REPORT

North Carolina Food System Resilience Strategy

FOOD RESILIENCE NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina Food Resilience Advisory Board
Duke World Food Policy Center
Center for Environmental Farming Systems

Authors

Duke World Food Policy Center: Jennifer Zuckerman, Jack Daly, Gizem Templeton, Ali Conrad, Nicole Lococo, Sara Darwish, Elizabeth Towell, and Deborah Hill; Center for Environmental Farming Systems: Abbey E. Piner, J. Dara Bloom, Andrew R. Smolski, Jamilla Hawkins, Tiera George, Erin Van Fleet, Andrea Padilla Guerrero, Robyn Stout, Tessa Thraves, Josie Walker, and Janie Hynson

Correspondence Contact

Jennifer Zuckerman, jennifer.zuckerman@duke.edu; Abbey Piner, apiner@ncsu.edu

North Carolina Food Resilience Advisory Board

Ryan Bethea, Oysters Carolina; William Booth, Alpha Life Enrichment Center; Georie Bryant, Communities in Partnership; Savi Horne, Land Loss Prevention Project; George Jones; Randolph Keaton, Men and Women United for Youth and Families, CDC; Ruth McDowell, Edgecombe County Public Schools; Chanel Nestor, NC State Extension; Cecilia Polanco, So Good Pupusas/Pupusas for Education; Chester Williams, A Better Chance A Better Community; Juanita Wilson, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; Der Holcomb, NC Cooperative Extension – Alexander County Center; Marcus Hill, Island CulturZ; Davon Goodwin, Sandhills AG Innovation Center; Jesalyn Keziah, UNC American Indian Center

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The Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) is a partnership of North Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. CEFS develops and promotes just and equitable food and farming systems that conserve natural resources, strengthen communities, improve health outcomes, and provide economic opportunities in North Carolina and beyond. The conclusions and recommendations of any CEFS publication are solely those of its author(s), and do not reflect the views of North Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, or the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

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Executive Summary

COVID-19's effect on the food system has been complex. Despite the pandemic's initial shock to supply chains, the system has largely functioned as intended. Yet that is not necessarily a relief for many, who have experienced harm from embedded inequities. While the dislocations associated with the pandemic have been felt broadly, we believe it is important to foreground the negative effects on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals and communities. This is partly the legacy of cultural and policy decisions that have created an inequitable food system.

This project focuses on North Carolina and contextualizes the current moment against the historical landscape. The audience for this project is philanthropy. As a group with substantial power, it asks how philanthropy can be a partner to address some of the most entrenched inequities. How, in other words, can philanthropy help create more equity and resiliency in the North Carolina food system?

During COVID-19, millions of Americans lost jobs or had hours reduced, and demand for food assistance spiked across the country. Food banks distributed 50% more food in 2020 compared with 2019, and US government spending on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) increased more than 48% from $60.3 billion in the 2019 fiscal year to $89.6 billion in 2020.

Changing the food system is difficult to imagine. Power often resides in the hands of actors who operate on a global scale. The report begins by defining food systems and providing historical context for how the food system came to be. Yet there are pathways forward. We believe community-rooted organizations already have ideas that can help chart a new course.

Findings: North Carolina Philanthropy

We present a summary of how the NC philanthropic community engages with the food system. This summation was developed through surveys and interviews of members of the North Carolina Network of Grantmakers to identify the strategies of in-state organizations. These research instruments allowed us to recognize five findings:

1. NC philanthropic organizations focus on food insecurity with emergency food aid that aligns with the Charity Framework.
2. Most NC organizations have a limited footprint in other aspects of the food system.
3. Increased flexibility with program funds and devoting additional resources to fight food insecurity were the most common responses to COVID-19.
4. Equity considerations are increasingly important, although many organizations are still determining how best to articulate their strategies.
5. There is a spirit of cooperation among NC funders, but not necessarily concrete collaborative structures or collective leadership.

Interventions designed to address issues in the food system can be interpreted through various frameworks. The most common paradigm—the Charity Framework—is first and foremost about helping those in need.

While we believe charity plays a valuable role, it does not address the systemic features that contribute to food insecurity. The persistence of various metrics reinforces the idea that current approaches are not addressing the root of the problem.[1]

Moreover, the Charity Framework has been criticized for maintaining many of the ills it has sought to remedy. Specifically, the model reinforces a system of oppression in at least three ways:

1. it reproduces white supremacy culture narratives;
2. it is reactive and short-term; and
3. it creates unintended consequences that reinforce existing inequalities.

Findings: Focus Group Feedback

Focus group participants brought together for this project, representing communities across NC, described experiences with these and other roadblocks. Many represent predominantly rural and BIPOC communities and have extensive experience in grant-seeking and funding relationships at the local, state, and national levels.

The focus group participants expressed a desire to develop new relationships with philanthropy that are grounded in trust and build justice, equity, and resilience into community food systems. Trust is perhaps *the* key word to use to characterize breakdowns between the organizations participating in the focus groups and philanthropy. There is a lack of trust that is both felt and perceived by the focus group participants, and influences many of the individual findings. These include:

- **The prevalence of white supremacy culture in grantmaking.** Throughout each of the four focus group discussions, community leaders expressed concerns with the racial history of philanthropic organizations. Philanthropy, in many minds, represents white wealth, privilege, and power built on the land and labor of others. In the current socio-political climate, funders are taking more interest in addressing the histories of the individuals and families who have donated to (or founded) their organizations. While this reckoning might be difficult, community leaders hope there is recognition that the legacy of many historic funders in North Carolina have long been painful for their communities.

1 Despite almost 20 years of philanthropic giving, NC's household food insecurity rate was 13.7% from 2001-03 and 13.9% in 2018 and projected to be 19.3% in 2020.

- **Transactional relationships and mistrust characterize the relationship.** Local leaders believe the relationship with philanthropy is often transactional, and that funders undervalue the work being done in the community. Participants feel philanthropy emphasizes a return on investment over the development and growth of the community.

- **Perceived flaws in the grantmaking process.** Participants advocated for a simplified grantmaking process. When applying for grants, many felt the costs associated with the process—whether time, effort, or financial—were not worth the potential benefits. There was a long list of items that repeatedly caused stress:
  1) applying for grants and not receiving the requested amount;
  2) difficulties associated with reporting evaluation elements, especially for smaller, BIPOC-led community organizations;
  3) lack of flexibility in the grantmaking process; and
  4) inaccessible language in the application process for Native and non-Native speakers.

New Pathways Forward

A multi-pronged approach to systems change would achieve better outcomes for communities. There are different strategies; however, we emphasize the merits of two related concepts:

The Innovative Framework: In contrast to the Charity Framework, the Innovative Framework is oriented toward justice and equity. The framework emphasizes the root causes of inequality. Food insecurity is viewed as structural injustice as opposed to a consequence of individual decisions or a lack of initiative on the part of BIPOC communities. In other words, it is understood that the whole system privileges certain groups and produces the problems that philanthropy intervenes to address. Solving those problems requires addressing the systems themselves, not the individuals within the systems.

Community Food Systems: Global food systems play a critical role in feeding the planet's population. But power regularly resides in multinational corporations and multilateral institutions that are outside the reach of local actors and the NC philanthropic community. Community food systems operate on a different scale. In many respects, philanthropy is already working with individuals and actors who are seeking to build systems rooted in the community. These organizations embrace many aspects of the Innovative Framework and are centered on simple ideas: 1) communities can nourish themselves physically, economically, and environmentally; and 2) they know what they need and have the power, capacity, and influence to transform lives.

Critical Action Recommendations

The Critical Actions named in this report are the result of a year-long process, led by food justice leaders from rural, urban, and peri-urban communities across North Carolina. While we envision a just, resilient, and equitable network of locally controlled community food systems in North Carolina, we wish to emphasize that no individual funder nor organization will be able to achieve that vision by themselves. The effort must be collective.

Prior literature has identified six interdependent conditions that allow social or environmental problems to fester. Shifting any of the six can create space for change to occur. The Critical Actions described in this report are designed to work across different levels and conditions. The actions will require time, capacity building, relationship building, and capital. They will take trust and relationships, and change will be slow—we envision 5-10 years at a minimum.

Many recommendations are building new systems across philanthropy, academia, government, and community. All of the recommendations address the shifts in decision making, leadership, and funding that have been, for the most part, historically left out of the community food system in North Carolina.

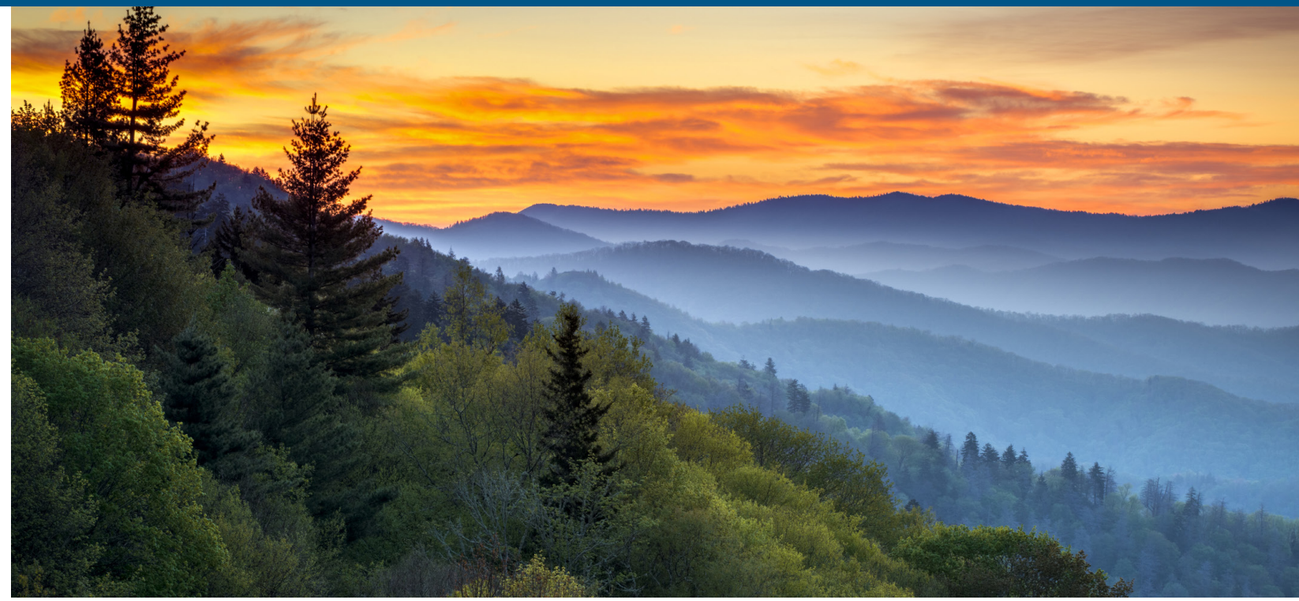
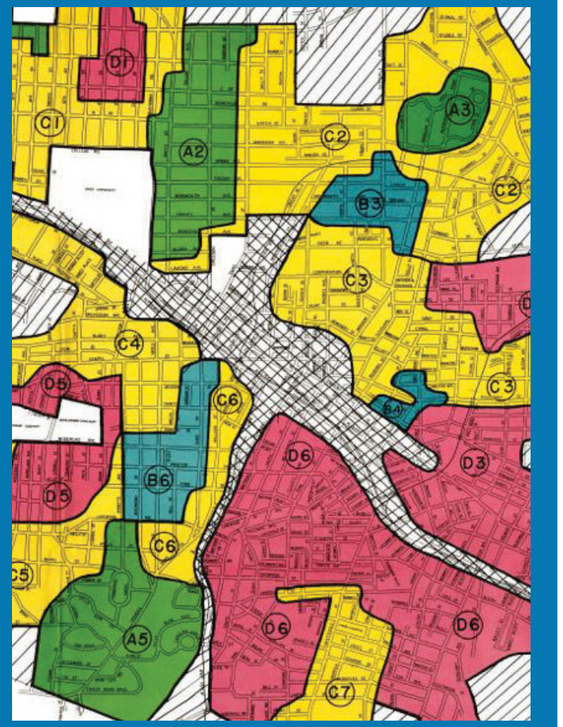


Table 1: Summary of Critical Actions and Funding Requirements

Critical Action	Estimated Investment Needed Over 10 Years
Formalize and invest in a statewide BIPOC-led, community-accountable Food Justice Network	$26.75M
Establish a Statewide Equitable Food Oriented Development Fund and Equitable Food Oriented Development Network	$17.5M
Create/Expand Community Participatory Grant Funding for Grassroots Food Systems Work in North Carolina	$12M
Create a Statewide Tribal Food Sovereignty Fund	$30.5M
Create a North Carolina Black Food and Farm Advocacy Network and Statewide Fund for Black Food and Agriculture	$9.25 M
Create an Agricultural Worker Equity, Access, and Advocacy Fund and Expand an Agricultural Workforce Network Development	$9.5M
Create a Food Justice Learning Network for North Carolina Funders Working Across the Food System	$800,000K
Total	**$150.55M**

Introduction

To make change, people need to "get proximate, change the narratives, stay hopeful, and learn to be uncomfortable" (Kane, 2020). That framing—inspired by author, lawyer, and human rights activist Bryan Stevenson—is fundamental to the research and recommendations in this report. It is a calling to understand both *why* inequities in our current food system exist, and *how* decision makers might move differently to leverage the resources in support of—as opposed to on behalf of— Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.



Systems change can happen through relationships with BIPOC-led and BIPOC-accountable food justice organizations. Systems change can happen when the narrative changes from "target populations" to "community-led and community-accountable." Systems change can happen when institutions and community stay hopeful during the inevitable struggles that will occur during the transformation. Systems change can happen when institutions embrace the discomfort of NOT leading the discussions—of hearing challenging truths and turning the lens inward to identify the internal and organizational changes that must happen to build equity.

This report is partly a response to the jarring impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food system and the disproportionate negative impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color individuals and communities. But it is also in response to systemic inequities that have existed for centuries. It addresses the conditions that are needed for change, focusing on community food systems, the role of philanthropy, and relationships to affect both practice and policy from the grassroots level up to state and federal systems.

The goal of this report is to begin the process of systems change to build justice and equity into the community food systems in North Carolina. To set the stage for that change, it:

1. Defines the food system, value chain, and differentiates the specifics of a community food system
2. Identifies the historic and systemic inequities inherent in the food system
3. Outlines pre-COVID and early COVID philanthropic investments in the food system
4. Highlights the community-defined barriers and opportunities of traditional grantmaking in the food system
5. Offers critical actions for investments that will start to address the inequities of community food systems through shifts in power and decision making

The authors and community food justice leaders involved in the creation of this report offer it as an invitation, to step into relationship, and begin the process of creating the conditions for change that will transform the community food systems of North Carolina.

BIPOC - This acronym stands for "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color." The term is "meant to unite all people of color in the work for liberation while intentionally acknowledging that not all people of color face the same levels of injustice." The BIPOC term separates Black and Indigenous individuals from People of Color in the United States to recognize that Black and Indigenous people face the worst consequences of systemic white supremacy, classism, and settler colonialism.

Foundations involved in systems change can increase their odds for success by focusing on less explicit but more powerful conditions for change, while also turning the lens on themselves.

—The Water of Systems Change, June 2018

Realities of the NC Food System

This project seeks to provide insight into how and why the food system does not meet the needs of all North Carolinians. The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated new food system failures for some while reinforcing existing structural inequities for others. Characterizing the pandemic's effect on the entrenched landscape has its challenges—the system is not necessarily broken; in many cases, it is working as intended. To analyze and address the systemic inequities exposed during COVID-19, it is therefore important to understand how the food system was designed. This effort is about how to build more equity and resiliency into the North Carolina food system to move towards a food system that works for all.

Key Terms & Concepts

Food Systems

To ensure we are working from shared understanding, we begin by first defining the term "food system." We recognize the phrase is ubiquitous—a shorthand that often stands by itself without further explanation. While there are different conceptions, most definitions share a holistic orientation that emphasizes the linkages across the production and consumption of food, and how those components are embedded within social, political, economic, and environmental elements.

To sharpen our theoretical understandings, the research team consulted with individuals from community organizations, representatives from philanthropy, and foundational academic work by scholars in the last two decades (Ericksen et al., 2010; Ericksen, 2008; Ingram, 2011). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has engaged in comprehensive exercises to catalogue what constitutes a food system. That effort led the organization to frame a food system as one that "gathers all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the output of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes" (HLPE, 2014). Figure 1 provides an illustration that is adapted from these sources.

Taking a systems approach to understanding our food includes looking at who has power in the system and how it is used. Who decides on behalf of whom? Who dictates the distribution of benefits? Who owns the means of production and profits from the food system? And who bears the costs?

