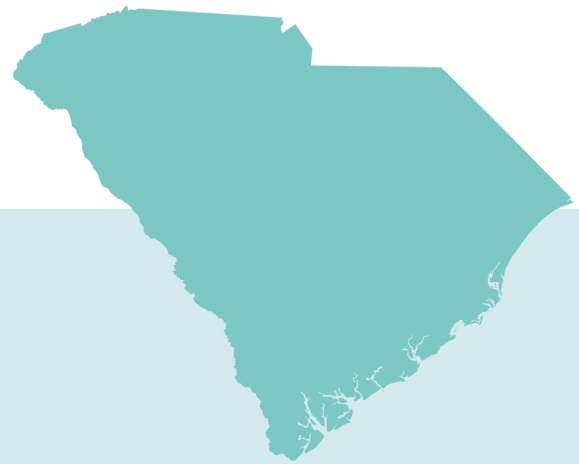


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GROWING LOCAL SOUTH CAROLINA



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOUTH
CAROLINA'S FOOD SYSTEM

Prepared by Nikki Seibert Kelley and Sara Clow
Funded by South Carolina Department of Agriculture

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Executive Summary

South Carolina has reached a critical point in the growth of its local food system in which it must make a significant commitment on a social, cultural, and economic level in order to become an active player in the agricultural market and leader in the region. The local food system presents an opportunity for building cross-sector collaborations while leveraging South Carolina's assets to energize the agricultural industry, create jobs, support rural economies, and increase food access. As noted in [Making Small Farms Big Business](#) (MSFBB) report, this is complex, long-term work—work that to date has largely been driven by grassroots efforts of a handful of NGOs and local municipalities. **In order to realize the true potential of the industry, it is time for the current players to come together as a collaborative network with the support of state-level agencies to drive institutional change.**

The focus of this report is to outline recommendations for continuing the work of Making Small Farms Big Business (MSFBB) to ensure South Carolina has the capacity, network, and support to advance the visibility and viability of local farms by connecting local foods to local markets. Themes from MSFBB carried forward in this process are: a state level commitment to local foods, strengthening food production nodes, farmer training programs, food hub growth, and supportive state policy.

Since the release of Making Small Farms Big Business (MSFBB), the landscape of local food continues to grow beyond expectations. Nationally, the demand for local foods grew from \$5 billion in 2008 to \$12 billion in 2014, and was projected to rise to \$20 billion by the end of 2019 (Packaged Facts, 2015). In 2018, a MarketForce Information survey found that 58% of shoppers indicated locally sourced meat, produce, and dairy products were important to them. At a state level, agribusiness, agriculture, and forestry drive South Carolina's economy with a \$41.7 billion a year impact and over 212,500 jobs (NASDA, 2018). Yet despite being a key economic driver, the state is missing an opportunity to tap into the demand for local food and develop a thriving local food economy. The state's current agricultural production focuses instead on export, while 90% of food eaten in South Carolina is imported from outside of the state (Meter, 2013). Of the 38,970 farms in the state, only 6 percent sell direct to consumers, demonstrating an incredible opportunity for farmers to participate in the growing market demand (USDA, 2017). One of the key recommendations in the MSFBB report was for a "core shift to be made to create a food culture, and productive resident networks, that allow South Carolina to produce most of its own food, and that encourages consumers to work collaboratively to eat locally" (2013). This approach follows national trends wherein leaders across the country are revitalizing their communities by addressing economic, social, environmental, and health challenges through the development of local food economies (Feenstra, 1997). Development of local food economies is especially relevant for South Carolina's rural communities where agriculture continues to have a strong presence but is currently underutilized in addressing economic, social, and health disparities.

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Despite clear market potential, barriers to realizing opportunity exist. The demographics of farmers are changing. The most recent census data in 2017 revealed that in South Carolina 35% of farmers are female, almost 30% are characterized as “new and beginning” (10 years or less experience), and 13% are veterans. Yet the state is still facing an aging farmer population (average age of 59) and must address the continued decline in farmers, with a loss of 1016 farms since 1997 (USDA, 2002 & 2017). The demographic populations hit hardest by this loss have been Native American and African American, whose combined drop in farmer numbers is 114 farmers in the five year period between 2012 and 2017. Due to these trends, South Carolina was one of the top 20 ranking states for farmland loss between 1992 and 1997 (American Farmland Trust, 2002). Even in areas where land is plentiful, land access (lease, purchase, and transition) continues to be a key issue for new and beginning farmers. On a national level, land access was cited in the National Young Farmer Coalition Survey (2017) as a top challenge for both first-generation and multigenerational farmers, particularly finding and affording land on a farm income. Despite the significant challenges associated with land, South Carolina is in a position of strength and opportunity with the USDA (2007) indicating that nearly a quarter of all land remains in agriculture (4.8 million acres) and a significant portion of that land ranked as High Quality farmland (American Farmland Trust, 2002).

These data reinforce the message from MSFBB: South Carolina’s agriculture industry has the opportunity to become an important player in the local food marketplace, growing opportunities for local farmers and in turn, growing the state’s economy.

South Carolina’s productive farmland, history of agriculture, long growing seasons, and consumer demand for local product provide opportunity to increase the supply and distribution of South Carolina produced, source-identified fruits, vegetables, small grains, meat, dairy, eggs, and honey. The MSFBB report projected significant economic potential for South Carolina’s local food system, but the state has fallen short on implementation to reach the targets outlined in the document. While the report provides a wealth of information and industry savvy insight, it is only as strong as the investment in the recommendations and facilitation of the plan into action. A number of initiatives in the report have experienced growth and success, but unfortunately several projects, programs, and even organizations have since ended: a fate often tied to lack of supporting funding, policy, and leadership.

The success of one of the central elements of the report, food hubs (and the recommended hub network), has demonstrated the power of strong leadership, timely investment, and a commitment to collaboration. Food hubs have become crucial to growing local food distribution to a scale that not only supports small to mid-sized farmers but is also capable of meeting growing consumer demand. While these operations have become an essential building block in local food systems, they do not exist in a vacuum and their success is tied to careful assessment, multi-agency input, adjacent local food organizations and trainings, support of state level programs and policies, and the strength of the complete local food system from farm

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to table.

As noted in MSFBB success of local foods requires that a “network of support must be built around each food hub” and includes everything from food processors, extension services, and government agencies to farmer cooperatives, land trusts, and food banks. Local food systems are complex and involve many players (often disconnected from others in the process), resulting in silos and redundancy in both industry and region. Despite South Carolina's relatively small size, the state is challenged with this very issue, resulting in inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and under-leveraged partnerships. While established (non-local specific) food distribution systems have spent decades refining the communication, logistics, technology, and economics of national and international processes for handling perishable products, local food distribution is still developing best practices and models for success. With the potential for millions of dollars in local food sales in South Carolina and the need for opportunities for farmers, it is clear that investing in the growth of this system will have a high return financially, socially, and culturally. In order to realize the benefits in the cultivation, processing, distribution, and sales of local food, South Carolina needs to build capacity for the farmers and food system leaders across the industry.

The crucial next step in realising the potential of MSFBB is the expansion from a network focused solely on hubs to the development of a statewide local food network, *Growing Local SC*, to align existing agencies and organizations working from farm to table. This broader partnership of organizations would work across the sector to create connectivity, increase efficiency, stimulate collaboration, surface new opportunities, attract national funding, and coordinate multi-agency projects. This local food network would operate under a contracted Local Food System Director (as recommended in MSFBB) to execute the goals outlined in this planning document.



Community Food Systems Graphic (USDA)

It is not the intention of this report to act as a full strategic plan or as a complete operational document but rather provide a catalyst in continuing the growth and support of South Carolina's local food system. **The report recommendation goals are two-fold: strengthen and expand local food capacity and increase visibility and viability of South Carolina small farms.** The recommended activities to achieve these goals are as follows: 1) Establish and sustain a local food system network for the state 2) Increase collaboration among local food stakeholders 3) Provide leadership development for local food advocates 4) Build capacity for the South Carolina Food Hub Network and 5) Develop, gather, and organize key metrics and resources.

