



# Puget Sound Food Infrastructure Exploration

**What infrastructure could help catalyze the development of an environmentally restorative, economically viable, and socially just and equitable regional food system?**

**This research was made possible through generous grants from Sustainable Communities Funders and the Bullitt Foundation. We at Ecotrust appreciate the ongoing support and partnership of these organizations so thoughtfully pursuing reliable prosperity for all.**



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Prepared by Ecotrust for Sustainable Communities Funders  
and the Bullitt Foundation

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# Executive Summary

## 1.1 Purpose

Our food system is built upon and exacerbates some of the most pressing issues of our time, from climate change to social inequity and beyond. If we are intentional with our approaches, however, redeveloping our food system could provide a tremendous opportunity to advance a shared vision that protects our environment, mitigates climate change, and advances social and racial equity.

In 2018, the Bullitt Foundation and the members of Sustainable Communities Funders supported an exploratory project to understand the landscape of infrastructure needs to support a more equitable, restorative, and prosperous food system in the Puget Sound. The objectives of the *Puget Sound Food Infrastructure Exploration* were: to assess and clarify the need for local food system infrastructure in the Puget Sound region, facilitate a collaborative review that aligns with existing civic programs, provide clear focus on equity and food access, and identify specific opportunities that could warrant further research.

In addition, this exploration consolidates a wide variety of information related to food system infrastructure in the Puget Sound, including past research and current projects, to help a wide variety of stakeholders engage in ongoing and new project development. And finally, because it is a core value of both Ecotrust's and the Sustainable Communities Funders' to center racial equity, this exploration also attempts to highlight where people of color and/or community-based organizations were explicitly engaged, or not, in order to prompt further discussion of whether all relevant perspectives are adequately engaged in the formulation of next steps.

## 1.2 Methodology

The exploration included three phases: 1) primary research with food system actors (producers, buyers, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders) from Skagit, Snohomish, King and Pierce Counties, 2) secondary research to review and summarize past regional food infrastructure reports, and 3) direct contributions by community-based organizations regarding food infrastructure needs.

## 1.3 Conclusions & Recommendations

### 1.3.1 “The What”

Local food infrastructure needs have been discovered in this exploration to be fragmented across scales, product categories, target constituents, and local geographies. What seems to be universal is the need for hard-asset infrastructure (e.g. warehousing, frozen storage, licensed kitchens), paired with training or technical assistance, to connect small and mid-sized producers with local food buyers, be they individuals or institutions. Investment and support is needed all along the value chain to bring into being an equitable

and restorative food system: one that stewards land and water resources effectively and provides affordable access to all eaters. Specifically, infrastructure is needed in several key categories:

- **Land access and on-farm infrastructure, plus farm business incubation and training.** The prohibitive cost of land in the Puget Sound was noted in almost every interview and study. Creative solutions continue to be needed for agricultural land preservation and land access for new and beginning farmers and ranchers, especially immigrants and people of color who have suffered systemic barriers to land ownership and financing over generations. Beyond basic on-farm infrastructure such as post-harvest handling facilities, animal handling facilities, cold/frozen storage, tools, equipment and farm implements, new producers may need investment, grants or loans to support start-up operations and access to technical assistance in production, business management training, market development, and value chain coordination. For immigrant populations and aspiring producers of color, it is also extremely important for the services provided to be culturally relevant and responsive to the systemic disparities that these communities have historically faced. Any such programming should be developed from the start in partnership with the intended beneficiaries, so as to ensure their needs are reflected within program design and implementation.
- **Aggregation, warehousing, and cold/frozen storage at multiple scales.** While most food system infrastructure is unique to its product category (wash and pack stations for produce, slaughter and processing for meat, seed-cleaning and hulling/milling for grains, etc.), many different product categories require a waystation for storage to facilitate efficient distribution of local product to buyers. Such aggregation capacity is needed at multiple scales - from relatively tiny facilities that could be housed in a shipping container and serve a geographically compact network of very small or new producers, to larger scale warehousing designed to serve a broader regional “ag of the middle” cohort, as was the mission of Ecotrust’s Redd on Salmon Street project in Portland.

Developing aggregation capacity across the scale spectrum is important for creating a pipeline of support for growth and a smooth flow of local goods through the region - very small producers will likely start out serving very small buyers in their immediate region, but some will grow and need access to larger markets. With that growth will come the need for access to additional infrastructure, as well as next-level technical assistance and training, partnerships with other producers to serve larger buyer needs, and specialized staffing. Clear opportunities exist to develop or coordinate aggregation capacity to serve each scale of operation, and to illuminate that pathway for growth and support to regional producers and entrepreneurs.

Before investing in aggregation capacity, it is important to understand that warehousing is a break-even activity at best, especially when storing whole or minimally processed food products that are very low-margin.

Unfortunately, traditional “food hubs” have at best a middling track record of financial viability, largely because of their mission-driven focus on produce, as well as their non-profit organizational structure and management style. To be financially viable, hubs need to include a mix of higher-margin value-added products (such as meat and locally produced consumer packaged goods and beverages), be operated with business rigor, and ideally, leverage a set of corollary services (such as sales support, advertising, office rental, technical assistance, etc.) to subsidize the warehousing component. Stringent financial feasibility studies and business modeling should be done to evaluate risk and viability before supporting any discrete aggregation development project.

A final note on facility development: to maintain cold-chain custody and comply with food safety regulations, aggregation in specific temperature zones is often required, and facilities must meet zoning, permitting and other regulations within multiple jurisdictions. Frozen storage is almost always in highest demand and shortest supply, so it is smart to err on the side of over-investing in frozen storage within a given facility, when possible. Advanced technology now exists to reduce the energy usage and environmental impacts of cold storage, but sometimes at significant incremental cost to the development project, so providing funding specifically for environmental upgrades may be a useful mechanism for support.

- **Distribution infrastructure, potentially to include sales support.** Most small producers start out self-distributing their product, whether by selling at farmers’ markets or farm stands, delivering product to CSA drop sites, or by delivering product themselves to restaurant and grocery accounts. Producers at this scale often need investment in trucks or delivery vans, which can sometimes be shared among multiple producers. Self-delivery is an important step in early-stage growth, as it is often while making deliveries that producers connect with their buyers in person, discover important nuances to their customers’ businesses, and learn how their products are received and merchandised. As producers grow, spending time behind the wheel making deliveries becomes less valuable, and the opportunity cost of time not spent further developing their products or business increases. At this stage it is useful to plug into an established distribution service, especially if the service also offers support for sales and market development, like providing samples and sales collateral, or staffing tastings.

Large distributors like Charlie’s Produce, Duck Delivery, and Food Services of America offer all of those services, but at high cost to the producer, and often with minimum volume requirements that are at a scale still out of reach for even midsized regional producers. “Aggregators of the middle”, like Puget Sound Food Hub and Farmstand Local Foods, offer accessible distribution services for small and midsized producers, including some sales support, and can potentially help overcome the significant barriers to

getting local food into institutions like schools and hospitals. We believe such aggregators could become integral components of a robust Puget Sound food system as they grow, and therefore are worthy of further investment and support.

- **Licensed kitchens for value-added processing.** As noted in studies by the Port of Seattle and the Food Innovation Network (FIN), the Puget Sound region lacks adequate facilities to support entrepreneurship in catering and specialty food business development. As with the other components of infrastructure described above, technical assistance and incubator services in both business management and language/cultural agility are vital to the success of any hard asset infrastructure development. FIN's Tukwila Village Food Hall will provide some kitchen and training capacity in South King County, and our understanding is that the Port of Seattle is still considering a licensed commercial kitchen project. Additional projects may also be needed to serve specific constituents or additional geographies.

### 1.3.2 “The How”

It is vitally important to note that *how* infrastructure projects are developed is as important as *what* infrastructure is developed. Even in this review of regional research and studies focused on food infrastructure, it is clear that specific efforts were generally not made to understand the unique needs and perspectives of communities of color or others historically underrepresented in food and agriculture conversations, or to ensure inclusive leadership in the development of new projects. We at Ecotrust have been guilty in this respect as well. While food banking and the array of programs designed to increase food access are critical to getting adequate nutrition to those who can't otherwise afford or access it right now, especially children, they are not fixing the food system at a fundamental level, nor are they removing the long-term systemic barriers that help keep people in need of services. We believe regional food infrastructure has the capacity to help change the food system writ large, if attended to with that intention.

To leverage investments in food infrastructure to help build a more just and equitable food system, probably the most important factors are inclusive leadership and collaborative decision-making. Communities of color, be they tribes, tribal members, or represented by community-based organizations, must not only be invited into projects at conception, but they must be invited in numbers significant enough to have meaningful voices at the table, and to share power over decision-making in such a way that the project is genuinely a collaborative effort. This will take time. If we want our collaborations to be successful, dominant culture organizations, including Ecotrust, also have an obligation to do significant internal work to recognize the ways in which our approaches are not “universal”, but rather reflect specific attributes of white culture. And finally, given the historic and current systemic barriers facing communities of color, infrastructure projects should include a specific objective related to capacity-building among participating community-based organizations in order to be most helpful in the long-term.

With regard to next steps, given the wide variety of opportunities that exist to further develop the Puget Sound regional food system, individuals and organizations interested in food infrastructure development should clarify the specific geography, scale of operation, beneficiaries, and desired impacts that align with their mission or motivations. Such clarity will provide useful transparency and self-awareness when engaging directly with the communities who will ultimately co-create and benefit from the projects. As projects and partners are confirmed, the challenging and often slower-moving work of humble collaboration and trusting partnership development take center stage. It would be helpful to all food system actors from around the region if transparency were provided on projects, project partners, and sources of funds, which suggests that it may also be helpful to create a mechanism for or identify a coordinator who can help facilitate communication and co-development of different projects.

### **1.3.3 Opportunities**

One idea for infrastructure coordination and two specific opportunities are described in the conclusion to this report as worthy of further consideration and potentially for collaborative regional support: Coordinating a Mesh-Network of Local Food Infrastructure, Community-Led Food Aggregation in South King County, and Building an Urban Last Mile Logistics Hub in SODO.

The first idea simply reflects the recognition that the most effective approach to addressing the varied infrastructure needs may be a coordinated effort (perhaps loosely coordinated) to support a constellation of projects designed to ultimately flesh out a mesh network of scale-appropriate food infrastructure to connect small and mid-sized producers with local buyers across the region.

Because of the inherent regional nature of food production and distribution, ideally such a coordinating function wouldn't be tied to a specific county or discrete local geography. Urban and rural agriculture are both critically important in building regional food access and resilience, and both have an important role to play in stewarding natural resources and doing all we can in the Northwest to mitigate the effects of rising inequality and climate change. That said, there could be specific programs offered by particular jurisdictions (e.g. cities, counties, conservation districts, states) that could be knit together to serve the overarching vision of a robust regional food system, and creating or coordinating dedicated capacity to shepherd that vision could help take advantage of those opportunities and overcome the inevitable challenges.

The community-based organizations that contributed to this report could be valuable partners in such an effort. We encourage readers to review section 5 to recognize what are in some cases very specific needs and opportunities as defined by community-led organizations operating in the Puget Sound region. These organizations were invited to contribute based on their commitment to supporting communities of color and others who have long-faced systemic barriers to food and land access, and are actively wrestling with the power structures inherent in our current food and agriculture systems. For help finding projects and organizations that align with specific funder missions

and goals, we have created an index of objectives and key results sought by the contributing organizations that can be found in Appendix 7.4. We also recognize that there are a great many more community-based organizations worthy of support and partnership in the region, so we offer a directory of additional organizations doing food system and related work in Appendix 7.5, with apologies to the organizations we inevitably missed.

The first concrete opportunity we suggest warrants further research is co-led by a collaboration of community-based organizations serving constituents in South King County who have begun exploring their shared needs for *small scale* food infrastructure in order to support specific programming in food access, urban agriculture, and community resilience. The partners agree that a food aggregation and access facility, sized to serve their constituent farmers, as well as those who aspire to launch urban commercial farm businesses, and located in close geographic proximity to their communities, is an important next step in achieving their individual and shared goals.

Finally, our research suggests that the most relevant catalytic infrastructure to serve *large scale* food buyers, including institutions, may be a last-mile storage and logistics facility in Seattle. Such a facility would be designed to provide support for local aggregators who are gathering product from multiple farmers on the urban periphery (including in Skagit, Snohomish, and King counties) for delivery to metro area institutions and other wholesale accounts. With access to cold, frozen and ambient temperature storage, the aggregators could hold larger quantities of product – including produce, proteins and value-added products – in the urban core, thus facilitating more frequent deliveries to clients and more efficient loads in from rural areas. Such a facility could also offer value-added production space, distribution services, co-working and office space, technical assistance and incubator services.

In closing, we at Ecotrust are committed to the cultivation of equitable, restorative, prosperous and resilient regional food systems across the Pacific Northwest, and look forward to continued opportunities to engage in and partner on many of the ideas and opportunities included in this exploration in the months and years to come.

# 2

## Purpose and Methodology

## 2.1 Project Goals and Background

The Sustainable Communities Funders (SCF) Collaborative is comprised of foundations and government agencies that care deeply about the intersection of environmental stewardship, equitable community development, and community engagement. In 2018, together with Bullitt Foundation and two private funders, the members of SCF supported an exploratory project to understand the landscape of hard and soft infrastructure needs to support a more equitable, restorative, and prosperous food system in the Puget Sound. As it stands currently, our food system is built upon and exacerbates some of the most pressing issues of our time, from climate change to social inequity and beyond. If we are intentional with our approach, however, redeveloping this system could provide a tremendous opportunity to advance a shared vision that protects our environment, mitigates climate change, and advances social and racial equity.

The *Puget Sound Food Infrastructure Exploration* included the following objectives:

- **Assess and clarify the need for local food system infrastructure in the Puget Sound region** by conducting primary research with local food system actors, including farmers, ranchers, fishers, chefs, institutional foodservice directors, and a spectrum of supporting agencies and stakeholders (King County, City of Seattle, Public Health - Seattle & King County, community-based and culturally specific organizations).
- **Facilitate a multi-stakeholder, collaborative process** that aligns with King County's Local Food Initiative and related City of Seattle programs, and includes civic and nonprofit agencies and community-based organizations.
- **Provide clear focus on promoting equity and food access**, as well as facilitating a shift toward plant-forward diets and sustainable/regenerative proteins to improve both eater and soil health.
- **Identify and define needs for specialized research or further assessment** of specific opportunities yielded from this initial exploration.
- **Assess the landscape of funding and financial support** for further research or development, pending the opportunities and partners identified in the exploration.

Furthermore, this exploration is meant to consolidate a wide variety of information related to food system infrastructure, including past research and current projects, to help stakeholders new to the conversation - be they policymakers, practitioners, funders or investors - access the history and current landscape of food system infrastructure in the Puget Sound region. Finally, because it is a core value of both Ecotrust's and the Sustainable Communities Funders' to center racial equity, this exploration also attempts to

highlight where people of color and/or community-based organizations were explicitly engaged, or not, in order to prompt further discussion of whether all relevant perspectives are adequately engaged in the formulation of next steps.

## 2.2 Methodology

### 2.2.1 Phase 1: Primary Research with Stakeholders

The first phase of the infrastructure exploration focused on primary research with food system stakeholders across the Puget Sound, from Skagit to Pierce counties. From July–November 2018, Ecotrust Food & Farms program staff (Amanda Osborne, Katy Pelissier, and Yolimar Rivera Vázquez) conducted 49 interviews with local food buyers, producers, aggregators, community-based organizations, and partners.

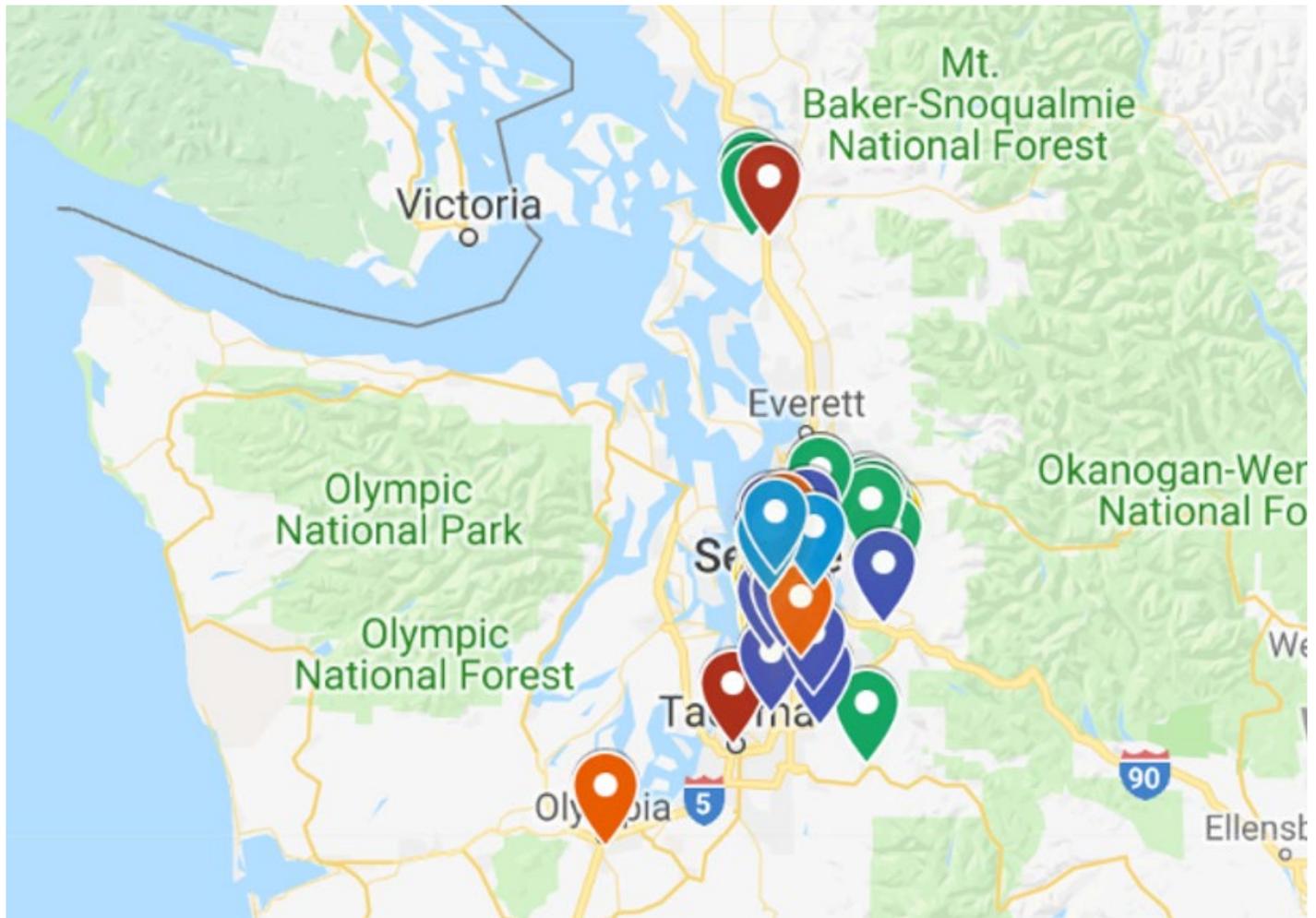
The purpose of these interviews was to inform this report, as well as two additional projects being conducted by Ecotrust simultaneously, which included: 1) facilitating a strategic planning process with the Local Institutional Food Team (LIFT), a collaboration of civic organizations and NGOs convened by King Conservation District and focused on increasing local food procurement by King County institutions, and 2) a project designed to outline strategies for increasing local food procurement by South King County school districts, contracted by Public Health - Seattle & King County. Although all primary interviews were valuable to informing Ecotrust's overall understanding of the state of local food systems in Puget Sound, different interviewees informed Ecotrust's different projects to varying degrees. Results from all primary research have deeply informed this final report.

Interviewees were chosen based on recommendations from LIFT participants and project funders from all three projects. Ecotrust prioritized interviewing anyone recommended by two or more project stakeholders, as well as producers suggested by WSDA's Farm to School & Value Chains Specialist, Chris Iberle, who is intimately familiar with the diversity of Washington's local farmers and ranchers. A full list of interviewees is available in the appendices of this report.

Most of these interviews were conducted in person, with some done via phone, and ranged from 30–90 minutes in length. Standardized interview questions were developed for all stakeholder groups (institutional food buyers, other buyers, producers, community-based organizations (CBOs), and LIFT members), and focused on needs related to local food infrastructure, institutional sales/purchases of local food, and farm to school. The scripts used in these primary research interviews are also included as an appendix to this report.

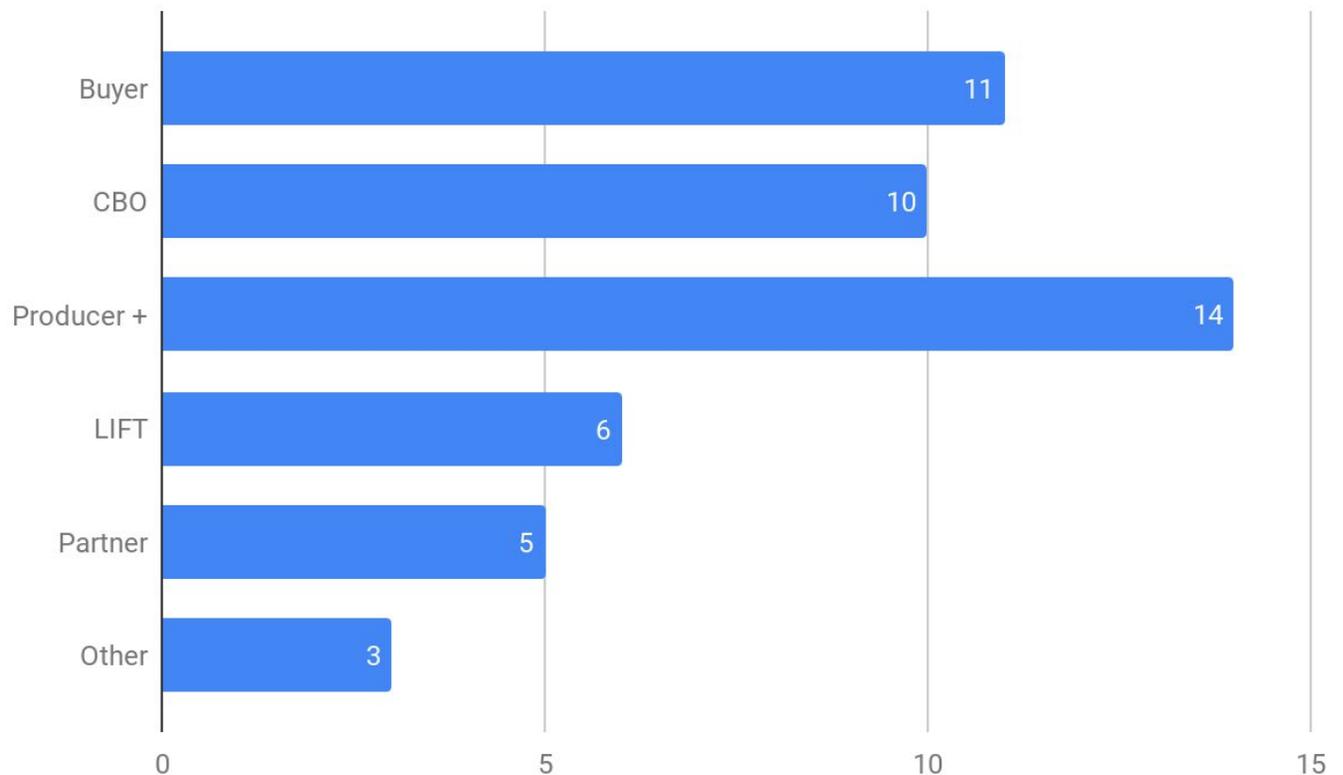
The geographic location of interviewees is illustrated below, wherein green pins identify producers, yellow pins identify community-based organizations, purple pins identify buyers, orange pins identify LIFT members, blue pins

identify partners, and red pins indicate a miscellaneous category that include a county initiative, a retail business and a community college. Note that several pins are clustered and so it may be difficult to distinguish at this scale. A digital version of this map, which can be zoomed in for more detail, is available in [Google Maps](#)<sup>1</sup>. The breakdown of interviewees is also shown below.



**Map of Primary  
Research Interviewees**

<sup>1</sup> <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1X6Y0DJf0Mb7U0-vCankfjbg665MGBjW>



### Number and Types of Interviews

#### 2.2.2 Phase 2: Secondary Research

As many readers are no doubt aware, there are many existing and past food infrastructure projects in the region, and additional pieces of research dedicated in whole or in part to the topic of food system infrastructure in the Puget Sound. Our team reviewed many of these reports and projects and have included summaries of key research in this exploration. While this is by no means an exhaustive review of related work and history, we believe it illuminates important themes and ideas, many of which have been or are being pursued in multiple discrete geographies around the region.

#### 2.2.3 Phase 3: Direct Contributions from Community-Based Organizations

To round out the primary and secondary research conducted by our team, we also solicited direct contributions to this report from seven organizations led by and/or working with communities of color in the Puget Sound area. Many of these were organizations we interviewed as part of our primary research in the summer of 2018. Although we did our best to accurately synthesize what we heard, we also recognized the way in which the “power of the writer shapes the final narrative” of any report, and wanted to provide an opportunity for these organizations to contribute in a direct and unedited way (Okuno, 2018). We at Ecotrust are by no means the best spokespeople for these organizations, the communities they serve, or the important work that they do. As a result, our goal was to create space for those working directly with communities of color on food systems reform to frame the issues as they see them, and to help guide investments into local food infrastructure in the months and years to come.

The invitation we provided to these organizations was intentionally open-ended: Ecotrust offered compensation directly to organizations, using funding provided by SCF specifically to engage community-based organizations, to contribute their perspective on the infrastructure investments needed to support the growth of a more resilient regional food system, leaving the word “infrastructure” intentionally open to interpretation. Our team provided optional prompts, which were used by some but not all of the report contributors. We left all other requirements, from the page limit to the format, flexible. The contributions by these organizations can be found in section 5.

Ecotrust limited our outreach to seven organizations due to available funding and existing networks, and worked to identify a diversity of voices as much as possible given these constraints. That said, it is important to note that there are likely dozens of additional community-based organizations that could provide additional perspectives and/or highlight other needs not captured in this report.

# 3

## History and Context

## 3.1 Relevant Pacific Northwest Infrastructure Research Highlights

Ecotrust has conducted significant past research related to food system infrastructure, and has experience developing a last-mile logistics hub in Portland, Oregon, both of which inform this project. What follows is a summary of key findings from relevant research, and lessons learned from development of the [Redd on Salmon Street](#).

For those newer to work in regional food systems, food system infrastructure, or support for the “ag of the middle”, what follows should provide helpful background and context for the recommendations made in this report.

### 3.1.1 Oregon Food Infrastructure Gap Analysis, 2015

With support from Meyer Memorial Trust, Ecotrust conducted an extensive year-long research project in the state of Oregon to identify the gaps and barriers preventing local food systems from scaling up beyond direct to consumer outlets like farmers’ markets, farm stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs (all of which were estimated to only be reaching 1-2% of the population, and a relatively educated, affluent set of consumers).

Published in 2015, this study concluded that scale-appropriate food aggregation, processing, and distribution infrastructure is not readily or affordably accessible by small and mid-sized regional farmers, ranchers, and entrepreneurs, and that this lack of access is inhibiting the growth and development of a robust regional food economy. The study also highlighted many other interdependent factors related to the development of equitable, restorative, healthy food systems.

The report describes key dynamics of regional food supply, demand and infrastructure, and then explores six product categories in more depth, including beef, pork, chicken, leafy greens, storage crops and grains. Executive summaries in English and Spanish, as well as the full report, can be accessed on Ecotrust’s website: <https://ecotrust.org/publication/regional-food-infrastructure/>.

The supply side assessment in the report highlighted the dramatic shrinkage in what has been described as the “Agriculture of the Middle” (aka Ag of the Middle, or AOTM) in Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, and the United States writ large, thanks largely to industry consolidation and US farm policy incentivizing farmers to “get big or get out” (Philpott, 2008). Broadly described as farms and ranches bigger than those selling via farmers’ markets, and smaller than those selling into the global-industrial commodity markets (or alternatively, as those with “farmers’ market values, but wholesale volumes”), the *Ag of the Middle* was identified as the “sweet spot” scale to support the development of robust and resilient regional food systems.

With regard to demand, the research showed that consumer demand for differentiated food (local, Certified Organic, Non-GMO Verified, Salmon-Safe,

grass-finished, pasture-raised, etc.) was growing nationally, as evidenced by the rapid increase in retail, restaurant, and manufactured food brands promoting “local,” “natural,” and similar claims and labels. This trend was prominent in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in urban areas, and most visible in retail and restaurant segments that cater to educated, affluent consumers. Institutions (e.g., schools, hospitals, colleges, correctional facilities) seem noticeably slower as a buyer segment to respond to customer interest in differentiated products for a variety of reasons, notably price. Institutions nonetheless pose a unique opportunity to act as anchors for regional food economies and play a vital role serving eaters across income and education spectrums.

As originally conceived, “infrastructure” was defined for the purposes of this study as both the physical components of food aggregation, processing, and distribution (e.g., warehouses, equipment, trucks), as well as the network of relationships (e.g., producers, processors, butchers, brokers, distributors, chefs), required to move food from the farm or ranch to the point of consumption. In actuality, infrastructure became the entry point into a much broader examination of the challenges and opportunities posed by the development of regional food systems.

An important factor highlighted in the report is that in commodity markets, producers are most often supplying inputs into a well-orchestrated supply chain optimized for efficiency. They are price-takers, and usually responsible for only one link in a long, linear supply chain. In contrast, Ag of the Middle producers are often taking responsibility for multiple links or entire supply ecosystems, from production, processing, and packaging, to branding, market development and sales, as well as distribution, all while staying committed to local or regional markets. Because of the fundamental differences in their market strategies, we found that Ag of the Middle producers face significant infrastructure challenges relative to commodity players. Such producers, processors, and entrepreneurs must spend significant time and energy to coordinate multiple pieces of the supply chain themselves, or cobble together a constellation of suppliers, partners, or fellow producers to connect the dots.

From an investment perspective, the differentiated regional food and agriculture sector characterized by Ag of the Middle production and values based supply chains looks a lot like emerging markets: highly fragmented, lacking consistent data and information, and dependent on personal relationships. It has also been described as highly collaborative and supported by local communities. This culture of collaboration is important because it has significant implications for the type of investments, capacity development, and support useful in growing the sector.

### **3.1.2 Cascadia Foodshed Financing Project Market Research, 2016**

Although the Infrastructure Gap Analysis described above highlighted systemic food system issues and opportunities we believed broadly applicable to the Pacific Northwest foodshed, it was only funded to specifically address Oregon, so in 2016, the Cascadia Foodshed Financing Project (CFFP) contracted

with Ecotrust to conduct market research and ground-truth findings from the Infrastructure Gap Analysis with producers in Washington State. In addition, this contract advanced the body of regional food infrastructure research by assessing the relative market opportunity of the six product categories originally profiled in the foundational report. This next phase of research specifically sought to answer the question, “if our shared goal is to catalyze a strong, thriving regional food economy in the Pacific Northwest, in which product categories should we collaboratively invest?”

To evaluate relative market opportunity, Ecotrust’s PhD staff economist contrasted published cost of production models in conventional production systems (think of these as “business as usual” practices in commodity agriculture) for each of the six product categories, with a specific “differentiated” production model (e.g. commodity beef vs grass-finished, conventional leafy greens vs certified organic), and then the team vetted assumptions and findings with local producers. Our primary interest was in assessing the costs of production to determine where efficiencies in the alternative model could be harvested to glean market upside, if collective regional investment was to be made in the category. In other words, which food categories had the most potential to metabolize investment capital and generate positive financial return on that investment?

With regard to the specific question about which product categories warrant collective investment, the research made clear that neither leafy greens nor storage crops presented obvious opportunity for market-oriented private investment at the regional scale, although leafy greens have market viability at the smaller scale in direct to consumer channels on the west side of the region, and commodity storage crops are an important component of the east side agricultural economy. Both categories are also important for environmental and health reasons, and may thus warrant mission-related support, but perhaps more effectively by attempting to influence consumer behavior or create an environment in which plant-based diets are easier to adopt, and more affordable.

The three protein categories - beef, poultry, and pork - all seemed to offer potential for successful regional market development in differentiated alternative production models (grass-finished, pastured, and pasture-pen, respectively). However, satisfying a significant proportion of regional demand would entail substantially rebuilding the regional industries, with significant investments needed in developing feedstocks, processing infrastructure, labor, and markets.

Alternative wheat and rotational/specialty grains offered the most significant potential return on investment, thanks to considerable investments already made by east side producers in no-till production methods, as well as west side investment in organic and boutique grain production and milling.

A synthesis of the CFFP research is available on Ecotrust’s [website](#)<sup>2</sup>.