To analyze the role of power in the food system, it is important first to understand the tangible and intangible steps associated with bringing food from the soil to the plate. To capture the transformation of inputs into a final food product, we use the value chains framework. The embedded social, political, economic, and environmental elements can then be layered to provide nuance. When all facets are considered together, we can describe and visualize the entire food system.

Food Production Value Chains

The value chains framework, developed by researchers throughout the 1990s and 2000s, provides a useful lens for characterizing and analyzing the core activities of the food system. Expanding beyond the conventional input-output considerations of supply chains, value chain analysis evaluates not only the full range of activities associated with the transformation of raw materials into food products but also how and where value is created and captured by different actors.

Research on food production value chains identifies similar segments of value-creation and capture in food or agricultural industries.[2] While there is significant diversity within and between individual chains depending on final markets or distribution channels, there is some combination of the following activities across products and locations:

Inputs: The seeds, fertilizers, and other goods that provide the foundation for agriculture activities.

Production: Farming, growing, or other cultivation activities. Capital, land, and labor are among major elements.

Processing and packaging: Manufacturing activities that convert raw materials into processed products.

Aggregation, trade, and distribution: The activities associated with the consolidation of raw materials and moving products to final markets.

Consumption, retail, and marketing: The economic actions consistent with selling and developing a base of consumers. This includes all point-of-sale activities, including food preparation in restaurants or retail locations.

Waste: Recycling and repurposing of unused food products and packaging. While most food waste ends up in landfills, repurposing in some cases can take the form of composting, which works its way back into the production system as an input.

2 Different terms are used for food and agriculture value chains, including agribusiness or product-specific versions. This report uses food production value chains as its umbrella term.

Social, Environmental, Economic, and Political Elements

While segments of the food production value chain can be viewed in isolation, a food systems approach emphasizes the structural features that stretch beyond the traditional input-output structure. Social, environmental, economic, and political elements all shape the overall operation of the supply chain and affect what people can—and cannot—eat. There is no food system without the human and ecological conditions that make it possible, providing it resources, values, governance, and rationality (Carolan, 2005; Fligstein, 2002; Polanyi, 1957).

For this report, we focus on four specific elements that influence the outcomes of the larger food system:

Social elements include the cultural, religious, and communal considerations around producing and consuming food. A diversity of approaches to diets and preparation is an emphasis. Systemic inequities and structural racism play a sizable role in shaping the food system. For example, in influencing who can access loans for land or capital and where investments are made in communities as well as who makes decisions for whom about programming in or support for communities.

Environmental elements include the air, soil, ecosystems, water, and climate. Activities in the food production value chain are shaped by the conditions of the natural environment. Food production activities also create significant effects on soil health, air and water quality, biodiversity, and other ecological outcomes.

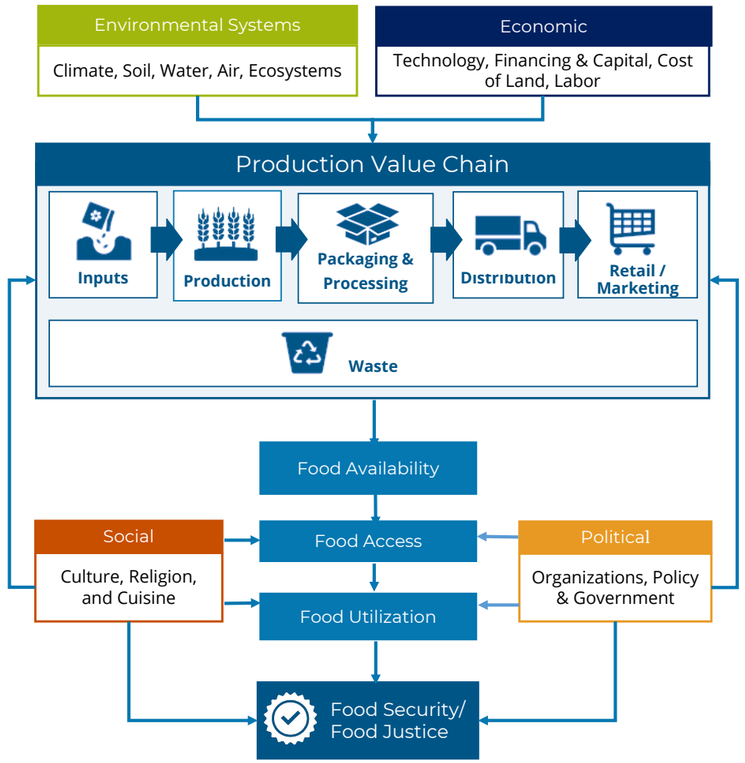
Economic elements include the cost, availability, and quality of land, labor, and capital, as well as access to technology to maximize the usage of those inputs. These broader macroeconomic forces dictate profitability, food supply, and which types of activities are possible in a region. The economic pressures felt by consumers living

in low-wage economies or economic downturns also exert a significant effect on the food system.

Political elements influence the food system in multiple ways. Powerful institutions regulate food safety, working conditions, and zoning laws among other considerations. Governments, corporations, political action committees, and other institutions might also facilitate increased access in certain segments of the food production value chain. For example, through subsidies or crop insurance to farmers to produce certain crops or the federal food safety net, or other initiatives.

There is constant feedback between the food production value chain and the four highlighted elements that are embedded within it.[3] Food production activities create social, environmental, economic, and political outcomes while also being shaped by these same conditions (Ericksen et al., 2010; Ericksen, 2008). Table 2 presents more detail and explanation for each element of the food system, including descriptions and examples of outcomes.

Figure 1: Food System Elements



Source: Authors, based on Ericksen (2008).

3 Depending on one's perspective, one could also argue the elements are embedding the food system with meaning for larger society. Since the focus of this paper is not to focus exclusively on sociological constructions, we do not seek to divert attention with a longer discussion.

Food Security

Food security is one output of a functional food system. It is defined for a household as having "access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life" (USDA, n.d.). Scholars identify varying determinants of food security as:

Availability: culturally appropriate food and food products that are available in stores or other locations within a particular geography;

Access: whether communities can access the stores or other locations with affordable food options;

Utilization: determined by whether people prepare, consume, and benefit from the food that is available (Ericksen, 2008).

Food insecurity emerges for many reasons, driven by influences from the demand and supply sides. It is sometimes associated with poverty, although such a perception can obscure social, economic, environmental, or political considerations that might cause breakdowns. Food insecurity is sometimes baked into a system that otherwise appears to be fully functional. Businesses in the value chain might pursue profit maximization strategies over the provision of healthy and culturally appropriate food or paying workers adequate wages, thereby exacerbating problems that are not fully addressed by social safety nets.

Sustainable food systems can be defined as those that achieve food security while also respecting and maintaining the integrity of the social, environmental, economic, and political elements (HLPE, 2017). Academic reviews of the food systems sustainability literature have noted differential emphasis on separate elements (Eakin et al., 2017). Scholars differentiate approaches to food system sustainability by asking: 1) what is the primary focus of sustainability and how are problems of food insecurity explained? and 2) what is being sustained, and what interventions are advocated?

Table 2. Components of the Food System

Element	Description	Outcomes
Food Production Value Chain	Segments of value creation and capture in food & agriculture industries. Includes: Inputs; production; processing & packaging; aggregation, trade & distribution; consumption, retail & marketing; waste	Food supply, food options, food availability, surplus/waste, income (profit, wages)
Consumer	Person who eats the food products created by the food system	Physical health, nutrition, well-being
Social Elements	How population groups perceive and interact with the food system	Resource distribution (inequality), cultural meaning of food, community interactions
Environmental Elements	Biotic conditions, including: air, soil ecosystems, water, climate	Biodiversity, pollution, natural resource availability
Economic Elements	Broader macroeconomic forces of cost, availability & quality of: land, labor, finance, inputs, technology	Profitability, productive possibility (maximum food supply), efficiency (outputs/inputs)
Political Elements	Power dynamics, structures, & standards created by political institutions and private market actors	Human/worker rights, safety standards, animal welfare

Source: Authors

While Eakin et al. (2017) identified six schools of thought, three specific framings of food (in) security have relevance for this report:

Individual food security: Food systems exist to nourish people and deliver nutrient requirements. Individual food security problems might be caused by unhealthy food environments or inequitable access to nutritious food. However, such issues are regularly framed as poor dietary choices and

behavior. Typical interventions might focus on human health outcomes and healthy food environments.

Human economic welfare: This knowledge area shifts from an individual emphasis to a focus on structure, and centers the interdependence of poverty, hunger, and environmental degradation. Problems with the food system are often tied back to poverty. Solutions often focus on economic development considerations.

Community food security: Food systems exist to ensure adequate and culturally appropriate food access for communities, as well as adaptability and resiliency in times of crisis. Problems associated with the systems can be attributed to historical legacies of racism or unequal treatment. Interventions often focus on community empowerment, and social or political solutions rather than the individual or the technical.

The emergency food system provides food at no or reduced cost to people in need of hunger relief through food banks, emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, or other distribution points. Such support is one potential solution when food insecurity occurs in emergency situations, such as the pandemic or natural disasters. These charity-based efforts are differentiated from the federal food assistance safety net in this report. Federal food assistance includes school lunches and programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

There has been a dramatic surge in demand for the emergency food system during the pandemic. In the United States, food banks already served an estimated 46 million people per year before COVID-19; however, the need for food assistance during COVID-19 led seasoned observers to say that they had "never seen anything like" current levels of demand (Bacon & Baker, 2017; Kulish, 2020). Yet even with the successes associated with food banks' performances—they managed to distribute as much as 50% more food in 2020 compared to 2019 (Parlapiano & Bui, 2021)—it is important to highlight an underlying tension: the emergency food system was not designed to be a sustainable response for food insecurity that is borne out of persistent poverty and structural racism.

There are various movements to help address systemic inequities that lead to chronic food insecurity. Two of the more prominent are food sovereignty and food justice. ***Food sovereignty*** is "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (Patel, 2009; World Forum for Food Sovereignty, 2007). The food sovereignty movement is founded on the idea of "directly challenging the corporate food regime and embedded power relationships, seeking structural change in international (and national) food systems" by increasing community ownership of the means of production (Clendenning et al., 2016).

Food sovereignty requires redistribution of land to increase the number of smallholder farms and stop ongoing land loss to development. It also requires community-controlled food distribution, like public infrastructure for small vendors and cooperative grocery stores, shifting retail away from corporate value chains so that the value produced circulates within the community.

Food justice is more likely to work within the system to address inequities and injustices and provide benefits for communities. This is based on: 1) a human rights conception of a right to food; as well as 2) an understanding of how the unequal distribution of benefits from the production value chain is determined by race, class, and gender and can be reduced (Alkon & Guthman, 2016; Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; Sbicca, 2018). In both instances, there is a substantial push for re-embedding the food production value chain within a more just, equitable, and sustainable set of social, political, economic, and environmental elements. To explore this possibility further, we consider community food systems.

KEY POINT
It is important to highlight an underlying tension: the emergency food system was not designed to be a sustainable solution for food insecurity that is borne out of persistent poverty and structural racism.

Power in Food Systems

The final concept we would like to introduce is power. There is a wide body of academic literature that focuses broadly on how power manifests itself in various nodes of the food system (Avelino, 2017; Leach et al., 2020).

For researchers interested in firm dynamics, the visual of an hourglass is a commonly used analogy. Millions of farmers around the world produce for a small handful of companies who have consolidated power and profits as they sell to billions of consumers around the world. For example, the 100 largest companies control 77% of processed food sales worldwide (Hossain, 2017; Howard, 2016).

This report embraces an approach to food politics that is consistent with the *food contentions and movements* dialogue. This dialogue emphasizes the importance of social mobilization and collective action to counter dominant power and interests (Leach et al., 2020). It highlights how power regularly resides in actors who are located outside of the community and often in large multinational corporations. Or in the hands of institutions or private individuals inside the community who have wealth and influence.

STRUCTURAL RACISM - Structural racism is the most pervasive form of racism and basis for all other forms of racism (internalized, institutional, interpersonal, etc.). It is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics—historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal—that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of white domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics, and entire social fabric. It is not easy to locate within any one institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism.

KEY POINT
Power in the food system regularly resides in actors who are located outside of the community and often in large multinational corporations.

FOOD JUSTICE - Hislop (2014) defines food justice as "the struggle against racism, exploitation, and oppression taking place within the food system that addresses inequality's root causes both within and beyond the food chain." As such, food justice is a movement-oriented framework that seeks to create alternative spaces for the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of foods based within communities historically and contemporarily excluded from decision-making power over the food system (Alkon, 2013). Rather than transform the current food system, food justice works to build equity into the existing structure by creating institutional capacity necessary to support economic opportunities, such as new businesses, higher wages, and healthier diets. Through this bottom-up, community development strategy focused on investments in underserved communities, food justice leverages the market in substantive ways to address the ongoing food apartheid while beautifying communities, creating jobs, and constructing career pathways for the next generation (Efird & Allen, 2014).

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY - Through shifts in ownership and decision-making, food sovereignty aims to build sustainable and resilient food systems that are place-based, relational, and intersectional. Food sovereignty has both political—a right to food and democratization of decisions over the food system—and economic—ownership over and democratization of the means of production and consumption, like land and retail space—elements that ultimately hope to help communities implement alternatives to the current system (Wittman et al., 2010). It is a transformative vision seeking a fundamental restructuring that reverses decades-long declines in small-holder and medium-holder farming as well as the loss of non-corporate retail, like street and public markets (Lobao & Meyer, 2001; Pensado-Leglise & Smolski, 2017).

How We Got Here: Historical Context

Today's racially stratified food system is a direct result of historical public policy decisions. Since the first contact between Indigenous people and European colonizers, policy at the national, state, and local scale has placed the welfare of white citizenry over BIPOC communities. In some cases, discrimination was the intent of the policy; in others the color-blind consequence of ongoing structural racism.

Understanding how policy supported the systematic reproduction of structural racism is a critical step in creating equitable systems. To unwind inequity, it is not enough to offer BIPOC groups the same opportunities as white communities and organizations. BIPOC communities and organizations do not 'start' from the same place because policies have disadvantaged them throughout history. To make explicit the connections between legislation and inequity, this section outlines policy themes that have influenced the lived realities of BIPOC communities today.

Additionally, despite this institutionalized racism, BIPOC communities and organizations have continuously constructed important initiatives to combat food insecurity, land loss, and poverty. We conclude this section with examples that demonstrate historical precursors of BIPOC-led initiatives to build a more equitable food system.

Policies Controlling Land and Home Ownership[4]

In the mid-1700s, Europeans imposed private land ownership on this continent through settler colonization. For white owners, land ownership was a pathway to generational wealth, privilege, and power. But for Indigenous peoples, settler colonialism disrupted their existing, sustainable food system. Indigenous people managed land and resources for the benefit of all community members before European settler colonialism.

North Carolina was part of lands "granted" by foreign governments to individuals or companies. In the 17th and 18th centuries, European descendants enslaved some Indigenous peoples for plantation work locally and in the West Indies. Colonists forced Indigenous people into 'assimilation' programs, and many Indigenous people left the area or hid to avoid conflict. Census records and other official historical accounts intentionally did not mention the continued presence of Indigenous peoples.

In 1862, The Homestead Act granted 160 acres of Indigenous Nations' land in the West to any American who applied and worked it for six years. The legislation excluded Black people from participating. Over the next 60 years, 246 million acres of western Native lands became privately owned.

For those Black families who acquired land in North Carolina, multiple private property law mechanisms made it possible to force them out. Many freed Black people could not obtain legally valid birth certificates to establish their identity. Lack of legal identity documents prevented Black people from taking advantage of programs designed to assist them in acquiring land and ensuring that it remained within the family. Black families tended not to have last will & testament documents to designate land ownership with proper titles. Without explicit legal inheritance, the land passed to all the next heirs—and heirs could sell off their portion of the property without informing others. Called "partition sales," these resulted in a significant loss of land wealth among the Black community.

Furthermore, Black farmers faced numerous challenges to accessing key financial resources from the USDA. The Pigford v. Glickman case demonstrated that farmers "were either denied farm loans, loan servicing and benefits, or had been given loans on unfair terms" (RAFI, 2015). At times, the denial of resources was political reprisal by local officials due to participation by Black farmers in the Civil Rights Movement (Daniel, 2015).

Two significant policies in the 1900s interfered with homeownership for BIPOC families. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) created neighborhood risk maps between 1935-1940, marking predominantly Black neighborhoods as areas not suitable for loans and public investment. The Housing Act (Wagner-Steagall Act) from the Federal Housing Administration provided home lending resources based on those HOLC redlining recommendations. Redlining prevented BIPOC people from purchasing homes at the same pace and lending price as white people. Although redlining was eventually outlawed, BIPOC communities feel its long-term effects even today because the legalized disinvestment led neighborhoods to decline. Neighborhood decline sets the stage for 'revitalization,' also called gentrification. And gentrification does not benefit everyone equally. As wealthy investors purchase low-value properties, property values rise dramatically with the new development. The area's historical owners and renters are often displaced. Residents in historically redlined areas also contend with reverse redlining and are targets for high-cost, sub-prime mortgage loans.