Recommended preliminary areas of focus for this statewide organization include: expanding local food distribution, coordination of farmer training, diversity and inclusion, farmland preservation, local food policy councils, and climate resilience. **See “Farmer Training” example scenario in Appendix.** The selection of these focus areas is informed by first-hand experience working in the industry but ultimately, the network governing council and the broader stakeholders it represents will determine the priority areas of focus. The work of Growing Local SC and the relevant organizations and agencies engaged in collaboration will vary based on final issues selected and level of priority assigned to each. **See “Food System Stakeholders” in Appendix.** Those implementing the plan are encouraged to build off the work of MSFBB and align with the goals of 1) strengthening and expanding local food capacity and 2) increasing visibility and viability of South Carolina small farms.

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To realize the benefits outlined in this plan and the broader MSFBB plan, South Carolina leaders must invest in the places, people, and programs driving the local food economy from farm to table. With sufficient time and investment, South Carolina will be a national leader in local food system development. To date, the investment of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA) in the SC Food Hub Network (SCFHN) has proved fruitful for the food system, and as outlined in the SCFHN 2019 Report, has demonstrated the impact of local foods when an initiative has the time and resources to realize its potential. Expanding the investment to the broader food system would provide continued support for SCFHN while enabling a broader and deeper impact across sectors. For the local food network activities outlined, an investment of \$200,000/year for three years is recommended. Support from both SCDA and Department of Commerce in the development of the local food system is crucial to its success.

Recommendations

Integrating the data and recommendations from MSFBB, up-to-date industry research, results from SCFHN activities and feedback from key informant interviews, the following are recommendations for next steps.

1. **Strengthen and Expand Local Foods Capacity in SC**

In order to realize the social and economic benefits in the cultivation, processing, distribution, and sales of local food, South Carolina needs to build capacity for the farmers and food system leaders across the industry. *The following key actions are recommended:*

Establish and sustain a local food system network for the state. The local food system is complex and spans across multiple sectors of specialized organizations, agencies, and businesses, making change at the systems level challenging. It is recommended that an organizing body is established to gather cross-sector input, facilitate collaboration, identify opportunities, build relationships, seek funding opportunities, and recommend policy. Although many models for organizing exist, including coalitions, alliances, communities of practice, and working groups, it is recommended that the network model is utilized. To develop this network, leaders are encouraged to reference industry best practices, existing organizational models, and established evaluation tools in conjunction with support from experienced experts to develop a framework to best serve the needs of South Carolina. To reduce redundancy and increase engagement, this organization would leverage existing organizations, programs, and meetings/events when possible. Governance for the network would be provided by a cross-sector council, such as the SC Food Policy Council, to ensure industries and perspectives from across this sector are represented. Special care and effort would be taken to ensure there is not only diversity in sector but also demographically. This council would provide leadership and create structure around the engagement of the informal “members” of the network, made up of all the relevant organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals working in the local food system. ***See “Food System Stakeholders” in Appendix.*** The governing council would also be responsible for the hiring of the Local Foods Director as well as monitoring and enforcing the contract. As a network, the specific focus and goals of the group are driven by the collective (not any one individual or organization) and subject to change as needed, so it is also recommended that key advisors are selected to reflect the needs of the current programmatic focus. To cultivate a deeper culture of impartiality, it is also recommended for the network to be housed under a third party non-profit organization to provide fiscal sponsorship and administrative support. Additionally, it is recommended that this network is supported with contracted staff skilled at working with diverse groups and with the flexibility to shift focus and priorities with the needs of the network. By using a third

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party fiscal sponsor and non-affiliated staff, the network has the ability to maintain an unbiased approach to facilitate the needs of the food system as a whole instead of being driven by any one organization. The development of the network would be supported by experienced professionals from organizations such as New Directions Collaborative¹ that are able to provide guidance, network mapping, and third party facilitation. To track and measure the effectiveness of the network, specialized evaluation tools such as the PARTNER Platform² would be utilized. The formation of this network created the driving force and framework for the remaining recommendations.

Increase collaboration among local food stakeholders. With a backbone organizing body, local food stakeholders will have an organization focused on gathering input, driving collaboration, identifying opportunities, gathering data, seeking funding, recommending policy, and serving as a clearinghouse for local food activities and services in the state. It is recommended that when possible, the organization leverages existing collaborative, statewide events and input gathering sessions to increase participation and reduce redundancy. To ensure access, inclusion, and engagement, it is recommended that organizations participating in the process receive travel stipends for their time and input. Recommended preliminary areas of focus for this statewide organization include: expanding local food distribution, coordination of farmer training, diversity and inclusion, farmland preservation, local food policy councils, and climate resilience. ***See “Farmer Training” example scenario in Appendix.***

Provide leadership development for local food advocates. South Carolina is home to many dedicated and passionate individuals working in food systems, but these professionals and organizations often lack access or funds to participate in professional development that serves to create stronger leaders and more effective organizations. It is recommended that an investment is made in the education of the leaders working in the community on a range of topics from organizational management and communications to equity and inclusion. To further collaborations from the ground up, it is recommended that the SC Food Policy Council is supported in their efforts to develop local food policy councils across the state. Additionally, it is recommended that during training sessions, time is allocated for organizations to learn about the programs and services of other organizations to increase awareness and collaboration and reduce redundancy.

2. Increase visibility and viability of small farms in SC

South Carolina’s productive farmland, history of agriculture, long growing seasons, and consumer demand for local product provide an incredible opportunity to increase the

¹ [New Directions Collaborative](#) is a consulting firm with skills in strategy, facilitation, systems change, networks, and collaborative leadership.

² [Partner Platform](#) is an all-in-one software program from Visible Network Labs created for conducting social network analysis.

supply and distribution of South Carolina produced, source-identified fruits, vegetables, small grains, meat, dairy, eggs, and honey. The following key actions are recommended:

Build capacity for the South Carolina Food Hub Network. The SC Food Hub Network (SCFHN) experienced great success in two years of operation, but has only begun to realize the full ability to advance the visibility and viability of local farms by connecting local foods to local markets (Refer to SCFHN Project Report for more details). It is recommended that the network continues operating with a third party facilitator to ensure their time spent collaboratively is productive as well as a technical assistance provider to support the individual operational growth of each hub. To continue the growth of the hub network and its ability to serve farmers in South Carolina, it is recommended that the SCFHN in conjunction with the broader Growing Local SC network work with potential new hubs and nodes to expand statewide opportunities and avoid overlap and when appropriate, award microgrant funding to support these activities. New hubs and nodes will be evaluated based on existing hub activity, logistics, market access, and farmer needs. Development of new hub and node activity should leverage industry assessment tools paired with local knowledge and be strongly tied to on-the-ground leadership with capacity to sustain activities. Additional details are outlined in the SCFHN 2019 Report. It is also recommended that the SCFHN formalizes crop production plan for top 20 crops, utilize logistics funding and partners to monitor and improve route efficiency, and continue to recruit new farmers to the network annually. As the network increases capacity for distribution, the organization would look to regional hubs for export opportunities. And finally, as a key player in the local food marketplace working directly with farmers to build capacity and sell product, the SCFHN is in a strong position to work in line with the state level network to recommend state level policies to support the growth of market opportunities for farmers.

Develop, gather, and organize key metrics and resources. To address the current deficit in data on South Carolina small farms, businesses, and organizations operating in the local food system, it is recommended that a Local Foods Analyst is contracted to work closely with SCFHN and across network stakeholders to gather and synthesize data. This position will support the gathering of specific, consistent, and accurate metrics to evaluate the success of the network as well as to provide valuable information for program development, funding, and policy making across the local food system.

