



COMMUNITY FOOD
STRATEGIES

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

INSPIRING CONNECTIONS
AMPLIFYING COLLECTIVE ACTION



LETTER FROM OUR PROJECT DIRECTOR

At least once a month, I get the feedback that I shouldn't use the term 'food systems'. I am always trying to take that advice, but it's a real challenge. That's why I was struck when a colleague described this work by saying, 'We want to be in communities that take care of each other. Food is the tool we use to do that.' It made sense to me, and it made me feel inspired. That's how I want people to feel when I talk about our work.

If we are going to take care of each other, we have to be in relationship. For us, that means being authentic and accountable. There are two pieces of our work in 2019 that especially embody those actions: our commitment to being a multi-organizational project and our practices towards racial equity. Constantly, our team uses tools to build accountability and trust. And we are clear that it makes our work more relational, and stronger. We're feeling the impacts of 'taking care of each other' on our team, and we're excited to share what is working with others.

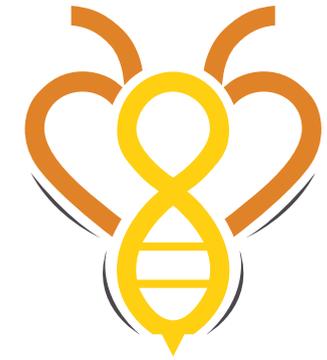
We also know that addressing racial equity is essential to taking care of each other. In 2019 we saw movement from our practices towards racial equity. We saw new faces and new conversations at the December Gathering; we noticed more willingness to show up for discomfort; and we're hearing an interest in getting past 'training' and into the work of engaging around equity. We know that work is hard and messy, and we need tools to take care of each other as we move forward.

I am proud of the ways that this project prioritizes connection and relationship. I'm grateful for the many platforms we had in 2019 to share the practices that we find so useful. And I'm grateful to that colleague who so simply and clearly shared what we're about -- taking care of each other through food.

Sincerely,

Abbey Piner

Abbey Piner, Project Director



OUR PARTNERS



OUR TEAM

From back to front as appears in photo:

JARED CATES, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association

LINDSEY CARVER, Food Bank of Central & Eastern NC

MEGAN BOLEJACK, Care Share Health Alliance

AMY MARION, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project

SHORLETTE AMMONS, Committee on Racial Equity at CEFS

LASHAUNA AUSTRIA, Kindred Seedlings

GINI KNIGHT, Center for Environmental Farming Systems

ABBEY PINER, Center for Environmental Farming Systems

JAMILLA HAWKINS, NC Rural Center

DALLAS GOODNIGHT (not pictured), Program Assistant at CEFS



Our nine team members' time on this project equals five full-time staff.

37

active food councils in North Carolina

100%

of food councils engaged in peer-to-peer learning

2,900

average monthly reach via Facebook

\$470K+

leveraged by food councils through network engagement

452

team member engagements with local food councils

300+

new connections between people from Statewide Gathering

115+

hours of one-on-one coaching, excluding travel & workshops

14

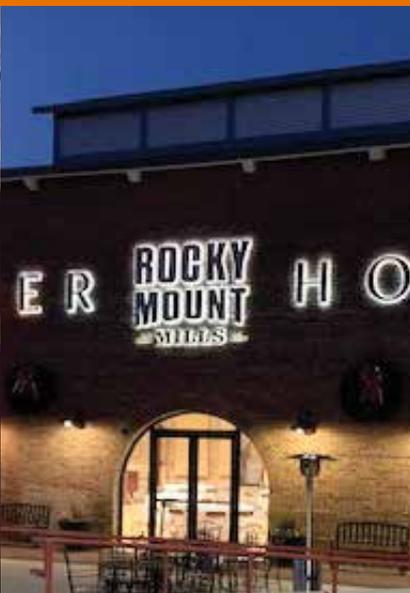
food councils working together on policy engagement

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These connections will allow us to expand the work we do and allow us to think in ways we had not been before.

”

- NC FOOD COUNCIL GATHERING ATTENDEE



WHAT ARE WE MOST PROUD OF?

This project is about connecting changemakers across North Carolina to shift our food system towards equity. We are so proud of the ways that the 'Cultivating Community through Food' Gathering supported those goals. For two days, over 200 people came together in Rocky Mount, NC to learn and to be (re)energized by our collective work. The event brought together a growing network that allows us to better reflect and represent our communities. We are more diverse across age, race, ethnicity, and levels of experience in this network.

The energy of the Gathering was nothing short of buzzing (yes, that's a bee reference). We were inspired by our keynote speakers to 'get uncomfortable' in our work towards equity and to support leaders with lived experience. We were amazed by our peers' stories and skills in 16 stellar workshops. And we made time to laugh hard, eat well, and honor history and place. Ultimately, we were left with a clearer vision of the system we're working to (re)create together.



