

# Community Food Systems Pilot Workshops Evaluation

## Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

### Farm, Food and Enterprise Development

The Food Systems Team within the Farm, Food and Enterprise Development Program of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach conducted seven Local Food Leader (LFL) and ten Community Food Systems (CFS) workshops in 2018-2019. This project was funded through an Agriculture Marketing Center subcontract with additional support from community partners for meals and meeting space. These workshops included a total of 183 participants in LFL, and 158 participants in CFS.

## Food Systems Team

The Food Systems Team offers many programs assisting communities in their place-based food system development. This includes farm to school programming, one-on-one technical assistance, and the Community Food Systems Program, which assists in the design and development of local and regional food systems through research, certifications, and a facilitated community process.

## Certifications

Each certification includes an in-person workshop followed by online modules for full certification. After completing the certification, participants have the option to attend a train-the-trainer workshop, which qualifies them to host workshops on their own.

### Local Food Leader

The Local Food Leader certification is an individual skill development program for beginning local food practitioners and local food supporters. Local Food Leader teaches several foundational competencies critical to successful involvement in community food systems development. The goal of the certification is to increase capacity for local food practitioners working on food systems programs around the United States. This certification consists of a one-day workshop followed by four online modules.

### Community Food Systems

The Community Food Systems certification is intended for intermediate levels of food system practitioners. It is a process-based certification that increases capacity for food system practitioners to work within community and develop food systems. This certification involves visioning techniques, research and community food systems assessments, and strategic development of projects. Participants will gain new skill sets for decision-making, facilitation, and team-building techniques, and will learn to bring projects from visioning to implementation for reaching systems-based goals. This certification consists of a two-day workshop followed by seven online modules.

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*Planning, Consulting & Design*

# Community Food Systems

This report details the impact, successes, and challenges of the Community Food Systems (CFS) workshops hosted nationally for community food systems capacity development.

## ***Learning objectives***

- Understand community food systems and how they relate to larger community and economic development goals.
- Engage and empower community partners to work collectively toward a community food system.
- Discern the different sectors of the food system and their impact on community.
- Utilize Collective Impact and Strategic Doing methods.
- Develop coalitions working toward collective community goals.
- Strategically partner with organizations for creative collaborations.
- Execute community processes including facilitation, project management, partnership, and building successful teams.
- Develop community food systems assessments through mapping, interviews, and public input sessions.
- Identify primary and secondary data sources for community food systems assessment and priority projects.
- Utilize community food system assessments to determine priority projects.
- Understand evaluation methods for determining collective community projects.
- Acknowledge the importance of design in community food systems and where it fits within project development.
- Provide partners with tools and resources for various food systems sectors: production, processing, distribution, consumption, and resource management (grants, best practices, research, etc.)
- Apply concepts and skills learned to develop a place-based Community Food Systems Program in your own university or organization.
- Create evaluation methods to understand whether projects developed are successful.

## ***Evolution of Workshops***

At the beginning of certification development, partner organizations, or hosts, were identified to offer each workshop and publicize locally. Workshops were offered first in person and participation in online modules was optional based on desire to receive full certification. Hosts supported by providing space for the workshop, confirming the location and agenda for in-person workshops, and providing place-based materials and presentations if desired.

Reflections and observations were shared between teachers after each workshop to improve program content. Initially, a pre-then-post evaluation was conducted; however, due to a low response rate for the pre-evaluation, this transitioned to a post-then-pre evaluation for participants to record both knowledge levels at the same time.

The pilot provided an opportunity to confirm the most effective schedule and agendas for workshops; appropriate design of accessible documents (printed slide decks, page numbers, and section tabs);

appropriate fees for program sustainability; needed levels of certification including train-the-trainer; online module content; and program materials, such as partnership agreements with hosts.

