



COMMUNITY FOOD
STRATEGIES

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY.
CREATING EQUITABLE FOOD POLICY.



COMMUNITY FOOD STRATEGIES: OUR 2017 WORK IN NUMBERS

33

active food councils in North Carolina

178

people attended the Statewide Food Council Gathering

2344

average viewers per month reached via Facebook

18

team presentations and trainings delivered

12

strategic action plans created by local food councils

4

states represented at the Statewide Food Council Gathering

580+

hours of technical assistance provided by our team, excluding travel

236

subscribers to the foodpolicycouncil listserv

LETTER FROM OUR PROJECT DIRECTOR

Within this network, I think the energy of being a part of something bigger than our individual groups is growing - reflected in the energy from our Statewide Gathering in November and seen in a group of 11 councils working together on a shared project, a first for this network.

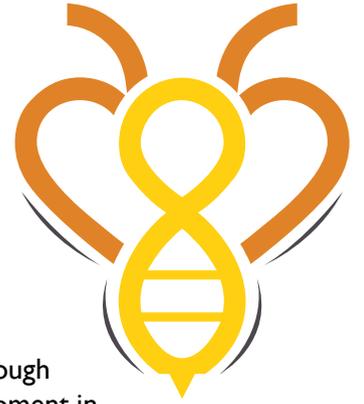
This energy is fed, in part by a theme of this year: building a shared language. As a project, we put down on paper a vision, a mission, and the values that drive our work. I am proud of the words this team has chosen to define this project, and inspired by the ways the mission is coming into focus in our communities. At our Statewide Gathering, we shared language around how food councils develop and also around how organizations progress through a commitment to racial equity. In conversations since, I hear councils talk about their development in the context of those four stages, and I see the model of organizational phases of equity being addressed and applied. On our regional networking calls, I hear council members connecting across counties, hearing one another in their stories of success and struggle, and offering ideas and feedback accordingly.

We are a network of local food councils, coalitions of dedicated community members, more than 30 councils strong, deepening our ability to work across communities. A shared language is one important tool in that work. The power of a shared vocabulary means that we can start to understand patterns across our work. And it helps us to build trust and trusted communication. As our values statements reflect, we believe that trusted relationships are essential to the longevity of this work. I am excited and encouraged to see the ways this emerging shared language helps us to deepen our connections and our impacts.

Sincerely,

Abbey Piner

Abbey Piner, Project Director



2017 HIGHLIGHTS

- We hosted an inspiring Statewide Gathering attended by 28 NC local food councils and other partners from Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.
- We captured stories of 12 local food councils through articles, short videos, and policy briefs to share as resources.
- We reached a nationwide audience with webinars about our revised toolkits and organizational structures for food councils.
- We've deepened connections across the Southeast, presenting at the Obesity Roundtable in Washington D.C., and facilitating sessions on developing food councils for 100+ people at the South Carolina Food Access Summit.
- As a team we refined our mission, vision, and values to guide our approach.
- For the first time, we offered micro-grants to local food councils in our network and received 19 applications.

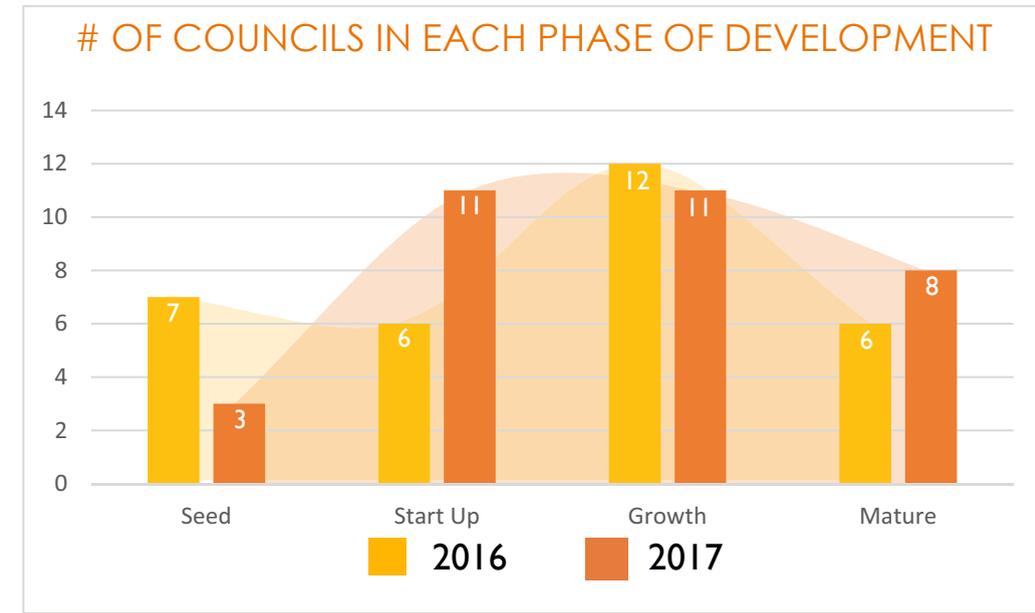
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Our team provides technical assistance to local food councils in all phases of development. Each of our team members are trained facilitators, and provide technical assistance through planning and facilitating meetings, customizing stakeholder and community outreach, developing strategic action plans, and presenting on a variety of food systems, policy, and community development topics.

