

Action Plan for Food Systems Improvement



Vibrant Communities – Robust Region



The 14-county bi-state region includes: Anson, Cabarrus, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union Counties in North Carolina, and Chester, Lancaster, Union and York Counties in South Carolina.

Action Plan for Food Systems Improvement

This document is an action guide for the CONNECT Our Future communities. It is intended to describe a process of community engagement for use by municipal and county officials seeking to increase wealth and strengthen community development by building and supporting local and regional food systems. It is not intended to be a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all, step-by-step plan. Instead, this document lays out a process for building capacity to take successful action and suggests some areas where actions might be taken first.

“CONNECT Our Future” is a process in which communities, counties, businesses, educators, non-profits and other organizations work together to grow jobs and the economy, improve quality of life and control the cost of government. This project will create a regional growth framework developed through extensive community engagement and built on what communities identify as existing conditions, future plans and needs, and potential strategies.

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Vibrant Communities – Robust Region

Introduction

CONNECT Our Future has engaged public, private, and non-profit partners, as well as the general public, to build a regional framework to grow jobs and the economy, improve quality of life, and control the cost of government within the greater Charlotte region.

The project is supported by a substantial U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Grant as well as local in-kind public and private matching funds.

The CONNECT Our Future project covers a 14 county, bi-state region consisting of Anson, Cabarrus, Cleveland, Gaston, in North Carolina and Chester, Lancaster, Union and York counties in South Carolina, and the Catawba Indian Nation.

The CONNECT Our Future Regional Food System project includes a component to provide needed tools for creating sustainable local food systems (that together form a sustainable *regional* food system), a regional food systems assessment, an action plan for food systems improvement, and a network of food policy councils.

This document is an action guide for the CONNECT Our Future communities. It is intended to describe a process of community engagement for use by municipal and county officials seeking to increase wealth and strengthen community development by building and supporting local and regional food systems. It is not intended to be a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all, step-by-step plan. Instead, this document lays out a process for building capacity to take successful action and suggests some areas where actions might be taken first.

It is expected that groups and organizations interested in food and farms will join in using this action guide as the basis for future development of the CONNECT Our Future regional food system. These include, but are not limited to:

- CONNECT Our Future Food Systems Working Group (Regional)
- Bread Riot (Rowan County, NC)
- Cabarrus County Food Policy Council

(Cabarrus County, NC)

- Carolina Home Grown (Union County, NC)
- Catawba Farm and Food Coalition (SC Region)
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council (Mecklenburg County, NC)
- Lincoln County Local Food Advisory group (Lincoln County, NC)
- Rocky River Local Foods (Anson, Stanly and Union, NC counties)
- SEED Foundation (Rowan County, NC)
- Upper Pee Dee Farm and Food Council (Anson and Stanly counties)

The remainder of this document is divided into three parts:

Part I: Setting the Stage, describes the **Community Capitals Framework** and discusses building community capital through efforts to support community food systems.

Part II: A Process for Taking Action, explains the **whole systems approach** and its application, as well as the use of **intentional networks** as a means of increasing the likelihood of success.

Part III: Taking Next Steps, explores actions and opportunities communities may wish to pursue as they seek to strengthen the local and regional food systems. Appendices follow, providing supporting information for the document.

Part 1: Setting the Stage

Strong, vibrant communities reflect wealth in many forms, not just financial. For example:

- Communities may have high levels of **human capital** when they choose to invest in the health and education of their residents.
- Communities in which diverse groups of residents are interconnected with each other tend to have high levels of trust, or **social capital**.

- Communities which give voice to and increase inclusion of all residents in all community activities promote high levels of community **political capital**.
- Communities actively celebrating their cultural heritage build high levels of **cultural capital**.
- Communities with high levels of **natural capital** work diligently to protect open spaces, as well as air, soil, and water quality.
- Communities where investments have been made in infrastructure and systems have increased their **built capital**.



Community Capitals and Framework¹

Thus, communities seeking economic growth and improved quality of life have many arenas in which to invest. But how do we go about investing in these capitals?

Building Community Capital through Community Food Systems

One approach to building community capital is to look at food as a uniting, cross-cutting issue. In a recent webinar, experts at the UNC School of Government pointed to community food systems as a good way to

develop each of the seven community capitals.²

But what exactly *is* a community food system?