Background

Since the release of Making Small Farms Big Business (MSFBB), the landscape of local food has continued to evolve with several key initiatives driving the momentum created by this landmark study and plan. The demand for local foods have grown from \$5 billion in 2008 to \$12 billion in 2014, and were projected to rise to \$20 billion by the end of 2019 (Packaged Facts, 2015). More recently a MarketForce Information survey found that 58% of shoppers said locally sourced meat, produce, and dairy products were important to them (2018). In a 2018 Forager survey, 9 out of 10 consumers indicated they were “seeking out local food to support their local farmers and economy” (Stone, 2019). Although the number of farmers markets continues to rise, Stone indicates that FDA has reported only 36% of local food sales occurred through direct-to-consumer channels, and a survey from Forager found that the grocery store is still the primary location for fresh and local items (87% of respondents). Stone also notes that despite this growing demand, grocers are challenged in sourcing local product due to the scale and efficiency of working with high numbers of farmers with smaller quantities of diverse product. Farmers often do not have the time, equipment, or knowledge to adequately tap into these markets, creating a gap between supply and demand.

Agribusiness, agriculture, and forestry are currently driving South Carolina’s economy with a \$41.7 billion a year impact and over 212,500 jobs (NASDA, 2018). Despite being a key economic driver, the state is missing an incredible opportunity to tap into the demand for local food and develop a thriving local food economy, with current agricultural production focused on export while importing 90% of food eaten in South Carolina (Meter, 2013). Additionally, the future of the industry is at risk with the average age of farmers over 59 in the state and a loss of 1016 farms since 1997 (USDA, 2002 & 2017). The demographic populations hit hardest by this loss have been Native American and African American, whose combined drop in farmer numbers is 114 farmers in the five year period between 2012 and 2017. Due to these declining farm numbers, South Carolina was one of the top 20 ranking states for farmland loss between 1992 and 1997 (American Farmland Trust, 2002). The USDA (2007) indicates that nearly a quarter of all land in South Carolina is in agriculture (4.8 million acres), but the existence of farmland does not always translate to agricultural activity and current agricultural activity does not always ensure land preservation. Between 1992 and 2012, 62% of development occurred on agricultural land (American Farmland Trust, 2015) and according to the USDA, 80% of the 353.8 million acres of farmland (nationally) are currently owned by non-farming landlords that often do not have a vested interest in protecting the land. Additionally, 21 million of these acres are expected to be sold to a non-relative, with 5 million acres of farmland slated for ownership transfer, in the next five years. Even in states such as South Carolina where land is plentiful, land access (lease, purchase, and transition) continues to be a key issue for new and beginning farmers. On a national level, land access was cited in the National Young Farmer Coalition Survey (2017) as a top challenge for both first-generation and multigenerational farmers,

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particularly finding and affording land on a farm income. Land access was also listed as the main reason why farmers quit farming and why aspiring farmers have not started (NYFC, 2017).

If barriers to access and preservation are addressed in South Carolina, the current agricultural lands provide opportunity for farmers to continue and grow their operations as well as play a crucial role in land conservation. In the most recent American Farmland Trust (2015) national “Farms Under Threat” report, maps in South Carolina indicate several counties in the state not only have high quality farmland with high productivity but the land was also determined to have high versatility and high resiliency values, making it ideal to support and steward the growth of agricultural production. On a local and national level, the preservation of land has become a key area of focus not only in supporting food production but also providing many cultural and ecological benefits “such as social heritage, scenic views, open space, and community character. Long-range environmental benefits include wildlife habitat, clean air and water, flood control, groundwater recharge, and carbon sequestration” (American Farmland Trust, n.d.). The World Resources Report (2019) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Land Report (2019) both highlight the importance of agricultural land management in addressing the impact of climate change as well as the threats to the industry from the resulting changing climate patterns (drought, flooding, storms, fires, sea level rise, etc). South Carolina has experienced first-hand the impacts of a changing climate, with an increasing number of extreme weather events from flooding to drought causing significant damage to crops across the state. Farmers have the opportunity to learn risk management techniques in the face of these challenges and shift production practices to protect their crops while playing a crucial role in conserving the state’s resources and cultivating South Carolina’s climate resilience.

Beyond markets and acreage, the demographics of farmers are also changing. The most recent census data for 2017 revealed that in South Carolina 35% are female, 13% are veterans, and almost 30% of farmers in South Carolina are characterized as “new and beginning” (10 years or less experience). These new and beginning farmers are increasingly interested in specialty crops, niche livestock, and direct to consumer markets, with a wide range of agricultural organizations, from Center for Heirs’ Property Preservation and Clemson University to Farm Bureau and SC Small Business Administration developing programming to provide farmers support in these areas. Of the 38,970 farms in the state, only 6 percent sell direct to consumers, demonstrating an incredible opportunity for farmers to participate in the growing market demand (USDA, 2017). One of the core recommendations in MSFBB was for a “core shift to be made to create a food culture, and productive resident networks, that allow South Carolina to produce most of its own food, and that encourages consumers to work collaboratively to eat locally” (2013). This approach follows national trends wherein leaders across the country are revitalizing their communities by addressing economic, social, environmental, and health challenges through the development of local food economies (Feenstra, 1997). Development of local food economies is especially relevant for South Carolina’s rural communities where agriculture continues to have a strong presence but is currently underutilized in addressing economic, social, and health disparities.

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As noted, the current model for food distribution is not designed to meet the needs of local farmers selling to local markets, especially if there is a value proposition requiring source identification. The juxtaposition of the demand for local food with the current mainstream food system reveals significant barriers to participation for both growers and consumers. As described by Hoey, Shapiro, & Bielaczyc (2018), "The U.S. food market has increasingly come to resemble two systems: the mainstream market controlled by national brands and globally focused corporations, and an expanding alternate market of hyper-local direct sales. This division is tied to a gradual loss of midscale regional production and processing, which is seen as key to scaling up more sustainable, economically viable and socially equitable food businesses." In their article "Competitiveness of Small Farms and Innovative Food Supply Chains: The Role of Food Hubs in Creating Sustainable Regional and Local Food Systems," Berti & Mulligan (2016) expand upon this issue by noting that direct marketing approaches are challenged with both meeting the supply and accessing the proper infrastructure to meet the demand. The authors summarize several other studies on the subject of localisation by noting that efforts are challenged by a lack of "economic, organisational, and physical structures of the appropriate scale for moving locally grown food to local eaters" and they go on to directly note that food hubs are "the most commonly recognised responses to the challenge of scale within the alternative foods systems is the Food Hub" (Berti & Mulligan, 2016).

Focusing on the market access and coordination challenge, GrowFood Carolina facilitated the creation of the SC Food Hub Network (SCFHN) with support from the SCDA, USDA, private investment, and resources from the individual organizations that we now classify as 'hubs'. South Carolina is one of only a handful of states across the country developing a hub network and the only one in the Southeast. SCFHN's mission is to ensure that the food hubs of South Carolina have the capacity, network, and support to advance the visibility and viability of local farms by connecting local foods to local markets. As an emerging approach to state level food distribution coordination, the creation of a hub network is a pioneering model that enables hubs to work collaboratively to increase capacity for more diverse and larger volume transactions that increase the marketability and distribution of locally grown product. The benefits of the SCFHN naturally extend beyond the hubs to help all key players/partners in the local food system: farmers, buyers, processors, policy coordinators, etc. Members work together as a network to coordinate efforts to increase efficiency from farm to table through coordinated regional crop planning, logistics, and farmer training. SCFHN members work with local farmers from planning and harvest to sales and delivery ensuring farmers at any scale can participate in the market. The SCFHN is not a separate buying or selling organization but rather it increases the capacity of the work being conducted within the existing organizations. Members of the SCFHN have included: GrowFood Carolina, Catawba Farm and Food Coalition, Swamp Rabbit Cafe and Grocery, Pee Dee Food Hub, City Roots, and Axiom Cooperative. Since the launch of the network the organization has seen the closure of City Roots as a hub (2018) and Pee Dee Food Hub (2019) as well as the opening of Axiom Cooperative (2019) and the exploration of a Florence Food Hub (2019).

