



# Year One Update: Wake County Food Security Plan

August 2018

## OVERVIEW

The Capital Area Food Network launched the [Wake County Comprehensive Food Security Plan](#) in August 2017 with the goal of completing its 41 action items and 5 measurement indicators by August 2020. This report contains the first annual summary of the Food Security Plan, including the work of [Capital Area Food Network](#), brief updates on each action item, and suggested modifications for the next year.

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## NARRATIVE

A significant amount of work has been done to begin a multi-organizational, comprehensive effort to fight hunger in Wake County. The inaugural year of the Food Security Plan incorporated research, systems building, and cross-sector collaboration led by Capital Area Food Network (CAFN). Many of these accomplishments were achieved through the following organizations and activities:

### Wake County Board of Commissioners

Beyond funding the creation of the Food Security Plan, The Wake County Board of Commissioners has been extremely supportive of local hunger fighting efforts. In February 2018, they formally endorsed the Plan. They have also allocated funding to support initiatives outlined in the plan, including school food pantries, farmland incubation at Walnut Hill, SFSP Summer meals sites for children, and county positions for a Food Security Program Manager and several AmeriCorps VISTAs. Additionally, they financially support local hunger organizations and universal breakfast programs in many schools.

### AmeriCorps VISTAs

The Plan commenced in August 2017, the same month that Wake County Cooperative Extension (WCCE) hired three, full-time AmeriCorps VISTA members to help build the capacity of the county's food security work. The VISTA member that worked directly with CAFN, Ruthie Wofford, spent the first several months of her service year gathering basic information about the Food Security Plan: organizational involvement, methodology for indicators, gaps in data, etc. Next, Wofford developed tracking documents to monitor progress. The months of October through February were spent developing methodology and gathering missing data about Wake County community gardens and food pantries. The other three county VISTAs contributed directly to the food plan through mapping food resources, food insecurity, building the Summer Food Service Program's capacity, and engaging community members in Southeast Raleigh to work on housing and food issues.

### Progress Report Meetings

On January 31, 2018, CAFN's Food Access Circle held the first Food Security Plan Progress Meeting. This event convened 36 local government and nonprofit professionals who were identified leaders for one or more Food Plan action items. Attendees reported updates about their respective action items as CAFN volunteers recorded their comments. This helped CAFN update tracking documents and allowed organization leaders to learn about each other's work

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and identify opportunities for collaboration. After the initial progress reporting event, the Food Access Circle decided to organize similar meetings quarterly.

## Public Updates

Information collected on the progress of the Food Security Plan was shared at the beginning of each month through the CAFN newsletter. These updates, which are Google Sheets documents, served a dual purpose: informing the public about project development and allowing CAFN leaders to see the progress or needs of each action item. Additionally, information and updates about the Plan were shared through the public CAFN Community Meeting on March 20, 2018.

## ACTION ITEM OVERVIEW

### Strategy 1: Ensure Food Access

#### 1.1 - Expand school pantries in Wake County Schools - **ACTIVE**

The outlined goal describes expanding the amount of Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) food pantries from 7 to 13. This goal was exceeded within a few months of launching the Food Security Plan. There are now 16 WCPSS pantries and 5 university/college pantries. Ten WCPSS pantries are funded by Wake County. The County awarded funding to establish four new pantries in the 2018-2019 school year. Additionally, Sydney Klein, the Wake County Food Security Program Manager, is working with WCPSS and local food banks to assess the capacity and needs of existing pantries. Wake County Public Schools is creating a procedure manual to assist schools with acquiring a pantry and help streamline the process. The next step is to find additional school pantries that are not county-funded or affiliated with a food bank.

#### 1.2 - Expand Universal Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) - **ACTIVE**

In the 2017-2018 school year, 35 elementary schools had universal breakfast programs and three of those schools had BIC. This program presents many financial, capacity, and organizational challenges. Nevertheless, WCPSS Child Nutrition Services worked tirelessly and most of the schools were very successful in implementing the program. Funding has been allocated to expand BIC to four schools in the 2018-2019 school year.

