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Arkansas Farm to School Institute Accepting Applications Until March 1

LITTLE ROCK, AR – The Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) is accepting applications for the Arkansas Farm to School Institute (Institute) until March 1, 2024. The Department’s Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program will select up to 15 schools to participate in the program for the 2024-2025 school year.

The Institute is a year-long professional development program that offers training, resources, and technical assistance to school educators, administrators, school nutrition directors, cafeteria staff, local farmers, and community partners. The program is open to schools looking to expand on existing farm to school efforts throughout the state.

Selected schools are invited to a summer retreat to create a collaborative farm to school action plan. Teams will meet throughout the year to discuss action plan progress and provide feedback to Department staff and coaches. In collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Education, selected schools will receive a \$1,000 implementation grant to execute their action plans.

“The Institute provides a unique opportunity for the Department to support the growth of existing farm to school programs across the state,” said Jessica Chapman, Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator. “From the retreat to the end of the school year, we get to assist schools in the implementation of a school-wide plan that integrates all three aspects of farm to school – school gardens, education, and local procurement.”

Selected schools are also eligible to participate in the Arkansas School Garden Program, an incentive program where up to five teachers per participating school can complete a professional development course. Upon completion of the course, each teacher will receive a \$1,000 grant to improve their school garden.

To learn more and apply for the Institute, visit arfarmtoschool.org/about/arkansas-farm-to-school-institute/. Contact Jessica Chapman at jessica.chapman@agriculture.arkansas.gov with questions.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture, forestry, and natural resources to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while conserving natural resources and ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit agriculture.arkansas.gov/. The Arkansas Department of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