Food system refers to all aspects of producing, buying, selling, and eating food:

- Production of raw food (e.g., farming, gardening, etc.)
- Processing and aggregation (e.g., processing grain into bread or packing produce)
- Distribution (getting food from farms and processors to retail)
- Marketing and access (promoting, selling, and buying food)
- Consumption (preparing) and food waste recovery (e.g., composting)

A community food system encompasses all of the components of a food system, but is place-specific and built upon a network of interconnected relationships. As a result, community food systems can have more transparency than a global food system.

Community food systems can be developed both locally and, by extension, regionally. What matters most is that activities are focused on the community that system stakeholders define, be it the 14-county bi-state region defined by CONNECT Our Future or a municipality or county within that region. (It is important to note that it is difficult to strengthen community food systems at a regional level without first strengthening municipal or county community food systems.)³

Strong community food systems generate results that extend beyond accessible food and open space, providing another way of viewing a community food system. Developing a strong community food system not only promotes **vibrant farms** and **healthy people**, but also **strong communities, healthy ecosystems, and thriving local economies**.⁴

² Rick Morse, "Local Food and Local Government: What You Need to Know," webinar presentation given September 11, 2013.

³ Based on findings in the Appalachian Foodshed Project and CONNECT Our Future food systems efforts.

⁴ Adapted from Seattle Neighborhoods Whole Measures Framework, "Whole Measures for Community Food Systems:

¹ Adapted from "Community Capitals Framework," Department of Sociology at Iowa State University, accessed December 13, 2013, <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/staff/cflora/nccrdr/capitals.html>.



Part 2: A Process for Taking Action

After considering the vast number of activities and actors within a community food system, including the interconnections between them, it's clear the system is complex. Likewise, efforts to strengthen a community food system are also complex.

Unlike simple issues, where cause and effect is clear and outcomes are predictable, multiple causes connect to multiple consequences here, and outcomes are often unpredictable. “What this means is that a typical planning approach – where outcomes are identified and then a set of actions are expected to produce that outcome – is not particularly useful for complex system change.”⁵ Therefore, taking action to strengthen a community food system requires a **whole systems approach**.

As whole systems approaches may be unfamiliar to many reading this document, we have devised a three-part process for taking action to strengthen the CONNECT Our Future community food system. This process is based on whole systems design, and therefore, provides a whole systems approach. The three parts of this approach are:

- Develop Intentional Networks to Strengthen

Values-Based Planning and Evaluation,” Center for Whole Communities, accessed December 9, 2013, <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch/documents/WholeMeasuresCFS.pdf>.

⁵ June Holley, “Network Weaver Handbook” (Network Weavers Publishing, 2012): 322.

- Community Food Systems
- Explore Collaborative Action to Strengthen Community Food Systems
- Learn What Works to Decide What to Do Next

Develop Intentional Networks to Strengthen Community Food Systems

A network approach is particularly useful when problems or opportunities are big, solutions are unclear, or a new system is needed. Intentional networks can help foster change when new ideas are needed, or when there is a need to engage many individuals and organizations, as well as people with diverse backgrounds. Current conditions in the CONNECT Our Future regional food system can be described by each of the above statements, and intentional development of a network is needed.

The CONNECT Our Future region already includes networks, in the form of existing food policy councils and groups working on food system issues. The region is also calling for a plan to develop a network of food policy councils across the region. By definition, food policy councils are formal networks with clear boundaries and a purpose. Therefore network development – for existing or future networks – is the logical starting point for strengthening the CONNECT regional food system.

According to Network Weaver Handbook author June Holley, an intentional network is a network of people and organizations working on the same issue or vision, along with structures designed and created to mobilize the energy of the group.⁶ A strong intentional network requires attention in three areas: **relationships, support structure, and coordinated action**.

Relationships

Relationships are often taken for granted or neglected, yet the strength of relationships between actors is the single greatest predictor of success in institutional

⁶ Holley, “Network Weaver Handbook,” 17.

change.⁷ Building a relationship in a network involves identifying new and potential connections, strengthening existing connections, and making new connections.

Some key questions to consider while building relationships in a network are:

- Do people impacted by this issue know each other?
- Are all the key stakeholders on this issue connected to the network?
- Are relationships strong enough for people to collaborate on complex activities?

