness and productivity concerns, but has the potential to expand the market for local food producers.

To move forward, the University of Iowa should pilot an income-based CSA voucher program for 50 employees earning under \$60,000 per year. The pilot should evaluate key outcomes including dietary behavior changes, employee satisfaction, and healthcare utilization. Alongside the voucher program, the University should also promote CSA participation to the full employee population. Providing information, education, and connections to local farms could still encourage wider participation among employees who may not qualify for a voucher but have the interest and ability to purchase a CSA share independently.

Based on the pilot results, the program can be scaled up depending on participation rates, health impacts, and budget capacity. This combined approach allows the University to make a strategic, evidence-informed investment in workforce health, reduce healthcare costs, and support the local food economy while promoting CSA access for all interested employees.

"Alongside the voucher program, the University should also promote CSA participation to the full employee population. Providing information, education, and connections to local farms could still encourage wider participation among employees who may not qualify for a voucher but have the interest and ability to purchase a CSA share independently."

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Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

As the final chapter in this report, Chapter 7 provides a summary of our overall findings and a detailed description of our recommendations for our project partners. The recommendations we have created are organized into three chronological phases beginning with planning the program and establishing partnerships, followed by program implementation, and concluding with program evaluation.

Summary of Findings

Through conducting a community profile, farmer surveys, and stakeholder interviews we found that the University of Iowa and the surrounding community have an interest in supporting the local food system and improving employee nutrition. Our literature review and case study analysis showcase a wealth of information and resources that are available to guide the successful implementation of local food system initiatives, specifically workplace CSA programs. After conducting a policy analysis on the options for introducing a workplace CSA program at the University of Iowa, we have formed recommendations to guide Iowa Valley RC&D's efforts as they work to implement the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program at the University and other local businesses.

Our recommendations are organized chronologically, beginning with Phase 1: Planning and Establishing Partnerships, which is intended to inform program design and planning processes taking place prior to conducting a pilot at the University of Iowa, such as forming partnerships with university stakeholders, assessing funding options, and designing administrative processes. The first phase is then followed by Phase 2: Implementation, which includes recommendations for launching a pilot program, the delivery of program services, and how to engage program participants. Finally, our recommendations conclude with Phase 3: Evaluation, which includes recommendations for collecting program feedback and assessing overall program impacts.

Recommendations

Phase 1: Planning & Establishing Partnerships

The first phase of recommendations seeks to inform planning for partnership development, engagement, funding, and program design principles.

Partnership Development

- Partner with the OSE to plan and design a workplace CSA program to be implemented at the University of Iowa. As covered in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, the OSE has been identified as a champion for a CSA voucher program at the University of Iowa, as evidenced by their contributions to the FMPP grant proposal and commitment to hiring an intern to assist with the implementation of a workplace CSA program. The OSE also has established connections within the University and knowledge of how to navigate bureaucratic systems, such as reserving campus spaces for events, effective university marketing strategies, and more. The OSE also has a clear commitment to promoting sustainability-related initiatives on campus. A workplace CSA program would naturally fit and build upon the work the OSE is already doing at the University to promote sustainable and local food purchasing.
- 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. As covered in Chapters 1, 5, and 6, the Well-Being at Iowa Office will be an essential stakeholder to work with to plan and conduct a workplace CSA program at the University. The Well-Being at Iowa Office is ultimately the final decision-maker in whether the University adopts the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program. Iowa Valley RC&D has already made connections with the Well-Being at Iowa Office, and Erin Litton, Senior Director of Well-Being Services, has expressed interest in exploring ways to increase employees' fruit and vegetable intake through a CSA program. Results of the 2024 PHA survey indicating that 83% of employees report inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption, also indicate how a workplace CSA program could bolster Well-Being at Iowa's efforts to improve employee nutrition. As the leader of campus wellness programs, the Well-Being at Iowa Office has valuable insights on how to design an effective program. Including the Well-Being at Iowa Office in the planning of the workplace CSA program will increase the likelihood of the Office adopting the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program.

Recruitment & Communication

• Conduct community engagement events to recruit participants, inform design, and generate program buy-in. Findings from Chapters 2 and 4 suggest the importance of gathering information about employees' food preferences and current participation in the local food system. This infor-

mation can then inform program design and recruitment approaches that meet employees where they are at. For a full community engagement plan designed to engage employees at the University of Iowa, please see Appendix 3.

- Collaborate with Well-Being at Iowa to recruit program participants. The Well-Being at Iowa Office can utilize PHA survey results to identify which categories of employees could benefit the most from a workplace CSA program to inform recruitment approaches. The Well-Being at Iowa Office can also assist with recruitment processes by sharing information about the Workplace CSA Program with employees currently engaged in other campus wellness initiatives. Information from Chapter 5 supports this recommendation.
- Develop a communications and marketing plan with Well-Being at Iowa and the OSE. As outlined in Chapters 1 and 5, Well-Being at Iowa and the OSE are two important University stakeholders with whom we recommend Iowa Valley RC&D form partnerships with. In interviews with both offices, Well-Being at Iowa and the OSE both offered to assist with marketing and communications for a workplace CSA program at the University. Working with these offices as partners for marketing and communications will be essential for Iowa Valley RC&D to navigate the communications processes set by the University that require direct university affiliation. If choosing to send a survey or other information through mass mailing at the University, please refer to Appendix 2 for resources to assist in that process.
- **Provide guidance for promoting and sustaining program participation.** As the facilitator of the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program, Iowa Valley RC&D should provide guidance to project partners to encourage and sustain participation in the program. According to evidence outlined in Chapters 2 and 4, other programs have found success identifying voluntary leaders in participating workplaces to act as champions for the program. Workplace CSA program leaders or "workplace CSA liaisons" can promote program participation in their office by answering common questions, sharing CSA experiences, sending sign-up reminders, and spreading other program information through word of mouth or alternative methods. Workplace CSA liaisons can also assist with coordinating CSA share drop-offs. Designating a workplace CSA liaison was recommended in all Workplace CSA Program Toolkits reviewed for this report.