The CFS workshops evolved in multiple ways throughout the pilot. Initially the workshop structure was based on content and themes. The second pilot workshops adjusted to follow the chronological process of the multi-phased program. The original workshops also did not include section learning objectives, only course learning objectives. After evolving to the chronological simulation process, learning objectives for each section were developed to share what was being taught. Similarly, sections were added to Pilot 2 such as “Project brainstorm” to include additional simulations of the actual process conducted in community so participants could experience the facilitation methods. Additional changes included adding more group activities and additional binder materials for use throughout the workshop.

**Evaluation**

The following report includes analysis of quantitative and qualitative results collected through paper surveys completed by participants anonymously on the day of the workshop. This report is organized by Pilot 1 and Pilot 2. The survey consisted of sections on usefulness and statements of agreement. The quantitative results were collected by rank of one to five, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These results are displayed as the aggregated total, representing the total number of respondents that selected a five (strongly agree) or a four (agree) for either the individual state or the combined average of all state results. The quantitative data was analyzed using Qualtrics and Microsoft Excel. The qualitative results were collected through open-ended questions and analyzed using NVivo. Common themes were identified based on responses to the following questions:

- What was the most helpful component of the workshop?
- What is one thing you will change in your work after participating in the workshop?

. Findings shared in this report represent the most-discussed themes.

The Food Systems Team hosted ten CFS workshops in 2018-2019 with a total of 158 participants and a 78% response rate for evaluations.

**Table 1: Participant counts by state.**

States in chronological order	# of participants	
	Pilot 1	Pilot 2
North Carolina	11	
Kentucky	22	
Texas	20	
Georgia (SRMEC) <sup>1</sup>	8	
Alaska		18
Nebraska		21
Colorado		11
Iowa		15
Pennsylvania		24
US Virgin Islands		8

<sup>1</sup> Southern Risk Management Education Center hosted LFL workshop in Georgia.

# Community Food Systems Workshop: Pilot 1 Findings

## Usefulness

The Pilot 1 workshops consisted of eight sections. We did not develop specific learning objectives for each section in the first pilot.

- Community Food Systems (CFS) Framework
- Collective Strategies
- Creative Methods
- Assessment, Mapping, and Reports
- Priority Projects
- Project Management
- Dynamic Teams
- Design Thinking



