

Strategic Plan

A Healthy, Sustainable and Equitable Food System

2023-2027



THIS STRATEGIC PLAN WAS DEVELOPED WITH INPUT FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS INCLUDING THE BOARD, STAFF, PARTNERS, FARMERS, DONORS, FOUNDATIONS, AND FRESH FARMACY PARTICIPANTS.

Overview

Local Food Hub was founded in 2009 with the goal of increasing access to fresh, healthful, locally grown foods by working with Virginia farmers. Initially, the organization worked with small and mid-sized farms in the region to distribute their products to a wide range of clients, including schools, grocery stores, restaurants, and farmers markets. In tandem, Local Food Hub operated farm support and food access programming.

Over the years, Local Food Hub grew significantly, expanding its programming to support local agriculture and food access, including establishing the Fresh Farmacy program for households facing nutrition insecurity, incorporating fresh local produce as a part of their health and wellness goals. In 2019, it sold its distribution network to deepen its programmatic work. The COVID19 pandemic, and resulting food access and food chain crises demonstrated the importance of Local Food Hub's end to end food system approach. The organization played a critical community role by operating twice-weekly drive-through markets and greatly expanding food access work from March 2020 into 2022. In 2021, the organization partnered with Virginia Foodshed Capital to focus on elevating black, indigenous or people of color (BIPOC) farmers and created the Virginia Black Farmer Directory.

Local Food Hub is a vital part of the community in Charlottesville, throughout Virginia, and across the East Coast, connecting farmers with consumers and promoting the benefits of and equitable access to locally grown food. Their efforts have positive impacts on health and well-being, support the local economy and strengthen the region's agricultural infrastructure.



Overview Continued

Local Food Hub operates within both geographic (i.e. Charlottesville, Virginia) and interest-based (i.e. food equity, food systems) communities. Involvement and scope in an interest-based community may vary by geographic footprint - for example, although Local Food Hub may consult with an organization seeking to start a Fresh Farmacy program in Maine, or create a resource guide for organizations looking to integrate fresh produce into food access work, our direct Fresh Farmacy programming is limited to within the state of Virginia, and Local Food Hub-paid Fresh Farmacy sites are limited to the Charlottesville-Albemarle area.

Local Food Hub celebrates the success of small-midsize independently owned farms selling local food in any region. As with food access, grower services work changes based on geographic scope. We work in Virginia to provide direct programming to farms, broadly across the East Coast to bolster sales opportunities and strengthen food systems infrastructure through the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative, and nationally, as a voice in the conversation and resource to those who need it.

Local Food Hub initiated a strategic planning process in early 2023 to envision goals for the next 3-5 years. The process began with pre-planning activities and a retreat with the board and staff, facilitated by Davenport Strategic Innovation & Design (DSID). During the retreat, key stakeholders and preliminary strategic objectives were identified. The importance of gathering input from as many voices as possible to plan for the future effectively was emphasized and thus a process to gather feedback from staff, board members, partners, farmers and recipients of the Fresh Farmacy program ensued. This process involved multiple meetings to gain insights and ensure that all stakeholders contributed to the decision-making process.

The following strategic plan is flexible and not meant to catalog everything Local Food Hub does in its entirety; it is designed to clarify the identity of Local Food Hub and to create a consistent narrative about the work. It will be the driving force for action over the next five years - giving clarity of purpose, connecting daily efforts to desired impacts within Local Food Hub and the communities Local Food Hub serves.



USE THIS QR CODE
TO SEE A
GLOSSARY OF
TERMS

Vision and Mission

Vision

A network of diverse, independent farms providing communities with fresh, nutritious, locally grown food.

Mission

Local Food Hub is strengthening local food systems by advocating for fairness in farming, advancing equitable access to local food, and providing support to small, independent farmers.



Our Values | Ways of Being

At Local Food Hub, we are as much concerned about how we interact with others while doing the work as we are concerned about delivering on our mission. The values below, generated by the staff and board, serve as our fundamental beliefs for guiding and motivating how we show up and work with one another and with our community.

Authentic

We are genuine and honest in everything we do. We believe that by being authentic, we can build trust with our stakeholders. We are transparent in our communication and we always give our stakeholders the true information. We also make sure that our actions align with our words. Being authentic also means that we are true to ourselves. We believe that being clear is kind.

Belonging

We embrace diversity of all kinds, and are dedicated to creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels like they belong. We believe that when everyone feels like they belong, they can be their whole selves and contribute to our community in a positive way. We are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and valued.

Collaborative

We believe that by working together, we can achieve more than we could ever accomplish alone. We know that collaboration is essential to our success, and we are committed to building and growing partnerships that help us to deliver more impact. We are proud to be a collaborative organization, and we are always looking for ways to better serve our employees, clients, and community.