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Since 2017, the network has: established an organizational framework and operational procedures; supported the launch of three new hubs (Greenville, Catawba Region, Columbia); provided strategic assessment, feasibility analysis, and guidance to aspiring hub projects; increased the sales of local foods; increased the number of farmers selling through food hubs; expanded critical storage and transportation infrastructure; and supported the ongoing streamlining of the communication, logistics, operations, packing, and pricing across the hub network through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and technology tools. **See SCFHN Final Report 2019 for additional information on the SC Food Hub Network**

The continued collaboration between hubs and nodes will be crucial to the continued growth and success of South Carolina farmers. As a cornerstone of successful local food systems, food hubs enable farmers to focus on strengthening and growing their business instead of spending time on logistics, marketing, and customer service. As noted in MSFBB, a successful local food system requires a “network of support must be built around each food hub” that includes everything from food processors, extension services, and government agencies to farmer cooperatives, land trusts, and food banks. In the report, much of this supporting activity is organized under the classification of “food node”, the purpose of which are to “increase community capacity to produce food for itself, create local efficiencies by clustering local activity in close proximity to each other, create permanent physical facilities that ensure access to food for local residents, foster local collaboration, and scale up production as appropriate for regional food hubs” (Meter, 2013).

The development of the SC Food Hub Network provided proof of concept that a network approach can be a highly productive and collaborative framework, especially when strong facilitation and technical assistance are provided. A key catalyst for the SCFHN was an intentional focus on mutual benefit to participation; through actively engaging in the network the participants gave and received support while growing their bottom line. Both the act of participating (networking, training, information sharing) and the act of collaborating (sales, logistics, farmer outreach) created a tangible benefit that outweighed any direct or opportunity cost of participating. This same approach could have significant benefits to the broader network of local food organizations in South Carolina, an approach recommended in MSFBB. The report suggested the development of a state level “community of practice” engaging food leaders from diverse sectors and locations as well as the hiring of a statewide director to “make sure local food system stakeholders are convened regularly, to serve as a facilitator for state action, and to intervene as needed to uphold the state’s commitment to local foods.”

As an organizational structure, a network is being defined here as “a set of relationships among a group of ‘members’—individuals or organizations” who “interact with one another in ways that confer mutual benefit” (Easterling, 2012). Although networks exist across industries, there is an increasing trend towards utilizing the network model in the food sector due to the broad range of relevant organizations and potential for both overlap as well as silos. In its analysis of the highly

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successful Farm to Institution New England Network (FINE), the Consensus Building Institute found the use of a network in strengthening the local food system highly effective. Author of the report Deas noted “Networks can bring the right players to the table and create efficiency by looking at the whole value chain rather than small segments of it. Specifically, networks allow people to identify their common goals, share information to better understand what it will take to achieve those goals, and create a framework by which to pursue those common interests. Networks connect diverse groups that have potentially complementary resources and knowledge that broadens the scope of what is possible” (Deas & Consensus Building Institute, 2015).

As noted in the book *Connecting to Change the World: Harnessing the Power of Networks for Social Impact* (Plastrik, Taylor, & Cleveland, 2014) a study of successful networks reveals that: 1) process is as important as product, 2) relationship building and subsequent trust building are critical first steps, without the time and space for these, the “products” or “outcomes” of the project will be less successful, and 3) creating shared aspiration, vision, and goals is the glue that holds people together. They go on to note “the “infrastructure of relationships” which is one of the strongest outcomes of network building is a critical component of any change process and enables change beyond institutional boundaries as it strengthens community capacity.

The Consensus Building Institute (2015) utilizes the work of Plastrik et. al (2014) to develop a framework for the design and evaluation of networks including: purpose, membership, value propositions, governance, and operating principles. The following are excerpts from the Consensus Building Institute Report:

“Purpose Plastrik et al. feel that a social-impact network must have a purpose that members collectively agree upon. If the mission “is being driven by staff or an outsider’s purpose” (169), then the organization is not a network, but rather an association that may provide members with services. Participants would not only agree upon the substantive purpose of the network, but also the function of the network.

Membership To be a network, there must be participating organizations or individuals that the network connects. Defining who is eligible to be a member, what membership entails, and the size of the network are important decisions that dictate the ultimate design and capacity of the network.

Value Proposition Plastrik et. al argue that for networks to be most effective, participants should not come in asking how they individually will benefit from participating, but instead what collectively they can accomplish together. Additionally, the value proposition must be flexible enough to envelop new collective needs as they arise or shift if old ideas become irrelevant.

Governance Structure While a network may be more loosely held together than a typical organization with a large internal staff and leadership team, it still must have a governance structure to determine the network’s strategy as it matures and to make key decisions. Plastrik et al. argue that this governance structure must be careful not to dominate

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decision-making or exclude participants. It must also recognize that leadership needs to evolve over time as people leave and successors take their place.

Operating Principles Networks must decide how members and staff will conduct the network's business. Plastrik et. al. argue that healthy networks ask partners to do the work, encourage multiple partners to take on projects together, allow members to determine which connections create value, maintain transparent decision-making, and allow plans to be flexible."

Plastrik et. al (2014) goes on further to outline the specific personality traits of a successful network director including: extroverted, agreeable, conscientiousness, neurotic, and openness to experience. The author also references the need for network-centric leadership as described by the Institute of Conservation Leadership as "The Less Visible Leader", someone who "catalyzes a culture of spirited cooperation, shares power and generates momentum, stays true to the long-term vision while navigating frequent twists and turns" (Plastrik et. al, 2014).

Several successful models of networks exist across the country, with Farm to Institution New England Network (FINE) rising to the top due to its relevance to work in local food system coordination. FINE is "a six-state network of nonprofit, public and private entities working together to transform our food system by increasing the amount of good, local food served in our region's schools, hospitals, colleges and other institutions. The FINE network consists of non-profit organizations, government agencies, institutions, foundations, farms, food distributors, food processors, food service operators and others." The following graphic captures the breadth and depth of the organization.



FINE works in three primary ways. They 1) serve as the backbone for the farm to institution network in New England, 2) catalyze collaborative projects that address key barriers in the New England institutional supply chain, and 3) advance a policy and programmatic agenda. FINE was not developed to launch programs but instead support the coordination of collaborative projects as well as working with partner organizations to research and identify gaps that are preventing progress. The organization will, when necessary, step into a programmatic role but readily hand off these activities when appropriate.

FINE was launched in 2011 as a joint initiative of the Regional Steering Committee of the National Farm to School Network and a collaboration of New England agricultural commissioners. The organization started with a partner organization acting as the backbone organization for collaborative activities before evolving to become an independent network with a national agency providing fiscal sponsorship, financial oversight, human resources, and

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administrative assistance. Governance comes from a network advisory council that plays an oversight role but without the fiduciary responsibility. This 15 member council approves the budget, conducts reviews of Executive Director, supports strategic planning, considers high level policy, and includes four standing committees (governance, steering committee, develop/funding, planning/evaluation) as well as advisors on projects/subject area as needed. For the first four years, FINE was run completely by contracted consultants, an approach that allowed the network to be nimble and impartial in the face of so many competing organizational priorities. As noted in a case study of the organization, “Participants also identified the collaborative and transparent nature of FINE’s leadership structure to be a key asset. FINE does not function under one lead organization or partner. All members of the leadership team carry equal weight and have an equal voice in decisions. This creates a significant sense of shared vision, responsibility, and ownership. Staff members also do not make decisions without involving the leadership team.”

Another model network is the San Diego Food System Alliance (“the Alliance”). As a multi-sector collaborative, the Alliance is described on their website as “creating system-level change by connecting, coordinating, and catalyzing actions that move us toward our shared vision of a healthy, sustainable, and just food system for San Diego County. Our network consists of more than 120 groups with 40 Voting Members representing a diverse cross section of the food system, including production, distribution, health, food security, philanthropy, production, education, and government. We create a space for conversation and collaboration by facilitating 6 Working Groups around the following areas: Healthy Food Access, Reducing Barriers to Farming, Food Recovery, Urban Agriculture, Sustainable and Local Seafood and Good Food Procurement. Through regular convenings, we are able to highlight intersections among our members to increase efforts around good food, and catalyze solutions for system level changes through advocacy, educational campaigns, community events and special initiatives.”