**Figure 1: Pilot 1, overall usefulness.**

**Table 2: Pilot 1, usefulness by state.**

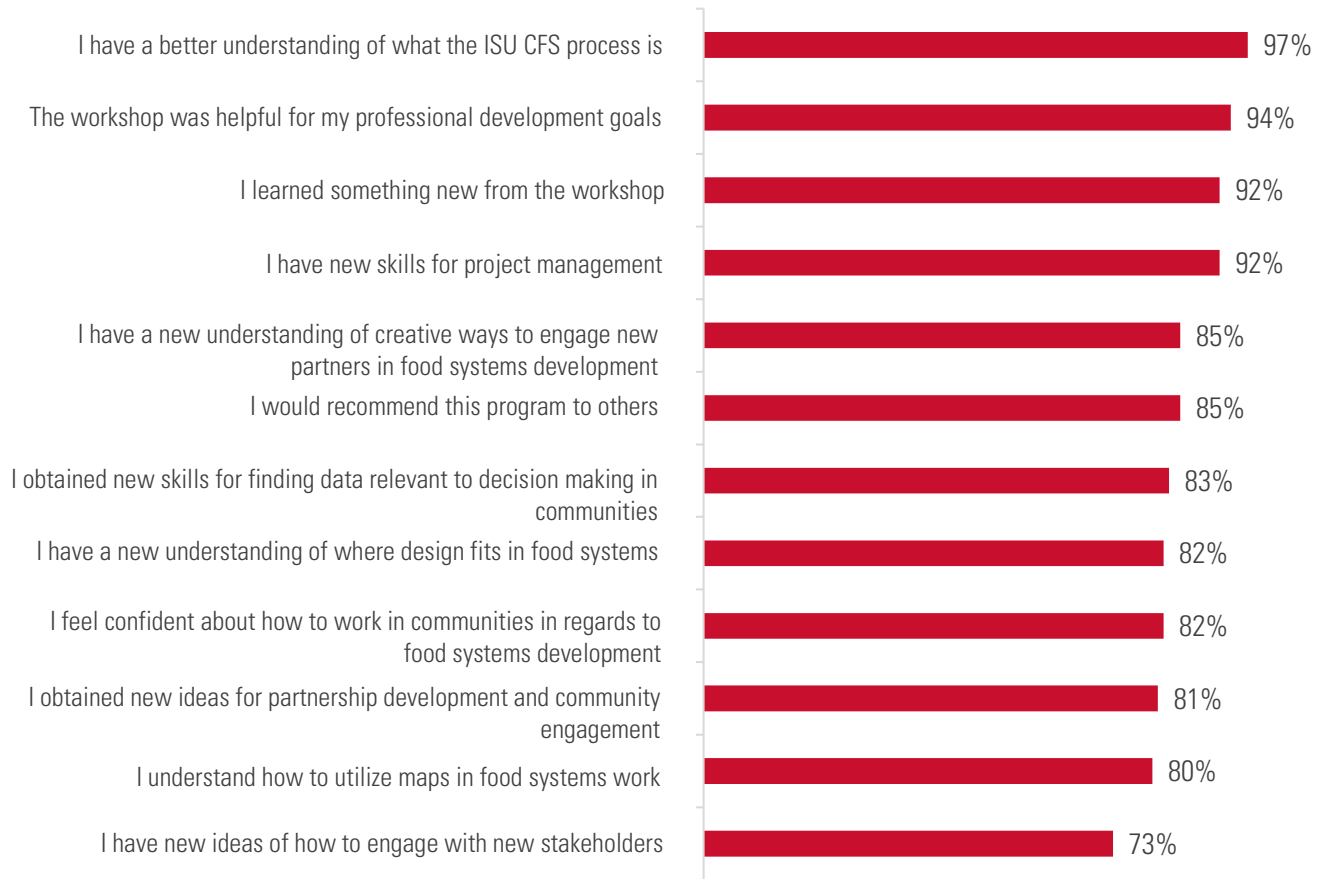
	<b>Total %</b>
<b>North Carolina</b>	
Creative Methods	100%
Priority Projects	100%
CFS Framework	83%
<b>Kentucky</b>	
Dynamic Teams	100%
Priority Projects	96%
Project Management	95%
<b>Texas</b>	
Priority Projects	100%
Evaluation	100%
CFS Framework	88%
<b>Georgia</b>	
CFS Framework	86%
Creative Methods	86%
Project Management	86%

The CFS workshop teaches a place-based process for increasing food systems capacity within communities, including teaching skills and methods from project development and visioning, implementation and decision-making tools. The above results signify that participants valued project development and management components of the workshop. Priority projects teaches practices for identifying priority project areas within communities and skills for facilitating those processes. Priority projects was rated the highest by participants for overall usefulness and also appears in three of the four individual state results. Similarly, project management was also rated highly in the overall usefulness findings and appeared in two of the four states with relatively high percentages (95% in Kentucky; 86% in Georgia). It's interesting to note that while project management is rated as the overall second most-useful section, CFS framework appears more frequently in the individual state results, with three of the four states.

Networking is a critical component of food systems work and is an underlying factor for successful projects. Many participants shared in the open-ended sections of the survey that the workshop fostered a healthy environment for connecting with others, both on a personal level and an organizational and community level. One participant shared that being able to "learn from others in the field" was a good experience and allowed for "in-depth discussions" relative to food systems topics.

Other common themes that emerged included insights on project prioritization, such as the process teaching ways to prioritize projects that could have further applications in food systems work, including developing "dynamic teams" and "creative teamwork projects."

