Appalachian Virginia
Community Food Security Assessment
Final Report
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Cultivating Community Food Security

USDA
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southwest Virginia Community Food Security Assessment was conducted as a partnership between the Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP) and the Appalachian Virginia Food Systems Network (AVFSN). The goal of the assessment is to support the on-going work of southwest Virginia community food security practitioners.

To this end, the research was conducted to enhance the strategy and development of the AVFSN as a vehicle for facilitating communication and collaboration related to regional community food security.

Across southwest Virginia, there are many organizations and individuals working on issues related to community food security. There is a lot of energy around vibrant farms, agriculture, and economic development, but there is also a strong culture around having a food system that allows all southwest Virginians to eat nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. In this report we present several recommendations for moving these energies and assets forward. Like our most resilient agricultural systems, this report is intended to be both a harvest and a seed.

Approach

To conduct the assessment, a team of community and university partners developed a process that included key informant interviews and three regional community work sessions. The overall aim of the assessment was to develop practical strategies for furthering community food security work in southwest Virginia.

The assessment team used the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems and the Community Capitals to structure their analysis. The Whole Measures was used to holistically understand values that regional practitioners are bringing to their work The Community Capitals were used to understand the assets that support (and might support) those values.

The analysed data was then synthesized with a conceptual framework provided by thought on complexity, emergence, and network. The four Synergies and the three recommendations are products of this multi-layered analysis.

Key Synergies in SW VA Food Systems Work

We understand a synergy to occur when two or more things are brought together and produce an effect that is greater than the sum of the parts.

Synergy A: Financial capital and the value of vibrant farms and thriving local economies.

Agriculture as economic development is a dominant point of synergy in food systems work in southwest Virginia. A large number of organizations and individuals are focused on connecting financial capital with the agricultural supply chain, whether that is through local processing and cost-savings to local farmers, or through access to capital for new agricultural ventures.
Particularly relative to the other Whole Measures, the communities involved in the assessment have been successful in securing funding to support vibrant farms and thriving local economies. This is potentially a result of both the interests of funding organizations and agencies, as well as the presence of social capital around vibrant farms.

**Synergy B: Vibrant Farms and Social Capital**

In southwest Virginia there is a great deal of social capital connected to the value of vibrant farms. A significant portion of the individuals and organizations working within the realm of community food security in southwest Virginia are doing so in a way that is directly connected to building the vibrancy of local farms.

Research on the community capitals has indicated that social capital is a requisite foundation for building capital in other areas (Emery & Flora, 2006). To achieve systemic food security impact, we see a need for using this existent social capital (around farming) to expand social capital into other areas of the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems--i.e. to organizations representing areas like justice and fairness, healthy people, and strong communities.

**Synergy C: Cultural Capital and Justice & Fairness and Strong Communities**

The community work sessions demonstrated cultural capital around ideas of justice and fairness and strong communities. This synergy is playing a critical role holding together various aspects of the community food work in southwest Virginia. It has a strong effect on the way regional practitioners are imagining a desirable food system.

This cultural capital could be an avenue for connecting with other non-food/agriculture partners who hold similar values. For example, this could mean connecting with those working on affordable housing, drinking water quality, mountaintop removal, livable wages, and equitable access to education. Novel collaborations like these could open new possibilities for systemic impact.

**Synergy D: Human Capital across the Whole Measures**

Across southwest Virginia there is a vast wealth of human capital (i.e. people, knowledge, skills) related to food systems and the six Whole Measures. But a lot of the energy is unconnected and, consequently, this asset is underutilized. Through the assessment process it was apparent that we (as potential partners) understand the need to collaborate across sectors and issues. Effective collaboration needs facilitation and strategy, and that requires financial and human resources.

**Recommendations**

1. **Strengthen Existing Synergies by Connecting Regional Human Capital**

   Though there is a great deal of human capital related to the Whole Measures, it is underutilized. We recommend prioritizing the facilitation of opportunities and spaces for connecting this human capital. As possible points of action, we recommend:

   - Seek funding opportunities for coordinated regional convenings with the primary objective of developing a learning network and building relationships and trust.
• Develop and utilize digital platforms for increased open access information sharing. Platforms like LocalWiki can be used to share organizational information and organizational/network learning.
• Establish a culture of open information-sharing and information transparency.

2. **Develop and Strengthen Relationships with Organizations that Share Similar Cultural Commitments to Strong Communities and Justice & Fairness**

Synergy C highlights the values that are connected to the community food work in southwest Virginia. These values, of justice and fairness and strong communities, are shared by many additional individuals and organizations that are more loosely tied to food security. We suggest that developing these potential “unlikely” relationships might strengthen our ability to systemically address food insecurity in the region. As possible points of action, we recommend:

• Explore possibilities for collaboration with partners working on issues like affordable housing; sustainable jobs; anti-racism; fair wage; access to safe drinking water
• Develop and sustain places for having cross-sector dialogue with “unlikely” partners. Explore the conditions that might make our conversations more inclusive of “unlikely” partners.

3. **Monitor and Evaluate Recommendations One and Two**

The synergies identified in this report are strong and well-developed across the region. Building and expanding these synergies could be aided by implementing an on-going evaluation process. As possible points of action, we recommend:

• Institute a planning and evaluation framework that prioritizes local and regional commitments to Strong Communities and Justice & Fairness.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The Appalachian Virginia Food Systems Network (AVFSN) emerged and developed alongside this assessment. It has become a vehicle for holding and facilitating space for community food security learning and strategy in southwest Virginia. Through the assessment, it has become evident that we need better ways to connect to other individuals, organizations, and ideas. We advocate for a focused effort on network building as a means of increasing our capacity to do more collaborative, higher-impact community food work.

There are many factors influencing the potential success of our recommendations. At this point in 2016, it is clear that human and financial resources are necessary to facilitate the next steps of the AVFSN. As the network continues to develop, this assessment can help frame the conversation and efforts to address community food security in southwest Virginia.

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OVERVIEW

The Southwest Virginia Community Food Security Assessment was conducted as a partnership between the Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP) and the Appalachian Virginia Food Systems Network (AVFSN). The goal of the assessment is to support the on-going work of southwest Virginia community food security practitioners. To this end, the research was conducted to enhance the strategy and development of the AVFSN as a vehicle for facilitating communication and collaboration related to regional community food security.

