

AFID Planning Grant **Fresh Food Project**



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Table of Contents

1 Executive Summary

4 Introduction

6 Project Scope

8 Process and Assessment
Tools

15 Results

26 Project Outcomes

33 Next Steps

34 Conclusion

35 Appendix

54 Project Brief

Executive Summary

Overview

The Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism applied for the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Fund Planning Grant program to support local agriculture initiatives. The team recognized an opportunity to foster the potential of mid-sized producers and promote high quality local food to consumers. The AFID grant is designed around the common challenge faced by roadside stands, farmer's markets, farm-to-table and other fresh food initiatives in Page County - few producers are growing for that market. Amanda Presgraves, Dustyn Vallies, and Taylor Alger, and Sara Levinson from SVSBC were identified as the consultants to undertake a Gap Analysis and Planning Grant Assessment. The team began work on this project in February 2022 in order to explore options to connect producers and consumers in ways that creates a locally-grown food supply chain that benefits the farmers and community.

Project Goal

The goal of the project is to conduct a pre-development gap analysis to research viability of the locally-grown food supply chain, identify strengths and opportunities for value chain integrations for local farms and identify strengths and opportunities for consumers, tourist and regional partners.

Project Objective

The project objectives include: 1) Research viability and identify opportunities for farmers to grow for local market (residents/tourists) and 2) Research viability and identify ways for residents, tourists and regional partners to engage proactively in meaningful, economically viable and healthy community activities that include a focus on buying, growing and using local fresh and value-added food.

Page County Vision: Throughout the research, 100+ community members were interviewed to create a future state vision, which guided the Gap Analysis and direction of recommendations outlined in the report. The core vision is to enhance and preserve the rooted farming culture of Page County and establish a local food ecosystem that promotes a vibrant next generation of successful producers.

Executive Summary

Timeline

Phase 1: Project and Team Coordination

Phase 2: Assessment – Interviews, Survey, Research Viability and SWOT, Gap Analysis

Phase 3: Consumer Demand, Production Capacity, Supply Chain

Phase 4: Community Engagement – Future State Vision, Community Gathering, Panel, Focus Group, Stakeholder Feedback

Phase 5: Implementation Plan – Final Report, Executive Presentation, Community Sharing

Project Funding

In February 2021, Governor Northam awarded grants to strengthen local food systems. Page County used the \$12,000 AFID Planning Grant to support its Fresh Food Project to connect local farmers with local consumers and tourists with the goal of strengthening the region's food system. This project was built on the GO Virginia-funded Agricultural Enterprise Center Feasibility Study in Region 8 by identifying ways to establish a supply chain for locally-grown foods.

Key Findings

Common themes emerged through the qualitative discussions and surveys with local consumers, producers, businesses, nonprofits, institutions and stakeholders (n=108*). The most significant being that Page County is rich with cultural and historical farming history that needs to be preserved. There are an abundance of opportunities available for Page County to coordinate initiatives and efforts. The greatest assessed gap is the lack of collaboration and coordination within the food ecosystem to generate connections between producers and the marketplace. The second finding was the lack of education and programming to get the next generation involved and thereby support the development of current producers. Lastly, many producers identified the need for a livestock processing facility.

*See: Community Stakeholder Interview Count (page 7), and Community Outreach Event Count (page 41)

Executive Summary

Assessment Outcomes

- Agriculture is deeply rooted in Page County. In order to support the next generation and continue historical preservation, education and programming within the school system and community must be emphasized.
- The greatest area of opportunity includes implementing 16 identified low-hanging fruit community projects (e.g., farm apprenticeship programs, CSA initiatives, wholesale networking events).
- Through the in-person community outreach event of nearly 100 community members, it was evident that developing connection, communication and collaboration with existing regional projects is needed in Page County.
- Primary data conducted included 40 in-depth qualitative interviews and 68 stakeholders engaged in a community focus group conversation.
- Opportunities are budding around Page County to start farmers markets, programming and new farm production. To create, sustain and support coordination of these efforts, Page County needs sustainable paid food ecosystem leadership and value-chain coordination.
- The Agriculture Subcommittee was created under the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism during the project. There is a need for this to continue developing into a more interdisciplinary, sustainable food system committee to support coordination of Page County's food ecosystem through leveraging partnerships, stakeholders, and collaborative network (e.g. roles across nonprofits, economic development, conversation, food access, business owners, VCE extension officers, institutions, farmers, producers, etc.).
- Digital infrastructure and other approaches are needed to increase transparency of local food and beverage initiatives. These efforts will help develop an economically viable local food system through relationships with local food and agriculture entrepreneurs and businesses, retailers, restaurateurs, distributors, institutions and farmers.

Recommended Next Steps

The coordination of local food ecosystem potential with a paid position and community Agriculture Subcommittee expansion would allow Page County to sustain momentum, implement low-hanging fruit projects and develop producer/market relations. Additionally, in the next 6 to 12 months, it is recommended that the leadership explore the opportunity of collaborating with Food Works Group, a Washington D.C. based advisory firm, to support surveying and data collection efforts from Page County and the surrounding counties to inform future regional work as a proof of concept. This includes the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative (EFC), a collaborative of food hubs throughout the Mid-Atlantic, who has been awarded an USDA Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP) planning grant to take stock of regional supply chain and food hub assets to leverage resources, increase efficiencies, and identify needed infrastructure investments.

Introduction

Page County is a culture deeply rooted in farming, where agriculture and tourism are major economic drivers. Mid-size producers are gaining strength in the marketplace and proactive efforts to support these growth trends are critical to the long-term economic and cultural survival of agriculture in Page County. There is potential in the local market (residents/tourists) for mid-size producers and the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism recognizes the opportunity to leverage the historical and cultural relevance of agriculture and farming. They also understand there is a clear need to assess the local and regional marketplace to better support farm viability, educational opportunities and the demand of consumers and tourism.

The AFID Fresh Food Project Planning Grant (AFID Grant) project focused on growing opportunities for mid-size producers and promoting high quality local food to consumers. In order to do so effectively, it's necessary to use a multi-faceted approach which includes assessing and creating collective community, local and regional food system impacts. There are a multitude of facets and spokes to the wheel that move a community forward and keep it going in a momentous, healthy, self-supportive direction.

The project team applied an asset-based community development approach that identified opportunities, implemented solutions with community organizations and built mobilizing partnerships throughout Page County. Both quantitative and qualitative data sources were used, with a heavy emphasis on community engagement in the AFID project. Each task took an iterative learning approach that helped design solutions to these complex systems through the processes and outcomes defined in the Implementation Plan.