Funding & Feasibility Planning

- Emphasize the benefits of the CSA voucher model when proposing funding options to business partners. As seen in the Case Studies in Chapter 4 and the Policy Analysis in Chapter 6, there are multiple funding models for workplace CSA programs that employers can consider. Our findings suggest that, while more costly, the CSA voucher model is the most effective way to improve employee nutrition, satisfaction, and overall well-being.
- **Promote the use of SNAP and WIC benefits for purchasing CSA shares.** According to findings in Chapter 2, barriers to CSA participation are often caused by financial barriers. Sharing information about using SNAP and WIC benefits with employees could improve the accessibility of the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program by making employees aware of additional financial support available to them.
- Conduct a pilot workplace CSA program at the University of Iowa. This will allow for the creation of a proof-of-concept to assist with the eventual pitch for adopting the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program to the University. It will be important to gather information regarding specific benefits to the employer, as the Well-Being at Iowa Office indicated they would like to see data on return on investment for a workplace CSA program. Erin Litton, Senior Director of Well-Being Services, also explicitly stated the need to conduct a pilot program first before moving forward with considering the adoption of a new wellness program offering. The information for this recommendation can be found in Chapter 5. While there is no official process for proposing and implementing a pilot program at the University of Iowa, both the OSE and the Well-Being at Iowa Office have expressed interest in collaborating with Iowa Valley RC&D for a pilot workplace CSA program.

Design Principles & Administrative Preparation

- **Review existing Workplace CSA Toolkits.** An overview of a variety of available Workplace CSA Toolkits was covered in Chapter 2 of this report. These toolkits include a wealth of information to support the successful planning and implementation of a workplace CSA program from organizations with specialized expertise.
- Design the program based on the employer's existing infrastructure and tools. To maximize efficiency in the planning and implementation of the

Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program, we recommend that Iowa Valley RC&D work with employers to integrate the program into existing wellness and benefit structures. By utilizing existing infrastructure, less input of staff time and employer resources will be required to implement the program, therefore reducing costs to the employer. This recommendation is informed by the 4 Es of Public Administration to achieve efficiency and economy in program design. Evidence supporting this recommendation can also be found in Chapter 6.

- Enhance program accessibility through design elements. Variables to ٠ consider for designing a more equitable workplace CSA program are highlighted throughout Chapters 2, 4, and 6. The greatest benefits of workplace CSA programs are realized when lower-income employees are engaged. This is due to the fact that these employees would not otherwise participate in a CSA without the financial support to do so. For the University of Iowa specifically, it will be important to target merit employees with outreach efforts because they are the category of employees facing the most barriers to CSA participation and reporting the highest levels of poor nutrition due to low fruit and vegetable intake according to the PHA survey and interview with Well-Being at Iowa. Design elements to enhance program accessibility could consist of inclusive pricing structures, engagement and education opportunities, or more flexible CSA share offerings. This recommendation is informed by the 4 Es of Public Administration to achieve equity.
- **Create mechanisms for program evaluation.** Setting up processes to assess program outcomes will be essential to determining the effectiveness of the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program. All stakeholders should be included in providing feedback for program evaluation. This recommendation is informed by the 4 Es of Public Administration to achieve effectiveness.
- Avoid administrative burdens in program design and implementation. To avoid placing administrative burdens on program participants, we recommend that Iowa Valley RC&D make translated program materials available, simplify eligibility requirements, and implement short application processes for the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program. Taking these steps will ensure that employees of all backgrounds are able to participate in the program and easily access program resources. To avoid administrative burdens for farmers and employers, it will also be important to create straightforward processes and requirements for program implementation. This could include setting up accessible communication channels, providing multiple funding options, and working with farmers and employers to

find ideal CSA share drop-off locations and times.

• Develop accountability and operational processes for participants and farmers. As covered in Chapter 5, it will be imperative for accountability processes to be set for both participants and farmers in the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program. University stakeholders expressed the importance of being able to measure program engagement and retention if they are to consider adopting a workplace CSA program. The surveys included in Appendix 5 were created with the intention to increase accountability for stakeholders. Tracking survey completion provides a method for the University to measure program engagement and retention. The surveys also provide program participants with the opportunity to provide feedback on CSA share satisfaction with farmers. Additionally, farmers can also utilize the surveys to provide feedback to both the university and Iowa Valley RC&D.

Phase 2: Implementation

The second phase of recommendations cover pilot program considerations, program delivery, and participant engagement.

Pilot Program Launch

- Start small before scaling up to the entire University. Findings from Chapters 4, 5, and 6 suggest that a pilot workplace CSA program at the University of Iowa should include a smaller number of participants before scaling the program up to the entire campus. This will allow project logistics and funding options to be worked out at a smaller scale to support the final proof of concept. The University of Kentucky found success, beginning with 200 participants in the early stages of their workplace CSA voucher program. After eight years, UK now offers up to 1,000 CSA vouchers to full-time employees on a first-come first-served basis.
- Survey employees to gauge interest and current CSA participation. To measure how many employees began participating in a CSA after the introduction of the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program, it will be important to know how many employees already purchased CSA shares prior to the program being introduced. Along with collecting information regarding the number of employees who already participate in a CSA, additional questions could be added to the survey to collect information regarding employee interests and preferences for CSA shares and overall program offerings. To survey employees at the University of Iowa,

we recommend working with the OSE and Well-Being at Iowa Office to navigate the University's mass mailing process that is described in Appendix 2.