## Statements of Agreement



**Figure 2: Pilot 1, overall statements of agreement.**

**Table 3: Pilot 1, statements of agreement by state.**

	<b>Total %</b>
<b>North Carolina</b>	
I have a better understanding of what the ISU CFS process is	100%
I feel confident about how to work with communities in regard to food systems development	100%
I learned something new from the workshop	83%
<b>Kentucky</b>	
I learned something new from the workshop	100%
The workshop was helpful for my professional development goals	100%
I have new skills for project management	95%
<b>Texas</b>	
I have a better understanding of what the ISU CFS process is	100%
I have a new understanding of where design fits in food systems work	100%
The workshop was helpful for my professional development goals	90%
<b>Georgia</b>	
I have a better understanding of what the ISU CFS process is	100%
I have a new understanding of creative ways to engage new partners in food systems development	86%
The workshop was helpful for my professional development goals	86%

Participants mainly discussed their plans to incorporate mapping and design tools and skills in their work; specifically utilizing analysis skills and generating maps to further inform food systems projects. Design thinking, which includes mapping, is a key component of the CFS workshop; however, while this theme emerged as one of the more commonly discussed topics, both design thinking and mapping were rated the lowest by participants for overall usefulness. These results indicate that while participants rated design thinking and assessments, mapping, and reports relatively low in comparison to the other workshop sections, these skills were still beneficial and have realistic applications in food systems work.

Participants also felt strongly that content related to food systems, evaluation, and community engagement will benefit their work. Many participants discussed how they hope to utilize the CFS framework for “food systems development and engagement,” and to incorporate the CFS framework into their work at an organizational level, e.g., “communicate how our agency could use this framework.”

Evaluation was another common topic, specifically referring to methods of incorporating the various evaluation tools into their work. Some examples of this included “prioritizing” the development of an evaluation logic model for projects and programs and integrating “evaluation methods with coalitions” and working groups, which included being intentional about who is involved in the process or “at the table”.



# Community Food Systems: Pilot 2 Findings

## Usefulness

The Pilot 2 Community Food Systems workshops consisted of 11 sections with specific learning objectives:

**CFS Framework:** understanding the certification process; new knowledge of the process; understanding of the menu of services and application.

**Quarter 1 (Q1) Vision:** team will determine location and coalition area; new understanding of facilitation methods for goal setting; new understanding of facilitation methods for assets and gaps.

**Engagement:** new understanding of the facilitator role in quarter 1 of the process; improved knowledge for individual engagement in communities.

**Quarter 2 (Q2) Research:** new understanding of the facilitator role in quarter 2 of the process; understand the difference between mission, vision, and core value statements; ability to facilitate vision, mission, and core value discussion.

**Secondary Data:** new understanding of the importance of mapping; understand how to gather data and where data exists; learn new interactive platforms for identifying food businesses.

**Quarter 3 (Q3) Compilation:** new ability to facilitate dialogue and confirmation of vision, mission, and values.

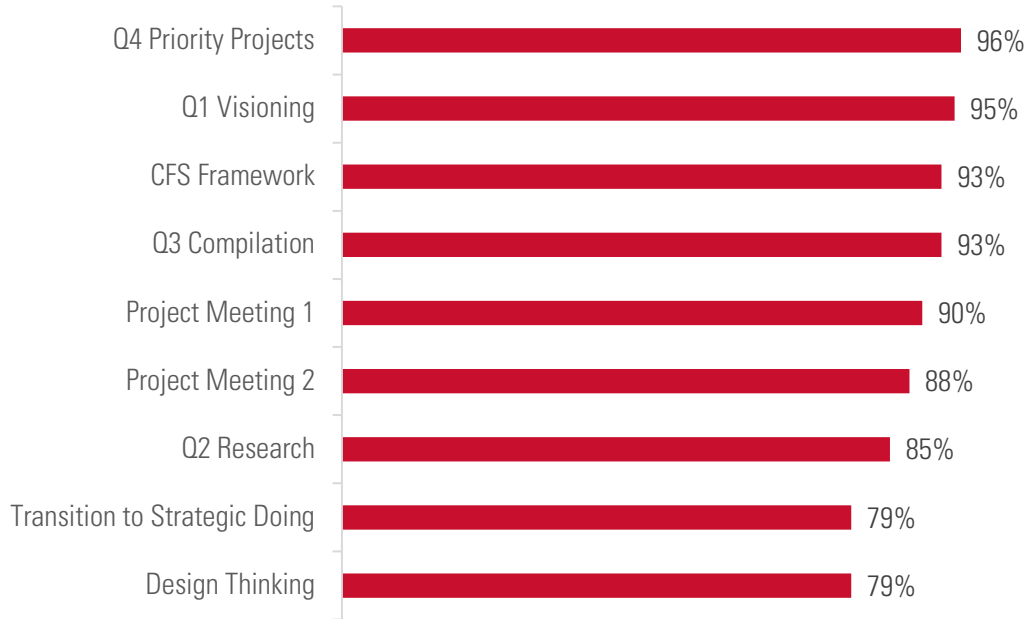
**Transition to Strategic Doing:** understand fundamentals of Strategic Doing; understand the difference between Collective Impact and Strategic Doing.