VCE Model of Community, Local, Regional Food Systems



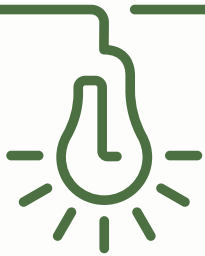
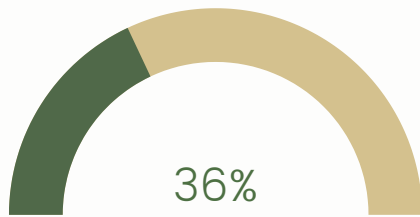
Graphic 1: VCE Model of Community, Local, and Regional Food Systems (Page 9, Facilitating Community, Local, and Regional Food Systems, Virginia Cooperative Extension)

Page County Office of Economic Development

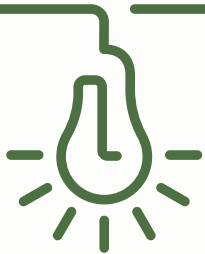
Page County

At a Glance

Land Used for Farming



Over the last 10 years, farms selling \$2,500 or less fell by 33% concurrent with significant increases in the number of those with annual sales levels between \$5,000-\$50,000 (2017, Census)



In 2007, 53% of farms had sales of \$10,000 or less and 65% of those generated under \$2,500 annually. This reality meant many farms were not self-sustaining (2017, Census)

#4

Ranking of Crop/Livestock Product Sold of 98 VA Counties

\$150,125,000

Market Value of Products Sold (Crop/Livestock)

Key AFID Needs

1. Research the viability and begin pre-development work that will successfully establish a locally-grown food supply chain and create a sustainable and profitable market for mid-sized producers.
2. Explore the viability and begin pre-development work that identifies opportunities for consumers, tourists and regional partners to participate in and build a community that focuses on health and wellness.



Project Scope

Problem Statement

The AFID grant was designed around the common challenge faced by roadside stands, farmer's markets, farm to table and other fresh food initiatives in Page County - few producers are growing for that market. The AFID planning funds for this grant were used to identify opportunities for mid-size producers and promote high quality local food to consumers. This involved exploring options to connect producers and consumers in ways that create a locally-grown food supply chain that benefits the farmers and community.

Project Objectives

The project objective was to identify and grow opportunities for mid-size producers and promote high quality local food to consumers. This involved exploring options to connect producers and consumers in ways that create a locally-grown food supply chain benefiting the farmers and community.

The broad and high-potential scope opened up an array of opportunities. This led to presenting 2-3 projects that would move the needle forward while assessing what was being done currently and how to sustain momentum by supporting ongoing and up-and-coming initiatives. This report summarizes the preparation of a strategic plan and implementation of pre-development work. It's delivered into action through a Gap Analysis and Suggestion/Action Plan. The Gap Analysis identifies the current state, desired future state, gap, and actions needed for this early planning project. In addition, the project elements and transformational trends, partners and stakeholders, funding sources, next steps, and a timeline are worked into the analysis. The Process and Assessment Methods section shares the process taken through the AFID Grant, and the Results shares the strategic plan, key resources and opportunities for next steps.

The results of these efforts will determine the feasibility of establishing a sustainable local food supply chain and establishing partnerships, identifying and securing resources (funding, suppliers, expertise, etc.), and initiating design of a multi-purpose community center (farmers market pavilion, commercial kitchen, community garden, educational and recreational activities, etc.).

Project Scope

Table 1: AFID Project Overview outlining project tasks, goals, and steps for assessment according to the grant.

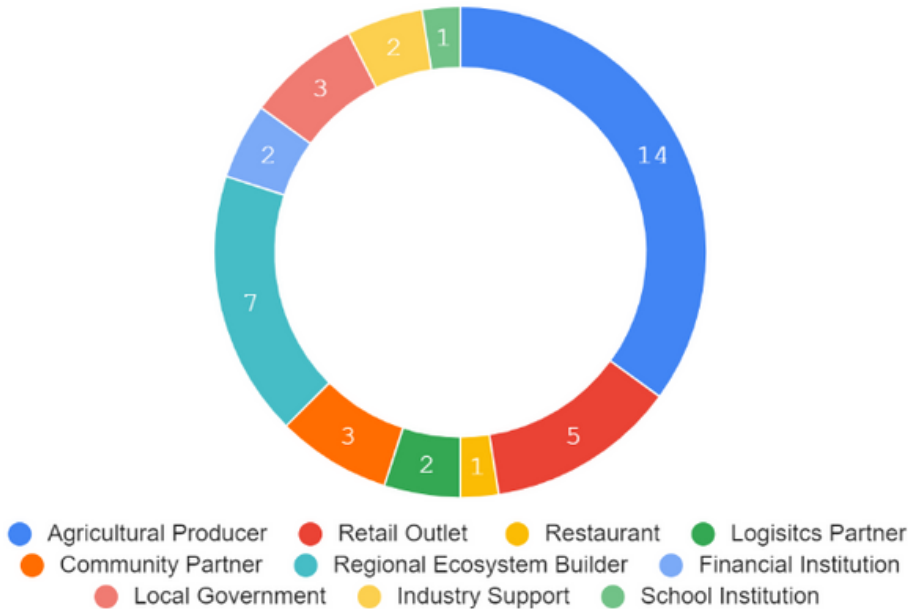
Task of Project	HOW
1) Research the viability and begin pre-development work that will successfully establish a locally-grown food supply chain and create a sustainable and profitable market for mid-sized producers.	(1) coordinate efforts that simultaneously support producers as well as (2) engage institutions, restaurants, grocery stores and consumers.
2) Explore the viability and begin pre-development work that identifies opportunities for consumers, tourists and regional partners to participate in and build a community that focuses on health and wellness.	(1) This initiative will be anchored by affordable, local fresh and value-added foods, home-based businesses and family farms, and food-related education (cooking, canning, etc.).

PROJECT MAIN GOAL: Pre-Development	Conduct a Gap Analysis to Research Viability of the Locally-Grown Food Supply Chain, Identify Strengths and Opportunities for Value Chain Integration for Local Farms, and Identify Strengths and Opportunities for Consumers, Tourists and Regional Partners
1	Research viability and identify opportunities for farmers to grow for local market (residents/tourists)
2	Research viability and identify ways for residents, tourists and regional partners to engage proactively in meaningful, economically viable and healthy community activities that include a focus on buying, growing and using local fresh and value-added food.

Process and Assessment Methods

Qualitative Data

Page County AFID Stakeholder Interviews

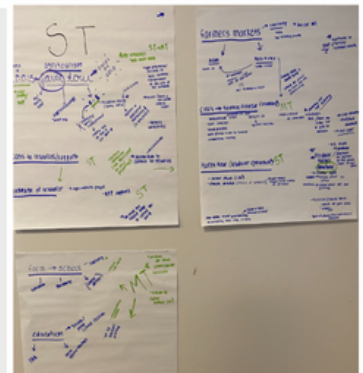
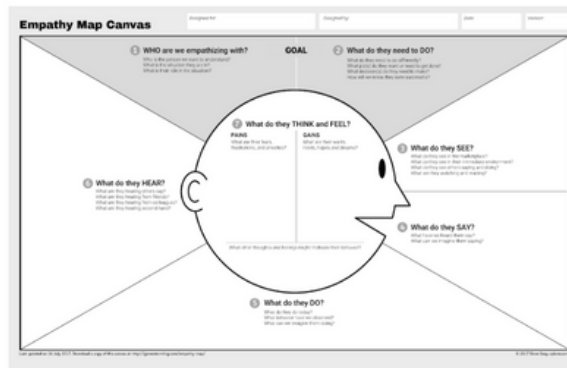


Over the three-month timespan of the AFID grant, 40 in-depth, qualitative community stakeholder interviews were conducted through the methods of in-person, phone, or video call meetings with community members engaging in the Page County food system producer or market relations. Included roles were Agricultural Producer, Community Partner, Retail Outlet, Restaurant, Logistics Partner, Regional Ecosystem Builder, Financial Institution, Local Government, Industry Support, and School Institution (Graphic 2: Page County AFID Stakeholder Interviews).