Program Delivery

- Assist business partners and farmers in coordinating pick-up and dropoff logistics. Conducting a workplace CSA program requires the workplace to designate a secure, climate-controlled place for farmers to drop off CSA shares, unless alternative delivery methods have been arranged to take place outside of the workplace. The space must be accessible to both farmers and employees and not burden the office space. Best practices for planning workplace CSA program logistics can be found in the Workplace CSA Toolkits covered in Chapter 2.
- Track CSA share pick-ups and redistribute or donate forgotten shares. Whether it is the farmer or the CSA workplace liaison facilitating pick-ups at the workplace, steps should be taken to track who does and does not pick up their share. Farmers can provide a shareholder list to check off names or write the names of participants directly on the share boxes. The best practices for handling forgotten shares can be seen in available Workplace CSA Toolkits in Chapter 2. In general, it is best to redistribute the share throughout the workplace or donate the food to a local food pantry or food rescue organization.
- Establish clear expectations with program participants. Make employees aware of the terms of program participation for the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program. Through informational engagement events or the disbursement of program materials, inform employees of CSA share pickup or drop-off options, required or voluntary feedback surveys, and other necessary knowledge for participation. Maintaining clear communication with employees is the best way to avoid dissatisfaction with the program. Information supporting this recommendation comes from the Workplace CSA Toolkits reviewed in Chapter 2.

Participant Engagement

• Plan events to increase and sustain participant engagement. As covered in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, research and case studies have shown that including community engagement events in workplace CSA programs can improve program outcomes by keeping participants engaged. Examples of community engagement events include cooking classes, farm tours, and

CSA share tasting demonstrations. Educational events such as cooking classes or tasting demonstrations can also increase the accessibility of CSA participation for people who do not have experience cooking or eating a wide variety of fresh produce.

Phase 3: Evaluation

The third phase of recommendations are intended to inform feedback collection methods and overall program evaluation.

Ongoing Feedback Collection

• Engage all stakeholders through surveys and opportunities for direct feedback. Provide opportunities for program participants, University stakeholders, and farmers to provide program feedback through surveys, interviews, or other forms of communication. We created surveys to be implemented to collect feedback specifically from program participants and farmers before, during, and after the CSA season. These surveys can be accessed in Appendix 5. Other survey templates and evaluation processes can be found in the Workplace CSA Toolkits covered in Chapter 2.

Program Impact Assessment

- **Collect data to assess program impacts.** Utilizing the surveys will allow for data collection to inform program impacts, such as changes in employees' fruit and vegetable consumption. Iowa Valley RC&D can also explore working with Well-Being at Iowa to incorporate a question relating to CSA participation in the annual PHA survey conducted at the University of Iowa to gain insights on program impacts. The surveys can be found in Appendix 5.
- Maintain financial records to support proof of concept. Tracking financial outcomes from the pilot program stage can support the creation of proof of concept for the University. Collecting data on variables such as health benefits, employer cost savings, or employee satisfaction can support arguments for return on investment for employers. The surveys found in Appendix 5 can be utilized to collect this information.

Summary

Chapter 7 concludes the report by summarizing key findings and presenting a comprehensive set of recommendations to guide Iowa Valley RC&D in implementing the Fresh Connect CSA Voucher Program at the University of Iowa. In this chapter, recommendations are structured into three chronological phases: Planning and Establishing Partnerships, Implementation, and Evaluation. The first phase emphasizes collaboration with key University stakeholders like the Office of Sustainability and the Well-Being at Iowa Office, as well as strategies for outreach, funding, and equitable program design. The second phase outlines steps for launching a pilot program, managing logistics, and engaging participants. The final phase focuses on collecting feedback, assessing program outcomes, and demonstrating return on investment to support future program expansion.



Appendix 1: Summary of University of Iowa 2025 Benefits for Full Time Employees

Link to University of Iowa 2025 Benefits Summary

**Some University of Iowa benefits require residency in the state of Iowa, including health insurance plans and dental insurance.

1. Health Insurance

- Two plans: OUSELECT (Iowa-only providers, lower premium) and UICHOICE (any in-network provider, higher premium).
- Includes prescription drug coverage with free generics.

2. Dental Insurance

• Dental II Plan: Free employee-only coverage, \$2,000 annual benefit, orthodontia coverage, and diagnostic/preventive visits.

3. Retirement Plans

- IPERSTM: Defined benefit pension plan (vested after 7 years or at age 65).
- TIAA®: Defined contribution plan with University matching.
- Voluntary options: 403(b) and 457(b) plans.

4. Life, Disability & Accident Insurance

- University-paid group life (2x salary) and long-term disability (60% salary replacement).
- Voluntary options: Term life, dependent life, and accidental death & dismemberment.

5. Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)

- Health Care FSA: Up to \$3,200/year for medical expenses.
- Dependent Care FSA: Up to \$5,000/year for care expenses.

6. Voluntary Benefits

- Adoption Assistance: Reimbursement up to \$2,000 per adoption.
- Vision Insurance: Options through Avesis® or EyeMed.

7. Time-Off Benefits

- Vacation: Accrual based on employment type (e.g., 16 hours/month for full-time faculty).
- Sick Leave: 12 hours/month for full-time employees, with family caregiving leave options.
- Paid Holidays: 9 holidays per year.

8. Employee Discounts

- Discounts on glasses, vision care, and third-party goods/services.
- 10% off at Revitalize U Med Spa & Salon.

9. Well-Being Programs

- liveWELL: Wellness resources and initiatives
 - Personal Health Assessments, Health Coach Services, Recreation Membership Incentive Program, Digital Weight Management Program
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP): Support for personal and work-related issues.