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G.I. Bill) made mortgages available to WWII veterans with little to no down payment and low interest. Historically, the G.I. Bill drove the rise of the white middle class—and significant intergenerational wealth. Discriminatory lending guidelines and restrictive neighborhood covenants largely excluded the more than one million Black and Native American WWII veterans. Between 1935 and 1968, less than 2% of federally-insured home loans went to Black people.

Policies Supporting Agricultural Education

North Carolina State University (NC State) was created through the Morrill Act of 1862 to help educate white farmers. NC State only admitted white students. The second Morrill Act of 1890 established a land grant institution for Black students called the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. These universities were never funded at equal levels, and the state's extension services flowed primarily out of NC State.

Policies Governing Worker Compensation

In the 1500-1600s, people from agrarian societies in West Africa were brought by force to North America to support large-scale agriculture as

4 The WFPC has published a food history of Durham, NC, that provides the basis for some of the material presented in this report: https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/reports/power-benefit-plate-history-food-durham-north-carolina.

enslaved labor. This stolen labor helped to create wealth and the economy in the United States. At the close of the Civil War that abolished slavery, the U.S. government did not adequately ensure that freed Black people could support themselves.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, many states passed restrictive 'Black Codes' laws designed to keep Black people as cheap labor sources, particularly for working the land. Black people were excluded from many jobs. Two of the most significant labor control mechanisms during the 1800s included sharecropping and tenant farming. The North Carolina Landlord Tenant Acts of 1868 and 1877 gave largely unchecked power to landowners.

During the 1900s, multiple public policy actions affected BIPOC workers in particular. In 1935, the National Labor Relations Act excluded farmworkers from labor protections such as collective bargaining, overtime pay, and child labor laws. This exclusion was structured to appease Southern Dixiecrats, who would only support the legislation if this exclusion occurred, and profoundly impacted the Black working class (Leary, 2005).

In 1942, The Bracero Program legislation allowed contract laborers from Central America to fill a labor gap resulting from WWII soldiers serving abroad. And to respond to the labor gap caused by the Great Migration of Black people to northern and western states (Mize & Swords, 2010).

The H-2A Program in 1982 allowed agricultural employers to hire temporary non-migrant workers. However, such individuals did not have the same labor protections as United States citizens tied to an employer. This function reduces workers' power to resist unjust labor practices. Further, the H-2A Program does not offer a path to permanent residency or citizenship (National Farm Worker Ministry, n.d.).

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 impacted Central American farmers. It stimulated a significant migration to places like North Carolina (Rothstein & Scott, 1997). In 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act increased the criminalization of immigrants and their deportability (Smolski, 2019). Employers utilize deportability as a threat against labor organizing or resistance to unjust labor practices.

Policies Affecting Food Security

In 1981, food insecurity spiked as President Ronald Reagan reduced spending for the poor. Reductions encompassed public housing, welfare benefits, grants for mass transit, and food assistance. These changes exacerbate the already existing impact of discriminatory practices limiting access to public goods and services. During this period, the emergency food system began to develop and solidify due to inadequate government programs addressing hunger and poverty.

In 1996, the Clinton-era Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (P.L. 104-193) continued reducing welfare benefits by ending the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program's open-ended support for families. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program replaced it, established a lifetime limit of five years, and requires work within two years. During recessionary periods, these changes exacerbate poverty and hunger by blocking support for recipients who have reached their lifetime limits or cannot find work.

The 2008 Farm Bill introduced the concept of a food desert. Food deserts were defined as census tracts with many low-income residents with low access to a grocery store or healthy, affordable retail outlets. Today "food deserts" are more accurately called areas of food apartheid. These tracts overlay the historical exclusion of BIPOC, and especially Black people, from housing, lending, and transportation.

Access to Capital & Resources

The racial wealth gap in the United States is the disparity in median wealth between the different races. White households have between 2.9-4.6 times more wealth than Black and Latino families (Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2017). The Pew Research Center (2017) found that White families had between 2.9 to 4.6 times more wealth than Black and Latino families. People of color face more and different challenges than white people when starting a business. The persistent racial discrimination in lending (to this day), less access to family wealth and well-resourced peer networks for seed money, and the high price of real estate are barriers to entry for food entrepreneurs of color. These disparities are also present in agriculture. The *2017 Census of Agriculture* demonstrates that out of more than 900 million acres in farming, White farmers held 94 percent, while Black farmers only held .52 percent (USDA, 2017).

BIPOC-Led Food System Alternatives

While BIPOC communities in the US have been subjected to institutionalized deprivation leading to structural racism within the food system, they have continuously built alternatives. These alternatives have staved off land loss, supplied food, and enabled wealth generation.

An important example is the Freedom Farm Cooperative in Mississippi, founded by Fannie Lou Hamer. The Freedom Farm Cooperative supported members through economic autonomy by utilizing the farm to accrue capital, provide subsistence through crops and livestock, and accessing credit and mortgages (White, 2018). This was supported by government and philanthropic funds that enabled the project to thrive from 1969 to 1976. However, as funding from the government and philanthropy dwindled and key leadership fell ill, the organization's capacity to continue was irreparably harmed.

In a similar vein is the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, still in operation, to support Black farmers and rural communities to build and sustain economic, political, and cultural autonomy (Nembhard, 2014). The idea was that through pooling resources, Black farmers could stabilize development and confront discrimination. This also connected farmers to important technical and financial resources, along with market access, that Black farmers were denied by the institutional racism they confronted by government and private agencies.

These are only two examples that demonstrate how BIPOC communities utilize collective action to redress historical inequalities by building economic, political and cultural power. Resilience has always been part of collective action solutions. These community-led efforts have taken place throughout history and are taking place today. The Critical Actions named in this report build on this legacy and expand or replicate existing efforts taking place in the US today.

Interventions in the Food System: NC Philanthropy Before and During Covid-19

Philanthropy plays an important role in the food system. With more than $890 billion in assets (Council on Foundations, 2020), US foundations and similar organizations intervene in cases of emergency or when the system fails.

The COVID-19 pandemic qualifies. In response to millions of Americans losing jobs or having work hours reduced, United States government spending on the SNAP program increased from $60.3 billion in the 2019 fiscal year to $89.6 billion in 2020. This is an increase of more than 48% (USDA, 2020b).

Philanthropy has also stepped into the breach with robust support. The immediate response was significant—nationwide, more than $11.9 billion was awarded globally in the first six months of 2020.[5] The range of actors who have marshalled support is similarly expansive. Corporations, independent foundations, and high-net-worth individuals accounted for 93% of funding in those first six months. However, community foundations awarded the highest number of grants (Candid & Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2020).

Focusing on the food system, the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders (SAFSF) collected information on a sample of the initial philanthropic response and recovery funds to COVID-19 (SAFSF, 2020). Analysis of the database indicated philanthropy most supported the following six areas:

1. Farmers and production segment of value chain (43% of programs in database)

5 For points of comparison, US$363 million was raised during a similar time frame for the last epidemic, the Ebola outbreak in Africa in 2014.

2. Food assistance and hunger relief (41%)
3. Restaurant and food service workers (37)
4. Agricultural workers (17%)[6]
5. Food distribution/distributors (17%)
6. Restaurants (16%)[7]

This section focuses on how NC funders engaged with the food systems before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The conclusions are based primarily on two research instruments. The first data source is a 28-question survey that was distributed by the North Carolina Network of Grantmakers to its members in September 2020. Thirty-one organizations answered at least some of the questions, and 20 completed the survey. The second source is interviews with officials from 14 philanthropic organizations.[8] The interviewees represented a mix of organizations active in North Carolina, both geographically and organizationally.[9]

Five conclusions emerged from these sources. We stress that this chapter does not offer normative judgments about philanthropic strategies. Subsequent chapters of the report offer recommendations that advocate for specific considerations.

6 Agricultural workers are distinguished from farmers by virtue of who owns the land.

7 The SAFSF database contained 63 total programs that were initiated through July 8, 2020. Some programs had multiple issue areas or geographic scopes. There were other issue areas, but none were the focus for more than 5% of programs. While the database was not comprehensive, it provides a sense of issue areas. It should be noted that SAFSF is focused on supporting agriculture and farming.

8 The semi-structured interviews lasted 45-60 minutes and covered five topic areas: 1) organization background; 2) engagement with the food system; 3) COVID-19 responses; 4) equity; and 5) perspectives on the NC philanthropic community.

9 Completed survey responses included the following: private operating foundations (4); family foundations (3); private non-operating foundations (3); community foundations (2); bank/charitable trusts (1); corporate giving programs (1); health conversion foundations (1); investors (nonprofit) (1); public foundations (1); regranting organizations/foundations (1); as well as others (2).

NC philanthropic organizations focus on food insecurity

Human economic welfare and food security programs are the foundation of the NC philanthropic community's engagement with the food system. Almost all of the NC funders surveyed support efforts to provide emergency food assistance. The programs take various forms—food banks, food pantries, or related initiatives designed to support school lunch programs were common. Given the spike in demand for emergency food, almost all organizations reported trying to increase emergency food provision.

The NC philanthropic community invests significantly in programs that support the federal food assistance safety net. Government nutrition programs receive regular funding. Multiple philanthropic organizations have double-up buck programs that leverage or amplify SNAP or WIC assistance programs to promote healthy eating and increase consumer purchasing power.[10] Many organizations also support efforts designed to improve health outcomes for mothers or young children.

Limited food system footprint beyond food insecurity investment

Moving beyond efforts to alleviate food insecurity, most NC organizations have limited footprints in other aspects of the food system. While efforts to alleviate food insecurity are the primary focus, NC funders are engaged to some degree with the other parts of the food system. The philanthropic footprint in each component is discussed below.

Food production value chains: Operationally defined as programs designed to improve connections between individual segments of the chain (i.e., producers with processors, or producers with direct-to-consumer options). Food hubs are an example, as are programs to help farmers or processors meet requirements or expectations of downstream actors (scale, quality, etc.).[11]

10 While these interventions are targeted toward the individual or household, it is important to note most work through intermediaries—the food bank, the public school department, or county health department. Most do not directly deal with the individual.

Most philanthropic organizations have what can be described as a limited portfolio in food production value chains. Food hubs are the most common. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, for instance, has supported food hubs. The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust has also sponsored similar efforts throughout North Carolina, partnering with Golden LEAF and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke in some locations in the eastern part of the state and also funding efforts directly in McDowell County. Golden LEAF has been among the most intentional in supporting greater connections between different segments of the food production value chain. The Rocky Mount-based organization has been broadly interested in supporting food processing programs or food processing businesses that are expanding in rural North Carolina.[12]

Social elements: Operationally defined as programs that focus on social elements, including resource distribution or inequities within the food system. Examples include efforts to address food apartheid (i.e., the role of racism in driving food insecurity through purposeful policies negatively impacting BIPOC communities), safety standards for food workers, and immigrant or immigration outreach among production and processors.[13]

11 In certain circumstances, food hubs could be considered an example of programs that support community food security. However, we were most comfortable counting them as a value chain intervention.

12 Golden LEAF reports only moderate success with its programs designed to help farmers connect with downstream actors such as processors.

13 Efforts by philanthropy to advocate for safety standards or immigrant communities can be considered a social program if it is directed mostly at the workers themselves but a political one if reform and enforcement are the focus or lawmakers the intended audience. There is similar overlap with labor elements. Programs designed to improve economic efficiency and production (skills trainings) were classified as an economic element while labor programs intended to improve equity or representation for underrepresented populations were classified as a social element.

There is some difficulty in separating the organizations that are interested in social elements broadly and the food system more narrowly. It is not unusual for NC funders to support programs that aim to address food apartheid. Such programs can have similar interventions as programs targeted at food access at the individual level.

The funding of initiatives aimed at immigration, food sovereignty, and labor issues does not appear to be as common, at least within the sample of organizations interviewed. No organization directly mentioned supporting efforts designed to work with food systems workers from an immigration or safety perspective. In the survey, participants were asked which topics they fund as part of their food system giving. Four respondents selected immigration as a focus funding area, three selected food sovereignty, and one selected labor.

Environmental elements: Operationally defined as programs designed to improve the sustainability of land (farms, water, processing sites). Examples include land conservation, urban agriculture that attempts to provide environmental benefits, water programs, or programs to support pollinators.

The environment does not appear to be a focus for the NC philanthropic community that engages the food system. Only four survey respondents indicated they supported environmental elements as part of their food system funding. All four focused on farmland conservation.

Economic elements: Operationally defined as programs that concentrate on improving the economic performance of individual segments of the food production value chain through land, labor, technology, finance, or other efforts. Examples include training programs and skills development, land ownership assistance (tax, deeds, etc.), and research on new technologies or processes.

The broadest interest among NC funders in supporting economic elements rests in skills development or technical assistance for farmers. Golden LEAF is particularly invested in helping producers access research and training

programs. Others provide assistance as demanded by their stakeholders. For example, Resourceful Communities works closely with its grantees, providing not only funding but also networking, capacity building, and technical support such as helping landowners access public records and assisting with applications for loans or other funds.

Political elements: Operationally defined as programming that leverages existing federal programs. Philanthropy's most consistent efforts with respect to political elements relate to supporting the federal government's SNAP and WIC programs through amplification strategies like double-up bucks. Some organizations talked about the need to advocate for increased SNAP or WIC funding, but there were no reports of organizations performing this advocacy directly to lawmakers.

Other possible political programs could include assisting with legal issues associated with immigration, advocacy for a $15 minimum wage, or encouraging better safety standards for workers. However, none of the survey respondents or interviews in our sample indicated this was a significant area of focus.

FOOD APARTHEID - is a term coined by activist Karen Washington which recognizes that the systems in place are what make it difficult for people living in low-income areas to access fresh, healthy ***food***. This concept looks at the whole ***food*** system and takes into account income, race, and geography. It encompasses the social and racial inequalities that are at play in our ***food*** system.

Increased flexibility with program funds and additional food insecurity resources

Other scholarship has documented a national trend that philanthropic organizations have difficulty operationally sharing power with communities and grantees (Council on Foundations, 2020). Nonetheless, some effort has been made in changing the dynamic. To assist with this shift, during the pandemic, the **Council on Foundations** advocated for the philanthropic community to commit to a pledge of action, which includes the following:

1. **loosen or eliminate restrictions on current grants;**
2. **make new grants as unrestricted as possible;**
3. **reduce requests of grantees;**
4. **contribute to community-based emergency response funds and other efforts to address the health and economic impacts on those most affected;**
5. **communicate proactively about decisions;**
6. **listen to partners, lifting up their voices and experiences to inform public discourse;**
7. **support grantee partners advocating for public policy changes to fight the pandemic and deliver an equitable and just emergency response; and**
8. **learn from emergency practices.**

By mid-October 2020, almost 800 organizations nationwide had agreed to abide by the conditions.

Responses from philanthropic organizations who completed the North Carolina Food System Resiliency Project survey indicate that many were following the spirit of the Council on Foundations guidelines. Organizations were asked specifically how COVID-19 was changing the way their foundation was making grants. Answers suggested increased flexibility was a strategic aim. The most common responses of the 20 completed surveys were as follows:

- 11 respondents said they were relaxing grant reporting requirements
- 8 indicated they had started COVID-specific funds
- 6 reported they were funding general operating grants
- 6 were increasing outgoing dollars

> ***I think strategically what COVID has done is it's laid bare the health disparities and wealth disparities in our state. We are beginning to put in a different kind of lens for how we would make our grant, do our grant making going forward. Looking specifically at social determinants of health and other determinants that have disproportionately hit Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities and not allowed investment in their nonprofits or their communities or that sort of thing. I do think COVID's kind of pulled back—we always knew it was there; it's life and death every day, and I think it's created a sense of urgency about thinking about our strategies.***

Organizations still working to articulate equity strategies

Although addressing immediate needs is a priority in the current environment, many organizations are grappling with the underlying questions that have influenced some of the economic and social outcomes that have been observed during the pandemic. These include: how do inequities in the food system contribute to food insecurity? And what can philanthropy do to reduce these discrepancies?

The interviews and surveys conducted for this project reveal that groups view equity from different lenses. Racial equity is the focus for the majority of organizations that provided a response (six organizations did not). Responses to the survey prompt asking if organizations make an explicit commitment to racial equity in grantmaking were as follows:

- Yes: 9
- No: 5
- No response: 6

Even for the organizations that have made commitments to equity, the specifics were sometimes vague. Their exact answers are listed below—the seven responses are from seven unique funders. As a general takeaway, many organizations said they were still in internal discussions about the best strategies for promoting equity.

