Collective Impact Toolkit for Food Councils

Purpose of this Toolkit

Organized around the idea of collective impact, the purpose of this toolkit is to support organizations conducting local food systems work by providing a method for these partnering groups to measure progress, share data, and use information to drive local food system strategies and activities. The toolkit is based on information gathered over several years from a series of local food system projects and case studies from across North Carolina.

The toolkit is flexible. Groups can use the information offered to fit their specific needs, interests, and capacity. Groups can organize the activities presented in the toolkit according to their own schedule and preference. A trained facilitator is not necessary.

What is Collective Impact?

Collective impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for addressing a specific social or environmental problem. Collective impact is more rigorous and specific than collaboration among organizations. There are five conditions that, together, lead to meaningful results from collective impact:

- **Common Agenda:** All participants share a vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.

- **Shared Measurement:** All participating organizations agree on the ways success will be measured and reported, with a short list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.

- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

- **Continuous Communication:** All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.

- **Backbone Support:** An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support by guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.

Many groups across the country have used the collective impact process to create positive social change in their communities. We believe that groups working across North Carolina can achieve similar successes in transforming our food system as we actively coordinate our actions, share our lessons learned, and create cross-sector alignment with government, nonprofit, philanthropic, and corporate sectors all working together towards a common goal.
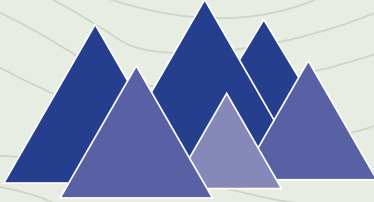
Organization of this Toolkit

The toolkit is organized into the following sections with detailed instructions and information contained within each section:

Our Common Agenda

For over a decade, agricultural support groups, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, local government agencies, and state initiatives in North Carolina have been working to improve and expand the local food system within our state. The research conducted by these groups shows that overall, there is a broad consensus of what individuals and groups engaged in food system work envision for our collective future. These big picture outcomes provide a starting point for thinking about and organizing a framework for collective impact and include:

- Vibrant Farms

- Individual & Community Health

- Sustainable Ecosystems

- Thriving Local Economies

- Supportive Policy

- Justice & Fairness

Section 1

To use a metaphor, imagine the work of building community and regional food systems as a mountain range and we are working to reach several different peaks. We are all on this journey and we may be in different places along the hike to the top, but we still have the goal of getting everyone it to the summit.

Thriving Local Economies

Sustainable Ecosystems

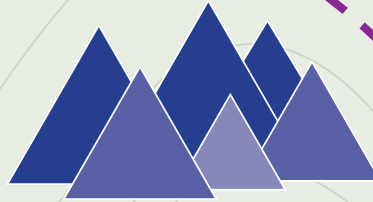**Vibrant Farms**

Individual & Community Health

Justice & Fairness

Supportive Policy

Results Pathways

Using the six **Summit Goals** as your starting starting point, over the next pages your task is to identify the various **Trails, Mile Markers**, and **Measures** you and your partner organizations currently use or would like to begin using to make it to your Summit Goals. As you work, focus on achievable results-based activities that can contribute to the overall shared vision for our food system.

As a group ask yourselves, what are you doing well? Where are there gaps in engagement? Are there any untapped opportunities? The format of this toolkit is designed to help you answer these questions and begin the conversation of how to best go about ensuring that your groups' activities are mutually reinforcing and contributing as a whole to the greater goals.