- Doctor on Demand, Suicide Prevention, UI Emergency Hardship Fund, Support for Supervisors, Work-Life Resources, Critical Incident Response, Understanding Therapy

- Ergonomics Program
 - Education Programs, Ergonomic Risk Assessment, and Consultations
- Family Services: Resources for family care
 - Financial Well-Being, Workplace Flexibility, Childcare, Elder Caregiving Resources, and Resources for Nursing Parents

10. Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)

Provides job-protected leave for qualifying family and medical reasons

 Personal, Family Member, Child Entering Home, Bone Marrow and
 Organ Donation, Military Leave

Appendix 2: University of Iowa Mass Mailing Request Process

Links to University of Iowa Guidance:

- <u>Requesting a Mass Mailing step-by-step</u>
- <u>Human Subjects Office Mass Emails</u>
- <u>Guidelines for Mass Mails to and From Faculty and Staff</u>

To send out a mass email with a survey for a research study:

1. IRB approval: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the governing body on campus that reviews all research involving human subjects to ensure compliance with federal regulations. When requesting to send out a mass email with a survey, the University may require you to obtain IRB approval. For more about IRB approval requirements: <u>link to resource</u>.

2. CITI certification: The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) provides a free online course to provide guidance on conducting research and adhering to ethical standards. When requesting to send out a mass email with a survey, the University may require someone overseeing the project to be CITI certified.

- Link to CITI program
- Link to University of Iowa resource for CITI requirements

3. Approval from: UI Provost Office, University Department of Communication, HR, and ITS

4. Process can take 7-10 days

Alternative Option:

An alternative option to requesting a mass mailing is to go through each college's department of marketing and communication and ask them to use their social media channels to communicate an informal survey. An informal survey is a survey for a research study that does not pertain to the categories of medical, behavioral or social science.

According to Peggy Stover, Director of the University of Iowa Marketing Institute, this alternative process is how organizations and groups share news about events, meetings, guest speakers, and other occasions, with faculty, staff, and students. However, Peggy recommends consulting the University of <u>Iowa Office of Strategic Communication</u> before pursuing this option.

Appendix 3: Community Engagement Plan

Local Food System Scenarios: A Community Engagement Workshop

Overview

Food systems are complex networks of activities and relationships that span beyond supply chains, influencing communities and the environment (Wentworth et al., 2024). Community-engaged research will enhance the team's efforts by involving stakeholders to co-create knowledge, ensuring solutions are practical and decision-making is inclusive of different perspectives. Through the process of a future-scenario-focused community workshop, our project team can synthesize the collected data into plausible and community-oriented scenarios to be implemented by IVRCD and the University of Iowa for a Workplace CSA pilot program.

Rationale

Through a public engagement workshop, we hope to collect the following inputs and data:

- Food access patterns;
- Preferences for local food;
- Barriers;
- Visions for the future.

Food access patterns data will help the project team better understand where University of Iowa (UI) employees currently obtain food and how frequently. Local food preference data will give us insight into the level of support for local farmers, local foods, and the reasons for doing so. Data that paint existing habits and motivations can help us identify leverage points for improving consumer food access and sustainability. Understanding barriers UI employees face in accessing local food will inform project recommendations and help us evaluate whether existing workplace CSA programs adequately address these challenges. Lastly, visions for the future will give participants a chance to generate ideas for an ideal local food system, including desired products and delivery methods. Visioning will help our project team avoid prescriptive solutions and allow the community to co-create a flexible and adaptive workplace CSA model that works for them.

The visioning data is an important aspect of this engagement and accounts for two major laws of systems thinking and stakeholder engagement that go hand in hand: "the easy way out usually leads back in," and "the cure can be worse than the disease," (Billingham, 2013). The first law says that "when something works, we like to reuse it," but applying best practices to complex problems does not always get you the best end solution (Billingham, 2013). Instead, this engagement activity allows community members to apply new tools through their own individual insights to a common problem. The second law is about "shifting the burden" and lessening dependence on a specific intervention, prioritizing the "system's ability to cure itself," (Billingham, 2013). Billingham (2013) says that stakeholders must play a role in defining problems and finding solutions to share the burden across the entire system.

Data from each of these areas will be collected during the workshop through various activities. Interactive food mapping, small group discussion, sticky-note brainstorms, and follow-up questionnaires will all be used to capture data in a variety of meaningful ways.

Process

To make the workplace CSA visioning project more effective, it's important to clearly define how participants can contribute and show how their input will be used. Schelings and Elsen (2023) emphasize that participation works best when people know what role they play, whether it's offering basic feedback or actively helping to shape decisions. Without this clarity, there's a risk of "tokenism," where people are invited to participate but their ideas aren't meaningfully considered or acted upon. This can leave participants feeling like their time and opinions don't matter, which damages trust and limits engagement. For the CSA project, our project team can address this by being transparent about how each activity—like food mapping and vision mapping—will be used to design the program. For example, participants might see how their feedback helps identify preferred CSA pickup options or the types of local products they want most. Giving people a chance to contribute to real solutions, rather than just sharing ideas that go nowhere, builds trust, and encourages participants to stay involved in the process.

Workshop Introduction

The workshop introduction will provide context for the project and emphasize the goal of engaging participants by exploring visions for the future that will help inform our project. We will make it clear that the purpose is to explore possibilities for strengthening the local food system from diverse perspectives, emphasizing CSAs as one potential tool. Principles from the "11 Laws of Systems Thinking" by Jamie Billingham (2013) will be echoed to set a tone of collaboration and adaptability.