Guiding these systems-level networks, strategic plans and charters provide a road map to reaching short and long-term goals. Two relevant examples of guiding documents include the Center for Regional Food Systems Michigan Good Food Charter and the Vermont Farm to Plate Strategic Plan. Both documents provide thorough and robust examples of how states are approaching the growth and development of their local food systems through coordination, policy, programming, and funding. It is important to note that these organizations and plans are to be inspirational and guiding models but not necessarily direct frameworks for emerging networks, as these are the result of 10 years of investment, research, and collaboration.

In tandem with guidance and planning documents, successful projects are able to demonstrate success and adjust their trajectory based on the use of metrics and evaluation tools. This information ensures the group is reaching its goals and that network members are engaged and benefiting from participation. Beyond the immediate benefits of project management, this data is a valuable asset to the national local food system movement. Currently, there is an incredible

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deficit in small farm data that prevents the industry from having an accurate picture of the number of farms and local food markets as well as a clear understanding of acreage in production, production practices, yields, and goods sold (Amaral, 2019). Without this data, federal and state policies often fall short in serving the needs of the small farmer, and it is hard to track the true success or failure of programs working with these farmers and local food markets.

In summary, there are tangible economic and social benefits of investing in the local food system and the demand currently exists to leverage this opportunity. By investing in the network framework paired with a robust plan and well designed metrics and evaluation tools, South Carolina's local food system could support the making of small farms into big business.

SWOT Analysis

South Carolina boasts rich agricultural assets, supporting organizations, a network of food hubs, and an increasing demand for local food. In contrast, the state is lacking a strategic, cohesive approach to support and advocate for local food systems, and there are barriers to participation for farmers of color. The disconnect between geographic regions and high staff turn-over in the industry impedes the progress of many local food efforts. These challenges reveal opportunities to build leadership and trust, increase diversity and inclusion, develop food nodes (especially in rural communities) and ultimately for organizations to collaborate to increase investment in South Carolina's local food system. Barriers to implementation include lack of proper funding investment, disruption of supply, lack of buy-in at the state level, lack of trust in the process, and weak state level policies. These strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were assessed during the evaluation process and provided the foundation for the recommendations made in this report. **See Detailed SWOT in the appendix.**

S

- High level of interest & engagement in local foods from farmers, buyers, & consumers
- Robust food and farming focused organizations
- Foundational reports, maps, & resource materials to guide decision making & collaborations
- Multiple Food hubs & distributors serving the state
- High quality farmland, long growing seasons, & multiple climates provide diverse products
- Several organizations invested in farmer training

W

- Lack of strategic planning, cohesive approach to support & advocate for local food system
- Barriers to access & inclusion for farmers of color, especially in leadership roles
- Ability to consistently/accurately track metrics across the industry
- Lack of cohesive land-use planning
- Staff turn-over causing shift in trust/culture/knowledge across agencies
- Disconnection between regions results in redundancy & missed opportunities

O

- Small state with great potential for intra & inter state connectivity
- Joint funding requests for both state & federal dollars to increase
- State level coordination of crop planning & farmer training
- Building trust & relationships with under resourced, under served farmers
- Expansion & stewardship in the development of food nodes
- Increasing diversity & inclusion across the system, especially at the leadership level

T

- Lack of funding
- Lack of product supply to maintain local food buying activities (climate, land loss, etc)
- Lack of state-level buy-in & staffing across agencies
- Lack of food nodes to create rural connectivity & support the system
- Past negative experiences in collaborative efforts
- Weak state level policies to support the local food system

Goals, Objectives, and Activities

Goal 1: Strengthen and Expand Local Foods Capacity in SC

Objective 1: Establish and Sustain SC Local Foods Network

Activities:

1. Secure three year grant funding
2. Develop job description and contract for SC Local Foods Director
3. Retain SC Local Foods Director
4. Leverage established SC Food Policy Council leadership for governance support and appointing key advisors
5. Outline organizational structure and develop operational processes including engaging network director
6. Conduct statewide meetings gathering input and sharing framework
7. Develop initial network work plan and key performance indicators
8. Develop and maintain network website as an information clearinghouse
9. Develop and share annual work plans with stakeholders
10. Manage project budgets and grant reporting
11. Conduct annual network evaluation
12. Secure permanent, annual funding

Objective 2: Increase collaboration among local food stakeholders

Activities:

1. Develop communication strategy
2. Gather statewide input and organize a scheduling meeting for service providers
3. Develop and maintain statewide shared calendar for training and events
4. Identify opportunities for multi-agency, cross sector (ex. healthcare, small business development, land use, etc), and/or multi-region collaborations and funding
5. Coordinate with key organizations/advisors annually to develop, prioritize, and implement strategic plan goals and objectives
6. Support, elevate, and promote existing data/information/input gathering efforts (ex. SARE input meeting, CFSA state meeting, SCACED local food input sessions)
7. Explore non-traditional partnerships with other food system businesses and organizations (i.e. broadliners, food banks, etc.)
8. Advocate for funding allocations for local food activities at the state level

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Goals, Objectives and Activities (cont.)

Objective 3: Provide leadership development for local food advocates

Activities:

1. Coordinate with relevant organizations and industry experts to provide multi-agency training on priority topics (from technical production knowledge to operations and cultural knowledge)
2. Support the SC Food Policy Council efforts to establish more local food policy councils
3. Guide local leaders to integrate goals with statewide priorities

Goal 2: Increase visibility and viability of small farms in SC

Objective 1: Build capacity for the SC Food Hub Network

(Note: Please refer to SCFHN Project Report for more details)

Activities:

1. Continue facilitation of SC Food Hub Network (SCFHN)
2. Work with potential new hubs/nodes to expand statewide opportunities and avoid overlap
3. Develop and administer microgrant program to support growth of hubs and nodes
4. Formalize SCFHN crop production plan for top 20 crops
5. Employ logistics funding and engage partners to improve route efficiency and increase trading
6. Identify key SCFHN technical assistance priorities and develop trainings in partnership with agencies
7. Introduce 10-15 new farmers to hubs and SCFHN each year
8. Engage regional hubs on potential export opportunities
9. Recommend state level policies to support the growth of market opportunities for farmers
10. Collaborate with existing agencies on marketing initiatives to highlight small farms

Goals, Objectives and Activities (cont.)

Objective 2: Develop, Gather, and Organize Key Metrics and Resources

Activities:

1. Review and update the SC Local Food System Map quarterly
2. Review and update the SC Farmer Resource Guide quarterly
3. Continue data gathering from SCFHN tracking farms, products, and buyers
4. Use gathered data to create and update annual goals for SCFHN to include:
 - a. Total number of farms
 - b. Farm certifications
 - c. Total sales by dollar
 - d. Sales (%) by channel (restaurant, retail, institutional)
 - e. Top 20 items by dollar
 - f. Total items (Demonstrates diversity of product)
5. Share and compare data with similar regional initiatives (Michigan, FINE) to gain national perspective and share best practices
6. Facilitate connections to other relevant agricultural organizations and resources

Growing Local SC

Goals, Objectives, Activities Timeline

	GOALS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	2020				2021				2022			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Strengthen & Expand Local Foods Capacity	Establish and Sustain SC Local Foods Network	Secure three year grant funding												
			Develop job description and contract for SC Local Foods Director												
			Retain SC Local Foods Director												
			Leverage established SC Food Policy Council leadership for governance support and												
			Outline organizational structure and develop operational processes including engaging												
			Conduct statewide meetings gathering input and sharing framework												
			Develop initial network work plan and key performance indicators												
			Develop & maintain network website as an information clearinghouse												
			Develop and share annual work plans												
			Manage budget and grant reporting												
			Conduct annual network evaluation												
			Secure permanent, annual funding												
		Increase collaboration among local food stakeholders	Develop communications strategy												
			Gather statewide input and organize a scheduling meeting for service providers												
			Develop & maintain statewide shared calendar for trainings and events												
			Identify opportunities for multi-agency, cross sector and/or multi-region collaborations & funding												
			Coordinate with key organizations and advisors annually to prioritize and implement strategic plan goals and objectives												
			Support, elevate, and promote existing data/information/input gathering efforts												
			Explore non-traditional partnerships with other food system businesses/organizations (Broadliners, Food Banks, etc.)												
			Advocate for funding allocations for local food activities at the state level												
		Provide leadership development for local food advocates	Coordinate with relevant organizations and industry experts to provide multi-agency training on priority topics												
			Support the SC Food Policy Council efforts to establish more local food policy councils												
			Guide local leaders to integrate goals with statewide priorities												