This is not a report of fixed solutions or even best practices. From our perspective, the issue of food insecurity is too complex to be solved by one-stop answers. We do think there are processes and ways of working together that can make it easier to innovate creative solutions and move the needle on food security.

Across southwest Virginia, there are many organizations and individuals working on issues related to community food security. There is a lot of energy around vibrant farms, agriculture, and economic development, but there is also a strong culture around having a food system that allows all southwest Virginians to eat nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. In this report we present several recommendations for moving these energies and assets forward. Like our most resilient agricultural systems, this report is intended to be both a harvest and a seed.
INTRODUCTION

Food Insecurity and Complexity

Food insecurity is a pressing issue across the United States. From 2012-2014, 14.3 percent of the national population was unable to provide food for a family member, at some point, over the course of a given year (USDA, 2015). There is a direct connection between food insecurity and poverty—food insecurity affects 40 percent of those living below the federal poverty line. Food insecurity also disproportionately impacts rural and urban communities, as opposed to their suburban counterparts.

Given this national context, Appalachian Virginia (counties designated Appalachia, by the Appalachian Regional Commission, ARC) has slightly higher than average levels of poverty (120.5 percent) (ARC, n.d.). These numbers notwithstanding, the authors of this report view household food insecurity as a product of larger, chaotic, and dysfunctional systems. Addressing household food security is a critical and pressing need, but there is simultaneous need to organize and develop our systems to address the conditions that lead to experiences of food insecurity.

In this way, our food assessment is less about the functionality of the systems addressing immediate food system needs (the emergency food system) and more about assessing, planning, and organizing for communities and food systems that are more resilient, fair, and just. To move toward this goal, we have been working with the concept of community food security, or a situation in which all of the people in a locality, or region, are able to eat food that is culturally appropriate, nutritious, and safe. We believe that this freedom of choice and access is critical for a resilient and just food systems and communities.

Community Food Security: Seeing a System

There are innumerable ways to make sense of community food security. To help guide and structure the work of the AFP (and later the AVFSN), we decided early on (2011-2012) to use the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems (WMCFS) (Abi-Nader et al., 2009) as a framework. The idea behind this approach is that holistic and sustainable change is more possible if the change agents have a more holistic view of the interrelated factors that might be part of a fair and equitable food system. This framework has helped us keep focus on a larger system. It has been a useful for challenging the more concrete, but reductive, theories of change that over-rely on theories of market-development and extraction long familiar to the history of Appalachia. The authors of the WMCFS organize the system into six “fields”:

1. Justice & Fairness*
2. Strong Communities*
3. Thriving Local Economies
4. Healthy People
5. Ecological Sustainability
6. Vibrant Farms
*Abi-Nader et al. have noted that the Justice & Fairness and Strong Communities should be considered sub-fields within the subsequent fields (3-6). 1 and 2 are broken out as separate fields to avoid being lost to 3-6.

These six fields have given us a basis for assessing the state of community food security work in southwest Virginia. Working from this starting point, we have been able to see existing assets as well as pockets of possibility that might be catalyzed via the AVFSN.

In southwest Virginia there are a number of organizations and institutions that are engaging in aspects of community food work1, but there had been little integration across organizations along multiple fields of the Whole Measures. The Appalachian Virginia Food Systems Network, first initiated in 2012, has been an effort to connect community food work across the region, with the goal of more integrated, strategic approaches and greater impact.

Food Assessments

Community food assessments typically have been conducted at a very local level, (i.e. X County, the Village of Y, or Neighborhood Z). Having a more regional scope, the 25 counties in southwest Virginia, and being attached to a project (AFP) that covers all of West Virginia and 19 counties in western North Carolina, we realized that the wider scope of the assessment called for a different approach. This regional approach to assessing community food security integrated well with the growing interest in food-systems-change collaboration across Appalachian Virginia.

Much of the literature on food assessments was written in the late 1990s or early 2000s (Winne, Joseph, & Fisher, 1997; Cohen, 2002), and this work was generally local in focus. Anecdotally, the state of food system change in 2014 was considerably different than that of the previous decade and a half. Since that time period, there has been a shift from building local capacity to building regional capacity. This shift was arguably the result of the success of local efforts to re-develop local food supply chains.

The success of locally-based efforts is evident in southwest Virginia. Though food system change efforts are uneven throughout the region, there are a number of organizations in southwest Virginia that are doing one or several types of community food work. Local inventories and assessments (the late 1990’s, early 2000’s approach) might still start dialogue at the local level, but to work broadly across the spectrum of community food work, and focus on more systemic change, we came to the realization that we needed to explore community food security organizing from a regional level. The dispersion of resources and assets over a largely rural region has underscored the need for regional integration of activities. Unlike an urban area where organizations representing all of the Whole Measures might share the same geographic and political space, in rural areas, these assets are potentially more diffuse, and spread across a larger geographic area.

1 We define community food work as any efforts that are aimed at improving community food security. We originally took the term from Rachel Slocum’s (2007) work. She details four primary approaches to food system transformation: those focused on: 1) farm sustainability – related to connection small-scale farmers to markets; 2) nutrition education – with emphasis on the prevention of diet-related illnesses; 3) environmental sustainability – related to the development and support of more-ecologically sound agricultural production; and 4) social justice – which consists of a bifurcated approach—producer/worker rights and hunger/food insecurity. Slocum termed the integration of these approaches, community food work.
Working with Complexity: Emergence & Network

Some community-level issues are relatively easy to solve—a streetlight is broken, drivers do not slow down in a school zone, but other issues, like community food security, are considerably more involved. Food insecurity exists in an ecosystem. It is difficult to discern what causes what. Is food security caused by the lack of jobs, poverty, a corporatized and global food system, the loss of food preparation knowledges? It is really difficult to know what is cause and what is an effect—they are too entangled with one another and an untold number of other issues. Food insecurity is the product of a complex ecosystem. To help guide our thinking on the assessment and its recommendations, we have drawn on the concept of complexity. We understand complexity to describe a situation in which cause and effect are not clearly connected—at least not until after-the-fact, when we are able to employ hindsight (Snowden & Boone, 2007). Food insecurity, and the social ecosystem in which it exists, fits this bill—solving one immediate problem often has unintended effects. No one really knows how to solve it.