The first component will be an introduction to our capstone project and current definitions of problems we seek to address, namely farmer stability and consumer access to local foods. This will include an introduction to local food systems and to community supported agriculture (CSAs) as a method of local food delivery. Figure 1 and Figure 2 represent two potential models of local food systems that can be used to educate and provide new perspectives on local food systems to better inform participation over the rest of the workshop. Figure 1 represents a local foods stock-and-flow diagram, with food being the stock and converters such as number of local farms, accessibility, and demand affecting the flow of food from farm to table.

Activity 1: Food Mapping

The first activity, food mapping, will ask participants to reflect on their current food habits, barriers, and preferences to ground visioning and identify actionable steps. This activity uses interactive visuals and group discussions to uncover key insights about how people engage with the local food system. The goal is to capture real-world patterns, uncover gaps, and build a shared understanding of where improvements can be made. These insights align with the American Planning Association's (APA) emphasis on linking food systems to community behavior and spatial patterns in the "APA Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning" (2017).

Using a provided map of the local area with key landmarks (grocery stores, farmers' markets, workplaces, CSA pickup points, etc.), participants will place icons and draw lines that represent where they shop for food, how often they visit these places, how they travel, and provide notes about barriers they face in doing so. These maps will be provided both virtually (using Miro, a visual workspace program) and physically to ensure inclusion of all attendees. Every placement of an icon and note they make provides our project team with insights we can use to inform the rest of the project. Alongside this initial map will be discussion prompts for attendees to respond to such as:

- "What makes you choose the places you shop at most often?"
- "What challenges or barriers do you face in accessing local foods?"
- "What do you think is missing in the local food system?"

Activity 2: Vision Mapping

The second activity, vision mapping, builds on insights from food mapping to co-create a collective vision for an improved food system. This activity encourages participants to think openly, collaboratively, and creatively about the future without prescribing a single solution. It focuses on imagining what could be based on participants' needs, values, and priorities. This activity aligns with Specific Policy #1A from the APA (2017) to "support the creation of local and regional food planning mechanisms that integrate major planning functions" at least partly through community participation.

The activity will begin with an open prompt: "Imagine a future where your food system works exactly how you want it to. Where do you get your food? What does it look like, feel like, and how do you access it?" The project team will remind participants of key systems thinking principles such as finding leverage points where small changes can produce big results and the necessity of evaluating the system in its entirety. They will then be provided with a blank map and sticky notes (physically and digitally) to place their ideas directly on the new "Vision Map." The project team will encourage participants to think spatially and conceptually answering questions such as:

- "Where would you want to access local food (e.g., workplace, local hub, home delivery)"
- "What kinds of local food products do you imagine having regularly?"
- "How would food from local farms reach you?"

These answers can range broadly from specific solutions to key values and vision themes.

Reflection & Feedback

The reflection and feedback step creates space for participants to share and reflect on the ideas generated during the vision mapping activity. It encourages participants to build on each other's contributions while ensuring all voices are heard. Through a balance of small group discussion and full group reflection, shared priorities, themes, and barriers can be synthesized.

Participants will be split into small groups to discuss their contributions to the vision map with more detail. The project team members can help guide the conversation using prompts to ensure productive dialogue. Each group should identify 1-2 key ideas or themes to share with the larger group. In the full group reflection, each small group will share their insights and the project team will summarize contributions in real-time on a white board, projector, or digital tool, clustering similar ideas under common themes.

This step encourages participants to reflect on ideas without forcing consensus and provides the project team with a clear synthesis of themes that reflect the group's vision for an improved food system. Additionally, it creates a foundation for follow-up steps, including the post-event email and development of scenario planning options.

Post-Event Email

The post-event email will summarize the key ideas and themes that emerged during the event. It will highlight both common priorities and unique perspectives, ensuring all contributions are represented. Additionally, the email will include a visual summary of the vision and food mapping activities to reinforce shared outcomes and provide a short survey link for participants to offer further reflections. Some potential post-event email survey questions include:

- "Which of the ideas shared during the event resonate most with you?" Open-ended
- "What do you see as the most important priority for improving our local food system?"

Ranked-choice

- "How likely would you be to participate in a CSA program if it included options like workplace pickups, flexible pricing, or diverse products?" Likert scale
- "Do you have any additional ideas or reflections that came to you after the event?"

Open-ended

 "Would you like to stay updated on this project and its outcomes?" Yes/No

Empowering participants with access to the data collected is key to keeping them engaged and showing that their input matters. Schelings and Elsen (2023) highlight that people are more committed when they can see and understand how their contributions connect to real outcomes. In the postevent email, this can be done by sharing clear, easy-to-understand results like food maps and key themes that emerged from the activities. By including this information and inviting participants to provide additional feedback through a follow-up survey, they can see how their ideas are helping to shape potential CSA options. This open and transparent approach builds trust and keeps participants involved in creating solutions that reflect their needs and priorities.

Results

Synthesizing Insights into Key Themes

The food and vision mapping activities will highlight key barriers, opportunities, and preferences for CSA participation. Themes such as accessibility, cost, and time constraints will emerge alongside aspirations such as sustainability, local farmer support, and culturally relevant food options. By documenting both shared priorities and diverse ideas, the results provide a comprehensive understanding of participant needs without prescribing solutions.

All the data we collect is useful and must be synthesized into key figures, insights, and themes. We want to ensure that all relevant information given to us through the donated time of UI employees is applied to our project in a meaningful way.

Informing the Project

The data collected through food mapping, vision mapping, and follow-up surveys will serve as a foundation for creating community-informed CSA scenarios. Specific data points such as food preferences, spending priorities, willingness to invest time in pickups, and motivations for supporting local food can inform various recommendations for our project:

- Logistical Design: Data on time and travel preferences will help us understand the need for different CSA distribution models such as workplace hubs, flexible delivery schedules, or multiple location pickup points.
- Program Offerings: Preferences for types of product and food preparation habits will guide CSA providers and IVRCD in tailoring offerings to meet participant demands.
- Engagement Strategies: Understanding participant motivations will inform communication strategies to highlight broader benefits and recruitment strategies for a future pilot program.