> *We realize that our communities, students, and residents do not all share the same life experiences or the same needs. Consequently, we support our grantees in efforts to explore what equity means for their work and how their organizations can ensure that they are working to meet the diverse and specific needs of their target population. We have also launched coaching opportunities for grantees surrounding equity and will soon begin work on an equity strategic plan at the board and staff level.*

Lack of concrete collaborative structures or collective leadership across funders

Interview participants were asked to assess the aggregated strengths and weaknesses of the NC philanthropic community that engages the food system. While interviewees framed answers in different terms, there was relative consensus on the following points:

Communication among NC funders is relatively strong. Participants reported that there is frequent discussion and knowledge sharing among the various organizations.

Few participate in funder networks focused on equity oWr food systems. While there is discussion about equity and food systems within the North Carolina Network of Grantmakers, no participants reported that they personally participated in funder networks that specifically focused on either subject.

There is interest in structures that pool resources or encourage leadership. Multiple individuals called for something similar to the Blue Meridian Partners initiative, which is a model where philanthropic partners pool resources across multiple portfolios to address shared concerns (see Appendix). For such an effort to gain traction, it would likely require one organization to assume responsibility to serve as the key instigator; until now, no one group or individual has managed to bridge differences and pull disparate actors together.

One potential complication: there is not necessarily universal interest in increased collaboration among all participants in the project. One of the survey questions asked if organizations are interested in participating in a food system funders collaborative designed to share learnings and strategize collectively. Half of the respondents said yes; and while no one said no, the other half said they would need more information.

> *I just think North Carolina just needs a CEO to stand up and invite other CEOs and say, 'Guess what? We're going to do this and we're not going to put anybody's logo on it and we're not going to talk, but we're going to be in a room and we're going to make a decision and I'm going to pledge X amount to this and I want you to come in and pledge X amount.' That is what I hope and there are no logos—it is we're going to change the health of North Carolina.*

Food Philanthropy: Power, Practices, Relationships & Connections

Interventions designed to address issues in the food system can be interpreted through various frameworks. The most common paradigm—the Charity Framework—is first and foremost about helping those in need. In the context of the food system, it can come in the form of giving away food, (volunteer) time, grants, or other forms of aid to those who are either chronically or temporarily in need.

Blunted Impact of Charity Framework

Charity has an important role to play in our society. The modern emergency food system can be viewed as a response to the spread and fortification of the neoliberal economic model throughout the developed world in the 20th Century. As the government retreated, food banks and food pantries in the United States stepped in to provide valuable services that governments were not offering. Charity, in other words, became an important means for addressing food insecurity.[14]

Despite its merits, it is important to note that the Charity Framework does not attempt to address the systemic features that contribute to food insecurity. The persistence of food insecurity metrics in NC reinforces the idea that current approaches are not addressing the root of the problem. **Despite almost 20 years of philanthropic giving, NC's household food insecurity rate was 13.7% from 2001-03 and 13.9% in 2018 and projected to be 19.3% in 2020 (Leonhardt, 2020; USDA, 2020b).**

Moreover, while the Charity Framework is the most frequent way philanthropy intervenes in the food system, it has been criticized for maintaining many of the ills it has sought to remedy (Avelino, 2017). Specifically, the Charity Framework model reinforces a system of oppression in at least three ways:

1. it reproduces white supremacy culture narratives;
2. it is reactive and short-term; and
3. it creates unintended consequences that reinforce existing inequalities.

14 We have constructed the intervention frameworks here and in other sections of the report from our analysis of existing academic literature and secondary data, specifically news articles, reports by food system organizations, and listservs. It should be noted that this is not the only way to understand different types of interventions, and other typologies exist (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011).

Replicates Culture of White Dominance

Research consistently shows that BIPOC communities overall have higher rates of food insecurity, while Black Americans tend to face more severe food insecurity than white Americans, Latinx Americans, and immigrants (Flores-Lagunes et al., 2018; Odoms-Young & Bruce, 2018). While the food insecurity rate was 10.5% overall in the US and 7.9% for white households in 2020, it was 19.1% for Black households and 15.6% for Hispanic households (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020).

Scholarship has also shown that structural racism has created a physical landscape that prevents many communities of color from purchasing the types and quality of food they were once in charge of producing (A. H. Alkon & Norgaard, 2009; Bower et al., 2014).

While there are multiple factors at play, the issue of historical landownership and dispossession of Black-owned land is a critical factor in the disparity in food insecurity rates. Black farmers faced a campaign of discrimination by the USDA that saw the number of Black-owned farms decrease by 97% in the period from 1920-2007 (Daniel, 2015; Patterson, 2010). More recently, housing segregation and redlining policies have allowed these disparities to take further root.

The implications of structural racism cannot be resolved through emergency cash infusions or dependence on giving (Bond Graham, 2011). Furthermore, charity allows the benefits of the food production value chain to accrue to class and race segments that historically have exploited BIPOC communities while also allowing for the perpetuation of certain beliefs.

Whiteness and white supremacy culture narratives dominate policy and practice throughout the food system and our entire culture. Whiteness can be defined as ideology that results in the unequal distribution of power and privilege based on skin color. White supremacy culture is the historically based, institutionally perpetuated system that is designed to establish, maintain, and defend a system of wealth, power, and privilege by white people over BIPOC communities (Martinas, 1994).[15]

Both whiteness and white supremacy culture show up in the food system in multiple ways (Conrad, 2020). Labor dynamics is one example. Whether at grocery stores, on farms, or in meat processing plants, essential workers across the food production value chain are more likely to be BIPOC, whether in total number or as a relative proportion of their population in the overall labor force (BLS, 2020). For instance, 64% of farmworkers are Latinx and 46% are migrants, documented and undocumented (USDA, 2020a). Many of these laborers—who already faced low wages and heightened food insecurity—also had to put themselves at risk to keep the food system functioning.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the virus spread rapidly within meat packing facilities, where workers labor closely together to process poultry, pork, and beef. This quickly led to shutdowns that affected the meat supply chain, panicking consumers about prices and access. To compensate, the federal government mandated meatpacking plants open under the National Defense Authorization Act. This forced workers, who are predominantly BIPOC individuals, into potentially unsafe conditions. While stabilizing the meat supply chain was framed as a food access issue, the implication was that workers were both essential and expendable as they worked for low pay. More than 50,000 meatpacking workers have been infected with COVID-19 and at least 250 have died since the pandemic began (Yeung & Grabel, 2021).[16]

15 Whiteness can be defined as ideology that results in the unequal distribution of power and privilege based on skin color. White supremacy culture is the "idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are [inherently] superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions." The Duke World Food Policy Center has published a research brief that provides further background on these and similar concepts: https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/sites/wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/files/Whiteness-Food-Movements-Research-Brief-WFPC-October-2020.pdf.

16 More than 50,000 meatpacking workers have been infected with COVID-19 and at least 250 have died since the pandemic began. The median hourly wage for workers for "Slaughterers and Meat Packers" is $14.05, below the median hourly wage for "All Occupations" of $19.14.

Reactive and Short-Term

Charity begets the need for more philanthropy instead of catalyzing change (Fisher, 2018). One-time cash infusions and programs that focus on single issues rather than systems cannot be expected to provide transformative change. Instead, such strategies perpetuate the need for more short-term efforts.

An important example is the "hunger-industrial complex," which has been the subject of concerted study (Fisher, 2018). This complex is characterized by focusing solely on emergency food provision, and not advocating "upstream policies, such as higher minimum wages, that would reduce the number of people needing food banks in the first place" (Fisher, 2020). Tying food insecurity to stagnating wages is especially relevant since pay in low-wage sectors in the United States declined by 5% from 1979 to 2013 (Mishel et al., 2015).

In addition, the hunger-industrial complex deploys short-term infusions of aid in a "color-blind" way, which can amplify existing inequities. For example, federal or state loans and grants that were deployed after businesses were shut down during COVID-19 were not distributed to different communities in an equitable manner. BIPOC business owners were disproportionately unable to access the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, for a myriad of reasons, such as not having long-term banking partners in place. Given that BIPOC families and businesses already had lower wealth to draw on prior to this crisis, inequitable financial support made these disparities even deeper (Leatherby, 2020).

Unintended Consequences

Unintended consequences occur when programs' focus on one aspect of the food system has negative implications in other parts, thereby making the overall situation worse. Individual parts of the food system do not exist in a vacuum. Furthermore, some demographic groups may benefit from a program while others may be harmed.

Poppendieck (2014) argues that short-term charitable efforts such as emergency assistance take the pressure off of the government to create sustainable solutions to end hunger and poverty in the long term. As much as philanthropy has tried to provide needed services in the neoliberal economic systems, only the government has the power and financial heft to end poverty and hunger.

Efforts to increase healthy food access through new grocery stores have been supported to help people change eating habits and become healthier (Conrad, 2020). Research has shown that these interventions do not necessarily work as intended—more effective strategies for increasing healthy food consumption focus on increasing consumers' economic resources (Allcott et al., 2019; Rosenberg & Cohen, 2018). The unintended consequences of these types of efforts reinforce the inequitable power dynamics characteristic of food retail, often providing funding to large corporations to put in a big, full-service grocery store, rather than investing in community wealth building options, such as Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD). Furthermore, many of these corporations play a role in food insecurity by paying low wages, which means their workers are reliant on federal food assistance and charity.

KEY POINT
'Whiteness' and the power and wealth that is associated with it developed in large part in the United States through the system of agriculture that built wealth on Indigenous land through the enslavement of Africans. The impacts of that system, and its grounding in land and labor, are still very much present today.

Perceptions of Philanthropy and Charity Framework

This research collaborative assembled focus groups representing communities across NC, from predominantly rural and BIPOC communities. All participants represent organizations working within the food system and have extensive experience in grant-seeking and in funding relationships at the local, state, and national levels.[17] In total, four focus groups were held with a total of 12 participants utilizing the same semi-structured questionnaire to guide the conversation. Following the IRB-approved research protocol, these focus groups were not recorded, and only extensive notes were taken by the focus group lead to protect the confidentiality of participants. Because of this, we present the results in aggregate without direct quotes.

The participants in the focus groups are seeking new relationships with philanthropy that are grounded in trust and build justice, equity, and resilience into community food systems. Trust, in fact, is perhaps *the* key word to use to characterize our discussions with these groups. There is a lack of trust that is both felt and perceived by the focus groups, which permeates through many of the individual findings discussed below. Participants said they had the perception that philanthropy did not necessarily trust BIPOC communities with money, which contributed to their mistrust of philanthropy. This, in turn, undermines progress toward racial equity.

If the trust deficit is the headline takeaway, the supplemental focus group findings can be divided into three broad categories that reinforce the concerns around (mis-)trust: 1) systemic racism and white supremacy culture; 2) the transactional nature of the relationships; and 3) the grantmaking process. While the discussion points contained herein emanate from participants in this project, many of the opinions are also validated by external research.[18]

17 Please see the Methodology section for more detailed information about the focus and advisory groups.

18 For instance, the first criticism of white supremacy culture has been noted by other researchers, who have found the biggest factors holding back philanthropy's efforts are rooted in race (Dorsey et al., 2020).

KEY POINT
Participants said they had the perception that philanthropy did not necessarily trust BIPOC communities with money, which contributed to their mistrust of philanthropy. This, in turn, undermines progress toward racial equity.

Prevalence of White Supremacy Culture in Grantmaking

Throughout each of the four focus group discussions, community leaders expressed concerns with the racial history of philanthropic organizations. Philanthropy, in many minds, represents white wealth, privilege, and power built on the land and labor of others.

Participants said that in the current socio-political climate, they have noticed funders taking more interest in addressing the histories of the individuals and families who have donated toward (or founded) their organizations. While this reckoning might be difficult, leaders hope there is recognition that the legacy of many historic families in North Carolina have long been painful for their communities.

Focus group discussions expressly highlighted the following frustrations:

Inadequate BIPOC representation on boards. Participants noted the lack of diversity.

PR-motivated philanthropic organizations. Focus group participants noted that collaborations with philanthropic partners are regularly featured on marketing materials. Predominantly BIPOC organizations feel the efforts are a means to cultural capital in the current social climate.

Non-equitable funding opportunities. Focus group participants see too much money going to large, white-owned farms and predominantly white organizations. A specific example surrounded a grant aimed towards sourcing local produce in the winter. While it seems equitable at the surface level, the

opportunity was perceived as inequitable and impractical because smaller, BIPOC-owned farms do not have the infrastructure that larger white-owned farms have to support this initiative.

Money management misperception. Participants feel there is the perception that BIPOC communities are unable to use money "wisely." From their view, this leads to white peers possessing wider and more attainable access to philanthropists and grants.

Short term funding is hard to sustain. One participant suggested that a percentage of each grant should be used for "community self-reliance funds" that are controlled by the community and provide long-term means to sustain efforts.

Transactional Relationships and Mistrust

The importance of centering on relationships—prioritizing authentic and open dialogue between parties—is regarded as best practice in philanthropic literature. However, local leaders believe the relationship with philanthropy is often transactional, and that funders undervalue the work being done in the community.

Participants feel philanthropy emphasizes a return on investment over the development and growth of the community. In one focus group, participants stated that philanthropy sometimes behaves as a bank, prioritizing asset growth over building real relationships. Community leaders experience transactional relationships with philanthropy in the following ways:

Lack of patience with marginalized populations. This shows up as a rush to get to results, as opposed to a desire to understand the complexity of the issues.

Little familiarity with specific needs of BIPOC communities. While non-BIPOC peer organizations have financial resources, they do not have community connections like BIPOC organizations.

Work is invalidated because it does not "fit the mold" of what funders think it should look like. This is particularly challenging for organizations because they know first-hand that their programming is functioning to positively impact their communities. They simply need more resources to continue their work. Being asked to change their model to one deemed more worthy by the funder only further complicates things for people who are working hard to feed their communities.

Current system built on the foundation of food charity. There is a widespread desire to begin building a more sustainable system rooted in food equity, which starts with philanthropy seeking connections with the community to build trust and address specific needs.

Participants want to flip the hierarchy. Funders could demonstrate how they address equity, what their boards look like, how they spend their budgets, how they make decisions, maybe even allowing communities to develop Requests for Proposals to which philanthropy can apply to support.

Perceived Flaws in the Grantmaking Process

The focus groups also offered feedback on the grantmaking process. Participants advocated for a simplified grantmaking process. When applying for grants, many felt the costs associated with the process—whether time, effort, or financial—were not worth the potential benefits.

Some mentioned applying for grants and **not receiving the expected amount**. Others had grants turned into micro-grants—receiving less than requested, or if they were funded, they would have to match a percentage or wait long periods of time for the funding to be distributed. This made focus group participants feel as if there were the aforementioned trust deficit from funding organizations.

Participants spoke at great length regarding the **difficulties of reporting**. It requires effort from dedicated staff, which pulls time away from core activities. Organizations must balance the opportunity costs—some choose to forgo applications where the paperwork requirements are onerous. Additionally, the overemphasis on reporting reproduces inequality by privileging organizations with the infrastructure to support reporting requirements. If the money is meant to be invested, participants asked why not just invest it in a community-based organization?

All focus group participants agreed that reporting requirements increase with the size of the grant. While reporting is an onerous process for any grant-funded organization, it is particularly difficult for smaller, BIPOC-led community organizations. A national survey of over a thousand Black woman-led/Black woman-founded organizations noted the majority of these organizations have annual budgets under $250,000 and lack paid staff (Howe & Frazer, 2020). Balancing operations and administration can be challenging at best, impossible at worst.

Participants also cited a **lack of flexibility** in the grantmaking process. As one participant said, communities do not function like institutions. Participants feel as though they could do their work better if they were granted more flexibility in how funds can be used. One farmer mentioned funding sources not allowing for the purchase of tangible things such as equipment as a major barrier in agriculture.

Finally, the proposal development process is often **not accessible**, both for native and non-native English speakers. Many study participants referred to language barriers. Many low-resourced, English as a Second Language (ESL) speakers discussed needing additional interpreters to help them submit applications.

Native English speakers expressed similar needs. One participant detailed the process of needing to enlist the county manager, multiple community leaders, and others outside of the organization to apply for the grant. The overhead of staff time required to prepare the grant was either too expensive or time-consuming to be feasible. The application process then took a year to complete.

KEY POINT
Despite almost 20 years of philanthropic giving, NC's household food insecurity rate was 13.7% from 2001-03 and 13.9% in 2018 and projected to be 19.3% in 2020 (Leonhardt, 2020; USDA, 2020b).

Sea Change: Planning, Partnering & Investing with the Outcomes in Mind

A multipronged approach to systems change is needed to achieve better outcomes for communities and a food system that supports and replicates equity. Earlier sections of this report identify key historical policy origins of the inequity in today's food system, and explain the limitations of typical charity framework-based food system interventions. These factors create the backdrop for current and future food systems work. In this section, we discuss conditions for systems change and present a framework for innovation.