**Q4 Priority Projects:** understand how to evaluate priority projects within a coalition; develop new facilitation skills for strategic planning and collective decision-making; increased understanding of the CFS process and coalition meetings.

**Project Meeting 1:** understand how systems evaluation feeds into project evaluation; understand how to create a project logic model; ability to create project team goals, objectives, and output statements.

**Design Thinking:** understand where design fits in food systems development; consider different perspectives and questions for observation; identify potential partners for design assistance.

**Project Meeting 2:** Consider creative ways of showcasing project ideas; understand use of critique and public-interest discussion to solve problems.



**Figure 3: Pilot 2, overall usefulness.**

**Table 4: Pilot 2, usefulness by state.**

	Total %
<b>Alaska</b>	
Quarter 4 Priority Projects	100%
Project Meeting 1	100%
Project Meeting 2	93%
<b>Nebraska</b>	
Quarter 4 Priority Projects	86%
Project Meeting 2	83%
Quarter 1 Visioning	80%
<b>Colorado</b>	
CFS Framework	100%
Quarter 2 Research	100%
Quarter 3 Compilation	100%
<b>Iowa</b>	
Quarter 4 Priority Projects	92%
CFS Framework	85%
Quarter 3 Compilation	85%

	Total %
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	
Quarter 4 Priority Projects	94%
Project Meeting 1	94%
Design Thinking	94%
<b>US Virgin Islands</b>	
Design Thinking	83%
Transition to Strategic Doing	71%
Quarter 3 Compilation	71%

These findings indicate that practices and skills revolving around project management and facilitation were valued the most by Pilot 2 participants for usefulness. Q4 priority projects, project meeting 1 and project meeting 2 were seen in the majority of the individual state results. Q1 visioning and Q3 compilation, which focus on facilitation skills, were also commonly seen in the individual state results.

The CFS workshop is centered around activities and networking to learn a new framework for community food systems development. Participants shared in the open-ended section of the survey that they valued opportunities to connect with others in the workshops through group activities and facilitated discussions, both in small and large groups. Some participants shared that the workshop fostered a “relative and tangible” hands-on environment that allowed for “project-focused activities” and discussions that created connections between pieces of the food system. Similarly, networking was also a valued component of the workshop, providing the potential for continued, engaged discussions outside of the workshop.

Participants discussed the structure and scope of the CFS workshop in a positive light, further describing that while the CFS workshop teaches a process, it is “flexible enough to be unique to communities,” and that “the comprehensive step-by-step layout of the whole process” was a helpful component. Other frequently discussed topics included facilitation, evaluation, and developing vision, mission, and core value statements. Participants noted the tools and skills taught in the workshop were particularly useful, such as the project team evaluation logic model, which one participant described as “very helpful and showed real-world examples.” Others shared that “facilitation skills” and “evaluation” were helpful components, but they did not share specific reasons why they felt these topics were helpful.