Graphic 2: Page County AFID Stakeholder Interview Industry Breakdown

Approach: Community Centered Voices

The approach followed asset-based community development and human-centered design research. In addition to conducting interviews, a community-centric in-person event was held with a diverse panel of food system related community members, collected surveys and had 3 focus groups (producer, market, and community organizations). (Graphic 3: Example of Community Empathy Mapping, Graphic 4: Mind-mapping community feedback and potential solutions)



Graphic 3 and 4: Image Examples of AFID Team exercises for community interviewing, brainstorming and connecting

Process and Assessment Methods

PRIMARY RESEARCH ANALYSIS: Emphasis on Qualitative Primary Research and Focus Groups

Three key areas were studied: 1. Producer Interest, Capacity, and Market Demand, 2. Distribution Logistics, and 3. Marketing and Communications. An intentional, and non-traditional approach was taken toward data gathering, outreach and coordination of communication for primary research. A heavy emphasis was placed on qualitative stakeholder interviewing and an in-person community-centered panel that shared unique and broad perspectives across Page County. A focus group for role and industry-specific feedback followed the panel as well as a digital and physical survey. All results are synthesized in the Results section (See: Gap Analysis page 41, Table 4: Market/Producer Stakeholder Interviews) and Project Outcomes (Table 8: In-Person Outreach Event Stakeholder Data Collection).

Outreach methods for interviews began with internal relationships within the producer, market, policy, nonprofit, local organizations, and key stakeholder groups. This approach included developing a comprehensive list of individuals throughout the community who provided multiple perspectives and experiences relevant to the area of study. In addition to the list of markets and producers, the consulting team identified a key regional support team that will be able to drive forward existing and emerging initiatives (See Table 9: Primary Interview Outreach List)

The marketing approach used to contact local organizations, producers, stakeholders and the community involved the distribution of flyers, word of mouth, and strategic partnership information sharing amongst local networks and relevant communities (Appendix page 48, Table 11: Market Outreach Methods)

These methods of communication were a success as evidenced by the community gathering that attracted more than 100 people. See Project Outcomes: Graphic 10: Page County AFID In-Person Outreach Event Interview Industry Breakdown. (Source: local newspaper, Page Valley News).

The greatest participation and feedback involved qualitative interviewing methods and in-person outreach as opposed to using digital and physical surveying.

methods of direct discussion and in-person outreach compared to digital and physical surveying.

Process and Assessment Methods

<p>Producers Interest, Capacity and Market Demand:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey farming community and home-based value-added businesses to determine interest and capacity to sell to the local market. This will include CSA opportunities and “pick your own” crop production. • Identify farmers’/businesses’ needs for resources and possible sources of funding • Identify interest and opportunities with farm markets, schools, hospital, grocery stores, hotels, resort/attractions, restaurants, wedding venues, etc. to purchase local goods • Identify interest and needs for local nonprofit organizations who purchase food: Page One, Choices, Valley Health, etc.
<p>Distribution Logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct interviews w/ assessing market demand and capacity [schools, hospitals, grocery stores, hotels, resort/attractions, restaurants, wedding venues, and nonprofits], • and (2) identify stakeholders, implement technology, and manage Page County pilot opportunities. • Explore use of regional resources • Develop concepts, identify funding sources and design a permanent farmers market structure and commercial kitchen. Identify local partners for funding and operations
<p>Marketing and Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research communities that have strong local food supply chains and identify successful branding and marketing campaigns that have established local producers in those regions.

Table 2: AFID Grant Objectives 1 and 2, Data Analysis Methods

To identify opportunities and research project viability for farmers to grow for the local market (residents/tourists/businesses/institutions) the team analyzed the following information.

Process and Assessment Methods

SECONDARY RESEARCH ANALYSIS: 2017 Census, Regional Meat Processing Report, County Level Data, and Shenandoah Ag Center Feasibility Report

Quantitative Data Limitation:

The five-year limit of time between censuses (2017) makes it difficult to track current and emerging developments in production. There are considerable data gaps in these studies at the local level due to confidentiality. This issue is especially troublesome when it comes to data on fruit and vegetable production in the Census of Agriculture. Many farmers do not report specialty crop production as reliably as commodity production. In addition, the USDA has placed higher priority reporting on the larger cash crops, so there are often gaps in this data. Moreover, since the Census of Agriculture uses sampling methods, the survey may only reach commodity farms in any given locale, thus overlooking or undercounting the actual number of vegetable growers. Since the last census, the economic impact of COVID-19, as well as other measurable changes, were not considered in the quantitative data. Due to these challenges, the team emphasized individual and focus group qualitative methods of data. The following chart provides relevant data sources that give context to the primary data.

Source, Date	Key Information/Purpose	Limitations
<u>Ag Center Feasibility Study Final Report, May 2021</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local demand for fruit and vegetables cannot be met by current production within Page County Page County meat and poultry/egg local production exceeds local demand, yet the demand within the state of Virginia and D.C demonstrates the regional demand that Page County could capitalize. Relevant area of opportunity for Page County noted during AFID qualitative interview - meeting demand for Egg (Interview: Policy B, noticed trend in free-range egg demand in Page County due to return vs space, disease, and processing cost). Appendix page 49 outlines key figures that are supportive for the AFID scope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No buyers or food businesses were interviewed or included from Page County Page County was the second to last represented county in the Shenandoah Valley (with 3 interviews) It is challenging to conclude results from such a small sample size of farmer/producer responses (3)