Our project team can also use this data to develop multiple future scenarios for a University of Iowa workplace CSA program. These scenarios could include variations in cost-sharing, delivery frequency, or types of partnerships with CSA providers. For example:

- A convenience-focused scenario would prioritize accessibility of local food at the workplace with short pickup times.
- A community-driven scenario would emphasize connections and interac-

tion with CSA farmers, and shared participant responsibilities like cooperative pickup and food preparation initiatives.

• A flexibility-centered scenario would include things like sliding-scale pricing and quarter/half season offerings to address cost concerns.

These scenarios will offer a range of ideas to address challenges without pushing a single solution. This approach allows workplace decision-makers, CSA providers, and participants to work together to find options that best fit their needs. By using real data and sharing practical ideas, the project can stay open to feedback, flexible, and focused on what works for the people involved.

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Appendix 4: CSA Farms & Offerings - Google My-Map

Eastern Iowa CSAs (2025 Season)



This interactive map displays all known CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farms within a 60-mile radius of the University of Iowa. Each pin includes the farm's name, contact information, website (if available), pricing structures, and CSA offerings. The map also uses separate pins to distinguish between farm locations and CSA pick-up sites, allowing users to easily view both production and distribution points.

An editable copy of the MyMap can be made from the link below. The map can also be embedded into a website to be used during workplace CSA sign-ups. Link to MyMap

Appendix 5: Surveys

Pre-Pilot Survey- Consumers

Explanation of Survey:

The primary goal of this survey is to gain an understanding of consumer preferences in reference to types of involvement with a CSA and food consumption habits. The first half of this survey will help Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development better support the farmers participating in the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program. The farmers will be able to use consumer information to plan their future growing seasons, delivery-style, and types of written materials to provide. Additional questions try to gain insight into consumer food preferences, habits and overall health outcomes. Iowa Valley RC&D will be able to use the consumption habits of consumers pre-CSA as a part of more in-depth analysis after the pilot project is completed. Through comparing pre- and post-survey results, this information will help display if consumers found healthier eating habits in part or as a result of participating in the Fresh Connect CSA Program.

Prompt that goes at the top of the survey:

This survey is being conducted by Iowa Valley Resources Conservation and Development, as a part of a Workplace CSA Program, called the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program. Through this survey, we seek to learn from you about your experience as a consumer in the local food market with the hopes that this data will inform a workplace CSA program that works for both farmers and consumers. This survey should take no more than 10 minutes. Thank you for your time! If you have any questions, please reach out to our community liaison, [FILL IN].

How did you hear about the Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program? (Select one answer)

- Communications from the University of Iowa Wellness Office
- Communications from the University of Iowa Office of Sustainability and Environment
- Heard from my supervisor
- Heard friends at work talk about it
- Other

In the past 30 days how often did you buy fresh fruits and vegetables from the following sources? (Select one frequency category for each shopping venue)

Shopping Ven- ue(s)	Always	Often	Some- times	Not at All	I've Never Shopped			
					Here			
Super Market								
(i.e. Hy-vee								
Big-Box Store								
(i.e. Walmart or								
Costco)								
Food Co-op or								
Specialty Store								
(i.e. New Pio-								
neer Co-op)								
Farmers' Market								
or Farm Stand								
Community								
Supported Agri-								
culture (CSA)								
Online Store								
Other (Write In)								

What are your top reasons for signing up for the Workplace CSA Program? (Check all boxes that apply)

- To help meet my goals for healthy eating
- The food is organically grown
- My friends at work are participating
- The food will taste better
- The food will be just-picked fresh
- I like knowing who has grown my food
- I want to support local farmers
- Workplace pickup is convenient
- The cost seems on par with supermarket prices
- Cooking videos and newsletters will make it easier to participate
- Other

Have you ever participated in a CSA before? (yes/no/other)

What types of goods are looking to receive in a CSA? (check all that apply)

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Herbs
- Eggs

- Dairy Products (milk, cheese, yogurt, etc.)
- Meat Products (beef, pork, poultry, etc.)
- Baked Goods
- Honey/Maple Syrup
- Flowers
- Value-added Products (sauces, jams, ferments, etc.)
- Other:

How much are you willing to pay for CSA subscription (\$\$ per month) Sliding scale

What season(s) would you like to have a CSA subscription? (check all that apply)

- Summer
- Fall
- Winter
- Spring

What method would you prefer to receive your CSA box?

- Home-Delivery
- Specificized Pick-up Location
- At the location of the farm
- Other

If home delivery is not an option, how many minutes are you willing to travel to pick up your CSA box?

- <5 minutes
- 5<10 minutes
- 10<15 minutes
- 15<20 minutes
- 20+ minutes

What is your preferred monthly CSA box allotment?

- 1 box every 2 weeks (2 boxes a month)
- 1 box a month
- Other (please specify)

It is common for CSA's to provide user-information in their boxes. Please check all that you would like to find in your CSA box:

- An explanation of the goods
- Advice on how to use the goods
- Recipes that include the goods
- Information about your CSA Farmer
- Information about the Local Foods community
- Other please explain

In the last 30 days, how many servings of fruits servings did you eat each day, on average, including meals and snacks? For this question, 1 serving = 1/2 cup cooked fruit OR 1 cup of raw fruit; OR 1 cup 100% fruit juice) (select one answer)

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5
- 6-7
- 8 or more

In the last 30 days, how many servings of vegetables did you eat each day, on average, including meals and snacks? For this question, 1 serving = 1/2 cup cooked vegetables OR 1 cup of raw for vegetables. (select one answer)

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5
- 6-7
- 8 or more

In the last 30 days, how many meals did you cook from scratch at home (excluding pre-prepared ingredients ie. frozen vegetable mix, Lean Cuisine, store bought marinated meats, etc.)?