Working in complexity requires different strategies and approaches than simpler, more straightforward, problems. Snowden and Boone (2007) have developed the Cynefin framework, a typology of decision-making scenarios that illustrates the challenge and potential of addressing complexity around an issue like food insecurity.

The framework [Figure 1] describes four contexts in which a leader might find her/him/themselves:

- **Obvious**- Meaning a clear relationship between cause and effect
- **Complicated**- Determining a relationship between cause and effect requires expert analysis
- **Complex**- There is no ordered relationship between cause and effect, it can only be perceived after the fact, but is not replicable due to a multiplicity of fluid variables
- **Chaotic**- There is no recognizable relationship between cause and effect

As indicated in the diagram, obvious and complicated problems can be solved with best and good practices, respectively. In other words, these problems can be solved by consulting experts. Institutions and government agencies are well-disposed to lead in the solving of these two types of problems. Complex situations, however, are not solved by experts, alone.

Best and good practices cannot be transferred to solve complex problems, but best and good processes can be a part of solutions to complex problems. These processes can help create the conditions for emergent...
solutions. Snowden and Boone (2007) advocate for a process of probe-sense-respond. For the work of the AVFSN, some of our partners have translated this process to experiment, evaluate, re-tool (see Figure 2 below) (D’Adamo-Damery, Ziegler, & D’Adamo-Damery, 2015). No one person or organization knows the solution to a complex issue, but through coordinated experimentation, evaluation, and re-tooling, we might collectively develop emergent solutions.

In this assessment we explore how working in complexity might shape the trajectories of both regional and local food security work. In the complex domain: Top-down expert-led solutions do not address complexity, and unconnected local work assumes a simpler problem. But both formal expertise and local knowledge are critical for developing emergent approaches in the complex realm. We need ways of bringing a diversity of perspective together on salient issues, as they emerge.

Thought on emergence, self-organization, and the potential of network has shaped our thinking on the potential power of facilitated collaborative work. In the complex domain, problems and solutions are emergent: the starting problem and its experimental solution lead to a new understanding of the problem, which leads to a new experimental solution, etc. No one organization holds the answers. Pulling these two ideas together: How can we rapidly self-organize across diverse organizations and communities on problems and opportunities as they emerge? Network Impact and the Center for Evaluation Innovation (2014) have argued that the idea of networks holds promise in this regard. Networks can:

• “Assemble and disassemble capacity with relative ease.

• Adapt to emerging opportunities and challenges in their environment.

• Bring together novel combinations of talent and resources to support innovation” (p. 2).

In respect to food security work, we envision this kind of network of individuals as a distributed network--a network where

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Figure 2. Experiment, Evaluate, Retool.
anyone can easily connect with anyone else, where self-organization is possible.

This potential for self-organization around emergent issues is possible in a distributed network, because the potential for connection is not centralized or hubbed (see diagram to the right).

In the domain of the complex, top-down organization (centralized or decentralized) is not timely enough to keep up with the pace of emergence. As part of the AVFSN, we have been exploring how a distributed network might be structured. On a conceptual level, we can envision the roles for local and regional organizations that might look something like this:

a. **Local-level:** facilitating processes for experimentation, evaluation, and re-tooling
   i. Actively building novel collaborations in search of more innovative solutions
   ii. Employing clear mechanisms for evaluation, re-tooling, and sharing within the network (which is fluid and inclusive)

b. **Regional-level:** employing processes for facilitation of information-sharing (communication), learning, evaluation, and collaboration.

The idea of a distributed network is drawn from the realm of computer networks and technology. It is not surprising that the idea of anyone being able connect with anyone else has emerged alongside technology. Digital technology has lowered the monetary and participation costs of self-organizing collaboration and its facilitation. Technology has opened the potential for new forms of collaboration (as suggested in the list above) (Benkler, 2011). From discovering new partners to rapidly sharing information about new learnings and opportunities, none of this is imaginable without the most basic digital technology like the internet and email.

Even with digital technology, it is important to note that self-organization does not happen without concerted energy. In this section, we have made the case that top-down expert directives will not solve community food security. **But moving towards a self-organizing approach does not diminish the resources needed for community work, it only changes the way these resources might be used.** Conceptually, we argue that facilitation is critical for sustaining and supporting self-organization and emergence in complexity. This is a role that can be played by a variety of organizations or individuals—from large institutions like Cooperative Extension, to self-directed volunteers. In any case, facilitation requires human resources, which realistically requires financial support and community accountability.
THE CONTEXT

This assessment is funded and facilitated by the Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP), which was funded by a United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural and Food Research Initiative (USDA AFRI - Award Number: 2011-68004-30079). Since 2011, a team of university and community partners have been working together on issues of community food security in West Virginia and the Appalachian counties of Virginia and North Carolina. The project has taken a community development approach to improving food security. Much of the work on the AFP has been centered around creating and holding spaces for increasing strategic communication and collaboration on issues related to food security.

As mentioned previously, this assessment is the product of the collaborative work of the AFP and the Appalachian Virginia Food Systems Network (AVFSN). The AVFSN grew out of spaces facilitated or co-facilitated by the AFP. While most active Virginia AFP collaborators are a part of the AVFSN, the network has a wider reach than the work of the AFP. In early 2016, the work of the AVFSN is being driven by an eight person oversight committee, led by Kelli Scott, an Extension agent with Montgomery County Virginia Cooperative Extension.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology and method for the assessment project have been iterative and evolving. We began a community-university development process in 2011. To date, the main components of this process have been building relationships in the region, developing an assessment plan, conducting key informant interviews, and implementing community work sessions. These pieces have been woven together by numerous meetings of community and university partners—the assessment team.

The key informant interviews were conducted by a team of four university and community researchers. They were primarily conducted via the phone. The interviewer took notes. The interviewees represented a wide-range of community food issues, from fair housing and small-scale vegetable production to farmworker health and church backpack programs. The primary findings from these 26 interviews was that there was a consistent need for greater communication and collaboration among food system practitioners in the region. The findings from these conversations were used to structure further assessment planning.

Following the interviews, the assessment team held a facilitated meeting (Oct. 2014) to discuss the next steps in the assessment process. In this meeting, the team settled on hosting community work sessions in several different sub-regions in southwest Virginia. The team determined that each work session would be hosted by a community-based organization, with support and logistical planning provided by the partners at Virginia Tech. In this meeting, the following work session goals were developed:

**Goal 1:** Inform the work and organization of the network, strategic plan, and next steps.

**Goal 2:** Learn and share across the region and sub-regions.

**Goal 3:** Form new relationships and strengthen the self-organizing/organizational capacity at the local level.
Three community partners from the AVFSN agreed to each host a community work session in their general region.