Summit Goal: *Peak local food system achievements toward which we all strive*

Measures: *Data points that collectively show progress along the summit trails*

TRAIL

Trails: *Respective results pathways organizations focus on to achieve summit goals. Trails show changes in behavior and decision making by members of a community that result from organizations' programs, and that move us all towards reaching summit goals. There are several different trails that lead to each summit goal.*

Mile Marker: *Along the trail, the Mile Markers are the incremental changes that take place that let us know we are making progress up our results pathway trail. They are the result of our programmatic activities and shifts in the cultural environment.*

Section 2

Vibrant Farms

By vibrant farms we mean:
current and future producers view
farming as a viable career choice and
grow environmentally responsible/
humanely raised products that are sold
to a variety of local markets

Vibrant Farms

Trail: Abundant local food production

Mile Markers:

- Farmland is preserved and transitioned successfully
- Farmers grow healthy foods for local consumption
- There is an abundance of local food production
- Community members, food businesses, and local decision makersunderstand the capacity and limitations to food production in the area

Trail: Abundant opportunities for local farms to operate successfully in local marketplaces

Mile Markers:

- Farmers have the knowledge, skills, and resources to run viable farm businesses
- Farmers have the knowledge, skills, and resources to meet market requirements
- Farmers are profitable
- Local food businesses purchase food from local farms
- Community members purchase local food from local farms

Vibrant Farms

Trail: _____

Mile Markers:
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Trail: _____

Mile Markers:
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Baselining your Local Food System
A Worksheet for Food Policy Councils

Vibrant Farms

Indicator	Data	Sources
Total farms		
Total acres of farmland		
Total farm operators		
Proportion of workforce employed in farming		
Average annual salary from farming		
Proportion of principal farmers younger than 35		
Proportion of farms growing fruits and vegetables		

Individual & Community Health

By individual and community health we mean: community members are familiar with and participate in the local food and farm culture of the region in deliberate and meaningful ways, making informed decisions supportive of their own personal health, the health of the environment, and the health of the food system.

Individual & Community Health

Trail: Community members engage with local food systems to improve the health of themselves and their families

Mile markers:

- Children regularly engage in age-appropriate activities around healthy eating (cooking, nutrition)
- Adults regularly engage in activities around healthy eating (cooking, nutrition)
- Community members increase their consumption of local foods from local farms
- Community members show interest in and demand local food from local farms

Trail: Community members understand what a healthy food system is and how to support it

Mile markers:

- Children regularly engage in age-appropriate activities to learn where food comes from and how it is produced
- Adults regularly engage in food and farm activities to learn where food comes from and how it is produced
- Community members show interest in and demand local food and farm engagement opportunities

Individual & Community Health

Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Baselining your Local Food System
A Worksheet for Food Policy Councils

Individual and Community Health

Indicator	Data	Sources
Proportion of population with inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption		
Diabetes rate		
Obesity rate		
Percentage of children eligible for free or reduced price lunch		
Number of community gardens		
Proportion of schools conducting nutrition education and/or farm to school programs		
Grocery stores/1,000 people		
Full service restaurants/1,000 people		
Farmers markets/1,000 people		

Sustainable Ecosystems

By Sustainable Ecosystems we mean: promoting sustainable ecosystems through a food system that utilizes production practices that sustain healthy environments, enhance biodiversity, and foster stewardship of the land.

Summit Goal:
Peak local food system achievements toward which we all strive

Sustainable Ecosystems

Trail: Food is produced in an environmentally friendly manner

Mile Markers:

- Farmers have the training, information, and resources they need to enact sustainable production methods
- Community members and local businesses understand the importance of sustainable production methods and actively voice and show their support

Trail: Community members engage with local food systems to improve the health of the environment

Mile markers:

- Children regularly engage in age-appropriate activities to learn about the ways that food production and natural environments interact
- Adults regularly engage in food and farm activities to learn about the ways that food production and natural environments interact
- Community members show interest in and demand local food produced using sustainable and humane methods of production

TRAIL

Sustainable Ecosystems

Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Baselining your Local Food System
A Worksheet for Food Policy Councils

Sustainable Ecosystems

Indicator	Data	Sources
Acres of land preserved		
Businesses renovated/modified to include local, healthy food		
Proportion of agricultural organizations offering training in sustainable farming techniques		
County sustainability plan that incorporates agricultural production and local food provision language? (y/n)		
Proportion of farms using sustainable practices (e.g., organic, rotational or management intensive grazing)		

Thriving Local Economies

By thriving local economies we mean: the region is home to a multitude and diversity of local food businesses that connect to one another in business relationships, and engage in the region's food system