#### 1.3 - Expand Summer Meal Program - **ACTIVE**

One of the four Wake County VISTAs was hired in August 2017 to increase programming for the USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sites. The VISTA's goals were to improve participant retention and sponsor-to-site communications in summer 2018. Additionally, WCCE hired 6 AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates to help SFSP sites build capacity and programming. Despite these resources, there were still numerous challenges that the sites and

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administration faced. After summer 2018 is complete, the county will restructure the planning processes and Sydney Klein will provide local support and guidance for the program.

#### **1.4 - Breakfast in the Classroom study and Program Guide - ACTIVE**

Several UNC Chapel Hill nutrition interns wrote this guide in summer 2017 under the supervision of Carol Mitchell. WCPSS Child Nutrition Services completed the draft a few months later and it is now being used to train school staff on best practices of the program.

#### **1.5 - Affordable mobile market programs - ACTIVE**

There was initially confusion on the type of mobile market this action item refers to. There are free mobile markets like the ones Inter-Faith Food Shuttle (IFFS) provides and there are paid mobile markets like Grocers on Wheels. In July 2018, a group of CAFN volunteers met with the City of Raleigh Office of Sustainability to figure out ways to encourage paid, affordable mobile markets to operate in food deserts. This could potentially involve partnering with Hungry Harvest to implement their Produce in a SNAP model. The action item goal of launching pilot mobile markets in Southeast Raleigh in 2018 will not be met.

#### **1.6 - Community-scale nutrition hubs - ACTIVE**

In fall 2017, the Raleigh Food Corridor helped Passage Home and Alliance Medical Ministry undergo strategic planning to become Raleigh's first nutrition hubs. Their action plans were developed and approved, but most of the programming outlined in them depend on funding. These three nonprofits applied for a combined BCBS Foundation grant in partnership with Fertile Ground Food Cooperative and will be notified of grant awards in fall 2018. Additionally, Alliance Medical Ministry and Passage Home are partnering to provide soft-skills job training classes.

#### **1.7 - Study and improve food bank and food pantry supply chain - ACTIVE**

The two local food banks, IFFS and Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC (FBCENC) have met to discuss improving the supply chain between their donors and warehouses and between their warehouses and partner agencies. No concrete steps have been identified yet, but the ideas are developing. Wake Forest Area Hunger Ministry is working with the Wake County Planning Department to develop a way to assess the supply chain from farms to food pantries in the northern part of the county.

#### **1.8 - Expand food and meal delivery to low-income residents, especially seniors - ACTIVE**

Wake Meals on Wheels is currently at capacity for meal delivery and has a waiting list of seniors who would like to receive meals. They have additional partnerships developing to increase health and nutrition information to their clients, but they do not have the funding to expand meal delivery at this time. IFFS delivers around 1,500 grocery bags/month to senior housing complexes

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and plans to increase that number to 2,000 bags/month. FBCENC is also planning to expand their Commodity Supplemental Food Program for seniors as well.

### **1.9 - County-wide database of food pantries - ACTIVE**

Between February and May 2018, the CAFN AmeriCorps VISTA member led a team of volunteers to identify and research all of Wake County's food pantries. The public list developed through this research effort is now housed on [Wake Network of Care](#) and the [study report](#) is available on CAFN's website.

## **Strategy 2: Communicate and Educate**

### **2.1 - Expand nutrition and gardening class offerings - ACTIVE**

CAFN's Food Access Circle has adopted this project to find and connect Wake County's nutrition educators and learn about their programs and needs. This project is being lead by Meghan Malka, Public Health Nutritionist with Wake County Human Services. The circle has not started to study gardening classes yet.

### **2.2 - Support strong volunteer networks - PENDING**

While WCCE has put significant resources into building the county's AmeriCorps VISTA food security program, very little has been done to support this action item among other organizations. There are plans to convene partners organizations that mobilize a lot of volunteers including Activate Good, Volunteer Raleigh, and large hunger-fighting nonprofits.