Process and Assessment Methods

Source, Date	Key Information/Purpose	Limitations
<p><u>Census of Agriculture County Level Data (Complete Report)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using census data, the assessment team gathered data on Page County's demographic and agriculture production context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 519 farms ◦ Avg size of farm: 139 acres ◦ 38% of farms are between 10-49 acres ◦ 24% of farms (122 farms) make less than \$2,500/year ◦ Poultry and eggs is the greatest producer, ranking in the top 100 of the US and 3rd in the state ◦ Greater than 25% of farms don't have access to internet ◦ 98% of farms are family farms ◦ 341 of the 881 producers are above 65, and only 58 producers being under 35 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The five-year limit of time between censuses (2017) makes it difficult to track current and emerging developments in production • There are considerable data gaps at the local level of these studies due to confidentiality (specially troublesome when it comes to data on fruit and vegetable production in the Census of Agriculture) • Many farmers do not report specialty crop production as reliably as commodity production. In addition, the USDA has placed higher priority reporting on the larger cash crops, so there are often gaps in this data • The Census of Agriculture uses sampling methods, therefore the survey may only reach commodity farms in any given locale, thus overlooking or undercounting the actual number of vegetable grower
<p><u>VA FAIRS Study of Small Volume Meat Processors</u></p>	<p>The American Farmland Trust collaborated with Piedmont Environmental Council on a project to interview the managers for 7 USDA inspected processing facilities within 2 hours of Fauquier VA. The team hired a consultant to tour those facilities and identify potential bottlenecks that the team could assist with overcoming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The biggest challenge to overcome was access to skilled labor. • The team then worked with the Rapp Center for Education to fund and plan a training program for meat cutters to take place in Rappahannock County. • They are finishing up with the first group of 8 meat cutters and we have received great feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not directly studying Page County

Process and Assessment Methods

Source, Date	Key Information/Purpose	Limitations
<p><u>VA FAIRS Study of Small Volume Meat Processors continued</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant area of opportunity presented in Interview with Community Support B: Skilled training is a bottleneck, and there is a need for a meat training program; Areas of Potential: equipment rental initiatives, utilizing USDA grants for smart commodity and marketing, solar panels on farms, agri-tourism, air-bnb experiences, and using current infrastructure for other enterprises • Resources: • https://www.ext.vsu.edu/mobile-processing-unit • https://ext.vsu.squarespace.com/events/2022/2/02/mobile-processing-unit-certification-program • VSU's mobile slaughter facility is an option for small ruminants (e.g.: goats and sheep) is. Producers can go through a training program and eventually use the mobile, USDA inspected facility at their farm 	
<p><u>Census of Agriculture County Level Data (Complete Report)</u></p>	<p>This data can be used to compare production sources across counties in more depth compared against the Page County Census Summary Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page County Summary: Page 14 • Poultry/Turkey: Page 14: majority of poultry inventory and sold is categorized as broilers and other meat-type chickens • This document outlines specific production of each vegetable, potato or melon for each county. Page 1 summaries all vegetable production which is increasing in Page County from 23 acres in 2012 to 48 acres reported in 2017. The majority of products report only one farm in Page County. • Market Value of Ag. Products Sold: Page 14: Opportunity for mid-sized farmers (most farm sales fall on the lower/upper ends) • New and Beginning Farmers: 201 farms with a new or beginning producer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Above: Page County 2017 Census Summary Limitations

Process and Assessment Methods

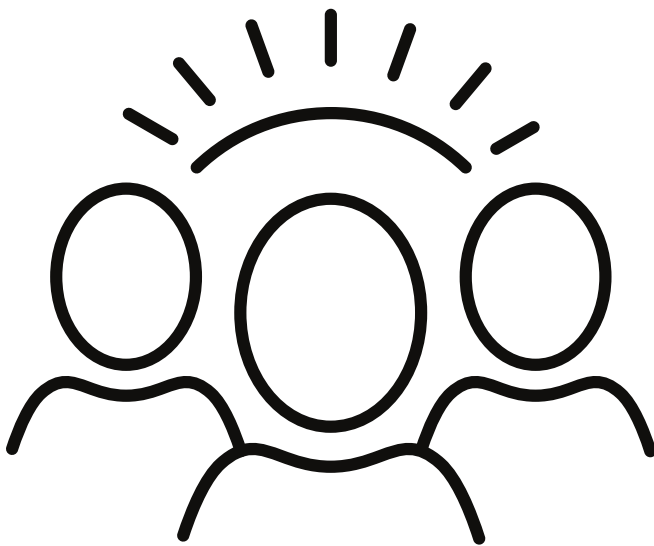
Asset and Priority Mapping

Local Food Network (LFN) used geospatial tools to identify high-priority areas for logistic partners, collaborations, programs and initiatives. Infrastructure and logistic partnership data was retrieved from the LOCAL-I GO Virginia Region 8 project. Land use maps were collected from the Page County Comprehensive Plan (Source Page County, 2020). Energy asset mapping (Graphic 8: Energy Asset Mapping) was created using Esri mapping tools (See: Project Outcomes, Infrastructure and Financing Opportunities for Page County Producers)



Future and Current Community Initiatives

As part of the community research and coordination of efforts, the assessment team identified and coordinated collaboration across businesses and local initiatives in effort to drive collective action between value-aligned organizations. The result of these efforts generated collaborations and the sharing of advice and support amongst 15 rising organizations and businesses. (See: Project Outcomes, Community Action)



Results

The assessment is organized into immediate, short term, and long-term categories of recommendations based on the opportunities and barriers identified in the Gap Analysis. These initiatives were identified by using the community input and data analysis in Table 5. In addition to the Gap Analysis and market/producer report data table, six key challenges were identified, and finally, a SOAR analysis was conducted to summarize all findings.

