Growing the Local Food Supply Chain:
NC Farm to Senior Services

Lindsey Carver, Robyn Stout, and County Team Partners
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CFSA Conference
Panelist Introductions

Name, County, Title, Role on Team
Session Objectives

- Understand the goals and approach of F2SS
- Understand the successes and challenges of F2SS
- Hear from on-the-ground partners engaging in F2SS
- Brief evaluation of the session
Why Farm to Institution?

- Consistent and profitable market potential for farmers
- Expands markets for local food intermediaries
- Improves healthy food options for consumers
- Greater resiliency for communities
What is Senior Food Services?

For our program, senior food services are county-funded senior centers that provide services and food for older adults (60+, varies). Food is provided in multiple ways, such as:

- Hot congregate meals at senior center
- Prepared hot or frozen meals (pickup or home delivery), like Meals on Wheels
- Fresh produce and/or protein boxes (pickup or home delivery)
Our Approach

- Place-based, multi-stakeholder approach
- Systemic local food procurement challenges unique to communities
- Builds on working relationships across sectors for ongoing collaboration
WHAT DOES THE F2SS MODEL INCLUDE?
PROPOSED F2SS IMPACTS

INCREASE:
- LOCAL FOOD PURCHASES
- FARMER & FOOD HUB REVENUE
- HEALTHY, LOCAL FOOD ACCESS FOR SENIORS

KNOWLEDGE GAINED ON ACCESS TO LOCAL FOOD & NEW MARKETS

3 NEW PROCUREMENT POLICIES CREATED

STRENGTHENED LOCAL NETWORKS
F2SS PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Project Management Team (PMT)

County Teams

Funding provided by:

United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
2020-2023
EQUITY FOCUS

With Support from CEFS Committee on Racial Equity (CORE)

1. Intentional work in rural communities
2. Providing access to (free) racial equity trainings in an effort to incorporate anti-racism practices into F2SS
3. Opportunities for storytelling
4. Intentional research around racial equity and senior services
5. Program staff participation in Committee on Racial Equity Working Group

In the first grant year, 12 of the 32 farmers that food hubs purchased from for F2SS were farmers of color
F2SS
SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES
GRANT YEAR ONE SUCCESSES

17
Local county team partners in three counties

32
Farmers producing food for new markets

370
Seniors receiving fresh, local food

3
Supply chain interns
SUCCESES

● Building community-based team
● Local Food Pathway models
● Networking for senior centers, farmers, food hubs, and Extension, and interns across counties
● Training on benefits of and cooking local foods with older adults
CHALLENGES

- Limited local food funds for Senior Services - how to sustain food boxes past COVID-related emergency food dollars?
- Collecting local food procurement data from senior centers - vary in structure; future: grant dollars to support capacity
- Measuring impact tools - impact in older adult population; appropriate data collection methods; more storytelling
- Food council role - difficult to move policy adoption without this team member; future: grant dollars to support capacity
- COVID closed congregate meal sites
More Info: go.ncsu.edu/f2ss

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What type of products did senior services in your county purchase, and what are you focusing on for the future?
EXAMPLES OF PRODUCTS PURCHASED

**Scotland**
- Peppers
- Tomatoes
- Zucchini
- Blueberries
- Sweet potatoes
- Corn

**Warren**
- Potatoes
- Greens
- Sweet potatoes
- Onions
- Pork
- Chicken

**McDowell**
- Carrots
- Beets
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Blueberries
- Lettuce
- Eggs
- Stew beef
- Ground beef
How did you build a relationship with senior services?
What roles have interns played in your county?
SUPPLY CHAIN INTERNSHIP

Interns:
- Have built capacity for food hubs
- Have supported local food pathways between local farmers and senior food services
- Have increased knowledge for consumers on food access and farmers on new markets

This Year’s Benefits for F2SS
- Hands-on experiences packing and nutrition education in the Sandhills
- Research that highlights farm to institution initiatives
- Establishing regular communication between Foothills Food Hub and McDowell County Senior Center
- Connection with seniors through conversation and storytelling
- Future food systems leaders
How are challenges or benefits different for farmers for this market versus other institutional markets?
Why Farm to Senior Services (F2SS)?

- **More flexibility** in contracts, seasonality, and supply chain logistics (GAP often not required)
- **More accessible** markets and require year-round volumes that match small and mid-scale farms
- Senior food services connected to local government offices *motivated to support community*
- Increases availability of local foods and supports aging-at-home for *vulnerable senior populations*
What is the role of Extension in institutional procurement?
Extension Agents support partners such as:

- Farmers
- Food Hubs
- Senior Services
- Food Council
What policies will enable more local purchasing?
EVALUATION