Thriving Local Economies

Trail: Local food businesses and institutions serve food sourced from local farms

Mile markers:

- Local food businesses and institutions have the information, desire, and resources to purchase local food from local farms
- Community members demand local food in their childrens' schools, at their work cafeterias, in local grocery stores, etc.
- Local food is identifiable in the marketplace

Trail: The local food system supports a diversity of innovative local food businesses

Mile markers:

- Food business entrepreneurs have the information, training, and resources they need to operate successful local food businesses
- Local policy supports local food businesses
- Community members understand the importance of locally owned businesses and actively show their support
- New farms and food businesses are attracted to the area

Thriving Local Economies

Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Baselining your Local Food System
A Worksheet for Food Policy Councils

Thriving Local Economies

Indicator	Data	Sources
Value of sales through direct market outlets		
Number of businesses sourcing local product		
Number of dollars reported spent on local food by 10% Campaign members		
Number of food-related micro-enterprise opportunities/micro-businesses		
Number of organizations that support small business lending opportunities		
Total sales at farmers markets		
Number of jobs supported by the local food system (locally owned food-related businesses)		

Supportive Policy

By supportive policy we mean: food system policies and regulations are supportive of a strong, environmentally responsible, and safe regional food system

Summit Goal:
Peak local food system achievements toward which we all strive

Supportive Policy

Trail: The public actively campaigns for policies and regulations to support local food systems
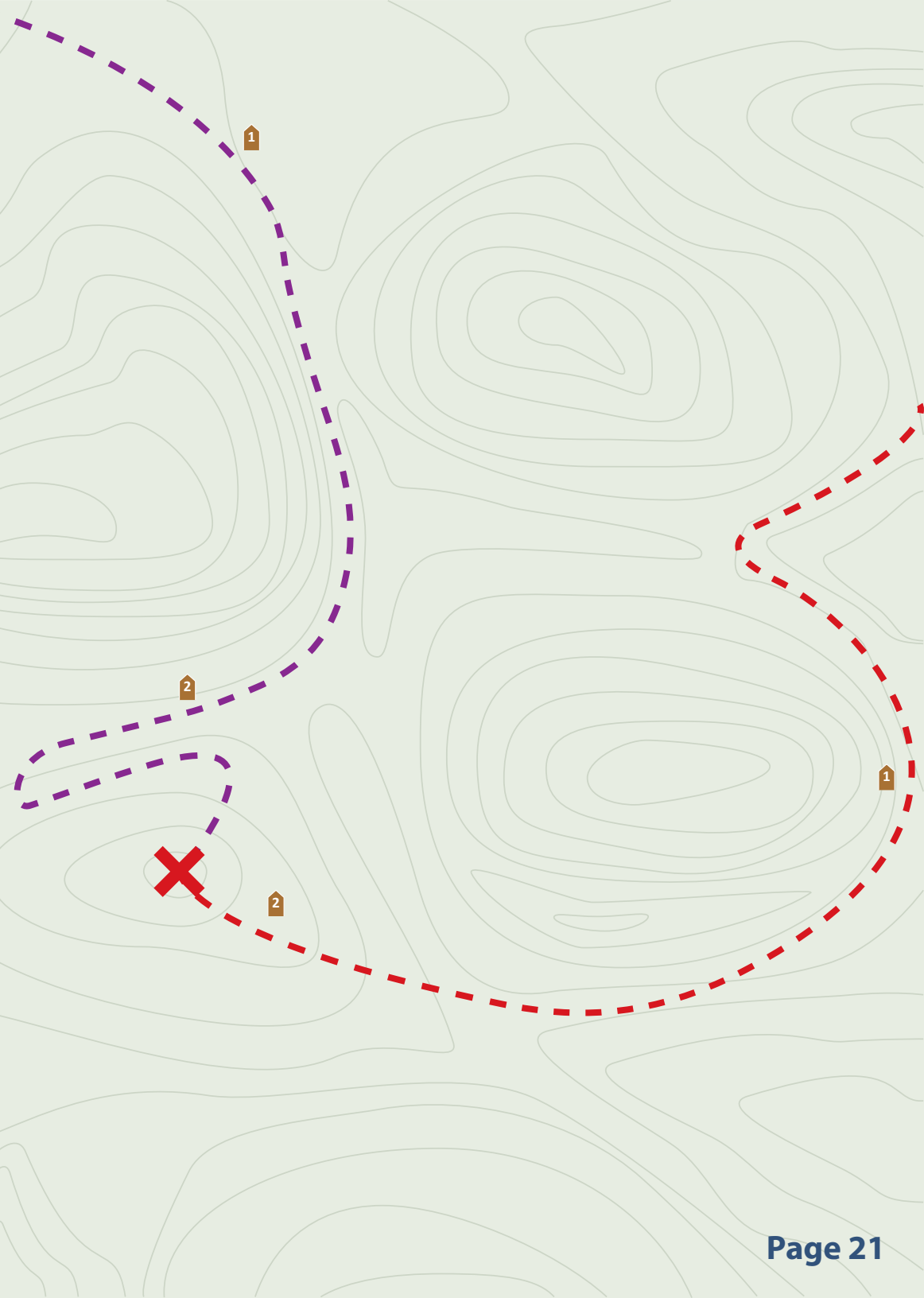
Mile Markers:

- Community members have the knowledge and resources they need to mobilize for change
- Community members have places to come together and exchange information

Trail: Decision makers take action to implement policies to support local food systems

Mile Markers:

- Decision makers are connected to their constituents and know what they want in terms of local food systems policies and regulations
- Decision makers actively engage with the public on food system issues
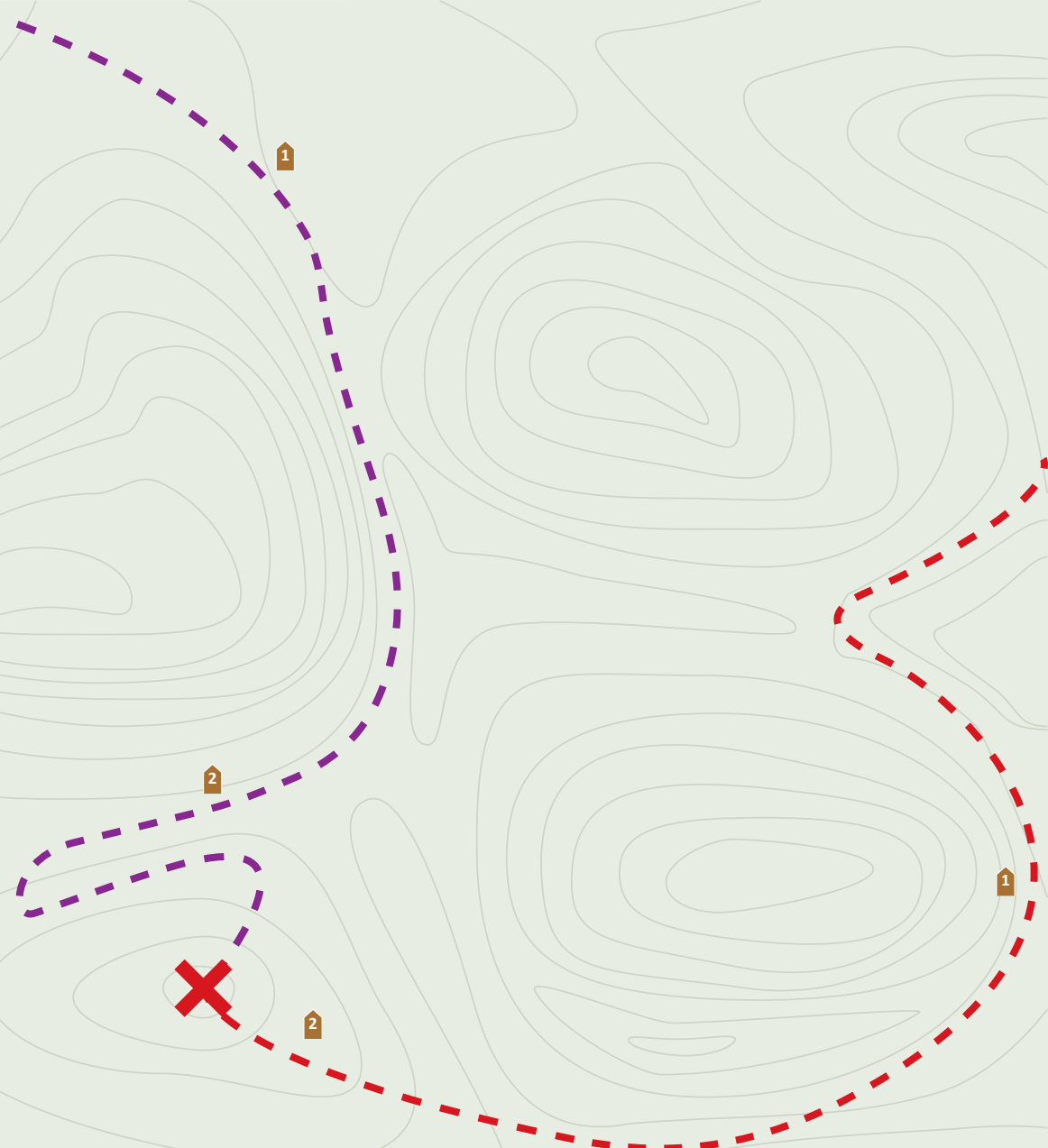
Supportive Policy

Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Baselining your Local Food System
A Worksheet for Food Policy Councils

Supportive Policy

Indicator	Data	Sources
Number of policies approved that support small- and mid-scale farmers		
Comprehensive Farmland Plan? (y/n)		
Policies to support sustainable urban agriculture practices (e.g., beekeeping, raising chickens,etc.)		
Present use value taxation? (y/n)		
Businesses with institutional wellness policies		
10% Local Food Procurement Policy within county government? (y/n)		
Presence of Agricultural District Program (Voluntary Agricultural District)? (y/n)		

Justice & Fairness

By justice and fairness we mean: the local food system contributes to sustainable livelihoods by ensuring workers in the system receive fair compensation, and that all residents can easily acquire the food they need to live healthy, productive lives

Summit Goal:
Peak local food system achievements toward which we all strive

Justice & Fairness

Trail: Local food system jobs are in safe, healthy environments and pay wages that support meaningful livelihoods

Mile Markers:

- Community members understand the working conditions and wages of workers in the food system
- Community members are civically engaged around food system issues and demand policies and actions that promote food system worker rights

Trail: Everyone in the community has access to fresh, healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods

Mile Markers:

- Community members learn about and understand the causes of poverty and low food access
- Community members take action based on their particular area's needs to implement changes that improve public access to healthy, fresh, foods
- Community members are civically engaged around poverty and hunger issues and demand policies and actions that promote greater access to fresh, healthy food options
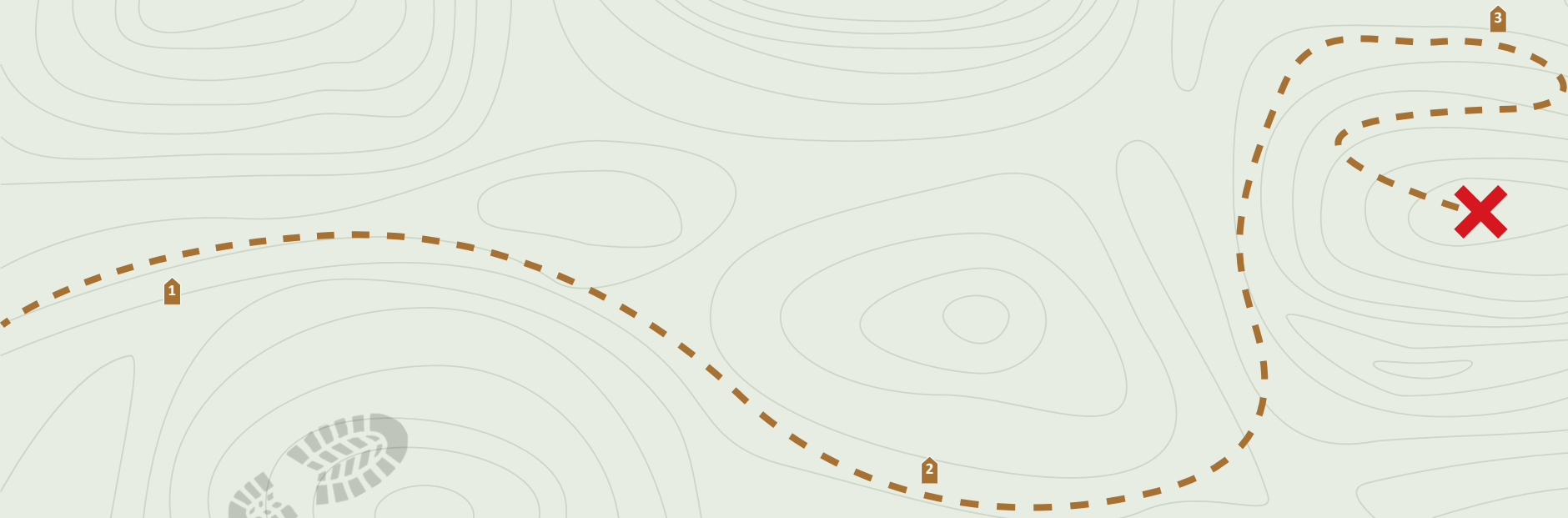
Justice & Fairness

Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Trail: _____

Mile Markers:

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Baselining your Local Food System
A Worksheet for Food Policy Councils

Justice and Fairness

Indicator	Data	Sources
Percentage of residents with low food access		
Total SNAP participants and/or SNAP participation rates		
Proportion of workforce employed in foodservice		
Average annual salary from foodservice work		
Wage policy measures for fair compensation		
Proportion of population below poverty level		