Creating Conditions for Systems Change

The FSG consulting firm published a conceptual model in 2018 titled *The Water of Systems Change.*[19] The model can be applied to any intractable social or environmental problem. It is included here as a way to conceptualize strategies for creating a more sustainable North Carolina food system.

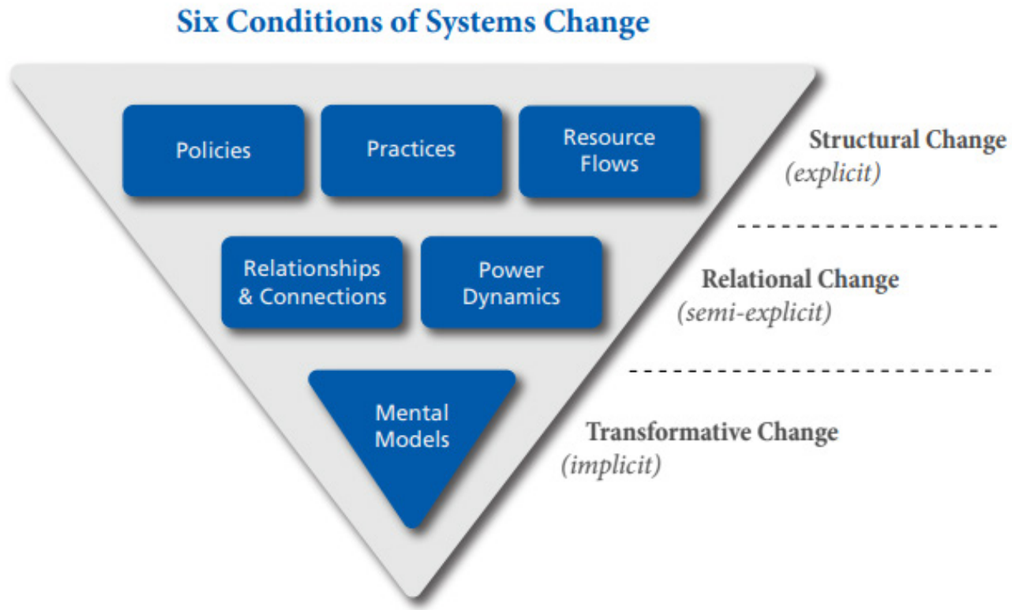
The Water of Systems Change model identifies six interdependent conditions that "hold social or environmental problems in place." (Figure 2, Shifting the Conditions that Hold the Problem in Place).

The model identifies three levels of change as well: explicit, semi-explicit and implicit. Shifting any of the six conditions can create space for change to occur, but the FSG notes that "real shifts in system conditions are more likely to be sustained when working at all three levels of change."

The Critical Actions in this report are designed to impact multiple conditions of change, and to work across explicit, semi-explicit, and implicit levels of change.

19 The report can be found on the following link: https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change.

Figure 2. Shifting the Conditions that Hold a Problem in Place



Source: The Water of Systems Change, FSG Consulting, 2018

DEFINITIONS

Policies: Government, institutional and organizational rules, regulations, and priorities that guide the entity's own and others' actions.

Practices: Espoused activities of institutions, coalitions, networks, and other entities targeted to improving social and environmental progress. Also, within the entity, the procedures, guidelines, or informal shared habits that comprise their work.

Resource Flows: How money, people, knowledge, information, and other assets such as infrastructure are allocated and distributed.

Relationships & Connections: Quality of connections and communication occurring among actors in the system, especially among those with differing histories and viewpoints.

Power Dynamics: The distribution of decision-making power, authority, and both formal and informal influence among individuals and organizations.

Mental Models: Habits of thought—deeply held beliefs and assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk.

Source: The Water of Systems Change, FSG, 2018 https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

Merits of an Innovative Framework

The Water of Systems Change concept can be applied to the food system through the Innovative Framework. A contrast to the Charity Framework introduced earlier, the Innovative Framework is oriented toward justice and equity. Systematic strategies tie programming together with solutions that address the causes of the unequal distribution of harms and benefits in the food system. Innovative strategies shift power to BIPOC communities based on sustainable, long-term relationship development.

The framework emphasizes the root causes of inequality. Food insecurity is viewed as structural injustice as opposed to a consequence of individual decisions or a lack of initiative on the part of BIPOC communities. In other words, it is understood that *the whole system* privileges certain groups and produces the problems that philanthropy intervenes to address. Solving those problems requires addressing the systems themselves, not the individuals within the systems.

Figure 2 includes some of the key features of the Innovative Framework. We wish to accentuate the following points with selected examples:

Relational, place-based approaches: Solutions that build capacity by developing programming across all aspects of the food system (Ventura & Bailkey, 2017). Rather than focusing narrowly on discrete components of a system—the processing segment of the food production value chains, for instance—each part is considered in relation to others, with an understanding that interventions must be comprehensive. Furthermore, a relational approach recognizes that a community's place-based attributes give it an identity that influences its relationship with all other parts. That, in turn, can shape questions and concerns about equitable development—how can projects ensure positive outcomes for all, reducing some of the negative consequences (land loss, gentrification, loss of community identity and cohesion) that are often felt by BIPOC communities in specific locations (Chakrabarti et al., 2019).

Intersectionality: A concept first developed to describe how different social constructs might overlap and intersect (Crenshaw, 1991), intersectionality in the food system explores how inequality and injustice are tied together across race, class, and gender categories (Collins, 2015; Horst & Marion, 2019; Smith, 2019). The case of two women restaurant owners—one white, one BIPOC—can serve as an illustrative example. While both may face discrimination because of their gender, the BIPOC owner might face additional race-based barriers. Alternatively, a business owner might still exploit a group of laborers and reproduce class-based economic deprivation, even if the business owner is from a BIPOC community.

To transition to a more just and equal system that works for all individuals, the intersections of race, class, and gender necessitate innovative solutions be built by those who are most adversely affected by inequities in the current food system (Collins, 2015). In other words: who and what *caused* the problem should not necessarily design the solution.

Resiliency: Resilience is the capacity to persist, adapt, and transform relative to a changing food system landscape (Sinclair et al., 2014). In an inequitable food system, resilience is more challenging for those confronting deprivation. An important clarification is that resilience does not mean that oppressed peoples are the ones who should adapt to survive; instead, the system should adapt (and persist and transform), not the individuals within that system (Ammons, 2020). System-level resilience reduces the burden on organizations by providing stability.

Sustainability: Sustainability captures the idea that a resilient system must also be capable of reproducing itself into the future (Caron et al., 2018). Communities deprived of resources are more likely to face business closures, land dispossession, and other events that threaten their longevity. Programming must consider long-term elements such as the role of building inter-generational wealth and infusing the food production value chain within a more balanced conception of social, political, economic, and environmental elements.

Taking a Community Food Systems Approach

COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM - A food system in which food production, processing, distribution, and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social, and nutritional health of a particular place.

To be Sustainable, Focus on Locally Responsive Systems

Food systems exist at different scales and orientations. Food production value chains are global in nature and highlighted by the volume of international trade in agricultural products—the value of Brazil's soybean exports was $26 billion in 2019, French wine was $10.8 billion, and United States corn was $8 billion.[20] These global value chains play a critical role in feeding the world's 7.8 billion people and have largely held during the pandemic.

While food and agricultural value chains have functioned as intended, this glosses over the disruptions that have been observed at the local level. This report documents some of the surge in demand associated with emergency food assistance as well as food insecurity measures.

As philanthropy considers the landscape, it is important to identify leverage points. The governance system of food and agricultural global value chains is controlled by multinational corporations and multilateral institutions that are beyond the reach of local actors.

Community food systems exist on a different scale and geographic orientation. In many respects, philanthropy is already working with individuals and actors who are seeking to build systems rooted in the community. These organizations embrace many aspects of the Innovative Framework highlighted above and are centered on simple ideas: communities can nourish themselves physically, economically and environmentally; and they know what they need and have the power, capacity, and influence to transform lives.

20 The FAO has trade databases that chart exports and imports across agricultural products.

Elements of an Equitable and Resilient Community Food System

A basic definition of a community food system is "a food system in which food production, processing, distribution, and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social, and nutritional health of a particular place" (Cornell University, n.d.). When comparing the two (global vs. community), community food systems can be distinguished by four factors related to food security, location, self-reliance, and sustainability:

- **The focus of food security revolves around the whole community.** Community food system framing is relational and prioritizes food security of the collective. Lower-income households are a key consideration.
- **Proximity is important.** Shorter geographical distances between stages of the food production value chain encourage deeper and more meaningful relationships between food system actors.
- **Self-determination is emphasized.** Related to some of the food justice movements described above, the community food system framing encourages local businesses and stakeholders to own the decision-making process to the highest degree possible, and to provide maximum benefit for all.
- **Sustainability is prioritized.** Food and agriculture practices do not jeopardize the ability of future generations to use the same natural resources while meeting their food needs. Sustainability concerns include fair working conditions and compensation for workers, ethical treatment of animals, active environmental protections, less reliance on synthetic fertilizers or chemical pesticides, and other factors.[21]

21 It should be stressed that these four factors are not necessarily "missing" from the globalized food systems. They are, however, accentuated in community food systems to a more significant degree.

Recommendations

The Critical Actions named in this report are the result of a year-long process, led by food justice leaders from rural, urban, and peri-urban communities across North Carolina. Each Critical Action is the start of the scaffolding for long-term systems change and systems building, rooted in community decision making and power shifts to achieve the outcomes of improved health and well-being for all North Carolinians.

Intentional Design of the Critical Actions

Before we share our recommendations, we thought it necessary to articulate our vision:

> *We envision a just, resilient, and equitable network of locally controlled community food systems in North Carolina. Systemic change in community food systems will happen through racial reconciliation and reparative funding structures for BIPOC communities. We highlight the importance of racial reconciliation and reparative funding structures as drivers for the Critical Actions to follow.*

How Critical Actions Were Developed

These recommended actions were developed in partnership with advisors whose work is directly aligned with each topic/focused action. All recommendations build on existing work that has been taking place at either the local or national levels (often both) but has been historically disinvested and under-resourced. As funders invest, they will build relationships with the respective leaders (organizations and individuals) and articulate the necessary details with those respective voices. To this end, when applicable, specific organizations have been named in the recommendations. The naming of specific organizations is intentional—those groups have the existing relationships, expertise, and vision to lead the work for which they have been specifically named. Where organizations have not been named it is also intentional, as recommendations and decisions around leadership cannot be prescriptive from predominantly white research institutions, such as the Duke World Food Policy Center or the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, nor from philanthropy.

Components of a Critical Action

All of the Critical Actions address the following criteria:

- **Concept:** What is being asked and who can affect the change? The naming or not naming of organizations is intentional, based on who is already positioned to do the work, not led by outside organizations.
- **Existing Models/Evidence of this Work in Action:** Where is this happening and what is the resulting impact?
- **Immediate Steps to Success:** How does North Carolina advance this work in the short-term?
- **Key Resource Needs:** How much will this cost? Where will those dollars go? How much time is needed for this to happen?
- **What Will Be Different:** The impact of the Critical Action on community food systems in North Carolina.
- **Community Accountability Mechanism:** How can we build structures to achieve relationships necessary for transformational health, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Focus on Applying an Innovative Framework and Community Food Systems Approach

Critical Action recommendations begin with the outcomes in mind, and scaffold the actions needed to achieve those outcomes. We focus specifically on community food systems because this is the scale at which philanthropy, nonprofits, and state organizations can create sustainable change. Locally responsive systems lead to sustainable solutions.

Focus on Reparative Impact

Reparative funding structures focus on the root of "repairing". We have cited several references in this report noting the funding disparities between predominantly white organizations and BIPOC organizations. The Critical Actions recommend direct investment in and creation of BIPOC organizations and networks to lead, decide, implement, and recommend efforts that affect the respective communities.

The William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation frames three aspects of racial reconciliation:

> *Racism is systemic and institutionalized and has deep and lasting impacts on BIPOC communities.*
>
> *Reconciliation is about supporting the power of communities through relationship building based in truth-telling.*
>
> *Justice is essential, and that justice must be restorative: "Restorative responses are meant to repair harm, heal broken relationships, and address the underlying reasons for the offense. Restorative justice emphasizes individual and collective accountability."*[22]

Focus on Existing Needs in NC

Each Critical Action is rooted in existing efforts, either at the local, state, or national level. However, all of these efforts need intentional investment to build capacity which will produce sustainable health, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Focus on Community Accountability Mechanism

Each Critical Action also articulates an accountability structure centered with the communities most aligned with the specific work the Action addresses. This attention to accountability comes from the perspective of advisors' experiences. Their vision for building a structure of accountability is mutual across grassroots organizations and funders and is values-based rather than transactional.

22 A glossary of Racial Equity tools, including the definition for restorative justice, can be found here: https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary#comp-ki145ql8__e39a8e2b-1a19-45d8-b923-0d5edad47df7.

Table 3: Detail of Funding Needed for Critical Action Implementation

Critical Action	Estimated Investment Needed over 5-10 Years
Formalize and invest in a statewide BIPOC-led, community-accountable Food Justice Network	$26.75M
Establish a Statewide Equitable Food Oriented Development Fund and Equitable Food Oriented Development Network	$17.5M
Create/Expand Community Participatory Grant Funding for Grassroots Food Systems Work in North Carolina	$12M
Create a Statewide Tribal Food Sovereignty Fund	$30.5M
Create a North Carolina Black Food and Farm Advocacy Network and Statewide Fund for Black Food and Agriculture	$9.25M
Create an Agricultural Worker Equity, Access, and Advocacy Fund and Expand an Agricultural Workforce Network Development	$9.5M
Create a Food Justice Learning Network for North Carolina Funders Working Across the Food System	$800,000K
Total	**$150.55M**

KEY POINT
No individual funder nor individual organization will be able to achieve the goal of a more just, resilient, and equitable food system. This effort must be collective.

Scope of Need and Timeline

The Critical Actions will require time, capacity building, relationship building, and capital. It will take trust and relationship to live into this vision. The change will be slow and we envision at least a 5 to 10-year period of time. Many recommendations are building new systems across philanthropy, academia, government, and community. All of the recommendations address the shifts in decision making, leadership, and funding that have been, for the most part, historically left out of the community food system in North Carolina. Intentional investment in the following Critical Actions can lead to the transformation in our food system that we seek, not only towards food security, but also towards food justice and community health and wealth. Table 3. summarizes the financial investment needed for the Critical Actions. Table 4. presents more detail on outcomes and the future state that will be achieved on completion of a Critical Action.

Call for Collaboration Across Philanthropy, Academia, Government, and Non-profits

Critical Actions are the shifts that must occur within and across BIPOC-led community-accountable organizations, predominantly white institutions (academia, government, nonprofits), and philanthropy in order to build justice and resiliency into community food systems in North Carolina. No individual funder nor individual organization will be able to achieve the goal of a more just, resilient, and equitable food system. This effort must be collective. All of the Critical Actions require collective actors—no one organization could implement any of the Actions and no one funder can affect all of the Actions.

Numerous Starting Points for Organizations to Engage

While the report has a specific focus on the North Carolina philanthropic community, the Critical Actions are designed for investments at any level and from any funding entity-philanthropic, corporate, or local/state/or federal government. Organizations can leverage Critical Action recommendations as a place to lean into and implement racial equity strategies.

Prioritization

The Critical Actions are designed with specific and purposeful framing. Each action is a necessary component of a more just, resilient, and equitable food system. There is no wrong place to start. Therefore, we do not present any prioritization of the actions. We do note one funding dependency, connecting the need for the BIPOC Food Justice Network to support the Food Justice Learning Network for North Carolina Funders.