- Blue Ridge Plateau - Hosts: Grayson Landcare and SustainFloyd
- Far Southwest Virginia: Appalachian Sustainable Development

In a later meeting, the team developed working research questions that would feed back into the previously developed work session goals.

In terms of community food work, the guiding questions were:

1. What kinds of food system opportunities are taking place?
2. Where are the synergies happening and with whom?
3. How can we best connect across the region to enhance these synergies?

The community partners hosted and designed the sessions with support from a team at Virginia Tech. Accordingly, each work session was unique to local needs and vision. The Blue Ridge Plateau and Greater New River Valley groups completed their sessions in Spring 2015. The Far Southwest Virginia group held their session in early October 2015.

Each work session was co-designed by a university and community partner team prior to approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Tech. The data from each session was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The identities of session participants were removed from all transcripts. An analysis team, composed of university and NGO partners, used a collaborative approach.

What are the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems?

The Whole Measures for Community Food Systems is a Values-based Planning and Evaluation Tool designed by a team of practitioners, led by Jeanette Abi-Nader, an evaluator with the Community Food Security Coalition. Since a lot of community food work is soft-funded, it tends to be the recipient of the values and metrics of funding organizations. The Whole Measures CFS are designed to help organizations better understand the values that they, themselves, bring to their work.

A central premise of the Whole Measures is that we only measure the systems we can “see,” and the things that we measure tend to drive the work that we do. The Whole Measures CFS lays out a system that is made up of six fields:

- Justice & Fairness
- Strong Communities
- Thriving Local Economies
- Healthy People
- Ecological Sustainability
- Vibrant Farms

In the process described in the Whole Measures CFS document, a community would take these fields and modify them to reflect their community. They would ask, “What are the important things that matters to us about a given field, i.e. Justice & Fairness?” The things that “matter,” or the values, would then be used to develop an evaluation plan. For example, “What would it look like in our community if our Local Economies started Thriving more?”

For the purposes of the Community Food Security Assessment, we use the Whole Measures to help us “see” the holistic view of the food system. The analysis team used the fields as a framework to help make sense of the values that are at play in southwest Virginia’s community food work.

In the Recommendations section (Recommendation 3) we do suggest the larger Whole Measures process as a potential next step for the AVFSN.
The Community Capitals is a development framework that can be used by communities to better understand their assets and to more strategically design plans for building upon these resources. For this process, the assessment team used the Community Capitals framework developed by researchers at the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (Flora, Flora, & Fey, 2004). This framework consists of seven capitals:

- Political Capital
- Social Capital
- Cultural Capital
- Human Capital
- Natural Capital
- Built Capital
- Financial Capital

We used the community capital to better understand the regional assets that align with the six Whole Measures. For example, we wanted to understand the human capital that might support the value of strong communities.

web-based qualitative software (Dedoose), to organize and analyze the (15+ hrs. data).

The team used the work session goals and two conceptual frameworks: the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems (WMCFS) (Abi-Nader et al., 2009) and the Community Capitals (Emery, Fey, & Flora, 2006), to guide a line-by-line reading of the data. These frameworks helped the team broadly categorize existing community food system opportunities and synergies that are taking place across the southwest Virginia region. The Whole Measures provided a framework for understanding the values that participants are developing and utilizing through their work. The Community Capitals served as a means for ordering and understanding the tangible and intangible assets that are (or have potential to be) supporting those values.

In addition to the Whole Measures & Community Capitals assets inventory, the data was then further analyzed and synthesized through the lenses of complexity science (Connolly, 2011; Durie, Lundy, & Wyatt, 2012; Snowden & Boone, 2007) and network theory (Barry, 2011; Escobar & Osterweil, 2010; Network Impact, 2014; de Ugarte, n.d.). Through this analysis, we have been able to point to some existing and potential synergies in southwest Virginia community food work. Altogether, this dynamic conceptual/methodological approach has not only enabled the group to identify several practical and evolving possibilities to strengthen southwest Virginia’s food system and contribute to community food security, but it has helped inform the Appalachian Virginia Food Systems Network (AVFSN) as a space for our ongoing collaboration and action.

**SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNINGS: SYNERGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Though the assessment process, we have identified four key synergies that are taking place across the region. In this section we describe these synergies and provide some empirical support.

**Synergy A:** Financial capital and the value of vibrant farms and thriving local economies.
Synergy B: Vibrant Farms and Social Capital

Synergy C: Cultural Capital and Justice & Fairness and Strong Communities

Synergy D: Human Capital across the Whole Measures

It is important to note how the structuring of the community work sessions has given form to these findings. The assessment was not exhaustive of the community food-related work being done in SW Virginia, for several reasons. First, due to the ecological and entangled systems nature of community food security, there are too many factors to ever assume that one might fully capture them in a one-time (or even an on-going) assessment process. Additionally, it is arguably reductive to decide who and what is and is not impacting the day-to-day experiences of food insecurity across a region. (See earlier section on complexity). From a research standpoint, we never thought that we could capture the whole of “what is actually happening;” so there was no need to feign complete representation. Second, the assessment process was developmental in nature. As an assessment team, we viewed this process as a way to develop our ability to work together as a south-west Virginia region (via the AVFSN). So instead of trying to create a controlled environment where interviewees

A Community Work Session - Blue Ridge Plateau

Food & Farming on the Blue Ridge Plateau: People, Planet, & Profits

In late March of 2015, Grayson LandCare and SustainFloyd hosted a community work session in Galax, VA. The session was focused on information-sharing among people and organizations interested in developing the local economy through food and agriculture. The session featured moderated presentations by farmers, aggregators, processors, and emergency food providers.

The meeting was an opportunity to both strengthen existing relationships and develop new connections. In addition to the sectors represented by the presenters, the event was attended by both elected officials and state-level agency representatives.

As a result of this meeting, energy is developing around the following emergent issues:

• New Investment Opportunities - As a result of the meeting some of the organizers, participants, and local development officials have been working with some large-scale investors who find the region suitable to large-scale innovative agricultural/food business ventures.