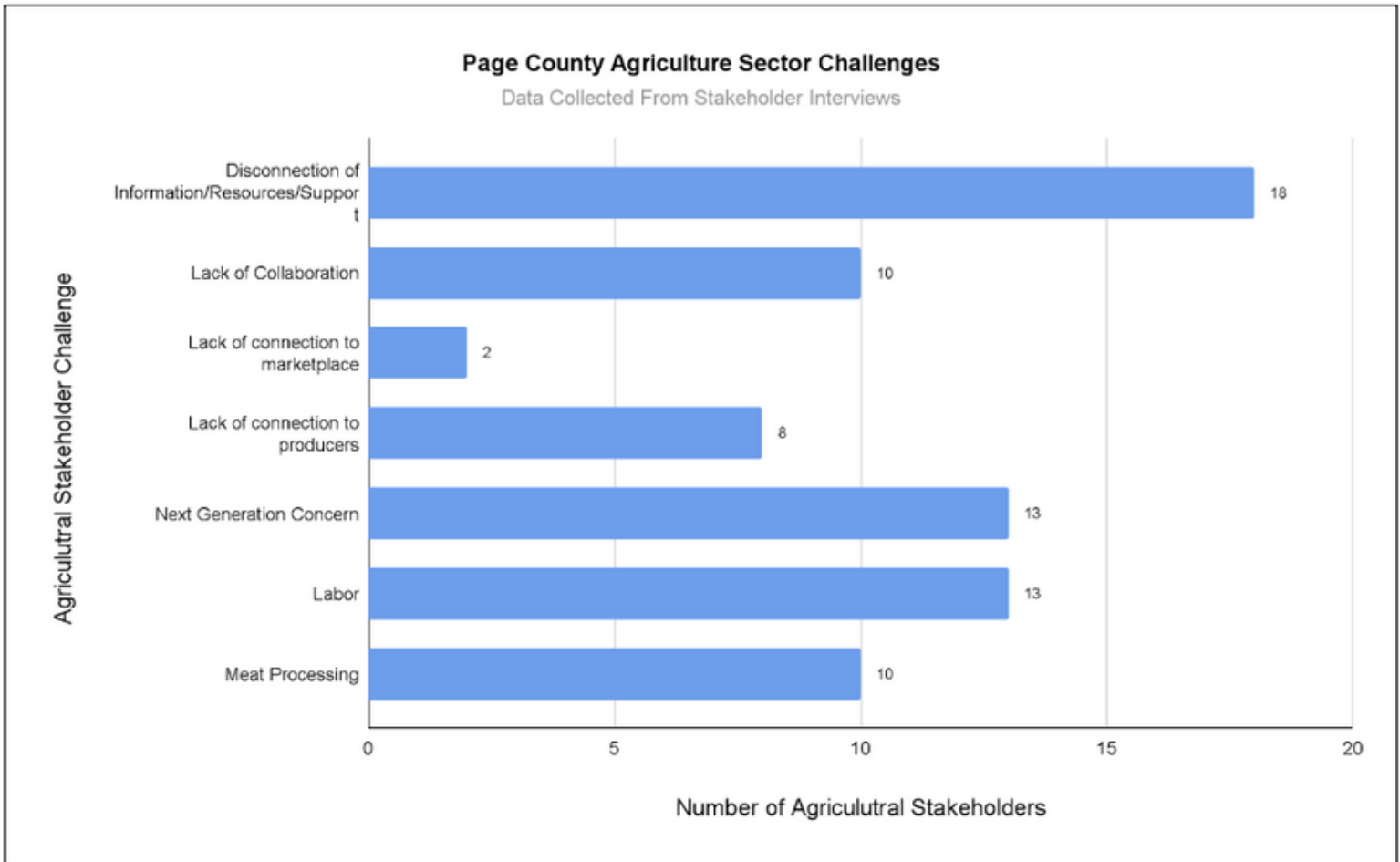
See Appendix, page 36 (Table 4): Market/Producer Interview Report Data Table for a comprehensive list of stakeholder and community outreach efforts conducted in the primary research phase of the study. The Table also highlights the Gap Analysis and market data collected.

Results

Seven Key Insights into Page County's Agriculture Sector Challenges

Chart 1: The Page County Agriculture Sector Challenges Chart

Challenges presented in the Gap Analysis are organized into six key categories: Disconnection to Information/Resources/Support, Lack of Collaboration, Lack of Connection to Marketplace, Lack of Connection to Producers, Next Generation Concern, Labor and Meat Processing. These are referenced in chronological order of the suggested implementation timeline.



Gap Analysis

See Appendix page 41 (Table 5): The Gap Analysis and Implementation Plan for the the immediate/short and long term goals that emerged through the AFID grant by identifying the gap between the current state and future state, and the suggestions for next steps.