Support Structure

Without effective communication and a space for shared learning, collaborative efforts often fail. A supportive network structure provides ways for people to share information, enables people to discuss and interact around ideas and action, and encourages resource-sharing.

Some key questions to consider while building network support structures are:

- How do we encourage informal communication when people in the network are not physically working in the same organization or place?
- How do we motivate members when participation is voluntary?
- How do we ensure interactive two-way communication across the network?

Coordinated Action

Taking coordinated action builds capacity to work and learn together, while also advancing a shared understanding of how the community food system works and what it needs to grow. Coordination doesn't require a formal organization; networks

provide a means for ad hoc groups to take initiative and try something.

Some key questions to consider while taking coordinated action in a network are:

- Do people want to set priorities so that their actions have more impact? Do members want to work together collaboratively?
- Do members recognize opportunities for action?
- Do members have the skills needed to operate in ad hoc groups?

Explore Collaborative Action

Once an intentional network is in place, no matter how small, the second critical part of strengthening community food systems is to take collaborative action. Each of these parts – developing intentional networks and taking collaborative action – are interrelated; networks need action to fuel their development, and actions related to community food systems need diverse groups of people working together to ensure success.

Transforming a complex system requires an intense amount of investigation, exploration, and innovation. And working in a complex system requires that results be shared across broad groups in order to see the effects of actions taken. Critical considerations for exploring collaborative action to strengthen CONNECT Our Future community food systems include: ***thinking in terms of results, starting with the assessment, and following a thoughtful process.***

Thinking in Terms of Results

When you ask someone about a food systems project, the response typically focuses on the activity, not the intended results of the activity. Ensuring that all members of an action team agree to intended results is an essential element of effective collaboration.

Imagine, for example, that a group working on building a farmers market comes together to take action. Without a discussion on the underlying results

⁷ Nicole E. Allen et al., "Changing the Text": Modeling Council Capacity to Produce Institutionalized Change," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 49 (2012): 317.

they are seeking, each person may appear to be after the same thing (a farmers market) when in fact, they each seek a different result (e.g., increased farmer profitability, increased connections between residents and food production, increased vibrancy in the location). It will not take too long before the group finds itself struggling to come to decision and take action, as each person is aimed in a different direction while the group believes it has already set the direction by deciding to create the farmers market.

One way to get to results thinking is to ask, “So what?” when collective action is being planned. This helps ensure more clarity of purpose across members of the group. As shown in the example below, there is often a trail of results behind any given activity.

- “We want to build a farmers market.” “So what?”
- “So we can increase connections between residents and food.” “So what?”
- “So residents become more excited about fresh food.” “So what?”
- “So residents eat more fresh food.” “So what?”
- “So they are healthier.” “So what?”
- “So we reduce our community health costs, increasing our community wealth.”

It cannot be overstated how important clarity around results is for successful action. When the focus is on activities, it is often difficult to see the larger context. Activities thinking can also reinforce actions that don’t move us forward. Simply thinking in terms of activities is not enough.

When we think in terms of results, we broaden the context in which we are working and begin to see more of the system. Using the example above, think about who might be engaged in the conversation about creating a new farmers market. Now consider who might be engaged if the conversation was about increasing community wealth, improving health, and creating a new farmers market. This expansion in engagement is vital to success in community food system development.

Starting With the Assessment

There are many, many parts of a community food system on which action could be taken. Communities in the CONNECT Our Future region are very fortunate to have the CONNECT Food Systems Assessment. This document provides information about elements of the food system at a regional and county level. In particular, the County Snapshots provide a great starting point for gaining insight into what results might be desired to strengthen a community’s food system.

The assessment also identified six priority areas for food system action:

1. Bring Food System Issues to the Forefront of Local Government
2. Support Farmers and Local Food Production
3. Connect Residents to Their Food System
4. Address Equity and Access in the Food System
5. Expand the Knowledge Base Around Your Community Food System
6. Develop an Intentional Network to Foster Communication and Collaboration

By identifying opportunities for improvement on the county snapshot, considering the priority areas for change noted above, and applying results thinking, groups wishing to take collaborative action in their communities are well-positioned to do so.