We connect with emerging and existing local food councils and community coalitions through in-person, phone, or email conversations, as well as social media. Thirteen NC local food councils are receiving regular, often monthly, technical assistance from the team. Many other councils receive support for occasional projects or strategies.

"The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council has thoroughly enjoyed the support of Community Food Strategies - from coordinating the regional food council phone calls to the specific support of advocacy training events and mobilization around specific policy issues like SNAP and farmland preservation, Jared and his team have been outstanding collaborators. We look forward to many future collaborations!"

NICOLE PETERSON,
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBERG
FOOD POLICY COUNCIL



STRATEGIC NETWORKING & ADVOCACY

With support from Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, our team provided training and coaching on food policy and advocacy. Thanks to this work, local food councils are more confident in developing relationships with their decision makers and better equipped to lead policy action.

- We assisted four food councils in planning and supporting 2017 Candidate Forums to highlight healthy food and farm concerns with their elected officials and candidates running for office.

- Our team worked directly with four local food councils to develop strategic networking and action plans for local food and farm policy agendas.
- We assisted the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council in organizing a half-day Advocacy Training, attended by more than 50 community members. Similar trainings will be replicated in 2018 in partnership with communities.
- We facilitated a multi-council effort to educate and advocate for maintaining SNAP funding and program structure in the 2018 farm bill.

COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT & PRIORITY SETTING

Our team guided councils on organizational development strategies and developing priorities.

- We facilitated processes to help Watauga Food Council and Chatham Community Food Council in developing priorities and associated actions.
- We provided consultation to multiple other councils regarding community engagement, leadership transition, and priority setting.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Policy Briefs: Three policy briefs and associated advocacy tools were created to showcase local policy initiatives.

Racial Equity Trainings: In partnership with the Committee on Racial Equity (CORE), we offered Racial Equity in the Food System trainings and resources.

Toolkits: We refined several toolkits, including Food Council Development, Candidate Forum, and Public Forum toolkits.

Webinars: We hosted webinars on federal and statewide policy updates and organizational structures for food councils.

2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF NC FOOD COUNCILS

PROMOTING FARMERS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

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

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

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

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

INCREASING FOOD ACCESS

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

With multiple community partners to support coordination, Bread Riot provided free local produce to low-income families in winter food boxes.

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

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

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

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

EXPANDING THE NETWORK

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

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

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

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

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



INCREASING AWARENESS

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

Caswell County Local Foods Council coordinated farmers market program to encourage children and adults to try seasonal produce in exchange for vouchers.

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

ADVOCATING POLICY & PROGRAM CHANGE

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

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

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

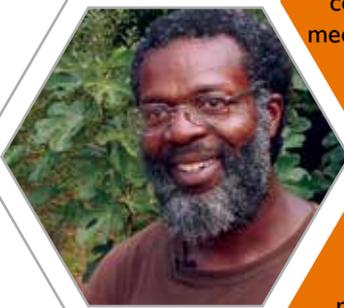
ADDRESSING EQUITY

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

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

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

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



CONNECTIONS

We believe that strengthening this network of individuals and organizations in local food councils through relationships and storytelling will build power to drive systems change – equitable food systems change.

We are creating a structure for local food councils to stay connected and learn from one another. These networking opportunities have increased the number and quality of connections within and between local food councils.

CAPTURING STORIES

We capture stories from local food councils to share with the broader network. This year we:

- Created videos of community engagement events.
- Developed policy briefs and advocacy tools for local level policy opportunities.
- Documented the process and outcomes of the Toe River Food Security Network’s listening sessions for faith communities and food pantry staff.
- Organized panel discussions with food council leaders sharing their experiences and advice.
- Hosted webinars on food council structures highlighting different council experiences.

Video: Candidate Forums

Highlights three councils’ experiences planning and hosting these events before the 2016 elections.

Video: Community Forums

Shares three food councils’ processes for organizing community forums to raise awareness of their work, gather community input, and invite participation.

Video: Equitable Food System

Features community member perspectives on what an equitable food system looks means to them and looks like in their community.

Blogs, Workshops, Panels:

Document and share local food council experiences, learnings, successes, and challenges.

CONVENINGS

We hold in-person gatherings each year regionally (even years) or statewide (odd years). We hold quarterly regional networking calls to continue to build relationships across councils throughout the year.

The full network came together for two days at the Statewide Food Council Gathering in November 2017. This gathering allowed us to start a more collective conversation about creating an equitable food system. We had amazing leadership framing this work in the context of food councils – from community members, the Committee on Racial Equity (CORE) team, our keynote speaker, Savi Horne, and many attendees bringing a robust conversation to the event. The power of having dialogue in person about how we can change our communities for the better is a great motivator and inspiration from these convenings.

