



Growing Grant County

Growing Grant County is a collaborative partnership that combines education, meat and vegetable processing, food production, and philanthropy to bolster the availability of local food to communities.

Through a partnership between the West Central Area and Ashby School Districts, local food shelves, and very supportive agriculturally based communities, the Growing Grant County project will build a system of collaboration to:

- Grow more local food.
- Provide training to students in the art of meat butchering and processing.
- Support Grant County food shelves by increasing donations of fresh food.
- Create a more sustainable and resilient food system.

Reaching our goal in 5 steps

Step 1: Raise funds

In a little over a year, project leaders met their community fundraising goal to build a greenhouse at West Central Area High School. This milestone led to increases in both student interest in agricultural careers beyond the 'family farm' and community buy-in around improving the local food system. Construction of the greenhouse is nearly complete. We expect additional fundraising needs as the project progresses.

Step 2: Strengthen curriculum

Both school districts are educating high school students on the current food system, from plant propagation to the plate. This includes growing methods, understanding of growing seasons and locales, transportation/global distribution, and economics.

A food science curriculum is available that focuses on both processing and preservation. Alongside the curriculum, Growing Grant County will provide staff to facilitate the community's involvement with the student experience. With the instructors' help, project leaders will arrange for the donation and sale of student-grown produce to the Grant County Food Shelf.

Step 3: Invest in a mobile food-processing trailer

Investing in a mobile food-processing trailer will allow students to receive instruction in meat butchering, processing, and distribution. Surplus harvested fruits and vegetables will be processed and preserved, and these nutritious local foods can be donated and/or sold to the Grant County Food Shelf.

"Growing Grant County is a realization of the goals and dreams of a highly supportive community. Imagine how different our community will be now that every student graduating from our schools will, at some point, have actively grown, harvested, and processed fresh food and delivered it directly to the local food shelf on a regular basis. When an entire community is engaged in the fight against hunger, there's no doubt that we will succeed!"

Eric Sawatzke

Agriculture Education Instructor
West Central Area Schools



**GROWING
GRANT COUNTY**
FEEDING THE FUTURE

Step 4: Explore expanded local food possibilities

Project leaders will explore food-related businesses, sales of project goods to the general public through grocers and institutions, and working with local growers to process cover crops or unprocessed crops (rejected sugar beets, for example).

Student-grown produce will be available in school cafeterias as soon as the kitchens have adequate capacity for processing and serving.

Step 5: Recognize a fully developed system

The project will culminate in a fully developed system in Grant County, with an increase in food production available for sale and consumption in local communities. This will be particularly apparent at the Grant County Food Shelf, where participants are gifted boxes of locally grown, nutrient-rich food.

Goals and objectives

- Increase the production of nutritious food available in Grant County.
- Increase the amount of food that is grown and produced in Grant County that is available to residents who are food insecure.
- Increase shelf life of food available in Grant County.
- Decrease food waste.
- Create systems of sale to both increase access to healthy foods and create program income to sustain efforts.
- Educate youth on food systems and encourage food entrepreneurship and agribusiness.
- Provide new, local market opportunities to farmers, growers, and ranchers in and around Grant County by selling their products to food shelves using the student-operated mobile food-processing trailer.
- Leverage opportunities within and outside the region for the improvement of the region's economic vitality and quality of life for its residents.



High School Classes

Intro to Agriculture

Food Products and Processing

Work-Based Learning

Agriculture for Grade 8

Agriculture for Grade 9

Agriculture Products

Advanced Agriculture Products

Animal Science

Horticulture

Connect with Us



"The local meat-processing industry is struggling due to retirements and other factors. We're providing students with hands-on experience that they can use in future careers — with the hope of helping fill a need in the community. That's workforce development." - Kate Mudge

Kate Mudge

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West Central Initiative received a Community Food Project Grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture to launch Growing Grant County.