Service-Oriented

We are dedicated to providing outstanding service to our clients, employees, and community and we are always looking for ways to improve. We are committed to setting the standard for service in everything we do. Service is at the heart of who we are.

Key Strategic Objectives

The Local Food Hub Strategic Plan focuses on several key objectives. The first objective is long-term sustainability, which involves ensuring that the organization can continue to thrive and serve its community for years to come. Another objective is to foster a culture of belonging within the community, creating an inclusive and welcoming environment that encourages participation and engagement. Programmatically, the plan aims to provide exemplary support for local farmers, helping them to grow and succeed in their businesses. On the other end of the food system, and key to supporting small independent farmers, is helping to ensure their product is made available in communities that may have a more challenging time accessing local food. Last but not least, as a trusted convener, Local Food Hub seeks to facilitate connections and collaborations between the community, businesses, and organizations.

OBJECTIVE 1



Operational
Excellence

OBJECTIVE 2



A Culture of
Belonging

OBJECTIVE 3



Exemplary
Farmer
Support

OBJECTIVE 4



Equitable Local
Food Access

OBJECTIVE 5



A Trusted
Convener



Operational Excellence

Ensuring the financial long-term sustainability of Local Food Hub is crucial to supporting and serving local farmers and improving accessibility to fresh, local food in communities the organization serves. Local Food Hub will continue to prioritize fundraising, communications, and performance management to strive towards operational excellence. At least annually, Local Food Hub staff and board will review progress against objectives on the strategic plan and make adjustments and changes as necessary.

Key Results

1

By August 31, 2023, hire a leader with a commitment to the long-term vision.

2

By December 31, 2023, create a comprehensive performance management process for the Local Food Hub board and staff move towards the long-term vision.

3

By June 30, 2024, create a comprehensive communication plan with audience-specific strategies and channels.

- Map each existing channel and ascertain baseline analytics. Create a strategy to improve reach and audience engagement and impact accordingly.
- Overhaul the website to make it interactive and functional for respective users (i.e. growers, partners, clients).
- Hire a person to advance the communications plan.

By December 31, 2027, achieve and maintain 50 percent of the annual budget in reserves.

4

- Create a diversified funding stream coming from foundations, individual donors, government, corporations and partners, and the remaining coming from revenue generating activities.
- Annually review programming and operational costs to ensure alignment with current market and financial demands.

A Culture of Belonging

Local Food Hub is committed to incorporating racial equity into all aspects of the organization. This means that staff and board will not only strive to create a culture that values diversity and inclusivity, but also respect community input and in adjusting operations and programming to better serve marginalized communities. Additionally, the organization will continue to participate in food systems partnerships and coalitions that share a commitment to social justice. By working to embed racial equity into operations, collaboration, and service, Local Food Hub will create real and lasting change in the communities it serves.

Key Results

- 1** By June 30, 2023 conduct intercultural competence assessments and report progress against objectives and post-intervention growth.
 - At least quarterly, assess progress against objectives as individuals and an organization.
- 2** Provide and/or promote participation in annual training opportunities for staff, board, and partners to improve individual and collective intercultural competence.
- 3** Cultivate a pipeline for a diverse pool of talent that is representative of the community Local Food Hub serves to join the board and staff.
 - By December 31, 2023, explore creation of an equity-focused advisory committee to support equity efforts and create a pipeline for potential board and staff.
 - Explore implementing new partnerships with internship programs to provide internship opportunities for area youth.

Exemplary Farmer Support

Local Food Hub has provided farm support since its founding, emphasizing both market readiness and food safety. Recently the grower services team built a custom food safety app and continues to provide technical assistance and food safety certification cost-share to partner farms. The team also guides institutional buyers to set realistic expectations for small farms. In 2022, Local Food Hub launched the Virginia Black Farmer Directory (with initial partnership support from Cultivate Charlottesville and Africulture) to meet the needs of BIPOC farmers. The platform places Black farmers at the forefront and facilitates connections with appropriate buyers. Local Food Hub also launched support services for Directory members, including a gathering and networking event and workshops.

Key Results

- 1** By August 31, 2024, establish criteria for classifying partner producers and the level of support required for different types of partners—leveraging talent and technology to provide valued, appropriate services and opportunities to all partners.
 - By December 31, 2024 ensure documentation, resources and website are updated to reflect new criteria for partner producer classification and overhaul grower resources section of website
- 2** Through regular grower services engagement, provide a minimum of three (3) rotating education workshops focused on increasing market access and building farm capacity annually.
 - Use annual partner surveys and current regulatory updates to inform partner education
- 3** By June 30, 2024, expand the Virginia Black Farmer Directory to 60 members.
 - Expand the size, scope, and associated programming of the Virginia Black Farmer Directory.
 - Annually, host a gathering of Black farmers
 - Add interactive elements to the website to foster peer networking and buyer engagement.
- 4** Annually, support at least five (5) local growers to become GAP audit ready and/or comply with FSMA's PSR.
- 5** By December 31, 2027 double users of FarmDoc App.
 - By March 31, 2024, finalize pilot of FarmDoc, documenting stakeholder use and ensuring capacity and optimization.
 - By December 31, 2024, engage and hire developers to create a new app platform, migrate off AppSheet.
 - By December 31, 2025, ensure FarmDoc is widely available to growers, capturing users and efforts to promote use.
- 6** Ongoing, engage directly with growers to anticipate needs for support and plan for necessary programmatic changes based on current knowledge and research