Following a Thoughtful Process

Once a group has identified an area of improvement and the priority area in which change might be most helpful, it needs to follow a thoughtful process for working together to take action. The following is an example process that includes critical elements for success.

Stage	Considerations	Example
Learn	What is the issue and intended result? What are the specific and underlying problems or challenges? How does the 'broken' system work? What do we need to know about this issue to act?	We are concerned about food waste. Local government does not see community food systems as an opportunity to support our farmers, reduce our waste, and promote a healthier environment.
Assess	What is known about this issue? Who are the players? How much of a healthy system is in place? What efforts have not worked in the past?	Our community has a lot of food waste that is going to the landfill and we have many poultry farmers who could feed food waste to their birds. Several poultry farmers are interested in experimenting. A local distributor is interested in backhauling food scraps to the farms. Chefs are interested in reducing their waste costs, but there are local environmental health codes that, depending on the inspector, could swing for or against saving food scraps.
Prepare	What are some small projects or acts that could help a group explore the intended result? What skills and resources does the group already have for this activity? Who and what else is needed to make the project a success? Who will facilitate the group as it moves forward?	We could start by educating our local government on community food systems and garnering support for activities that promote economic well-being (of farmers, of chefs). We could partner with environmental health to explore possible opportunities to develop a pilot together. We select a result that we can accomplish in a 6-month period and create an action plan.
Act	Take action.	We map the relationship network to identify who needs to be engaged in the issue and develop an engagement strategy. Then we set up a series of presentations/workshops designed to engage stakeholders across the issue.
Reflect	What worked well? In what way did we accomplish the intended results? In what ways did we fall short? Why? What might we do differently next? What insights or surprises did we have?	We realized it was harder to get some stakeholder groups into the conversation. We also saw that the viewpoint of one group often precluded an understanding of another group. We have good presentation skills, but need to develop stronger relationships to get the broad buy-in we seek. With a little more work on relationships, we can get a pilot started.
Communicate	Who needs to know what we have learned? How best shall we share the information?	We send a brief summary of our findings to each of the other food networks in the region over the listserv. Our neighboring group asks to use our presentations. Another group shares how they have successfully addressed similar cultural communication gaps.

What is most important about the suggested process above is that it incorporates a lot of reflection – about what has been done before, what is needed, who needs to be involved, and how the actions affected the system as a whole. Because community food systems are complex, such reflection is vital to understanding what works in a particular community and what to do next.

Learning what Works to Inform what's Next

Complex systems require small interventions and reflection along the continuum toward action. It isn't enough to simply take action – it's necessary to amplify what works and discard what doesn't.

Exploring collaborative action builds capacity for people involved in different projects to come together and learn about what seems to be working, as well as what doesn't. Collaborative learning leads to smarter actions and better results. It also makes it possible to develop a system strategy that accelerates transformation.⁸

Continuous improvement is a goal of any long-term process. In community food systems, any action, even a small one, can lead (sometimes unpredictably) to significant change. Yet with so many factors influencing the results, "it is difficult to determine which specific factors were important in leading to the result."⁹

Coming together to identify patterns of success and actions to avoid is imperative to learning and informing next actions. Collaborative learning requires a **learning-oriented culture** which addresses concerns such as:

- "Is it safe to reveal shortfalls? Can people talk openly about 'poor performance'?"
- Can people ask for help and do they offer one another help?
- Do people have the time and support to talk about concerns and to analyze and

understand how current processes and systems are functioning?

- Do they have the skills to do so effectively?"¹⁰

We see two prerequisites for a successful learning-oriented culture in systems work:

- **Trust and reciprocity.** Relationship building within a network is essential to building a culture of trust and reciprocity. Such cultural norms provide a supportive context for collaborative learning to occur.
- **Results thinking.** As stated earlier, thinking in terms of results rather than activities can bring a broader set of network voices into the conversation, allowing for more observation and data sharing about what changes are being seen across the system.

With both trust and reciprocity and an orientation toward results, network actors can work toward shared results in order to learn together. By reflecting on questions such as those listed below, the group can identify **patterns of success**, as well as actions to avoid.