Results

Infrastructure and Financing Opportunities for Page County Producers

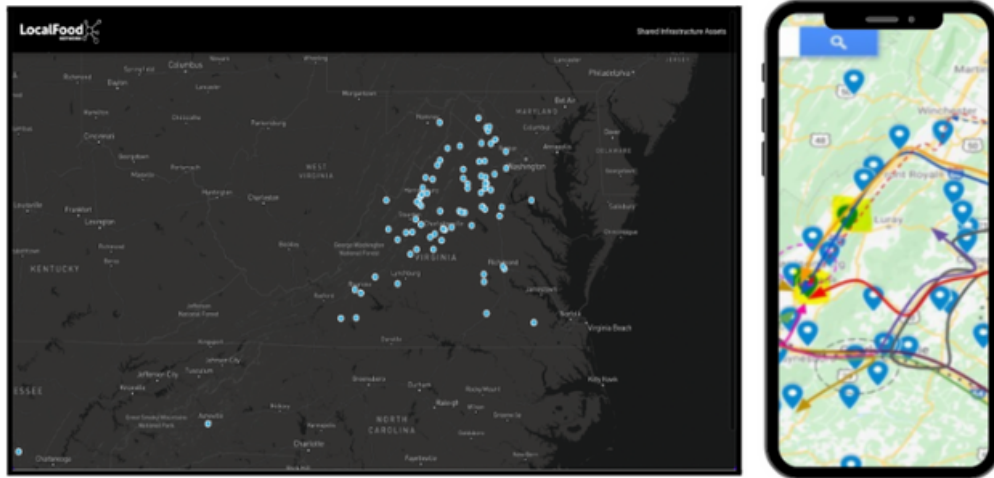


Figure 1: Screenshot of LOCAL-I Shared-Infrastructure Asset Map

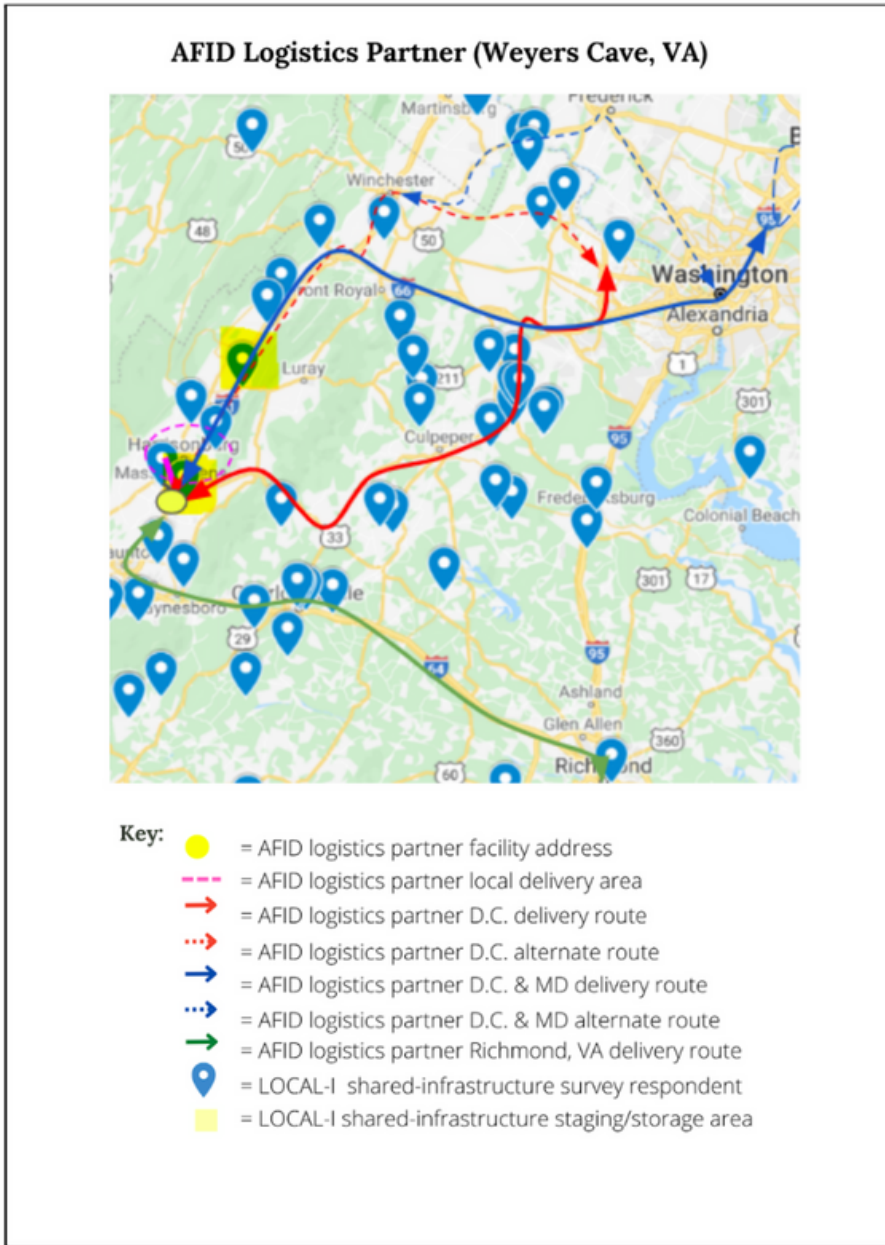
Logistic Partners

The AFID planning grant team identified small to large-scale logistical services, offered by farmers and rural small business owners, that can directly benefit Page County producers. By leveraging the Local Ordering, Communication, and Logistics Initiative (LOCAL-I), administered by the Common Grain Alliance and in partnership with Local Food Network and with support from GO Virginia Region 8, the AFID planning grant team identified shared-infrastructure opportunities for Page County producers (Figure 1). This includes dry or reefer truck space and dry or cold storage.

As for small to medium-scale logistical services, AFID personnel identified a rural small business owner located in Weyers Cave, Virginia who typically has a partially empty truck on the way to Washington, DC; Charlottesville, Virginia; and Richmond, Virginia, and the truck is usually empty on the way back as well. In response to this, the AFID planning grant team confirmed that the rural small business owner is willing and able to leverage their empty truck space to assist Page County producers via possible delivery and/or brokering services on a year-round basis (Figure 2). Additionally, 3,000 to 5,000 sq.ft. of cold or dry storage, located in Weyers Cave, Virginia and New Market, Virginia, has been identified near convenient exit ramps along interstate 81 (See: the staging/storage icon in Figure 2).

Results

Infrastructure and Financing Opportunities for Page County Producers



As for large-scale logistical partners, a rural small business owner, located in Edinburg, Virginia, has been engaged as a possible partner to expand the impact of Page County producers. The business owner is willing and able to assist Page County producers with the following services: (i) delivery services (Figure 3), (ii) staging, (iii) brokering (to small and large retail outlets), (iv) co-packing, (v) storage, and (vi) United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) meat processing.

Figure 2: A map of the AFID Logistics Partner Offerings. Note that brokering is an offering that is not pictured in the graphic above.

Results

Infrastructure and Financing Opportunities for Page County Producers

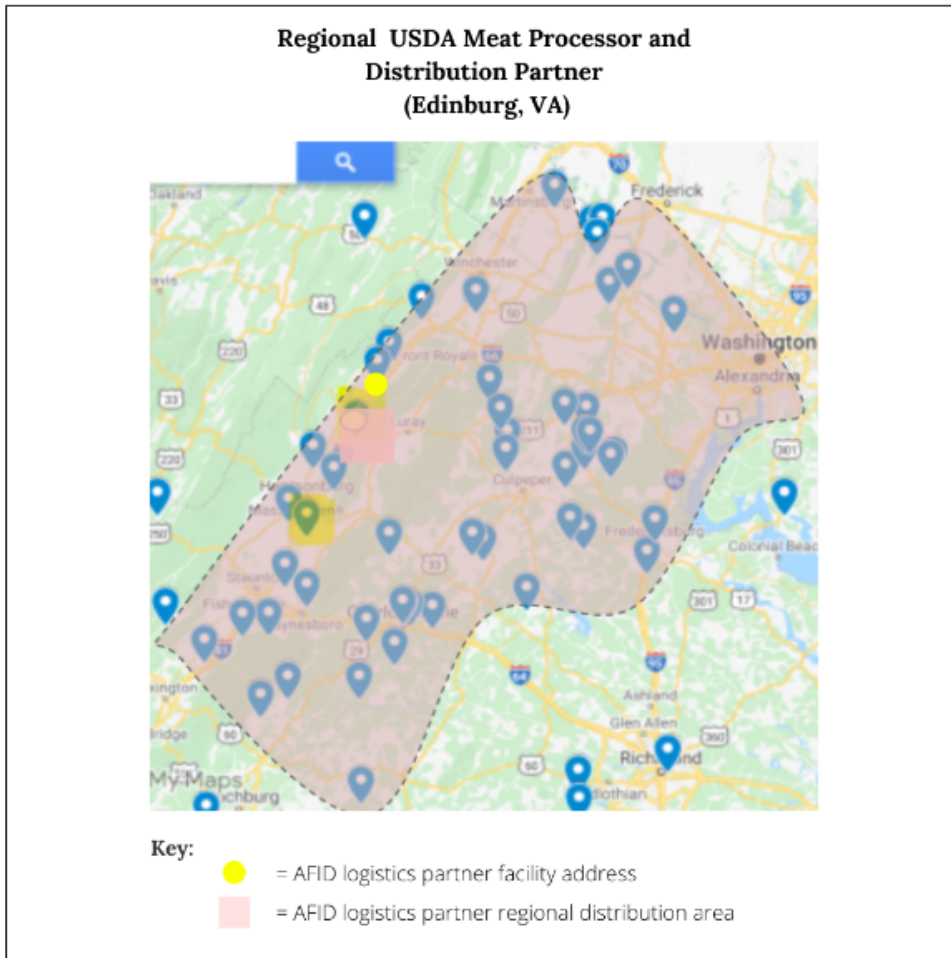


Figure 3: A map of the area that the AFID Logistics Partner can offer regional distribution

As for USDA meat processing, the rural small business owner is offering processing of beef, pork and lamb with USDA Label and Custom-Exempt (not for sale). This includes vacuum packed, frozen and boxed on site. They can design and add a Page County producer custom label and logo. They can also set up with other companies to have animals killed.

To address the backlog within Virginia's meat processing facilities, the rural small business owner intends to build a kill floor and function as a one stop shop for USDA processing (Figure 4).

