



Arizona
Food Bank
Network



DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona



PINNACLE
PREVENTION

Arizona LFPA 18-Month Progress Report



March 2023 -
June 2024

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Introduction to AZ LFPA

In December of 2021, the USDA announced the historic Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA), which used approximately \$900 million of American Rescue Plan (ARP) and Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funding for state, tribal and territorial governments to purchase locally produced foods for distribution to feeding programs, including food banks, schools and other organizations that reach underserved communities (USDA AMS, 2022). The purpose of the program is to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency by strengthening local and regional food systems; build and expand economic opportunity for local and underserved producers, farmers and ranchers; and provide healthy, nutritious, and geographically unique foods to rural, remote, and underserved communities (USDA AMS, 2022).

In fall of 2022, food system practitioners in Arizona quickly mobilized to procure LFPA funds to support local food production. The LFPA program for Arizona is spearheaded by the Arizona Department of Economic Security (AZDES), working in collaboration with the Arizona Food Bank Network and Pinnacle Prevention.

The Arizona Food Bank Network (AzFBN) is a coalition of 5 regional food banks and almost 1,000 food pantries and agencies that work to address hunger across Arizona. Pinnacle Prevention is an Arizona-based nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating a just food system and opportunities for joyful movement by offering training, consultation, technical assistance, research and evaluation, advocacy and policy support, community engagement, and community-based programs.



AZ LFPA Program Overview

OUR APPROACH - PRODUCERS

Both the AzFBN and Pinnacle Prevention operate existing nutrition and food assistance programs throughout the state and support local food producers, so they were able to collaborate with AZDES to implement a strengths-based approach with multiple entry points by engaging local producers through:

1. Direct market outlets such as farmers markets, farm stands, and farm stores;
2. Regional innovations that surfaced amid the pandemic; and
3. Expansion of AzFBN's Friends of the Farm program, increasing the benefits of the AZ Farmer's Market Nutrition Programs, and development of Pinnacle Prevention's Purchase Local AZ program.

This approach benefits local producers by providing them with options to engage in and benefit from LFPA at a point of entry that feels realistic and scalable based on their farm and ranching operations.

OUR APPROACH - DISTRIBUTION

The methodology for the distribution of the local foods to underserved communities in Arizona also allows for multiple entry points, with distribution occurring through:

1. existing direct market sites that are already serving families and individuals living under the federal poverty line through the WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (AZFMNP);
2. regional food distribution collaboration channels, such as through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) aid programs and fruit and veggie box distributions at housing sites or senior centers located in underserved communities (Purchase Local AZ); and
3. TEFAP-contracted food banks and food pantries already serving food insecure individuals (Friends of the Farm).

This distribution approach engages traditional food distribution networks with strong existing capacity while also increasing availability and access to local foods that might not otherwise be affordable or accessible for individuals experiencing food insecurity.

AZ LFPA Program Structure



AZ LFPA Program Goals

1

To support Arizona farmers, ranchers, and food producers; prioritizing those from socially disadvantaged groups.



2

To distribute fresh, nutritious foods to underserved communities across Arizona.



Outcome Indicators

As part of the funding application, specific outcome indicators were established in order to evaluate program impact. The AZ LFPA program has made significant progress towards these indicators, achieving several of them by the 18-month evaluation date of this report. Outcome indicators are listed below through June of 2024 (please note the value of food purchased includes already distributed funds, although additional funds are committed in contract, as noted).



MEASURE	GOAL	PROGRESS
Number of local producers participating in the program	200	268 ✓
Number of socially disadvantaged producers	120	111
Value of local food purchased	\$15,083,626.00	*\$4,605,655.68
Value of food purchased from socially disadvantaged producers	\$9,050,175.60	\$2,974,952.96
Number of distribution locations	120	146 ✓
Number of local food product types purchased	80	123 ✓