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2 [https://ecotrust.org/media/CFFP\\_synth\\_8\\_16\\_16.pdf](https://ecotrust.org/media/CFFP_synth_8_16_16.pdf)

### 3.1.3 Ag of the Middle, 2015 and 2017

Having identified the “Ag of the Middle” (AOTM) as a vital contributor to the development of thriving regional food systems, Ecotrust undertook additional follow-on research to better understand the unique needs of AOTM and aspiring-AOTM producers. The conclusions from this research were published in a white paper entitled, [Organizing to Rebuild Agriculture of the Middle: A needs assessment of agriculture of the middle producers supplying Oregon’s foodshed](#)<sup>3</sup>. This research includes detailed summaries of findings across an array of barriers, including business structure and succession, access to land, labor, and financing, production practices, operations, and market development.

Ecotrust contracted with a freelancer steeped in small, sustainable and local agriculture issues, Nellie McAdams, to conduct research interviews with 18 producers in Oregon and Washington, operating in ten different product categories with between five and 3,500 acres in production, between two and forty employees during high season, and between \$50,000 and \$15 million in gross sales. All of the producers interviewed were white and owned at least a portion of the property they were cultivating or grazing. In fact the report notes that most found their properties through “luck, family, or community”, a sentiment that reflects the history of racist land and labor laws and practices in the Northwest.

Our primary conclusion relevant to food system infrastructure was that small producers must make multiple “quantum leaps” to become AOTM; in other words, to be profitable, they must often expand their land base, production and processing infrastructure, labor force, and/or market development capacity almost simultaneously, and often before their businesses can accommodate such expansion or capitalize such growth. Recommendations for investing in the development of aspiring AOTM producers included: 1) value-chain coordination to support producers finding reliable buyers, as well as processors, partners and investors, 2) protecting farmland and devising creative solutions to provide land access to small and beginning producers, 3) providing technical assistance and networks for peer to peer support on such issues as marketing, business management (legal, finance, HR, etc.), and succession planning, 4) supporting beginning farmer and specialized labor training opportunities, 5) developing creative financing programs that help producers cross difficult growth stages, and 6) policy and research to help accomplish these goals.

In 2017, Ecotrust launched an *Agriculture of the Middle Accelerator* designed to address several of these needs. The objective of the Accelerator is to help participating producers overcome the tremendous hurdles that challenge basic viability and make it exceedingly difficult to supply the wholesale and institutional markets that comprise the majority of food sales. The program is a two-year, hands-on, capacity-building and business development initiative,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://ecotrust.org/media/AOTM-Producer-Whitepaper-FINAL.pdf>

providing training and technical assistance on business structure, taxation, credit, finance, market development and more, while connecting producers with each other, to a network of service providers, and to prospective buyers. Now 34 producers strong, the AOTM Accelerator includes farmers and ranchers from Northern California, Oregon and Washington, who collectively manage 8,283 acres, as well as a significant number of fishermen from the Pacific Northwest coast and Alaska. The group collectively represents approximately \$6.5 million in gross revenue as of 2017.

While the vast majority of current Accelerator participants are white, reflecting the same racial disparities in land ownership and access to resources described in the research above, concerted outreach is being done this year to engage Northwest tribes and tribal members who are operating midsized agricultural operations, and initial efforts are being made to nurture a pathway for aspiring farmers of color with incubator and technical assistance programs like [Mudbone Grown](#)<sup>4</sup> and [Adelante Mujeres](#)<sup>5</sup>.

Together, the current and future cohorts of the AOTM Accelerator create notable potential to bolster a consistent supply of nutrient-dense, fresh, local food for the Pacific Northwest region. Additional information regarding Ag of the Middle and the AOTM Accelerator can be found on Ecotrust's website: <https://ecotrust.org/project/ag-of-the-middle/>

### **3.1.4 Redd on Salmon Street, 2016 and 2019**

In addition to investing in training and business development for AOTM and aspiring-AOTM producers, Ecotrust has also invested in physical infrastructure in the form of the [Redd on Salmon Street](#)<sup>6</sup>, a last-mile logistics hub and public convening space located in Portland's historic Central Eastside Industrial District. The \$25 million, two city-block campus is designed to help scale a more restorative, equitable, prosperous and delicious regional food economy across Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. Redd West, opened in 2016, offers cold storage, warehousing, distribution, fulfillment services, advertising, collaboration, and co-working spaces and amenities, as well as a vibrant and networked tenant, subtenant and supplier community. Redd East, newly renovated and opened in January 2019, hosts a world-class event center, community teaching kitchen, and small format food retail space being developed as a minority food business incubator platform.

Redd West anchor tenant [B-Line Sustainable Urban Delivery](#)<sup>7</sup> provides vital services to aspiring AOTM farmer and ranchers, community based fishermen, and urban food entrepreneurs. Thanks to a unique partnership with New Seasons Markets, producers can store or take delivery of their processed products at the Redd, and B-Line will pick and pack product from the 90+

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4 <https://www.mudbonegrown.com/home>

5 <http://www.adelantemujeres.org/agriculture/>

6 <http://reddonsalmon.com/>

7 <https://b-linepdx.com/>

regional producers who are participants in the program and make consolidated store deliveries for the group, saving those producers 17 individual weekly distribution stops each around the Portland metro area. In addition to traditional warehousing, B-Line offers fulfillment stalls that allow producers to store packaging and labeling materials, scales and processing equipment, promotional and trade show gear, farmers' market stall infrastructure, or other odd-sized materials important to conducting business, in a dedicated space, essentially liberating them from their garages. Importantly, all of B-Line's spaces and services are offered on an a la carte menu, facilitating the growth of small producers and entrepreneurs by allowing them to add capacity-building services as their business growth can support them.

In addition to B-Line, a vibrant community of tenants make Redd West an important collaboration and networking hub within the regional foodshed. FoodCorps is a national nonprofit that provides nutrition education and garden programming in schools and works to create opportunities for children – regardless of class, race, or geography – to grow up to lead healthier and more productive lives. SoupCycle is a small-batch fresh soup, salad and sandwich grab-and-go company recently acquired by Seattle based Evergreen Foods. New Foods Kitchen is Portland's only plant-based shared and certified commercial kitchen incubating a fast-growing segment of vegan entrepreneurs. Finally, Wilder Land & Sea curates and distributes local and regional meat and seafood to more than 80 Portland-area restaurants and chefs.

Redd East encompasses more than 33,000 square feet of event space, including a main hall, demonstration kitchen, outdoor plaza, and board room meeting space. A former powerhouse on the property has been converted to a small format retail space that is being developed as a minority food business incubator program, currently featuring Portland Pupusas & Taqueria.

Collectively, the campus and its tenants are working together to:

- Scaffold a food system sourced from many small and mid-sized producers in the region;
- Stimulate fulfilling entrepreneurial economic opportunity and jobs, both rural and urban;
- Actively foster equity, diversity, and inclusion in the regional food system by helping to expand food access, support minority entrepreneurship, and cultivate a shared sense of place;
- Advance the restoration of healthy soils, grasslands, rivers, and oceans through our facilities and partnerships, and to conserve and restore the land, water, and biodiversity on which our food supply depends;

- Cultivate a regional cuisine from a larder of what grows abundantly, healthfully, restoratively, and mouthwateringly here in the Pacific Northwest, in order to make local, seasonal eating the norm; and
- Create a platform for collective impact, meaningful collaboration, and critical conversations to advance food system reform.

## **3.2 Puget Sound Food Infrastructure Context & Research**

Following are synopses of research and studies related to regional food infrastructure conducted by partner organizations in and around the Puget Sound over the last 15 years. While not an exhaustive compendium of reports, these summaries provide a helpful orientation to the history of explorations already conducted, as well as participants already engaged in an ongoing regional conversation about food infrastructure.

### **3.2.1 Food Processing in Western Washington: A Review of Surveys on Agricultural Processing Infrastructure and Recommendations for Next Steps, 2012**

The earliest secondary research reviewed for this infrastructure exploration was a report on food processing commissioned by the City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability and the Environment in 2012 (Urban Food Link), which also references at least seven other studies conducted since 2003 by different agencies or organizations seeking to understand the food processing capacity of the region.

Ultimately facilitating import substitution within the Puget Sound region was a primary objective of the report, citing the value of total raw food imports in 2000 as \$1.38 billion, and noting, "it may not be possible to completely substitute these imports for locally-produced food. Nevertheless, to the extent that the infrastructure is put in place to allow for maximized production, the region can take a big step in re-localizing the food economy" (Urban Food Link, 2012, pg. 2).

The City contracted with Urban Food Link to conduct the research. Urban Food Link's methodology was to review the literature on agricultural processing infrastructure in Washington State, with a focus on survey results for Western Washington. Additionally, interviews were conducted with local and national experts on food systems to understand the feasibility of creating food hubs or other appropriate infrastructure that could increase access to markets for regional farmers (Urban Food Link, 2012). As was common with other reports and assessments at the time, no explicit focus on racial equity was called out in the report methodology, and we can assume that survey responses and related research primarily reflect the perspectives of established, land-owning farmers, the vast majority of which are white.

Expanding local food sales at institutions (including schools, hospitals, college and university campuses, corporate cafes, assisted living centers and the like)

appears to be a key motivation in this report for recommending investment to develop the processing capacity of the region, assumably because the procurement budgets of institutions make up a significant portion of the total raw food import budget noted above. The report explains that institutions require raw commodities to be minimally processed (i.e. peeled, cut, portioned, frozen, or otherwise processed for ease of use and low labor), and that the equipment and facilities needed for such processing are lacking in the Puget Sound region. Specifically, the report notes that “today, few stand-alone fruit and vegetable processing plants exist and the ones that remain are outdated and inefficient. The region has also lost cut and wrap facilities for meat and is lacking in cold storage and warehousing for hanging meat to cure” (Urban Food Link, 2012, pg. 2). The report goes on to conclude that, “increased institutional purchasing will be difficult without investment in new facilities to allow for fresh product to be cut, frozen, processed, or packaged in a way that institutions can handle” (Urban Food Link, 2012, pg. 5).

Food processing infrastructure is described as critically important from the producer perspective as well. The report describes the situation facing established farmers in Western Washington:

Despite the limited data, experts agree that investing in infrastructure that allows for value-added products can support additional farm-related businesses. These experts have identified several issues that keep small farmers from optimizing their production, including aggregation, cold storage, processing, and distribution challenges. Loss of small-scale infrastructure for processing for meat and produce has left fewer opportunities for value-added products. Across Washington State, only half of the farms that self-distribute their goods have on-farm facilities for basic washing and cooling. A 2002 survey of Washington farmers found that 3.85% of the farmers in the urban Puget Sound area (King, Pierce, Thurston, Mason, and Kitsap counties) are currently adding value to their products through on-farm packing or processing. This is greater than the statewide average of 2.05% but lower than the 7.37% of farmers in northwest counties (Clallam, Island, Jefferson, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom). With more capacity, these farms could increase their processing and take advantage of increasing demand for local products (Urban Food Link, 2012, pg. 4).

The report goes on to explore the possibility of investing in regional food hubs, defined by the USDA as facilities offering wholesale aggregation and distribution, active coordination with food producers, and permanent facilities (as opposed to the recurring, but temporary nature of farmers’ markets), to bridge gaps in infrastructure, but notes that a great many projects and facilities are already in the process in the region, so care should be taken to coordinate efforts and carefully vet investments given the high capital costs of such developments (Urban Food Link, 2012).

Also explored were food innovation districts, defined as “geographic concentrations of food-oriented businesses, services, and community activities

that local governments support through planning and economic development initiatives in order to promote a positive business environment, spur regional food system development, and increase access to local food.” Food innovation districts differ from food hubs in that they are not just focused on providing infrastructure and services to producers, but rather include consumer food outlets such as restaurants and retail, as well as culinary, health or nutrition education, and/or community gathering and event spaces. Close proximity of varied offerings is the key requirement of such districts, as proximity creates the potential for the cross-pollination and longer-term collaborations that lead to innovation.

Finally, the report recommends that municipal, county, and state jurisdictions work to update local procurement policies to preference locally-produced food (and notes the success of farm to school value chain coordination efforts by WSDA, which had been cut in the 2011 state budget, but have since been reinvigorated by WSDA including with the creation of a new Statewide Farm to School Network), and suggests that additional market development and capacity building for producers, producer networks and regional food system coordination writ large be supported.

For additional information and background, the report cites the following studies:

- WSU Agriculture in Washington State (2002)
- Cascade Harvest Coalition/NABC Puget Sound Food Project (2008)
- King County Agriculture Program FARMS report (2009)
- WSDA Future of Farming report (2009)
- WSU Small Farms Program King County Food and Fitness Agricultural Assessment (2009)
- EcoPraxis Small Farm Distribution Practices in Washington State (2010)
- University of Washington Department of Urban Design and Planning Central Puget Sound Food System Assessment (2011)

### **3.2.2 King County Local Farm and Food Roundtable, 2014**

The King County Farm and Food Roundtable was created by three sponsoring organizations: King County, the City of Seattle, the Pike Place Market Preservation and Development Authority. The sponsors invited thirty-five individuals experienced in local farming, food processing, distribution, marketing, financing and technical assistance to participate in the Roundtable. The participants are described in the summary of recommendations as an “all-star” line-up of leaders within the public, private and nonprofit sectors of the local food system. No information was provided in the synthesis of recommendations regarding outreach or invitations to people or organizations

specifically representing communities of color, low-income populations, or other systemically disadvantaged or underserved groups.

The stated purpose of the Roundtable was to “identify options and make recommendations to the sponsoring agencies for strategies, both near-term and long-term, to preserve additional farmland in King County, as well as to identify options and make recommendations for near-term and long-term strategies to increase market and distribution opportunities for local small and mid-sized farmers in King County, looking particularly at food hubs or other means of aggregating local product to expand access to markets” (Cedar River Group, 2014, pg. 1).

The methodology employed by the Roundtable collaboration was to create two subcommittees, one focused on Land Preservation, and one on Markets and Distribution. The invited members of the Roundtable self-selected into one of the two subcommittees, and participated in three meetings of their chosen subcommittee and three meetings of the full Roundtable between November 2013 and April 2014. Cedar River Group was hired to facilitate the Roundtable’s work and summarize its recommendations. Roundtable participants identified four values to guide their work and filter final recommendations: economic opportunity, improved public health, social equity, and environmental quality and sustainability.

In the final synthesis, a great many recommendations were made for local policy and programmatic interventions all along the food value chain, from farmland preservation and access, to production support and harvest, to processing and aggregation, to sales and markets, and finally to ongoing system coordination. The recommendations reflect the varied and interdependent nature of food and agriculture challenges (we often say that when any local food system thread is pulled, a whole tapestry of related issues unravel). However, It doesn’t appear that community-based organizations, particularly those representing the substantial diversity of South King County, were well represented at the Roundtable, and so the Roundtable’s recommendations may in fact be incomplete, and/or not prioritized with the benefit of all necessary input.

As it relates to the question of food infrastructure, the Roundtable identified gaps consistent with other reports and projects described in this exploration, including lack of scale-appropriate and affordable cold storage and warehousing space, and the lack of financial support for research and development of necessary facilities and services. Perhaps the most important development to emerge following the work of the Roundtable is King County’s creation of the Local Food Initiative. The Roundtable laid an important foundation for ongoing work, collaborative projects, and new partnerships in and around King County, many of which have been facilitated at least in part by County leadership and dedicated staffing via the Local Food Initiative.

### 3.2.3 King County Local Food Initiative, 2014 and ongoing

In 2014, King County Executive Dow Constantine launched the Local Food Initiative (LFI), which is an ongoing effort to better connect local farms to consumers, and to increase access to healthy, affordable foods for low income individuals and communities. The Initiative's two primary goals are to "expand our local food economy to ensure job growth and economic viability for King County food businesses and farms," and to "improve access to healthy, affordable food in low-income communities" (King County, 2015, pg. 7). This initiative was born out of the recognition that "less than 2 percent of the nearly \$6 billion King County residents spend annually on food and drink is actually grown in King County. Increasing that figure to 10 percent could mean an increase of at least 10,000 new jobs, a stronger rural economy, improved health, and more."

Key indicators of success of the Local Food Initiative include improving access to farmland, increasing technical assistance and training for farmers and food businesses, enhancing school nutrition environments, increasing the affordability of healthy food through nutrition incentive programs, enhancing access to direct market outlets for priority communities, increasing the availability of fruits and vegetables at food banks, growing new farmers, increasing access to irrigation, growing markets for local food products, and decreasing food waste. Progress on these indicators, and updates on the progress of the Local Food Initiative strategies and tactics, are available on the King County [website](#)<sup>8</sup> and in LFI Annual Reports.

King County's Local Food Initiative frames many of the food system-related initiatives currently being executed in the region, several of which are relevant to the discussion of food system infrastructure, such as LIFT and the community food grant program administered by King Conservation District, and are therefore included later in this summary.

### 3.2.4 Agriculture Infrastructure Study, Pierce County, 2015

The Puyallup Watershed Initiative (PWI) is a unique organization designed to holistically and collectively steward the environmental, economic and cultural dimensions of a region encompassed mostly within Pierce County and defined by the Puyallup Watershed, which includes, as described on the organization's website: 1,000 square miles, 316,000+ people, 2 Tribal nations, 17 cities and towns, pristine forests, rich agricultural lands and one of the busiest ports on the West Coast (Puyallup Watershed Initiative, n.d.).

In 2015, in concert with the Puyallup Watershed Initiative, Washington State University - Pierce County Extension, The Evergreen State College, Pierce County Planning and Land Services - Agriculture Program, Pierce Conservation District and the Pierce County Agriculture Roundtable, and with support from the Russell Family Foundation and the Pierce County Agriculture

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/initiatives/local-food-initiative.aspx>

Program, PWI collaborated to produce an Agriculture Infrastructure Study for Pierce County.

Many of the findings of the study further validate the challenges and barriers facing small and mid-sized agricultural producers as described above in the Ag of the Middle section of this report (3.1.3), including challenging access to land, labor, financing capital, and market development, plus additional challenges in this geography related to riverine flooding and related drainage, ditch maintenance, and seasonal ponding in pastureland.

With regard to infrastructure, the report notes, “lack of ‘infrastructure’, broadly defined, is seen as a limiting factor for operating or expanding agricultural production.’ Respondents to the survey tool used to gather data for the report suggested, “a wide variety of infrastructure deficiencies in the region, ranging from tractor repair and implements to cold storage to commercial kitchens to slaughter and butchering facilities and services” (Washington State University-Pierce County Extension, 2015, pg. 3).

As was found in the Oregon Food Infrastructure Gap Analysis, the Pierce County report suggests that infrastructure gaps in small and mid-sized agricultural value chains are many and varied. An initial food hub feasibility study was subsequently completed for Pierce County, but concluded that significant additional research would be needed to clarify the business model and financial viability of such a hub.

### **3.2.5 SeaTac/Tukwila Phase I Feasibility Assessment, Kitchen Incubator, 2016**

In 2015-2016, the Food Innovation Network (FIN) commissioned an initial feasibility assessment for a food business incubator and licensed commercial kitchen facility in SeaTac/Tukwila. According to the assessment, the ultimate goal of the project is “to increase household income through net business income as a means of improving the health and well-being of low and moderate income residents in SeaTac and Tukwila” (Dawn Meader McCausland Consulting, 2016, pg. 6). The study concludes that a kitchen incubator facility would facilitate improvement in local household income by lowering barriers to entrepreneurship and supporting business profitability and growth.

As illuminated in more detail in the summary of the *South King County Food Aggregation and Access Report* later on, South King County is home to a large minority and immigrant population. Consistent with that demographic profile, the FIN feasibility study showed that “most of the entrepreneurs interested in participating in the incubation program are likely to be women with families who come from diverse backgrounds and live in low-income households. A large share are immigrant and/or minority entrepreneurs, and roughly half prefer to communicate in a language other than English” (Dawn Meader McCausland Consulting, 2016, pg. 6).

The challenges facing the aspiring entrepreneurs surveyed by FIN are similarly consistent with reports from other organizations supporting

beneficiaries in South King County (see section 5 of this report for reports from seven organizations including FIN), namely lack of start-up capital, lack of credit, language barriers, difficulty navigating the regulatory environment, and the need for business management training. In addition, specialty or value-added product developers and aspiring caterers face the challenge of affordable access to a licensed kitchen.

While much of the study focuses on clarifying the need for hard asset infrastructure in the form of a licensed commercial kitchen, as well as the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate incubation services and technical assistance necessary to help ensure the success of the entrepreneurs who will ultimately use the facility, the study also makes an important point about collaborative development. FIN reportedly undertook significant outreach, stakeholder engagement and partnership development to prime the path for the success of an incubator, and intends to deepen engagement with the local business community, in addition to deepening relationships with potential kitchen users and other organizations serving food entrepreneurs in the immediate region.

*Update:* as described in section 5 below, FIN plans to open the Tukwila Village Food Hall in late 2019. The nearly 2,900 square feet space is on the ground floor of a six-story building located in Tukwila Village, a new mixed-use development and affordable housing project. The commercial kitchen will have four cook stations that will accommodate at least 20 food businesses, including eight that will rent stalls in a food hall that will be open to the public. Others will use the kitchen for off-site sales, such as catering and farmers markets. Program participants have guided the design of the food hall, which will serve as the heart of the food business incubator. It will also be a space where people can gather, learn about, and celebrate the community's rich food traditions while creating community wealth.

### **3.2.6 Food Production Space Needs Assessment, 2017**

In 2016, the Port of Seattle completed a study of incubators and accelerators operating in King County in order to understand the potential for such entities to support small businesses within the Port's key business development clusters. The study showed that more than 60 incubators and accelerators exist across the Puget Sound region, but found that few, if any, provide small and midsize food producers with production facilities, equipment and services. In addition, the Port's 2016 study identified lack of adequate food production space as a key gap (Business Cluster Development & Food Spectrum, 2017).

Thus, in 2017 the Port contracted with Business Cluster Development (BCD) and Food Spectrum (FS) to conduct a needs-assessment for a food production and/or incubator space. The goals of the assessment were to 1) determine the current market need/demand for new food production capacity to support small and midsize food producers in scaling and expanding their businesses, and 2) to focus on the needs and opportunities for existing small and midsize food businesses seeking to scale up, expand operations, and/or enter new markets (Port of Seattle, 2017).

The methodology of the needs assessment included fielding a “widely distributed” primary research survey that was completed by 70 food businesses from May to June 2017, and was followed up with 30 in-person interviews and two focus groups in June 2017. The report does not enumerate how the survey was disseminated, nor whether any specific efforts were made to include food businesses owned by people of color, women, or located in underserved communities or neighborhoods.

The findings of the study concluded that local food entrepreneurs in every stage of growth lack access to “affordable production facilities that provide the means to operate safely, efficiently, and professionally”, and that “reasonably priced production space in Seattle is particularly difficult to find” (Business Cluster Development & Food Spectrum, 2016). Furthermore, food production infrastructure designed to support the growth of local food entrepreneurs would need to accommodate a wide variety of product types (from value-added processing of raw commodities, to beverage and other specialty product manufacturing), provide dedicated (not shared) production spaces, offer business incubation and value-chain coordination services, and ideally be located in the SODO area of Seattle.

As a result of these findings, the report authors recommended establishment of a food business incubator that provides both facilities and assistance. They recommended that such a facility primarily serve existing entrepreneurs seeking to scale, while enhancing the resources available to startups. The study suggests that such an incubator would create jobs, benefit the local economy, and improve the availability of local food.

### **3.2.7 Local Institutional Food Team (LIFT), 2016 and ongoing**

Increasing the quantity of local food procured by institutions and increasing access to fruits and vegetables in schools are key strategies under the LFI (Local Food Initiative, 2017). In the County Executive’s list of Top 20 Priority Action Items & Tactics, number eight reads:

Continue to grow institutional demand for local food by increasing awareness and knowledge of local sourcing and supporting efforts to change institutional procurement policies to increase local sourcing. In order to capitalize on the estimated \$74 million institutional food market in King County, there must be continued support for efforts connecting farmers to institutions, aggregating food, and increasing access to infrastructure such as cold storage and commercial kitchens. (King County, 2015).

To achieve these strategies, a group of stakeholders including King County, King Conservation District, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, the nonprofit Health Care Without Harm, and others formed the Local Institutional Food Team (LIFT) in 2016 (King Conservation District, 2016).

In 2018, Ecotrust was awarded a contract by King Conservation District to help facilitate the growth and development of the LIFT collaborative. Ecotrust’s engagement is focused primarily on facilitating the collaboration and

providing support to engage relevant institutions keen to source local food, community-based organizations who may see anchor institutions as potential partners in achieving food justice, and local aggregators and producers who could become supply partners.

LIFT refined its vision and mission in November 2018 as follows:

**Vision:** “We envision institutions - e.g. schools, hospitals, colleges, and corporate cafes - as anchors in robust regional food systems and enablers of improved social equity.”

**Mission:** “LIFT helps catalyze food system transformation by inspiring Seattle area institutions to engage with their eaters and leverage their purchasing power by buying from regional farmers, ranchers, and fishers.”

Furthermore, the group has identified three core strategies, with working groups dedicated to advancing each, to guide its work together in 2019:

- *Power the Aggregators:* Increase institutional sales of local food by established local food aggregators (e.g. Farmstand Local Foods, Puget Sound Food Hub, Viva Farms).
- *Appeal to the Administrators:* Gain commitment from institutional leadership to buy local food, especially whole and minimally processed local produce, grains, dairy and proteins.
- *Engage Students, Patients & Staff:* Create pathways for eaters to make their voices heard and partner with institutions to get the healthy, local, culturally appropriate food they want.

Given these areas of focus, LIFT could potentially be an important partner in the development of food infrastructure designed to help catalyze the growth of local food systems and economies. The specific infrastructure gaps in value-chain coordination between local producers and institutions will be further discussed later in this report, both in the discussion of institutional demand and in the opportunities for infrastructure investment.

Full meetings of the LIFT collaborative will be held quarterly in Seattle in 2019, with workgroup meetings to advance specific strategies scheduled by phone in between the quarterly meetings. Current LIFT organizational participants include City of Seattle, King County, King Conservation District, Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Health Care Without Harm, with meetings and workgroups facilitated by Ecotrust. At the time of this writing there are no community-based organizations participating in the core LIFT collaborative. The group does desire additional outreach, particularly as it relates to the eater engagement strategy described above, but no plans have yet been made. Additional LIFT information can be found on the King Conservation District website, [www.kingcd.org](http://www.kingcd.org).

### **3.2.8 South King County Food Access & Aggregation Project, 2018**

In 2018, a group of community-based organizations in South King County began working together, with the support of Public Health - Seattle & King County, to address the needs of their respective constituents for food aggregation infrastructure to support access to healthy, local food in their immediate region.

Participating organizations included the Food Innovation Network, International Rescue Committee, Living Well Kent, Shared Soil, the South King County Food Coalition, and Elk Run Farm (a project of the South King County Food Coalition). Independent contractors Patricia Hennessy, Maggie Chumbley, and Laura Titzer facilitated group meetings in August and September 2018 and wrote up findings, per a contract with Public Health - Seattle & King County.

The group was focused on overcoming barriers for small farmers and food producers in South King County, many of whom are recent immigrants or refugees, and for supporting eaters facing systemic disadvantages to good nutrition, including children, the elderly, low-income residents, people of color, and food bank clients. Their objectives were to foster community resilience and interdependence, support good health and nutrition, and help create opportunities for financial independence for vulnerable populations.

The participants made a compelling case for supporting food system development in South King County, which, loosely defined, includes cities along the I-5 corridor between Seattle and Tacoma, such as Tukwila, Des Moines, Kent, Federal Way, Auburn, and Enumclaw slightly farther southeast. The region has been identified as one with deep capacity for entrepreneurship, ingenuity and innovation, thanks largely to a significant immigrant and refugee population. More than 130 languages are spoken in the area, which has become majority minority over the last two decades as people of color moved from central Seattle to escape soaring housing prices, and an influx of immigrants and refugees settled in the region (Hennessy, Chumbley, & Titzer, 2018).

It is also home to residents facing high rates of poverty and lack of access to food, transportation, and housing. Of note, according to this report, 60% of all children living in poverty in King County are in South King County. As a result, the participating organizations are keenly interested in cultivating food sovereignty, food justice, regional resilience, economic development, and health equity.

Producers in South King County are mostly very small. Unlike the more established farms in King County, and those typical in Snohomish, Skagit, and Pierce counties, many in South County are cultivating community garden or small incubator plots. Many could also be characterized as “farm-interested” (pre-commercial), or very small, and selling products via farm stands or in barter systems. The community-based organizations serving these beneficiaries are thus focused on small scale infrastructure designed to help

new and beginning producers get started and established. The group identified two sets of needs, as follows.

In the near term, small producers in the area need geographically accessible and affordable cold storage, optimized for produce being sold direct to consumer and small wholesale (corner stores and local restaurants), as well as to supply food access programs like local food banks and pantries. In addition, they need business incubation services, such as farm production training and tools, market development technical assistance, business management and food safety training, as well as language and cultural agility support to engage in successful market development. And finally, if the group were to co-invest in a small-scale collective storage facility as was suggested in the report conclusions, support would be needed for cooperative facility management, business model development, and partner capacity building (Hennessy, Chumbley, & Titzer, 2018).

In the longer term, a long list of incremental needs were identified: additional infrastructure to support distribution and value-added processing; access to additional land for cultivation, including water infrastructure and other on-farm equipment; farm production training, tools and support; business acceleration and scaling support, including advanced business management training and technical assistance; access to loans and financing capital; further support for market development; operational support for collaborative network development; and programming to build food literacy, cooking skills, and intersectional issues related to food access and security.

### **3.2.9 KCD Community Food System Grants, 2015 and ongoing**

King Conservation District (KCD) has been a leading supporter of local food systems in the county and has funded a variety of local food infrastructure projects over the past four years. Several projects funded by KCD were mentioned by interviewees during Ecotrust's primary research and are summarized here.

The first is a project funded in 2015 to fill a gap in USDA meat processing in the county. The project is a partnership between Falling River Meats, Harlow Cattle Company, Krainick Dairy, West Valley Beef, Carnation Farms, King County Livestock Program, and King County Agriculture Policy and Economic Development. Each of these partners would benefit from the existence of additional USDA meat processing in the county, but none has the capacity to lead on such a project independently. Running through December 2019, this project is focused in its final year on identifying a meat processing unit (MPU) that could meet stakeholder needs, conducting due diligence, identifying an operator, and building out a site. The goal is to have the MPU in operation by summer or fall 2019. Related, Public Health - Seattle & King County has also received funding for a project focused specifically on building out the meat supply chain for King County's East African community, who may utilize the MPU once available.

Goose & Gander farm in Carnation has also received funding from KCD to address a lack of on-farm aggregation and cold-storage. Funded in 2017, Goose & Gander will construct a shared aggregation, packing, and cold storage facility that will be utilized by a variety of partners in the immediate region, including SnoValley Farmers Cooperative, Cascadia Cooperative Farms, Puget Sound Food Hub, Farmstand Local Foods, and the 30+ King County farms that supply these entities. Goose & Gander already provides some shared aggregation and packing space for nearby producers, though the space is inadequate to meet existing needs. Through this project, Goose & Gander will convert an existing barn by adding 300 square feet of cold storage space, 2,100 square feet of aggregation and packing space, dedicated space for egg washing and packing, and electrical and drainage upgrades. Their location above the floodplain is unique compared to most of the farms in the area and renders Goose & Gander an ideal location for this intentional investment in shared local food infrastructure.

Beyond these two projects, KCD has made a variety of investments in local food infrastructure, with awards ranging from \$2,000-\$100,000. A full list of organizations and projects funded through their Regional Food System Grant Program can be found [online](#)<sup>9</sup>.

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9 <http://kingcd.org/tools-resources/grants/regional-food-system-grant-program/>



# Current Landscape

## 4.1 Demand

As noted previously, the Local Food Initiative estimates that \$6 billion is spent collectively on food annually in King County, which is home to more than two million people and hosts a daily influx of commuters from around the Puget Sound and tourists from around the world. Food is accessed via multiple channels, the most familiar of which of course are standard grocery retail (e.g. PCC Community Markets, Metropolitan Markets), restaurants that range in scale and affordability from food trucks to fine dining, foodservice and catering operations at hotels, event centers, and institutions, and specialty food operations like the world-renowned Pike Place Market.

In addition, local produce (and in some cases, meat, eggs, and value-added products like jams, pickles, salsas, etc.) are sold by local and regional producers directly to consumers via farmers' markets, farm stands and subscription programs. More than 40 farmers' markets operate in King County, with gross sales of nearly \$35 million, and many farms across the Puget Sound offer "CSA", or community supported agriculture programs, wherein eaters can share in the bounty of a particular farm by buying a subscription or share (Find Your Farmers Market, n.d.).

Finally, recognizing that local, nutrient-dense, high-quality food is generally most accessible in the channels described above to people with affluence and education, such food is also distributed via a wide variety of social purpose and hunger relief programs, many of which are specifically designed to overcome systemic barriers to good food access by people experiencing poverty and/or economic instability, particularly children.

King County's Local Food Initiative includes key strategies for working with local jurisdictions to develop better food system policies, practices and incentives, and for improving access to healthy, affordable food, updates on many of which can be found in the LFI's most recent annual report.