### **2.3 - Centralize food resource data into Wake Network of Care online app - ACTIVE**

This project was completed in May 2018, but it will need ongoing maintenance. All information is currently on Wake Network of Care's [food resource listings](#) and on their new Food Access Portal [page](#). The biggest updates include the addition of a community garden category and the updated food pantry list. These improved resources were shared with many local nonprofit and government leaders. Here are some of their responses:

"Our staff is over the moon with your food pantry list. We get calls all the time and we can't answer the question. Now they can. They wanted me to thank you for your effort." - Wake Meals on Wheels

"Thank you for sharing this. I will make sure all of our case managers have this resource." - US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

"Thank you so much for reaching out to us with this wonderful resource list for food pantries. We will share it with our clients for sure." - Centro para Familias Hispanas, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Raleigh

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## **2.4 - “Granny’s Garden” program to connect seniors and youth - ACTIVE**

FBCENC is piloting this program at their new garden site in partnership with WCCE Master Gardeners, the City of Raleigh Office of Sustainability, and the City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department. They are renaming this program to either “Intergenerational Garden Project” or “Garden Corps” because “Granny’s Garden” is exclusive in both gender and age.

## **2.5 - Establish a coordinator for school learning gardens - ACTIVE**

Megan Lewis, a teacher at Willow Springs Elementary, was hired for this part-time position. Her immediate goal is to collect information on which WCPSS schools have active edible gardens. Several WCCE interns have been working to help find the points of contact for the gardens. Additionally, Megan Lewis will help develop curriculum about edible gardens for different grade levels.

## **2.6 - Build foundations for a shared community kitchen network - NEEDS ATTENTION**

At this time, no leaders or organizations have been identified for developing this action item.

## **2.7 - Include food systems and agriculture in Dix Park Master Plan - ACTIVE**

The plans for Dix Park are being developed slowly. It is still too early for the CAFN volunteers who serve on the Dix Park Advisory Committee to advocate for agriculture in the park, but several volunteers have attended public meetings and made suggestions relevant to this action item.

## **2.8 - Mixed media marketing campaign with emphasis on seniors’ needs - ACTIVE**

CAFN received a grant in January 2018 to fund a “Senior Voices” project that will highlight food insecurity among Wake County seniors of color. Filming has already begun and the project should be complete by the end of fall 2018.

## **2.9 - Food security medical intake questions - ACTIVE**

Wake County Medical Society Community Health Foundation launched a pilot project to learn about social determinants of health for patients. This includes five local clinics asking patient intake questions about food insecurity, housing, and interpersonal violence. Additionally, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) will work with Wake County Human Services to possibly develop a nutrition education “prescription” program.

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## Strategy 3: Develop Sustainable Food Supply

### 3.1 - Community gardens at food bank and food pantry sites - **ACTIVE**

In the past year, CAFN has found 12 community gardens that are run by food banks or food pantry host organizations. FBCENC opened their garden in spring 2018.

### 3.2 - Education programs around food donation (liability, food safety, tax incentives, etc.) - **ACTIVE**

The CAFN Food Recovery Circle created a series of [food waste reduction flyers](#) that are available on the CAFN website. The flyers include information about food donation locations, liabilities, and tax incentives.

### 3.3 - Community garden programs in all municipalities - **PENDING**

CAFN now has an updated [public list](#) and [research](#) about Wake County community gardens. There are 50 operating community gardens across Wake County. The municipalities that do not have any community gardens are Knightdale, Rolesville, and Zebulon. These municipalities have not been approached about supporting potential gardens at this time.

### 3.4 - Local food hub - **NEEDS ATTENTION**

At this time, no leaders or organizations have been identified for developing this action item.

### 3.5 - Wake County incubates new farmers by making farmland accessible - **ACTIVE**

Triangle Land Conservancy bought Walnut Hill Preserve with support from the Wake County Board of Commissioners, Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and additional donations. Farm incubation is included in the development plans for the land. They hope to have farmers on the land within two years.

### 3.6 - Client choice at food pantries - **ACTIVE**

Before the 2018 food pantry study, CAFN was only aware of three client choice food pantries. Now it is known that at least 32 of the county's 80+ food pantries offer their clients at least some choice in the food they receive. Currently, Gideon Adams of the FBCENC is working to develop a "how-to" guide for pantries looking to become client-choice models.