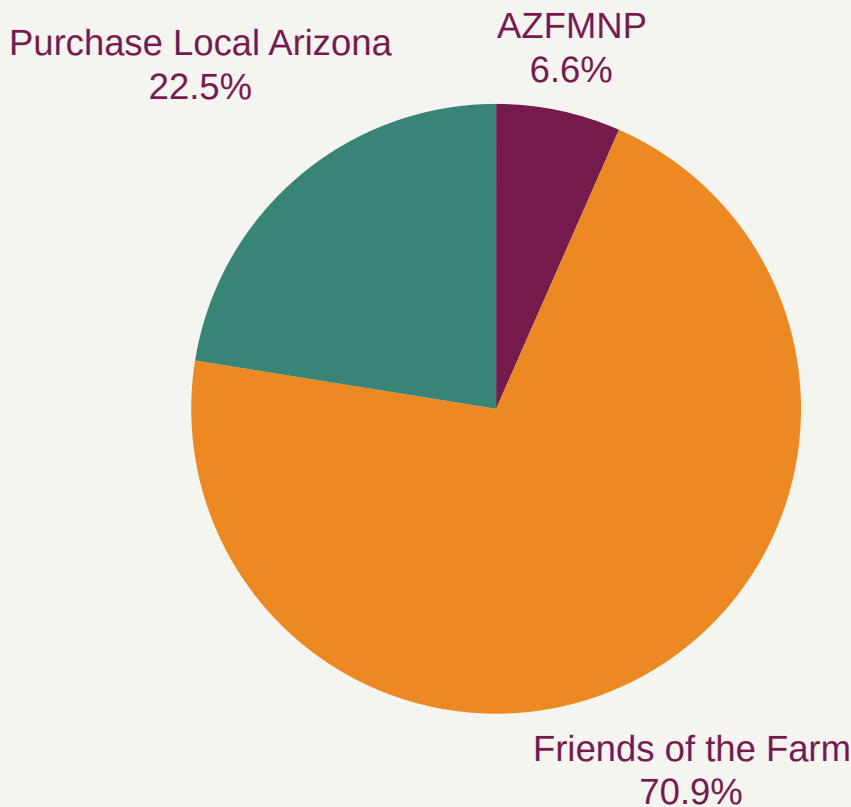
*plus an additional \$5 million currently committed in contract

"The USDA LFPA program has been so amazing to help us grow and improve our small farm operations. It has given us the confidence to permanently expand our farm operation so we can grow at least five times more healthy food than the last two years. In addition, we are excited to bring more fresh produce to more senior citizens, Native Americans, and disadvantaged food bank clients around Arizona."

-Machokoto Family Farms (Edenic Gardens)

PURCHASES BY PROGRAM

Below is the breakdown of LFPA spending by program. Friends of the Farm is AzFBN's farm-to-foodbank program, while Pinnacle Prevention runs the Purchase Local Arizona and AZ Farmers Market Nutrition Programs.



\$7.8M

Estimated local economic impact to-date of the LFPA program in AZ (based on [USDA's economic multiplier calculator](#))

Local food has been purchased from growers in

13

Arizona counties and distributed to agencies across the state

"This past growing season, Superyard Farms utilized this program to direct our efforts toward serving Indigenous community members in Northern Arizona. We organized a weekly farm-share from August 21 to November 17th, which was delivered free of charge to the staff of the Flagstaff Bordertown Dormitory (FBD). The FBD staff are all Native American tribal members who work long hours supporting high school students who live in nearby reservations and go to school in Flagstaff. ...

Each week, the produce was accompanied by notes that included stories about crops, farmers, nutritional information, and new recipes to try with the ingredients. Produce from the farm-share exposed staff to new crops, while also being culturally relevant foods, many of which sparked a variety of memories and stories amongst the staff. The feedback from the farm-share recipients was phenomenal."

-Owner of Superyard Farms

Success Stories

More stories from our farmers and food recipients

"Last year was our first year participating in the PLAZ program. We have expanded our growing area and learned many lessons that will help us to be even more successful this next round."

-A Phoenix area farmer

"One of my favorite parts of the program was being able to hand the produce directly to the people who needed it. It made me feel really good knowing that the food I put my life's passion into is benefiting people in my community. Feeding people good food is why I am a farmer. Thank you for including this farmer in the program."

- Mark Rhine, Farmer, Rhiba Farms

"In 2023, Manzanita's farm-to-food share efforts grew by 200%. This program uses Purchase Local AZ [LFPA] dollars to purchase fresh produce from local farmers and distributes it to individuals who would otherwise not be able to afford this nutritionally dense, fresh food. We are now the largest local purchaser of local produce in the Verde Valley. Last year, we bought over \$100,000 of products from 25 small farmers."