A significant milestone was reached in June 2017, when Seattle City Council passed a tax on the distribution of sugar-sweetened beverages in the city of Seattle, in an effort to reduce consumption of such beverages (shown to lead to Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke, weight gain, and tooth decay), and raise tax revenue to improve access to healthy foods and fund programs aimed at reducing educational disparities facing communities of color. Revenue generated from the tax supports a range of programs in healthy food access, early learning, education, job training for workers, and evaluation, and some will go into a fund reserved to support the recommendations of a newly created Community Advisory Board (King County, 2017).

The tax, and the commitment to use the resulting revenue to shore up or expand food access programs, especially for young children, as well as to help close the education gap between communities of color and white students, could be an important trifecta - simultaneously reducing consumption of a substance known to cause harm and increase healthcare costs, directly expanding food access via programs like Fresh Bucks and related efforts that

face an otherwise uncertain funding future, and investing in education to help level the playing field and overcome long-term systemic barriers that inhibit good health and nutrition in underserved communities, particularly communities of color.

That said, it is important to stay engaged in programs like Fresh Bucks in order to leverage their purchasing power to help build markets for local food and producers, especially as the program is expanded into Safeway and neighborhood grocery stores, which are no doubt more convenient for shoppers than farmers' markets. Efficient aggregation, processing, and distribution infrastructure could be the vital link that makes food from regional farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and value-added producers affordable and accessible to these more mainstream food outlets.

Similarly, in a primary research phone interview with Linda Nageotte, President and CEO of Food Lifeline, we learned that the hunger relief service sources more than 18 million pounds of fresh produce directly from agricultural producers for distribution among its networks of food banks and programs, but nearly all of it from large scale, commodity producers. To source from small and mid-sized local producers using diversified, restorative production practices of the type targeted in this infrastructure exploration, Food Lifeline would need to pay roughly \$1 more per pound of produce (so up to an incremental \$18 million if that volume of produce could even be aggregated from smaller producers), and substantially re-tool its operations to accommodate smaller deliveries and more varied product.

At the smaller end of the hunger relief scale, South King County Food Coalition is a network of 12 smaller food banks and pantries, many of which access food from Food Lifeline's distribution center. The coalition has taken advantage of a unique opportunity to grow some of its own fresh produce on a former golf course in Maple Valley (east of Kent and north of Enumclaw), and so started a project there called Elk Run Farm. In addition to growing produce for the network's food banks, Elk Run Farm hosts education programs for students and aspiring farmers. Additional information on the South King County Food Coalition and Elk Run Farm can be found in section 5.

Beyond food banks, which offer vital sustenance for those in our communities experiencing hunger, there is a significant class of operations feeding hundreds of thousands of meals per day to Puget Sound residents: institutions. Institutions and public K-12 schools create demand for food that is of particular interest in this exploration, thanks in part to commitments made by King County, King Conservation District, City of Seattle, Public Health - Seattle & King County, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), and the nonprofit Health Care Without Harm. All of these entities are participants in the Local Institutional Food Team (LIFT), and several are active in regional farm to school initiatives as well, notably WSDA.

#### 4.1.1 Farm to Institution

Broadly defined to include schools and preschools, hospitals and healthcare centers, assisted living facilities, correctional institutions, colleges and universities, as well as corporate cafeterias and special event venues, “institutions” are feeding a substantial proportion of our general population, including a great many working families, low-income residents, and vulnerable populations (e.g., children, hospital patients, and the incarcerated).

In a report completed by Cascade Harvest Coalition and Slow Money Northwest and cited in the Local Food Report of 2015, the institutional market (specifically schools, hospitals, and daycares) in King County was valued at approximately \$74 million annually (King County, 2015). Owing both to their extremely high demand for whole and minimally processed product volume, and to their large food procurement budgets, institutions play a significant role in the food system writ large. Because of the magnitude of their purchasing, even relatively small preferences for locally grown and -processed sourcing by the foodservice operations of institutions could have a significant ripple effect across the domestic food system.

Our primary research interviews for this exploration with foodservice directors from multiple Puget Sound K-12 public school districts, the University of Washington, FareStart, and Google, all re-confirmed the barriers acknowledged by the members of LIFT and other farm to institution projects and initiatives nationwide (Lynd, 2016). As described in Ecotrust’s Infrastructure Gap Analysis (Ecotrust, 2015), summarized in section 3, these barriers include:

- *Cost*: Whether subcontracted or self-operated, foodservice is usually run as a cost center at institutions, and thus price sensitivity is high. At such large purchase volumes, even a few pennies more per case can add up to substantial budget increases. Furthermore, institutions wrestle with the labor cost of peeling, slicing, filleting, or portioning product that is delivered whole, and therefore usually require that product arrive at least partially prepped.
- *“Credit”*: Ingredient sources, brands and stories are generally not transparent to eaters in a buffet-style setting, making it challenging for the foodservice department to “claim credit” for locally sourced or differentiated food, and pass along associated price premiums.
- *Customer*: As noted above, foodservice operations tend to serve the general population, rather than the subset of customers seeking, and willing to pay more for, local or differentiated product.
- *Capacity*: Serving thousands of meals per day means making soup by the vat and tetrazzini by the flat. Such volumes outstrip the capacity of small and midsized individual producers, and require that product in each category be aggregated from multiple sources.

- *Consistency*: The recipes and workflow of institutional kitchens are generally based on ingredients meeting exacting specifications for size, grade or weight. Further, institutional menus rarely account for geography or seasonality (e.g. bananas and strawberries on a breakfast buffet year round), and therefore require consistent month-to-month volume of core ingredients (school and college/university vacation periods notwithstanding).
- *Complexity*: Transaction costs are currently high for sourcing local product, to the extent that, given current fragmentation in the marketplace and lack of optimized aggregation and distribution, sourcing from many suppliers is required. Foodservice directors we spoke with explained that it would be prohibitive, in terms of vendor management, accounts payable, food safety and liability insurance verifications, and receiving (especially for institutions with multiple locations, as in school districts or on college campuses), for institutions to source directly from small and mid-sized producers and processors. Moreover, at a basic physical level it would be infeasible to receive dozens of deliveries at their loading docks daily.
- *Certification*: Food safety concerns and liability loom large over transactions with institutions. Such facilities carry enormous responsibility for the health and safety of eaters, given the number of meals served per day, and are therefore highly motivated to minimize both risk of incidents and the associated legal liability.

It is important to note that sourcing locally is not a top priority for most institutions. Consumer demand for specialized diets based on allergens (e.g. gluten-free or lactose-intolerant) or preferences (e.g. vegan, paleo), and overarching sustainability goals such as reduction of antibiotics in meat and dairy, shifting toward plant-based diets, and reducing food waste, often rank higher on the priority list of conscientious institutional foodservice than sourcing locally. Cost and convenience are still the two primary factors for which operators will solve.

As will be discussed later in this report, infrastructure such as cold storage and warehousing, as well as programs and services designed to facilitate aggregation, processing and distribution of local food in key categories from regional farmers, ranchers, fishermen and value-added producers, will be absolutely necessary to get closer to parity on price and convenience with conventional, globally sourced product, and thereby overcome the barriers described above.

#### **4.1.2 Farm to School**

Schools, both K-12 and early care and education, constitute an important subsegment of institutions, both because they serve some of our region's most vulnerable eaters, and because their foodservice operations are regulated by a host of specialized nutrition guidelines and related labeling and packaging requirements that create additional barriers for small and mid-sized regional producers.

In December 2018, Ecotrust completed a Farm to School Strategic Plan for Public Health - Seattle & King County designed to answer the question of how to increase local food procurement in seven South King County public school districts with the highest rates of federal free and reduced-price meal eligibility (a proxy for low-income) and racial diversity. Although each of these school districts is at a different place with regard to local purchasing, there were some common themes that emerged from primary research interviews. For reasons outlined in the Farm to Institution section above, these school districts buy the vast majority of their food from mainline distributors, who can guarantee price, availability, food safety, and meet the volume and distribution needs of schools. Nonetheless, generally school districts indicated an interest in sourcing “as much local as possible,” with “local” often defined as within the state of Washington. Districts are also willing to source locally in concentric circles, extending to the Pacific Northwest region when needed, including the states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho. The west coast is the outermost ring when defining local in this way. In such cases, much of the produce comes from California and even Arizona.

More than local sourcing, however, marketing of school food and nutrition services with a goal of increasing meal participation rates is an area where most of the school districts interviewed indicated desire for improvement. In general, staffing is a significant issue for nearly every district. Given bandwidth constraints, it is extremely difficult for districts to absorb any additional work, whether focused on marketing, farm to school, or otherwise.

Many of the districts interviewed also identified the cost of local food and the related increased labor needed to process raw product as severely limiting factors when it comes to local procurement. Some districts would benefit from increased infrastructure investments, such as kitchen equipment and delivery vehicles, to move product from central kitchens out to individual school sites, but for this investment in infrastructure to be productive, corresponding investments must be made in staff positions to utilize the infrastructure.

Logistics are also a recurring challenge for school districts and producers alike. First, it can be a time-consuming process for school districts and producers to develop a working relationship; “death by committee,” according to one producer. Working with schools, and with institutions in general, is a culture shift, according to one local aggregator. Farm to school direct purchases are usually initiated with the support of a nonprofit or government partner, which producers find to be necessary in order to reduce the number of meetings and navigate inevitable challenges. School districts often have fairly inflexible requirements with regard to delivery days and times, and especially in districts without central kitchens, may require delivery to multiple schools to fulfill one order. So, even once a sale has been brokered, it can be costly and time-consuming for a small producer who self-distributes. As a result, producers have often been willing to engage in pilot projects and/or sell to schools for special events, but haven’t found a sustainable way to secure sales on an ongoing basis.

The bottom line for both the schools and the producers interviewed is that institutional sales need to work for both parties financially. To date, this remains one of the biggest challenges for which to solve.

### 4.1.3 Medically Tailored Meals

Before closing, we want to highlight one other potential opportunity that doesn't fit cleanly elsewhere in this report, but could be pursued by partners working in the institutional healthcare sector (and perhaps eventually by the LIFT collaborative as well). To surface the opportunity requires some background: In our research with food banks, we learned that Food Lifeline has come to understand that its constituents are not just dealing with food insecurity, but also housing insecurity, lack of healthcare, and a need for job training and placement services for living wage jobs. The organization has thus made a commitment to developing collaborative programs with housing, healthcare and job training in order to combine services to its target populations. One such collaboration is with [Sea Mar Community Health Centers](#)<sup>10</sup>.

Sea Mar operates 32 healthcare facilities in the same Western Washington footprint as that in which Food Lifeline is serving food. In the collaborative program, Sea Mar is screening patients for food insecurity and high blood sugar, and directing those affected to an onsite navigator who prescribes healthy food, and links the patients to food subsidy programs and nutrition education. Participants also receive a twice monthly distribution of fresh produce, developed in partnership with health care professionals and picked up at the clinic (and sourced from conventional distributors, not necessarily local sources). Sea Mar staff have been tracking patient usage and redemption and evaluating health impacts of the program, and have found that patients who complied with the program reduced their blood sugar as effectively as would be expected with the introduction of medication, but without the medication or its side effects. Food Lifeline is interested in expanding the program, and sees the potential for even bigger impact with medically tailored meals.

Medically-tailored meals (MTM) are meal-kits designed to directly address the nutritional needs of specific illnesses or patients at high risk of malnutrition or diet-related disease, and are delivered to patients' homes (Prevost, 2018). Evaluations of pilot programs from around the country have shown positive results, especially with chronically ill, homebound, or low-income patients, including significant reductions in emergency room visits, emergency transportation services, hospital inpatient admissions and readmissions, length of in hospital stays, and average monthly healthcare costs (Berkowitz & Waters, n.d). Food Lifeline is interested in developing an MTM program in Western Washington, and has explored a partnership with FareStart for meal-kit packing and preparation as part of FareStart's workforce development program.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.seamar.org/index.html>

There is currently no plan for the food packed in these kits to come from local or regional producers, and due to cost constraints, will likely be sourced via standard conventional distribution. Given the economic development and health improvement potential of local food (especially when raised in restorative production systems that improve nutrient density), it would seem a missed opportunity not to explore how local farmers, ranchers, fishermen and entrepreneurs might supply components of these meal kits, in the same way that we hope for them to ultimately supply institutions via their foodservice. Food Lifeline and FareStart are open to further discussions regarding this possibility, with the understanding that price and product volume will be umbrella constraints.

## 4.2 Supply

### 4.2.1 Puget Sound Ag of the Middle

As outlined in the methodology section, Ecotrust interviewed 14 local farmers and food producers across the Puget Sound region, with an emphasis on producers recommended by WSDA's Farm to School & Value Chain Specialist, Chris Iberle, and recommendations from other members of LIFT. We asked producers to tell us about their operations generally (size, types of products grown, primary markets, etc.) as well as their experiences selling to institutional markets and their infrastructure needs and gaps.

At the highest level, the first thing we observed is that size and scale matter. Farms up north in Skagit County, and to a lesser degree in Snohomish County, tend to be significantly larger than those in King County, meaning that they are significantly more likely to be able to serve large-volume buyers and thereby significantly impact the regional food economy. There are many established farms in those regions with the scale and experience to more effectively serve wholesale markets, and who could still be considered local. From a racial equity perspective, it is worth noting that most farms and ranches at this scale are operated by dominant culture owners, meaning predominantly white and male, who have long benefitted from access to land, financing and hereditary wealth. Most of the workforce of these larger farms is made up of immigrants.

Ralph's Greenhouse is a good case study of an organic farm in Skagit County that specializes in carrots, leeks and beets. Larger farms such as this one tend to specialize in a short list of key products that they know they can grow well. This type of operation most closely aligns with the expectations of larger scale retail and institutional buyers, as well as other wholesale accounts ordering from broadline distributors who supply a wide variety of products to a wide variety of customers. Ralph's is reliable and high quality, so distributors will send their trucks on a regular schedule to pick up product on-farm. Ralph's sells directly to some institutions, uses Puget Sound Food Hub for much of their distribution to PCC Markets, and is carried by Charlie's Produce and other distributors to a wide array of other outlets.

Several of the producers with whom we spoke sell to distributors currently, and there was some agreement amongst all producers that this is the best avenue through which to work with institutions such as schools. Ralph's, Viva Farms, and Oxbow all sell through or have established partnerships with Charlie's Produce. When asked who supplies their local products, few institutional food buyers named individual farms. Instead, the most common suppliers of locally grown products included Food Services of America, Charlie's, Duck Delivery, Sysco, and Dairy Fresh. One school district did mention sourcing local flour from Shepherd's Grain, a cooperative of no-till wheat growers in eastern Washington and Oregon, while another district referenced Truitt Family Foods, an Oregon-based company that creates hummus from Washington-grown garbanzo beans.

It is worth noting that although broadline distributors such as Charlie's Produce and Duck Delivery already have established contracts with institutions serving vulnerable populations, they are not the easiest distributors for beginning, small, and/or midsize producers to access. Due to their large size, these distributors often standardize their requirements for suppliers in ways that are difficult if not impossible for small and midsize producers to meet. For example, food safety processes and/or certifications required by large distributors can be prohibitively expensive for smaller producers, while mandatory minimum volumes may be far too large for small and midsize producers to achieve.

#### **4.2.2 Small or "Farm-Interested"**

At the other end of the spectrum are farms like Local Roots, a small farm with diversified produce that sells directly to consumers via their CSA, farmstand, U-pick flowers and some restaurant sales. Smaller producers like Local Roots are working in high-touch, high-margin markets, meaning that the level of communication required to make a sale is high, but the product margin makes this effort worthwhile. Even smaller than farms like Local Roots are what could be considered "pre-commercial farmers" or "farm-interested" entities and individuals. There seems to be a pipeline of people interested in farming who are studying what it takes and getting involved in very small-scale operations, especially in South King County. Again, from a racial equity perspective, it is worth noting that there is a high degree of racial diversity represented in those "farm-interested" communities. The South King County Food Aggregation and Access report, summarized in section 3, and the contribution in section 5 from Highline College, which offers an Urban Agriculture and Food Security certificate program, provides an overview of this scale of operation.

#### **4.2.3 Educational & Incubator Farms**

Between the small and the large are educational and incubator farms, some of which are growing food and selling direct-to-consumer and/or to wholesale outlets, some of which are offering land access for aspiring farmers to gain experience and grow their own, and some of which are creating experiential

educational opportunities for school districts and the public. [Viva Farms](https://vivafarms.org/)<sup>11</sup>, for example, is both an incubator and an aggregator. [Carnation Farms](https://carnationfarms.org/)<sup>12</sup>, [Oxbow Farm & Conservation Center](http://www.oxbow.org/)<sup>13</sup>, and [21 Acres Center for Sustainable Living](https://21acres.org/)<sup>14</sup>, are all examples of hybrid farm and education centers in the Puget Sound region.

### 4.3 Infrastructure

Another key strategy of the Local Food Initiative is to improve the processing, distribution, and marketing infrastructure in King County to accommodate and increase aggregated local food distribution. As described in the Local Food Report for King County published in 2015, the County ranks number one in food processing in Washington State. However, little information about processing infrastructure for small and mid-sized local/regional producers is available. The LFI thus recommended the following activities: develop a better understanding of the food system infrastructure; support food innovation districts and aggregated food models, and support infrastructure development, including meat processing units (King County, 2015).

What follows is a general orientation to food system infrastructure, provided in an attempt to meet the LFI's first recommendation for developing a better understanding of food system infrastructure. Much of this content is pulled from Ecotrust's Food Infrastructure Gap Analysis (Ecotrust, 2015).

As suggested by the specific note in the LFI recommendations regarding meat processing, most factors of infrastructure are unique to the product category in which they operate. For example, the beef supply chain includes facilities for animal slaughter, cut and wrap, aging, cold storage, and perhaps dry-aging, grinding, blast-freezing, or vacuum-packing. Fruits and vegetables, on the other hand, require washing, cooling, storage and packaging, and perhaps peeling, slicing, individual quick-freezing (IQF) or canning. Small grains require seed sorting, cleaning and hulling, and then milling or oil pressing, and so on for each category.

In addition to being sold in whole or minimally processed form, products from each sector are often further processed into "value-added" products (e.g., sausage, tomato sauce, bread) or become inputs into other types of food manufacturing, creating all manner of multi-ingredient products filling grocery store shelves (e.g., frozen burritos, ready-to-eat soup, condiments and sauces, baked goods). Each category also faces unique regulatory and food safety requirements, and is in the jurisdictions of multiple state and federal agencies.

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11 <https://vivafarms.org/>

12 <https://carnationfarms.org/>

13 <http://www.oxbow.org/>

14 <https://21acres.org/>

Due to the wide range of activities that can fall under the heading of “infrastructure,” it may be helpful to divide them into “first mile” and “last mile” infrastructure.

First mile infrastructure generally includes the set of activities, and supporting assets and relationships, that conceptually—and sometimes physically—take place in closer proximity to the initial producer. Depending on the product, first mile activities may include post-harvest handling, cooling, processing, seed cleaning and sorting, or animal slaughter and initial processing.

Last mile infrastructure generally includes such activities as packaging, labeling, value-added processing, last mile logistics, and distribution. Because last mile activities are usually customized to the buyer segments they serve (packaging, for example, may include totes or primal cuts for foodservice or manufacturing clients, but individual shrink-wrapping or vacuum sealing, barcoding, and labeling for retail sale), these activities often occur conceptually and/or physically closer to buyers.

Thus, it is often the case that first mile infrastructure is associated with rural areas where initial production often occurs, and last mile infrastructure with urban areas where buyers are concentrated, but this is by no means always the case. For example, urban agriculture is becoming more prevalent, and the most efficient means of accessing “first mile” infrastructure, even for a rural producer, may well be to truck it across the state to a specialized processor.

As noted throughout this exploration, the needs for food system infrastructure are many and varied, and occur at multiple scales and across multiple product categories. The Puget Sound region is fortunate, however, to have several aggregators and intermediaries already doing the crucial “first-mile” work of aggregating product from multiple small and midsize farms from around the region for distribution into wholesale restaurant, retail and institutional accounts in King County. We turn our attention next to these important players.

#### **4.3.1 Aggregators & Intermediaries**

Smaller, mission-driven local cooperatives and distributors that exist in the region, such as Puget Sound Food Hub and Farmstand Local Foods, might be better candidates to broker sales between small and midsize producers and large buyers such as school districts than broadline distributors. These smaller intermediaries are currently aggregating product from local farms and selling wholesale to markets like PCC, restaurants, and to a slightly lesser degree, institutions. Each of these businesses has idiosyncratic operational issues and constraints, and logistically, may be more challenging for a larger buyer to work with in the short term than an established distributor such as Charlie’s Produce or Duck Delivery. That said, these smaller aggregators are significantly more accessible to beginning, small, and midsize farmers, and with institutions as anchor customers, may present greater long-term potential for legitimate regional food systems transformation.

[Puget Sound Food Hub](#)<sup>15</sup> (PSFH) is a farmer-owned cooperative originally launched in 2009 as a project of the Northwest Agriculture Business Center, and formed into a cooperative in 2016. The mission of the cooperative is to provide the region with direct access to locally produced food while supporting the viability of local farms. The cooperative provides marketing and distribution services for approximately 60 member farms and 12 vendors, most located in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. Gross sales in 2018 sales were approximately \$2.2 million.

[Farmstand Local Foods](#)<sup>16</sup> (FLF) was originally incubated as part of Puget Sound Food Hub and housed at 21 Acres, beginning in 2014. In 2017, recognizing the unique needs of smaller farms in Snohomish and King Counties, including Sammamish, Snoqualmie, and Snohomish Valleys, FLF separated from PSFH and formally launched as Farmstand Local Foods. The LLC aggregates product from multiple small farms and sells into a variety of wholesale accounts in Seattle, including some important food access programs such as the Farm to Table Program, which provides subsidies for local food purchasing to early childcare education sites in Seattle, and is a program that will be expanded using revenue from Seattle's Sweetened Beverage Tax.

[Viva Farms](#)<sup>17</sup> is primarily a farm incubator started in 2009 and helping cultivate a pipeline of new and beginning farmers, however it also does some marketing and distribution, and contracts with PSFH for distribution services into Seattle. Operating on 88 acres across three farms, two in Skagit and one in King County, Viva sublets land to new farmers to launch and grow their businesses while keeping prohibitive start-up costs to a minimum by providing access to shared resources: education, training, equipment, technical assistance, capital, land, and markets. It aggregates product from participating incubator farms to fulfill a regional CSA and wholesale accounts, and owns a refrigerated truck it uses to make deliveries.

[SnoValley Farmers' Coop](#)<sup>18</sup> is aggregating product from its 25 member farmers in the Snoqualmie Valley for distribution via CSA, and Pike Place Market has created four urban [farmers' markets](#)<sup>19</sup> and a [CSA program](#)<sup>20</sup> for Pike Place member farmers. Neither program serves wholesale markets at this point, but are important sales outlets for their respective member farmers.

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15 <http://pugetsoundfoodhub.com/>

16 <http://www.farmstandlocalfoods.com/>

17 <https://vivafarms.org/>

18 <https://snovalleycoop.com/>

19 <http://www.pikeplacemarket.org/farmers-market>

20 <http://www.pikeplacemarket.org/pikebox>

5

# Partner Voices

A broad array of community-based organizations (CBOs) are working on food systems reform in the region, many of which are specifically serving constituents of color, immigrant communities, or low-income residents. As described in the methodology, Ecotrust interviewed 10 CBOs in the Seattle-area and South King County during the primary research phase of this project and found that they are playing a critical role in raising awareness of, advocating for, and increasing culturally-relevant food access for youth, people of color, and low-income families. Ecotrust's impression of the group of CBOs working in South King County is that they are collaborative, innovative, and absolutely committed to community-driven leadership. These organizations seem motivated first by health and community development, and the farmers they are supporting are generally smaller or in the "farm-interested" category. Some are studying Urban Agriculture at Highline College, farming at Shared Soil, or growing their own food at the Hillside Church community gardens and preparing for the day they are ready to sell their harvest. For the most part they are far too small to serve institutions and are at a much earlier stage of development as a cohort than the farmers of Skagit, Snohomish, or other parts of King County with more producers who could be characterized as Ag of the Middle.

Specific activities of these CBOs include:

- Community gardens (World Relief Seattle, Living Well Kent)
- Nutrition/cooking classes (FEEST Seattle, Healthy King County Coalition – WSU King County Extension partnership)
- Working to change school meals to include healthier options, more fresh foods, more culturally-relevant foods (FEEST Seattle, Living Well Kent)

Like many nonprofits, the CBOs in South King County struggle with a lack of consistent, long-term, dedicated funding to work on food access with their communities, including students. Most of the organizations Ecotrust interviewed are tackling substantial, vital missions with relatively small budgets and limited staff. Additional networks and coalitions may prove valuable to maximize collective efforts, although CBOs should be in leadership positions at the start of any such decision-making process, and their time to participate would likely need to be compensated.

What follows are contributions from seven organizations operating in King County describing current goals, activities, and needs as they relate to food system infrastructure. These contributions have not been edited by Ecotrust, as our desire is to let the voices of the leaders working most directly and closely with the residents of the region shine through. The contributions are presented in alphabetical order by organization name.



## 5.1 Feed Seven Generations

**Organization Name:** FEED Seven Generations (FEED)

**Address:** PO Box 1165 Enumclaw, WA 98022

**Website:** [facebook.com/FEED7Generations/](https://facebook.com/FEED7Generations/)

**Primary Contact:** Valerie Segrest, Executive Director  
([vsegrest@gmail.com](mailto:vsegrest@gmail.com), 360-471-8384)

### Organizational Overview

**Feeding 7 Generations** is a nonprofit known as FEED, an acronym, and representation of organization's core principles;

- **Fostering** economic opportunities for Tribal food producers in a modern, global food system,
- **Educating** Tribal communities by developing and teaching health education materials grounded in health traditions and modern scientific findings,
- **Empowering** Tribal communities by strengthening our voice and presence in broader food movements, and
- **Developing** Tribal communities through policy frameworks that create meaningful community change and measurable outcomes.

### Background

Indian Country is facing a health epidemic. Compared to the U.S. population at-large Native populations have lower health status and life expectancy; disproportionate disease rates; higher mortality rates from depression, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes; and face discrimination in health service delivery.

In the face of such disparities, a movement is growing. Tribal communities are organizing and unifying efforts to enhance the health of the land and people. We are providing culturally appropriate health education based in traditional teaching and current research, hosting conferences, writing books, and developing curriculum. These efforts are making an impact and are a testament to the power of Tribal communities across the country. Grass roots efforts have filled the gap where Tribal Nation governments lack capacity, but more must be done. Like many community based-movements, organization is needed to strengthen capacity and meet the growing demands for services. FEED aims to empower the people and the movement by creating structure, cohesiveness across communities/sectors and strengthen tribal food sovereignty.

### Historical Ecology of Coast Salish Food Systems

Humans have inhabited the Northwest Coast of North America for more than 10,000 years. Before Rome was even a dream, woolly-mammoths and large glaciers shared this space with the ancestors of the Coast Salish people. Any Coast Salish person will tell you we have thrived in these territories,

since time immemorial. When Captain George Vancouver sailed through the Salish Sea and observed the shores of the Puget Sound in the early 1800's, he reflected in his journal that:

*“I could not possibly believe any uncultivated country had ever been discovered exhibiting so rich a picture. Stately forests... pleasingly clothed its eminences and chequered its valleys; presenting in many places, extensive spaces that wore the appearance of having been cleared by art... [We] had no reason to imagine this country had ever been indebted for its decoration to the hand of man.”*

Nothing could have been further from reality. The very lands he explored were well-maintained gardens, spanning several ecosystems that offered a complex array of foods and medicines. Vancouver's journey ushers in the demise of Coast Salish Food Systems and foreshadows the institutionalized perspective of a dominant society that applies cultural patterns incongruent with Coast Salish ancestry.

This incongruence is pervasive and ongoing. For tribal communities, land, foods, plants, and water are deeply intertwined with culture and a predominate right outlined in treaties. This connection drives a deep sense of stewardship and conservation. Though access to land, plants, and game were outlined in treaties, tribal communities carry a substantial financial burden to maintain these treaty rights and mitigate the impact of western land mismanagement. Today, nearly every tribe in Washington State has fisheries, wildlife and resource management divisions. The goal of these efforts is to try to conserve resources like salmon, deer and elk, wild fruits and vegetables, and clean water. All dollars generated through gaming efforts first go to fund these divisions at a cost to other nation building efforts. These divisions are staffed by mostly non-Native biologists and come at a financial cost on resources that could be distributed to other nation building efforts.

Though challenging, we find healing in the work to restore what our food systems once were. We view native foods as spiritual, mental, and physical medicine. That means when we are actively on the land in pursuit of wild game, fishing the rivers and sea, cultivating prairie lands, or harvesting medicine with good intention, we are gifted with new memories and connections with those of a distant past. These memories remind us of who we are and the lands we come from. They settle us in a sense of belonging that promotes balance and generosity.

Our foods are more than commodities, they are teachers and they weave together the social fabric of our community. The Salmon remind us of what it takes to be an advocate of the land. Every year they journey the ocean waters, eating, exercising and tonifying their bodies with the richness of the seas. Upon returning from their odyssey, they become nourishment for the land and everything that dwells on it. We witness this homecoming and ask ourselves how we pitiful human beings might be like the Salmon People. How can we be

powerful medicine for our landscape, and humble ourselves enough to truly honor the gift of food?

The beauty and intricacy of these ancient food system is drastically different from the dominant conventional one we currently rely on. The standard North American diet promotes a consumer mindset and places us in grocery stores far from the source of our food. Camas prairies and berry patches are paved over for super stores and our Salmon People are unable to spawn in the rising temperatures and dammed rivers. Despite all of this, Native People continue to be relentless advocates for the continuity of our native food system. We are the students of the Salmon People after all.

We understand that it will take all of us to encourage the health of the land. Food is the right place to begin. Several times a day, when our hunger grows, we are presented with the opportunity to reflect on what we eat and how our choices might transform our world. We can rise to the request of our teachers – the salmon, the plants, the animals, the shellfish – to practice good stewardship, reciprocity, collaboration and generosity, and to always pay attention to our traditional food teachings.

### **A Time of Change: Contemporary Challenges & Tribal Food Sovereignty**

*“Food sovereignty is important to us. Historically, we had good access to many types of seasonal foods from a variety of ecosystems. Sadly, this is no longer the case.”*

– Wendy Burdette, Muckleshoot Tribal Member

### **Tribal Community Food Sovereignty**

Food sovereignty is an increasingly important issue among native communities across the world. As the industrial food system grows and wild food landscapes dwindle, many Native People are severed from their traditional food ways. Native foods are not only nutritionally superior to industrial foods, they are deeply woven into culture. When people cultivate, harvest, process, prepare and serve these foods, they build strong relationships with the land and with each other. We believe in the power and source of our indigenous spirits as being connected to the lands, foods, plants, waters and rocks of our ancestors.

Communities that exhibit **tribal food sustainability** and **food sovereignty** are those that:

- Have access to healthy food
- Have access to foods and food system infrastructures that are culturally appropriate and relevant

- Grow, gather, hunt, and fish in ways that are maintainable over the long-term
- Distribute foods so people get what they need to stay healthy
- Adequately compensate the people who provide the food
- Utilize tribal treaty rights and uphold policies that ensure continued access to traditional foods

### **Tribal Treaties and Native Foods**

A violent war for natural resources erupted between Native people and settlers soon after non-Indians arrived in the Pacific Northwest. While settlers wanted to *possess* the land through ownership, Coast Salish people wanted to *access* the land as they had for countless generations. This difference in world-view caused tensions and Native People became the target of animosity and violence, perhaps because they stood between settlers and the Northwest's rich resources.

In response to tensions, the U.S. government negotiated a series of treaties with 20 Tribes in western Washington in 1855-1856. Treaties are legally binding contracts under the United States Constitution. Tribes were recognized as sovereign nations and agreed to give up some land, but reserved certain rights to ensure their cultures would survive. Among these rights, were the right to fish, hunt, and gather native foods.

Initially, the U.S. government was complacent about treaty rights, believing that settlers were primarily interested in farming as a food source. They were gravely mistaken. As Washington State took control of salmon harvests and treaty rights were denied, many Native communities revolted. Treaty rights were not upheld until the "Boldt Decision" of 1974, which reaffirmed original treaty rights and established tribes as co-managers of salmon within the state.

In spite of U.S. District Court Judge George Boldt's decision in *United States v. Washington*, tension among sports and commercial fishers, the State of Washington, tribes, and tribal fishers has persisted. Other laws make it difficult for Native people to access their traditional foods. New regulations require that Native people get a permit for harvesting forest products, including berries and cedar. This costs extra time and money. There is concern that if Native people *do not* exercise their rights to hunt, fish and gather, they will lose their rights under the treaties.

Soon after the treaties were signed, the U.S. government began distributing annuity foods that included pig fat, beans, flour and sugar to tribes. According to Rudolph Ryser (Cowlitz) chair of the Center for World Indigenous Studies, "The strategy was to wean people away from reliance on the land. Then they would not need access to deer, fish, and other traditional foods. They could become 'civilized.'" These annuity foods were used to create foods such as fry bread. Unfortunately, the lard was far inferior to the people's customary

sources of fat from wild animals and fish. Carbohydrates, including wheat, were refined in a way that removed most of the fiber and made them into quick digesting high-gluten cereal and flour. Because milk and grains were not present in the traditional diet of Washington coastal tribes, people did not have the ability to digest lactose and high-gluten wheat. All of these may be factors in the subsequent development of chronic diseases, including diabetes, a preventable nutrition related disease which is at epidemic levels in modern tribal communities, yet was non-existent until the 1930's.