Summary of Critical Actions & Outcomes

Table 4: Critical Actions & Outcomes

Critical Actions	Current State	Future State
Formalize and invest in a statewide BIPOC-led, community-accountable Food Justice Network	The Food Resilience Advisory Board is currently working as an intentional network to bring the long-time work of BIPOC community organizations to the forefront of food systems change. There is currently no financial investment or structural capacity for this group to continue beyond the scope of the completion of this Resiliency Report.	Power shifts to a collaborative network of leaders accountable to communities most impacted by systemic inequities in the food system. This network will be a collective convener for BIPOC-led food justice organizations in the state. The network will collectively design strategies for justice, resiliency, food security, and community ownership of food system solutions.
Establish a statewide Equitable Food Oriented Development Fund (EFOD) and a statewide Equitable Food Oriented Development Network	No collective fund exists to drive equitable food systems change in North Carolina. The Fair Food Fund has supported the development of the Michigan Good Food Fund, and is currently creating equitable funds in Camden, New Jersey and New York state.	An EFOD fund will leverage state, federal, and private dollars to provide grants and loans to grow equitable food organizations and businesses across North Carolina. The fund is accountable to the Equitable Food Oriented Development Network.
Create/Expand Community Participatory Grant Funding for Grassroots Food Systems Work	Developing strategies exist for community participatory grant funding (RSF Social Finance Shared Gifting Circles) and could be expanded through existing models in NC such as Community Food Strategies Participatory Grant making process, the Cypress Fund, and/or other infrastructure.	Power shifts to local community leadership for collaborative dissemination of dollars, and values-based grantmaking processes that intentionally invest in both social and financial capital, acknowledging the critical value of both in equitable food systems development.
Create a Statewide Tribal Food Sovereignty Fund	No statewide fund currently exists explicitly for Tribal Nations. The UNC American Indian Center currently reinvests the limited regranting dollars they receive for food system efforts and has the capacity and relationships to serve as a fiscal and administrative home for the fund.	Intentional investment in Tribal food sovereignty shifts power to Tribal leadership resulting in increased food security and improved health and well-being across Tribal Nations.
Create a Black Food and Farm Advocacy Network and Fund	There are several organizations working independently on Black food and farm efforts but there is no dedicated network or fund to support collaborative efforts across Black food and farm organizations. Also, recent legislation, such as the Justice for Black Farmers Act, has increased the need for legal support to navigate federal and state resources for Black farmers.	Because the BIPOC community is not monolithic, this network will speak to and meet the particular needs of North Carolina's Black farmers and growers from fisheries to producers of multiple scales; Black food systems advocates, entrepreneurs and those in agri-business; and Black policy makers. This network and fund will support opportunities and address barriers specific to Black food and farm organizations.
Create an Agricultural Worker Equity, Access, and Advocacy Fund and Network Development	Many organizations focusing on agricultural worker equity convene through The Farmworker Advocacy Network. The network is significantly underfunded for capacity and operations and does not have a full-time coordinator.	Intentional investment in agricultural worker aligned organizations through network building, with attention to both urgent technical assistance needs as well as advocacy efforts, shifts power to the groups with the most direct influence on farmworker rights and wellbeing resulting in increased food security and improved health and well-being across farm and agricultural worker communities.
Create a food justice learning network for North Carolina funders working across the food system	The North Carolina Network of Grantmakers convenes and supports funders and offers racial equity training for its members. The Sustainable Agriculture and Food System Funders Network offers support for regional food system networks. Cypress Fund and MDC are convening funders to support more investments in BIPOC-led organizations. No networks currently exist in partnership with BIPOC community leadership and across private philanthropy and government funders.* ** = This Critical Action relies on the funding of the formalized BIPOC-led, community accountable food justice network (Critical Action 1) as an accountability structure.*	Intentional and restorative relationships built across funders (public and private) and BIPOC-led community organizations, resulting in more impactful health, educational, economic, and environmental outcomes in BIPOC communities. This learning network will support the trust, relationships, and investments of all Critical Actions.

CRITICAL ACTION

Formalize and invest in a statewide BIPOC-led, community-accountable Food Justice Network

CONCEPT

The current members of the Food Resilience Advisory Board were intentionally selected because of their connection to their communities, their long-term (generational) work across community food systems, and their commitment to equity and justice. While this network does not represent all communities or all organizations across the state at this time, it does represent existing relationships and committed leaders with which a statewide network can begin to form. The intent is for this network to expand, building relationships to include additional BIPOC food system leaders, including youth leaders. This Statewide Food Justice Network will establish its own framework, strategy, agenda, and policy platform and will lead connections with and recommendations for ongoing and future philanthropic and state investments for justice and resiliency in the North Carolina food system. It will also serve as a connecting organization for other focused networks named in these Critical Actions (Equitable Food Oriented Development Network, Black Food and Farm Advocacy Network, Agricultural Worker Equity, Access, and Advocacy Network, and Tribal Food Sovereignty Network).

TOTAL COST

$26.75 million over five years

IMMEDIATE STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Immediate investment of $100,000 for each of the fifteen organizations currently participating on the Advisory Board that intend to continue to engage for at least one additional year (through June 2022).
- Invest $1 million ($100,000 for each organization up to ten additional organizations), to expand the leadership of the Food Justice Network over the course of the first year (through June 2022).
- Four-year scaling investment in each organization: July 2022-$125,000; July 2023-$150,000; July 2024-$175,000, July 2025-$200,000 per year to ensure consistent leadership and representation as the Network and responsibilities grow.
- Invest $1.5 million over five years to support youth networks and youth-focused organizations (such as but not limited to: NC Native American Youth, Food Youth Initiative, Juntos, Men and Women United for Youth and Families' Youth Ambassadors, SEEDS, A Better Chance a Better Community, Transplanting Traditions, Growing Change, and NC FIELD) to ensure capacity for inter-generational leadership structure for the Food Justice Network. This investment includes $100,000 each year for five years to support youth coordinator(s)/coordination within the Food Justice Network.
- Invest $5M to establish an endowment dedicated to supporting intergenerational BIPOC leadership to organize and run this Network for a minimum of ten years.
- Investment of $1.5 million over five years to a fiscal agent, determined by the network, to support the hiring of a full-time coordinator, network capacity building, strategic development, communications, programming, travel, and convenings.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT AS A RESULT OF THIS NETWORK

- Decisions about funding to BIPOC communities are made by BIPOC community organizations, eliminating the need to "mine" communities repeatedly for information.
- "Best practice" is redefined as practice that is based in relationship, accountability to community, and sustainable, substantive change for the most impacted communities.
- Convener for developing networks
- Creation of an intergenerational, BIPOC-led food system policy platform.
- Power shift to BIPOC-led, community-accountable organizations to bring in support from government, academia, and predominantly white nonprofit partners.
- Trust built across BIPOC-led, community-accountable organizations and philanthropy to establish reparative funding models.
- Intergenerational leadership, offering a pipeline to continue multigenerational BIPOC leaders.

KEY RESOURCE NEEDS (TIME, DOLLARS, STAFFING, CAPACITY, ETC.)

- Full-time network coordinator
- Fiscal sponsoring organization
- A minimum of two years for the network to deepen relationships, establish shared values and key strategies, and build collective recommendations for action.
- A minimum of five years of ongoing support to solidify the network as a cohesive organization.
- Financial investment in all participating organizations to support time dedicated to building the network while also supporting day-to-day community programming for which these organizations are continually operating.
- Establishing a fund that provides ongoing support to this network to maintain momentum and ensure sustainability.

COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

- All members represent community-accountable organizations as defined by the Network

EXISTING MODELS/EVIDENCE OF THIS WORK IN ACTION

The Food Resilience Advisory Board has been working over the course of the last year to bring this Resiliency Report to fruition. This group represents evidence of this work in action. The leaders who have come together to form this Board represent organizations across the state and across the value chain. They represent organizations that have been doing this work, often out of their own pockets, for years. They also represent networks that have connected outside of this project for decades, but have never had investment to support collective strategy, advocacy, capacity building, policy, or action. The leaders on this Board recognize that the current participants do not represent every community across North Carolina and will grow this network over time.

A national example of a collective BIPOC-led, community accountable Food Justice Network is the HEAL Food Alliance.[23] The HEAL Food Alliance launched in 2017. The Alliance is a multi-sector, multi-racial coalition of 55 organizations. They have developed a platform that serves as an action and advocacy roadmap addressing health, the economy, and the environment to achieve the vision that "all people and all communities should have the right and the means to produce, procure, prepare, share, and eat food that's nutritionally and culturally appropriate, free from exploitation of themselves and any other people, and to be in their full power in harmony with the rest of the natural world." The Alliance works through five core methods of: Connecting and Uniting Groups; Political Education and Analysis; Advancing a Shared Narrative; Connecting and Nurturing Existing and Emerging Campaigns; and Organizing Resources for a BIPOC-led Grassroots Movement For Change (HEAL Food Alliance, 2020).

23 The HEAL Food Alliance web site can be found here: https://healfoodalliance.org/who-is-heal/.

CRITICAL ACTION

Establish a Statewide Equitable Food Oriented Development Fund and Equitable Food Oriented Development Network

CONCEPT

Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD), as defined by the Equitable Food Oriented Development National Steering Committee, is "a development strategy that uses food and agriculture to create economic opportunities, healthy communities, and explicitly seeks to build community assets, pride, and power by and with historically-marginalized communities" (Chakrabarti et al., 2019). EFOD efforts must align with the practitioner-created criteria of: Equity and Justice First; Place-Based; Uses Market-Based/Business Strategies; Community Leadership Development/ Community Organizing; and Community Ownership. Traditional grantmaking and financing instruments do not sufficiently meet the needs of EFOD-aligned projects.

A statewide EFOD fund will establish strong connections across state and federal dollars, private equity, philanthropy, and community development finance to provide innovative relationship-based financing (ex: grants, character-based loan-making, program related investments, patient capital) that EFOD organizations need to build healthier, more resilient community food systems.

The statewide EFOD Network will consist of organizations (nonprofit and for-profit) that meet the criteria listed above. This Network will support the capacity building of EFOD organizations across North Carolina, creating connections across rural and urban communities. The Network will also serve as a community accountability mechanism for the EFOD fund and as a connector to the EFOD National Steering Committee.

TOTAL COST

$17.5 million over five years, plus contracts with DAISA Enterprises and Fair Food Fund (amount TBD)

IMMEDIATE STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Establish a two-year contract with DAISA Enterprises (amount dependent on the scope of work), the technical support consultant for the national EFOD collaborative, to develop the structure of the EFOD Network and framing of the EFOD fund.
- Establish a two-year contract (amount dependent on the scope of work) with the Fair Food Fund, or similar organization, to create an infrastructure, bring in investors (to include state and federal dollars, philanthropic dollars, and private equity), and establish a fund that will be transferred, once operational and active, to the NC Equitable Food Oriented Development Network.
- Invest $10 million to establish the Equitable Food Oriented Development Fund.
- Invest $1.5 million each year for five years to Communities in Partnership (CIP) to develop an EFOD Network, hire an EFOD Director, EFOD Fund Liaison, and administrative support. CIP will also administer EFOD programming, capacity building, and communications for the fund and the Network. $500,000 of the $1.5 million will be invested directly in technical assistance for organizations in the EFOD Network. Communities in Partnership is currently the only North Carolina organization that is a member of the national EFOD Executive Steering Committee, and would bring those national relationships and expertise to development in North Carolina.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT AS A RESULT OF THIS FUND?

- Addressing food insecurity in rural and urban areas with community-led solutions, leading to increased food security and collective community wealth.
- Increase in culturally-appropriate foods in communities across North Carolina.
- Deep organizational, relational, and community-driven market connections across rural and urban communities.
- Adoption of community-designed health and nutrition priorities.
- New/expanded BIPOC business ownership with capital that circulates locally, supporting collective community wealth.
- Community members involved in leadership roles and decision-making
- Community-ownership of data collection and data communication demonstrating the impact of EFOD projects.

KEY RESOURCE NEEDS (TIME, DOLLARS, STAFFING, CAPACITY, ETC.)

- Creation of a viable fund requires approximately two years.
- The development and capacity building of the EFOD Network will be done in coordination with the development of the fund over those two years, with the leadership of the fund transferring to the Network once the fund and the Network are established.
- Fund developer (such as the Fair Food Fund)
- Technical support to the EFOD Network (DAISA Enterprises)
- EFOD Network Director, Fund Liaison, administrative support
- EFOD organization capacity building
- Communications support
- Education/communications to potential investors about EFOD
- $10 million from anchor investors from Department of Health and Human Services and private philanthropy

COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

- NC Equitable Food Oriented Development Network, as defined by the National Equitable Food Oriented Development Steering Committee

EXISTING MODELS/EVIDENCE OF THIS WORK IN ACTION

The National Equitable Food Oriented Development movement began to formalize in 2015 when initial founding members and leaders in the field of community development, the late Dana Harvey of Mandela Partners in Oakland, CA, and Neelam Sharma of Community Services Unlimited in Los Angeles, CA, came together to discuss a shared frustration "that funders and investors bypassed investment in their organizations in order to fund largely outsider-led and -serving enterprises, failing to recognize or measure the deep social, health, and economic impacts possible when investments are made in the expertise of on-the-ground leadership" (Chakrabarti et al., 2019). As a result of that initial conversation, a national network, supported by the Kresge and W.K. Kellogg Foundations, has formed, codifying a framework, identifying funding and investment needs, building a technical assistance infrastructure, and leading a network-building EFOD grants program.

An example of the results produced by EFOD is the impact of Mandela Partners in Oakland. "Since 2004, Mandela Partners has made significant economic, health, food system, and social impacts, including: increased revenue for businesses and farmers, new jobs and expanded employment opportunities, and improved access to healthy food for hundreds of neighborhood residents and local customers. Among its network of Mandela Partners-incubated social enterprises is Mandela Foods Cooperative, a 2,200-square-foot cooperative grocery store in West Oakland that alone has generated more than $4 million in new revenue for its worker-owners and network of farmers and local food entrepreneurs—with $1 million in sales recorded for 2014, and growing."

CRITICAL ACTION

Create/Expand Community Participatory Grant Funding for Grassroots Food Systems Work

CONCEPT

Participatory grantmaking strategies are an established mechanism for shifting power, fostering innovation, and increasing connection across grassroots organizations (Buhles, 2017). These models shift power of decision-making to community organizations in terms of who distributes the dollars and who is funded, lessen restrictions as to how the funds are used, and usually come with flexible and collaborative reporting. This funding structure inherently values and invites relationship development as an intended outcome, in addition to financial investment. This type of funding allows organizations that normally do not receive funding from private philanthropy at a substantive level to build capacity and leadership and reduces the competitive nature of traditional grantmaking strategies, while offering opportunities for partnerships to deepen or develop among community-based organizations. The work of transformative food systems change is necessarily tied to relational trust and will take collaboration across organizations. This funding structure offers a mechanism to prioritize those closest to the work while centering relationship and collaboration as key needs in addition to financial resources.

TOTAL COST

$12 million over five years

IMMEDIATE STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Allocate an initial $10.5 million scaling investment over five years ($1 million year one; $1.5 million year two; $2 million year three; and $3 million years four and five) for participatory grantmaking among food systems organizations to a fiscal agent designated by the recommended Statewide Food Justice Network.
- Create/expand this framework for local decision-making of community grants. This might include a combination of strategies, which could include expanding the capacity of Community Food Strategies community participatory 'Shared Gifting', establishing a food system grassroots fund with Cypress Fund, and/or other mechanisms recommended by the Statewide Food Justice Network.
- Allocate $200,000 each year for five years to fund the coordination/support of this framework development. This position(s) will be housed at an organization(s) recommended by the Statewide Food Justice Network.
- Allocate $100,000 a year for five years to build the practice of participatory grantmaking. Funds will support training community leaders to be Shared Gifting facilitators, allowing the process to be implemented in their local communities; and will support a learning group with Shared Gifting facilitators, including an annual convening for learning and development and sharing resources.
- Commit to developing a long-term (minimum of ten years) investment allocation for community-controlled local grant funds with mechanisms to scale the participatory grantmaking funds over time in alignment with the growth and resonance of the process in the initial three years, and with direction from the network of Shared Gifting facilitators, and the Food Justice Network.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT AS A RESULT OF THESE/THIS FUND(S)

- Increase in BIPOC-led, grassroots organizations receiving funding, which improves the resiliency of community food security systems
- Shift power to and build leadership within grassroots organizations
- Funding distributed based on the values and priorities defined and led by the communities with the most relevant lived experience
- Increased capacity of grassroots organizations
- The practice of social capital development as central to grassroots food systems funding in NC
- A network of BIPOC practitioners leading the continued development and implementation of ongoing participatory funding opportunities
- Opportunity to engage local and regional funders to support BIPOC and grassroots food systems leaders
- Deepened collaboration and connection, building trust, across grassroots organizations and funders
- Growth of network of BIPOC-led organizations across North Carolina, especially among small and scaling projects

KEY RESOURCE NEEDS

- Fiscal agent
- Fund development coordinator/ administrator(s)
- Capacity building and strategic planning for the administering organizations
- Communications infrastructure for the network; support for posting and disseminating funding opportunities, sharing the work of the network to build and deepen community
- Creation of a sustainable fund and process will require a minimum of five years of investment, both in pooled dollars for the fund as well as support for fund coordination and administration.

COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

- Determined by the Statewide Food Justice Network
- Opportunity for participating grantees to be accountable to one another (relational/circular accountability, rather than hierarchical)

EXISTING MODELS/EVIDENCE OF THE WORK IN ACTION

At least two groups in North Carolina have experience developing these participatory funding mechanisms with grassroots groups—Cypress Fund and Community Food Strategies. Additionally, a strong history and growing relevance of participatory grantmaking exists nationally. RSF Social Finance's support of Shared Gifting has fueled this collaborative model across several food networks nationally including ongoing work in Minnesota, Maine, Michigan, and the Chesapeake Bay in addition to North Carolina.