- from a community partner's 2023 annual report



"This program is so very important to both underserved, struggling farmers and underserved, struggling communities. It gives farmers a genuine purpose and way to get their produce to families that are truly in need of healthy organic food."

-White Lotus Farm

"I want to thank you so much for the meat that you donate to the food bank... I can't even begin to tell you how much everyone gets excited when they see the meat that they are given that you donate. Again, thank you so much."

-Food recipient

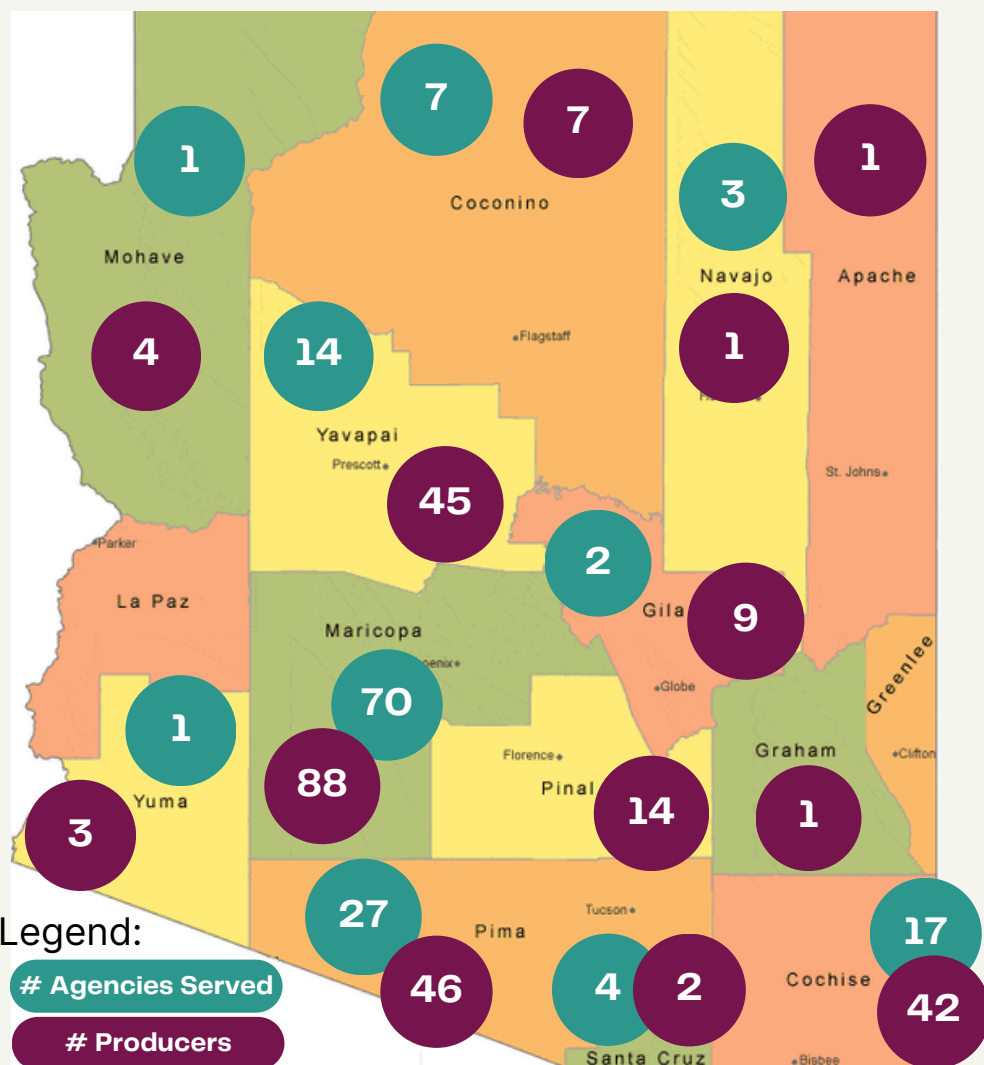
"This was my first year full-time farming and having a purchasing agreement with Pinnacle was the best thing that could have happened. Obviously it helped to have a stable outlet and it felt great knowing the food was helping to support a bigger cause but I'm now realizing the value in all the lessons learned. It was tough having to consistently produce for 5 months in an environment that's always changing. Having an agreement to honor forced me to improve as a grower. Having a deal also meant learning the administrative side of farming such as invoicing and managing cash flow. Being able to learn through experience with people on both sides who are supportive and understanding has been everything.