In the 1930s, the U.S. government created the formal commodity foods program to help farm workers who were suffering from the upheaval of the Great Depression. Surplus grains and other foods were bought from American producers to keep prices stable. Commodity foods changed over time based on what surplus was available. These surplus foods were distributed to tribal communities. Many Native People experienced growing up with commodity foods, including powdered milk that would not dissolve, poor quality meat, and processed cheese.

Tribal communities still rely heavily on government commodities and state and federal food programs to feed their people. While food that is provided has improved over the decades, it is often high in sugar, carbohydrates, and poor quality fats that increase the risk of diabetes and other chronic diseases. Fresh produce, good quality proteins and healthy fats that were the foundation to a healthy traditional diet are not as available in these food programs. Additionally, state and federal food programs often mandate what types of foods must be served, even if they are not culturally appropriate. This is where the importance of food sovereignty is evident. As tribal communities are able to produce more of their own healthy food, they become less restricted by food regulations.

### **Taking Control of Food Resources**

For many reasons, tribal communities across the nation are striving to become more stable in their ability to provide their own food. According to the *Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool* designed by the First Nations Development Institute (2015):

Assuming power to localize your food supply affords opportunities to regain control of the most significant assets possessed by Native communities. Conscious management of food supplies affords opportunities for tribal use of land, deliberate control of health, sustainability of the environment, and maintenance or revitalization of cultural integrity.

Innovative techniques for building food sovereignty are growing in many tribal communities across the Northwest. The Nisqually Tribe support a garden program that produces enough native and non-native fruits and vegetables to supply tribal programs including Head Start, the elders program, community events, and individual families. The Muckleshoot Tribe has employed food sovereignty strategies to develop comprehensive curriculum, policy, and economic engines that aim to increase the health of the community. Tulalip

and other tribes offer community education programs that teach people how to harvest native foods and grow food in gardens.

Building strong partnerships within communities is central to tribal food sovereignty. One woman from the Skokomish Tribe who fishes for a living spoke about how important it is to get to know people in your community who gather, grow, hunt, or fish for food. Often these people are willing to donate food for tribal events or may be willing to trade. No person is an island. We each carry different knowledge and skills. If we rely on each other, it makes the community stronger. When we are active citizens that recognize our dependence on the environment and on other people, then we can maintain those relationships and pass them on to the next generation. This strengthens our social fabric and creates a balanced food system. All of these facets of a tribal communities' relationships with camas promote "collective continuance," which Potawatomi philosopher Kyle Whyte describes in the following manner:

"Collective continuance is a society's overall adaptive capacity to maintain its members' cultural integrity, health, economic vitality and political order into the future and avoid its members from having to experience preventable harms (Whyte 2017:10)."

## Revitalizing Coast Salish Food Ways

### **Specific Strategies to Pursue Policy Change to Improve Nutrition, Food Access, Food Sovereignty and Health**

Through convening's, discussions and survey results led by FEED Seven Generations, themes emerged around strategies to improve nutrition, traditional food access, tribal food sovereignty, and the overall health of tribal communities. These themes included meaningful cross-cultural collaboration, community outreach, education, increasing access to traditional foods on tribal and non-tribal lands, advocacy for policy changes to incorporate the presence of first foods into conservation efforts, and to strengthen intertribal partnerships.

### **Meaningful Cross-Cultural Collaboration**

The key themes of meaningful cross-cultural collaboration include sharing power, building relationships, and being respectful.

**Sharing power** includes prioritizing tribal decision-making by integrating all parties into all project phases from the beginning. Often tribal communities are consulted at the end of a project and asked to choose amongst a set of options that they did not have a role in determining. The most meaningful collaborations occur when tribal partners are the leaders and instigators of projects, while non-tribal partners participate with their support. Furthermore, project timing needs to be on the Tribe's timeline, rather than externally imposed deadlines.

It is often said in Coast Salish territory that **meaningful relationships** are the source of true wealth. In cross-cultural projects, building relationships between all parties helps to build trust and understanding, which in turn increases the likelihood of successful outcomes. While meetings held in offices may have their place, a common theme in our work is that spending time collectively out on the land observing and learning from the wisdom of place and one another is an opportunity to build trust and strengthen relationships. The way in which relationship building unfolds will vary depending on tribal priorities, who is involved, the scope of the project, and available resources.

The theme of **respect** emerges in several ways: Tribal members emphasize the importance of non-tribal partners developing cultural awareness, and the importance of “seeing through our lens;” coming to understand *one’s own* limitations, biases, and priorities, as well as recognizing and respecting each other’s goals and constraints; and respecting the land itself as being teachers, as having a voice, and as having as much value as non- tribal farm lands.

### **Community Outreach**

Some community members are not aware of, or have never harvested or eaten many traditional foods, especially plants. Community outreach strategies include serving traditional foods at tribal gatherings such as community dinners or ceremonial events, organizing harvesting and processing events, providing transportation and the necessary tools to harvest, and providing a knowledgeable elder or others to teach where and how to safely and ethically harvest, and process and preparation of traditional foods. Tribes could also learn how to cultivate plant foods in their own gardens at home. These community outreach strategies would increase knowledge and support tribal members to increase the consumption and access to camas. Further, these methods would increase nutrition, health, and food sovereignty in tribal communities. Ultimately, raising the profile of these ancient foods.

### **Non-tribal allies support**

Non-tribal allies can support these efforts by opening their land to tribal harvests and consider the presence of traditional foods in their planning and development pursuits. There are also opportunities for the State Parks Department as well as the Department of Natural Resources to partner with local tribes and increase awareness of enrolled tribal members’ ability to gather on state lands. They can also work to eliminate non-native invasive species that endanger the perpetuation of traditional foods and work to manage natural areas for conservation. There are also opportunities to advocate for laws to support conservation efforts based on the presence of first foods.

### **Education**

Many tribal community members express concern that as traditional food access is reduced, opportunities to pass down traditional knowledge and share in traditional practices has also declined. Learning about and consuming traditional foods early is important for lifelong consumption and ensuring traditional knowledge is not forgotten. If children hear their traditional

stories early and often they're more inclined to remember and pass down that knowledge to future generations. Integrating place-based learning, traditional knowledge, and exposing students to important cultural places during pre K-12 is a valuable strategy to support traditional knowledge and encourage the awareness and consumption of traditional foods. There are resources available and being developed through FEED Seven Generations that support these efforts. These include the Cedar Box Teaching Tool Kit and the Tend, Gather, Grow curriculum. Both sets of curricula aim to provide tribal educators with culturally anchored curriculums, train the trainers, exposure to traditional gathering places, and support to implement teaching strategies within a place-based framework to support future generations to consume their traditional foods and encourage future leaders and advocates for cultural ecosystems.

### **Increase access to and cultivate traditional foods on Tribal land**

Tribal community members are concerned that development of their own tribal lands has not considered the cultivation of native plant foods specifically. Strategies that involve food security can be woven right into planning departments as they develop land for housing, businesses, and other initiatives. These strategies would support tribal communities to identify and acquire camas prairie habitats for example and would ultimately increase camas knowledge and consumption.

### **Integrate Indigenous knowledge and first foods into conservation efforts**

Identifying the presence of First Foods as grounds for protection and stewardship is lacking both in tribal communities and on public lands. A high priority for both tribal members and non-tribal members identified is to work collaboratively to develop strategies for incorporating Indigenous knowledge and values into land stewardship. Additional policy, advocacy and partnership is needed to move protection and management efforts to be based on the presence of First Foods.

## **Specific Food Infrastructure Projects**

### **PRAIRIE Revival Project: Revitalizing Camas**

Camas (*Cammasia quamash*) is one of the most important cultural foods in the Coast Salish food system. Many families followed seasonal attunement and traveled great distances, camping several weeks at a time, to dig copious amounts of prairie bulbs. The harvest would be roasted in earthen ovens, preserving them for use throughout the year. While camas does not represent a large portion of Coast Salish diets in a contemporary world, it remains an important cultural food that is honored in many communities during ceremonial celebrations of first foods.

Camas also plays a significant ecological role, providing food for native pollinators and endangered butterflies like the Taylor’s checkerspot and Fender’s blue butterfly. Many tribes are actively working to reintroduce camas and camas harvesting into everyday lives of community members. Increasing access and consumption of traditional foods such as camas contributes to the health of the individual, family and community.

We know that with this challenge comes the opportunity to educate, across generations and populations, about the historical and current significance of conserving and restoring northwest prairies. In 2018, FEED launched the PRAIRIE Revival Project with funding support through the Shakopee Tribes Fertile Ground Grant Program.

Through this funding opportunity, we facilitated two convenings, a participant survey, and one interview. Using a participatory action framework, these methods helped us collectively identify;

- Community values around camas prairie cultural ecosystems,
- Barriers and opportunities to collaborative cross-cultural relationships, and
- Meaningful action to increase tribal relationships with camas and the places where camas grows both past and presently.

It also was an act of stewardship through the reintroduction of Indigenous stewardship practices. Putting more camas on the table is inherently about fulfilling responsibilities to the camas, the prairies, all of the other plant and animal relatives that grow there, those who came before us and those yet to come.

### **Summary of the FEEDing Camas Champions Event**

This convening was held at the Chehalis Indian Reservation in Oakville, Washington on May 25, 2018. The Camas Champions Convening had 50 attendees. Attendees included tribal members and leadership from eight tribes with connections to South Sound prairies (Chehalis, Nisqually, Squaxin, Skokomish, Suquamish, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, Quinault); Agency representatives (Washington State DNR, EPA), academics, and concerned private citizens. Presentations focused on the historical reach and contemporary status of camas prairies in the South Puget Sound. Honored guests feasted on traditional foods of the region and were served ceremonial style. Participants were then able to spend time digging camas in the Chehalis prairies. Digging tools were provided. At the end of the day the group reconvened for a discussion focused on next steps towards revitalizing camas prairies. The results of this discussion inspired the “Specific Strategies to Pursue Policy Change to Improve Nutrition, Food Access, Food Sovereignty and Health” section of this report and are adopted practices of FEED Seven Generations.

The Tulalip tribe generously offered to host the next convening in early 2019.

## Outline of Next Steps to Achieve Change

**1. Organize an elder’s council and working group consisting of tribes, private landowners and public land management agencies** – An elders’ council and working group would ground the work and build a foundation for continued efforts. The group would help identify community needs in relation to camas; articulate strategies for incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and values into camas prairie stewardship; identify existing and potential policies that support increased tribal access to camas; and develop pilot projects to cultivate camas at tribally managed gardens and farms. Specific projects identified include, finding private landowners open to tribal harvesting and working with Washington Department of Natural Resources to take the relationship at Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve (an area of cultural significance) to the next level.

**Capacity and commitment:** Many participants at the Chehalis meeting expressed a strong interest and commitment to continue the work and attend future gatherings. Additional funding is needed to cover future meetings administrative costs and a collective GIS mapping project. There are funding opportunities available through local tribes that the project staff will explore.

**2. Develop educational materials** – Free and open access materials would be available for tribes to share with private landowners and public lands managers about the importance of camas to tribal communities.

**Capacity and commitment:** Content for these materials was gathered through grant activity. Project staff is currently developing these materials and after undergoing a peer review process with camas champions will be released.

**3. Develop educational materials/protocols for meaningful collaboration** – These materials create a simple framework based off of the recommendations from this project to promote tribal and non-tribal partnerships and collaboration and conservation efforts.

**Capacity and commitment:** The content for these materials was gathered through grant activity. Project staff are currently developing these materials and after undergoing a peer review process with board members will guide the work of Feed Seven Generations in future collaborative efforts with multiple stakeholders.

## Salish Harvest: A Wild Foods Cooperative

The Salish Harvest Wild Foods Cooperative Program is an incubator project that aims to build on the vision of tribal community members through animating self-determination by becoming the first ever culturally relevant wild berry farm. Harvesters will consist of tribal members who will gain hands-on training throughout the seasons so that they may participate in a cooperative of wild harvesters and learn methods to cultivate their own homesteads. Harvested materials will be derived from traditional and

accustomed harvesting territories. A six-acre berry farm is located on primed lands that includes a 500 square foot cold storage and processing area. According to land records of tribal places, this property was historically used as a berry gathering and processing locations for ancestors now representing several tribes. Nearby this location, historical maps locate a family-owned longhouse entitled the “House of Blueberries”, it was known as the territory of the “House of Blueberries,” located in what is now called the Enumclaw Plateau. This berry farm will serve as the training epicenter and storage facility for all harvested goods. Berries will be sold and distributed to tribes and restaurants that strive to serve locally cultivated product.

This program is destined for success, as it stands on the shoulders of the Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project (MFSP), which has worked to gather crucial data to meet the community’s food needs for the past seven years. It is through the MFSP that a community led food sovereignty assessment; strategic plan and cultural food protocols were developed. A feasibility study was also completed in December 2013 that identified incredible cost savings for Muckleshoot tribal kitchens as the top ten purchased foods can be cultivated and harvested from our own usual and accustomed harvesting grounds. Currently, the only community food producer in existence is our tribal fishers’ fleet, which provides salmon to our kitchens. Shellfish, like crab, clams, oysters and shrimp are also harvested, but are not very reliable. Wild game, such as deer and elk, are donated to kitchens during the winter season. These food sources are a beautiful gift and cost savings to our kitchens, however they are not plant foods and we know that plant foods, particularly berries, make up an average of 20% of the combined purchases of our kitchens.

This initiative is meaningful and significant in its efforts towards revitalizing the health of the land and tribal communities. Berries were a major pillar of the Coast Salish Traditional Diet and are rich in antioxidants, fiber and vitamin C. This coveted traditional food source is so revered that berries have easily found themselves on the weekly menus of all seven Muckleshoot kitchens, which serves over 1,000 meals a day to community members, from the daycare to the Elders program. Yet, each week the tribe purchases their produce from corporate vendors and some local farms, none of which are tribal, nonetheless Muckleshoot. This does not include the food bank and special feast events, such as the Canoe Journey, which brings thousands of other tribal guests to our home each year. The overall expenditures of the tribal kitchens come from tribal tax fund dollars and average 1.5 million per year. By establishing a blueberry farm that trains tribal members and supplies our tribal kitchens, we are confident this business will thrive and strengthen our food sovereignty.



## 5.2 FEEST Seattle

**Organization Name:** FEEST (Food Empowerment Education & Sustainability Team)

**Physical Address:** 605 SW 108th St. Seattle, WA 98146

**Website:** <https://feestseattle.org/>

**Primary Contact:** Lisa Chen, Executive Director  
([lisa@feestseattle.org](mailto:lisa@feestseattle.org), 206-348-3675)

### Organization:

FEEST (Food Empowerment Education & Sustainability Team) works at the nexus of healthy food access, racial justice, and youth empowerment to create food justice in low income communities of color and develop leadership for lasting change in South King County. We set the table for young people to change the landscape around health and equity in their families, schools, and neighborhoods while simultaneously advocating for systems and policy changes that increase access to healthy food and win youth voice with school decision makers. FEEST began in 2008 as part of the King County Food and Fitness Initiative, seeking a community-driven approach to reversing health inequities in low income, racially diverse neighborhoods. Since then, FEEST youth have been changing the way school districts run lunch programs and systematizing an information pipeline from students to school food policy makers. FEEST's Student Advisory Council in Highline School District gives youth the opportunity to work directly with School District Nutrition Services to address improvements in school food, including healthier, fresher, better tasting food; more culturally relevant meals; more food made from scratch; and breakfast after the bell. FEEST youth leaders serve as emissaries between school policymakers and the student body, raising the concerns of the student collective and likewise gaining support for the changes from the entire school.

### School Food Infrastructure Gaps:

#### Challenges:

For Highline School District, of the 20,248 students that are enrolled in free and reduced lunch only 54% of them actually ate school lunch in June 2017 according to reports from OSPI. For Seattle Public Schools the data is even worse. Of the 54,000 students enrolled in free and reduced lunch, only 27% of them actually ate school lunch that month. That means less than a third of the lowest income students in Seattle are even eating their school food. FEEST leaders have identified some of the major barriers to eating school food, and the opportunities listed below are rooted in addressing these issues.

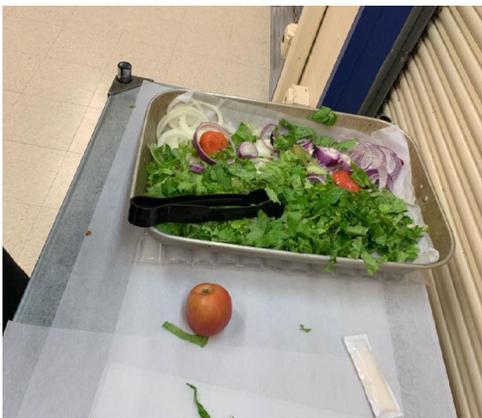
Our long-term vision for school food is that every student has access to free, nutritious, culturally relevant, fresh food whenever they need it.

In a recent FEEST survey to both students and parents about their reaction to school food, participants have shared:

- “I talked to my child often regarding her lunch. She sometimes skipped lunch because it was cold and looked nasty.”
- “My child told me everyday that food is always cold and fruits and salad are soggy.”
- “Yucky! I sometimes just take a bite and toss it in the trash.”

### Opportunities:

- **Culturally Relevant Menu Items:** Schools in highly dense urban neighborhoods are unable to meet the diverse needs of their student body. Daily lunch items still include: pizza, nachos, chicken nuggets and chicken burgers. In our student surveys and parent engagement listening sessions, the top 2 improvements consistently articulated across stakeholder groups included increasing culturally relevant menu items and a demand for fresh scratch cooked food. Diverse students need to see themselves and their families’ food in the menu. This is especially true for the strong Muslim community in South King County where there is an increased need for access to halal meats and assurance that pork products do not cross-contaminate with other school food items. Increasing culturally relevant menu items also addresses the need for more variety in school food.



*Pictures from salad bars from Rainier Beach High School in 2019*

- **Increase Participation in Salad Bars:** Some FEEST high school sites have either outdated or disregarded salad bars. As hot meal options are increasingly less appealing, a clear way to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables is to invest in improvements in school salad bars. These improvements can include:
  - + One-time capital investments to improve salad bars for high Free and Reduced Lunch schools: bigger bins for variety, wheels for accessibility, etc.
  - + Increase the funding for fruits and vegetables for school districts for all schools with more than 50% Free and Reduced lunch eligibility
  - + Work with students to create youth-centered marketing that increases knowledge of making well-rounded salads
  - + Create policies for cafeteria staff to train on cleaning and replenishing salad bars efficiently
- **Kitchen Renovations to Increase Scratch Cooking:** Most schools have old and outdated kitchen equipment. Since Highline and Seattle Public Schools both moved to central cooking in the 1990s, a majority of the schools only have the capacity to heat and serve (limited to heating ovens). Anecdotally, students often share that food is frozen, gone bad, or simply lack taste because of this heat and serve model. And studies (see below) have shown the clear impact scratch cooking has on closing food-related health inequities for low income students.

- Investments can include assessment of equipment, overhaul of new equipment, dedicated technical assistance for kitchen staff to return to scratch cooking, sustainability support, and evaluation tools.

Example: [Explore Empire Health Foundation's work to bring all school districts in Spokane back to scratch cooking on site](#)<sup>21</sup>

- + This was done with buy-in from the Nutrition Services Director, Superintendent and administrators. In order to be successful, FEEST recommends ensuring community based organizations and parents be included in design and implementation of new programs to increase racial equity analysis and participation.
- **Capacity Building:** FEEST recognizes how stretched Nutrition Services Directors and their departments already are to meet increasing demands with limited budgets. There needs to be an investment and buy-in from the district leadership to increase capacity building support that produces long-term procurement shifts to locally grown and culturally relevant produce. Some opportunities could include:
  - + Intentional training and assessment of current procurement policies
  - + Increase incentives for procuring locally grown food, culturally relevant food (ex. Halal meat, etc)
- **School-based Food Pantries:** Rainier Beach High School has a unique partnership with the local food bank to have an on-campus food pantry that students can access at any time without question or stigma. Included are backpacks full of fresh produce to send with students on Fridays for the weekends. This increases access to fresh fruits and vegetables for low income families and makes schools a center for food access. Opportunities can include scaling this project at schools with high Free and Reduced Lunch rates and one-time capital investments to increasing engagement and reach.
  - + [Rx Fresh Bucks](#)<sup>22</sup> in School Settings: The City of Seattle operates a Fresh Bucks Rx program, where health providers and partners give vouchers to patients struggling with food insecurity. Options for funding or advocacy priorities could be to expand that program, or also test it in school settings as part of a student's academic improvement plan.

### Food Justice Leadership Infrastructure Gaps:

**Challenges:** King County lacks a broad coalition that is led by and for people of color addressing the institutional barriers for good food in our region.

21 <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2016/sep/08/scratch-cooking-in-spokane-public-schools/>

22 <https://www.freshbuckseattle.org/how-it-works/>

Existing work led by people of color (ex. [Food Innovation District](#)<sup>23</sup>) is either hyper local or focused primarily on economic development. Alternatively, the LIFT coalition is focused on increasing local food in institutional purchasing, but unfortunately the coalition is a majority white-led network and lacks strong equity values. There's a clear infrastructure gap in organizing and building food policy and systems change work that are centered in equity and led by those most impacted by our broken food system.

### Opportunities:

- [Good Food Purchasing Policy in King County](#)<sup>24</sup> (**GFPP**): “The Good Food Purchasing Program transforms the way public institutions purchase food by creating a transparent and equitable food system built on five core values: local economies, health, valued workforce, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability.”
  - + *Led by and for People of Color*: Support funding and leadership development opportunities for community based organizations led by and for people of color to work on policies like Good Food Purchasing Policy. Fund capacity and coalition building efforts to move holistic policies like GFPP.
- **Invest in Leaders of Color in the Food Justice Movement:**
  - + [Castanea Fellowship](#)<sup>25</sup>: Encourage or replicate leaders of color to deeply develop their leadership to do this work long-term
  - + Give capacity building support for leadership coaching, technical assistance trainings, campaign cross-learning opportunities, etc

23 <http://www.rbcoalition.org/category/action-areas/growing-food-to-develop-healthy-industry/food-innovation-district/>

24 <https://goodfoodpurchasing.org/>

25 [https://www.castaneafellowship.org/apply/?fbclid=IwAR1oIoNAS\\_QtbATaOZE2nHeHbkOE1-\\_\\_tEUb\\_q-rpIs2llr0lfN7s-H5Kfw](https://www.castaneafellowship.org/apply/?fbclid=IwAR1oIoNAS_QtbATaOZE2nHeHbkOE1-__tEUb_q-rpIs2llr0lfN7s-H5Kfw)



## 5.3 Food Innovation Network

**Organization Name:** Food Innovation Network (FIN), a program of Global to Local

**Physical Address:** 2800 S. 192nd St. Suite 104, SeaTac, WA 98188

**Website:** <https://foodinnovationnetwork.org/>

**Primary Contact:** Kara Martin, FIN Program Director  
([kara@foodinnovationnetwork.org](mailto:kara@foodinnovationnetwork.org), 206-850-2877)

### **Organizational Vision, Mission, Beneficiaries, Geography:**

Food Innovation Network (FIN)'s vision for an Equitable Food System in South King County is a community in which:

- all people can get to good food
- everywhere a child is, there needs to be good food
- money, regulations and bureaucracy don't get in the way
- people have to time to cook, eat together and learn about nutrition
- people that grow our food are important.

FIN's mission is to enhance the local food system, increase access to healthy food, create pathways for success, and support resource- and idea-sharing that engages the diverse communities of SeaTac/Tukwila and South King County. FIN uses a collective impact model to address the health and economic disparities faced by low-income and immigrant communities. We encourage and support community residents to take leadership roles within FIN's governance and strategic planning, bringing an authentic community voice to our work. Our network includes organizations, educational institutions, local government, and community members.

### **Short synopsis of key of food-related objectives:**

Our work focuses on supporting underserved SeaTac/Tukwila and broader South King residents, primarily low-income and immigrants and refugees, by:

- improving their financial stability through creating a supportive and sustainable business environment to start and sustain food and farm businesses and participate in the local, thriving food sector; and
- increasing community access to fresh, local and culturally appropriate foods through creating direct market channel opportunities, and access to land for food production.

We seek to provide opportunities for communities to engage in the local food system, and to increase community ownership of that system.

### **South King County Food System Infrastructure Gaps**

South King County faces several gaps in food system infrastructure that make it challenging for the community to purchase local foods, start businesses in the local food sector, grow culturally appropriate foods, and ultimately increase community ownership of the local food system. FIN's work is informed through extensive and ongoing outreach and listening sessions with community members that have resulted in a comprehensive feasibility study and development of two program focus areas—incubating food businesses and increasing food access. While infrastructure is often defined as physical structures and systems, our definition considers the economic, social, and cultural context of the community and how that impacts the community food system.

Infrastructure gaps in South King County include:

**Lack of commercial kitchen facilities and storage:** In South King County there are very limited options for commissary or shared commercial kitchen spaces that accommodate multiple businesses at once. There are fewer than three commissary kitchens, with the closest cluster of commissary kitchens located in South Seattle – over 10 miles from the northern part of South King County. Compounding this issue are the already-high – and rising – market rental fees for businesses. Due to the low supply, these commissary kitchens are often at capacity and have rental fees that are challenging for low-income start-ups to access and afford. The only other shared kitchens in the area are informal sharing arrangements between two to three businesses. These types of kitchens can lack multiple workstations, specialized equipment, and storage capacity.

While there are large warehouse facilities in the area, there are very limited options that accommodate small-scale needs for cold and dry storage. Small food service businesses (e.g. catering and special events), processed and packaged goods businesses, local growers, and food access/security organizations need storage space to hold product for delivery, drop-off points for customers (both wholesale and direct), and aggregation. As a result, this impacts profit margins, limits business' growth, and inhibits potential efficiencies such as purchasing wholesale ingredients, making large batches, and freezing products for longer lifespan.

**Limited urban agriculture opportunities:** Refugee and immigrant families who grew food in their native countries have resettled with little or no land in urban areas accessible for cultivation. Despite having agrarian backgrounds, they face challenges navigating systems and resources, both formal and informal, and leasing or purchasing land for farming. Because social services and designated affordable housing are based in urban areas, many immigrant and refugee families are unable to move to rural areas to pursue farming. South King County is currently home to a little over a dozen community gardens and urban farms—a stark contrast to nearly 80 in neighboring Pierce County. Outreach shows community gardens are also limited due to the

small plot sizes available to individual growers, as well as rules against food production for sales (due to being grown on public land).

**Economic challenges:** Financial constraints are a significant hurdle for individuals wanting to enter the food sector, from farming to food service. Rising market rate rents (for both land and facilities), permit and license fees, equipment, insurance, and other start-up costs make it challenging for individuals with limited incomes to save and self-fund a business or even qualify for financing. There are also limited micro-financing options in the area – microloan programs have been restricted to Seattle residents due to funding sources. Further compounding the issue are rising household costs (rent, child care, etc.) due to development pressure and gentrification into South King County.

**Understanding of industry standards and business practices:** Many aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs are unaware or unfamiliar with tax regulations, business permitting requirements, and food safety standards and laws that limit food production in a home kitchen or require the use of a commercial kitchen. Yet, it is not uncommon for individuals to start selling informally from home. A number of different motivations and barriers can lead entrepreneurs to start informally, including the desire or need to earn extra income, wanting to test the market before investing in a business, a lack of affordable commercial kitchen space, insufficient revenue to pay licensing and kitchen costs, and a discomfort with formal government processes. Another significant barrier is limited financial skills or experience such as bookkeeping, budgeting, pricing, and invoicing. Aspiring growers need resources or training around land-related regulations (e.g. riparian buffers, zoning), business and land management, and education around regional growing techniques and crops.

**Social-cultural barriers:** Other challenges that prevent immigrants and refugees from pursuing food sector work or entrepreneurial interests include: limited English speaking and writing skills; need for affordable child care; affordable transportation and accessible transit options; and lack of resident documentation that limits workforce opportunities, business formalization or access to capital. Current conditions on the national level regarding immigration status have also increased fear throughout immigrant and refugee communities in program participation and accessing services.

## Strategies to Build South King County's Community Food System

FIN and other community partners are working to address the infrastructure gaps described above to build an [equitable food system](#)<sup>26</sup>. This work is done in collaboration and coordination with community partners, and is rooted in

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26 [https://grouphealthfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/FoodInnovationNetworkGlobaltoLocal\\_Presentation.pdf](https://grouphealthfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/FoodInnovationNetworkGlobaltoLocal_Presentation.pdf)

community participation. Partners including community-based organizations, local and state jurisdictions, elected officials, education institutions, and community members play key roles in the development and implementation of the work. FIN is primarily focused on two distinct priorities: creating a food business incubator to support under-resourced food entrepreneurs, and increasing the availability of local, fresh produce to low-income residents.

### **FIN's Food Business Incubator:**

FIN's ongoing outreach and 2016 feasibility study indicate there is high interest in the South King County community to start and operate food businesses. Based on the study insights and community outreach, most of the potential entrepreneurs interested in participating in an incubation program are likely to be women with families who come from diverse backgrounds and live in low-income households. A large share are immigrant and/or minority entrepreneurs, and roughly half prefer to communicate in a language other than English. Nearly two-thirds of interested entrepreneurs have previous experience in the food industry, and are interested in growing a full-time food business. They make a variety of ethnic and specialty food products, and are predominantly interested in selling baked goods, catered meals, packaged foods directly to local customers and aspire to open restaurants/cafes. On-the-ground outreach identified 66 individuals already operate a formal or informal food business from their homes or from a rental kitchen. Others reported their launch had been hampered by the lack of affordable commercial kitchen space.

These entrepreneurs are motivated by a passion for food, market opportunities, and an interest in improving their financial circumstances. Many also see demand in their communities and in the region for diverse food products and have an interest in bringing people together through food. They bring many assets to their businesses, including unique food products, connections with potential customers, and a strong work ethic.

The study recommends a **moderate sized commissary kitchen facility (3000-4000 square feet)**, along with business support services to address the challenges identified by aspiring entrepreneurs. A facility that is too large or has high overhead would be difficult to support given the lower market rates in South King County generally, and the high share of below market rate users the program aims to serve. By right-sizing the facility to the demand, incubator resources can remain focused on supporting business growth. Co-location with a retail space would be beneficial to start-ups for testing food service and developing market channels. Recommended core components of a facility would be:

- adequate space for four or more cook/prep stations with commercial grade kitchen equipment;
- adequate cold and dry storage for 25-30 client companies; and
- teaching/office space for classes and consultations.

In spring of 2017, with input from many partners and community members, FIN piloted a food business incubator for under-resourced residents through subleasing a 500 square foot commercial kitchen). Most of the participants are part of immigrant and refugee communities.



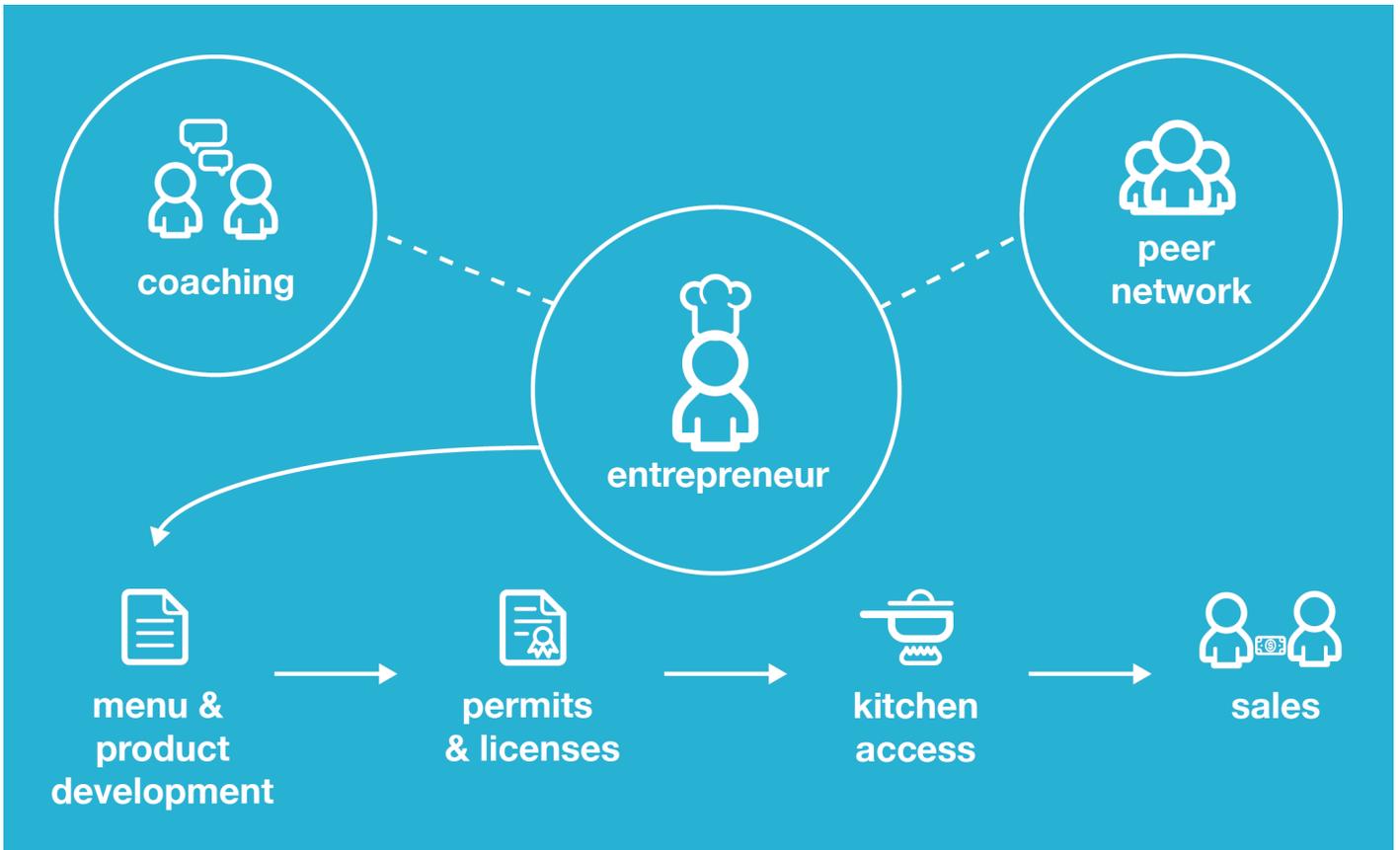
### Meet Entrepreneur Caroline Musitu

Caroline Musitu grew up helping her mother cater events in Congo. After coming to SeaTac, Caroline cooked for celebrations within the Congolese community. She joined our incubator to formalize her business and extend her reach to a broader market.