- None
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20 or more

How confident do you feel preparing or cooking with fresh produce?

• Likert Scale (Extremely not confident – Extremely confident)

How often do you do the following tasks during the last 30 days?

	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+
Eat processed snack foods					
Read nutrition labels					
Eat vegetable salads					
Discuss nutrition with friends and col-					
leagues					
Buy organic foods					
Buy food marketed as locally produced					
Exercise					
Watch your caloric intake					
Eat out at a restaurant					
Eat processed foods for meals					
Eat Fast Foods (i.e McDonalds)					
Take active measures to improve your					
health					
Purchase locally produced foods (pro-					
duce, meats, dairy products, etc.)					

"How would you rate your current health condition?"Poor – Below Average – Average – Good - Excellent

Mid- Pilot Survey- Consumers

Explanation of Survey:

The primary goal of this survey is to gain an understanding of consumer experience mid-way through the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program as it pertains to their CSA subscription and food consumption habits. The first half of this survey will help Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development better support the farmers participating in the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program. The farmers will be able to use consumer information to plan their future growing seasons, delivery-style, and types of written materials to provide. Results of this survey may also help farmers mid-season to provide better service and products to their customers. Iowa Valley RC&D will be able to use the consumption habits of consumers mid-pilot as a part of more in-depth analysis after the pilot project is completed. This information will help display if consumers found healthier eating habits in part or as a result of participating in the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program.

Prompt that goes at the top of the survey:

This survey is being conducted by Iowa Valley Resources Conservation and Development, as a part of a workplace CSA program, called the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program. Through this survey, we seek to learn from you about your experience as a consumer in the local food market with the hopes that this data will inform a workplace CSA program that works for both farmers and consumers. This survey should take no more than 10 minutes. Thank you for your time! If you have any questions, please reach out to our community liaison, [FILL IN].

To which farm's CSA have you subscribed?

- CSA A
- CSA B
- CSA C
- Etc.

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied are you with your overall experience with your CSA subscription to this point?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

•

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

- Long answer text
- •

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied are you with the quality of goods you have received in your CSA box to this point?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied are you with the types of goods you have received in your CSA box to this point?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied are you with your method of receiving your CSA Box (Home Delivery, Specified Pick-Up Location, At the Location of the Farm, Other) to this point?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

What method do you currently use receive your CSA box?

- Home-Delivery
- Specificized Pick-up Location
- At the location of the farm
- Other (please specify)

If not participating in home-delivery, how many minutes are you currently traveling to pick up your CSA box?

- <5 minutes
- 5<10 minutes
- 10<15 minutes
- 15<20 minutes
- 20+ minutes

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied are you with the time needed to travel to pick up your CSA box (Home Delivery, Specified Pick-Up Location, At the Location of the Farm, Other) to this point? • Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied are you with any/all written materials provided with your CSA box (an explanation of goods advice or recipes on how to use the goods, MORE) to this point?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied are you with the pricing for the goods you received in your CSA subscription to this point?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

In the last 30 days, how many servings of fruits servings did you eat each day, on average, including meals and snacks? For this question, 1 serving = 1/2 cup cooked fruit OR 1 cup of raw fruit; OR 1 cup 100% fruit juice) (select one answer)

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5
- 6-7
- 8 or more

In the last 30 days, how many servings of vegetables did you eat each day, on average, including meals and snacks? For this question, 1 serving = 1/2 cup cooked vegetables OR 1 cup of raw for vegetables. (select one answer)

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5
- 6-7
- 8 or more

In the last 30 days, how many meals did you cook from scratch at home (excluding pre-prepared ingredients ie. frozen vegetable mix, Lean Cuisine, store bought marinated meats, etc.)?

- None
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20 or more

How confident do you feel preparing or cooking with fresh produce?

• Likert Scale (Extremely not confident – Extremely confident)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

How often do you do the following tasks during the last 30 days?

	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+
Eat processed snack foods					
Read nutrition labels					
Eat vegetable salads					
Discuss nutrition with friends and col-					
leagues					
Buy organic foods					
Buy food marketed as locally produced					
Exercise					
Watch your caloric intake					
Eat out at a restaurant					
Eat processed foods for meals					
Eat Fast Foods (i.e McDonalds)					
Take active measures to improve your					
health					
Purchase locally produced foods (pro-					
duce, meats, dairy products, etc.)					

"How would you rate your current health condition?"

• Poor – Below Average – Average – Good - Excellent

Post-Pilot Survey: Consumers

Explanation of Survey and What is to be used for:

The primary goal of this survey is to gain an understanding of consumer experience after the completion of the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program as it pertains to their CSA subscription and food consumption habits. The first half of this survey will help Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development better support the farmers participating in the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program for future interactions of the program. The farmers will be able to use consumer information to plan their future growing seasons, delivery-style, and refine the types of written materials they provide. Iowa Valley RC&D will be able to use the consumption habits of consumers post-pilot as a part of more in-depth analysis after the pilot project is completed. This information will help display if consumers found healthier eating habits in part or as a result of participating in the Fresh Connect CSA Program.

Prompt that goes at the top of the survey:

This survey is being conducted by Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development, as a part of a workplace CSA program, called the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program. Through this survey, we seek to learn from you about your experience as a consumer in the local food market with the hopes that this data will inform a workplace CSA program that works for both farmers and consumers. This survey should take no more than 10 minutes. Thank you for your time! If you have any questions, please reach out to our community liaison, [FILL IN].