As an example of this work, RSF hosted the first gathering of the Food & Agriculture Shared Gifting Program in February 2011. "The model created a sense of abundance, community, and mutual trust among a group of grantees that had previously never worked together. One reason for this is that the initial gift from RSF to the group came from a gesture of trust. RSF had no intended outcomes or objectives for how the grantees would use the money, other than transforming the practice of grantmaking. Rather, RSF asked the group to use its collaborative wisdom to determine the best use of the funds. That gesture of trust created reciprocal trust, both among the participants and between the participants and RSF as the initiator. It also freed the grantees to create mutually beneficial collaborations and outcomes (Buhles, 2012, p. 6)."

This model can be developed with guidance from state and national voices who have experienced the creation and application of a participatory grantmaking process, and in collaboration with BIPOC and community-rooted leadership from groups that have participated in these methods. Developing a standing fund that supports building social *and* financial capital across grassroots food-justice work builds a foundation for growth grounded in connectivity and collaboration among food-related organizations.

CRITICAL ACTION

Create a Statewide Tribal Food Sovereignty Fund

CONCEPT

Tribal Nations steward and govern resources for their communities, and have the best understanding of their communities' strengths, strategies, and traditions supporting wellness through strong local food systems. Supporting Native American food sovereignty means supporting self-determined food efforts led by Tribal Governments and Native-led community organizations. There are already strong local food systems and powerful models of food sovereignty work happening on the ground in every Tribal Nation and Native American community across the state, operating on countless centuries of strong local agricultural and land stewardship traditions. However, there has been no dedicated outside funding specific to supporting, expanding, and uplifting this powerful traditions-based work already happening in Tribal communities. We know that the most powerful reach and impact comes from sustainable projects rooted in local community leadership (Tribal Governments, Urban Indian Organizations, and Native-led/serving organizations) and attuned to the unique and specific culture and dynamic within each community. In the case of Native American communities, this means recognizing and supporting the original and continuous stewards of Native land and foodways. Establishing explicit direction of funds to Tribal Leadership mediates invisibility of Indigenous populations from funding priorities and strengthens direct relationships among funders and Tribal Leaders. Funding in a trust-based model of investment follows Tribal self-determination of spending priorities to honor and reaffirm Tribal Sovereignty.

TOTAL COST

$30.5 million over five years

IMMEDIATE STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Invest $250,000 a year for a minimum of five years to each of the eight recognized Tribal Governments (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Coharie Indian Tribe, Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, Meherrin Indian Nation, Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, Sappony, and Waccamaw-Siouan Tribe) and each of the four Urban Indian Organizations (Cumberland County Association for Indian People, Guilford Native American Association, Metrolina Native American Association, and Triangle Native American Society) to support their own self-determined food sovereignty efforts in their local communities/service areas.
- Invest $350,000 a year for a minimum of five years to the UNC American Indian Center as a uniting meeting ground to expand technical assistance, capacity building, and inter-tribal workshops and gatherings for resource sharing, mutual learning, and exchange among all Tribal Nations and Urban Indian Organizations' work.
- Invest $150,000 a year for a minimum of five years to Native-led nonprofits and institutions that are operating in inter-tribal service (for example, United Tribes of North Carolina, NC Native American Youth Organization (NCNAYO), American Indian Women of Proud Nations, the American Indian Health Board, and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.
- Invest an initial $5 million in an entity determined by Tribal Leadership to create a Tribal Food Sovereignty Fund that can be drawn from to support future grantmaking and invest in longer-term sustainable efforts.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT AS A RESULT OF THIS FUND

- Increased security and capacity of each Tribal Nation and Urban Indian Organization to expand and strengthen their current local food systems and food sovereignty work.
- Groundbreaking funding opportunity for North Carolina funders to emerge as leaders in supporting Tribal food sovereignty.
- Flexible funding and capacity building allows for sustainable efforts.
- Trust-based model, recognizing that Tribal Leadership and Government are already the trusted sources doing the work of food sovereignty in their communities.

KEY RESOURCE NEEDS

- Direct investment for Tribally self-determined food sovereignty priorities. These specific areas of prioritized need are often restricted from many grant funds, hence the need for unrestricted funding open to priorities of communities. Frequently listed priorities of need include reliable money to:
- hire staff/coordinators and increase internal capacity
- land acquisition for the purchase of permanent Tribally-owned land re-establishing ongoing stewardship and permanent community access to traditional activities and sacred spaces
- invest in infrastructure (building/repair, refrigeration, large scale commercial equipment for food processing, storage, distribution, agricultural use)
- Convening, communications, and technical assistance through the UNC American Indian Center
- Capacity building for Native nonprofits working in Inter-Tribal service
- Establishment of a dedicated Tribal Food Sovereignty Fund

COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

- Create an advisory board of Tribal Leaders and Native delegates to help funders determine the fund structure and process for grantmaking and priorities. Funders benefit from this learning space.
- The UNC American Indian Center currently serves as an intermediary to disburse funds to Tribal Nations and Urban Indian Organizations. AIC convenes Inter-Tribal gatherings, capacity building, and resource sharing opportunities among all of North Carolina's Tribal Communities, and has coordinated the statewide Healthy Native North Carolinians Network for years around issues of foodways, food access, and food sovereignty.

EXISTING MODELS/EVIDENCE OF THIS WORK IN ACTION

The Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance (NAFSA) is a nonprofit organization that supports Native communities nationwide through advocacy and education programs. NAFSA evolved out of a nearly ten-year process of grassroots Native food activists working together to have a greater impact on Native food systems. NAFSA works across communities, generations, and the food system, centering "farmers, wild-crafters, fishers, hunters, ranchers, and eaters at the center of decision-making on policies, strategies, and natural resource management." NAFSA programs include an Indigenous Seedkeepers Network, a Native Food and Culinary Mentorship Program, and Food Sovereignty events. The organization is led by Native food activists at the staff, Board, and Leadership Council levels.

CRITICAL ACTION

Create a North Carolina Black Food and Farm Advocacy Network and Statewide Fund for Black Food and Agriculture

CONCEPT

Incubate a multi-layered network of Black farmers and food leaders in North Carolina within an existing Black-led organization, such as the National Institute for Economic Development (The Institute), with the intent to form an independent network. Because the BIPOC community is not monolithic, this network will speak to and meet the needs of North Carolina's Black farmers and growers from fishers to producers of multiple scales: Black food systems advocates, entrepreneurs and those in agri-business; and Black policy makers. This equitable framing will seek to address, alleviate, and rectify past discriminatory practices that have directly and disproportionately impacted Black communities in North Carolina with emphasis on issues of discriminatory lending, inequitable access to resources and social capital, as well as significant land loss. This work will include but will not be limited to: creating multi-generational, urban-rural mentorship opportunities for Black growers and producers; providing technical assistance and support to Black growers and entrepreneurs to adequately and equitably access resources as well as be informed of and advocate for relevant policy issues; create and/or support an annual convening space for Black communities in food and agriculture; and establish a fund for Black community support in the areas of food, land, and agriculture. This caucused group will have direct input, relationship to, and representation on the Statewide Food Justice Network.

TOTAL COST

$9.25 million over five years plus contract with Fair Food Fund (or other similar organization)

IMMEDIATE STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Invest $500,000 a year for five years to The Institute to incubate the Network and to support the hiring of a full-time coordinator, network capacity building, governance, strategic development, communications, programming, travel, and convenings.
- Invest $350,000 a year for five years in the Land Loss Prevention Project to serve as the agricultural law resource for the Black Food and Farm Advocacy Network. This investment will support staff and capacity for advocacy, structural services, infrastructure development, business law services, training, and outreach to farmers about programs and services.
- Contract with the Fair Food Fund, or a similar organization, to establish a statewide Black Food and Farm Fund, similar to the Black Farmers Fund in New York, a mix of regranting dollars and debt capital, accountable to the Black Food and Farm Advocacy Network.
- Invest $5 million to establish the Black Food and Farm Fund.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT AS A RESULT

- Establishment of a Black, all-encompassing, food and farm systems network
- Development of a Black-determined, collective, abundance-focused action plan
- Power shift for decisions about Black food and farming policy, programs, and investments made by Black farmers and food systems leaders
- Development of a Black farmer mentor program, bringing intergenerational learning and knowledge sharing across Black farmers and new/young Black farmers
- Increased access for Black farmers in North Carolina to federal and state resources

KEY RESOURCE NEEDS

- Full-time network coordinator
- Fiscal sponsoring organization
- A minimum of two years for the Network to deepen relationships, establish shared values and key strategies, and build collective values, advocacy, and action plans. A minimum of five years of ongoing support to solidify the Network as a cohesive organization.
- Communications, capacity building, and convening support
- Infrastructure to navigate federal and state legislation around Black farmer support and Black land loss
- Technical service support to navigate Farm Services, Farm Credit, and conservation programs
- Expertise and support from N.C. Cooperative Extension and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Technical support to establish the fund

COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

- Black-led food and farming organizations around the state including, but not limited to: Minority Land Ownership Conference conveners, Bailey Conference conveners, Land Loss Prevention Project, Black Communities Conference conveners, and Island CulturZ.

EXISTING MODELS/EVIDENCE OF THIS WORK IN ACTION

The New York State Black Farmer Fund began developing in 2017 as a "direct request from communities of Black food system entrepreneurs to create an instrument that uses capital as a catalyst for social change" acknowledging "there needed to be a means for community members to access capital that recognized the historical discrimination of lending and banking that informs the present reality of Black communities (BFF, 2020)." The Fund became operational in 2019, with the hiring of staff, launching a pilot fund, and developing a community governance model. The organization is currently raising re-granting and debt capital dollars to expand the Fund, growing a network of community stakeholders, and expanding financial educational curriculum. This existing structure provides a framework on which the North Carolina Network and fund may be built.

Additionally, the Justice For Black Farmers Act, part of the Biden Administration's American Rescue Plan, will provide $5 billion to farmers of color. This landmark legislation has created significant opportunity, but for Black farmers in North Carolina to be able to navigate this system and access those dollars, legal guidance and technical assistance are needed to leverage these federal and supporting state resources (such as the North Carolina Heirs Property Act) to advance Black farm ownership and land access.

CRITICAL ACTION

Agricultural Worker Equity, Access, and Advocacy Fund and Agricultural Workforce Network Development

CONCEPT

Invest in infrastructure, including capacity building and sustainability, of informal and formal rural collaborators who seek equitable access to resources for agricultural workers, by leveraging larger statewide networks, like the Farmworker Advocacy Network (FAN) and AMEXCAN, to elevate the voices of farm and agricultural workers through rural community organizations across North Carolina.

Barriers are currently overwhelming for thousands of essential agricultural laborers and their families, and include lack of trust, language barriers, cultural concerns, transportation, and persistent, extreme poverty. The current lack of basic resources is dangerous to the health and safety of the agricultural workforce. And COVID-19 further illuminated glaring disparities. There is a need to alleviate chronic food insecurity, address transportation barriers, and provide equitable access to health care for agricultural workers both in the immediate term, and also through systemic efforts that center their voices and lived experiences.

The power to create the most significant change lies in fully resourcing local, dedicated activism within communities meeting urgent needs, and creating opportunities for agricultural workers to have the capacity and skills to participate alongside allies in crafting and implementing systemic advocacy efforts. This Critical Action will build the capacity of existing networks, formal and/or informal, like FAN and its member organizations, to improve health, food security, and labor conditions for food and farmworkers and their families and will create a fund available to support the ongoing and critical needs of the agricultural workforce.

The Fund for Equity, Access and Advocacy will fulfill the vision set forth by the agricultural workforce communities by developing infrastructure that promotes continued capacity building. The Fund will facilitate a range of supports, some of which include the following: reimbursement for time lost from work, transportation, language accessibility, popular education/ training, related expenses, facilitating opportunities for entrepreneurship; and financial and cultural opportunities for upward mobility without leaving the region.

TOTAL COST

$9.5 million over five years

IMMEDIATE STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Allocate an immediate $800,000 a year for five years to FAN and aligned networks
- $250,000 a year for FAN's sustainable operating dollars; and
- $550,000 a year in partnership with rural nonprofits and community groups to build sustainable infrastructure in partnership with the agricultural workforce. [The $550,000 can run through FAN or can offer support for an aligned network specific to technical assistance, with an intention to work alongside FAN for advocacy purposes.]
- Invest $100,000 a year, during the first two years of these Critical Action investments, in facilitation, identified by FAN membership and its affiliates, to support network growth and development including clarifying fiscal agents and roles across aligned networks.
- Allocate an initial $5 million investment over five years to create an ongoing Agricultural Workforce Equity, Access, and Advocacy Fund that can be drawn from by community-based partners to support the critical needs of the agricultural workforce. Resources will provide infrastructure necessary to facilitate access and equity for farmworkers to be key players and leaders in identifying and directing funding of and advocacy for agricultural workers' health and wellbeing.
- Invest $150,000 a year for two years to support development/clarification of the Agricultural Workforce Equity, Access, and Advocacy Fund mechanism and management for a simple, equitable process with an emphasis on rural capacity building and infrastructure that is data-driven by the population in Areas of Concern.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT AS A RESULT

- Sustainable funding to support rural areas of concern and the technical assistance they need to build, facilitate, and seek long term solutions based upon the unique barriers and deficits of the area
- Significant and relevant technical assistance resources within FAN and clear outcomes from existing partnerships will deepen trust across the Network and allow for increased collaborative allocation of time and resources to the agricultural workforce.
- Resources will provide infrastructure necessary to facilitate access and equity for farmworkers to be key players and leaders in identifying and directing funding of and advocacy for agricultural workers' health and wellbeing.
- Systemic food systems change will reflect the needs and voices of the agricultural workforce
- Local community organizing will be promoted, then elevated to statewide advocacy, policy, and systems change to address the barriers. Diversity, equity, and inclusion will be a focus in rural communities that suffer high incidences of environmental injustice.

KEY RESOURCE NEEDS

- Full time Coordinator for FAN
- Full time Resource Coordinator (to support technical assistance network building) at FAN or aligned TA-focused network
- Hire a consultant to support effective Network growth that builds capacity within and between TA and advocacy organizations in FAN and aligned networks
- Programming funds to support bilingual communications, and support meetings and calls in areas of concern
- Investments to FAN agencies and nonprofits and community groups in areas of concern in order to build relevant, sustainable, and strong rural communities through a combination of human capital, access to state and federal resources, internal capacity building, etc.
- Establishing an Equity, Access, and Advocacy Fund that ensures the agricultural workforce steers policy and systemic change work.

COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

- Preparation, training, and support for the agricultural workforce to participate in the Statewide Food Justice Network
- Farmworker voices

EXISTING MODELS/EVIDENCE OF THIS WORK IN ACTION

The Farmworker Advocacy Network is an existing entity of collaborators whose membership includes both organizations that are focused on-the-ground with capacity building to meet urgent needs in areas of concern and those focused on advocacy and systemic, policy-related solutions. FAN is an existing mechanism that can be funded to address systemic advocacy, and has the potential to serve as an initial convener/fiscal agent for the numerous agricultural worker-focused organizations in the state. With multiple organizations offering localized support to agricultural workers (including but not limited to FAN member organizations), funding an existing entity of collaborators can provide a landing place for the incubation of network agreements to support funding across organizations and communities most directly aligned with agricultural workers' visions for a healthy future.

CRITICAL ACTION

Create a Food Justice Learning Network for North Carolina Funders Working Across the Food System

CONCEPT

Engage North Carolina funders (public and private) in an 18-month to two-year process to deepen relationships across funders and with BIPOC food justice organizations for collaborative learning, intentional relationship building, and investment. This collective work will support the racial reconciliation and reparative funding frameworks outlined in the previous Critical Actions. Examples of the collaborative learning includes but will not be limited to: the history of philanthropy; the history of inequity that built our current food system; principles of trust-based philanthropy; strategies for equity-centered and justice-centered philanthropy; strategies for shifting power; and frameworks for building reparative funding models. Learning and intentional relationship development also includes coordinated conversations led by the Statewide Food Justice Network[24] and other developing networks supported through the Critical Actions, as well as other food justice and racial equity leaders who will be engaged as needed.