Taste of Congo, the only Congolese food business in the region, is now a point of pride for Caroline's community. Her business has also been a hit at farmers markets, where she's generated income to help support her family.



Participants are provided with subsidized rent at a small commercial kitchen, as well as other **culturally-sensitive business supports**, including permit assistance and market channel development (see diagram).



FIN has since helped launch nine businesses, established market channel opportunities through FIN's Taste Around the Globe farmers market booth both at Renton and Federal Way farmers markets and coordinating catering requests. The pilot has refined the service delivery model and coordination

with partners (e.g. Ventures Nonprofit and StartZone at Highline College). Program growth is constrained by the small subleased kitchen space and limited schedule (e.g. nights and weekends only). However, FIN has an exciting opportunity to build off the success and expand the program to accommodate more entrepreneurs.

In late 2019, FIN plans to open the [Tukwila Village Food Hall](#)<sup>27</sup>, which will be six times the size of the current location. It will be located in Tukwila Village, a new mixed-use development and affordable housing project. Program participants have guided the design of the food hall, which will serve as the heart of the food business incubator. It will also be a space where people can gather, learn about, and celebrate the community's rich food traditions while creating community wealth.

The nearly 2,900 square feet space is on the ground floor of a six-story building. The commercial kitchen have four cook stations that will accommodate at least 20 food businesses, including eight that will rent stalls in a food hall that will be open to the public. Others will use the kitchen for off-site sales, such as catering and farmers markets. Construction began late 2018, and the facility will be open for operations late 2019/early 2020. FIN has an agreement with the developer, Pacific Northern, for a long-term lease.

**To build out the space and expand the program, FIN needs to raise \$800,000 in capital funds in the next year. Funds will support construction, equipment, program expansion staffing, and initial operating costs to get the facility up and running.**

The forecasted \$265,000 annual operating budget includes facility management and maintenance as well as incubation services such as the business advising and marketing support. The subsidized rent generated by the incubated businesses will cover over the half the annual operating costs that. **For the remainder, funds will be solicited through grants and sponsorships and developing earned revenue streams such as cooking classes, meal delivery, food festivals, and limited market-rate rentals.**

### **How FIN is Increasing Food Access:**

FIN and our partner, New Roots, operate the Namaste Farm Stand at two core community locations: Tukwila Village, and Matt Griffin YMCA in SeaTac. Piloted in 2017, the farm stand grew significantly in 2018 by: adding a second location at Tukwila Village; nearly doubling the weeks open from 10 to 18 weeks; purchasing the majority of vegetables from New Roots' community gardeners and other local growers; and becoming eligible in August to accept SNAP/EBT benefits and Fresh Bucks, the county's "double your bucks" program. The farm stand has seen steady increases in sales and number of customers.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://foodinnovationnetwork.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Tukwila-Village-Food-Hall-overview.pdf>

The lack of small cold/dry storage space and urban agriculture opportunities has impacted the logistical operations of the farm stands. In 2018, FIN began a strategic planning process with a group of other community organizations facing similar barriers in their food access programming. A case prospectus, [South King County Food Aggregation & Access](#)<sup>28</sup>, was developed; it outlines needs and considerations for a centrally located facility that would **provide dry/cold storage and adjacent growing space**. A potential prototype is a facility using shipping containers for shared cold/dry storage located on one to five acres with space suitable for farming. The farming space is intended to support South King County food banks, new and emerging farmers, community gardeners and possibly a youth development program. King County's Public Health Department and Local Food Initiative have been critical supports in the work's development.

**The group has begun the next phase of work in identifying the operating structure, refining the conceptual design, exploring potential locations, and seeking funding resources for planning, capital and operating needs. Technical and consultation support needed include real estate expertise, facility design, and cooperative development.**

In addition, FIN is working with Forterra on a King Conservation District-funded project that aims to increase urban agriculture production by securing land opportunities for refugee, immigrant, and low-income communities in South King County. The work focuses on improving community partners' resource-sharing and collaboration by establishing the South King Urban Agriculture Network (SKUAN), and linking potential growers to resources for business development and urban landowners willing to host, lease, or sell land for urban agriculture use. Outcomes have included hosting a "Farming in King County" five-hour workshop that brought together agricultural service providers and over 40 aspiring growers from immigrant and refugee growers. This has not only provided resource connections, but also shed light on the gaps within existing services for these communities, and different perspectives on land ownership. Over the next year, technical assistance will be provided to community groups and other partners to secure urban agriculture land opportunities. **A farm incubator program with training and land access to large plots with potential to scale would address barriers aspiring growers face.**

## **Recommendations to Build South King County's Community Food System**

To achieve an equitable community food system, investment and resource support should prioritize:

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28 <https://foodinnovationnetwork.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Case-Prospectus.pdf>

- developing facilities (e.g. commissary kitchens, cold/dry storage) designed and programmed to accommodate small-scale needs. Facilities should be affordable to users (e.g. growers, entrepreneurs, community organizations), and consider both economic and social impacts.
- tailoring existing services, or developing service delivery and programming (e.g. business development training, financing), for immigrant and refugee communities. Program development should incorporate community input and participation.
- alternative market channel and distribution development in areas that may not have as much market demand and capacity as other, more mainstream, direct market channels. Examples include a mini farmers market of 3-5 vendors vs. a standard farmers market of over 20 vendors; or shipping containers vs. a warehouse.
- alternative land-ownership and management models or creation of locally based land conservation organizations or land trusts due a current lack of these types of entities being locally and community based. This includes working with the community to understand perspectives of land ownership.
- efforts to build relationships across the food sector, including for-profits and non-profits, to strengthen connections and relationships for under-resourced communities.
- identifying clear, achievable outcomes and metrics with community-based efforts. Local food system evaluations often consider the connection of local food from farm-to-fork. Unfortunately, due to infrastructure gaps described—particularly economic, cultural and economic barriers—make it challenging to achieve in a single project. Multi-phased steps and long-term investment are required to genuinely build system-wide connections that all stakeholders participate in and benefit from.



## 5.4 Highline College

**Organization Name:** Highline College

**Physical Address:** 2400 S. 240th St. Des Moines, WA 98198

**Website:** <https://www.highline.edu/>

**Primary Contact:** Bobby Butler, Urban Agriculture Program Manager  
([bbutler@highline.edu](mailto:bbutler@highline.edu), 206-592-3985)

### Organizational Overview

**Organization Name:** Highline College

#### Vision and Mission

Highline College's mission, vision, values, core themes, and strategic plan align with and support the efforts of the college's Sustainable Urban Agriculture & Food Security Program (Urban Agriculture program).

#### Mission

As a public institution of higher education serving a diverse community in a multicultural world and global economy, Highline College promotes student engagement, learning, and achievement, integrates diversity and globalism throughout the college, sustains relationships within its communities, and practices sustainability in human resources, operations, and teaching and learning.

#### Vision

Highline College is valued as the educational crossroads where dreams are shaped, communities created and excellence achieved.

#### Values

Highline College is committed to these values:

- Access: We believe education should be available to all who seek it.
- Collaboration: We value teamwork, joint responsibility and ownership.
- Community: We value our community and are dedicated to serving its educational needs.
- Diversity: We respect the rights and perspectives of the diverse populations, who live, learn and work in our community.
- Excellence: We strive for the highest quality in all our programs and services.
- Integrity: We believe in honesty and trustworthiness in all our college practices.
- Internationalization: We value a global perspective and respect cultural diversity.
- Learning: We develop an interactive, creative and learner-centered environment that supports student success.

Highline's [strategic plan](#)<sup>29</sup> includes four initiatives:

- Achieve excellence in teaching and learning.
- Enhance a college climate that values diversity and global perspectives.
- Strengthen and expand the presence and role of the college within the communities it serves.
- Sustain an open, honest and collaborative environment that is responsive to the needs of the college community and that promotes good stewardship of the college's financial resources.

Highline's **core themes** build on the strategic plan:

- Promote student engagement, learning and achievement.
- Integrate and institutionalize diversity and globalism throughout the college.
- Build valuable relationships and establish a meaningful presence within Highline College's communities.
- Model sustainability in human resources, operations, and teaching and learning.

### **History, Geography and Beneficiaries**

Highline College is located in Des Moines, Washington in the southwestern part of King County. South King County is home to the lowest income population, the highest number of immigrants and refugees, and the most ethnically diverse households. South King County has less access to social services than the rest of King County and relies heavily on community-based organizations.

In 2018, The Chronicle of Higher Education listed Highline College as the fifth most diverse higher education institution in the United States. This distinction brings tremendous responsibility. We are committed to equity and social justice, being culturally responsive in our educational approaches and in partnerships with our diverse communities. The college is a beneficiary of abundant human complexity and rich natural resources that contribute to individual and community economic vitality and sustainable practices. We are inclusive in welcoming all who may benefit from our program offerings and we have been gratified to see not only the populations we first identified, but also individuals with disabilities, international students, mid-life career changers, and indigenous communities looking to reclaim heritage food and practices.

To understand our current situation related to sustainable urban agriculture and food security, a brief history may be helpful. In 2013, the professional technical program offerings at Highline College were reviewed for viability, employment demand, community need, student interest, and to identify

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<sup>29</sup> <https://documents.highline.edu/highline/Highline-College-Mid-Cycle-Strategic-Plan-1718-2021.pdf>

gap areas. The college does not have any traditional trades programs such as welding, manufacturing or automotive because they are available at nearby community and technical colleges and our system does not allow for duplication. While the college offered a breadth of programs that met the economic development and workforce needs of our community, we did not have any career paths that involved the outdoors, developed student entrepreneurial potential, and used deep experiential learning. At this same time, we were aware of the food insecurity in our service area. More than 70% of the students in the school districts we serve meet the federal qualifications to receive free or reduced lunch. Many of our students live in communities determined to be food deserts.

We have a large and diverse immigrant and refugee population who come to Highline to learn English and to assist them to become employed as quickly as possible. More than 130 languages are spoken on our campus and 50% of our students speak a language other than English at home. Our students are 73.3% first generation, over 70% identify as people of color. The sustainable urban agriculture program is a microcosm of this varied diversity with the majority of students being immigrants/refugees and learning English with hopes of securing employment. More than 80% are the first generation to attend college. The college has partnerships with many immigrant-serving community-based organizations and together we recognize the remarkable cultural, linguistic, and myriad of other assets they bring to south King County. Many of these immigrants were farmers or grew food to supplement their families in their home countries and during their time in refugee camps. Their farming knowledge is not always transferable to the Pacific Northwest climate.

Our research also highlighted the graying of the agriculture workforce with the average King County farmer now aged 65. We were concerned about how this unaddressed gap will impact food access and quality. Another significant population we focused on are youth who have either not completed high school or completed but have no post-secondary skills. In Washington, 80,700 students begin 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 19,900 of these drop out before graduation, and only 25,500 complete a post-secondary credential. The high school dropout rate in south King County is the highest in the county. We believe some of these youth will be attracted to a profession that involves being outside, designing creative growing spaces, producing healthy food, and learning business skills.

Reviewing the startling facts about food growing and access and looking at key elements of our student population we felt compelled to respond. We wanted to develop a program where everyone could see himself or herself belonging. Starting a program that teaches sustainable urban agriculture and improves food security was a unanimous decision from college leadership. This program has actively nurtured greater collaboration with the cities near campus; community based organizations that promote health, wellness, and financial education; food growers; food banks; and entities that provide consultation for getting started in growing food. The cross disciplinary nature of the program involves biology, environmental science, economics, nutrition,

business, human services and English language development for immigrants bringing disciplines from the entire campus together. The focus on supporting immigrants and youth to learn about and consider agriculture-agroforestry as a way to supplement diet and/or become entrepreneurial demonstrates the college's intention to recognize the capacity within our communities and to further sustainability through opportunities to grow healthy food in dense living environments in communities that offer little access to wholesome, local food.

Not long after our educational program began, the new program manager became aware of the need for evening food access for working night students and the urgency to have free food available for students in general. Working with Lancer, the college's contracted food service provider, evening hours were extended so students could eat between work and evening class. The idea of a campus food pantry began at this time. With the collaboration of many, especially the South King County Food Coalition, the pantry came to fruition in the summer of 2018. This pantry served over 400 students the first week it opened. It is a space that has potential for teaching food preparation if we are able to incorporate a kitchen in the future.

We were fortunate to receive two grants from the King Conservation District (KCD), which enabled us to begin and grow the program to where it is today. KCD is a significant partner and advisor, connecting Highline with the existing and burgeoning farming expertise, land access, immigrant and other special populations.

#### **Key Leadership Staff:**

Dr. John Mosby, President Highline College

Dr. Jeff Wagnitz, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Alice Madsen, Dean of Instruction for Professional Technical Education

Bobby Butler, Program Manager for Sustainable Urban Agriculture & Food Security

#### **Synopsis of key of food-related objectives:**

One full-time person, the program manager, leads Highline's Urban Agriculture program. One hourly employee assists with the campus garden maintenance. The scope of the program manager's work is large and includes not only teaching and advising students but also marketing, outreach, community connections and partnerships, communication with the city of Des Moines, and providing technical assistance to community-based organizations and immigrant groups.

He maintains the campus growing areas and the projects at Sonju Park and Parkside, areas leased from the City of Des Moines and close to Highline's campus. He builds community gardens for schools and neighborhoods throughout our service area and delivers produce to the local food banks and our campus food pantry. He works closely with his advisory committee to assure a vibrant program and sits on high school agriculture advisory committees. The program manager works with students in the Permaculture

Club, a co-curricular organization. In addition to leading/teaching a college credit program, he provides many hours a month teaching and providing technical expertise all over King County.

The administration is amazed at the number and quality of partnerships he has forged and the tireless work he does to raise awareness about food growing and food access. The following are the programs food related objectives underway:

- Seek funding for a functioning kitchen for food preparation demonstrations and teaching (The campus Community Pantry has some space and potential and a kitchen could leverage the access and learning available in one known space.)
- Provide nutritious food preparation demonstrations for the campus and community
- Identify and gain access to public land with food growing capacity near campus and/or accessible with public transportation
- Seek funding to add a full time farmer assistant to help the program manager with growing maintenance, land acquisition and indoor food growing
- Increase the local food donations to the college's community pantry and to the Des Moines Food Bank
- Expand food growing areas on campus
- Expand growing the heritage foods available for specific ethnic populations and provide technical assistance for successful production
- Connect potential food business entrepreneurs with StartZone and Small Business Development Center; seek funding to support a StartZone advisor part time to advise and guide clients interested in food related endeavors—cottage industries, Project Feast, etc.
- With the guidance of SAgE (Sustainable Agriculture Education), develop the associate degree in Sustainable Urban Agriculture & Food Security that articulates to Washington State University so students wanting to pursue a bachelor's degree have access.
- Maintain partnerships with community based organizations and entities that promote sustainable agriculture and together leverage the opportunities for growth and new farmer support.

## Food System Infrastructure Gaps

### How does your team think about or define “infrastructure” as it relates to your food system or food-related objectives?

Our goal as a program is to give our students the essential knowledge and skills to be successful as new farmers. What makes this a challenge is that the needs of new farmers are many and our capacity is limited. However, in an ideal world, we would provide our students with the following:

#### Infrastructure that our program currently provides to King County:

**Training and Education:** Our program, currently offers a 1-year certificate comprised of 12 courses that is geared towards students interested in starting and running their own small farm business (<5 acres) after graduation. We also offer a 2-year AAS in Business Entrepreneurship with a focus in Urban Agriculture for students that are interested in expanding their business knowledge and/or to broaden their potential career options. At present, we are working with three (3) Washington universities to create a 2-year AAS-Transfer to give students the opportunity to continue their education and earn a bachelor’s degree in a relevant field of study. Our 1-year certificate courses are:

- Spring Practicum
- Summer Practicum
- Fall Practicum
- Indoor Growing
- Farm Business Administration
- Food Justice
- Permaculture and Edible Landscape Design
- Small Business Seminars
- Food as Medicine
- English
- Practical Accounting
- Human and Labor Relations

These courses provide the scientific knowledge, hands-on experience, practical business expertise that are crucial for starting and operating a small farm business. Our courses are also current with the changing food safety regulation/certification landscape.

Our program teaches a combination of regenerative, market garden, lean business management, and organic farming techniques, to be successful as sustainable farmers; with a definition of sustainability that is associated with the three pillars of economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

**Growing Space:** Although limited, our program provides students with growing spaces spread throughout campus, and off-site at neighboring Sonju Par. This provides hands-on training as part of our three practicum courses. These spaces also allow students in the program to claim their own incubator

plots. These incubator plots give students real world farming experience, but on a much smaller scale. Students will also have an opportunity to sell their crops at a shared booth at the Des Moines Farmers Market, to earn scholarship dollars for their education. This incubation method essentially gives students real life experience (but on a much smaller scale) and serves as a metaphorical safe space where students can fail and succeed as often as they need, as long as they are enrolled in the program. The end goal of this incubation method is to give our students the best chance of success after they leave our program.

**Outreach and Technical Assistance:** As part of our 2015-2016 KCD Regional Food Systems Grant, about half of the program manager's time was spent building relationships in the community and offering technical assistance. As a result, our program has developed over 40 partnerships with schools and community organizations in King County. We see these partnerships as being invaluable relationships moving forward as we seek to enhance the food system in South King County and train a new generation of farmers. The following is a list of the Urban Agriculture Program's community partners:

- Seattle Tilth
- Elk Run Farm
- Des Moines Food Bank
- Renton Farmers' Market
- City of Des Moines
- Friends of Sonju Park
- Food Innovation Network
- Immigrant Refugee Coalition
- Truman High School
- Decatur High School FFA
- Tahoma High School FFA
- Enumclaw High School FFA
- Permaculture Club @ Highline College
- StartZone @ Highline College
- Whistling Train Farm
- Adelay Farm
- First Light Farm
- Alvarez Farm
- Stone Soup Gardens
- Kent Meridian HS
- Mosby Farms
- Seattle Public Utilities Rainwise Program  
(likely to partner on projects in the future)
- Restoring Eden Nursery
- Des Moines Farmers' Market
- Seattle Tree Fruit Society
- Project Feast
- Oasis Edible Naturescapes
- WSU Extension
- The Farm at 277th

- City Fruit
- Puget Sound Skills Center
- Global to Local
- SoDo Hydro
- Growing Veterans
- AFRICATOWN
- Over the Hill Farm
- King Conservation District

Each of our partners are unique in their own right, but they all share a common focus on food and agriculture. The needs of each partnership varies, but more often than not, it boils down to technical assistance. Our program has been able to offer technical assistance to community partners in the following ways:

- Construction of raised garden beds
- Construction of greenhouses
- Community lectures
- Farmland matchmaking
- Providing growing space
- Showcasing of community partners at annual Food Summit
- Service as advisory board member for 2 organizations
- Assistance with summer youth programs

### **Infrastructure that still needs to be provided to King County:**

**Land:** The price of arable land in King County is much higher than many parts of Washington, and the rest of the country for that matter, often making it difficult to purchase land near most metropolitan areas. Also a reason why it is so important to have the proper education to be successful in the first few years. Our program has worked around the high land prices in the past by leaning on the support of our community partners, such as the City of Des Moines, to help provide growing spaces on publicly owned land. However, even this has its challenges. For one, it is much more difficult for smaller organizations or individuals to negotiate a similar partnership. In addition, selling crops from publicly owned land requires zoning and other policy changes. The two most viable options that we see for small organizations and/or individuals to work around high land prices are to establish a farmer cooperative or individually lease land from farmers that have an abundance.

In terms of matchmaking new farmers and land, a few useful web applications can help with this process. One of which being Tilth Alliance's FarmLink program which offers tools such as: an "available farmland map", farmers seeking land classified ads, and templates for important documents that are involved in purchasing, leasing, or cooperatively sharing land.

**Farm Business Support:** Over 11 weeks, our program's Farm Business Admin course guides students through the process of identifying their values, creating a business plan, and learning various profitable farming techniques.

Although our capacity for additional student support is limited, we do our best to give additional guidance to those that are currently going through the start-up process. In different parts of the state, however there are actually organizations that just focus on helping farm business as they grow and develop. Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC) is an example of one. The NABC is a wonderful organization that provides various resources to help farm businesses grow. These include but are not limited to value added business development services, producer to consumer connections, and connections to funding and lenders. Although the NABC considers King County as part of their network, their office is in Mt. Vernon, WA, so the vast majority of their clients come from Snohomish and Skagit counties (Northwestern WA).

We have a much more generalized and smaller version of an organization like NABC on campus, called StartZone. StartZone was an initiative started by Highline College to offer free business support to local communities in South King County. StartZone offers services such as workshops, feasibility assessments, business planning services, mentoring programs, and provides connections within the community. Although, they do a wonderful job in assisting aspiring business owners, they do not have staff members that are specifically versed in agriculture; and because of shortages in funding, this is not currently an option for them.

**Cold Storage:** Cold storage units can come in many forms, but to put it simply, they are essentially walk-in refrigerators. Cold storage is a great structure to have on a farm but also an expensive one. So most new farmers tend to skip this purchase the first few years to save their start-up funds. However, without cold storage, farmers are forced to harvest many of their crops the same day as market. This type of farming is exhausting and can easily lead to farmer burnout in the long run. Cold storage gives farmers the gift of time, which is inevitably in short supply during the first few years farming. With cold storage, farmers are free to harvest their crops over a couple of days without having to put all of their other tasks on hold. Traditionally, purchasing cold storage has been up to the individual farmer, but some organizations have come up with creative ways to offer community cold storage lockers to local farmers.

**Food Hub:** A food hub is a relatively new concept for many regions, but has shown to be quite successful in the northern parts of Western, WA. The function of a food hub is to act as an intermediary between farmers and consumers. The food hub offers cold storage lockers placed in strategic locations throughout a particular region where local farmers can drop-off their products. The food hub then sources the customers to purchase the products and delivers the products right to their doorstep. There are 3 food hubs spread across Washington, LINC Foods (Spokane), Puget Sound Food Hub (Snohomish, Skagit, and North King County), and Okanogan Producers Marketing Association. Sadly, there are no food hubs currently supporting South King County.

From our experience in working with people at the Puget Sound Food Hub, building a new food hub will require forming a new business/organization with its own specific infrastructure requirements. Examples of infrastructure being aggregate cold storage drop sites, delivery truck, and staff. Staff includes management, delivery drivers, sales specialists to build connections among farmers and consumers, marketing specialists, and logistic specialists to manage the web-platform and outgoing deliveries.

**Commercial Kitchen Spaces:** From our program's experience, we feel confident to say that there are an equal or greater number of individuals interested in starting food businesses in South King County as there are in farming. For these individuals, the greatest infrastructure need is shared commercial kitchen space (legal requirement for processing and selling food). There are a few options for kitchen space rentals in King County, but most are located in the Seattle city limits and are relatively expensive. One of our community partners, Food Innovation Network (a branch of Global to Local), is working on building a commercial kitchen space in Tukwila for their immigrant/refugee clients within the next couple of years. However, it is currently unknown whether this will be enough space to meet the demands of the entire South King County community.

Project Feast and Ubuntu Café have a decently sized commercial “ready” kitchen. It may be possible to work with them in the future in terms of renting out the space when it is not in use, but that discussion is pending.

We are also looking into the possibility of building a commercial “ready” kitchen addition to our current Food Pantry space. This could serve as a space for community cooking demonstrations; student club use; and for some of our culinary focused courses, like our program's Food as Medicine course. This space will not be able to be rented out to local businesses.

### **What systemic gaps in food system infrastructure are inhibiting your organization's ability to achieve its food-related vision or goals on behalf of your beneficiaries?**

**Land:** Although we are making progress in acquiring more arable land near the college, nothing is certain at this point. Currently our program has about ½ acre in production which is spread across campus and neighboring Sonju Park. Our goal is to have 4-6 acres of land in production by the end of 2019. Two acres of which will be used by our program, and the remainder leased (free or at low cost) to a handful of our strongest community partners: The International Rescue Committee, Food Innovation Network, Elk Run Farm, and Des Moines Food Bank. Depending on the size of the land, we may continue to lease out portions of this land to our various other community partners.

Currently, we are waiting on the outcome of our request to the Des Moines City Council. If approved, we may be able to lease enough public land (and sell from that land) to achieve our goals. If it is rejected, we will likely need to look into private leasing options (see *Administrative Policy Changes* below).

**Administrative Capacity:** For the past 3 years, our program has made great strides on campus and the community with one program manager, and one hourly garden assistant. We are very proud of the work that we have done, but the rate at which we have done it has been unsustainable in terms of time and effort. To continue growing at the rate that we intend, we will need to hire another employee(s). This position(s) could look a few different ways. It could be in the form of a farm manager to oversee the future college farm and incubator plots; it could be in the form of hiring quarterly adjunct instructors to free up more time of the program manager to oversee the college farm and incubator plots; or it could be a combination of quarterly adjuncts and more student workers.

Along with this need for expanded administrative capacity, we have another challenge to address by the end of the year. At the end of 2019, our current KCD Regional Food Systems Grant will expire. Included in this grant is funding for 1/3 of the program manager's salary. We are currently looking into other grant funding options, but at this time, have not found one that fits our needs.

**Administrative Policy Changes:** Although we are not currently at a stalemate, we have run into some challenges involving college and public policies. As mentioned previously, we have collaborated with the City of Des Moines to grow on some of the public land in Des Moines, which currently has policies in place to prohibit the sale of goods from public lands. The city has been flexible and accepted our request to present our case to their administrative staff. This may be a larger project than we are willing to commit to undertake. In which case, we will likely search for privately owned land. However, we are optimistic that a policy change passed by the Seattle city council that allows community gardeners to sell crops as a form of supplemental income will encourage Des Moines to do the same. We also have met with the person who spearheaded this policy change to discuss our options.

Although our administration has been supportive of our program from the start, we have run into some challenges regarding the conversion of on-campus green spaces into growing spaces. For our college, this mostly involves our facilities department, which views the layout of the campus in terms of maintenance, up-keep, and their 10-year plan. We have made a fair amount of progress with the facilities department over the years, but not enough for us to discontinue looking off-campus for potential growing areas.

We have also run into certain challenges in attempting to sell through our on-campus catering service. Although, they have expressed interest on more than one occasion, we have yet to get them to agree on a partnership and actually make a purchase. What we have taken from the situation is that it is not much of a policy issue for them, as it is an inconvenience issue. We will continue our attempts to collaborate with them, but will focus on other sales channels.

**What specific or acute gaps in food infrastructure would, if filled, facilitate progress against your food-related goals in the short term (1-2 years), or in the mid-term (3-5 years)?**

**Land:** (1 year) Acquiring 4-6 acres of land before the end of 2019 would help us complete our outcomes for our current KCD grant, as well as help us make steps towards the end goal of a Highline College Farm with student incubator plots.

**Administrative Capacity:** (1 year) Once we achieve our goal of acquiring 4-6 acres of land, it will be necessary to hire another employee (or employees) to help spread the workload of the program. We will also need to find a funding source to support our program manager by the end of 2019.

**Administrative Policy Change:** (1 year) If we were to acquire enough land to meet our goals through the city, we will need to make sure that our program has the opportunity to sell the crops from that land. Ideally, this policy change would happen before acquiring the land, but we do not know if that will be the case.

**Farm Business Support:** (3-5 years) After hiring an employee(s) to help spread the workload of our program, it is possible that it will free up enough time for the program manager to host some type of “Farm Business Development Workshops” for the local agricultural community. However, if the demand is high for this type of support in our community, it may be more beneficial to hire a StartZone employee with a background in agriculture to focus on a project such as this.

**Cold Storage:** (1-2 years) Although not required, cold storage space will help our program and farming community tremendously in terms of preventing burn-out. We could probably do without cold storage for a year, but will likely need to make it a priority for the following year. A community cold storage unit that provides space for our program as well as the surrounding community would be ideal. There is even potential for a storage unit like this to be built on Highline owned/leased land.

**Campus Kitchen Space:** (1-2 years) A campus kitchen space will be necessary for our campus in the next 1-2 years. Our student cooking club and Food as Medicine course recently lost our previous kitchen space due to campus expansion, and have been forced to use a small employee kitchen in the Human Resources building. Within the next year or two, it will be important to construct a new kitchen space. We may have some grant funding currently available for building a kitchen addition to our current Food Pantry. Whether this space will be available for use by business owners in the community is another question. An off-campus community kitchen space might be required for a project of this nature.

**What ancillary or wrap-around support is needed to make good use of the infrastructure you just described (i.e. culinary training programs or food business entrepreneurship training to make good use of an investment in a commissary kitchen)?**

**Project Feast** is a non-profit organization that supports immigrants interested in using their ethnic cooking skills professionally. Project Feast serves the south King County area and partners with Highline College so students can earn a certificate in Hospitality preparing them for a future in food preparation. They may choose to work at the local Project Feast-run Ubuntu Street Café where the menu revolves and different entrepreneurs take turns creating meals, become caterers, employed at a restaurant, or open their own food establishment. Highline College collaborates with Project Feast for the training. The Urban Agriculture program could assist in the identification and growing of specific foods and herbs to promote local, organic food. Project Feast students may receive guidance from the college's StartZone office that helps entrepreneurs navigate licensing, funding and business planning for microenterprise or small businesses.

The **Puget Sound Skill Center** (PSSC) located near the college serves the neighboring school districts by providing career specific training for high school students preparing them for employment directly from high school. Many of the students would be at risk of not completing high school if they remained in their traditional setting. The experiential learning and employment focus of PSSC gives students a new perspective on their future. The PSSC has a distinguished culinary program that operates an on-site restaurant as part of the work based learning experience. The PSSC administration and culinary instructors are interested in developing a closer relationship with our urban agriculture program specifically in adding the farm to table component for students to learn food growing techniques and producing food on their campus. Deepening this relationship could offer a higher education pathway for interested PSSC students to learn about food growing and broaden the local food production options in the south county area. Having a kitchen on our campus that high school students could use to participate in the immediate reinforcement of growing, harvesting and preparing food would enhance learning and inspire food growing on the PSSC campus.

Two **community and technical colleges** located near Highline College offer culinary programs, South Seattle College and Renton Technical College. We have positive relationships with these sister colleges. All of our food-connected programs could benefit from collaboration around food growing and preparation. These culinary programs have kitchens, but they are not currently accessing farm to table practices, food growing, or local food access. If Highline College had a kitchen, we could demonstrate these practices with other college's programs; students would become more connected with the food supply chain and witness benefits of local food production while being exposed to additional career options.

**StartZone** is a micro and small business enterprise support entity hosted by Highline College. Their vision is a community where everyone has the opportunity to become financially self-sufficient by participating in a diverse, strong, and sustainable local economy. In pursuit of this vision, StartZone helps South King County residents achieve financial self-sufficiency by providing accessible and affordable training, consulting and other support for building small businesses that are bankable, profitable and sustainably connected to the local economy. Their services include workshops, feasibility assessments, business planning, business consulting, mentoring, networking, peer support and referrals. They are funded by a grant from the King County and Federal Way Community Development Block Grant; that funding has recently been significantly reduced and at a time when the services are more needed than ever. Many StartZone participants are interested in food related cottage industries, food trucks and microenterprise related to local whole foods. StartZone's target constituents are immigrants, people of color, women and individuals with disabilities.