- "What are your first thoughts about your activity? Has it had the intended result? Why do you think that was?"
- What assumptions did you have going into this activity? Do you still think those assumptions make sense, or have you modified them? How might your changed assumptions change the way you engage your next actions?
- How did your activity appear to impact other elements in the community food system? Was that what you expected? What can we learn from its impact on other parts of the system?
- Each of you had different approaches to attaining this result. What did you notice about these differences? Did any of these differences make more of a difference than

⁸ Holley, "Network Weaver Handbook," 315.

⁹ Holley, "Network Weaver Handbook," 322.

¹⁰ Peter Senge and Hal Hamilton, "Why We Need Metrics and Why Metrics are Dangerous," Sustainable Food Lab, accessed December 13, 2013, http://sustainablefoodlab.org/images/stories/pdf/Why_we_need_metrics_062513.pdf.

others?

- Were there any roadblocks? How did you deal with them? How can we all learn from that? What was easier than you thought? Why do you think that was so? What had a greater impact than you thought? Why was that? What did you do that was really not that successful or necessary? How could you have noticed and stopped doing it sooner?
- Are there any shifts happening in the area where you are working? Have you noticed any things that may be opportunities for us to build upon?¹¹

Once collaborative learning takes place, the group is better informed about what to do next. Often, this involves revisiting earlier high-level strategies: network development and exploring collaborative action. In this way, collaborative learning is an underpinning part of the process, providing a foundation for future actions that will help strengthen the system.

Part 3: Taking Next Steps

Given the process for taking action in a complex system and the recommendations made in the CONNECT Our Future Food Systems Assessment Report, the following list contains suggestions for where community groups might focus their next actions. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather a starting point for communities.

Intentional Network Development: Relationship-Building Opportunities

- Add formal networking time to all meetings (food policy councils, food networks, farmers market boards, community health advisory groups, etc.) to encourage interaction and conversation among participants.
- Adopt an existing informal network gathering, such as Green Drinks Concord,

Charlotte, or Lake Norman or Cleveland County potluck dinners, as a place where members of the community food system network can meet regularly to build relationships and share information.

- Look for creative ways to expand the network reach of existing food policy councils and networks (such as those listed in the Preface) to strengthen connections with a cross-section of voices from the food system. For a list of voices to engage, refer to Appendix B: Stakeholder Voices.
- Encourage greater connections within and between existing food-related groups. Refer to *Appendix C: Actions for Improving Networks* for more ideas.

Intentional Network Development: Support Structure-Development Opportunities

- Use local-food-action-plan and food policy council listservs to share information about community food system development across communities. Refer to Appendix A: Resource List for information on joining these listservs.
- Create a ning.com group or listserv to discuss community food system development within a specific community.
- Encourage identification and sharing of resources across the network, such as skills, money, space, and equipment.
- Make use of the systems in place for collecting small donations from many people to support network efforts.
- Provide training and coaching to help build network development skills. Refer to Appendix C: Actions for Improving Networks for skills that may be needed.

Action Exploration: Bringing Food Systems Issues to the Forefront of Local Government

- Build capacity for public speaking and

¹¹ Holley, "Network Weaver Handbook," 340.

presenting on community food systems across food policy council and network membership. Develop a speaker's bureau, and encourage existing social and civic clubs, such as Rotary, Civitan, Optimist, and Kiwanis, to invite speakers who can highlight community food system issues.

- Host or attend films focused on local food system issues. One example is the film series organized by Cleveland County Cooperative Extension.
- Look for opportunities to educate elected officials and decision makers on food system issues. One example is the Stewardship Tour for Elected Officials, sponsored by the Cabarrus Soil and Water District.
- Host viewing sites for webinars pertaining to community food systems and encourage local government staff and elected officials to attend.

Action Exploration: Supporting Farmers and Local Food Production

- Connect farmers and food producers with opportunities to increase business skills, available through programs such as REAL Agripreneur classes and small business centers at community colleges.
- Encourage farmers to increase agricultural education, such as the Gaston County Small Acreage Conference or GAPS training and support through CFSA or SCDA/NCDA.
- Promote opportunities to develop new and beginning farmers such as Piedmont Farm School, the Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm, and SC New and Beginning Farmers Program through Clemson University.
- Raise awareness of and support the development of resource directories promoting local food. Examples include the Mecklenburg Community Garden list and the Rocky River Farmer Food Guide.