Growing Local SC

Goals, Objectives, Activities Timeline

	GOALS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	2020				2021				2022			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2	Increase Visibility & Viability of South Carolina Small Farms	Build capacity for the SC Food Hub Network Note: Please refer to SCFHN Project Report for more details.	Continue facilitation of SC Food Hub Network												
			Work with potential new hubs/nodes to collaborate on statewide opportunities & avoid overlaps												
			Develop and administer microgrant program to support growth of hubs and nodes												
			Formalize SCFHN crop production plan for top 20 crops												
			Employ logistics funding and engage partners to improve route efficiency and increase trading												
			Identify key SCFHN technical assistance priorities and develop trainings in partnership with agencies												
			Introduce 10-15 new farmers to hubs and SCFHN each year												
			Engage regional hubs on potential export opportunities												
			Recommend state level policies to support the growth of market opportunities for farmers												
			Collaborate with existing agencies on marketing initiatives to highlight small farms												
		Develop, Gather & Organize Key Metrics & Resources	Review and update the SC Local Food Map quarterly												
			Review and update the SC Farmer Resource Guide quarterly												
			Continue data gathering from SCFHN tracking farms, products, and buyers												
			Use gathered data to create and update annual SCFHN goals												
			Share and compare data with similar regional initiatives (Michigan / FINE) to gain national perspective and share best practices												
			Facilitate connections to other relevant agricultural organizations and resources												

Three-year Budget & Justifications

ACCOUNT	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
Cash Balance	\$ 10,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 33,000	\$ 10,000
Income				
Grant Revenue	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 600,000
Other Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Income	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 600,000
Expenses				
Contracted Staff	\$ 100,000	\$ 105,000	\$ 110,250	\$ 315,250
Consulting Fees	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 15,000
SCFHN Logistics Support	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 45,000
SCFHN Microgrant	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 75,000
Additional Training for Service Providers	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 30,000
Meeting Expenses (Including Travel Stipends for Partners)	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 15,000
Marketing & Communication	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 15,000
Network Administration	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 60,000
Network Evaluation	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 3,000
Total Expenses	\$ 186,000	\$ 191,000	\$ 196,250	\$ 573,250
Net	\$ 14,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 3,750	\$ 26,750
Ending Cash Balance	\$ 24,000	\$ 33,000	\$ 36,750	\$ 36,750

Revenue:

For the network to mobilize and accomplish the outlined objectives, we will seek a \$600,000 three year grant (\$200,000 per year) from South Carolina Department of Agriculture. To sustain beyond three years, the network will seek permanent annual funding from South Carolina General Funds for a portion of the budget. The remaining funds will be public and private grant funding for the network directly or in collaboration with one or more of the network partners to work on specific issues outlined in the annual plans.

Expenses:

Contracted Staff: As the network will not be a formal organization, all 'staff' are contractors. This provides flexibility and diverse capacity to build a strong network.

Local Foods Director: South Carolina needs an impartial Local Foods Director to launch the network and foster complex collaboration to reach its goals. The Director's performance will be

evaluated by the network advisory council as part of the annual network evaluation process. This process will include input from the leadership team and partners.

SCFHN Technical Assistant: As the SCFHN expands, existing and new hubs will continue to need technical assistance. This person will work closely with the Director to identify opportunities and priorities.

Local Foods Analyst: There is a shocking deficit of data on South Carolina small farms and the businesses and organizations operating in the local food system. A dedicated contractor working across network stakeholders will be able to gather and synthesize data that will be useful for countless statewide and national projects and programs.

Consulting Fees: The proposed network model is unique and built upon different examples around the country. The Director will use the consulting fees to gain subject matter expert guidance and fill in gaps where he/she identifies a better suited resource.

SCFHN Logistics Support: Logistics (Fleet maintenance, fuel, and drivers) costs remain a financial challenge for growing local food systems in South Carolina and around the country. This line item will be used to subsidize individual hub logistic costs as well as to more fully integrate Senn Brothers into the SCFHN. As a partner, Senn will provide a reduced freight rate to the hubs, so the hubs can trade more often and more efficiently.

SCFHN Microgrant Fund: The early success of the network was, in large part, predicated upon available funding to individual hubs for infrastructure needs. This microgrant fund will continue to provide critical funding directly to the hubs and nodes for growth.

Additional Training for Service Providers: These multi-agency trainings will range from leadership development and technical knowledge to cultural awareness and fill training gaps unable to be addressed through existing organizations.

Meeting Expenses (Including travel stipends for partners): Funds will be used to partner with other agencies on meetings crucial to the network's priorities. Participation will be higher with stipends available, especially for smaller nonprofit organizations.

Marketing & Communication: This includes website design, printed materials design and production, website expenses, the shared Slack channel for the SCFHN, and funds to be deployed when partnering with other organizations and agencies when there is a clear goal of promoting small farms.

Network Administration: The network will operate under the umbrella of a fiscal sponsor. These fees reflect approximate fiscal sponsor expenses as provided by a recommended firm.

Network Evaluation: Evaluating the effectiveness of the network and having insight to make strategic changes as the network grows will be critical to its success. PARTNER, The Platform to Analyze, Record, and Track Networks to Enhance Relationships, is the recommended tool.

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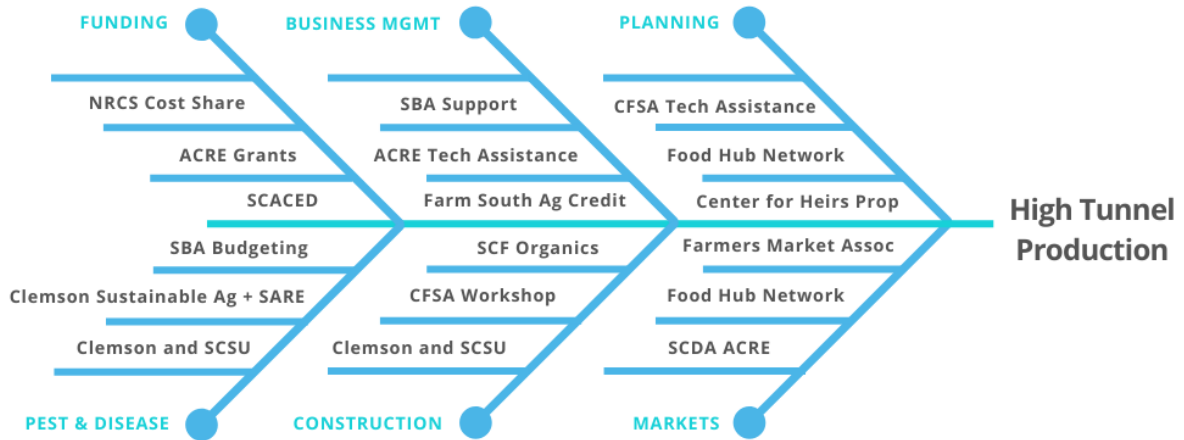
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Appendix



FARMER TRAINING

The following is an example of collaborating organizations focusing on a specific farmer training topic.