**FareStart** is an organization that provides culinary and hospitality training to people who are homeless in the King County area. They have restaurants, cafes and catering services; their training is hands on and completed in 90 days. Farestart's completers are employed at a 90% rate. This poverty reducing program currently is not available in the south county where need is great. Farestart is interested in using and promoting locally grown food and supporting the farm to table movement.

**Please briefly describe the ecosystem of organizational partners you would rely on or need to cultivate to achieve your goals, were the infrastructure you described above available.**

To put it simply, considering the capacities of the majority of our community partners, it is more likely that they will need to rely on our program to achieve their goals, than us relying on them. With all of the services and resources that our campus provides, we virtually have everything it takes to achieve our goals. The only component that we are short of is funding.

The community partners that are (and will be) the most beneficial in supporting the achievement of our goals are King Conservation District, King County, and the City of Des Moines.

- King Conservation District has been vital in supporting our program's financial needs and connecting us with various organizations in our region.
- The City of Des Moines has been a wonderful partner and has helped us tremendously by providing public land options near the college. If we are able to work with the city council to enact certain policy changes, they will become a vital partner for our program.
- King County has offered to help our program find public land outside the Des Moines city limits. This will mean farmland that is at a further distance

from the college, but may choose to look into this as a possibility if the city policy changes are not an option. At this point, we will need to determine if public land is the best option for our program, or if a private lease will be a better route.

## **Specific Food Infrastructure Project(s) or Related Research**

**If you have a specific food infrastructure project you would like to surface, and/or a key piece of research you would like to share, please provide an overview or include a separate document.**

**- For projects, please provide whatever specifics are available related to size and scope, location, timing, partners, target beneficiaries, anticipated impact, total funding required and any funding gaps, and any other important details.**

As previously mentioned, we are currently working with our community partners to identify a large piece of property that can be used to achieve all of our organizational needs. The concept of a shared property began to develop after hearing the recurring theme from our community partners of a need for growing space. As part of our current grant through KCD, we agreed to acquire 4-6 acres of land to be used for our program, as well as to provide growing space for some of our community partners (International Rescue Committee, Food Innovation Network, Elk Run Farm, and Des Moines Food Bank) by the end of 2019. With our city, county, and private industry connections, we are confident that we will be able to find a property that meets all of our needs. In this scenario, Highline would essentially act as the land manager of this property to ensure that only organic and sustainable farming methods are used on the property, to provide assistance with equipment, and to provide training when needed. However, to manage this property effectively, we will need to hire another full-time staff member, or hire enough adjuncts to teach the courses so that the program manager can also take on the responsibilities of a property manager. Hiring this staff member will be our greatest challenge moving forward, considering that our grant funding will end in December 2019.

When funding is identified, it is our intent to bring on a full-time property manager. The property manager would be responsible for:

- Coordination and supervision of student incubator plots (1-5 acres)
- Coordination of agriculture training for land tenants
- Coordination of educational workshops for the community
- Inspection and regulation of tenant farming practices to ensure organic and sustainable
- practices (entire property)
- Construction of growing structures (i.e. greenhouses and row tunnels)

- Determination of necessary purchases
- Operation and maintenance of gas-powered machinery
- Management of crop planning and production at the Highline College farm
- Instruction of the Spring, Summer, and Fall practicum courses (6 credits in total)

**Costs for full-time Property Manager:**

Yearly Salary	Yearly Benefits	Yearly Total Costs
\$55,000	\$19,250	<b>\$74,250</b>

The addition of adjunct instructors would allow us to both free up the time of the current program manager as well as increase the courses available to students. In turn, the program manager could feasibly take on many of the responsibilities of the described property manager. If we were to hire enough adjunct instructors to free up the time of the current Program Manager. The adjunct instructor average cost is approximately \$2,400 per course:

Course	Instructor cost per course
Food as Medicine – 3cr	<b>\$2,580</b>
Food Justice – 5cr	<b>\$4,300</b>
SUST 152: Indoor Growing – 3cr	<b>\$2,580</b>
Farm Business Administration/Farm Tour – 5cr	<b>\$4,300</b>
Permaculture and Edible Landscaping & Design – 5cr	<b>\$4,300</b>
Spring Practicum – 2cr	<b>\$1,720</b>
Summer Practicum – 2cr	<b>\$1,720</b>
Fall Practicum – 2cr	<b>\$1,720</b>
Yearly Total Costs	<b>\$23,220</b>



## 5.5 Living Well Kent

**Organization Name:** Living Well Kent Collaborative

**Physical Address:** 515 W Harrison St. Suite 208, Kent, WA 98032

**Website:** <http://livingwellkent.org/>

**Primary Contact:** Shamso Isaak, Executive Director  
([Shamso@livingwellkent.org](mailto:Shamso@livingwellkent.org), 253-457-2964)

### Organizational Overview

#### Organizational Vision, Mission, Beneficiaries, Geography:

Living Well Kent (LWK) is a community-driven collaborative dedicated to the vision of public spaces and initiatives that encourage healthier lifestyles and better living. It is focused on creating a healthier, more equitable and more sustainable city of Kent. LWK's specific goals include creating community in which all residents thrive:

- Widespread access to healthy and affordable food for all residents
- Safer streets and public spaces that encourage physical activity
- Greater equity and therefore opportunities to achieve full potential
- A strong sense of community inclusion

We recognize that our community is ethnically and culturally diverse and that our work must stay grounded in diverse voices.

We believe that all people and food have purpose. We seek to understand and celebrate each other across barriers around culture, age, values, gender, ethnicity, politics, and physical, linguistic, intellectual or developmental abilities.

### Our Guiding Values

To achieve our bold Purpose, we commit living out the following values...

- We build trust and create healthy, inclusive community partnerships
- We honor and cherish diversity by building cultural competence
- We acknowledge and celebrate our collective strengths
- Many voices, one message

### Our Change Approach

- Mobilize and build community capacity
- Take collective action on shared priorities
- Provide backbone support for deeper collaboration

### Key Leadership Staff:

- Executive Director: Shamso Issak
- Project Manager: Riham Xashi
- Food Access Manager: Zack Knight
- Healthy Housing Manager: Hoda Abdullahi

### **Short synopsis of key of food-related objectives:**

Living Well Kent is partnering with PHSKC and Multicare Clinic in maintaining a community-led Farmer's Market in the East Hill neighborhood of the City of Kent, growing participation, and increasing the accessibility of this market by accepting food benefits such as SNAP, WIC, and Fresh Bucks. Living Well Kent runs the Kent East Hill Farmers Market (KEHFM) seasonally between June and October.

### **Food System Infrastructure Gaps**

**How does your team think about or define “infrastructure” as it relates to your food system or food-related objectives? We have heard definitions ranging from warehousing, cold storage and distribution, to commissary kitchens, culinary training and food safety compliance, to farm incubator support, land access, tools and technical assistance, to childcare and transportation for aspiring food or farm entrepreneurs. We'd like to understand how you think about infrastructure as it relates to your constituents or beneficiaries.**

At Living Well Kent Collaborative (LWK), we define “infrastructure” as a food system in which communities and community based organizations are able to come together and have a space for growing, distributing, storing and training to advocate and encourage community members to grow and eat locally. Further, we see it as a food aggregation system that provides land and technical assistance, as well as, culinary and farming trainings, and food safety compliance to small scale farmers and in particular farmers of color. This is very important to us at LWK as a food justice and social justice organization, we recognize and acknowledge the disparities that are faced by in particular farmers of color and small-scale farmers, and the biggest disparity as it pertains to food aggregation, is lack of access to land and access to resources.

**What systemic gaps in food system infrastructure are inhibiting your organization's ability to achieve its food-related vision or goals on behalf of your beneficiaries? Feel free to address infrastructure as you defined it above, and if relevant, to touch on any systemic economic, political or cultural issues that stand in your team or community's way.**

We work with Somali and West African farmers that speak very limited English, but are able to grow produce in abundance given that they have access to land to grow. However, they are interested in only farming, growing and harvesting. The objective of these farmers is to sell their produce wholesale to bigger good buyers, such as schools, hospitals and other big food buyer local institutions. The main hindrance these farmers face is language barrier as well as lack of partnership with these important local institutions. The systematic gaps in food system infrastructure that are inhibiting our organization's ability to achieve its food-related vision or goals are establishing and maintaining partnerships with institutions that are very essential to our food-related objectives and goals.

**What specific or acute gaps in food infrastructure would, if filled, facilitate progress against your food-related goals in the short term (1-2 years), or in the mid-term (3-5 years)?**

Living Well Kent, mainly works with farmers in South King County, and our Farmers Market (KEHFM) is based in Kent. LWK has done a food assessment in 2015, and our findings showed that Kent, in particular Kent East Hill and most of South King County, is a food desert. That is, Kent and surrounding cities have little access to adequate fresh and organic fruits and vegetables. One specific acute gap that we can identify is accessibility. The communities we serve are low income and are based in Kent and surrounding cities. So the critical gap in food infrastructure that would facilitate progress against our food-related goals in the short term would be the population we serve and our community members not being able to easily have access to an inclusive food infrastructure.

**What ancillary or wrap-around support is needed to make good use of the infrastructure you just described (i.e. culinary training programs or food business entrepreneurship training to make good use of an investment in a commissary kitchen).**

Providing necessary support in technical assistance and operation is needed to make good use of utilizing this food aggregation infrastructure. Farm training, culinary training and food business entrepreneurship training are such important components to address disparities and gaps experienced by small-scale and farmers of color. By providing support to implement these programs, it would greatly bridge the gap between immigrant farmers and their American counterparts.

**Please briefly describe the ecosystem of organizational partners you would rely on or need to cultivate to achieve your goals, were the infrastructure you described above available?**

The ecosystem of organizational partners we would need to cultivate to achieve our goals would include governmental departments such as, public health, and local food justice and social justice organizations, and network of local farmers.



## 5.6 South King County Food Coalition

**Organization Name:** South King County Food Collaborative

**Physical Address:** 22225 9th Ave S Des Moines, WA 98198

**Website:** <http://www.skfcf.org/>

**Primary Contact:** Barb Houston-Shimizu, Executive Director  
([director@skfcf.org](mailto:director@skfcf.org), 206-878-2660)

### Introduction

Twelve food banks serve over 11 million lbs of emergency food assistance to over 25,000 different families every year across communities in South King County. These food banks serve a diverse region south of Seattle which includes urban, suburban and rural areas and has the highest percentage of food insecurity in all of King County. The ability to access food (especially highly nutritious food) is limited in the region, where numerous census tracts are identified by the USDA as “food deserts,” where there is a high percentage of low-income families coupled with low access to healthful foods. Families cope by substituting cheaper, processed foods, so consumption of fruits and vegetables is very low and obesity stands at 26%.

The South King County Food Coalition (SKCFC) convenes the region’s local food banks to coordinate and leverage their efforts. SKCFC is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase program impact and foster innovation by providing support, resources, advocacy, and standards for emergency food programs serving communities in South King County. The coalition’s vision is for South King County to have a strong food system where everyone has equitable access to nourishing and culturally appropriate foods they need to thrive.

### SKCFC Programs

- **Shared transportation:** A 26’ refrigerated truck helps eight participating agencies pick up food from distribution centers like Food Lifeline and Northwest Harvest. Through grant support and shared maintenance fees, food banks are able to quadruple their transportation capacity for this critical food at half the cost of picking it up on their own. Approximately 40% of these agencies’ food is delivered via the coalition truck.
- **Shared funding:** SKCFC serves as the lead agency for over \$300,000 in pass-through funding for South King County food banks from the WA State Department of Agriculture. In addition to WSDA support, the coalition has brought in more than \$750,000 over the past 10 years supporting food bank emergency planning, intake system development, general food bank operations, and recent health and farming initiatives. The coalition has also served as a resource to help each food bank improve its own grant applications.



*Utilizing sustainable growing practices, Elk Run Farm has added thousands of lbs of farm-fresh produce to South King County food banks’ traditional offerings.*



*With the sodium reduction grant, SKCFC secured funding for new displays at one food bank, which transformed an aisle where clients used a laser pointer to select food into a beautiful, open shopping area.*

- **Elk Run Farm:** Over 100 youth are engaged in development and operation of Elk Run Farm to provide fresh, healthful produce for distribution through member food banks.
- **Farm to Food Pantry:** In 2018, SKCFC piloted a program to purchase fresh produce from local farmers in order to increase the amount and quality of produce available to local food banks while supporting the local food economy and increasing produce donations.
- **Health Initiatives:** In addition to its goal of a minimum standard unit of service at each food bank, SKCFC has engaged with Public Health Seattle-King County to reduce sodium-laden food in pantries, offer “train the trainer” programs to expand nutrition education in food banks, and help members transition to more dignified services where the healthy choice is the easy choice.
- **Advocacy:** SKCFC has engaged in GIS mapping to assess food bank service and inform program development, while serving as a voice for food banks and their client communities in public policy debate and advocacy.

### Infrastructure Gaps

Given the breadth of its programs, SKCFC work directly touches local food banks, sub-region efforts to support food banks, and local urban agriculture. The organization recognizes and experiences infrastructure gaps at each of these levels.

### Food Banks

- **Storage and Food Transportation** – Aging refrigeration and vehicles call for new investments to replace equipment purchased in the 1980’s, while new programs and donation streams that include more frozen and prepared foods are necessitating expanded cold storage in food banks.
- **Funding** – United Way, formerly a key funder of local food pantries as well as the coalition transportation project, has begun a divestment in emergency food, no longer considering it part of “family stability.” This has already significantly impacted food bank budgets in 2018-2019 and will get worse as cuts to the coalition transportation project will increase food bank transportation costs, as well. Steady United Way funding of general operations over the years allowed food banks to hire additional personnel and add programs; loss of these funds could lead to staff reductions, retraction of services added over the past ten years, and reduced ability to respond to crises such as rising need among the growing senior population.
- **Outdated Intake Systems** – At least six coalition food banks utilize an intake software system whose developer has retired and can no longer provide support or updates to the system. This impacts over 100 food banks around the state and will lead to a management crisis within 3-5 years. While some area food banks are sinking funds into development of new



*The coalition truck allows agencies to expand the amount of food they can take at a fraction of the cost they would incur on their own.*

systems from scratch, there is an opportunity to seek a common solution and find savings by working together to research, select/develop, and implement new systems.

- **Regional Policy** – Consolidation of donations at national corporate levels into the regional distribution center means that local food banks are losing access to smaller, regular amounts of food that can be distributed equitably to clients throughout the week in favor of large, once-per-week pickups, all on the same day. This situation, while advantageous to corporate donors, adds extra burden to the slim storage capacity at food banks, means they have to accept less product than previously received in order to distribute it within the product shelf-life, and it results in a lack of equal distribution of these food donations among families in need.
- **Client Transportation** – Many members of the community in need cannot access food bank services due to lack of transportation options, leading some local food banks to seek mobile options and alternative distribution channels, adding to staffing needs and transportation costs.

### SKCFC Subregional Work

- **Transportation Project Support** – United Way, the sole funder of the coalition transportation project (through the Multi-Service Center as lead agency), has cut its support by 60% in 2019 and is uncertain about future funding in emergency food.
- **Farm Cold Storage and Food Transportation** – Lack of cold storage on Elk Run Farm means produce must be harvested and delivered on the same day to local food banks in amounts they can handle immediately. As production on Elk Run Farm scales up and Farm to Food Pantry efforts grow, transportation capacity will need to grow beyond staff members' personal cars. Aggregation space and cold storage would provide more flexibility in produce distribution schedules and allow food banks to place custom orders.
- **Farm Production Scale** – Elk Run Farm, still new, lacks sufficient hoop houses for season extension crops and production of plant starts to distribute through food banks. Adding this capacity would increase produce at food banks at the time of year they receive and can offer the least and clients need it the most, due to seasonal expense.
- **Capacity/System development** – In the last two years, SKCFC has moved from facilitating networking among food bank directors and serving as the lead agency on one shared grant to development of Elk Run Farm, efforts to help food banks provide more healthful foods, and developing Farm to Food Pantry relationships. These efforts have been accomplished through significant collaboration with community partners such as Rotary First Harvest and Rotary International, Public Health Seattle-King County, Highline College, Tahoma High School, Washington State University, King Conservation District, member food banks, and other community-based

organizations in the local South King County food system. One lesson learned is that these collaborations—while powerful—take time to develop, maintain, and grow, creating staffing expense that does not fit easily into designated program funding. Other coalition systems need to grow with this work, including internal policy development, financial systems expansion, volunteer engagement, etc.

## Local Urban Agriculture

- **Lack of Urban Agriculture Spaces w/ Water** – It is only over the last 100 years that we have pushed so much food production outside of our urban areas. While grain and beef cattle cannot reasonably exist in dense urban spaces, fruits, vegetables, and small- to medium-sized animals can and have coexisted with humans for as long as we have had cities. Tax codes that undervalue food production and jurisdictions that don't like the messiness of plants and animals out in the open in their cities restrict the spaces that people can grow food. There are many unutilized empty lots, easements, and public property that could be used for growing food. Additionally, community gardens are good, but there is a serious lack of properties at least 1/8 acre that can be managed by one person or a collective group of people with the intent of growing for market or family subsistence.
- **Lack of Community-Held Food Infrastructure** – Local farmers, post-production processors, and community members lack access to almost every kind of infrastructure for value adding or post-processing locally grown foods. Without community-held grain mills, small- to medium-scale farmers that grow grains of all kinds have a very limited market. Without local USDA slaughter and butcher options, meat producers have to choose between driving their animals long distances at considerable expense to command top dollar for individual cuts, sell their animals live, or choose not to raise livestock for market. Without local commercial kitchen space, vegetable growers don't have anywhere to easily take their tomato seconds to process into sauce, salsa, dried tomatoes, etc. Other examples of possible community-held infrastructure include bread ovens, flash freezers, dehydrators, rentable cool and cold storage, and kitchen tool libraries.
- **Pathway to Farmer Development** – Nearly 60% of farmers in the US are over the age of 55 and there is no clear pathway for young people to become farmers. With the dissolution of the Tilth Alliance farm incubator in Auburn, the pathway to becoming a farmer in South King County just got harder. While Highline College is stepping into that void by offering classes and in-ground growing experience to a diverse group of students and several high schools in the area have FFA programs, the connection to further agriculture education and industry jobs is tenuous.
- **Local Policy** – Ensuring that farmers have a legal avenue for selling food that they have grown, raised, and processed is the best way to foster a local food economy, but local land use policy is often not favorable for small-scale urban agriculture. Many jurisdictions have not adopted code

legalizing urban agriculture in their communities, whether it is growing fruits and vegetables or animal husbandry such as raising goats and pigs. Other barriers exist, as well, such as Homeowners' Associations prohibiting the growth of food in specific parts of peoples' yards. Ultimately, poverty itself is a barrier for urban agriculture, as it limits a community's ability to participate in the local food system, so anti-poverty policies as a whole are also needed.

- **National Policy** – National agriculture resources are focused on five main commodity crops, promoting an unsustainable system of monoculture food production that is driving out small farmers and creating ecological problems, while subsidizing unhealthy foods. Until we shift the paradigm away from massive scale monocultures and toward robust polycultures, the land, our communities and our health will continue to suffer.

## **Opportunities for Investment**

### **South King County Food Aggregation and Access**

In the course of helping food banks feed hungry people, SKCFC has developed relationships with a variety of partners in the local food system and found that there are many common needs across the sector. For example, whether it is food banks, regional coalition efforts to support them, refugee integration efforts, food system innovation work, or urban agriculture and urban ag education, there is a common need for land, aggregation space (both for market and donation), cold storage, kitchen facilities, etc. Funding the planning and implementation of a facility for aggregation in South King County would benefit multiple partners in the region's food system. The purpose of this aggregation site would be to provide a point of intersection where the work of different sectors overlap. For example, with respect to SKCFC interests, a space for growing, aggregating and processing food could allow for the coalition to accept donations too big for local food banks to accept, provide a drop-off point with cooler space for Elk Run Farm produce, allow farm incubator produce to come into the food bank donation stream or the Farm to Food Pantry purchasing program, and develop a pipeline of new farmers to ensure the future of our food production systems. If community kitchen space at the site can accommodate different partner needs, it could allow SKCFC to replicate a successful food rescue program of the Thurston County Food Bank. That program reduces food waste by rescuing restaurant food, packaging it into frozen prepared meals, and distributing them through the emergency food system. With the many restaurants in and around SeaTac Airport and the Southcenter Mall area, SKCFC sees tremendous potential for this program locally and envisions it as a possible solution for feeding hungry seniors in the coming years. SKCFC is one of a diverse group of agencies committed to this aggregation concept that are now seriously looking for space and funding partners, planning how to set up cooperative management of such a site, and determining how to share the risks and responsibilities of operating it.

**Capacity Building Investment in SKCFC**

With the advent of Elk Run Farm in late 2015, the program work of the South King County Food Coalition has grown exponentially and resources for the organization to maintain this growth and operate successfully need to grow exponentially as well. Opportunities to work with other food system partners—such as the aforementioned aggregation site—are exciting but beyond the scope of work of current coalition funding streams. Significant investment in SKCFC over a 3-year period would enable the organization to stabilize after rapid growth, develop new systems to support that growth, leverage volunteer engagement for Elk Run Farm, free lead staff to pursue fund development efforts in order to solidify and diversify the coalition financial base, grow existing cross-sectoral collaborations, and provide a conduit through which funders can invest in the regional food banking system with projects such as the coalition's shared transportation program.



## 5.7 World Relief Seattle

**Organization Name:** World Relief Seattle

**Physical Address:** 841 Central Ave N, Suite C-106, Kent, WA 98032

**Website:** <https://worldreliefseattle.org/>

**Primary Contact:** Tahmina Martelly, Resiliency Programs Manager  
([tmartelly@wr.org](mailto:tmartelly@wr.org), 253-277-1121 x 251)

### Organizational Overview

#### Organizational Vision, Mission, Beneficiaries, Geography:

As the local affiliate of the international humanitarian organization World Relief, World Relief Seattle (WRS) has served refugees and vulnerable immigrants in Western Washington since 1979. Founded in response to the needs of refugees fleeing wars in Southeast Asia, WRS has grown to be the largest refugee resettlement organization in Washington - resettling and providing social services to more than 40,000 refugees, asylees and other vulnerable immigrants.

WRS exists to welcome refugees and immigrants by providing comprehensive social services that focus on establishing self-sufficiency and community connection. Our vision is to see *every refugee and vulnerable immigrant welcomed by community, rooted in community and empowered for community.*

#### Key Leadership Staff:

WRS has a history of establishing deep community trust and is committed to representing the community we serve in our staff and leadership. Our staff of 47 represents 15 countries, 24 different languages and is lead by our Executive Director, Chitra Hanstad, who is an immigrant and woman of color herself. Our management team consists of ten individuals, five of whom are former refugees, asylees or immigrants. World Relief's Advisory Council also includes refugees, immigrants and persons of color.

#### Short synopsis of key food-related objectives:

WRS's programs focus on building self-sufficiency and strengthening the inherent resiliency of refugees. Objectives for food-related programs include:

- Improve **food security** and **access** of refugees living in food deserts by offering community garden spaces to grow culturally appropriate foods not found in local grocery stores.
- Expand **food based education** by offering classes on gardening, preserving, food safety and nutrition education through the community garden and teaching/commercial kitchen
- Expand support of **food related microenterprise**, including aggregating and selling food produced in community garden space.
- Provide **incubator** support for emerging farmers

## Food System Infrastructure Gaps

**How does your team think about or define “infrastructure” as it relates to your food system or food-related objectives? We have heard definitions ranging from warehousing, cold storage and distribution, to commissary kitchens, culinary training and food safety compliance, to farm incubator support, land access, tools and technical assistance, to childcare and transportation for aspiring food or farm entrepreneurs. We’d like to understand how you think about infrastructure as it relates to your constituents or beneficiaries.**

One of the main infrastructure needs for the people we serve is access to more community garden space located near public transit. This not only helps those who want to grow food for their families but fosters spaces for those wanting to grow into the next level of food based business, such as selling at a pop-up farm stand to developing and marketing a CSA. The majority of people we are serving are not ready to sell or grow food as a mid-level producer. Some of the current gaps in infrastructure to get more refugee and immigrant farmers to enter the local food economy include: education and training (in agricultural practices, marketing, food safety etc), land access, transportation, technical assistance, childcare, water resources access as well as a way to navigate the fiscal cliff that is faced by those wanting to move into a food related business.

Currently in South King County the following resources are available:

- Urban Agriculture certificate program – Highline College 46 credits
- Living Well Kent – green houses in Auburn
- Tilth alliance - volunteer training program – soil and water
- Project feast – culinary vocational training (partnered with Highline College)
- FIN – some help with starting food based businesses such as catering
- Kent Farmers’ market
- Living Well Kent Farmer’s market (2 x month beginning 2019)
- Auburn Farmers’ Market (Sundays)

Even though the Urban Ag certificate program exists, it is a difficult program for refugee and immigrant participants to access. The classes are primarily daytime and often 3 credit hour classes are broken into three 1-hour classes M, W, F. This causes 6 trips just to take one 3 credit class. Even though there are scholarships available specifically for refugee or immigrant students, it is not a viable option because they would have to attend full time and the barrier to remain housed and pay all other bills would be cost prohibitive.

This is also an issue with the Living Well Kent green houses. This is an exciting partnership with NW Harvest and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Even though the green houses are great for growing food all season long for immigrant and refugee farmers to commit to growing food and developing a market there is a time lag between when they are sustainable and how much

time they can put into working in the green house with full time jobs. The potential for this to grow into something useful is great and will take a bit of time and proper staffing to develop more fully.

We have referred 6 participants to Project Feast. It is a good training program with credits available through Highline College, but does not address the marketing or small business development. There is a gap to take the graduate of this program to the next level – actually building or growing a business. It is a great program to get someone ready to work in a restaurant or foodservice environment. This program also does not provide any childcare or access to childcare unless participants are co-enrolled in employment programs such as BFET. There are a few who have moved from training with Project Feast to FIN's programming but the pathway is not seamless.

The Kent Farmers' Market and the Living Well Farmers' Market and the Auburn market does not generate enough sales to build income except for small scale income generation and some learning opportunities.

There is a need for incubator farming in south King County. A way for the local refugee and immigrant farmer to learn by doing when their literacy skills may not be that high and to build markets and skills in increments.

Tilth Alliance ran a farming incubator project at the Red Barn Ranch in Auburn, Washington. This project worked with a few immigrant farmers both officially and unofficially. In the official sense, two immigrant farmers went through the entire program and a few others went through portions of the program while farming. According to several conversations with the participants, when the Red Barn Ranch closed in November 2017, the immigrant farmers did not have the skills developed to find additional land, research out market opportunities or have access to any tools.

**What systemic gaps in food system infrastructure are inhibiting your organization's ability to achieve its food-related vision or goals on behalf of your beneficiaries? Feel free to address infrastructure as you defined it above, and if relevant, to touch on any systemic economic, political or cultural issues that stand in your team or community's way.**

World Relief Seattle's Community garden program empowers individuals and families regarding their food choices, accessibility, and consumption. They raise awareness that food does not just come from the grocery store but from the ground and in connecting to the ground, we are creating sustainable solutions for food production and accessibility for the future. This is especially important as SNAP dollars are slated to be drastically reduced by 2020, impacting refugee, immigrant and other low income community members. The current landscape in south king county (SKC) does not include a network of community gardens that the City of Seattle enjoys in the form of P-Patch gardens. The City of Kent, where World Relief Seattle is located has three community gardens that are run by World Relief Seattle, City of Kent and International Rescue Committee. All are full with a long waiting list.

This is also an issue in nearby cities of Auburn, Federal Way and Des Moines. Julie Parascondola, the director Kent Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department expressed in a recent meeting that the department does not have funding or plans to build any community gardens in the near future. It would be ideal if the county and the cities within South King County would work together to identify land and partner with community based organizations (such as World Relief and IRC) to proactively build community gardening spaces that also take into account green stormwater infrastructure (such as cisterns or rain gardens). This would create a network of gardens that would help community members as they relocate to different parts of South King County to have increased access to grow healthy, nutritious food.

A healthy community garden system can provide a pathway for new farmers to emerge from that first important step of growing food with support and education to growing food for small scale CSAs and beyond. It is one of the best pre-incubators of a healthy and robust local food system.

There is also a lack of refrigeration or cooler space to aggregate produce. If small scale farmers or even community garden members wanted to aggregate produce to make residual income from mid- sized plots, it would be difficult in SKC without some creative bartering or long distance travel.

**What ancillary or wrap-around support is needed to make good use of the infrastructure you just described (i.e. culinary training programs or food business entrepreneurship training to make good use of an investment in a commissary kitchen).**

WRS is in the process of building a teaching and commercial kitchen. It is our goal that with 1-2 years, we would be able to provide hands on food business related trainings to augment what Project Feast is already doing and to provide services like focus groups, so participants know what type of foods they need to produce and what will do well in the broader market place. It is also important to help those who have lower English skills to know who to partner with to reach their full potential in food based businesses. Further the teaching and commercial kitchen will help to extend the shelf life of food beyond the growing season through master canning certification and other food preservation technique classes along with nutrition and healthy eating classes for refugee and immigrant community members.

Within the next 3-5 years as some community gardeners grow into small scale farmers, it is important for them to have access to emerging markets of consumers. There is a gap currently between small to mid level entities that buy food connecting to small scale farmers who produces food locally.

**Please briefly describe the ecosystem of organizational partners you would rely on or need to cultivate to achieve your goals, were the infrastructure you described above available?**

We would have to partner with other community based organizations so we do not duplicate efforts but enhance it with shared spaces and resources, like cold storage for aggregation of produce, trucks for transportation, marketing help, incubator spaces for small scale farmers and combined water rights. It would be great to have the county and city support as well as organizations like Northwest harvest who already have infrastructure in place for food storage and transportation.

# 6

## Conclusions and Opportunities

## 6.1 “The What”: Infrastructure Investments to Catalyze Regional Food System Development

Local food infrastructure needs have been discovered in this exploration to be fragmented across scales, product categories, target constituents, and local geographies. What seems to be universal is the need for hard-asset infrastructure (e.g. warehousing, frozen storage, licensed kitchens), paired with training or technical assistance, to connect small and mid-sized producers with local food buyers, be they individuals or institutions.

Investment and support is needed all along the value chain to bring into being an equitable and restorative food system: one that stewards land and water resources effectively and provides affordable access to all eaters. Specifically, infrastructure is needed in several key categories:

- **Land access and on-farm infrastructure, plus farm business incubation and training.** The prohibitive cost of land in the Puget Sound was noted in almost every interview and study. Creative solutions continue to be needed for agricultural land preservation and land access for new and beginning farmers and ranchers, especially immigrants and people of color who have suffered systemic barriers to land ownership and financing over generations. Beyond basic on-farm infrastructure such as post-harvest handling facilities, animal handling facilities, cold/frozen storage, tools, equipment and farm implements, new producers may need investment, grants or loans to support start-up operations and access to technical assistance in production, business management training, market development, and value chain coordination. For immigrant populations and aspiring producers of color, it is also extremely important for the services provided to be culturally relevant and responsive to the systemic disparities that these communities have historically faced. Any such programming should be developed from the start in partnership with the intended beneficiaries, so as to ensure their needs are reflected within program design and implementation.
- **Aggregation, warehousing, and cold/frozen storage at multiple scales.** While most food system infrastructure is unique to its product category (wash and pack stations for produce, slaughter and processing for meat, seed-cleaning and hulling/milling for grains, etc.), many different product categories require a waystation for storage to facilitate efficient distribution of local product to buyers. Such aggregation capacity is needed at multiple scales - from relatively tiny facilities that could be housed in a shipping container and serve a geographically compact network of very small or new producers, to larger scale warehousing designed to serve a broader regional “ag of the middle” cohort, as was the mission of the Redd in Portland. Developing aggregation capacity across the scale spectrum is important for creating a pipeline of support for growth and a smooth flow of local goods through the region - very small producers will likely start out serving very small buyers in their immediate region, but some will grow and need access to larger markets. With that growth will come the need for access to additional infrastructure, as well as next-level technical assistance

and training, partnerships with other producers to serve larger buyer needs, and specialized staffing. Clear opportunities exist to develop or coordinate aggregation capacity to serve each scale of operation, and to illuminate that pathway for growth and support to regional producers and entrepreneurs.

Before investing in aggregation capacity, it is important to understand that warehousing is a break-even activity at best, especially when storing whole or minimally processed food products that are very low-margin. Unfortunately, traditional “food hubs” have at best a middling track record of financial viability, largely because of their mission-driven focus on produce, as well as their non-profit organizational structure and management style. To be financially viable, hubs need to include a mix of higher-margin value-added products (such as meat and locally produced consumer packaged goods and beverages), be operated with business rigor, and ideally, leverage a set of corollary services (such as sales support, advertising, office rental, technical assistance, etc.) to subsidize the warehousing component. Stringent financial feasibility studies and business modeling should be done to evaluate risk and viability before supporting any discrete aggregation development project.

A final note on facility development: to maintain cold-chain custody and comply with food safety regulations, aggregation in specific temperature zones is often required, and facilities must meet zoning, permitting and other regulations within multiple jurisdictions. Frozen storage is almost always in highest demand and shortest supply, so it is smart to err on the side of over-investing in frozen storage within a given facility, when possible. Advanced technology now exists to reduce the energy usage and environmental impacts of cold storage, but sometimes at significant incremental cost to the development project, so providing funding specifically for environmental upgrades may be a useful mechanism for support.