### 3.7 - Local tax incentives for gardens and gardeners - **NEEDS ATTENTION**

At this time, no leaders or organizations have been identified for developing this action item. If the CAFN Policy Circle reconvenes, this could be an excellent project for them to work on.

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### **3.8 - County compost program - PENDING**

CAFN's Food Recovery Circle has explored the possibility of this kind of program and it looks like the county is not interested in offering a curbside compost service or subsidizing CompostNow's services. The county does, however, have food waste drop off locations, serviced by Food FWD, at four of their convenience centers. The Food Recovery Circle is looking for ways to support this program through marketing to expand this program. See page 12 for suggested modifications.

### **3.9 - Urban agriculture in affordable or senior housing developments - ACTIVE**

IFFS's Camden Street Learning Garden is very near affordable housing and they are doing an excellent job with engaging their neighbors. Additionally, MOW is considering starting a container gardening program at a senior center in Garner. CAFN still needs a point of contact at the county level for this action item.

## **Strategy 4: Build Economic Opportunity**

### **4.1 - Build resources and champions for grocery cooperatives - ACTIVE**

In the past year, Fertile Ground Food Cooperative (FGFC) has grown its membership and resources. They also held a successful Community and Farmers Market in summer 2018 and they hope to open a store by 2020. Several CAFN volunteers are also FGFC member-owners, but the partnership between FGFC and CAFN can, and should, be strengthened.

### **4.2 - Reduce barriers to food assistance application process - NEEDS ATTENTION**

At this time, no leaders or organizations have been identified for developing this action item. The NC Justice Center was exploring the possibility of doing similar work at the state level, but there is not news from them yet.

### **4.3 - Job training in urban agriculture - ACTIVE**

Passage Home hosted a Garden Job Training Program in summer 2018. This 6-week paid training was a part of their Passage Works program.

### **4.4 - More options for SNAP redemption - PENDING**

At this time, no leaders or organizations have been identified for developing this action item.

### **4.5 - Education programs on food and household budgeting - ACTIVE**

The Food Access Circle is currently working to build relationships with EFNEP and IFFS to learn more about their food budgeting education programs. As of August 2018, no work has been done to catalog general household budgeting classes aimed at low-income families.

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#### **4.6 - Food service job training and placement - ACTIVE**

IFFS offered their [Fostering Wellness](#) program this year and plan to hire several paid interns to relaunch their Culinary Training Program. Passage Home also offers Basic Culinary and Restaurant Certification in partnership with Wake Tech. They hope to scale up this program once their new building is complete with an industrial kitchen. Wake Tech offers several culinary certifications apart from Passage Home as well.

#### **4.7 - Voluntary living wage certification for businesses - NEEDS ATTENTION**

The NC Justice Center Workers' Rights Project has expressed interest in leading this project, but they need committed partner organizations, funding, and staff capacity before they can start.

#### **4.8 - Shared food processing center - NEEDS ATTENTION**

At this time, no leaders or organizations have been identified for developing this action item.

### **Strategy 5: Leading Through Networks**

#### **5.1 - Capital Area Food Network coordinates this Plan - ACTIVE**

In August 2017, WCCE hired CAFN's first AmeriCorps VISTA to help coordinate the Food Security Plan and improve CAFN's communications systems. Since then, CAFN has hosted a public education event, sent out monthly newsletter updates, built a new website, and developed tracking systems for the Food Security Plan. More specifically, the Food Access Circle held several Food Security Plan progress reporting meetings for action item leaders. The CAFN Americorps VISTA also created a comprehensive list of Wake County community gardens and food pantries and developed relationships with hunger-fighting groups like Wake Forest Area Hunger Ministries.

#### **5.2 - County-based Food Security Coordinator - ACTIVE**

Sydney Klein, the Wake County Food Security Program Manager, was hired in February 2018. Her duties include managing the food security AmeriCorps VISTAs, guiding the county's Summer Food Service Program, enhancing partnerships and collaboration around Food Security work, facilitating school based strategies, and participating in CAFN's Food Access Circle.

