



North Carolina's Network of Food Councils

Working to build a thriving, sustainable community-based food system across all counties in North Carolina

What is a Food Council?

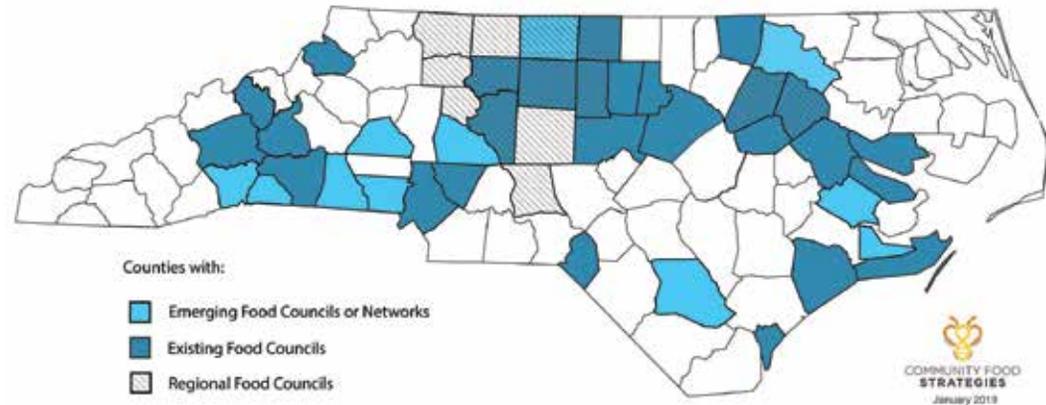
Food councils are community-based coalitions, created to help build a more just and sustainable food system. Each council supports a specific community – usually a county or region, and sometimes a town, city or neighborhood. A local or regional council is made up of individuals and organizations from that community who represent multiple sectors and work together to build relationships, leverage resources, and learn from one another.

Food is a fundamental need for all people, and touches our lives in the most basic ways.

When food systems are out of balance, people do not have access to healthy food, do not have a connection to where it is grown, and do not have a voice in rectifying these problems. Local food councils work to solve these crucial issues, as well as to improve health outcomes, protect natural resources, support economic development, and aid the work of farmers and fishermen.

Who is involved?

Food councils are made up of community members. They are intentionally made up of people and organizations from different sectors and industries. They, ideally, also aim to include the voices of people with lived experience of our food system's challenges in addition to the organizations and institutions that serve them. By coming together with diverse perspectives and differing strengths, members of food councils are able to give their communities greater control over the food they consume and solve broader food system issues.



Our state is leading the charge for food council development and capacity building. Over the past decade, the number of local and regional councils in North Carolina has grown from four to over 35. Community Food Strategies is dedicated to fostering collaborative partnerships with and between these groups to help create greater impact in communities across the state.

Members of councils often include representation from these groups – Local government officials • Farmers/fishermen and/or agricultural organizations • Restaurants and local businesses • Public health professionals • Cooperative Extension staff • Soil & Water Conservation District staff • Faith communities • Public schools • Interested parents and consumers • Food pantry and food security advocates • Community colleges or universities

Ideally, councils reflect the makeup of the community they serve including similar demographic representation across race, class, and rural and urban localities.

What do councils do?

The work and impact of food councils varies by community. Not every area has the same needs or values around food, so no two councils are the same.

Councils try to shift the system by encouraging and influencing policies (and practice) that are designed with health and community wellness as an end goal. In general, councils:

- Create space for people in their community to share stories about food and how it impacts their lives
- Engage experts to help better understand our interconnected food system
- Educate leaders and community members about issues surrounding food
- Connect decision makers and stakeholders to help create more alignment across programs and initiatives
- Recommend program and policy changes that affect local food systems in order to create lasting change
- Work together with people in the community, especially people with lived experience, to build solutions that create equitable outcomes

2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF NC FOOD COUNCILS

communityfoodstrategies.org



PROMOTING FARMERS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Davidson County Local Food Network funded a farmers market awareness campaign, including billboards, stickers, and farm-to-plate dinner marketing.

Capital Area Food Network developed a strategic plan for their Farm Advocacy Circle.

McDowell Local Food Advisory Council received grant funding to create a feasibility study and project development for a Community Food and Health Hub.

Greater High Point Food Alliance hosted a Food Security Summit and a Youth Food Summit.

Gaston Co. Food Policy Council hosted National Farmers Market Week events at all three county farmers markets, and hosted four community education events.

Forsyth Community Food Consortium hosted monthly Local Food Meet-ups to increase awareness of local food initiatives and encourage collaboration.

Toe River Food Security Network hosted listening sessions with pre-school teachers about gardens, and with faith-based food pantry staff and county government.

Orange County Food Council hosted two forums, welcomed four new council members, and started Food Access & Local Food Economy work groups.

Asheville-Buncombe FPC hosted a 2017 Candidates Forum, highlighting the Food Policy Action Plan they developed, which was passed by the City of Asheville.

Charlotte-Mecklenberg Food Policy Council hosted a food advocacy training for 50+ community members and leaders.

INCREASING AWARENESS

ADVOCATING POLICY & PROGRAM CHANGE

Greater High Point Food Alliance worked with High Point City Council to fund a Community Garden Coordinator through the Guilford Co. Extension Office.

Durham Farm & Food Network hosted a public engagement event to announce their newly created 4-part Policy Platform and encourage new participation.

Durham Farm & Food Network received funding for facilitation to support the development of a sugary beverage advocacy campaign rooted in racial equity.

Orange Council Food Council funded several members to attend racial equity trainings.

ADDRESSING EQUITY

North Carolina Local Food Council expanded their membership with diverse voices representative of their work.

INCREASING FOOD ACCESS

EXPANDING THE NETWORK

Capital Area Food Network assisted with the completion of the Wake County Comprehensive Food Security Plan, and held multiple community forums for input.

Cape Fear Food Council formalized their council structure and committees, which are meeting monthly, and filled all council and four committee chair positions.

Just Foods Collaborative recruited an Advisory Board, formalized its structure, and drafted a plan of work.

Alamance Food Collaborative partnered with Elon University classes on student projects that propelled their council's top priorities.

Warren County Local Foods Promotion Council completed a farmer survey and online map to create a Local Food Guide.

Cabarrus County Farm & Food Council engaged in a food access study with UNC-Charlotte partners.

Durham Farm and Food Network provided mini-grants to food pantries to improve services offered to clients.

Asheville-Buncombe Food Policy Council launched a Double Up Food Bucks project for greater access to healthy foods.

Caswell Local Foods Council hosted a free soup lunch every 2nd Wednesday of the month in 2017, attracting 50-100 attendees each month.

Pitt County Farm and Food Council became a county sanctioned council, held three community forums, and started work with three action circles.