• Carroll County STEM Lab - This located in an area high school is local asset for training a new generation of agricultural innovators. After the meeting, the STEM lab received interest and support from a U.S. senator.

• Food safety certification - Participants are exploring potential opportunities for locally based certification professionals who can assist local producers as they adapt to the new regulations of the Food Safety Modernization Act.

• Regional abattoir - Collaborators at the event are continuing to explore possibilities for an on-going project developing a locally based animal slaughter facility.

• Markets for organics - VA Dept. of Ag. and Consumer Services reports a greater demand for organic produce than the region can currently meet. Most producers are small-scale; refrigerated transportation (with a dedicated driver) is an ongoing hurdle to aggregating this produce and coordinating with shipping schedules.

• Organic transplants - Local organic farmers need organically-started transplants, which are not available locally. Both county high schools (Grayson & Carroll) have greenhouses; this could be a spring semester fundraising opportunity for 4-H or Ag classes.

In the Spring of 2016, the Blue Ridge Plateau group is moving ahead with the development of business opportunities with a range of investors.

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A Community Work Session - NRV+

Enhancing a Vibrant Community Food System in the ‘New River Valley Plus’

NRV Plus = Bland, Giles, Floyd, Montgomery, Pulaski, Wythe Counties and City of Radford

Two community work sessions have taken place thus far, in April and November 2015, engaging 31 community partners and culminating in goals and action plans developed by them to be delivered in 2016 and 2017. A third session for committee work is scheduled for late March.

Persons/groups/county’s representing this area and a range of food system arenas were invited. In the first gathering, each participant shared their work with the entire group, including successes and challenges, resulting in creation of ongoing relationships and identification of prominent commonalities or themes in a picture of a “Community at Work:”

- Livability
- Reduced Regulations
- Sustainability
- Job Security
- Hunger & Food Access to all
- Communication
- Connectivity
- Distribution & Marketing
- Availability of Food
- Profitability
- Enthusiasm
- Public Awareness
- Inter-generational Needs & Learning Options

At the second session, starting from input during the first, attendees identified key issues (with notable interest in educating the public and in business viability for farmers), then drilled down to goals and action items that met these criteria: beneficial or urgent to this region as a whole; achievable in 2 years; does not include more networking creation ideas.

The goals selected focused around locally produced, locally sold/used foods:
- Promote local foods intake in the community
- Educate public about food preparation
- Strengthen the supply side of local foods by strengthening the small farmer

Our first set of action items complement each other to address those goals:
- ‘Fruit/Veggie of the Month’ Program for children, and
- ‘Make the local farmer the local hero’ campaign.

Strategies were proposed and action committees formed to fine tune and begin their work in spring 2016.

Overall, we learned that when diverse food system practitioners are first invigorated by sharing experiences and connecting, it sparks momentum to further develop working relationships and “big dreams” for the area AND then a willingness to give significant ongoing time to those efforts IF that time is spent creating concrete actions with results.

Host organizations: SO Fresh, Independence Farmers Market, & Montgomery County Cooperative Extension

Contact Person: Kelli Scott - kescott1@vt.edu and Amy Tanner - aetanner@mac.com

were carefully selected for their representative perspectives, we worked on pulling together community sessions that allowed some of our leading organizations to gather their communities of collaborators (new and potential) and conduct the work session that fit their local needs, differences, and trajectories. As should be clear from the information boxes (Blue Ridge Plateau, NRV+, and Far southwest VA), each of the work sessions drew upon different organizations and sectors. A few attendees attended all three sessions, but each session largely drew from distinct clusters of organizations and spaces where there was already synergy.

A synergy occurs when two or more things are brought together and produce an effect that is greater than the sum of the parts. This captures a goal of the assessment process. In southwest Virginia, where are people
and ideas coming together in relation to community food security, and producing something that is greater than the sum of the parts? Where are the fertile grounds for growing existing and emergent synergies? Through the Whole Measures and the Community Capitals, we identified the four synergies described in this section. These synergies, when synthesized with the concepts of complexity, emergence, and network, have provided the foundation for the recommendations described in the next section.

Synergy A: Financial capital and the value of vibrant farms and thriving local economies.

Agriculture as economic development is a dominant point of synergy in food systems work in southwest Virginia. A large number of organizations and individuals are focused on connecting financial capital with the agricultural supply chain, whether that is through local processing and cost-savings to local farmers, or through access to capital for new agricultural ventures. This synergy is strengthened by strong connections between the Virginia Department

A Community Work Session - Far southwest VA

Food System Connectivity Convening

The far southwest Virginia community work session was hosted by Appalachian Sustainable Development and embedded in a multi-host regional convening. The meeting was held in October 2015. The event drew over 80 attendees from across southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee. The participants represented diverse perspectives of local foods, public health, economic development, government, academic, faith-based, and grassroots groups.

The convening had four main objectives, to help participants: 1) see the big picture of healthy food economies, 2) make connections with each other around existing work, 3) better understand what each of us can do in our own role, and 4) determine what we can do together to advance our region’s food system and health outcomes. During the work session, attendees participated in various working groups focused on:

- Food production
- Workforce development and education
- Food access
- Policy and economic development
- Food and health

Participants also had a chance to identify linkages among the various working groups, provide input on working group priorities, and build relationships and connections with other participants.

The following themes and priorities were identified across the groups:

- Common messaging around local food and health
- Coordinating & sharing information across the region
- Connecting & partnering amongst ourselves and with other food and health actors
- Education & training for consumers, providers, and volunteers
- Policy & advocacy to support effective food and health strategies
- Branding & marketing to build public awareness around local foods and health

By thoughtfully working across northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia, at the intersections of these systems of local food, public health, and economic development, this effort focused on building a broad coalition of food and health actors working collectively to improve the region’s communities and economy.

Working Groups are currently meeting to continue moving this work forward.

Contact Person: Kathlyn Terry - kterry@asdevelop.org
“...Back into the 80’s, there was a FANTA (Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance) study done. Virginia looked at this thing in just a little bit different way. They decided to put [aggregators] in the production areas instead of, if you look at states south of here, they chose to go into more or less where the population was, where you sell more product retail wise. ...Ours was the first one of the four remaining that was built. ...Virginia Department of Agriculture owns the facility still at this point in time.”