South Carolina Food System Stakeholders

	Consumer Distribution	Wholesale Distribution	Technical Assistance	Funding	Policy	Small Business Development	Food Access	Consumer Education	Research	Health	Farmland Preservation
Ace Basin Growers	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	
Axiom Coop	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	
Blue Cross Blue Shield										X	
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association			X		X			X			X
Catawba Farm & Food Coalition	X	X	X				X	X		X	
Center for Heirs Property			X	X	X	X					X
Clemson Extension			X								
Clemson University									X		
Coastal Conservation League					X						X
Eat Smart Move More			X	X	X		X	X		X	
Harvest Hope Food Bank	X						X	X		X	
Lowcountry Food Bank	X						X	X		X	
Lowcountry Local First						X		X			
PeeDee Landtrust					X			X			X
SARE				X					X		X
SC Community Loan Fund				X		X					
SC Farm Bureau					X						
SC Food Policy Council					X						
SCF Organics	X		X					X		X	
Senn Brothers		X									
Slow Food								X			X
Small Business Administration Offices (4 regions)			X	X		X					
SC Assoc of Community Economic Development			X	X		X					
South Carolina Department of Agriculture			X								
SC Department of Health and Environmental Controls								X	X	X	
South Carolina Food Hub Network	X	X	X								
South Carolina State University						X			X		
South Carolina State University - 1890 Extension			X			X					
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group			X								
University of South Carolina									X		
Upstate Forever					X						X

FULL SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths:

- Making Small Farms Big Business provides good foundation for strategic thinking
- Increased interest in agriculture across sectors including health, economic development, education, workforce training, and youth leadership
- Local Food Assessments completed in several counties
- SC Food Policy Council supporting state level initiatives and local food policy council development
- Statewide Local Food Map and Farmer Resource Guide
- Strong farmer training programming and technical assistance
- Farmers interested in local food markets
- SC Food Hub Network has strong relationships with farmers and buyers
- SC Food Hub Network provides increased access to markets for farmers
- SC Food Hub Network provides increased access to consistent and diverse supply of local food for buyers
- Distribution and cold chain infrastructure and equipment at existing hubs
- Partnerships with Regional Wholesalers and out of state markets

Weaknesses: (Resources, Training, Experience)

- Lack of strategic planning, cohesive approach to support and advocate for local food system
- Barriers to access and inclusion for farmers of color, especially in leadership roles
- Disconnection between regions results in redundancy
- Lack of cohesive land-use planning
- Staff turn-over causing shift in trust/culture/knowledge across agencies
- Inconsistent funding/staffing in institutional programs creates gaps in services
- Lack of smaller farms and local foods representation in state and regional decision making
- Differences in experience, staff, capacity and business models between hubs
- Inconsistent multi-hub and/or multiple grower (single item) transactions
- Gaps in service for several rural counties
- Ability to consistently/accurately track metrics across the industry
- Closure of Pee Dee Food Hub
- Hub differences in inventory and or/ product priorities beyond fruits and vegetables (ex. Protein, eggs, dry goods, grain)

Opportunities:

- Small state with great potential for connectivity
- On the I-95 corridor

- Good range of growing climates to provide consistent supply for customers and resulting sales for a farmer
- Joint funding requests for both state and federal dollars
- State level crop planning
- State level coordination for farmer training
- Professional development for ag agencies
- Building trust and relationships with under resourced, under served farmers
- Leveraging unique programs that connect low-income families with fresh, healthy local food
- Access to strong regional markets (Charlotte, Atlanta, DC)
- Untapped rural communities with farmers currently exporting crops below potential value
- Increasing demand for local food
- Intrahub Software usage
- Multi-hub order aggregation for larger buyers
- Increase demand for GAP certification, Organic Certification, Non-GMO
- Capacity for specialized intra-network training
- Streamline new hub development (Aiken, Columbia, Florence)
- Network to support/steward the development of nodes

Threats:

- Lack of funding
- Organizations viewing each other as competitors
- Past negative experiences in collaborative efforts
- Loss of investment in food hubs
- Lack of product supply to maintain the local food buying activities (loss of farmers/land, lack of production, weather)
- Farmers lack of trust, especially farmers of color
- Lack of food nodes to create rural connectivity and support the system through relationship building, processing, aggregation, and cold storage
- New programs/organizations launching separate from the network (without feedback/guidance) causing redundancy, confusion, and/or stretching limited resources
- Traditional wholesale and broadline distribution competition (pricing and logistics)
- Lack of state-level buy-in and staffing across agencies
- Lack of funding to support on-going individual hub activities
- Weak state level policies to support the local food system

POSITION DESCRIPTION

TITLE:	Collective Impact Facilitator – Food Circles
CLASSIFICATION:	Band 6
STATUS:	Fixed-term (3 years), 0.6 EFT
BUSINESS UNIT:	Community Strengthening
DATE:	June 2019

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Our vision is that the Cardinia Shire will be developed in a planned manner to enable future generations to enjoy and experience the diverse and distinctive characteristics of our Shire.

To undertake this vision successfully we are developing a skilled and professional workforce that embraces our corporate values and demonstrates key leadership capabilities. The Values help guide us to continue to be a customer-focused organisation that strives to achieve excellence in everything that we do. The Leadership Capability Framework describes what we do as leaders and the Values form the basis of how we behave in the workplace and conduct the business of planning. Our corporate values are:

Teamwork:	We work collaboratively to achieve shared goals
Respect:	We value diversity and appreciate others
Accountability:	We are responsible for our actions and behaviours
Communication:	We communicate openly and share knowledge with others
Customer focus:	We consider the needs of others and make a difference for our community

Council plays an important role in contributing to life in the community by providing many of the services and facilities that residents of all ages access every day. Council provides traditional local government services like local roads, waste management, and planning, building and animal control. But beyond this we provide much more. We work with residents from new born babies, to young people, families and our senior citizens.

Cardinia Shire Council values gender equality and does not condone any behaviour outlined in our Workplace Behaviours Policy. This includes, and is not limited to, discrimination, bullying, family violence, victimisation and breaches of our other workplace policy.

CARDINIA FOOD CIRCLES PROJECT

Sustain: The Australian Food Network is the backbone organisation for the Collective Impact project, Cardinia Food Circles. The project's common agenda is to establish a healthy, delicious, sustainable and fair food system for all residents.

The determinants of a healthy diet are complex, requiring a systems approach and long-term commitment to ensure generational change. Whilst not traditionally seen as the business of local government, Cardinia Shire Council, including its elected members, believe that the health and wellbeing of the community is a priority and are using innovative methods to set a new standard of service in this area. Obesity is strongly linked to diet and the food security status of individuals and communities and has become an urgent area for Council to address.

The Food Circles Project sits within the context of the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan*, *Cardinia Shire Council Plan* and *Cardinia Shire's Liveability Plan 2017-29*.

This position demonstrates Council's strong, long-term commitment to establishing a healthy, delicious, sustainable and fair food system for all Cardinia Shire residents and more broadly. Further to this commitment is the adoption of Cardinia Shire's first *Community Food Strategy* and signing of the *Urban and Regional Food Declaration*.

ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Reports to:	Healthy Communities Coordinator
Supervises/Direct Reports:	Students (on occasion)
Internal Liaisons:	General Manager Community Wellbeing, other managers and team leaders of Community Wellbeing division, Team Leader Social and Community Planning, Healthy Communities Coordinator, Community Planners, Strategic planning officers, and other relevant officers across the organisation.
External Liaisons:	Councillors, general public, local community groups, community service organisations, Cardinia Food Network, academic researchers, state and federal government agencies, councils and professional associations.

POSITION OBJECTIVES

The Collective Impact Facilitator – Food Circles is responsible for coordinating Cardinia Shire's Food Circles Collective Impact project, including the Community Food Strategy, in partnership with the backbone organisation, other partners and the community. The role has a key focus on enhancing the local food system, which will contribute to improved food security and diet status of individuals and communities.