- Explore and create opportunities to connect farmers to institutional buyers, and then help foster relationships between these two groups. The NC 10% Campaign can serve as a resource for strategies based on their experience in this area.

Action Exploration: Connecting Residents to their Food System

- Support and expand existing efforts to connect youth and communities to their food system through food production experience. Examples of these efforts include high school horticulture and agriculture programs, school and daycare gardens, and all types of community gardens.
- Raise awareness of public events that offer people opportunities to learn about local food. Examples include the Ag and Art Tour (SC), Can You Dig It? Community Garden tour, Cleveland County Farm tour, Know Your Farms Charlotte regional farm tour, Lincoln County Apple Festival.
- Strengthen and expand food education programs. Examples include formal programs such as Chefs Move to Schools and Watch us Grow Academy as well as informal efforts at farmers markets, churches, and workplaces.
- Strengthen and expand programs which build food preparation skills. Examples include formal efforts such as weekly cooking demonstrations sponsored by the Cabarrus Health Alliance, classes offered by Cooperative Extension, and classes offered by the American Heart Association as well as informal efforts such as cooking demonstrations at farmers markets and stores where local foods are sold.

Action Exploration: Address Equity and Access in the Food System

- Partner with groups already working or

embedded in economically disadvantaged communities to collaborate on increasing consumption of healthy, local food. Examples include the Go Go Fresco partnership with the Queen City Supermoms and the American Heart Association partnership with Congregational Health Program.

- Increase the use of SNAP/EBT for healthy, local food, learning from previous efforts by Atherton Market, Queen City Mobile Market, and work of the Community Transformation Grants.
- Strengthen and expand efforts to connect economically disadvantaged communities with food production, such as the Cleveland County Potato Project, the Society of St. Andrew gleaned programs, and Sow Much Good.

experience into meetings and projects. Ensure communication of such “lessons learned” to others working on community food systems across the community and region.

Action Exploration: Expand Knowledge Base Around your Community Food System

- Become familiar with available research related to issues/priority topics, such as food waste, infrastructure capacity building, and food deserts.
- Use existing tools to leverage community resources, such as the County Snapshots developed in the CONNECT Our Future Food Systems Assessment Report, which provide a baseline for understanding elements of your community food system.
- Create opportunities for individuals and groups to share research, assessment, or knowledge gleaned through joint reflection on collaborative experience.
- Adopt as a practice establishing a clear connection between policy or programmatic recommendations of a food policy council or network and external research, community assessment, and joint reflection on collaborative experience.
- Build time for joint reflection on shared

Appendix A: Resource List

Intentional Network Development

Tools

Network Weaver Handbook

<http://networkweaver.com/>

Local Food Action Plan listserv

<http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/getinvolved/listservs.html>

Food Policy Council listserv

Contact: kmchojna@ncsu.edu

Reference Material

Food Systems Networks that Work – Webinar

<http://ngfn.org/resources/ngfn-cluster-calls/food-systems-networks-that-work>

Collaborating for Systemic Change

<http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/collaborating-for-systemic-change/>

Intentional Network Development

Tools

How to Advocate Locally for Sustainable Food and Farms – A Brief How-To Manual

<http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/how-to-advocate-locally-for-sustainable-food-and-farms-a-brief-how-to-manual/>

Local Food Action Plan listserv

<http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/getinvolved/listservs.html>

Feeding America: Map the meal gap

<http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.asp>

Reference Material

A Community & Local Government Guide to Developing Local Food Systems in NC

www.cefs.ncsu.edu/publications/guide-to-developing-local-food-systems-in-nc.pdf

Local Food and Local Governments: What You Need to Know – Webinar

<http://www.sog.unc.edu/node/3676>

Planning for an Agricultural Future: A Guide for NC Farmers and Local Governments

http://www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/FINAL_NCP4Ag_AFT_1.pdf

SC Agricultural Landowners Guide

http://www.farmland.org/programs/states/documents/AFT_SC_Guide_05-03.pdf

Growing your Local Food Business in NC: A Guide to Laws and Regulations

http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/CFSA_RegGuide-NC2012_webres4.pdf

Growing your Local Food Business in SC: A Guide to Laws and Regulations

http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/CFSA_RegGuide-SC2012_08-webres2.pdf