#### **5.3 - Local governments and school system sign on to this Plan - ACTIVE**

The Wake County Board of Commissioners officially endorsed the Food Security Plan in February 2018. The plan was also presented to the Wake Forest Board of Commissioners in February 2018 and Andrew Brown with the Town of Wake Forest is currently working with Sydney Klein and local partners to figure out how they will proceed. There are plans to host information and interest meetings where relevant community members and organizations will be invited to attend and

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participate in shared decision making. CAFN needs to prioritize progress on this action item because it is essential and time-consuming. Approaching through Regional Community Action Committees may prove helpful in getting buy in from municipal leaders.

#### **5.4 - Grocery stores become nutrition and food security hubs - NEEDS ATTENTION**

In the past, the food banks have talked to Food Lion leadership about piloting this type of initiative, but the discussions did not lead to any concrete projects. Additionally, Wake County Human Services Social and Economic Vitality team tried to help corner stores in Southeast Raleigh provide healthy, affordable food, but this project lost momentum

#### **5.5 - Expand leadership role of faith community - ACTIVE**

CAFN connected with Wake Forest Area Hunger Ministries, a group of churches with hunger-fighting programs, in February 2018. They became an organizational partner and a pilot site for engaging a regional group of churches. They also are piloting a supply-chain study between gardens, farms, and food pantries. Other than this partnership and Church of the Nativity, CAFN does not have many faith-based partners.

#### **5.6 - Explore opportunities to support youth food leadership - ACTIVE**

4-H hosted a Growing Youth Food Security Leaders camp in July/August 2018, but at this time there is no funding to host a Youth Food Summit. Additionally, YouthThrive has yet to be directly involved with this action item, so CAFN needs to reach out to them again.

### **INDICATOR OVERVIEW**

Overall, progress on the indicators outlined in the back of the Food Security Plan was slow. The descriptions of the indicators in the Plan are intentionally short so the assembled research team had the ability to explore and decide upon appropriate methodologies.

#### **Indicator 1: Meal Gap/Hunger Index**

Description: Calculate how many meals are missed by low-income families.

The team working on this indicator decided on a methodology for this calculation; it will be based on the [Sonoma County Hunger Index](#). There were several missing datasets, but a stakeholders meeting was convened, and the data will be aggregated in early fall 2019.

#### **Indicator 2: Community Food Participation**

Description: Number of participants in food education programs and number of volunteers engaged in food security efforts.

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This indicator requires a significant amount of individual data collection. Currently, Meghan Malka is building relationships with nutrition educators and she can get information about food education program participation. The volunteer numbers will have to be collected from individual organizations annually.

### **Indicator 3: County-Based Food Supply**

Description: Pounds of food grown and distributed in Wake County and pounds of food rescued and distributed in Wake County.

This indicator may not be possible to complete because the necessary information is very difficult to acquire from the USDA. Depending on the next few months of data requests, this indicator may need to be modified or rewritten.

### **Indicator 4: Food Job Index**

Description: Measure Wake County's food sector jobs and the average wages of those jobs.

This indicator has been completed using 2015 county data about wages of food businesses.

### **Indicator 5: Organizational Connections**

Description: Number of organizations collaborating on food security efforts; number of collectives working on food security efforts.

Originally, CAFN was going to do this study independently, but Community Food Strategies (CFS) hired a group to create a network map for food council participants in NC. This professionally made map can inform Indicator 5. Sydney Klein and other Triangle food council leaders are working on this project with CFS. The goal is to launch the pilot in fall 2018.

## **SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS**

The Food Security Plan was designed to allow modifications: “Fast population growth in Wake County and evolving partnerships may naturally lead to modification of the recommended actions. Constant discoveries in food security best practices may either encourage a shift in focus or introduce solutions unknown to the team in 2017” (Wake Food Security Plan, page 15). After a year of monitoring Wake County’s food security work, the recommendations for modification are as follows.

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## General

### Race Equity

The [USDA](#) reports that in 2016, 22.5% percent of African-American households and 18.5% of Latino households experienced food insecurity - compared to 9.3% of White households. Clearly, hunger disproportionately affects people of color in the United States. The racial food security gap, however, is not mentioned in the Food Security Plan and should be acknowledged and addressed by CAFN and its partner organizations. This process could begin by hosting a race equity training for CAFN leaders and volunteers followed by a formal commitment and strategy to address race disparities in the food system outlined in the Food Security Plan.

