

Taking it Statewide: Growing Sustainable Good Systems Capacity and Outcomes across North Carolina

Final Report for MS09-002

Project Type: Matching Grants Program

Funds awarded in 2009: \$14,950.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2009

Region: Southern

State: North Carolina

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Project Information

Abstract:

2013 FINAL REPORT

Taking it Statewide: Growing Sustainable Food Systems Capacity and Outcomes across North Carolina.

Through this planning project, The Center for Environmental Farming Systems (North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services) brought together a comprehensive group of partners engaged in all aspects of the food system in North Carolina from farm-to-fork, along with potential funders who could consider providing matching resources as the program developed. We contracted with an excellent facilitation team (Fountainworks) who lead us through a process to set priorities for programming, and strategies for funding.

In addition to a kick-off meeting in association with this planning grant, we also hosted a group of 25 funders from across North Carolina to discuss the strategic planned initiatives and the potential of them providing matching resources. Though the matching funds from SARE have not materialized, we have continued the work and have raised more than \$1 million from NC foundations in support of our identified and commonly shared goals, developed in part, through this effort.

The work of the planning grant was to coordinate, with a broad group of partners, an effort to identify priorities in local food systems statewide, and to identify a strategy for funding them. This dovetailed with CEFS launching a statewide initiative called "From Farm to Fork: Building a Sustainable Local Food Economy in North Carolina". The farm to fork initiative included a 75-person advisory team, six regional meetings (600+ attendees), eleven working-issue teams led by CEFS' strategic partners (150+ participants), and a statewide summit (400+ attendees including the Governor), held in May 2009. The goal of the process was to develop "game changer" strategies, defined as high-impact actions that could be accomplished in a 2-3 year time frame, in key areas determined by a large and statewide group of collaborators. From this initiative, CEFS published a 100-plus page comprehensive

guide for statewide action entitled From Farm to Fork: A Guide to Building North Carolina's Sustainable Local Food Economy (<http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/resources/stateactionguide2010.pdf>).

We also initiated a local foods listserv, that is very active still with more than 2000 subscribers.

Now, four years later, nearly all of the "game changer" ideas identified through that process have been accomplished by either CEFS or its many partners. These include:

Spearheading legislation establishing a North Carolina Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council, institutionalizing our partnerships and giving us the political authority to address key food system barriers (unfortunately, the 2013 legislature sunset the council along with many others);

Launched a statewide "NC 10% Campaign" that has engaged more than 865 business partners and 6641 individuals, tracking more than \$40 million spent on local foods since inception; Won a competitive process (along with 4-H and many community partners) to be an inaugural pilot state for FoodCorps; Are in the process of developing a network of community gardens in every county (funded and initiated by Blue Cross and Blue Shield); Implemented a beginning farmer program that partners with local governments to incubate farms on vacant public lands; Initiated a teaching training program for farm-to-school (accomplished by the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project); are developing models to improve access to fresh and local foods in underserved communities; and, are working towards the development of model supply chains for local foods to serve institutional markets at Fort Bragg Army Base, and Lowes Foods grocery store chain.

In 2012, BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina Foundation (BCBSNCF) has funded CEFS to updating the 2009 Farm to Fork roadmap. The renewed effort, Farm to Fork II, provides North Carolinians an opportunity to reflect, deepen, and improve upon the collaborative work begun four years ago. The goals of Farm to Fork II will include identifying new game changer ideas, but also identifying and implementing standard measures of success in a results framework.

In summary, while the matching funds from SARE have yet to become available, the collaborative efforts and planning that the SARE funding provided were integrated with other funded statewide planning and implementation efforts among a wide variety of organizations and agencies. We were able to leverage additional resources for the effort, but look forward to raising this to the next level if the SARE matching funds ever become available.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or SARE.



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