Percentages of participants from across North Carolina.

"The entirety of this gathering was excellent! The speakers helped my organization prepare for the new year with fresh ideas and other approaches to our work."
 - 2019 GATHERING ATTENDEE



ATTENDEES AT THE SOCIAL HOUR HIGHLIGHTING ROCKY MOUNT HISTORY, ENTREPRENEURS, AND ARTISTS.



WHAT GAVE US A BREATH OF FRESH AIR?

Over the course of this past year, we were able to not only "engage" young people, but our work centered around supporting and elevating their leadership.

At our bi-annual Statewide Food Council Gathering, young people from several organizations took center stage. They shared stories about the work they were doing in their respective communities and the impacts it has had on their lives and the lives of their families. One of the Youth Ambassadors discussed their recovery work following Hurricane Florence which devastated parts of their community, leaving many people displaced. Because of their community gardening work prior to the hurricane, they were able to provide food for their community when power was out for several days.

The story of these young people is one of leadership and shared responsibility for the overall health and well-being of their communities. They represent how change happens!



YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS PRESENTING AT NC FOOD COUNCIL GATHERING:

- CONETOE FAMILY LIFE CENTER
- GROWING CHANGE
- JÓVENES LÍDERES EN ACCIÓN
- TRANSPLANTING TRADITIONS
- WORLD CHANGERS, ABC2
- YOUTH AMBASSADORS, MEN & WOMEN UNITED FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES



YOUTH PRESENTERS AT NATIONAL COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS CONFERENCE IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA.



"I have more awareness of systemic racism in the food system, and social and economic issues that contribute to the food system."

"Beautiful stories and amazing reflection on food and our relationship with it."

"Kudos for the support to local business."

- 2019 GATHERING ATTENDEES

"Amazing to hear and see young people!"

"Great group of youth. Their input, dedication, and knowledge inspired me to get my youth involved."

"Best session of the conference."

- 2019 GATHERING ATTENDEES

WHERE IS THE ENERGY BUILDING?

We hosted regular Collaborative Policy Calls for food councils on three different topics over the past year, including food recovery regulations, local agriculture trust funds from Present-Use Value (PUV) tax programs, and healthy vending policies. These calls have been energizing spaces for councils to come together and learn about strategies to take on local policy change as well as to collaborate on statewide policy issues.

Intentional regional engagement has brought more people and counties to these conversations. The Piedmont Triad Regional Food Council officially launched this past year serving twelve counties and efforts are underway to create a Kerr Tar Regional Food Policy Strategy across five counties. We are excited to see and support collaborative spaces that spur cross-pollination and action, regionally and statewide.



WHERE DID WE FALL SHORT?

We want to acknowledge where we fell short and where we are working to do better.

First, systems thinking is key to our collective action. We are falling short in bringing clear “systems” learning and leadership tools to communities. Our work for 2020 is to explore cohort learning models as an opportunity for deeper understanding, strategy, and leadership at a systems level.

Second, we have noticed that as councils become more connected to the network, they get more support from our team. We’re curious about how to support communities early in their exploration while continuing to meet them where they are and show up when invited.

Finally, we want to continue to walk the talk. We are working internally to be accountable to our racial equity principles, as well as to amplify the stories of local farmers, businesses, and community resilience.



WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FORWARD TO?

In 2020 we’re challenging ourselves to put story at the center of our work with both data and decision-making.

The NC Food Action Plan will engage stakeholders in identifying metrics to understand the changes we’re seeing in North Carolina’s food system. We want the stories of farmers, youth, and communities of color to be at the heart of that work. We’re excited to elevate the wisdom of oral histories, artists, and data visualization for tracking change.

We’re also really excited to shift our microgrants to a shared gifting model. Decisions about funding within the network will be driven by the people doing the work. Food council members are in support of trying this out - for the money, yes - but also for deeper connections and collaborations. Telling and hearing stories of each other’s work is a crucial part of the decision-making in shared gifting.

WHAT’S AHEAD IN 2020?