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied were you with your overall experience with your CSA subscription?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied were you with the quality of goods you received in your CSA box?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied were you with the types of goods you received in your CSA box?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied were you with your method of receiving your CSA Box (Home Delivery, Specified Pick-Up Location, At the Location of the Farm, Other)?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

What method did you use receive your CSA box?

- Home-Delivery
- Specificized Pick-up Location
- At the location of the farm
- Other (please specify)

If not participating in home-delivery, how many minutes did you spend traveling to pick up your CSA box?

- <5 minutes
- 5<10 minutes
- 10<15 minutes
- 15<20 minutes
- 20+ minutes

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied were you with the time needed to travel to pick up your CSA box (Home Delivery, Specified Pick-Up Location, At the Location of the Farm, Other)?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied were you with any/all written materials provided with your CSA box (an explanation of goods advice or recipes on how to use the goods, MORE)?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied were you with the pricing for the goods you received in your CSA subscription?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

In the last 30 days, how many servings of fruits servings did you eat each day, on average, including meals and snacks? For this question, 1 serving = 1/2 cup cooked fruit OR 1 cup of raw fruit; OR 1 cup 100% fruit juice) (select one answer)

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5
- 6-7
- 8 or more

In the last 30 days, how many servings of vegetables did you eat each day, on average, including meals and snacks? For this question, 1 serving = 1/2 cup cooked vegetables OR 1 cup of raw for vegetables. (select one answer)

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5
- 6-7
- 8 or more

In the last 30 days, how many meals did you cook from scratch at home (excluding frozen and/or pre-packaged ingredients)?

- None
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20 or more

How confident do you feel preparing or cooking with fresh produce?

• Likert Scale (Extremely not confident – Extremely confident)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

How often do you do the following tasks during the last 30 days?

	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+
Eat processed snack foods					
Read nutrition labels					
Eat vegetable salads					
Discuss nutrition with friends and col-					
leagues					
Buy organic foods					
Buy food marketed as locally produced					
Exercise					
Watch your caloric intake					
Eat out at a restaurant					
Eat processed foods for meals					
Eat Fast Foods (i.e McDonalds)					
Take active measures to improve your					
health					
Purchase locally produced foods (pro-					
duce, meats, dairy products, etc.)					

"How would you rate your current health condition?"

• Poor – Below Average – Average – Good - Excellent

Mid-Pilot Survey: Farmers

Explanation of Survey:

The primary goal of this survey is to gain an understanding of farmer preferences, capacity, and capabilities when it comes to participating in the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program. This survey will help Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development better support the farmers participating in the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program in the future. In the middle of the farming season, we want to ensure that this survey will not be an additional burden on farmers. Because of this, we suggest that this survey be conducted in person, or briefly over the phone.

Prompt that goes at the top of the survey (if conducted online):

This survey is being conducted by Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development, as a part of a feasibility study for a workplace CSA program, called the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program. Through this survey, we seek to learn from you about your experience as a producer in the local food market with the hopes that this data will inform a workplace CSA program that works for both farmers and consumers. This survey should take no more than 5 minutes. Thank you for your time! If you have any questions, please reach out to our community liaison, [FILL IN].

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied are you with your participation in the Fresh Connect Program?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied are you with the support you have received from IVRCD?

	1	2	3	4	5
Social					
Support					
(connecting					
with the lo-					
cal farming					
communi-					
ty)					

Marketing			
Support			
(social			
media,			
exposure,			
communi-			
cations)			
Adminis-			
trative Sup-			
port			
Other			
(please			
explain)			

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answers:

• Long answer text

How could IVRCD better support you in the future?

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least likely, 5 being most likely) likely are you to participate in a program like the Fresh Connect CSA Program in the future?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

Are there specific actions IVRCD could implement to ensure your involvement in the future (ex: create materials, social media, marketing, make deadlines clearer, etc.)?

• Long answer text

Is there anything else you would like to tell us that could better your experience for the rest of the pilot?

• Long text answer

Post-Pilot Survey: Farmers

Explanation of Survey and What is to be used for:

The primary goal of this survey is to gain an understanding of farmer preferences, capacity, and capabilities when it comes to their participation in the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program. This survey will help Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development better support the farmers participating in the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program in the future. There is a chance this survey might be administered in the middle of the farming season, so we want to ensure that this survey will not be an additional burden on farmers. Because of this, we suggest that this survey be conducted in person, or briefly over the phone.

Prompt that goes at the top of the survey (if conducted online):

This survey is being conducted by Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development, as a part of a feasibility study for a workplace CSA program, called the Fresh Connect Workplace CSA Voucher Program. Through this survey, we seek to learn from you about your experience as a producer in the local food market with the hopes that this data will inform a workplace CSA program that works for both farmers and consumers. This survey should take no more than 5 minutes. Thank you for your time! If you have any questions, please reach out to our community liaison, [FILL IN].

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied were you with your participation in the Fresh Connect Program?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least satisfied, 5 being most satisfied) how satisfied were you with the support you have received from IVRCD?

• Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

	1	2	3	4	5
Social					
Support					
(connecting					
with the lo-					
cal farming					
communi-					
ty)					
Marketing					
Support					
(social					
media,					
exposure,					
communi-					
cations)					
Adminis-					
trative Sup-					
port					
Other					
(please					
explain)					

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

How could IVRCD better support you in the future?

• Long answer text

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least likely, 5 being most likely) likely are you to participate in a program like the Fresh Connect CSA Program in the future? • Likert Scale (1 Least Satisfied – 5 Most Satisfied)

Please tell us more about why you selected your previous answer:

• Long answer text

Are there specific actions IVRCD could implement to ensure your involvement in the future?

• Long answer text

Is there anything else you would like to tell us that could better your or other farmers experience in this program?

• Long text answer