Also with the Piedmont Triad Regional Council as a partner, we convened eight local food councils for an in-person Triad region gathering to get input on a regional food council and regional food system assessment.

STATEWIDE GATHERING HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 food councils helped plan the event
- 178 people attended
- 28 NC food councils were represented
- 19 event sponsors from multiple sectors
- 8 of 15 workshops were led or co-led by food council members
- 85% of attendees developed 4+ new connections



TESTIMONIALS

“I met so many wonderful people in my region that I didn’t know before! What a great idea! I’m excited for the future partnerships and work ahead.”

Statewide Gathering attendee



“Thanks for a great event, [it] helped to ground the work, find inspiration at a challenging time in our development, and build community with great folks!”

Statewide Gathering attendee



OUR TEAM

In 2017, Community Food Strategies expanded our project to six team members and one intern representing five partner organizations.

Our approach intentionally reflects the cross-sector membership and work of food councils. We rely on shared leadership, creativity, and systems analysis to direct our work.



From left to right:

AMY MARION, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project

Amy leads the shared measures and evaluation work and is the Western region contact.

JARED CATES, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association

Jared focuses on strategic advocacy support, directly works with councils, and is the contact for the Charlotte region.

SHORLETTE AMMONS, Committee on Racial Equity, CEFS

Shorlette focuses on bringing equity tools, strategies and trainings to this program team and to the network at large.

MEGAN BOLEJACK, Care Share Health Alliance

Megan, the Triangle region contact, brings the public health perspective and works directly with several food councils.

ABBEY PINER, Center for Environmental Farming Systems

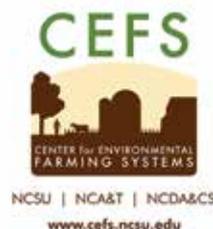
Abbey, Program Director and North and Southeast region contact, focuses on program development and strategic partnership.

THOMPSON TEAGLE, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association

Thompson works directly with food councils and on resource development through an internship placement at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

GINI KNIGHT, Center for Environmental Farming Systems

Gini manages project communications, works directly with several food councils, and is the Triad region contact.

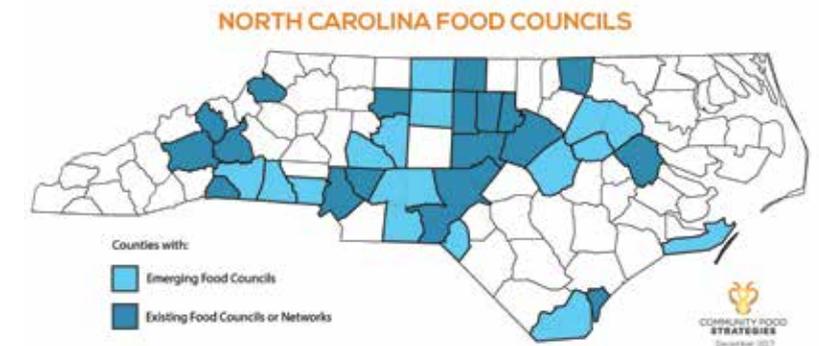


OUR VISION

We envision an equitable food system that is community driven and improves the quality of life for all.



Food councils have a role to play in shaping the policies, practices and programs that drive our food system in communities and statewide. We support these inspiring community-led councils by building alliances and by providing tools, trainings, and statewide structure to this growing network of local food councils across North Carolina.



2017 FOOD COUNCIL NETWORK

CHARLOTTE REGION

Bread Riot
Cabarrus County Farm & Food Council
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council
Gaston County Food Policy Council
Upper PeeDee Farm & Food Council

NORTHEAST REGION

Just Foods Network
Pitt County Farm & Food Council
Warren County Local Foods Promotion Council
Wilson County

SOUTHEAST REGION

Brunswick County Food Council
Cape Fear Food Council
Carteret County Task Force
Green Fields Sandhills
ScotLand Grows

TRIAD REGION

Alamance Food Collaborative
Caswell County Local Foods Council
Davidson County Local Food Network
Forsyth Community Food Consortium
Greater High Point Food Alliance

Guilford Food Council
Rockingham County Food Policy Council

TRIANGLE REGION

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

WESTERN REGION

Asheville Buncombe Food Policy Council

Cleveland County
McDowell County Local Foods Advisory Council
Polk County
Rutherford County Food Council
Toe River Food Security Network
Watauga Food Council

STATEWIDE

Healthy Native North Carolinians
North Carolina Local Food Council

STAY CONNECTED



COMMUNITY FOOD STRATEGIES VALUES

We believe **food is a connector** and vehicle to drive community change.

We believe **community-led** work honors history, place, community voice, and all perspectives.

We believe **equity** includes addressing structural racism, diversity and inclusion to create shared prosperity.

We believe communities can create the greatest impact through **system change** which is done through strategic connections and community empowerment.

We are **responsive** to community needs, emerging ideas, and exploratory solutions.

We believe **collaboration** requires trust and accountability.

We believe **trusted relationships** are critical for systems change and lasting sustainability.