Results

Infrastructure and Financing Opportunities for Page County Producers

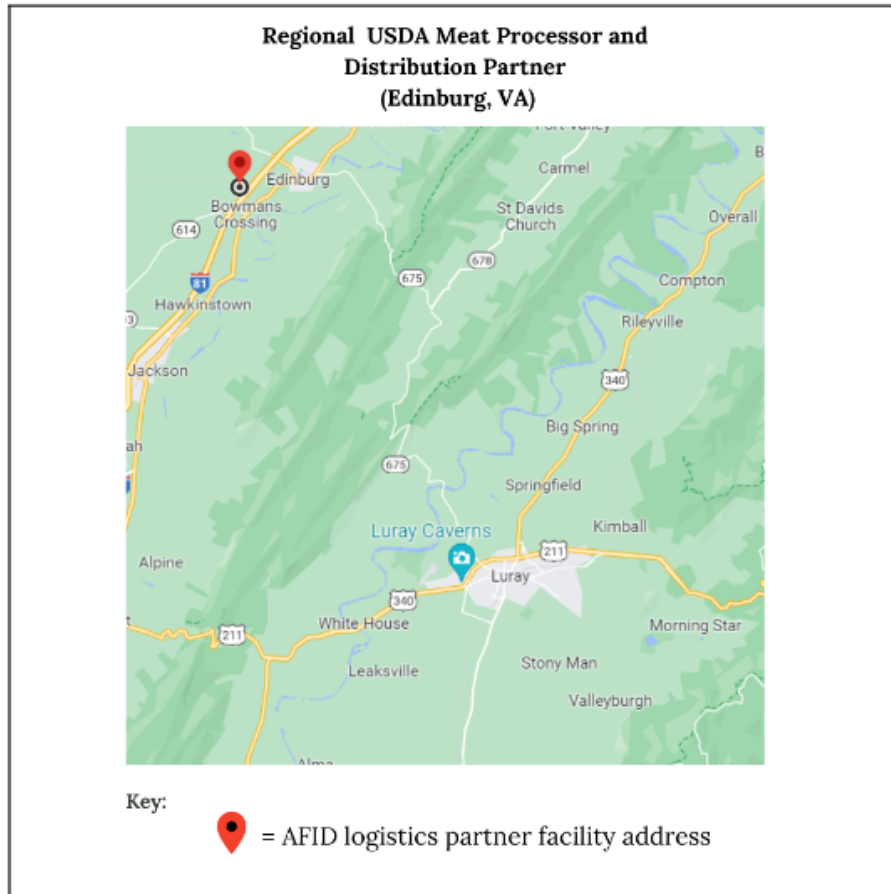


Figure 4: AFID logistics partner and USDA local meat (beef, pork, and lamb) processing facility and proposed kill lot location

However, in spite of the business having a special use permit to build the kill floor, the AFID team was informed that Virginia's Department of Transportation (VDOT) is halting the project due to driving infrastructure requirements that mitigate risk of traffic flow. The business owner is concerned with unnecessarily investing an estimated \$100,000 to improve their parking lot entrance, if other solutions could be implemented. VDOT is concerned with how an increase of trucks pulling into the facility parking lot can impact the driving risk. As a possible solution, stakeholders could explore decreasing the speed limit (e.g., replacing the traffic signs), instead of the small business spending \$100,000 to build a new parking entrance at their facility. This approach may allow all parties to: (i) mitigate risk for drivers, and (ii) enable the development of a local USDA processing facility that could benefit producers in Page County and beyond.

Results

Infrastructure and Financing Opportunities for Page County Producers

Funding Resources

Page County producers who wish to invest in community-scale storage, processing, or distribution assets are faced with the burden of high capital expenses and uncertain project feasibility, despite being eligible for financing options. In many cases, producers have indicated an unwillingness to commit the required upfront capital for community-scale infrastructure, as the economic feasibility is uncertain and the opportunity cost is high, especially when it means foregoing investment in other assets that are directly pertinent to their production (e.g., inputs, land, operational machinery).

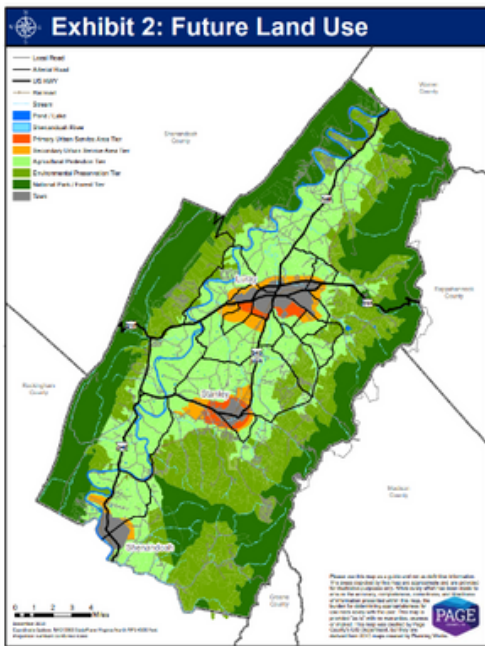
Since the opportunity cost of investing in certain community-scale infrastructure is perceived as uncertain and high for the small business owners, it is clear that there is a need to identify project specific feasibility studies and reliable financing options for community-scale infrastructure projects in Virginia. Such an approach would (i) alleviate immediate, short-term financing and community-infrastructure challenges for Page County producers and (ii) establish a vetted road map for sustainable, long-term industry growth.

To address this financing need, AFID personnel have identified a suite of financing mechanisms by engaging regional partners, including community development financial institutions (CDFI). For example, Foodshed Capital may be able to offer Page County Producers (i) 0%-interest rates on loan amounts up to \$10,000, (ii) 3-5%-interest rates on loan amounts up to 50,000-dollars, and (iii) Virginia Community Capital (VCC) has a local food loan program that provides a \$10 million revolving loan fund to address food projects throughout the state of Virginia. Additionally, (iv) AFID facility grants were recently expanded via House Bill 2068, which created the “AFID Infrastructure Program.” This new program awards matching grants of up to \$25,000 to develop the community-scale projects. For additional context, direct case studies from the AFID Infrastructure Program press release can be found below, and a local, state, and federal resource fact sheet has been included beneath as well (See: Appendix page 47, Table 10: 2021 Virginia AFID Infrastructure Program funded projects)

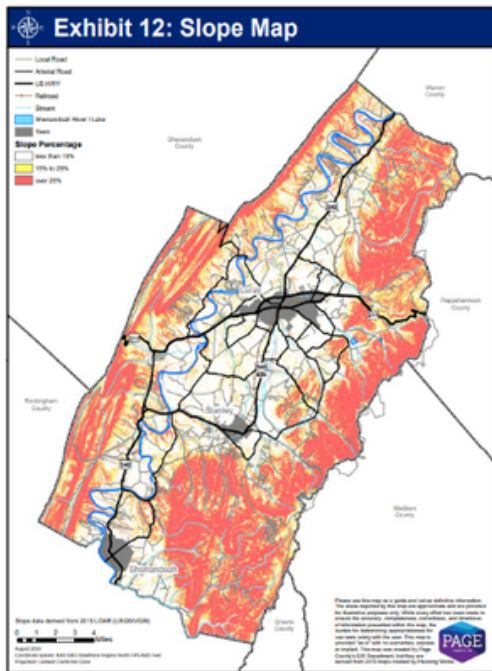
Results

Infrastructure and Financing Opportunities for Page County Producers

Land Conservation/Use



The topic of land conservation and land use was one that occurred frequently in conversations around preservation. In spite of the preservation of prime farmland being a clear priority in the Page County comprehensive plan, prime farmland is being threatened by various forms of development. Many agricultural producers have the concern that commercial development, utility -scale energy projects, and “hobby farms” are limiting and/or underutilizing prime farmland. Since utility-scale energy project development is a major shared concern with Page County stakeholders, the AFID team developed an energy asset map that displays transmission lines as the access to interconnection (e.g., accessing transmission lines) is a major characteristic of an economically viable utility-scale energy project. As can be seen in the energy asset map, the transmission lines intersect with prime farmland and should be kept in mind when discussing projects proposed by energy developers (Graphic 8: Energy Asset Mapping).

