

VCE Community, Local, and Regional Food Systems (CLRFS): Update and Next Steps



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Introduction

A community-focused food system must be cultivated and nurtured by local leadership encompassing strong community ties that are inclusive of a diversity of voices and ideas. This approach involves the establishment of collaborations and partnerships to create more resilient, vibrant, and equitable food systems and economies.

Dr. Ed Jones, VCE Director, formed a temporary steering committee for a Community, Local, and Regional Food Systems (CLRFS) team in Nov. 2015 with a charge to:

- Identify current VCE programs and program activities related to CLRFS, and
- Develop a workable and inclusive organizational structure for supporting these efforts across the Commonwealth.

Building Capacity and a Shared Understanding for CLRFS



A word created from the evaluation comments on the “strengths” of the CLRFS Forum.

VCE Model for Community Local, Regional Food Systems



Our model is the result of a vast literature review and an interactive mapping exercise conducted at the CLRFS Forum to emphasize a values-based approach to developing CLRFS opportunities for food systems change in the region.

Zing Visioning Exercise

A 2-day Zing Training session was co-sponsored by VCE and the Virginia Food Systems Council in May 2017. Nearly 50 members of a many food systems programs across Virginia gathered to create a vision of Virginia’s Food System in 2027.

Watch for our final draft!

Next Steps

Forum and listening session participants along with our Zing Training experience have provided input for a plan of action for our next steps for 2017-18.

- Finalize/publish our 2027 Virginia’s Food System Vision
- Develop a database of persons interested in CLRFS
- Develop and promote additional marketing tools and resources for CLRFS efforts
- Develop a workable online format for sharing CLRFS information
- Develop and distribute assessment tools for local program evaluation that can contribute to the development of a collective impact statement for CLRFS statewide.
- Develop an agent’s CLRFS facilitation toolkit
- Vet and implement a VCE CLRFS organizational structure

Follow our progress:

VCE CLRFS Topic Page:
<http://www.ext.vt.edu/topics/food-health/nutrition-wellness/clarfs/>
 VCE CLRFS Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/VACLRFSLRFS/>
 VCE CLRFS Blog:
<http://blogs.ext.vt.edu/clr-food-systems/>



Photo by Theresa Nartea

Purpose of the Steering Committee

Develop an action plan based on the collective impact framework to identify, enhance and promote community, local, and regional food systems resources, information, and partnerships to VCE specialists, agents, and community partners supporting “systems-level farm to table” work.



Activities/Outputs



2016 CLRFS Forum

March 29, 2016 - Carillon in Byrd Park, Richmond to facilitate dialogue and a shared understanding of the innovative approaches and collaborations that comprise food systems work in Virginia. With input of participants, we have:

- Revised the VCE CLRFS model
- Compiled and distributed a CLRFS Forum Report with revised model
- Conducted local listening sessions to learn more about local efforts
- Developed web/blog marketing tools
- Begun development of a database of persons, projects and resources

“The forum fostered an atmosphere of collaboration, communication, and effective dialogue that enabled participants to see first-hand the idea of collective impact.”
 ~Forum participant

Local Listening Sessions

In response to strong demand from Forum participants for more opportunities for agents to tell their local stories, we conducted nine local listening sessions (72 participants), which were audio recorded, transcribed, and collaboratively analyzed. Our initial analysis reveals five key recommendations to guide future VCE CLRFS work:

- Establish VCE support of CLRFS as a statewide collaboration with regional working groups; possibly from a “center”
- Establish an online sharing network or repository of CLRFS resources
- Improve flexibility of VCE appointments to allow engagement in cross-sector work
- Enable multiple entry points for VCE and community stakeholders to engage in CLRFS work
- Establish a culture of evaluation in order to steer CLRFS work

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