Equitable Local Food Access

Local Food Hub believes that access to healthy, local food should be a right and not a privilege. Fresh Farmacy: Fruit and Veggie Prescription Program is the main avenue for which individuals who are at risk for diet-related illnesses receive local food with no financial risk. Fresh Farmacy was originally designed as a health program. Due to a variety of factors, the largest being the impact of Covid and subsequent increase in federal and local dollars, the program grew exponentially. It went from requiring administration and enrollment by a local health partner to being administered by a variety of partners so food insecurity challenges could be addressed in a more proactive way, meeting community members where they are, literally at their front door. The Fresh Farmacy program will need to continue to adapt and be flexible with the changing federal landscape and innovate on ways to remain a viable community program.

Local Food Hub is committed to exploring how long-time Fresh Farmacy participants can continue to benefit from eating local food outside of the program. We will accomplish this in a number of ways, from developing strategic partnerships to creating bridge program solutions, and ensuring community and beneficiary engagement along the way. LFH will also serve as a resource for incorporating fresh food into food access programs at other organizations as appropriate. This imperative ensures the organization maintains its commitment to supporting farmers while also ensuring it is increasing the opportunity for household agency over what kinds of produce participants want to bring home.

Key Results

- 1 Annually, review and develop memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with community health & well-being partners to provide Fresh Farmacy programming for community members receiving individualized health services.
- 2 By March 31, 2024 develop a proposal for equitable food access programming, a next/new step for current and new beneficiaries to access and have agency over what kinds of foods they're bringing home.
 - Work directly with Fresh Farmacy sites, community partners, relevant coalitions and additional key stakeholders to explore bringing and funding additional types of fresh food access programming (i.e. farm stands, mobile markets).
 - By 12/31/2024, explore Fresh Match as a nutrition incentive available to Local Food Hub program participants and determine next steps.
 - Research and develop additional funding opportunities to advance fresh equitable food access based upon research gathered with key stakeholders.
- 3 By December 31, 2027, publish results from the comprehensive Fresh Farmacy program evaluation.
 - In partnership with UVA Health, design and develop a comprehensive evaluation of Fresh Farmacy to include baseline data on client usage and health and wellness impacts.
 - By March 31, 2024 develop a standardized non-clinical food access program evaluation protocol to assess the value impact.

A Trusted Convener

Local Food Hub has a reputation for being a great partner, thought leader, and trusted convener in the food systems regional community, and an active member of many local groups and coalitions. Their commitment to supporting farmers and increasing access to their products and goods has earned them the respect of many organizations. As a result, they have been able to form valuable partnerships and participate in coalitions with like-minded groups that share their vision for a better future. In 2020, Local Food Hub was asked to facilitate and support a regional food systems coalition, the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative (EFC), whose mission is to work together to expand opportunities for farmers and equitable access to good food for all. Through the EFC, Local Food Hub aspires to provide a transparent, scalable, and replicable model for multi-regional food system development. Moreover, the organization's ability to convene diverse stakeholders and facilitate productive conversations is an invaluable skill that can help move any initiative forward. The organization is open to stepping into the trusted convener role for other initiatives when appropriate.

Key Results

- 1 Grow Local Food Hub's role as convener and thought leader in local and regional food access, agriculture, and food safety communities representing LFH at 4-6 local, state, and national convenings and coalitions per year.
- 2 Host annual grower meetings and grower expos with 35 growers and 60 buyers attending in 2025, as well as an annual gathering of Black farmers.
- 3 Develop role as Virginia Fresh Match Piedmont Regional Lead; continue facilitating access to the nutrition incentive program for participants and supporting new and existing outlets as needed.
- 4 At least quarterly, write a white-paper, article, blog or present at a conference sharing best practices and learned lessons.
- 5 Secure funding that enables expanding membership of EFC to 20 member hubs and 10 non-hub partners supporting 1,200 growers by the end of 2025.
- 6 Through virtual and face-to-face convenings of EFC, facilitate relationship-building, resource-sharing, and trade between members resulting in \$30M in annual procurement in 2025.
- 7 Lead the design and implementation of business plans, governance policies, and benchmarks that build equity, member leadership, and financial sustainability into the DNA of the EFC network.

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