QUARTER I	QUARTER 2	QUARTER 3	QUARTER 4 <small>* ongoing</small>
Team Retreat Strategy & Planning Policy Calls* Racial Equity Coaching*	Shared Gifting Planning* Regional Collaborations* Facilitation Workshops Council Check-ins (39)	Team Retreat Shared Gifting Roll-out Food Action Plan* Regional Gatherings (6)	Microgrant Distribution Toolkit Revisions* W.K. Kellogg funding ends Internal Principles Review



2019 EXPENSES

- 60% Staff
- 12% Community Support
- 10% Statewide Gathering
- 10% Supplies
- 5% Food Action Plan
- 3% External Evaluation

FUNDED BY:

BCBSFNC & W.K. Kellogg

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Two new team members and one new partner organization
- Cultivated youth and rural involvement
- Increased people of color and community voices in strategy development
- Monthly strategy & logistics team calls
- Refined strategy at two team retreats
- Used story to refine what our project uniquely does at our best



NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

- 204 attendees across 39 counties attended a successful NC Food Council Gathering
- Distributed \$56,000 to councils through 44 microgrants and block grants
- Supported regional collaborations, mostly in the Triad, Triangle, and Kerr Tar regions
- Hosted two shared gifting learning circles
- Supported council members to participate in statewide and national conferences



SHARED MEASURES

- 78 leaders engaged at the NC Food Action Plan Kickoff
- Released Community Food Snapshot Templates



COACHING & TRAINING

- Finalized a document of local boards & commissions
- Piloted local policy & public investment tool
- Hosted two-day Lead Locally Intensive with CFSA
- Offered Racial Equity trainings, coaching, and tools
- Led two facilitation workshops
- Completed 37 council check-ins



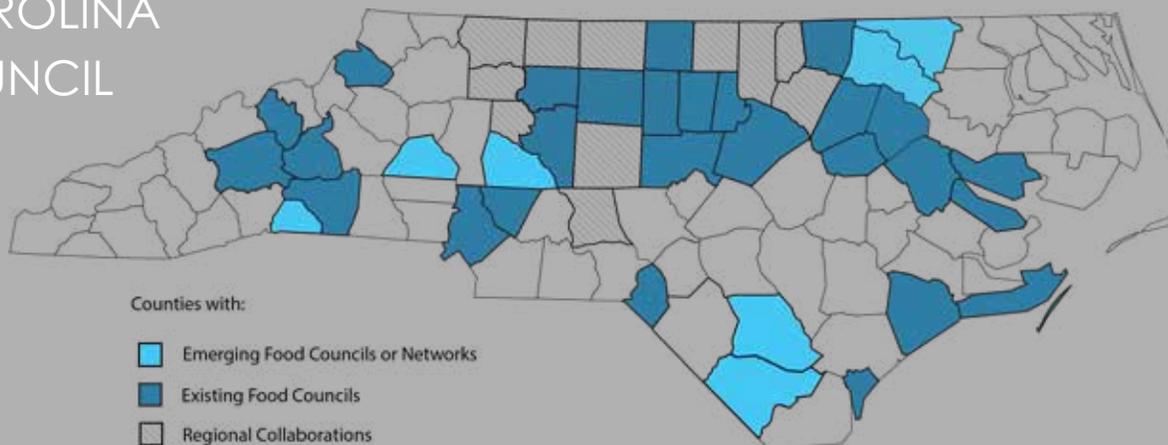
COMMUNICATIONS

- Launched new website
- Gave 21 presentations locally, statewide, and nationally (4x more national events in 2019 than 2018)
- Expanded social media presence, including Instagram, @communityfoodstrategies
- Highlighted six council members in profiles

STAY CONNECTED



NORTH CAROLINA FOOD COUNCIL NETWORK



Map updated December 2019

WESTERN REGION

- Asheville Buncombe Food Policy Council
- Catawba County Food Council
- McDowell County Local Foods Advisory Council
- Polk County
- Rutherford Food Network
- Toe River Food Security Network
- Watauga Food Council

CHARLOTTE REGION

- Cabarrus County Farm & Food Council
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council
- Food and Farm Network Rowan

TRIAD REGION

- Alamance Food Collaborative
- Caswell County Local Foods Council
- Davidson County Local Food Network
- Forsyth FoodWorks
- Greater High Point Food Alliance
- Guilford Food Council
- Island CultureZ
- Piedmont Triad Regional Food Council
- Winston-Salem Urban Food Policy Council

TRIANGLE REGION

- Capital Area Food Network
- Chatham Community Food Council
- Durham Farm & Food Network
- Orange County Food Council

NORTHEAST REGION

- Beaufort HEAL Collaborative
- GrowK, Halifax/North Hampton County
- Just Foods Collaborative
- Kerr Tar Region
- Pitt County Farm & Food Council
- Warren County Local Foods Promotion Council
- Wilson Food Council

SOUTHEAST REGION

- Cape Fear Food Council
- Carteret Food & Health Council
- Onslow County Food Council
- ScotLand Grows
- Youth Ambassadors, Bladen/Columbus County

Counties with food council interest:
Craven, Henderson, Robeson



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