The role will be required to:

- Work in partnership with the backbone organisation in applying the collective impact framework to establish, implement and facilitate effort for community outcomes in Cardinia.
- To support the backbone team to implement the five conditions of Collective Impact and monitor the 27 indicators of success for Food Circles.
- Coordinate local Implementation and review of the Cardinia Shire Community Food Strategy.
- To support the project leadership in inspiring sectors of the Cardinia community and levels of government to align their efforts to a common agenda to enhance the local food system.
- To support the Cardinia Food Network in building the capacity of local food leaders and ensure the voices of a range of stakeholders (parents, teachers, farmers, businesses, health professionals etc) inform the vision, planning, solutions and outcomes for the local food system.
- Build on partnership opportunities with key agencies to enhance the food system.
- Advocacy and leadership for food system issues.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

PARTNERSHIPS AND TEAMWORK

- Work in partnership with the Backbone organisation to lead coordination of the Cardinia Food Circles Collective Impact Project.
- Actively participate in the Backbone Team.
- Support the development and maintenance of the Backbone Team, Food Circles Steering Group and Cardinia Food Network.
- Share local knowledge and feedback with the Backbone Team, Governance Group, Steering Group and Food Network.
- Attend communities of practice and networks working in Collective Impact, public health nutrition and food systems.
- Keep records and policy and strategy documentation up to date.

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

- Actively engage community partners and encourage participation in the project's consultation and activities.
- Facilitate community partners to engage local residents in researching community issues and ideas for strengthening the local food system.
- Facilitate residents and partners to be resourced with information and data to support the ownership of a shared agenda for change in line with the project vision and action plans.
- Build and strengthen relationships with the various sectors of education, health, sports and recreation, faith based, CALD, Aboriginal, community groups, farmers and business groups and development their involvement in community solutions.
- Contribute to internal and external initiatives that address the drivers of inequity for healthy eating and in the local food system.
- Develop and implement project plans, communication plans and engagement plans.
- Maintain an up-to-date stakeholder database.
- Support the facilitation and capacity building of the Cardinia Food Network.
- Using the Community Food Strategy as the platform, work with internal teams to embed food systems principles across the organisation.
- Planning, promoting and coordination of an annual food forum.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Facilitating continuous communication with and between key stakeholders via the most appropriate platform.
- Work in partnership with the Governance Group, the Strategic Steering Group and the Backbone Team to ensure communications are agreed, consistent in messaging and high quality.
- Support administration of the Cardinia Food Movement social media pages (Facebook, Instagram), website and newsletter under the advice of the Communications Team.
- Actively market and promote community solutions, key messages and outcomes.
- Ensure the 'no logo – no ego' philosophy is maintained on all Food Circles activities.

DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

- Support data collection and reporting for the Cardinia Food Circles Collective Impact Project.
- Support the coordination of shared measurement and evaluation activities and communicate progress to the broader community.
- Work alongside internal and external project evaluators to disseminate learnings to the community in appropriate and relevant formats.
- Work in partnership with the Governance Group, the Strategic Steering Group and the Backbone Team to collect and disseminate local data and evidence.

- Contribute to local, state and national funding applications that advance the common agenda of Food Circles.
- Provide summary reports when requested.
- Provide reports to external funding providers as required.
- Contribute to internal business planning and reporting, including the Liveability Plan.
- Prepare and present Council Briefing and Senior Leadership Team reports as requested.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE COMPLIANCE

- Adhere to (and promote) HR, IT, OH&S/Risk Management policies, procedures and practices.
- Demonstrate understanding and accountability for record keeping policy including the accuracy and capture of data, the sensitivities involved and the release and destruction of documents.
- Ensure compliance with Council financial and procurement policies and procedures in ensuring an adequate standard of internal control over finances is maintained.
- Adhere to the Child Safe Standards policy and procedures and ensure staff and user of facilities are aware and maintain the requirements.
- Ensure all personnel, practices and procedures in Council sponsored programs comply with relevant legislation, National Standards and Council policy

ACCOUNTABILITY AND EXTENT OF AUTHORITY

- Freedom to act set by clear objectives and budgets, with a regular reporting mechanism to the Food Circles Governance Group, Steering Group and Council to ensure goals and objectives are being met.
- At times, the work is performed within specific funding guidelines and under general supervision from the Healthy Communities Coordinator and is guided by the Council's standards and procedures.
- Provide advice in relation to community feedback and progress of the objectives and give support to more senior employees in their decision-making.
- Accountable for informing and influencing Council planning and service development.
- Accountable for providing accurate and timely information to internal and external customers.
- Accountable for assessing the risk of Food Circles activities.
- Responsible for the quality, accuracy and timeliness of all work produced within the role.
- Effect of decisions and actions taken may be significant but are generally subject to review by the Healthy Communities Coordinator.

JUDGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING

- Decision making using specialised methods and processes based on existing policies, guidelines and Council's procedures.
- Demonstrate personal and professional integrity at all times consistent with the Cardinia Shire Council values.
- Utilise personal skills and professional knowledge in consultation with staff and the community.
- Ability to identify and develop policy options for consideration, together with the ability to negotiate solutions based on established procedures of precedent and to recognise when new approaches are required.
- A high level of initiative in problem solving and the development of improvements and recommendations is required.
- Ability to apply reflective practice to experiences and decisions.
- Guidance and advice is usually available within the specified timeframe to make a recommendation or decision, or provide advice.

SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

- Knowledge and experience in the Collective Impact Framework and the importance of using data to maximise social impact.
- Understanding of systems and complexity theory as applied to grass roots social change.
- Knowledge of public health nutrition, food security and sustainable food systems.
- Proven community engagement, facilitation and negotiation skills working across all levels of community.
- Demonstrated success in building and maintaining relationships with senior staff and community leaders.
- The presence to inspire confidence and passion in external audiences and to build effective relationships with a range of stakeholders including community members.
- Project management and coordination.
- Capacity to experiment and learn for innovation and effort to grow effectiveness and impact.
- Flexibility and the ability to work autonomously as well as take direction as needed.
- Ability to understand and articulate the Collective Impact concepts and grow expertise through consultation and learning as part of a national community of practice.
- Familiarity with Cardinia Shire's local community and neighbourhood networks.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- Ability to communicate and work effectively with a diverse range of people including the community, Council Officers, government and community agencies.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- An ability to work autonomously or as part of a team
- Demonstrated ability to gain co-operation and commitment from both internal and external stakeholders to achieve agreed results and outcomes.
- Able to be visionary, influence people and facilitate change
- Skills in forming strategic relationships with key stakeholders (Council staff, community organisations and government departments)
- Ability to discuss and resolve problems.
- Ability to represent Council effectively in public and private forums.

MANAGEMENT SKILLS

- Ability to manage and prioritise project and work plan and timelines in line with strategic goals.
- Ability to liaise with internal and external customers to achieve beneficial outcomes.
- Ability to work independently within a local government framework to meet the required objectives.
- Ability to embrace challenges and recognise opportunities.
- Ability to self-reflect on practice and project implementation.
- Ability to contribute to the strategic directions of the organisation.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- Tertiary qualification in nutrition and dietetics, health promotion, community development or related discipline.
- Demonstrated experience in planning for and providing a wide range of community engagement activities.
- Demonstrated experience in working collaboratively with external organisations to achieve outcomes and maintaining effective and respectful relationships
- Experience in project management and coordination.
- Experience in Local Government sector will be well regarded.

- Current Victorian Driver's Licence
- A current and valid Working with Children's Check (WWCC)

KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

- A degree qualification in nutrition and dietetics, health promotion, community development or related area with demonstrated experience in public health or community development, preferably in local government setting.
- Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the Collective Impact model and its effectiveness with complex social problems.
- Demonstrated experience in working with multiple stakeholders to plan and deliver initiatives that address social and health priorities, especially in the public health food and nutrition area.
- Ability to manage projects including internal and external stakeholders, budgets, project timeframes and consultants.
- Extensive community engagement and change management experience.
- Effective communication skills with people across a variety of settings and authorities.
- Ability to juggle a range of priorities and timelines

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Terms and conditions of employment are in accordance with the Cardinia Shire Council Enterprise Agreement 2017 and Cardinia's policies and procedures.

Tenure	This is a part-time, 3 year contract
Police Record check	Appointments are subject to a satisfactory National Police Record Check.
Working with Children Check	Appointments are subject to a satisfactory Working with Children Check
Pre-employment Medical	Appointments are required to undergo a pre-employment medical check
Probation	All appointments are subject to a six month probation period (new employees only)