Common Pathways: *Many trails can share common pathways, intersections, and measures to achieve different goals. Look for overlap in your food system work.*
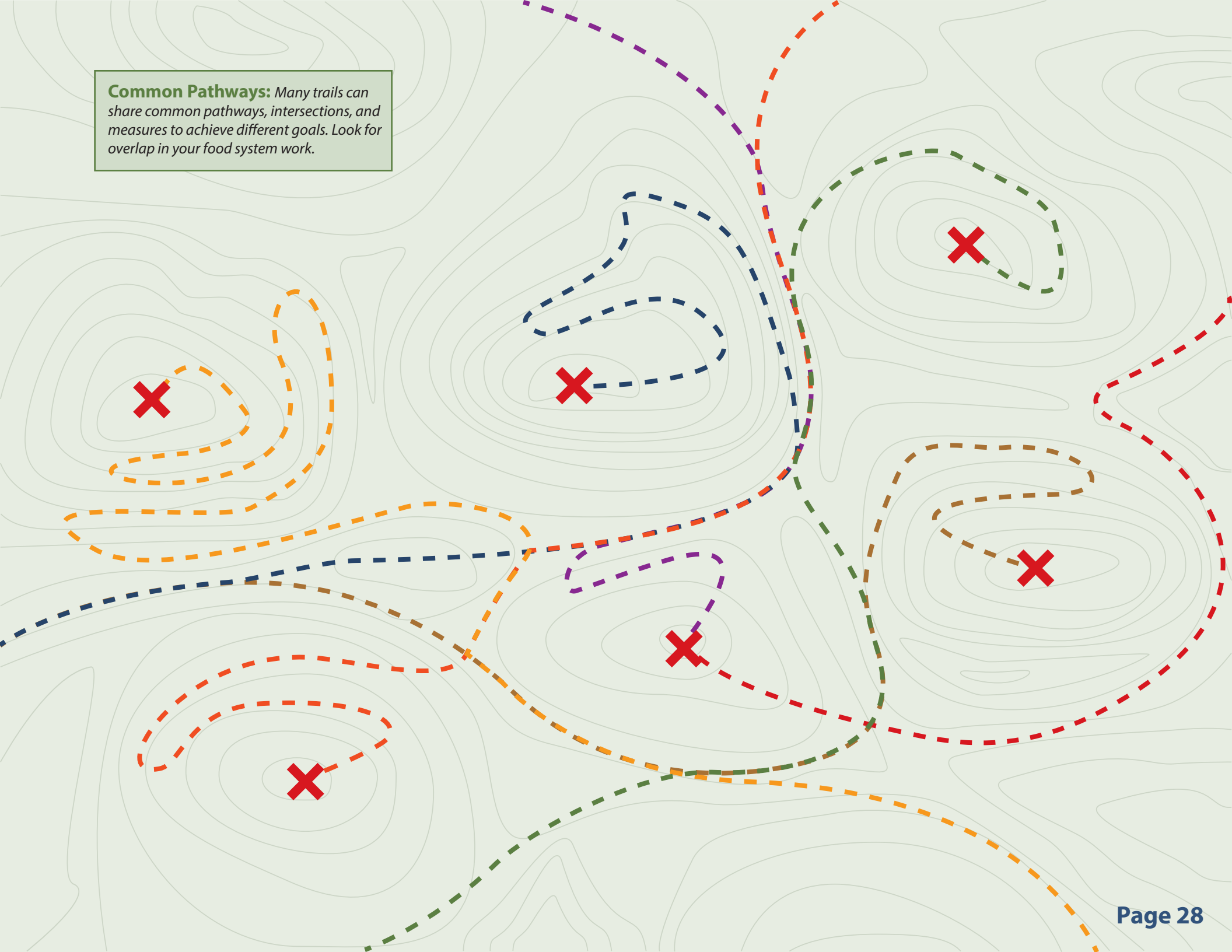
Shared Measurments

One aspect of collective impact that makes it different and potentially more effective than traditional collaborative projects is collective impact's focus on shared measurement systems. Agreement on food system goals and strategies is irrelevant if there isn't also agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported. When all groups are able to collect, analyze, and report their data across organizations, it ensures accountability of action and allows participants to learn from one another's successes and shortcomings. This section of the toolkit should be used as a way to identify the measures that you and your partners will use to track progress towards shared goals, learn and course correct, and catalyze action. The measures provided on the following pages have already been broken down into Performance Measures—measures of the efficiency and effectiveness of specific activities and actions—and Community Indicators—quantifiable characteristics of a population that support evidence of community change

Section 4

Sample Measures

Performance Measures

- Number of attendees at events
- Number of participants receiving trainings or assistance
- Number of participants indicating plans to use knowledge/skills/resources acquired from training
- Number of participants who take action based on knowledge/skills gained at trainings
- Number of resources distributed
- Number of farmland acres conserved or transitioned
- Number of business connections made between farmers and buyers (e.g., at meetings/workshops)
- Number of children engaged in farm to school activities
- Number of meetings, workshops, and/or conferences held
- Number of attendees at events
- Number of participants in local branding program

Community Indicators

- Number of acres devoted to food production
- Number of new and/or beginning farmers (defined as those farming for less than 10 years)
- Number of residents and visitors shopping at direct market outlets
- Value of sales at direct market outlets
- Dollars loaned to farmers to begin, improve, or expand their farm business
- Number of farmers able to secure funding/loans for farm business improvements
- Percentage change in obesity, diabetes, etc.
- Percentage change in poverty levels, SNAP usage, etc.
- Dollar value of local food purchasing by community
- Percentage/Number of food businesses sourcing local product
- Number of new food system jobs
- Policies and or regulations changed
- Percentage of residents with low food access
- Wages of employees working in the (local) food system
- Wage policy measures for fair compensation

Continuous Communication

Clear and consistent communications among project partners is essential for building trust, assuring mutual objectives, and keeping everyone motivated and on task. It is only by communicating with one another that organizations and individuals can develop a shared sense of commitment and ownership to projects, and to collectively address concerns and hurdles.

