Executive Summary: Impact Report

Addressing food insecurity is essential for realizing a more healthy North Carolina. Currently, 10.9% of households are food insecure, making North Carolina 34th in the nation in food security. Because Black and Brown and Indigenous communities are 2 times more likely to navigate food insecurity and associated health barriers, they have to be at the heart of building solutions that will work.

Over the last eight years, Community Food Strategies has grown the network of food coalitions engaged in solution building towards food security and equity in North Carolina from three community councils to a network that represents more than 60% of the counties in North Carolina. And the network is significantly diverse across age, race, ethnicity, and levels of experience. This is a meaningful network, and the need for a hub to connect community food security efforts has never been greater.

> *"Food councils coordinate responses across multiple sectors, enhance collaboration across the food supply chain, and help facilitate data collection and public messaging. Now more than ever these collaborative efforts of statewide organizations are desperately needed. Everyone working together to ensure that communities have access to healthy nutritious foods, especially the fresh foods and vegetables that our farmers and farmer markets provide to our community is crucial. Likewise, the education, advocacy and access to work ensures that people with limited income and transportation have access to farm-raised crops. Farm to table should not be reserved for the wealthiest people in our communities."*
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> *- Congresswoman Alma Adams*

Community Food Strategies is a hub for community-based solutions for food security and food justice. The project facilitates this vibrant community of practice connecting individuals, organizations, and policymakers across the state working towards equitable food systems.

The strength of Community Food Strategies lies in its emphasis on participatory-engagement and equity. Their work has become known for fostering collaboration and idea exchange,establishing models for community engagement and participatory decision-making, community organizing, and policy frameworks. It also emphasizes the importance of inclusive and participatory governance structures to ensure diverse stakeholders' voices are shaping food policies and practices.

Because of their work:

- More institutional, government, and funder support exists for community-based food systems work.
- More food councils are acting from a greater awareness of systemic racism in our food system.
- Food councils are more engaged with systemic level and cross-sector solutions for food security.
- Food councils have more policy and advocacy expertise, experience, and impact at all levels of government.

Community Food Strategies is an invaluable resource for individuals and organizations seeking to build sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems. Its intentional approach, focus on equity, and significant collection of resources make this hub of collaboration an essential player in navigating towards community-based food security in North Carolina. By amplifying community wisdom and modeling inclusive practices, Community Food Strategies has laid the groundwork for transformative action towards a healthier, more equitable, and resilient future in North Carolina.