## Action Items

### 1.1 - Expand school pantries in Wake County Schools

There is a great deal of support for pantries in WCPSS middle and high schools from Wake County, IFFS, and FBCENC. However, this action item could be expanded to include supporting elementary school pantries as well as university/college pantries. According to the Food Access Circle's [food pantry study](#), most Wake County university/college pantries are extremely understaffed and underfunded.

### 1.8 - Expand food and meal delivery to low-income residents, especially seniors

An additional measurable indicator for this action item could include the number of meals (or pounds of food) delivered in a particular year.

### 2.2 - Support strong volunteer networks

As previously mentioned, not much has been done to support this particular action item. One of the reasons for this is that the goal of the action item is to “establish a central online resource for food security volunteer opportunities.” This resource already exists through organizations like Volunteer Raleigh, Activate Good, and VolunteerMatch. While strengthening and promoting these resources is a definite need in Wake County, striving to create yet another volunteer opportunity site is redundant. This goal should be removed from Action Item 2.2 and replaced with strategies to streamline and market the preexisting resources and recruit more CAFN volunteers (?).

### 2.4 - “Granny’s Garden” program to connect seniors and youth

As mentioned in the updates section, the name of this project has been changed to the “Intergenerational Garden Project” and the name should be updated in the Food Security Plan too.

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### 3.8 - County compost program

After several conversations with Wake County's Solid Waste Management Division, CAFN's Food Recovery Circle learned that the creation of a county-sponsored, door-to-door composting service is improbable in the near future. The core of the project is to create a "comprehensive organics collection and compost program." This action item should be reworked to focus on helping build existing county composting programs. A focus on helping community gardens and/or individuals compost could also be added.

#### Action Items to Focus On

Several action items lack momentum and organizational leaders altogether. CAFN's Food Access Circle should take a closer look at the following action items work to find leaders and/or resources for these projects:

- 2.6 Build foundations for a shared community kitchen network
- 3.4 Local food hub
- 3.7 Local tax incentives for gardens and gardeners
- 4.7 - Voluntary living wage certification for businesses
- 4.8 Shared food processing center
- 5.4 - Grocery stores become nutrition and food security hubs

### Indicators

#### Indicator 1: Meal Gap

Two of CAFN's major organizational partners, IFFS and FBCENC, are both members of Feeding America, a national network of food banks and food pantries. Feeding America has a body of research called [Map the Meal Gap](#), which includes information about how many meals are missed by hungry individuals in every county. Feeding America's meal gap calculation has a different methodology and results when compared to the Wake County meal gap calculated using the Sonoma County Hunger Index methodology. Because IFFS and FBCENC do not want to report two conflicting meal gaps calculations, Indicator 1 should be renamed from Meal Gap to Hunger Index.

#### Indicator 3: County-Based Food Supply

This indicator requires information from the USDA that neither WCCE nor Wake County has access to. Therefore, Indicator 3 needs to be reconfigured to demonstrate Wake County's food supply assets and needs in a different way. This may include measuring the county's food supply in dollars, not pounds, or redefining the indicator altogether.

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## **Indicator 5: Organizational Connections**

While methodology for completing this indicator has been developed, Community Food Strategies, the network of all North Carolina food councils, has hired a company to build a dynamic, online network/connections map of food council volunteers and employees across North Carolina. Once complete, the map will reveal the amount and strength of connections between individual hunger fighters in Wake County. Since this map is already funded by a third party and will be consistently updated, it may be wise to adjust Indicator 5 to focus on individual connections between local hunger fighters rather than organizational connections. This modification may reveal more in-depth information about inter-organizational connections because many of those relationships are started and maintained by individuals in the first place.

## **CONCLUSION**

Progress on the 2017-2020 Wake County Comprehensive Food Security Plan has been significant in its first year. During this time, many projects have been funded, research has been conducted, and a diverse array of hunger-fighting partners has been assembled. There is a considerable amount of work yet to be done, but CAFN and its partners are off to phenomenal start.