When developing an internal communications plans for the organizations participating in your project, it is helpful to identify the specific methods to be used for each type engagement, and when these communications should occur. For example, large scale planning is best suited to face-to-face meetings, while notifications of a new potential funder may only necessitate a phone call or email. The way to communicate effectively will change and flow and be re-evaluated in the light of new information and changes in the environment. However, it is important for all partners to have equal representation and involvement in all interactions, to ensure that decision-making is collaborative and takes into account all members' point of view.

In addition to internal communications, it is suggested that project partners also come up with an external communications plan for dealing with outside stakeholders, potential funders, and the general public. In fact, listening to the community, and communicating results to the public, is an important component of building and sustaining a successful collective impact initiative as it allows the collaborative to identify the areas they should be targeting, as well as build public support for the collective effort.

Section 5

Backbone Support

In the collective impact model, backbone functions guide a project's vision and strategy, support activities, establish the shared measurement practices, and in some cases work to advance policy and mobilize funding. Individuals conducting backbone work provide periodic and systematic assessment of progress attained by the various groups working on a project, and then synthesize the results to present back out to project participants, funders, and the public.

Common misperceptions of the role of backbone function staff are that they set the agenda for the project, receive all of the funding, or drive the solutions. This is typically not the case. Instead, backbone staff take on the role of balancing the coordination and maintenance of project accountability while staying behind the scenes so that projects can establish collective ownership.

Backbone staff should be:

- Visionary

- Results-Oriented

- Collaborative, Relationship Builders

- Focused, but Adaptive

- Charismatic and Influential Communicators

- Humble

- Have the resources, skills, and dedicated staff to convene and coordinate participating groups

Section 6

Statement of Work

So far this toolkit has provided a core collective impact-based framework to guide any local food systems project. This includes a wider common agenda, the supportive environment that must be in place to achieve that agenda, and the building block activities that lead to the creation of a supportive environment. Now, it is your turn to take this framework and apply it to your collective impact project.

Your project might fall neatly into one of the trails provided on previous pages, or you may want to start from scratch using the following pages of blank templates. As you and your partners work together to create a project system that utilizes a common agenda, shared measurement, and mutually reinforcing activities, your current project but it is important that your council define its own purpose and goals. Use this space to create an agreed-upon common purpose for your local food system work moving forward

Statement of Work

Our group is working to (state project goal) _____
_____
_____
_____.

Through our work our project will (name trail, e.g., our project will help create abundant local food production, our project will increase the capacity for food to be produced in environmentally friendly ways) _____
_____
_____**which contributes to North Carolina Food Policy Councils' common goal of** (name summit goal) _____
_____.

Internal Communications Plan

Communication Channel	Function	Frequency of Use	Lead Organization

External Communications Plan

Communication Channel	Function	Frequency of Use	Lead Organization

Assignment of Backbone Functions

Backbone Function	Lead	Backup
Accountability, Evaluation, and Guidance • Develop and monitor outcome indicators and performance measures to evaluate progress and to inform system improvement • collect indicators and develop data collection processes • Analyze and monitor progress against specific strategies and goals identified by partners • Encourage sharing of best practices		
Knowledge Sharing and Logistical Support • Foster relationships with project partners and key stakeholders • Coordinate research and other activities • Monitor and enable easy dissemination of project agenda, activities, and findings		
Fundraising and Outreach • Engage with and/or facilitate a broader audience to build buy-in from additional stakeholders • Develop external communications materials and a comprehensive community engagement and communications plan • Coordinate with other major initiatives in the community, as appropriate, to minimize redundancies and align strategies and actions • Respond to requests for information by community partners and allies • Develop a plan for on-going funding		
Project Management • Identify and raise concerns with project partners • Manage meeting logistics • Follow up and manage next steps that come out of partner meetings • Maintain a high-level perspective to guide and participate in partner meetings		

the end