“Just a few things that really resonated with me is the whole idea of bringing in, looking at policy, looking at entrepreneurs, people who have a—and probably not the usual suspects, but entrepreneurs, but people we might think of in this region that are unique, so it’s kind of exciting to think about how we can make it work.”

“What I’m hearing with this model is you know, so many people are focused on local food, and yet, in order to make the scale work, we’re talking about taking this and shipping this off. Even with some of the bigger vegetable producers, we’re talking about getting to the volume, we’re on the highway, we’re shipping it to markets that are going to pay more money for it. And so in one way, that contradicts the same local food effort, where we’re trying to grow food that stays in our area, feeds our local folks, and then trying to get a decent price for that, to where our farmers can stay farmers and grow here for our local community and at the same time, our local community can afford local food. So how do we build our local community and infrastructure and teach our value, get people to value what we’re doing with local food as well as scaling up and shipping it off.”

“The other thing that we’ve had conversations about that you guys might be interested in is there’s a professor at [nearby private college] who does these classes called...‘Help Me, Help You’ is what it is, it’s ‘help me the business person, help you the customer. What he does is he has classes, you know for adults, small business folks in the community to come and just get a good business course. You know it just kind of goes through all the steps of writing a business plan and that sort of thing, so what we’ve envisioned with him is that he might hold some of those classes physically at [a specific local NGO]. It’s the same class that he’s teaching at [the college], now it’s just going to be five minutes down the road in a different setting. So [the university] provides the educational setting, we provide that farm, the easy going, you-can-wear-your-muddy boots, you know, comfortable setting.”

“[Breaking into a new vegetable market] helped diversify other things in this county, it really helped the [local distributor], [they] helped it and it helped [them]. Just like [my colleague] said here, it gave us another road to turn down, it enabled us to help transform the [local distributor] into more of a community type packing facility to benefit any grower who wanted to use it... They are able to get food safety standards quicker and easier than we would be able to and also it may not be financially feasible for everybody to be able to do that, to be able to build a packing facility like that to be able to supply product to places, whether it’s [regional supermarkets] or anywhere else. Until you see that it’s profitable and get big enough to go out on to your own, use the [local distributor]. Its there and they’re there to help you.”
of Agriculture and southwest Virginia. This synergy is made manifest in built infrastructure like produce distributors, aggregators, and the numerous local farmers’ markets spread throughout the region. All three of the community work sessions pulled together stakeholders who indicated the value of vibrant farms and the value of thriving local economies. This is partly a reflection of the host organizations’ commitments to agricultural and economic development. At the same time, these issues are a clear magnet for existing financial capital. Particularly relative to the other Whole Measures, the communities involved in the assessment have been successful in securing funding to support vibrant farms and thriving local economies. This is potentially a result of both the interests of funding organizations and agencies, as well as the presence of social capital around vibrant farms (which is Synergy B).

**Synergy B: Vibrant Farms and Social Capital**

In southwest Virginia there is a great deal of social capital connected to the value of vibrant farms. A significant portion of the individuals and organizations working within the realm of community food security in southwest Virginia are doing so in a way that is directly connected to building the vibrancy of local farms. For example, see the programs and activities of the community work sessions’ host organizations. There is wide variation in the ways that this commitment is made actual—some social clusters are focused on equipping producers for local markets and institutional selling, while other are working to connect local farmers with national, and as feasible, international markets. This variation leads to some level of productive tension, as might be read through the quotation series for Synergies A, B, & C.

Southwest Virginia’s social capital for vibrant farms is at once mature, and ripe for new growth. Though each host organization has played a role in creating spaces for building social capital among farmers and agricultural advocates and service providers, it was clear that many people at each work session were meeting each other for the first time (see quotation series). Research on the community capitals has indicated that social capital is a requisite foundation for building capital in other areas (Emery & Flora, 2006). Therefore, we suggest that providing space for growing and strengthening the existing social capital around vibrant farms is essential for creating systemic food systems change. In pursuit of systemic change, we also see a need for using this existent social capital to expand social capital into other areas of the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems. (For more on this, see the recommendations section later in this report.)

**Synergy C: Cultural Capital and Justice & Fairness and Strong Communities**

The community work sessions demonstrated cultural capital around ideas of justice and fairness and strong communities. Unlike the financial and social capitals of Synergies A & B, the cultural capital was less immediately tangible. It was manifested in a diversity of ways across multiple references—for example: working conditions, labor practices, senior advocacy, and faith communities. (See the Synergy C quotation series for more examples.) The lead author of the Whole Measures (Abi-Nader, 2013) has suggested that “justice and fairness” and “strong communities” are more realistically sub-fields that support the other four fields (thriving local economies, vibrant farms, healthy people, and sustainable ecosystems). It is understandable that this cultural capital would be pervasive, but enmeshed with other values. This synergy is playing a critical role holding together various aspects of the community.
Synergy B Quotation Series

“I know nothing about farming. I tried last year. These people helped me plan a plot. We also manage a community garden. Ok, she had to show me what I was doing. Just to be able to do it. I think I grew one tomato but I was proud of that tomato! ...But anyway, we talked about taking this on, we were very reluctant about doing that, because it was out of our realm. We weren’t really into agriculture. And a lot of these folks came to us and convinced us to do it and they’re the reason that we do it. So if they’re successful, we’re successful.”

“The new marketplace...has been phenomenal. It’s gone, like I said, from five vendors to I think its what, like 20, 25 vendors. That’s phenomenal, in just three years. There’s a huge support system there, the other vendors are always willing to educate and inform and I think that is enabling us as growers and producers to explore and expand.”

“When we started out [in lamb], [an agency employee] got our first customer in distance, other than that I was doing a farmers’ market every day except Sunday and Monday and that was to market the product that we had, which was the lamb was the big thing. But [the agency employee] invited some chefs from D.C. down and [a local meat distributor] was there and he invited us for the lamb and that worked really good. It got it started. He was an excellent chef to talk to to teach you how to start [working with restaurants]. So thank you [agency employee]. Here I am today.”