TOTAL COST

$800,000 over two years

IMMEDIATE STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Invest $800,000 over two years in one or more convening organizations to work with the Statewide Food Justice Network to develop the curriculum, coordinate learning opportunities, convene critical conversations, provide training and resources, and conduct ongoing research that leads to deeper understanding of inequities in the food system and strategies to shift and share power in funding.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT AS A RESULT OF THIS NETWORK

- Deeper understanding within philanthropy of power shifting strategies that will build resilience, equity, and justice into community food systems across North Carolina
- Mechanisms for pooled grantmaking and strategic alignment of investments across funding organizations
- Develop/apply mechanisms for accountability within philanthropic and public institutions that align with power shifting strategies
- Establishment of the first statewide reparative funding network

KEY RESOURCE NEEDS

- Curriculum/learning framework: 3-6 months for development/framing; the initial learning network will go through a 12-18 month learning/unlearning process
- Aligned, community-centered, values-based accountability mechanism development, over 12-18 months
- Network convener
- Research support
- Communications support

COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

- The Statewide Food Justice Network will serve as the Community Accountability Mechanism for this learning network.

EXISTING MODELS/EVIDENCE OF THIS WORK IN ACTION

There are multiple philanthropy-serving organizations and affinity groups across the state and nation including the North Carolina Network of Grantmakers, Grantmakers in Health, Council on Foundations, and Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders. Many of the private philanthropic organizations in North Carolina are members of one or more of these organizations. These organizations provide critical support to learn from other organizations, build partnerships, and create new learnings. Based on the surveys and interviews conducted for this report, there was the desire from private philanthropy to build on the strong communication and collaboration within philanthropy in the state and to expand collaboration with state and local government funders. No organizations interviewed reported participating in a food justice-specific or equity-specific learning network at this time. This Network will focus across community, public, and private funders with a specific lens of racial equity and justice in the food system to help support the Critical Actions in this report.

24 Note that the funding of the Statewide Food Justice Network is critical to the success of the Food Justice Learning Network for Funders in order to build the necessary accountability for longer term relationship building and change.

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Appendix A Methodology

This report is based on data collected and analyzed through complementary methods relating different facets of a complex social phenomena. By bringing them together, our research integrates analysis providing a deeper description and explanation of the social phenomena under study.

Content Analysis of Secondary Data

Content analysis is a systematic process to analyze text data utilizing quantitative and qualitative tools. Quantitative tools, such as counting, are important for producing a distribution of codes. Qualitative tools, such as interpretation, are important for understanding the themes that a set of codes signify. The shared purpose of both emphases is the description of patterns and themes within the textual data.

To conduct the content analysis for this study, from April 1st to June 30th, 2020 a collection of news articles, reports, and listservs were compiled into a corpus. All pieces of data collected focused on food system responses to COVID-19. In total, there were 240 news articles from a variety of news sources (e.g., *Civil Eats*, *Eater*, *Politico*), 10 reports from NGOs (e.g., Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, EFOD Collaborative), and 62 listserv documents from the Wallace Center at Winrock International's Biweekly Recap. A sample of those documents (27) was then pulled for qualitative coding in NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, utilizing a pre-determined set of categories by a coding team. The coding categories were actor (e.g., government agency, retail, labor), demographic (e.g., race, class), problems (e.g., land loss, supply chain disruption), and strategy (e.g., affirmative action, funding). Coding was an iterative process, occurring over two rounds, involving coding, memoing, and discussion. From this process, the content analysis team developed the components of each framework, in dialogue with existing literature. That follows literature on the content analysis process moving from coding to thematic development.

Focus Groups with Community Organization Representatives

Focus groups are an important tool for collecting qualitative data on a particular topic. Group dynamics around a shared situation can lead to a developmental, in-depth response as participants build off one another (Stewart et al., 2007). As such, the focus group leverages a collective understanding and experience.

Focus groups were conducted with a sample of representatives from community organizations working on food system challenges. The sample of participants was gathered through a snowball method, leveraging CEFS and Duke WFPC networks to find possible participants and invite them to be a part of a focus group. Each focus group had a duration of an hour and a half, with a focus group lead and three to four participants. All focus group leads utilized a semi-structured focus group protocol. The protocol was organized around five focused questions to guide the conversation: community organizations and trust, experiences with philanthropy, impact of COVID-19, recommendations for philanthropy, and building BIPOC institutional power. The focus group leads kept track of time, assured all voices were heard, and took extensive notes. In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, the focus groups were not recorded. After the focus groups were completed, the notes were sent to focus group participants for their review. Then, the focus group leads convened to analyze the notes for shared themes and prepare the results.

Community Review and Recommendations

Community participation in the research process is crucial when predominantly white institutions are undertaking a project focused on BIPOC communities. Due to a history of extractive and paternalistic research in BIPOC communities, there is a mistrust of research institutions (Scharff et al., 2010). Because of this, it is important for

researchers to work toward codeveloping research with BIPOC communities, practice transparency, and provide tangible benefits for participation that go beyond one-time incentives toward sustained support through research (Edwards et al., 2020).

Following from this understanding of the need for community co-development of research, an advisory board made up of representatives from community organizations was convened to review the semi-structured focus group protocol, the final report, and support development of the recommendations. In total, there were 16 advisory board members, representing a cross-section of BIPOC communities, as well as a variety of focuses on different parts of the food system. Over a series of meetings with the research team, the advisory board provided important insights on the frameworks and outcomes of the research process. As well, as drafts were developed, they were shared with the advisory board, who during meetings offered their criticisms and suggestions to improve upon the report. As such, this report is a co-production of PWIs and the BIPOC Advisory Board, working to build trust and confidence in the results of research and outcomes from the recommendations.

Appendix B Collaborative Funding Models

The discussion on the NC philanthropic community's relationship with the food system highlighted the deficit in collaborative structures or collective leadership. This Appendix Item investigates possible models that NC stakeholders might choose to replicate.

Philanthropy is increasingly interested in collaborative funding models. While the idea of funders coming together and pooling resources to try to address shared problems has been around for decades, there has been a quantifiable jump in the number of pooled funds in the last 20 years—more than 70% of aggregated giving funds that have been tracked by researchers have started since 2000 (Powell et al., 2019).

Part of the reason collaborative funding models are an emerging phenomenon is because of their perceived benefits. In one study that sought to assess a large number of collaborative funding initiatives, 92% of funders and 80% of grantees reported that the advantages of the approach outweighed the drawbacks (Powell et al., 2019).

Although the data points suggest the approach has merit, it is important to note the gap in perceptions between funders and grantees. Collaborative funding models are not necessarily a cure-all. The contemporary research has identified factors that contribute to the success or detriment of collaborative models:

SUCCESS FACTORS

- A clear investment thesis—what goals it hopes to achieve, how it will do it, and how effectiveness will be measured
- Shared expectations among participants
- Operating model and leadership structure designed to achieve collaborative's goals

DETRIMENTAL FACTORS

- Misaligned goals among funders
- Inability to translate goals into realistic targets
- Ineffective administrative structure
- Inflexible strategical approach that does not evolve with challenges
- Limited stakeholder engagement

The Appendix item that follows builds upon the recent research by presenting collaborative efforts that might be relevant to actors within the state's food system community. It presents short case studies of two collaboratives: 1) Blue Meridian's Get Ready Guilford Initiative and 2) Fresh Taste. Key lessons are highlighted, tying each back to the prior literature.

BLUE MERIDIAN AND GET READY GUILFORD

Blue Meridian Partners is a collaborative funding organization. It started in 2016 as part of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation before becoming its own 501(c)(3) in 2018. The 18 funding partners are a mix of high-net-worth individuals and foundations. As of early 2021, Blue Meridian said it had raised more than US$2.5 billion.[25]

While Blue Meridian has five investment portfolios, its larger focus has most often revolved around childhood poverty and increasing economic mobility for young people. It distinguishes itself through its investment orientation and its financial muscle—program officers have the technical expertise to rigorously research and vet compelling ideas and programs, which are then presented to the partners, which can then provide the requisite capital to reach national scale.[26]

The Get Ready Guilford Initiative based in Guilford County helps provide further insight into Blue Meridian's approach. The three-year, $32 million initiative is focused on early childhood interventions for 6,000 children in the county to provide pathways out of poverty. It could expand significantly in terms of duration and financial commitment if certain metrics are met in the project's first phase.

The Duke Endowment (TDE) has been an important facilitator. The organization did not fund the effort directly because the project's goals were outside of its mandate; instead, the Duke Endowment advocated on its behalf to Blue Meridian, which ultimately offered financial

25 This is the figure that is on the Blue Meridian website: https://www.bluemeridian.org/.

26 Stakeholders said Blue Meridian makes investments of $100 million or more in single initiatives.

support.[27] The arrangement has meant the Duke Endowment has been in the somewhat unusual position of being a grantee. Ready for School, Ready for Life (Ready Ready), an independent 501(c)(3) whose board of directors is comprised of community leaders, has been charged with building the administrative staff and working with the Duke Endowment to report on progress to Blue Meridian.

Stakeholders reported that there are notable features associated with Blue Meridian's presence. These include the following:

Upfront theory of change provides clear investment thesis and explicit indication of how progress will be measured

When Blue Meridian became aware of the efforts that eventually became Get Ready Guilford, it visited the Greensboro area for two days of "very intense" proposal sessions where TDE and Ready Ready were required to walk through the theory of change of what the project hoped to accomplish and how it would do it.[28] While participants in the process said Blue Meridian's ask for these details was not necessarily unprecedented, its focus on the specifics was unique. The target metrics are presented in Table A-1 below.

The focus is altering population-level dynamics Pooling the resources of selected foundations and high-net-worth individuals, Blue Meridian places an emphasis on scale. Its frame of reference is the population and taking steps to change the system.

> *I get a little bit discouraged with philanthropy—and I don't mean this in a highly critical way—it's just not as effective as I think it should be," said one official involved with Get Ready Guilford. "And that is sometimes in philanthropy we fund things that sort of make us feel good, and they are frequently one-off things; or you hear a story about an individual or a family that we've helped in some fashion, either through the schools or through some kind of social service program. But we don't look at the population level movement and what's happening at a larger scale. And Blue Meridian is really laser focused on that. They want to see change at the population level.*

The collaborative model includes more than collaborative funding

While Blue Meridian is ambitious by design, some of the challenges cannot be glossed over. Get Ready Guilford is sprawling and requires focus and dedication from stakeholders; otherwise, there is risk that partners will splinter onto other projects and risk diffusing the potency of the effort. Even with the access to funds, there is a degree of difficulty. For example, Ready Ready has plans for an integrated data system and has hired Salesforce experts, but some partners might have informal data collection strategies, which makes tracking the results challenging. And then there is the question of how replicable it is—there are only so many Duke Endowments or billionaire philanthropists.

TDE and Ready Ready have worked to overcome such obstacles by emphasizing community. Yes, Blue Meridian's pooled resources imply a level of financial commitment that captures attention, but they are in some ways reflective of collective action from local leaders that already coalesced around the shared idea that captured Blue Meridian's imagination. TDE and Ready Ready leadership have found it effective to emphasize the community nature and shared ethos.

FRESH TASTE

Fresh Taste's roots can be traced to Chicago-area funders who began collaborating in the early 2000s around issues related to local and regional food systems. There were five funders at the outset before the number grew to 10. Although none of the organizations focused exclusively on the food system, all supported projects that touch aspects of it—by pooling their resources, they hoped to implement a more cohesive giving strategy.

27 The Duke Endowment's participation in Blue Meridian was predicated on a regional match—it was willing to donate $75 million to the initiative if Blue Meridian made $75 million worth of contributions in North Carolina. Blue Meridian's other regional initiative is in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which can be tied to the Kaiser Family Foundation's participation in Blue Meridian.

28 A shortened version of the proposal document and its theory of change can be found here: https://www.getreadyguilford.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2018-06-24-GRGI-Regional-Strategy-for-RR-website.pdf

The number of participating organizations has fluctuated over the years, but a critical step toward a permanent structure was the commission of an assessment of the Illinois food system landscape, which led to the hiring of a director. Members of the current staff describe Fresh Taste as an operating funder collaborative—there is active effort to allocate staff time, convening capacity, technical assistance, and other human resources to promote collaboration in the space (in addition to the funds).

Stakeholders reported on factors that have been critical for Fresh Taste's endurance. The most immediate include the following:

Fresh Taste makes a concerted effort to ensure alignment between its goals, its decision-making process, and the programs it supports.

Fresh Taste's goals are to provide equitable access for people in the greater Chicago area to food that is healthy and culturally appropriate, promotes responsible land stewardship, provides fair wages for workers, and is still affordable. Care is taken that both the programs receiving funding and the decision-making process itself reflect those goals.

> *If you have a value you want to see expressed, it needs to show up in whatever your decision-making structure is," one Fresh Taste official said. "Having a rubric that was scored the way we scored it ensured we would have more BIPOC-led organizations. … We put a very high priority on BIPOC-led organizations; in a place like Chicago and Illinois, that's easy to do. We define that as having more than 50% people of color in staff, leadership, and board. In our scoring rubric, we gave [an] extra 10 points for organizations that were led by people of color, we gave four points to organizations serving people of color, and one point to not doing either, explicitly. And as a result, we had [a] very high proportion of BIPOC-led organizations being grant recipients. So I would just say make sure that whatever your decision making tool is really reflects the values that you want the fund to represent.*

Full-time staff plays a critical role in ensuring consistency

Part of the reason Fresh Taste has managed to ensure consistency between its process and its vision is the dedication of its full-time staff. There are two full-time positions: a director and program manager. The individuals can serve multiple roles—advocates, experts, program managers, and more. Together, they help the foundations that are Fresh Taste's members coalesce around shared ideas while also ensuring that the grants offered by each individual foundation serve larger aims. Keeping multiple groups of stakeholders on the same page does not necessarily happen organically. The full-time staff can help ensure these efforts gain traction.

Fresh Taste strives to listen to its grantees and push them to own their programs.

Fresh Taste embraces the metaphor presented in some business or leadership literature of acting like Mary Poppins—helping catalyze change, but then putting up your umbrella and flying away when it has been accomplished. An overarching goal is to listen to the grantees' needs but have them dictate the potential solutions. "We don't want to own anything," said one official. "We tell people from the get-go—sooner or later we want to help make this happen, but we are not going to be here forever."

FAIR FOOD FUND

Any discussions on the virtues of the Fair Food Fund (FFF) first requires some background both on the FFF and its parent organization, the Fair Food Network (FFN). The FFN is a nonprofit based in Michigan that works to improve the economic, social, and environmental outcomes associated with the local food system. The FFF is its investing and financing arm.

Created in 2013, the FFF originally focused on nine northeastern states until 2018. During that time, it provided close to $3.5 million in financing to 13 grantees, mixing loans (19% of the portfolio), equity (39%), and royalty financing and convertible notes (43%). It also offered business assistance to more than 70 enterprises in the form of group trainings, one-on-one consulting, and advising (Fair Food Network, 2018).

The FFF expanded its geographic scope in 2019 and embraced a nationwide mandate. In 2020, its parent organization—the FFN—announced that it would assume management of the Michigan Good Food Fund (MGFF) beginning in 2021. The FFF will serve as its lending partner.

While the FFN has served as a core partner for MGFF since its inception in 2013, providing outreach and assistance with communications,[29] it imagines pushing the Fund in a direction that aligns with its ethos. The MGFF has had a number of quantifiable successes—since 2015, the partners have disbursed close to $17 million in loans and grants to more than 300 businesses (Fair Food Network, 2020)—stakeholders have noted that funders are largely determining outcomes and priorities.

> *The questions that were raised by national funders and some local ones were: 'Well, how is this different? We know about all these other lending collaboratives,'" said one official affiliated with the Fair Food Fund. "Our answer is: 'When we talk about capital, it's not just money—it's intellectual, social, political, and money.*
>
> *The collective is giving oversight of this initiative to the community, which will actually have governance authority over tweaking our process. How will we fill the pipeline? What deals get approved so that the collective will be accountable?"*

The FFF's portfolio provides examples of attempts to provide financing to entrepreneurs that are often excluded from traditional systems.[30] The relationship with Soul Kitchen in Grand Rapids, Michigan, provides a representative example. In his efforts to become a valuable community resource—offering culturally meaningful food, paying a living wage, sourcing from local farms—the owner of the soul food restaurant was having difficulty getting access to growth capital, despite clear economic successes. FFF provided a $50,000 term loan in the summer of 2020. The owner used it to expand delivery and curbside options during the pandemic as well as catering offerings.

FFF also has the financial expertise to identify creative solutions while not being beholden to traditional orthodoxy or the same regulatory constraints. Two specific examples were highlighted during conversations: 1) FFF has created new collateral products to help businesses looking to restructure loans as they emerge from COVID-19 that avoids having the new loans being flagged as troubled in regulatory reporting; and 2) preserving collateral options for businesses looking to avoid being over-leveraged as they grow.

29 The FFN, Capital Impact Partners, the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation all served as original core fund partners for the Michigan Good Food Fund. The genesis for the collaboration was a $3 million federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) award to Capital Impact Partners. The HFFI was a $400 million national program designed to provide healthy food options to impoverished neighborhoods and rural communities.

30 A summary of the FFF's projects can be found here: https://fairfoodnetwork.org/what-we-do/fund-investments/.