Community Food Strategies
Strengthening Partnerships | Aligning Results

Building Community Food Councils in North Carolina
May 12, 2014
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Christy Shi Day
Community Food Strategies
Project Lead

Teisha Wymore
Community Food Strategies
Programs Lead

http://communityfoodstrategies.com
North Carolina: Addressing Significant Hurdles in the State
Laying the Foundation

2009  Convened more than 1000 participants statewide – “Farm to Fork” initiative

Prioritized Statewide action items through 11 Working Issues Teams

2010  Published “From Farm to Fork” A Guide to Building North Carolina’s Sustainable Local Food Economy

===OK now what===

2012  Funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation

2013  Community Food Strategies Launched
Learning about underlying factors reveals food-related barriers and opportunities.
What we know: Food is a complex system.
Many people have a role to play in community food systems development.
Systems change requires many diverse people learning from each other.
Systems change requires a shared concept of a community food system.
What we needed: A frame that reflects everyone’s investments in improving the system.
Many communities, agencies and groups engage in parallel efforts.

Engaging locally statewide facilitates connections to resources and learning opportunities.
Identifying priorities focuses attention on what needs to happen next.
Recommending policy changes removes barriers and creates opportunities.
Engaging local government facilitates connections across agencies to our community.
WHY

...are food councils needed?
Many groups recognize the important role food councils can play in coordinating efforts.
Food council interest has increased significantly, in many different forms, across North Carolina.
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Local or Regional Food Councils in 2014

- Councils engaged with statewide network development, as of April 2014
- Council activity present, or emerging
There is no set formula for what food councils do, but most provide three key functions.

- Drive Action
- Facilitate Connections
- Focus Attention
Food councils facilitate connections – across departmental silos and within the community.
Food councils provide focus – through assessing, learning, and identifying priorities.
Food councils drive action – through policy and programming recommendations.
Through national findings and our experience in NC we have identified best practices for food councils.
BEST PRACTICE: Adopt an inclusive and efficient decision-making process.

- Consent-based, not consensus-based
- Short-term **time investment**, not long-term disengagement
- **Authentic** buy-in, not lip service
- **Both/and thinking**, not either/or thinking
SUPPORTING EXAMPLE:
Raleigh Wake Food Policy Council Task Force

- Defined consent
  - Will my needs be met?
  - Can I live with this?

- Described a **process**
  - Up: Fully Support
  - Sideways: Can Live w/ It
  - Down: Cannot Consent

- Agreed to a **trial period**

- Tried, assessed, refined

- Reminded newcomers
BEST PRACTICE: Create a picture everyone can support – community food systems are big.

Vibrant Farms & Fishing

Healthy People

Strong Communities

Resilient Ecosystems

Thriving Local Economies
SUPPORTING EXAMPLE: Guilford Food Council Task Force

- Focused on scope and jurisdiction initially
- Used 15-min exercise to create a shared aim
- Included all answers without wordsmithing or debating
- Got positive reaction to shared focal area and process from participants
BEST PRACTICE: Develop an inclusive and flexible organizational structure.

- Multiple **groups working on issues** concurrently
- **Coordination** across groups to keep focus
- **Advisors** to keep an eye on big picture
- **Support** for training, communications, resource pool, etc.
SUPPORTING EXAMPLE:
Forsyth Community Food System Consortium
BEST PRACTICE: Intentionally strengthen relationships between council members.

- **Bonding** relationships, those within the group, are strengthened to build trust, creating a stronger group.

- **Trust**, as shown by strong relationships, is a **critical success factor** in institutionalizing change.
SUPPORTING EXAMPLE: Raleigh Wake Food Policy Council Task Force

- Meeting agendas include **time to share** how people are doing and **time for networking**
- Work in **small groups** between meetings
- Rotate meeting location to learn about each other’s working environment
BEST PRACTICE: Support inclusion of differing viewpoints – early and always.
SUPPORTING EXAMPLE:
Healthy Alamance Public Meeting

- Allowed **plenty of time** for scheduling purposes
- Populated **list of key food system voices**
- Used **relationships** to get people to attend
- **Distributed the work** across several people
- **Tracked RSVPs**; focused on missing voices

Local Food Policy Council

November 12th 3:30-4:30pm
Alamance Regional Medical Center – Grand Oaks

A Food Policy Council is a volunteer group of representatives from various parts of the food system, including consumers, producers, processors, retailers and stakeholders. The purpose of this meeting is to examine the relevance of a food council & begin initial steps toward development in Alamance; the Center for Environmental Farming Systems will be our guest speaker.

For more information and to register please contact: April Durr, Healthy Alamance Director (336) 513-5590 or Adurr@armc.com
Best Practices around Process

- GOVERNANCE MATTERS
- A COUNCIL INVOLVES GOVERNMENT
- RELATIONSHIP BUILDING = SUCCESS
An emerging trend is a formal collaboration between community and government.

- **Chatham Food Council**
  - To be established 2014
  - Formed by community-government task force
  - MOUs to outline city/county support
  - Both local government and community groups serve as fiscal sponsors and provide support
  - Charter & resolution outlining partnership

- **Raleigh Wake Food Policy Council**
One council was initiated by local government staff to serve as a community network.

Caldwell Food Council

- Established 2013
- Desired outcomes identified with facilitation
- Initiated by Cooperative Extension and the Caldwell County Health Department
- Staff informed elected officials of council
One regional group is reconfiguring council development to a local level.

SENCFS
Feast Down East

- Established 2006
- Began as rural poverty alleviation strategy
- Reorganizing to form county-level councils
- Incubated at UNCW, now is a 501(c)3
Some councils are an informal collaboration between community and government.

Upper PeeDee Farm and Food Council

- Established 2012
- Desired outcomes identified internally
- Community members engage elected officials
- Initiated by community and local government
Some groups have organized at a regional level out of necessity.

**Western NC Food Policy Council**

- Established 2011
- Low population density needs regional council
- Patterned on existing regional collaborations
- Incubated at WCU, now volunteer-supported
A successful method for developing strong food councils is emerging in North Carolina.

Approximately 30 – 42 months from Seed to Mature
Most of our current communities-in-progress are here.

- Does it already exist?
- Is there any history?
- Task force volunteers?
- Government interest?
- Community interest?
- Facilitation support?

3-6 Months
Our Approach

- Consulting on process
- Coaching on local government engagement
- Delivering presentations

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Our Approach

Seed
Start-Up
Growth
Expansion
Mature

- Facilitating task force
- Advising on best practices
- Coaching on local government engagement

[communityfoodstrategies.org/contact](http://communityfoodstrategies.org/contact)
Our Approach

- Facilitating meetings
- Consulting on structure
- Training and development
- Coaching as needed

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Our Approach

- Training and coaching
- Large group facilitation
- Food assessments & action planning

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Our Approach

Seed
Start-Up
Growth
Expansion
Mature

Impact assessments
Performance assessments
Network mapping
Strategic planning

communityfoodstrategies.org/contact
Access council development tools at our website.

communityfoodstrategies.org
Join the Network Weaving Learning Community, an action-oriented book club starting this Summer!

communityfoodstrategies.org/network-weaving