“As a large-scale vegetable farmer] I had some good years, had some bad years, the bad years make you start looking at what else is there? We need to be diversifying into some things to spread the risk. So if cabbage is cheap or something is cheap maybe we’ll have something else to take up the slack. That’s when I went to looking at broccoli because we had tried it in years past and noted it was a cold crop, it was grown a lot like cabbage, I thought I could grow it. So I got with [a local wholesaler], so we talked with [a regional supermarket chain] and struck out a deal with them. They let me give it a try, you know. I remember the word, we went on a conference call, they said, “broccoli is grown in California, we don’t think you can grow it here.” I says, “We can grow cabbage” they said, “we’ve tried it” but I said, “you haven’t had a cabbage grower to grow it.” I said “if we can grow cabbage, we can grow broccoli.” And so they said, “ok, we will try it, we will give you a try.” So they gave me a try there, it’s been probably close to ten years. That first year, it was a success and we’ve built on it every year.”

“We also realized pretty quickly that you can’t produce enough product to the system out there without aggregating with other farmers as well. So we work with a number of other cattle producers and pig producers in North Carolina, southwest Virginia, we work with a [university] down in [a nearby state], just trying to see how we can continue to build this grass-based production model.”

“But we got into a discussion group with other seasonal dairy farmers from all over the country and it was a New Zealand based discussion group where we opened our books to each other, we all changed our business, our recordkeeping, so that they were uniform so we could compare the methods and help each other with experiences that we’d have whether they were successes or failures. And we were working with California and Indiana and Georgia and New York, and just learned a huge amount about the business at that time. Conventional farmers were rapidly exiting the business.”
Synergy C Quotation Series

“Let’s not just feed the people, let’s also address the broader needs that they have.”

“...Holistic resource management, has been a key management and decision-making process for us and we keep those goals, basically we came to the realization that if we’re not working for our own goals, we’re working for somebody else’s, and I’ll guarantee that all the big corporations that we are involved in our community and in our marketplace and world have goals. And if we don’t, then were working for theirs. So we’ve been able to focus on that and the family, our family is a big, err, huge part of our goals, both of our kids have been off the farm, gone away, worked overseas, worked in other industries and they’re back and that’s what it’s all about, as far as I’m concerned.”

“The challenge that I think we all face is that our financial and economic systems don’t work, our financial systems value money and profit over true values of what is good and what’s needed and what human need is all about. Because when you’re driving after nothing but profit, local food doesn’t make money, it doesn’t.”

“We’re finding that a lot of our clients [food pantry] are not chronic users and abusers of the system, but they are working poor, they are families that had two or three jobs, and now, all of the sudden they’ve still got the two little kids, but now they’ve only got one job, or one and a half jobs. And they just don’t have the money to make the ends meet for the end of the month...Of course, you’ve got seniors who can’t make it on the money that they bring in and their other circumstances, but so many of the people are where they don’t want to be, I’ll just put it that way.”

“I helped start this [college-connected] organization with just a few students about 32 years ago. In the beginning I felt like asking people to come and work was a sacrifice on their part, but yet, I never asked them to support the program, I mean I was reluctant at some fundraisers of ours, but you learn to be—if you help them be self-sacrificial in what you’re doing, they are going to be more of a partner with you. And that’s been a thing with Christian groups, challenge them to see what you’re doing, but also to support it. And don’t be hesitant to ask for that.”

“It’s been amazing to see... When I came there thirty years ago it was the town and the gown and they were suspicious of anything the college did because they’re always asking for something. And we are asking for something, but we’re asking it for the good of the community, and that makes a big difference, it’s been amazing to see attitudes change through the years over that, and how the churches have gotten involved. But it’s all about relationships... If we let the word out, then other people are going to be challenged, other people are going to get together, and it’s networking. It’s about community.”

“I mean, we have folks that are homeless, we have folks that are convicted felons, we have folks in really dire situations, housing, mental health issues, substance abuse. Giving them a space and garden their own food, feel valued, feel connected to the food, I think it works outward as well as it impacts inward so I think food can be at the center of meeting a multitude of needs.”
food work in southwest Virginia. It is driving individuals’ personal goals, that are, in turn, shaping their roles as community food workers. For example, one producer said, “...Basically we came to the realization that if we’re not working for our own goals, we’re working for somebody else’s...and the family, our family is a big, err, huge part of our goals.”

Another regional leader of a national non-profit urged, “Let’s not just feed the people, let’s also address the broader needs that they have.”

The series of quotations in the Synergy C page touches on both the vastness and the breadth of the power of this synergy. It has a strong effect on the way regional practitioners are imagining a desirable food system. By spending energy exploring this cultural capital, the AVFSN might find ways to create new collaborative alliances across different manifestations of justice and fairness and strong communities. This could be a mechanism for developing new partnerships with non-food related organizations that hold similar cultural capital. For example, this could mean developing projects with those working on affordable housing, drinking water quality, mountaintop removal, livable wages, and equitable access to education.

Synergy D: Human Capital across the Whole Measures

Across southwest Virginia and stretching into the surrounding states, there is a vast wealth of human capital related to food systems and the six Whole Measures for Community Food Systems. A wide variety of organizations and individuals are involved in a diversity of food system efforts. Some organizations have been around for decades, others are just emerging. There are organizations and individuals working with pre-schoolers, senior citizens, and nearly every age group in between. There are individuals with detailed knowledge of community-level programming and advocacy, individuals who are thinking strategically about regional markets, and individuals exploring questions about systems-level collaboration.

We are not including a quotation series to reflect this synergy—it is reflected in nearly every corner of the community food work that is underway in southwest Virginia. From the start of the assessment through the key informant interviews and the analysis of the community work sessions, the presence of this human capital has been abundantly clear. Through the process of the assessment, the data, analysis, and conceptual work, it has become evident that this human capital has a potential for greater connectivity and synergies.

This potential is hinted at in the following work session excerpts:

“In every single one of these groups, my guess is that there is like, ‘oh wow, didn’t know you were doing that’, ‘didn’t know you were doing that.’”

“I think we were in that group, and we talked about how it’s really hard for us to communicate with each other. We need a site or a distribution list. I know that one of the students said ‘well, here’s an entire list’...taking the time to build that into some list or database [...] or a site that we could go to let everybody know ‘well, here’s some policy that we need for everybody to call Congressman [A] or Congressman [B] or whoever.’ And that’s what we talked about. We don’t communicate enough, so we’re over here doing this and we need this, and this entire group could help us.”
In a different context, another speaker nuanced these statements,

“And then looking at this final element, looking at across different [issues], other actors that could be essential to the work of the food and health situation, but the need for funding, ongoing and strong funding for these types of things, there’s only so much in the pot, there’s no surprise there.”