- **Distribution infrastructure, potentially to include sales support.** Most small producers start out self-distributing their product, whether by selling at farmers' markets or farm stands, delivering product to CSA drop sites, or by delivering product themselves to restaurant and grocery accounts. Producers at this scale often need investment in trucks or delivery vans, which can sometimes be shared among multiple producers. Self-delivery is an important step in early-stage growth, as it is often while making deliveries that producers connect with their buyers in person, discover important nuances to their customers' businesses, and learn how their products are received and merchandised. As producers grow, spending time behind the wheel making deliveries becomes less valuable, and the opportunity cost of time not spent further developing their products or business increases. At this stage it is useful to plug into an established distribution service, especially if the service also offers support for sales and market development, like providing samples and sales collateral, or staffing tastings.

Large distributors like Charlie’s Produce, Duck Delivery, and Food Services of America offer all of those services, but at high cost to the producer, and often with minimum volume requirements that are at a scale still out of reach for even midsized regional producers. “Aggregators of the middle”, like Puget Sound Food Hub and Farmstand Local Foods, offer accessible distribution services for small and midsized producers, including some sales support, and can potentially help overcome the significant barriers to getting local food into institutions like schools and hospitals. We believe such aggregators could become integral components of a robust Puget Sound food system as they grow, and therefore are worthy of further investment and support.

- **Licensed kitchens for value-added processing.** As noted in studies by the Port of Seattle and the Food Innovation Network, the Puget Sound region lacks adequate facilities to support entrepreneurship in catering and specialty food business development. As with the other components of infrastructure described above, technical assistance and incubator services in both business management and language/cultural agility are vital to the success of any hard asset infrastructure development. FIN’s Tukwila Village Food Hall will provide some kitchen and training capacity in South King County, and our understanding is that the Port of Seattle is still considering a licensed commercial kitchen project. Additional projects may also be needed to serve specific constituents or additional geographies.

## 6.2 “The How”: Every Bit as Important as The What

It is vitally important to note that how infrastructure projects are developed is as important as what infrastructure is developed. Even in this review of regional research and studies focused on food infrastructure, it is clear that specific efforts were generally not made to understand the unique needs and perspectives of communities of color or others historically underrepresented in food and agriculture conversations, or to ensure inclusive leadership in the development of new projects. We at Ecotrust have been guilty in this respect as well. While food banking and the array of programs designed to increase food access are critical to getting adequate nutrition to those who can’t otherwise afford or access it right now, especially children, they are not fixing the food system at a fundamental level, nor are they removing the long-term systemic barriers that help keep people in need of services. We believe regional food infrastructure has the capacity to help change the food system writ large, if attended to with that intention.

To leverage investments in food infrastructure to help build a more just and equitable food system, probably the most important factors are inclusive leadership and collaborative decision-making. Communities of color, be they tribes, tribal members, or represented by community-based organizations, must be not only be invited into projects at conception, but they must be invited in numbers significant enough to have meaningful voices at the table, and to share power over decision-making in such a way that the project is genuinely a collaborative effort. This will take time. If we want

our collaboration to be successful, dominant culture organizations including Ecotrust also have an obligation to do significant internal work to recognize the ways in which our approaches are not “universal”, but rather reflect specific attributes of white culture. And finally, given the historic and current systemic barriers facing communities of color, infrastructure projects should include a specific objective related to capacity-building among participating community-based organizations in order to be most helpful in the long-term.

With regard to next steps, given the wide variety of opportunities that exist to further develop the Puget Sound regional food system, individuals and organizations interested in food infrastructure development should clarify the specific geography, scale of operation, beneficiaries, and desired impacts that align with their mission or motivations. Such clarity will provide useful transparency and self-awareness when engaging directly with the communities who will ultimately co-create and benefit from the projects. As projects and partners are confirmed, the challenging and often slower-moving work of humble collaboration and trusting partnership development take center stage. It would be helpful to all food system actors from around the region if transparency were provided on projects, project partners, and sources of funds, which suggests that it may also be helpful to create a mechanism for or identify a coordinator who can help facilitate communication and co-development of different projects.

### **6.3 Mesh-Network of Local Food Infrastructure**

The most effective approach to addressing these varied needs may be a coordinated effort (perhaps loosely coordinated) to support a constellation of projects designed to ultimately flesh out a mesh network of scale-appropriate food infrastructure to connect small and midsized producers with local buyers across the region. As noted above, individual projects should be directly connected to and co-created with the partners who are meant to benefit, and should be well vetted for financial viability, with a clear sense of the capital costs, revenue models, buyers, and reliability of throughput (recognizing that addressing needs and opportunities is an iterative process and so business models will evolve). Projects may be filtered or prioritized based on their capacity to build on existing momentum, address specific community needs, and/or advance the emergence of a strong regional food system as a whole.

Because of the inherent regional nature of food production and distribution, ideally such a coordinating function wouldn't be tied to a specific county or discrete local geography. Urban and rural agriculture are both critically important in building regional food access and resilience, and both have an important role to play in stewarding natural resources and doing all we can in the Northwest to mitigate the effects of rising inequality and climate change. That said, there could be specific programs offered by particular jurisdictions (e.g. cities, counties, conservation districts, states) that could be knit together to serve the overarching vision of a robust regional food system, and creating or coordinating dedicated capacity to shepherd that vision could help take advantage of those opportunities and overcome the inevitable challenges.

The organizations that contributed to this report would also be valuable partners in such an effort. We encourage readers to comb back through section 5 to recognize what are in some cases very specific needs and opportunities as defined by community-based organizations operating in the Puget Sound region. These organizations were invited to contribute based on their commitment to supporting communities of color and others who have long-faced systemic barriers to food and land access, and are actively wrestling with the power structures inherent in our current food and agriculture systems. For help finding projects and organizations that align with specific funder missions and goals, we have created an index of objectives and key results sought by the contributing organizations that can be found in Appendix 7.4. We also recognize that there are a great many more community-based organizations worthy of support and partnership in the region, so we offer a directory of additional organizations doing food system and related work in Appendix 7.5, with apologies to the organizations we inevitably missed.

In addition to the needs and opportunities surfaced by these partners, two specific projects emerged during our exploration that seem worthy of additional research in the near-term, in addition to the many specific projects and opportunities identified by partners who contributed to this report.

## **6.4 Community-Led Food Aggregation in South King County**

As summarized in section 3.2.8, several of the community-based organizations serving constituents in South King County began collaborating in 2018 on their shared needs for small scale food infrastructure in order to support specific programming related to food access, urban agriculture, and community resilience. As described in the final project report, the partners agreed that a food aggregation and access facility, sized to serve their constituent farmers and those who aspire to launch urban commercial farm businesses, and located in close geographic proximity to their communities, is an important next step in achieving their individual and shared goals (Hennessy, Chumbley, & Titzer, 2018).

Participants agreed that such an aggregation facility would increase access to direct and wholesale market channels for beginning and small farmers, increase food access in the area generally (by increasing throughput and providing product flow via area farm stands, farmers' markets and food banks), and increase access to culturally relevant produce more specifically. In addition, the partners hope the facility could ultimately provide space for community members to learn about and engage directly in their local food and agriculture systems, whether via culinary education or community organizing (Hennessy, Chumbley, & Titzer, 2018, pg. 5).

The top priority for the aggregation facility is cold storage to serve small scale produce growers in South King County. Participants agreed that space should be designed for flexibility and expansion, and suggested that one or more

shipping containers located on a nearby farm (ideally one that also provides land access and incubator support), would provide an ideal initial solution. Over time, participants imagine adding a mixed use space that could include a licensed production and teaching kitchen, office or co-working space, backbone technology infrastructure, additional cold/frozen storage, services to support entrepreneurship and business incubation, culinary education, workforce development, and a platform for community outreach, engagement and organizing (Hennessey, Chumbley, Titzer, 2018, pg. 5-7).

As a starting point for a conversation about facility design and related investment, project facilitators sought high-level design and cost information for shipping containers, as follows (Hennessey, Chumbley, Titzer, 2018, pg. 7). In addition, we’ve noted additional information needed to flesh out the project scope.

Description	Rate	Total
40' Shipping Container (320 sqft)	\$20/sqft	\$6,400
40' Shipping Container with Refrigeration (320 sqft)	\$45/sqft	\$14,400
Finishing Costs – site placement, electrical, plumbing, furnishings	\$75 - \$100/sqft, based on finishes and amenities	\$24,000 - \$32,000
Collaborative development, start-up operations, and organizational capacity-building	Not specified	TBD
Farm and/or business incubation services, tools and equipment, value chain coordination, and market development	Not specified	TBD

*Report authors note that prototype design and costs were informed by conversations with Cargotecture in Seattle, WA and Dry Box Storage in Chehalis, WA. Both companies specialize in the use of shipping containers as primary construction material for a variety of facilities.*

Specific next steps in the project are as yet undefined, as the group seeks support for ongoing development and coordination. Pending support, project facilitators outlined the following recommendations (Hennessey, Chumbley, Titzer, 2018, pg. 9):

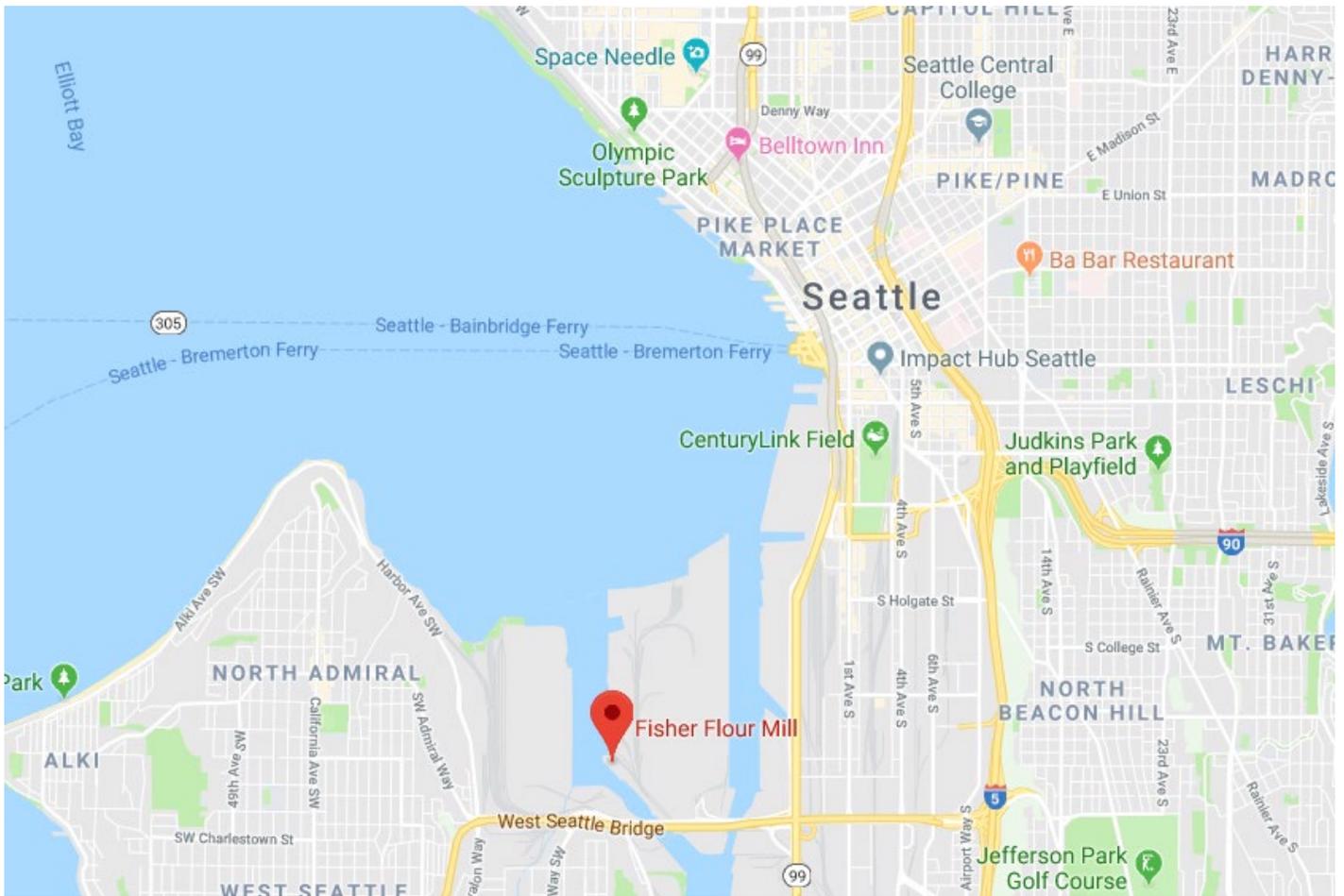
- Define the operating structure, including articulating roles and responsibilities, decision-making processes, conflict mediation steps, fundraising roles and allocations, sharing of risks and benefits;
- Develop communication procedures and documents for internal and external communications;
- Leverage monetary resources to move this vision forward;
- Further refine conceptual design to include architectural consultation and cost estimates.

Report authors did not designate a particular organization or contact for follow-up on this opportunity, but Seth Schromen-Wawrin from Public Health - Seattle & King County has been in regular contact with organizational partners and could likely help facilitate follow-up.

## **6.5 Urban Last Mile Logistics Hub**

Our initial work with LIFT, and related conversations with Michael Lufkin, King County's Local Food Economy Manager, suggest that the most relevant catalytic infrastructure to serve large scale food buyers, including institutions, may be a last-mile storage and logistics facility in Seattle. Such a facility would be designed to provide support for aggregators, such as Puget Sound Food Hub and Farmstand Local Foods, who are gathering product from multiple farmers on the urban periphery (including in Skagit, Snohomish, and King counties) for delivery to metro area institutions and other wholesale accounts. With access to cold, frozen and ambient temperature storage, the aggregators could hold larger quantities of product - including produce, proteins and value-added products - in the urban core, thus facilitating more frequent deliveries to clients and more efficient loads in from rural areas.

Relevant to this need, Michael Lufkin has explained that King County owns a piece of land and facility on Harbor Island in the SODO area of Seattle near the West Seattle Bridge, known as the former Fisher Flour Mill.



The facility is partially leased, but includes approximately 20,000 square feet of available ambient temperature space, as well as approximately 5,000+ square feet of cold/frozen storage, six dock-high loading doors, and a ground level roll-up door (see floorplan and front photo below).





While not without challenges, the site meets many of the needs described by local food aggregators and AOTM producers in the Puget Sound, and even attracted keen interest from small and mid-sized Alaska-based fishermen attempting to sell their small-boat, source-identified seafood (analogous to local produce or meat) into the Seattle market<sup>30</sup>. However inconvenient are components of the floor plan (the readily accessible space for new tenants is way in the back of the cavernous facility, and would need upgrades to offer licensed food processing), the vacant cold and frozen storage space in the urban core is in itself a precious gem that should not be overlooked. For this reason, we believe the potential project is well worthy of further exploration.

As we understand it, King County is currently seeking tenants to fill the space, but is potentially open to a broader discussion of the community benefits of converting and/or upgrading the facility to a local food aggregation hub to serve local food producers, aggregators, and food access programs,

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<sup>30</sup> The focus group with Alaskan fishermen took place at the live convening of Ecotrust's Ag of the Middle Accelerator in Portland Oregon in November 2018, and included six seafood operators who are also Accelerator participants.

and perhaps to also include processing and/or office capacity, as well as distribution, sales, and/or technical assistance services. Michael Lufkin from King County is interested in exploring the possibility further and is actively seeking engagement from other civic entities such as King Conservation District and City of Seattle, as well as multiple types of potential users of the space, including social purpose entities such as food banks, in addition to local food aggregators, and food entrepreneurs.

Next steps in the exploratory process as discussed with Michael Lufkin, pending partner engagement and funding support, include:

- Identifying regional food system infrastructure stakeholders interested in a multi-function food facility and clarifying their specific interest, ideal usage, and capacity to engage in ongoing development. (Note that to the extent that community-based organizations are engaged, funding may need to be provided to facilitate their participation.)
- Providing preliminary recommendations for development of a multi-function food facility or facilities that identify: (a) the functional content of the facility (e.g., commercial kitchen/s, cold storage, processing, etc.); (b) a conceptual facility model; (c) potential lines of businesses served by the facility and potential revenue streams; (d) list of key strategic partners; and (e) approaches for phasing the development of the facility.
- Pending a positive outcome from those recommendations, next steps would include working with key stakeholders to develop a business and financial feasibility plan, including clarification of the operating model and entity, for a multi-function facility that would provide the necessary roadmap and resource for entrepreneurs, social benefit users, community organizations, local jurisdictions, investors and other interested stakeholders, to advance the development of this infrastructure.
- And finally, if a viable business and feasibility plan were to be rendered, a capital/fundraising effort would need to be undertaken to support facility upgrades, initial operating capital, and perhaps tenant support for social purpose users.

In closing, we at Ecotrust are committed to the cultivation of equitable, restorative, prosperous and resilient regional food systems in the Pacific Northwest, and look forward to continued opportunities to engage in and partner on many of the ideas and opportunities included in this exploration in the months and years to come.



# Appendices

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## 7.2 Full List of Primary Research Interviewees

### Organizations and People Interviewed, July-September 2018

(CBO=community-based organization; LIFT=Local Institutional Food Team; RD=Registered Dietitian)

Category	Organization / Business	Person(s) Interviewed	Interview Date	Interview Area of Emphasis
CBO	Living Well Kent (LWK) Location: Kent, WA About: LWK is a community-driven collaborative dedicated to the vision of public spaces and initiatives that encourage healthier lifestyles and better living. It is focused on creating a healthier, more equitable and more sustainable city.	Riham Xashi	7/24/18	Farm to institution Farm to school
CBO	FareStart Location: Seattle, WA About: FareStart has been helping people transform their lives through food for over 25 years - one person, one job and one community at a time. Their mission is providing real solutions to poverty, homelessness and hunger	Matt Gurney	7/31/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
CBO	Food Lifeline Location: Seattle, WA About: Food Lifeline rescues millions of pounds of food from farmers, manufacturers, grocery stores, restaurants and retailers that would otherwise go to waste and with the help of volunteers, sort, repack and distributes food to food banks, shelters and meal programs throughout Western WA.	Linda Nageotte	8/3/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
CBO	FEEST Seattle Location: Seattle, WA About: FEEST empowers low income youth and youth of color in White Center and Delridge to become leaders for healthy food access, food justice and health equity. Their mission is to set the table for young people to transform the health and equity of their community by gathering around food & working towards systems change.	Becca Meredith	8/1/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school
CBO	World Relief Seattle (WRS) Location: Kent, WA About: WRS envisions every local refugee and vulnerable immigrant welcomed by community, rooted in community, and empowered for community. Their work is informed by the belief that every refugee and vulnerable immigrant has an important place in our community.	Tahmina Martelly	7/23/18	Food infrastructure
CBO	International Refugee Committee (IRC) Location: SeaTac, WA About: IRC helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and regain controls of their future.	Tyler George-Minetti	8/7/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school
CBO	Food Innovation Network (FIN) Location: SeaTac, WA About: FIN's mission is to enhance the local food system, increase access to healthy food, create pathways for success, and support resource and idea-sharing that engages the diverse communities of SeaTac/Tukwila and South King County.	Kara Martin	7/24/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school
CBO	South King County Food Coalition (SKCFC) Location: Des Moines, WA About: For more than 20 years, SKCFC has devoted its energy to passionately advocating for the hungry in our local communities by ensuring effective emergency food assistance for families in need in South King County.	Barb Houston-Shimizu	7/23/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school

Category	Organization / Business	Person(s) Interviewed	Interview Date	Interview Area of Emphasis
CBO	<p>Healthy King County Coalition                      Location: Seattle, WA                      About: The Healthy King County Coalition is a group of King County organizations united to create health equity. They support access to healthy eating, smoke and drug-free environments, and safe places to be active.</p>	Jennifer Hey & Anna Kitchin	8/20/18	<p>Food infrastructure                      Farm to school</p>
CBO	<p>Sno-Valley Tilth                      Location: Carnation, WA                      About: For nearly 15 years Sno-Valley Tilth has served a key networking role among local farmers and they act as a bridge between the valley's farmers, the local community, and the surrounding metropolitan areas.</p>	Libby Reed	8/17/18	<p>Food infrastructure                      Farm to institution                      Farm to school</p>
PRODUCER	<p>Puget Sound Food Hub (PSFH)                      Location: Mt. Vernon, WA                      About: The PSFH is a robust farmer-owned cooperative operating in the Puget Sound region to market, aggregate and distribute locally produced food from farms to restaurants, hospitals, preschools, grocery stores, universities and more.</p>	David Bauermeister	8/3/18	<p>Food infrastructure                      Farm to institution                      Farm to school</p>
PRODUCER	<p>21 Acres                      Location: Woodinville, WA                      About: 21 Acres is a center for sustainable agriculture education and collective action. Their purpose is to promote the benefits of local food systems within the context of climate challenges.</p>	Robin Crowder	8/21/18	<p>Food infrastructure                      Farm to institution                      Farm to school</p>
PRODUCER	<p>Snoqualmie Valley Farmers Cooperative                      Location: Carnation, WA                      About: The Sno-Valley Farmers Coop is a nonprofit organization comprised of more than 25 small, local farms working together to bring people fresh produce. The member farms initiated and built the co-op so that they could spend less time on logistics and more time growing food. In exchange, people get more diversity while supporting the whole local foodshed, not just one farm.</p>	Morgan Brewer	8/9/18	<p>Food infrastructure                      Farm to institution                      Farm to school</p>
PRODUCER	<p>Oxbow Farm &amp; Conservation Center                      Location: Carnation, WA                      About: Oxbow inspires people to eat healthy, sustainably grown food and to steward our natural resources for future generations. Oxbow connects people to the land, to their food, and to the work they do through a member program, workshops, tours, school programs, special events, and an organic farmstand.</p>	Lisa Jaguzny & Kevin Haggerty	8/8/18	<p>Food infrastructure                      Farm to institution                      Farm to school</p>
PRODUCER	<p>Full Circle Farms                      Location: Carnation, WA                      About: Full Circle started as an organic farm in 1996 on just five acres near North Bend, Washington. They've been passionate about growing and sourcing delicious produce free of herbicides and pesticides and promoting sustainable farming that preserves our soil and environment ever since.</p>	Andrew Stout	8/21/18	<p>Food infrastructure                      Farm to institution                      Farm to school</p>
PRODUCER	<p>Local Roots Farm                      Location: Duvall, WA                      About: Wife and husband team Siri and Jason, along with a small crew of workers and apprentices, grow about fifteen acres of vegetables, which they sell at the honor-system on-farm stand, through their CSA subscription program, and to many fine restaurants.</p>	Siri Erikson-Brown & Jason Salvo	8/8/18	<p>Food infrastructure                      Farm to institution                      Farm to school</p>

Category	Organization / Business	Person(s) Interviewed	Interview Date	Interview Area of Emphasis
PRODUCER	Jubilee Farm Location: Carnation, WA About: Jubilee has been a family-run farm since 1989. Jubilee's produce is available through its CSA subscription program, in which members of the public support the farm by committing to purchase shares of its produce for a season.	David Haakenson	8/8/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
PRODUCER	Ralph's Greenhouse Location: Mt. Vernon, WA About: A certified organic, wholesale producer	Tim Terpstra & Ray de Vries	8/2/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
PRODUCER	Farmstand Local Foods (FLF) Location: Woodinville, WA About: FLF links urban commercial customers to the diverse range of ingredients found throughout Seattle's fertile valleys through the use of a modern, convenient ordering and delivery system. FLF's mission is to help establish an economically and environmentally sustainable food system by facilitating and maintaining connections between producers and consumers to demonstrate the value and importance of viable local farms.	Austin Becker	8/10/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
PRODUCER	Viva Farms Location: Mt. Vernon, WA About: The Viva Farms Incubator started in 2009. They sublease to new farmers and help them launch and grow their businesses.	Michael Frazier	8/3/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
PRODUCER	Boldly Grown Farm Location: Mt. Vernon, WA About: Boldly Grown Farm's primary focus is wholesale quantities of storage crops for sale over the fall and winter. They also grow cut flowers for retail markets and events. They are certified organic and are currently farming at Viva Farms.	Amy Frye	8/3/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
PRODUCER	Shared Soil Location: Enumclaw, WA About: Shared Soil addresses issues of land access by renting farmland to multiple farmers at a time	Lily Gottlieb-McHale	8/20/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
PRODUCER	Pike Place Market Location: Seattle, WA About: Pike Place Market is a vibrant neighborhood comprised of hundreds of farmers, craftspeople, small businesses and residents.	Leigh Newman-Bell	8/1/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
PRODUCER	Carnation Farms Location: Carnation, WA About: Carnation Farms is a nonprofit organization on a mission to transform the way that people want to eat. They celebrate delicious and nutritious food produced in a sustainable manner by providing inspirational and educational experiences that positively affect the health, the environment, and local economies.	Rosy Smit	8/9/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution Farm to school
BUYER	Tukwila School District Location: Tukwila, WA About: Tukwila School District consists of five schools. Their mission is "is create a learning community that supports and empowers students, staff and families to reach their greatest potential."	Craig Huckins (previous Director)	7/18/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school
BUYER	Seattle Public Schools Location: WA About: Seattle Public Schools consists of 109 schools. Their mission is "Committed to ensuring equitable access, closing the opportunity gaps and excellence in education for every student."	Lindsey Danner (RD) & Charlotte Marrison (Assistant Director)	7/25/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school

Category	Organization / Business	Person(s) Interviewed	Interview Date	Interview Area of Emphasis
BUYER	Kent School District Location: Kent, WA About: Kent School District consists of 44 schools. Their mission is “Successfully preparing all students for their futures.”	Tom Ogg (retired Director) / Teresa Fields (Director) & Alison Landry (RD)	10/29 & 11/2/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school
BUYER	Auburn School District Location: Auburn, WA About: Auburn School District consists of 23 schools. Their mission statement is “in a culture of equity and excellence we engage, educate, and empower each student for success beyond graduation.”	Carol Barker (Director) & Jan Campbell-Aikens (RD)	6/28/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school
BUYER	Renton School District Location: Renton, WA About: Renton School District consists of 28 schools. Their mission is “Committed to ensuring equitable access, closing the opportunity gaps and excellence in education for every student.”	Heather Mann (Director)	10/11/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school
BUYER	Federal Way Public Schools Location: Federal Way, WA About: Federal Way Public Schools consist of 46 schools. Their mission is “In an environment of high expectations, high support, and no excuses, the staff of Federal Way Public Schools will continually lead, utilize data, and collaborate to ensure our scholars have a voice, a dream, and a bright future.”	Alisha Peretti (Director) / Lauren Hoffman (RD) & Brenda Roning (Central kitchen supervisor)	6/25 & 6/27/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school
BUYER	Highline Public Schools Location: Burien, Des Moines, and SeaTac, WA About: Highline Public Schools consist of 34 schools. Their promise is “Every student in Highline Public Schools is known by name, strength, and need, and graduates ready for college, career, and citizenship.”	Lisa Johnson (Director) / Kris Marsh (RD)	6/25 & 6/27/18	Food infrastructure Farm to school
BUYER	Seattle Pickle Co. Location: Seattle, WA About: From the sweet briny-saltiness of the Pacific Ocean in the Puget Sound, to the fertile land that supports the many farms in the surrounding region, Seattle Pickle Co. is “combining & brining” the freshest ingredients to create that unique taste you can only find in the Pacific Northwest.	Chris Coburn	7/20/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution
BUYER	University of Washington (UW) Housing & Food Services (HFS) Location: Seattle, WA About: UW’s HFS are there to foster holistic learning. Everything they do is about creating opportunities for students to grow in all aspects of their lives.	Torin Munro	8/20/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution
BUYER	SanMar Location: Issaquah, WA About: SanMar is all about activewear and accessories that unite people and build up teams, groups and communities.	GJ Claus	8/29/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution
BUYER	Google Location: Kirkland, WA About: Google’s mission is to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.	Leon Pellicer	8/1/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution

Category	Organization / Business	Person(s) Interviewed	Interview Date	Interview Area of Emphasis
PARTNER	Bellevue School District Location: Bellevue, WA About: Bellevue School District’s mission is to “To serve each and every student academically, socially, and emotionally, through a rigorous and relevant education that is innovative and individualized. As a learning community that values one another’s humanity, we provide courageous support for an equitable and exceptional education for all students.”	Shoko Kumagai (formerly with WSDA)	8/2/18	Farm to institution Farm to school
PARTNER	Independent Contractor Location: Seattle, WA About: Facilitator of School District Nutrition Services Learning Network, among other grand-funded projects	Katie Busby	8/14/18	Farm to school
PARTNER	UW Department of Health Services Location: Seattle, WA About: UW is one of the world’s preeminent public universities. Their Department of Health Services prepares future health practitioners, managers, and researchers to conduct the unfinished work of improving the well-being of communities in the United States and throughout the world.	Mary Podrabsky	8/6/18	Farm to school
PARTNER	Bellevue School District	Wendy Weyer	10/29/18	Farm to school
PARTNER	Oregon Department of Education Location: Salem, OR About: The Oregon Department of Education fosters equity and excellence for every learner through collaboration with educators, partners and communities.	Rick Sherman	8/31/18	Farm to school
LIFT	King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks Location: Seattle, WA About: King County DNR works in support of sustainable and livable communities and a clean and healthy natural environment. Their mission is to foster environmental stewardship and strengthen communities by providing regional parks, protecting the region’s water, air, land and natural habitats, and reducing, safely disposing of and creating resources from wastewater and solid waste.	Michael Lufkin	6/29/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution
LIFT	Public Health - Seattle & King County (PHSKC) Location: Seattle, WA About: PHSKC works to protect and improve the health and well-being of all people in King County as measured by increasing the number of healthy years that people live and eliminating health disparities.	Elizabeth Kimball & Seth Schromen-Wawrin	7/3/18	Farm to institution Farm to school
LIFT	City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment Location: Seattle, WA About: The Office of Sustainability & Environment develops and implements citywide environmental policies and programs that propel our city toward a sustainable, equitable, and carbon neutral future.	Sharon Lerman	7/23/18	Farm to institution
LIFT	King Conservation District (KCD) Location: Renton, WA About: KCD is a natural resources assistance agency authorized by Washington State and guided by the Washington State Conservation Commission. Their mission is to promote the sustainable use of natural resources through responsible stewardship.	Bea Covington, Deirdre Grace & Mary Embleton	6/28/18	Food infrastructure Farm to institution

Category	Organization / Business	Person(s) Interviewed	Interview Date	Interview Area of Emphasis
LIFT	<p>Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA)                      Location: Olympia, WA                      About: WSDA has been serving the state’s agriculture community and the public for more than 100 years. Through service, regulation, and advocacy, WSDA supports the viability and vitality of agriculture while protecting consumers, public health, and the environment.</p>	Chris Iberle & Laura Raymond	7/3/18	<p>Farm to institution</p> <p>Farm to school</p>
LIFT	<p>Healthcare Without Harm                      Location: Pacific Northwest                      About: Health Care Without Harm seeks to transform health care worldwide so that it reduces its environmental footprint, becomes a community anchor for sustainability and a leader in the global movement for environmental health and justice.</p>	Jenna Newbrey	7/13/18	Farm to institution
OTHER	<p>Highline College                      Location: Des Moines, WA                      About: Highline College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Their Urban Agriculture/Food Security Program provides students with practical hands-on learning that the agricultural industry demands, while giving special attention to the ecological and social justice aspects of the discipline.</p>	Alice Madsen & Bobby Butler	7/23/18	<p>Food infrastructure</p> <p>Farm to institution</p>
OTHER	<p>Puyallup Watershed Initiative (PWI)                      Location: Tacoma, WA                      About: The PWI includes 1,000 square miles, 316,000+ people, 2 Tribal nations, 17 cities and towns, pristine forests, rich agricultural lands and one of the busiest ports on the West Coast. As the region continues to grow, it must address the consequences that come with widespread development such as polluted stormwater, the loss of farmlands, forests and recreation areas, and greater social and economic inequities.</p>	Jennifer Chang	8/17/18	<p>Food infrastructure</p> <p>Farm to institution</p> <p>Farm to school</p>
OTHER	<p>Skagit Valley Food Co-op                      Location: Mt. Vernon, WA                      About: They’re a cooperatively owned retail store dedicated to bringing natural, wholesome, organic, and local foods to our community at fair prices.</p>	Nicole Vander Meulen	8/2/18	<p>Food infrastructure</p> <p>Farm to institution</p>

## 7.3 Primary Research Interview Scripts

### 7.3.1 Interview Script for Community-Based Organizations

#### Introduction

[Share short overview of who we are, the project(s) we're doing, and why we're doing these interviews. No right/wrong answers - just looking to get to know you and understand your org's work.]

1. What is your organization's overarching mission or mandate? Feel free to answer on two levels if you are in a department or business unit of a larger organization. We'd love to understand both.
2. What is your geographic jurisdiction?
3. Who are your constituents? Please describe their culture or character, as well as any important demographic features.