## Statements of Agreement



**Figure 4: Pilot 2, overall statements of agreement.**

**Table 5: Pilot 2, statements of agreement by state.**

	<b>Total %</b>
<b>Alaska</b>	
I have a better understanding of what the ISU CFS process is	100%
I learned something new from the workshop	100%
I have new creative ways for engaging with partners	100%
<b>Colorado</b>	
I have a better understanding of what the ISU CFS process is	88%
I learned something new from the workshop	88%
I learned new tools for developing community food systems assessments	63%
<b>Iowa</b>	
I learned something new from the workshop	100%
I have a better understanding of what the ISU CFS process is	92%
I have new creative ways for engaging with partners	85%
<b>Nebraska</b>	
I have a better understanding of what the ISU CFS process is	100%
The workshop was helpful for my professional development goals	100%
I learned new tools for developing community food systems assessments	87%
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	
I have a better understanding of what the ISU CFS process is	100%
The workshop was helpful for my professional development goals	100%
I learned something new from the workshop	94%
<b>U.S. Virgin Islands</b>	
I have a new understanding of where design fits within the food system	75%
I am confident about how to work with communities in regard to food systems development	75%
I learned new tools for developing community food systems assessments	63%

Community engagement and collaboration were the most-discussed topics by participants, followed by utilizing research methods and tools. Participants found practices and methods for engaging the community to develop food systems helpful from the workshop. One participant described their plan to “incorporate Strategic Doing” into their work, while others shared “implementing public input sessions” and “I will work harder to get people I work with to get involved in local food.” Many participants used action verbs in their responses, implying a tangible change in work or behavior.

Networking and connections, along with design and mapping tools, were the main takeaways discussed by participants. Participants shared their plans for applying workshop content for creating professional goals and developing connections and relationships with other organizations and workers within the food systems space. Multiple participants identified “new connections” as their main takeaway. One participant similarly stated, “I made new connections that will assist in my work,” and another respondent identified “strong, local contacts.”

Design thinking, mapping, and visuals were also themes discussed in the Pilot 2 workshop evaluation. Participants shared that they will utilize design components such as visuals, design resources, and mapping in their work with communities. Similarly, creating snapshots and community food systems assessments

were also helpful new tools. One participant shared using the “design thinking as a process;” while another respondent claimed “learning more about the design process” as a main takeaway from the workshop.

## Conclusion

The aggregated findings from both pilots were over 60%, indicating that, overall, these workshops successfully taught the CFS learning objectives. Participants in both pilots enhanced their understanding of what the CFS process is and gained skills in various subject areas, such as professional development, project management, evaluation, and partnership development. When comparing findings between pilots, Pilot 2 had consistently higher percentages for the aggregated totals for usefulness: Pilot 1 had a range of 60% to 93%; Pilot 2 had a range of 79% to 96%. It could be inferred that there was improved understanding of the workshop content between the two pilots. The same could also be argued for the statements of agreement, where the aggregated findings were also consistently higher in Pilot 2 (range of 80% to 100%) than in Pilot 1 (range of 73% to 97%).

## Next Steps

Continuing these pilot workshops, a third series of Community Food Systems workshops were hosted in national “hubs” (Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, and Oregon) in the fall of 2019. The evaluation report for these workshops can be found at: [https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/wp-content/uploads/20200210\\_Final-CFS-Hubs-Evaluation-Report.pdf](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/wp-content/uploads/20200210_Final-CFS-Hubs-Evaluation-Report.pdf). This report provides further insights into the successes and impacts of the Community Food Systems Certification workshops.

The CFS workshop and full certification has been adapted to a virtual setting in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; this also addresses the need for online food systems education nationally. The virtual certification features a blended delivery method where participants attend virtual workshop sessions and complete the corresponding online modules, resulting in full certification. The first virtual cohort started in fall of 2020 and will complete in spring of 2021. Virtual cohorts will be offered each fall.