From Farm to Fork: A Guide to Building NC's Sustainable Local Food Economy

<http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/resources/stateactionguide2010.pdf>

Comprehensive Assessment of the South Carolina Agribusiness Cluster

http://www.clemson.edu/public/ciecd/focus_areas/r

esearch/files/Complete%20Report%20MarketSearch
July2909.pdf

Planning for Food Access and Community-Based Food
Systems
[www.planning.org/research/foodaccess/pdf/foodacc
essreport.pdf](http://www.planning.org/research/foodaccess/pdf/foodaccessreport.pdf)

Mecklenburg County Community Food Assessment
Phase 1
[http://ui.uncc.edu/story/mecklenburg-county-
community-food-assessment-2010](http://ui.uncc.edu/story/mecklenburg-county-community-food-assessment-2010)

Mecklenburg County Community Food Assessment
Phase 2 [http://ui.uncc.edu/story/mecklenburg-
county-community-food-assessment-2010-phase-2](http://ui.uncc.edu/story/mecklenburg-county-community-food-assessment-2010-phase-2)

CTG Project NC Fruit and Vegetable Outlet Inventory.
Community Transformation Grant.
http://www.healthydurham.org/docs/FVOI_2012.pdf

Community Needs Assessment: Change for Good
Begins Here. Charlotte, NC: University of North
Carolina at Charlotte's Urban Institute
[ui.uncc.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/2011_UW_Needs_
Assessment_Full_Report.pdf](http://ui.uncc.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/2011_UW_Needs_Assessment_Full_Report.pdf)

Local & Sustainable Food and Farming in the Palmetto
State: A Progress Report
[carolinafarmstewards.org/wp-
content/uploads/2013/04/SC_Inventory_2013.pdf](http://carolinafarmstewards.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/SC_Inventory_2013.pdf)

APA Guide to Planning a Healthy, Sustainable Food
System
[http://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/health/pdf
/apapchfoodsystemplanning.pdf](http://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/health/pdf/apapchfoodsystemplanning.pdf)

Appendix B: Stakeholder Voices

Community food systems present a cross-cutting issue, where no one group has ultimate responsibility, yet every group has a part to play. The work is, by necessity, decentralized and distributed. Those wishing to strengthen a community food system must take special care to engage a broad cross-section of actors to succeed in change across the system.

Potential Stakeholder Voices, Organized by Sector

Government

- Agriculture: Cooperative Extension, NC Sea Grant, NCD, SCDA
- Health: Public Health, Social Services, School System Nutritionists
- Economy: Economic Development, Tourism
- Land Use: Planning and Zoning, Code Enforcement, Waste Management
- Education: community colleges, school curricula
- Other: emergency management, county management, elected officials

Industry

- Retail: grocery/convenience stores, restaurants
- Transport: food distributors, cold storage facilities
- Processing: dealers/packers, processors, slaughterhouses
- Preparation: restaurant associations, culinary schools, chefs
- Business: small business associations, chambers of commerce
- Financial: lending institutions, peer-to-peer lending (Slow Money), community lending, grant funding

Community

- Direct marketing: farmers markets, CSAs, farm stands
- Local food organizations: food policy councils/coalitions, marketing efforts
- Communication: food bloggers and writers
- Charity: churches, food banks, nonprofits
- Land: land trusts, agricultural districts
- Residents, youth

Producers

- Individuals: community gardeners, home gardeners
- Groups: community garden organizers, producer co-ops, producer representative groups (Farm Bureau, etc.)
- Farmers: small-scale farmers, organic, sustainable, and conventional farmers
- Fishermen: wild-caught fishing, aquaculture

Potential Stakeholder Voices, Organized by Impact Area

Healthy Ecosystems

- Planning, code enforcement, waste management
- Land trusts
- Cooperative Extension – Natural Resources
- Soil and Water Conservation
- Parks and recreation, watershed, and nature groups
- Environment/Sustainability Office
- Planning Department/Planning Commission Members

Thriving Local Economies

- Economic development, tourism

- Banks, endowments, funding agencies
- Dealers/packers, processors, grocery/convenience stores, distributors
- Cooperative Extension – Local Foods Coordinator
- Community colleges – small business center, culinary schools
- Small business associations, chambers of commerce, restaurant/chef associations
- Workforce development office
- Planning Department/Planning Commission members
- Food hubs/food aggregators/produce marketing groups
- Input suppliers – hardware stores, feed and seed businesses