You guys are doing awesome stuff over there. Please keep doing what you're doing. It's making a positive change in the world. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to grow, serve my community and move closer to being the farmer I want to be."

-A beginning farmer near Douglas, AZ

ARIZONA LFPA PRODUCERS AND DISTRIBUTION AGENCIES BY COUNTY

Program purchases and distributions March '23 - June '24



268

Arizona farmers, ranchers, and food producers purchased from

65%

of program purchases were made from socially disadvantaged producers

146

distribution sites in all 15 Arizona counties

123

different types of food products were purchased (representing 476 unique varieties)

**AzFBN distributes to regional food bank networks that serve all 15 AZ counties, although the individual distribution sites are not represented on this map.



UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

In addition to the outcome indicators tracked in compliance with LFPFA funding, several unexpected outcomes have presented themselves during the first 18 months of the program:

Socially Disadvantaged Producer Landscape

Food systems partners in Arizona now have a better understanding of the BIPOC and socially disadvantaged producer landscape in the state. This information was not well documented prior to the initiation of the LFPFA program and there were some initial challenges when trying to document self-identified producers in this group. Several iterations and adaptations were made to better collect this information and this pivot has resulted in a much more comprehensive understanding of this farmer and rancher demographic in Arizona.

Diversity in Arizona's Local Food Market

Another unexpected outcome was the natural development of a database of foods grown in Arizona. This includes what items are grown, in which varieties, by whom, in which region, at what time(s) of year, etc. This dynamic database can provide valuable insights for food systems planning, decision making, and advocacy across the state. The most diverse produce items purchased in terms of variety included **peppers, lettuce, onions, microgreens, squash** and **apples**.

Challenges Encountered

The large scale of the LFPA program and the somewhat volatile nature of the local food market have presented some challenges for AzFBN and Pinnacle Prevention. While many were overcome, several challenges have persisted during the first 18 months of the LFPA program, including:

Demand has exceeded available funding

Demand from local producers and community partners has far exceeded available funding throughout the lifetime of the program. This has led to increasingly difficult decisions about which projects to fund among so many eligible and strongly aligned proposals.

Demographic data has been difficult to capture

Collecting producer demographics and socially disadvantaged status has been difficult, especially because the AZ LFPA program supports existing programs (Friends of the Farm, FMNP, CSA programs) that had not historically collected this type of data.

Not all AZ counties have equally participated

Due to Arizona's vast geography, variable growing seasons, and the digital divide in rural communities across the state, some counties have been underrepresented including, Apache, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, and Santa Cruz counties.





Lessons Learned and Solutions Developed

Partnership and Collaboration

AzFBN and Pinnacle Prevention have continued to expand upon and improve their partnership and data sharing in order to strategically leverage LFPA funds across the entirety of the state.

This includes meeting regularly, increasingly frequent ad hoc communication, and coordinating data tracking methods and language.



Continuous Feedback and Process Improvements

New application processes, reporting tools, and communication channels have been developed to best meet producers where they are and continue to achieve program goals. This includes hosting webinars and meeting one-on-one with producers, creating multiple modes of communication (website, listserv, text campaigns, phone calls, etc.), and iterating on existing processes based on feedback and lessons learned each quarter.

Program Outlook

As we head into second half of the LFPA program there are several goals that we hope to achieve:

GOAL 1

Continually improve coordinated data collection and reporting.

GOAL 2

Expand geographic reach and manage remaining LFPA fund distribution equitably across Arizona.

GOAL 3

Support farmers and community partners through increased resource sharing, and advocate for increased investments in local food purchasing programs.



Thank you for your interest and support.

For more information about our programs contact Parker (parkerfiler@pinnacleprevention.org) or Erica (erica@azfoodbanks.org)

References / Additional Resources

- [USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Program](#)
- [Arizona Department of Economic Security](#)
- [Arizona Food Bank Network](#)
- [Friends of the Farm](#)
- [Pinnacle Prevention](#)
- [Purchase Local Arizona](#)
- [AZ Farmers Market Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Wallace Center LFPA Impact Report](#)
- [USDA + Colorado State University Local Food Impact Calculator](#)