Across the Community Food Security Assessment, we saw a great deal of human capital related to community food work. The first speaker really summed up our understanding of human capital in southwest Virginia. As both the first and second speakers noted, the potential of this asset is often underutilized. In the recommendations section, we suggest that this synergy has a rich potential that may be realized through strategic and concerted communication and information sharing efforts—holding face-to-face and digital spaces for new relationships, coordination, and collaboration. In the third excerpt, the speaker hinted at the tension at play. Across the region, people understand the need to collaborate across sectors and issues. But this kind of collaboration is not the path of least resistance. It requires facilitation and strategy, and that requires financial and human resources.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA FOOD SYSTEMS WORK**

**Creating Conditions and Openings, Nurturing New Synergies**

The Appalachian Foodshed Project was funded by the USDA to “enhance community food security.” As a team of university and community practitioners, we have agreed to make sense of community food security via the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems and Community Capitals. This means that a community food secure system is one that is attempting to leverage movement in all six fields of the Whole Measures and is able to build upon assets across each of the seven community capitals, albeit in various ways. In addition to the conceptual framing on complexity, emergence, and network, these recommendations are shaped by this particular understanding of community food security.

**The recommendations:**

1. Strengthen Existing Synergies by Connecting Regional Human Capital
2. Develop and Strengthen Relationships with Organizations that Share Similar Cultural Commitments to Strong Communities and Justice & Fairness
3. Monitor and Evaluate Recommendations One and Two

**Recommendation One:**

**Strengthen Existing Synergies by Connecting Regional Human Capital**

There is a lot of energy around vibrant farms and thriving local economies, but it is not necessarily connected across the region. There is potential for expanding the reach and impact of existing resources by connecting to other southwest Virginia organizations, agencies, and individuals.

**Questions to Explore for Recommendation One:**

- How do we create and hold spaces for knowledge sharing across regional practitioners?
  - For example, in southwest Virginia, how can a group in one county learn about, and from, a group in another county?
  - How might we lower the participation and financial costs of information sharing across the region?
Possible Points of Action for Recommendation One:

• Seek funding opportunities for coordinated regional convenings with the primary objective of developing a learning network and building relationships and trust.

• Develop and utilize digital platforms for increased open access information sharing. Platforms like LocalWiki can be used to share organizational information and organizational/network learning.

• Establish a culture of open information-sharing and information transparency.

Recommendation Two: Develop and Strengthen Relationships with Organizations that Share Similar Cultural commitments to Strong Communities and Justice & Fairness

As ecological thinking has taught us, small changes in one area can change an entire system. Food insecurity is an effect of a very complex and entangled system. In this complexity, it is not possible to know the exact impact that one change or action might have. It requires experimenting and trying new things. For example, from the assessment it was clear that simply increasing the number of local farmers was not going to significantly change the state of food insecurity in the region. Farmers need to make a decent living and nutritious food needs to be affordable. Sustainably addressing food insecurity will require exploring and transforming new avenues and new partnerships across the different Whole Measures for Community Food Systems.

Questions to Explore for Recommendation Two:

• How do we create spaces where diverse practitioners (inclusive of underrepresented Whole Measures) can collaborate on complex and real regional food system issues?

• How might we take a more ecological approach to food system change? Looking at the webs of cause that lead to food insecurity in southwest Virginia.

• Who are the “unlikely” partners for food systems change? How do we integrate our work with theirs?

• What sort of synergies might there be between community food security and:
  • Affordable housing
  • Sustainable jobs
  • Anti-racism organizing
  • Fair wage
  • Access to safe drinking water

Possible Points of Action for Recommendation Two:

• Consider food insecurity as a symptom of broader issues. What are the local and regional webs of cause that are resulting in food insecurity? What other partners are working on these issues? Explore possibilities for collaboration.

• Develop and sustain places for having cross-sector dialogue with “unlikely” partners. Explore the conditions that might make our conversations more inclusive of “unlikely” partners.

Recommendation Three: Monitor and Evaluate Recommendations One and Two

The synergies identified in this report are strong and, in many ways, developed across the region. Building and expanding these synergies could be aided by an adaptable, but well-conceived, evaluation process. Evaluation frameworks can also be tools for exploring
the values that drive our diverse work. The benefit of these frameworks is that they allow a group, or in this case, a network, to be sure that they are evaluating their work and successes based upon the core beliefs that are most important to the group (see examples below). The emerging field of network evaluation (Network Impact, 2014) has created tools and processes that can support this process.

Questions to Explore for Recommendation Three:

- How can we better understand the values that individuals and organizations are bringing into the network?
- What processes can we use to ensure that the direction of the AVFSN reflect these values?
- How can we better understand whether or not the network is having the impact it is seeking?
- What tools and processes can we use to better understand our collaborative learning?

Possible Points of Action for Recommendation Three:

- Institute a planning and evaluation framework that prioritizes local and regional commitments to Strong Communities and Justice & Fairness.
  - Some examples:
    - Whole Measures for Community Food Systems (Abi-Nader et al., 2009)
    - Whole Measures: Transforming Our Vision of Success (From Center for Whole Communities: the non-food systems version of WMCFS)
    - Getting to the Next System: Guideposts on the Way to a New Political Economy

CLOSING THOUGHTS

The southwest Virginia Community Food Security Assessment unfolded over several years, growing and changing as it developed. Even through the ebbs and flows, we maintained a focus on a process that would benefit community food security work in our region. The AVFSN emerged and developed alongside the assessment, and has become a vehicle for holding and facilitating space for community food security learning and strategy in southwest Virginia. Throughout this process, it has been evident that we need better ways to connect to other individuals, organizations, and ideas. We advocate for a focused effort on network building as a means of increasing our capacity to do more collaborative, higher-impact community food work.

As the AVFSN moves forward, it is our hope that the work of this assessment lends some initial structure to the conversation and next steps for the region. There are many factors influencing the potential success of our recommendations. At this point in 2016, it is clear that human and financial resources are necessary to facilitate the next steps of the AVFSN. We see a strong role for some of our institutional partners, like Virginia Cooperative Extension, but we also see space for a more dispersed approach to facilitation—local leaders who are capable of providing support and capacity to the AVFSN. As a member of the analysis team from Grayson LandCare, Jerry Moles, likes to say: “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”
REFERENCES


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