#### Food Systems

4. We're going to talk about food and food systems, and I'd like to start by understanding your beneficiaries' interests or needs as it relates to food. (Probe for constituent needs related to health, access/justice, economic development, or land/environment issues; also probe for urgency/priority relative to other needs.)
5. Given your constituent's needs, how does your organization work on food systems, if at all? Please tell me about any specific food or farm programming that you offer.
6. Do you currently, or have you ever, done any farm to school or institutional food procurement work?
  - a. **If yes**, please elaborate (probe about working with schools specifically)
  - b. **If no**, are you interested in this work? Why or why not?
7. Are there gaps in local food system infrastructure that keep you from meeting your objectives?
  - a. **If yes**, what are they?
  - b. **If no**, what existing infrastructure do you rely on most heavily?
8. What do you see as the biggest untapped opportunity in rebuilding local food systems in the Puget Sound area? If you had all the money in the world to do anything, what would you do, or who would you partner with, and why?

9. Is there anything else we should know?

**End:** Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with me. If you have any further questions or can think of any additional information, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or anyone in our Food & Farms Team (Katy or Yolimar) either by email or phone.

### 7.3.2 Interview Script for Producers

1. Can you tell me about your farm operation?
  - a. *If necessary, probe for:*
    - What do you grow?
    - What are your growing practices?
    - Do you have your own storage and packing facilities?
    - Who are your customers
2. What market outlets do you use?
3. How does your product get to each of your market outlets?
  - a. *If necessary, probe for:*
    - What do you need to do (packing, weighing, washing) to get your product ready for market?
    - Do you go through any intermediaries (brokers, distributors, packers)?
4. Approximately what percentage of your volume goes to each of your market outlets?
5. Approximately what percent of your sales dollars comes from each of your market outlets?
6. Do you currently, or have you ever, sold to schools or other institutional food buyers?
  - a. *If necessary, probe for institutions beyond schools*
    - Hospitals
    - Corporate campuses
    - Colleges/universities
7. When (year) did you begin selling your product to schools or other institutions?
8. What motivated you to begin selling your product to schools or other institutions?
9. What motivates you to continue selling your product to schools or other institutions?
10. What have been your experiences working with school or other institutions food service?

- a. *If necessary, probe for:*
  - What have been some of the benefits, if any?
  - What have been some of the problems or challenges, if any?
- 11. What has been the downside of working with institutional food service?
- 12. What changes, if any, have you had to make in order to accommodate schools or other institutions?
  - a. *If necessary, probe for:*
    - Have you had to make changes to in terms of your production, marketing, or distribution routines?
- 13. Suppose I was a buyer that approached you about buying your product. How would you decide whether you would be willing to work with me?
  - a. *If necessary, probe for:*
    - How important is your consideration of price?
    - How important is your consideration of the quantity that you could or would deliver?
- 14. Are there gaps in local food system infrastructure that keep you from meeting your objectives?
  - a. **If yes**, what are they?
  - b. **If no**, what existing infrastructure do you rely on most heavily?
- 15. Is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know about your experiences in working with school or other institutions food service?

**End:** Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with me. If you have any further questions or think of any additional information that would be helpful for this project, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or anyone in our Food & Farms Team (Katy or Yolimar) either by email or phone.

### 7.3.3 Interview Script for School Districts

*Developed and used by Caity Robinson, UW MPH/Nutrition Student & Dietetic Intern*

Questions determined in conjunction with PHSKC and Ecotrust. Questions meet the standards applied by the National Farm to School Network's training template to guide child nutrition professionals through the process of conducting a self-assessment to gauge their school/district's readiness to start or expand farm to school practices, and/or by National Farm to School Network's Farm to School Evaluation Toolkit and Food Service Director Interview Guide, and/or by the Washington State Department of Agriculture's questionnaire guide to support the assessment of school nutrition programs to identify opportunities and challenges for increasing the use of seasonal, fresh, Washington-grown foods in meals and snack programs.

**Intro:** Review what the project is for, why we've gathered and how information will be used.

Good morning/afternoon \_\_\_\_\_. This is Caity Robinson. Is this still a good time to talk?

*(If "no," try to schedule another time, if "yes," keep reading)*

Thank you for your time today. As discussed in my initial e-mail, I'm a UW graduate student working with Public Health - Seattle & King County. I am excited to get your insights on some topics of interest to Public Health - Seattle & King County as they strategize ways to support schools in efforts to procure local foods and increase participation in school meals. For the purposes of this interview, when we talk about local foods we are focusing on "whole" unprocessed foods like produce, meat, seafood, poultry, dairy, grain, nuts, etc. This interview will take about (insert approx. time here).

My roles are to develop a narrative history of the work that school districts in South King County have implemented or are currently implementing to increase local food purchases and increase meal participation; assess challenges and opportunities from the school district perspective in these two areas; and provide recommendations to PHSKC that can be used to support your efforts. At the culmination of this project, I would be happy to provide you with a summary of the findings and recommendations. Do you have any questions before we begin? Is it ok if I record this interview?

The first set of questions are designed to provide us with an overview of your foodservice operations.

### **Introduction**

Q1: How long have you worked in the district and what general job duties are included in your role in the Nutrition Services department?

### **General Procurement**

Q2: What is the foodservice model of your district? What degree of food preparation takes place at the different levels, including school level?

Q3: Who are your main food suppliers – what items generally do you procure from each?

Q4: Can you describe your food delivery system from the time food is received at the district level, to the time it is delivered to the schools?

The next set of questions focuses more specifically on your past and/or present purchases of local foods. Again, we are defining them as "whole" foods like produce, meat, seafood, poultry, dairy, grain, nuts, etc.

## Local Food Procurement and Utilization

Q5: Do you currently have a procurement policy beyond federal meal guidelines and competitive food rules that guides your choices about where and how to procure foods?

If no, what does guide your procurement?

*(Probes: what is the ultimate concern? Is it cost? Palatability/likeability with students? Etc.)*

If yes, does this policy include local foods?

If no, Are you aware of any conversations in your district and/or wellness committee to consider including local food procurement in your district procurement or wellness policy?

OR *(For districts with a known local food purchasing policy)*

How is this incorporated into your purchasing decisions?

Q6: When considering purchases of “local” foods, how do you define “local?”

*Probes: within 50-400 miles, Washington State, Pacific Northwest Region (NCal to Alaska, WA to Montana)*

Q7: Are you currently purchasing (or have you purchased in the past) any locally grown/produced foods either through a vendor or directly from farmers? Who are you purchasing from and what foods are you buying?

Can you estimate your total food purchases spent on local foods?

Q8: How did you decide which local foods to target for purchase?

Q9: How do the vendors indicate local items?

Q10: Do you or have you previously worked with any community partners or nonprofit organizations on farm to school or local food purchasing?

*(what would an example of this be? I think you should provide some because they might not know exactly what you are asking).*

Q11: Have you communicated the fact that you are purchasing local foods to students, parents and other stakeholders? If so, what mechanisms do you use?

Q12: What, if any, benefits to you see to your program in purchasing local foods?

Q13: What successes, benefits and/or positive feedback have you experienced when purchasing and serving local foods? (Probes: Any feedback from district leadership? Nutrition services staff? School staff? Students? Parents?)

What is your method of receiving feedback?

Q14: What challenges has your district experienced in *purchasing* local foods? How have you overcome these challenges, or do they continue to exist?  
(Probes: *bid process, GAP/liability insurance, finding farmers, distributor selection...*)

What challenges have you experienced in *utilizing* local foods in your district? How have you overcome these challenges, or do they continue to exist?  
(Probes: *processing challenges, equipment limitations, staffing, storage, logistical challenges*)

*Addtl Probes: Do you have adequate dry storage space?*

*Do you have adequate refrigerator and freezer space to accommodate the purchase of unprocessed food items?*

*Do you have adequate staff with the ability and skillset to accommodate the processing of unprocessed food items?*

Q15: What resources have been particularly helpful in purchasing and serving local foods?

(Probes: *tools, trainings, manuals, websites, organizations*)

Q16: What opportunities do you see for purchasing and serving more local foods in your district?

(Probes: *county-level assistance that could be helpful such as connecting and communicating with local farmers, central processing, trainings for staff, cost of equipment, etc.*)

(*If processing, where in chain? Farmer -> sell to processor -> sell to FSA -> provided/distributed to schools*)

Q17: What generally is your food cost per meal for both breakfast and lunch? How much of that is typically apportioned to the main entrée and other components?

(Probes: *does this cost contribute to the challenges you mentioned in purchasing/processing local foods? Storage, refrigeration, staff?*)

Q18: Are there any last comments on this topic that you'd like to share? Anything that I didn't ask about that you think I missed?

I'd also like to interview three other staff in your district to hear about successes and challenges at different levels of the district. Would you be able to put me in touch with your registered dietitian (or whoever does the menu planning), procurement manager, and one kitchen lead? – Would there be a best time to reach each of these individuals over the next couple months?

**End:** Thank you so much for your participation in this project. This was really interesting and I appreciate all your thoughts. Again, you'll be able to get the final report including a summary of the findings and recommendations sometime this fall. If you have any further questions or can think of any

additional information, please don't hesitate to reach out to me either by e-mail or phone.

### 7.3.4 Interview Script for Other Buyers

#### Introduction

1. How long have you worked with \_\_\_\_\_ and what general job duties are included in your role in the Food Services department?

#### General Procurement

2. What is the foodservice model of your institution? Do you have multiple sites that you manage?
  - a. *(Probes: central kitchen; satellite kitchens, contract. Do you have a central kitchen, or is there cooking in satellites – and what are the capabilities of each kitchen (full, limited, or minimal capabilities?)*
  - b. **Follow up question, if multiple sites:** What degree of food preparation takes place at the different sites?
3. Who are your main food suppliers – what items generally do you procure from each?
4. Can you describe your food delivery system from the time food is received at the institution, to the time it is delivered to the dining area? *(note: be sure to capture any differences that occur depending on food type. For example – Auburn has all produce delivered directly to individual schools by supplier; some may have milk directly delivered by provider, etc Probe if needed: are there differences with different food types?)*
5. What generally is your food cost per meal? How much of that is typically apportioned to the main entrée and other components?

The next set of questions focuses more specifically on your past and/or present purchases of local foods. We are defining local foods as “whole” foods like produce, meat, seafood, poultry, dairy, grain, nuts, etc.

#### Local Food Procurement and Use

6. Are you currently purchasing (or have you purchased in the past) any locally grown/ produced foods either through a vendor or directly from farmers?
  - a. **If so**, who are you purchasing from (or who did you purchased from) and what foods are you (where you) buying?
  - b. **Follow up question:** Can you estimate your total food purchases spent on local foods?

7. When considering purchases of “local” foods, how do you define “local?”  
*(Probes: within 50-400 miles, Washington State, Pacific Northwest Region (Northern California to Alaska, WA to Montana))*
8. Do you currently have a procurement policy that guide your choices about where and how to procure foods?
- a. **If no**, what does guide your procurement?  
*(Probes: what is the ultimate concern? Is it cost? Palatability/likeability with diners? Etc.)*
- b. **If yes**, does this policy include local foods?
- **If no**, are you aware of any conversations in your institution to consider including local food procurement in your menu planning?
  - **If yes**, how is this incorporated into your purchasing decisions?
9. How did you decide which local foods to target for purchase?
10. **If buying local food through a vendor**, how do the vendors indicate local items?
11. What benefits, if any, do you see in your program when purchasing local foods?
12. What successes, benefits and/or positive feedback have you experienced when purchasing and serving local foods?
- a. *(Probes: Any feedback from institution leadership? Nutrition services staff? Customers/stakeholders?)*
- b. **Follow up question:** What is your method of receiving feedback?
13. What challenges has your institution experienced in *purchasing* local foods? How have you overcome these challenges, or do they continue to exist?
- a. *(Probes: bid process, GAP/liability insurance, finding farmers, distributor selection...)*
- b. **Follow up questions:**
- What challenges have you experienced in utilizing local foods in your institution?
  - How have you overcome these challenges, or do they continue to exist?
- (Probes: processing challenges, equipment limitations, staffing, storage, logistical challenges)*
- Additional Probes:*
- *Do you have adequate dry storage space?*

- Do you have adequate refrigerator and freezer space to accommodate the purchase of unprocessed food items?
- Do you have adequate staff with the ability and skill set to accommodate the processing of unprocessed food items?

14. What resources have been particularly helpful in purchasing and serving local foods?

*(Probes: tools, trainings, manuals, websites, organizations)*

15. Do you or have you previously worked with any community partners or nonprofit organizations on farm to institution or local food purchasing?

a. **If yes**, please elaborate.

16. What opportunities do you see for purchasing and serving more local foods in your institution?

*(Probes: county-level assistance that could be helpful such as connecting and communicating with local farmers, central processing, trainings for staff, cost of equipment, etc.)*

*(If processing, where in chain? Farmer -> sell to processor -> sell to FSA -> provided/distributed to schools)*

Now I'm going to ask you some questions more generally about meal participation.

### **Participation Rates**

17. Do you track meal participation rates?

a. **If yes:**

- How so?
- How have your meal participation levels trended over the past three years?

18. What have been your greatest successes in working to increase your institution's meal participation rates?

*(Probes: menu changes, marketing, behavioral economics/smarter cafeterias, direct certification, CEP, BAB...)*

a. **Follow up questions:**

- Are you still doing these?
- **If no**, why not?

19. What have been your greatest challenges to maintaining or increasing institutional meal participation and how have you tried to address these challenges?

*(Probes: funding, equipment capacity, staff capacity, diner palates)*

### Broader Awareness

20. Is your institution administration aware of challenges and successes within the food services department?
  - a. **Follow up question:** Do you have a board member or institution administration member who has been a particular champion for the Food Services department?
21. Have you communicated the fact that you are purchasing local foods to your diners/customers/stakeholders? If so, what mechanisms do you use?

### Closing

22. Are there any last comments on this topic that you'd like to share? Anything that I didn't ask about that you think I missed?

**End:** Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with me. If you have any further questions or think of any additional information that would be helpful for this project, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or anyone in our Food & Farms Team (Katy or Yolimar) either by email or phone.

## 7.3.5 Interview Script for "Other" Groups

### Introduction

1. What is your organization's overarching mission or mandate? Feel free to answer on two levels if you are in a department or business unit of a larger organization. We'd love to understand both.
2. What is your geographic jurisdiction?
3. Who do you think of as your constituents? Please describe their culture or character, as well as any important demographic features.

### Food Systems

4. We're going to talk about food and food systems, and I'd like to start by understanding your beneficiaries' interests or needs as it relates to food. What are the primary challenges that your business exists to solve? Please tell me about the specific programming that you offer.
5. Do you currently, or have you ever, done any farm to school, institutional food procurement, or other collaborative purchasing/supply-chain facilitation work?
  - a. **If yes,** please elaborate
  - b. **If no,** are you interested in this work? Why or why not?

6. Are there gaps in local food system infrastructure that keep you from meeting your objectives?
  - a. **If yes**, what are they?
  - b. **If no**, what existing infrastructure do you rely on most heavily?
  
7. What do you see as the biggest untapped opportunity in rebuilding local food systems in the Puget Sound area? If you had all the money in the world to do anything, what would you do, or who would you partner with, and why?
  
8. Is there anything else we should know?

### 7.4 Index of Objectives & Key Results Contributed by Community Based Organizations

The following are key objectives and desired results culled by Ecotrust from contributions by the community-based organizations shared in section 5. We highly recommend reading that section in its entirety to understand the complexity and nuance of the work as described by the authors in their own words; this index is meant to simply support wayfinding to specific objectives or bodies of work.

**Objective:  
Improve access to local and/or nutrient-dense, culturally appropriate food (aka food sovereignty, food justice, resilience)**

Organizations	Desired Result
<b>Feed Seven Generations</b>	Tribal communities achieve food sovereignty
<b>FEEST</b>	Students are empowered to advocate for culturally relevant and nutritious meals in their schools, and increase their participation in school meal programs as result
<b>FIN (Food Innovation Network)</b>	Community access to fresh, local and culturally appropriate foods is increased by creating direct market channel sales opportunities, and access to land for food production
<b>Highline College</b>	A food pantry is opened on campus; students are trained to work in and/or provide broad support (via farming, policymaking, advocacy, nonprofit programming, urban design, or related fields) for urban agriculture and resilient community food systems
<b>Living Well Kent</b>	Food access for Kent residents facing systemic barriers is increased within holistic and integrated approaches to health and well-being

<b>South King County Food Coalition</b>	Systemic support for food banks is recognized and supported as a necessary and ongoing safety net for South King County residents experiencing hunger, especially given an acute rise in need thanks to widening wealth inequality and aging demographics
<b>World Relief Seattle</b>	A robust network of community gardens creates access to organically-raised produce and community development, plus small farmer onboarding and training to support economic independence

**Objective:  
Restore the Coast Salish Foodways of Muckleshoot people**

Organization	Desired Result
<b>Feed Seven Generations</b>	Food sovereignty is achieved for tribal communities  Nutrition, traditional food access, and the overall health of tribal communities is improved  Camas bulb root gardens within King and Pierce counties are mapped and recaptured, and camas production is revitalized  A wild foods cooperative is established (“Salish Harvest Wild Foods Cooperative Program”)

**Objective:  
Creating food justice in school meal programs and building leadership for lasting change**

Organization	Desired Result
<b>South King County high school students, supported by FEEST</b>	Culturally relevant items are added to core school food menus (vegetarian dishes, Halal meat, etc. instead of pizza, chicken nuggets, burgers)  Kitchen staff ensures and students are informed that there is no pork contamination  Scratch kitchens are built to replace heat and serve facilities  Salad bars are added or improved  Student participation rates in meal programs increase, especially for salad bars  Investments are made in capacity-building and training within Nutrition Services Depts at public schools  School food pantries are established/expanded

**Objective:**  
**Build equity and food justice by sharing power to transform the system with people of color, primarily in South King County.**

Organization	Desired Result
FEEST	<p>Funding and leadership development opportunities are created for community based organizations led by and for people of color (to implement a Good Food Purchasing Policy in King County)</p> <p>Investment is made in capacity-building for leaders of color</p>

**Objective:**  
**Improve the financial stability of underserved SeaTac/Tukwila residents, primarily low-income and immigrants and refugees, by supporting local food entrepreneurship.**

Organization	Desired Result
Food Innovation Network (FIN), a program of Global to Local	<p>Tukwila Village Food Hall is fully funded and completed, providing commissary kitchen space and alternative market channels for budding food entrepreneurs seeking catering and farmers' market sales</p> <p>FIN Incubator Program is sustained to provide vital business management, food safety and regulatory training to aspiring entrepreneurs</p> <p>One-on-one technical assistance is further refined and tailored to entrepreneur needs</p> <p>Creative solutions to land access for small scale farming have been created</p>

**Objective:**  
**Land and infrastructure supports graduates of the Highline College Urban Agriculture certificate program (68% people of color) becoming viable farmers and food entrepreneurs in South King County**

Organization	Desired Result
Highline College	<p>Creative solutions to land access for small scale farming have been created</p> <p>Financially and geographically accessible cold storage exists</p> <p>Commissary kitchen space, business management training, and physical food hubs support agriculture and value-added product development</p> <p>Staff capacity and local policies exist to successfully support all of the above</p>

**Objective:  
 Create financial viability and independence for Kent residents, primarily low-income and immigrants and refugees, via farming and local food (farmers’ markets, farm stands and local sales to institutions)**

Organization	Desired Result
<p><b>Living Well Kent</b></p>	<p>Creative solutions to land access for small scale farming have been created</p> <p>Investments have been made in shared farm tools and implements</p> <p>Financially and geographically accessible aggregation exists</p> <p>Commissary kitchen space and business management training exists</p> <p>Value chain coordination supports local farmers making market connections with local food buyers</p> <p>Language and cultural agility training supports successful entrepreneurship</p>

**Objective:  
 Provide fresh, nutrient-dense, local food to food bank clients in South King County, particularly in the face of the “silver tsunami” (rapid demographic growth of low-income seniors)**

Organization	Desired Result
<p><b>South King County Food Coalition and Elk Run Farm</b></p>	<p>Financially and geographically accessible cold storage exists to support Elk Run Farm and other nearby producers</p> <p>Geographically accessible aggregation facility facilitates larger and more efficient perishable donations, while also connecting producers and local buyers</p> <p>Quality of food provided via food banks is healthier (lower sodium, etc.) and more locally-sourced</p> <p>Operating efficiency is improved via updated systems (i.e. software/IT, organizational capacity, support for participating in networks)</p>

**Objective:  
 Improve food security, access, and education of refugees living in food deserts by offering community garden spaces to grow culturally appropriate foods and offer culinary education**

Organization	Desired Result
World Relief Seattle	Land near public transit is made available for community gardens  Water access and infrastructure supports garden cultivation  Adequate training and services are offered in language and cultural agility, cultivation, food safety, food preservation and value-added production, etc.

**Objective:  
 Create financial viability and independence for South King County residents, primarily low-income and immigrants and refugees, via farming and local food**

Organization	Desired Result
World Relief Seattle	Creative solutions to land access for small scale commercial farming have been created  Investments have been made in shared farm tools and implements  Financially and geographically accessible cold storage exists  Commissary kitchen space and business management training supports value-added product development  Value chain coordination supports local farmers making market connections with local food buyers  Language and cultural agility training supports successful entrepreneurship

## 7.5 Directory of Community Based Organizations Engaged in Food/Ag

This table provides an overview of organizations and possible partners referred to Ecotrust as potential stakeholders in food infrastructure research. We include this table as a starting point for additional research or project development in the future.

Organization	Location	Target Audience(s)	Food-related work	Website
<b>Beacon Food Forest Permaculture Project</b>	Beacon Hill	General	The goal of the Beacon Food Forest is to design, plant and grow an edible urban forest garden that inspires our community to gather together, grow our own food and rehabilitate our local ecosystem.	<a href="http://beaconfoodforest.org">beaconfoodforest.org</a>
<b>Beecher's Foundation</b>	Seattle	General	Sound Food Uprising conference; youth and adult direct education to inspire people to eat real food and vote with every food dollar	<a href="https://beechersfoundation.org/about/">https://beechersfoundation.org/about/</a>
<b>Community Alliance for Global Justice</b>	Seattle	Minorities; marginalized communities	Through community education, political action, anti-oppressive organizing and community-building, the Food Justice Project seeks to challenge and transform the globalized, industrial, corporate-driven food system and promote existing alternatives.	<a href="https://cagj.org/">https://cagj.org/</a>
<b>Community to Community Development</b>	Bellingham	Latinx	Work on Farmworker Rights, Transforming the Food System and Agroecology	<a href="http://www.foodjustice.org/">http://www.foodjustice.org/</a>
<b>El Centro de la Raza</b>	Seattle	Latinx	Latin cooking classes	<a href="http://www.elcentrodelaraza.org/">http://www.elcentrodelaraza.org/</a>
<b>Emergency Food Network</b>	Lakewood	Low income	Emergency Food Network (EFN) is "to provide Pierce County with a consistent, diverse and nutritious food supply so that no person goes hungry."	<a href="http://www.efoodnet.org/">http://www.efoodnet.org/</a>
<b>Ethnic Business Coalition</b>	Seattle	Immigrant and minority-owned small businesses	A key marketing initiative by the EBC is the website, <a href="http://ethnicseattle.com">ethnicseattle.com</a> . The website is EBC's digital platform dedicated to raising the visibility, profile, and distinctiveness of the ethnic retail, services, and restaurants through fresh, original, and engaging content	<a href="https://ethnicbusinesscoalition.org/">https://ethnicbusinesscoalition.org/</a>
<b>Familias Unidas por la Justicia</b>	Burlington	Latinx	FUJ is an independent farmworker union of indigenous families located in Burlington, WA representing over 500 Triqui, Mixteco, and Spanish speaking workers at Sakuma Bros. Berry Farm. FUJ formed on July 11th, 2013 with the hopes of securing a better future for hand harvesters in the local berry fields of Whatcom and Skagit County.	<a href="http://familiasunidasjusticia.org/en/about/who-we-are/">http://familiasunidasjusticia.org/en/about/who-we-are/</a>

Organization	Location	Target Audience(s)	Food-related work	Website
<b>Farmer Frog</b>	Everett	Schools & Rural Communities	F2S work, neighborhood gardens, farmers markets, teacher trainings, more	<a href="http://farmerfrog.org/">http://farmerfrog.org/</a>
<b>Feed Seven Generations (FEED)</b>	Enumclaw	Tribes	FEED fosters economic opportunities for Tribal food producers, educates Tribal communities in health traditions and modern scientific findings, empowers Tribal communities to strengthen their voice and presence in broader food movements, and develops Tribal communities through policy frameworks that create meaningful community change and measurable outcomes.	<a href="http://www.feedsevendgenerations.org">www.feedsevendgenerations.org</a>
<b>FEEST</b>	Seattle	Youth; multicultural	FEEST is building a youth-led movement for healthy schools. Focusing on the need for healthier, more culturally relevant food in school, we support the leadership of youth in South Seattle and South King County to transform the culture and policies that directly impact their lives. Our work challenges the root causes of food injustice by placing those most impacted at the forefront of change.	<a href="https://feestseattle.org/">https://feestseattle.org/</a>
<b>Food Innovation Network</b>	SeaTac		FIN's mission is to enhance the local food system, increase access to healthy food, create pathways for success, and support resource and idea-sharing that engages the diverse communities of SeaTac/Tukwila and South King County.	<a href="https://foodinnovationnetwork.org/">https://foodinnovationnetwork.org/</a>
<b>Global Social Business Partners</b>	Bellevue	Youth; farmers; minorities	GSBP was founded in 2010 to incubate food system hubs and to foster youth entrepreneurship to address hunger, poverty and other social justice issues. Since 2010, in partnership with Farmer Frog, GSBP is incubating local food and entrepreneurship hubs as The Bellevue Urban Gardens/Farm and working to expand globally in the future. GSBP is also launching its Youth Rising Summit for Social Business Innovation as a movement to engage youth to solve social justice issues as they contribute to the UN SDGs.	
<b>Global to Local</b>	SeaTac	Global to Local has established trust with Somali, Latino, and Eritrean/Ethiopian communities	Nutrition and healthier lifestyles work. Global to Local has a Built Environment group working on food access injustices, amongst many other inequities. Through leadership development training in the community (creating leaders that will effect change, take action, mobilize their communities).	<a href="https://www.globaltolocal.org/">https://www.globaltolocal.org/</a>

Organization	Location	Target Audience(s)	Food-related work	Website
<b>Got Green</b>	Seattle	POC	Food Access Team working on lifting community voices; work on food injustices.	<a href="http://gotgreenseattle.org/">http://gotgreenseattle.org/</a>
<b>GRuB</b>	Olympia	General	GRuB (Garden-Raised Bounty) is a nonprofit organization working to inspire positive personal and community change by bringing people together around food and agriculture. We work at the intersection of food, education, and health systems to grow healthy food, people, and communities.	<a href="https://www.goodgrub.org/">https://www.goodgrub.org/</a>
<b>Highline College</b>	Des Moines	POC; multicultural; youth	The Urban Agriculture/Food Security Program provides students with practical hands-on learning that the agricultural industry demands, while giving special attention to the ecological and social justice aspects of the discipline. At its core, the program focuses on organic and sustainable agriculture systems as a way of introducing students to premium markets, the importance of land stewardship, and to demonstrate techniques that can be used to adapt to a changing climate.	<a href="https://urbanag.highline.edu/">https://urbanag.highline.edu/</a>
<b>Hilltop Urban Gardens</b>	Tacoma	Local community impacted by inequities	Community gardens; food justice; food security	<a href="http://www.hilltopurbangardens.com/">http://www.hilltopurbangardens.com/</a>
<b>Kamayan Farm</b>	Snoqualmie Valley	General	We seek to support our land and our communities to be healthy, diverse, and resilient through participatory workshops and by creating food and plant medicine that tells a story.	<a href="http://www.kamayanfarm.com/about/">http://www.kamayanfarm.com/about/</a>
<b>Latino Educational Training Institute</b>	Lynnwood	Latinx	LETI does nutrition and well-being / healthy lifestyle classes for Latinx women; does a youth leadership development training and hosts Mexican culture workshops	<a href="http://letiya.org/programs.html">http://letiya.org/programs.html</a>
<b>Living Well Kent</b>	Kent	Immigrants; POC	One of LWK's goals is to create a community where all residents have a widespread access to healthy and affordable food for all residents. In partnership with NW Harvest, they a greenhouse and farm project to make land accessible for immigrant farmers. They also offer a farmer's market where their farmers sell their product. Additionally, LWK has been working with the Kent School District to procure healthier and culturally relevant foods from local farmers	<a href="http://livingwellkent.org/">http://livingwellkent.org/</a>

Organization	Location	Target Audience(s)	Food-related work	Website
<b>Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project</b>		Native Americans	Promote a return to traditional foods and food practices. Harvest and berry festivals, cultural-sovereignty classes, salmon-filleting demonstrations, sheep- and elk-processing presentations, and workshops that teach traditional food preparations are some of the many initiatives that result from the food sovereignty project.	<a href="https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pnw-history-culture/muckleshoot.cshml">https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pnw-history-culture/muckleshoot.cshml</a>
<b>Nisqually Community Garden</b>	Dupont	Nisqually Tribe members and nearby by community	We grow and distribute food, medicinal plants, and body care products to Tribal members and community members. We also coordinate classes and workshops so that people can build skills in growing, harvesting, and preparing their own foods and medicines.	<a href="http://www.nisqually-nsn.gov/index.php/administration/tribal-services/community-services/community-garden-program/about-contact/">http://www.nisqually-nsn.gov/index.php/administration/tribal-services/community-services/community-garden-program/about-contact/</a>
<b>NW Indian College</b>	Bellingham	Native Americans	Has done traditional cooking demos (2016), like hosting Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project.	<a href="http://www.nwic.edu/">http://www.nwic.edu/</a>
<b>Percussion Farms</b>	Seattle	POC	Mission: Percussion Farms works to undo racism and other oppressions that prevent access to nutrition and healthy spaces for People of Color.	<a href="https://percussionfarms.org/about/">https://percussionfarms.org/about/</a>
<b>Puyallup Watershed Initiative</b>	Puyallup	General	Their Agriculture Community of Interest (Ag COI) works with a broad group of partners to promote the preservation of farmland, the consumption of local agricultural products, and the viability of agriculture in Pierce County.	<a href="https://www.pwi.org/">https://www.pwi.org/</a>
<b>Seattle Indian Center</b>	Seattle	Native Americans	Food deliveries and food bank	<a href="http://seattleindian.org/">http://seattleindian.org/</a>
<b>Seattle Indian Health Board</b>	Seattle	Native American	We provide community health care and services targeting the urban American Indian and Alaska Native population in the greater Seattle/ King County area.	<a href="http://www.sihb.org/">http://www.sihb.org/</a>
<b>Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland</b>	Mount Vernon	General	Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland exists to ensure the economic viability of Skagit County agriculture and its required infrastructure through farmland protection, advocacy, research, education, and public awareness.	<a href="http://www.skagitonians.org/">http://www.skagitonians.org/</a>
<b>Slow Food Seattle</b>	Seattle	General	Offer educational events and activities to promote sustainability and biodiversity and connect farmers, cooks, educators, students and everyone else who cares about their food and the environment.	<a href="https://slowfoodseattle.wordpress.com/about/">https://slowfoodseattle.wordpress.com/about/</a>

Organization	Location	Target Audience(s)	Food-related work	Website
<b>Solid Ground</b>	Seattle	Minorities; marginalized communities	Solid Ground's food programs work with school children, families and community groups alike to help people access better nutrition, grow and cook their own food on a budget, and lead healthier lives.	<a href="https://www.solid-ground.org/our-impact/hunger-nutrition/">https://www.solid-ground.org/our-impact/hunger-nutrition/</a>
<b>South King County Food Coalition</b>	Des Moines	Low income; homeless	Food bank with twelve member pantries. Elk Run Farm grows for the food banks' pantries.	<a href="http://www.skfc.org/">http://www.skfc.org/</a>
<b>Sunfield Farms</b>	Port Hadlock	General	Sunfield is a pioneering nonprofit organization with a broad community-building mission. Inspired by the ideas of the early twentieth-century philosopher and scientist Rudolf Steiner, Sunfield offers a Waldorf school and educational programs in sustainable land stewardship that take place on our eighty-one acres of fields, forest, and wetlands.	<a href="http://sunfieldfarm.org/about/">http://sunfieldfarm.org/about/</a>
<b>Sustainable Connections</b>	Bellingham	General	Support local farmers, connect food buyers to local farms and artisans, and encourage our community to always Eat Local First!	<a href="https://sustainableconnections.org/">https://sustainableconnections.org/</a>
<b>World Relief Seattle</b>	Kent	Refugees and immigrants	WRS's Paradise Parking Plots Community Garden is a public space that exists to empower refugees, immigrants, and the local community to improve food access, build community, and foster economic independence. The garden is also a practice of environmental stewardship through the incorporation of a repaved parking lot, rain gardens, and water catchment into the design.	<a href="https://worldreliefseattle.org/">https://worldreliefseattle.org/</a>