Strong Communities

- Elected officials and government leadership, congressional staff, political groups
- Representatives of museums and historical associations and their support base
- Civic clubs and organizations (Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.), people with links to outside resources, people with networks
- Communication: food bloggers, newspapers, radio, television
- Cooperative Extension – Community Development
- Community foundations

Healthy People

- Public Health, Social Services, School System Nutritionists
- Educators (K-12), higher education, community colleges
- Cultural and religious groups
- Cooperative Extension – Family and

Consumer Sciences

- Faith-based organizations, food banks, community gardens
- Health practitioners, hospitals
- Youth

Vibrant Farms

- Cooperative Extension – Agriculture, 4H
- Farm Service Agency, Soil and Water Conservation
- Direct Markets: farmers markets, CSAs
- Local farm & food organizations: campaigns, organizations, Farm Bureau
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Community colleges – agriculture education
- High School – FFA
- Food hubs/food aggregators/produce marketing groups

Appendix C: Actions to Improve Networks

The following list of network characteristics and associated actions is adapted from Network Weaver Handbook by June Holley.

To Improve Relationships

Network Characteristic	Suggested Actions
Not enough energy	Identify people's passions or interests and help them form self-organized action groups. List missing voices and bring them into the network for more energy.
Need innovation or new ideas	Have people attend conferences or meetings where they will meet new people with overlapping interests.
Not including key groups	Identify people from excluded groups and introduce them to "connectors" in the network. Include people from these groups in small projects.
Need more resources or expertise	Brainstorm or do Internet searches for names of people or organizations who have the resources, expertise, or new ideas. Identify people who might know them and ask them to make introductions.
Not enough people	Recruit – add friends of friends. Have introductory workshops and recruit.
People don't know each other	Encourage small actions be done in pairs. Conduct 'speed networking' at meetings. Create opportunities for small group work, and encourage people to work with people they do not already know.

Network Characteristic	Suggested Actions
Cliques, territoriality, divisiveness, isolated clusters	<p>Identify ‘connectors’ in each cluster who are interested in bringing clusters together and help them identify common interests.</p> <p>Have people from two clusters pursue resources they could not obtain singly.</p> <p>Match up individual or group needs from one cluster with individual or group expertise in another.</p>
Low trust	Develop activities that promote formation of quality connections.

To Improve Support Structure

Network Characteristic	Suggested Actions
Communication not flowing in overall network or small project groups	<p>Have groups develop ground rules for sharing information: What do we agree to do?</p> <p>Set up web-based project management sites.</p>
Communication not getting to all parts of network, especially small project work not shared well to the larger network	<p>Create a listserv or www.ning.com site and push people to send notices, news.</p> <p>Create connections between key people in the core who do not know each other.</p> <p>Provide templates and training to help people present more effectively in oral or written reports.</p>
Group or network doesn’t understand network approaches	Do short presentations on ‘Why Networks?’.
Few networking or collaboration skills	Provide training and coaching in skills (refer to Network Weaver Handbook).

Network Characteristic	Suggested Actions
Not making needed breakthroughs or learning from experience	<p>Have a meeting where people look at most successful projects or activities and analyze why successful to identify patterns of success.</p> <p>Have online spaces, such as ning.com sites, to share learning and give feedback.</p> <p>Provide forms for feedback at meetings (in person or by phone calls).</p>
Network does not use social media	Identify social media experts in the network, have them introduce social media, and coach individuals in their use.

To Improve Action

Network Characteristic	Suggested Actions
Not collaborating with other individuals or organizations	Set up a small “innovation fund” to provide incentive for collaboration; projects must involve two or more organizations or communities.
Disorganized/little action or people seldom take initiative	Form small groups around shared interest in an opportunity and have them identify small actions they can take in a near-term timeframe.
Self-organized projects fall apart	<p>Provide project management worksheets.</p> <p>Host regular check-in calls or meetings with project coordinators.</p>
Projects seldom include new people	Draw map of project and think of missing skills, resources, perspectives; recruit new people to fill these roles.

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