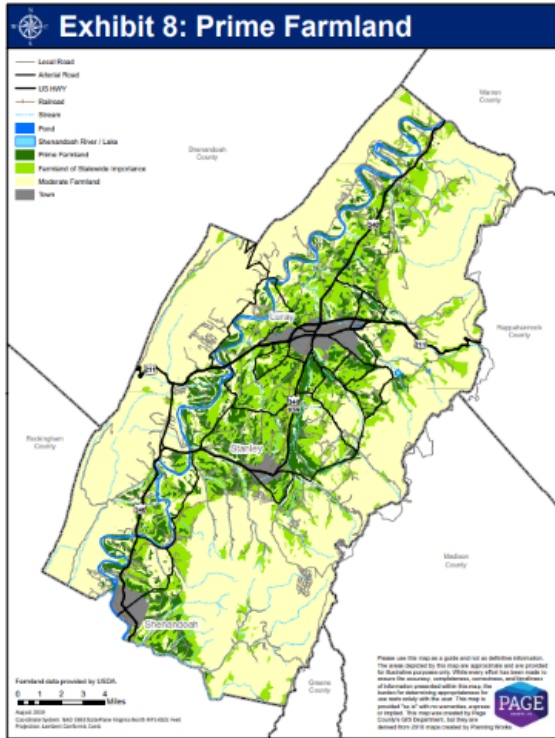


Graphics 5, 6: Mapping from Page County’s Comprehensive Plan

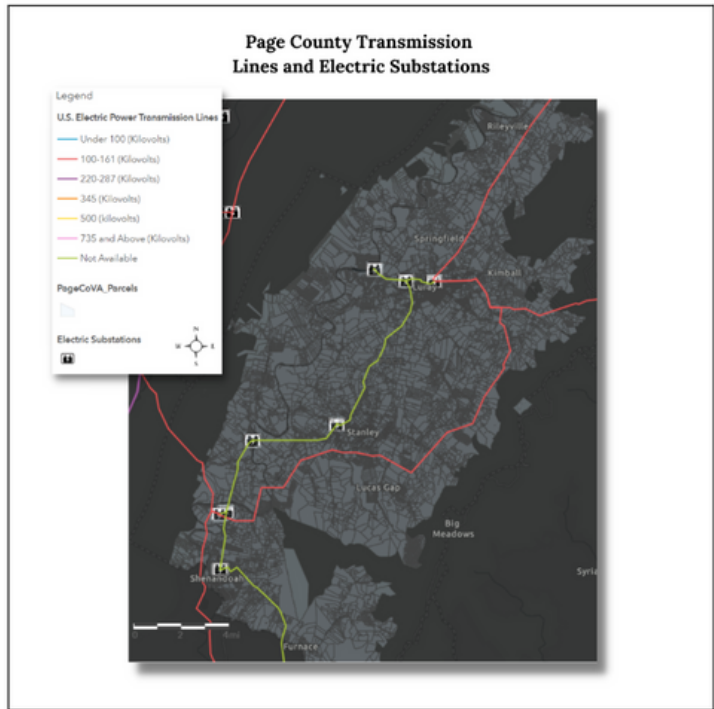
Results

Infrastructure and Financing Opportunities for Page County Producers

Land Conservation/Use



Graphic 7: Mapping from Page County's Comprehensive Plan



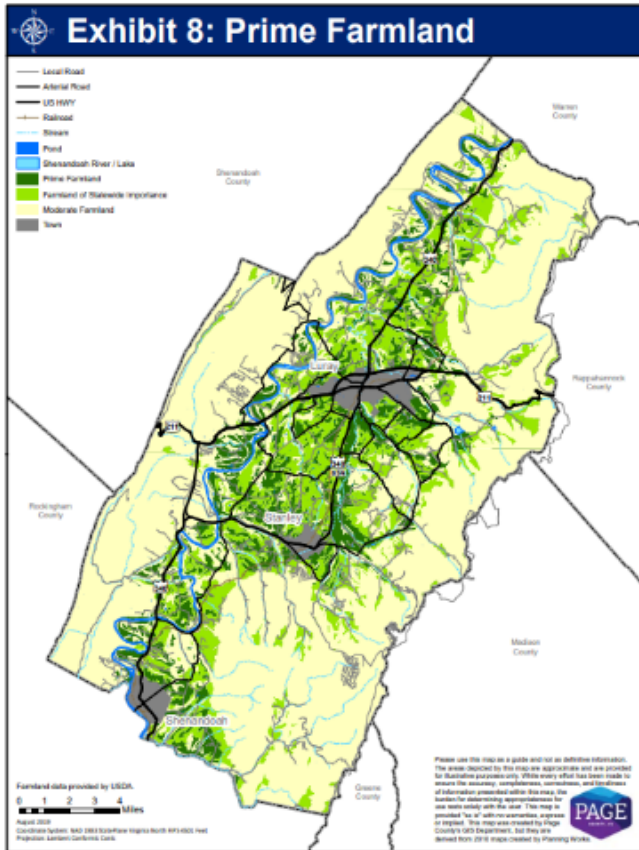
Graphic 8: Energy Asset Mapping

As a solution, the AFID team recommends working directly with the Virginia Outdoor Foundation (VOF) who can provide customizable land conservation easements that may be utilized in such a way to: preserve prime farmland on an unique case by case basis, ensure the parcel of land will be used for agricultural purposes, enable long-term agricultural building development (but not other commercial development), and allow for a flexible one-time parcel split for the farmer to sell a portion of their land in case of the land owner needs to liquidate their asset. See Graphic 5 Future Land Use, Graphic 6 Prime Farmland, and Graphic 7 Slope Map below, which includes mapping from the AFID team and from Page County's comprehensive plan.

Results

Infrastructure and Financing Opportunities for Page County Producers

Land Conservation/Use



As a solution, the AFID team recommends working directly with the Virginia Outdoor Foundation (VOF) who can provide customizable land conservation easements that may be utilized in such a way to: preserve prime farmland on an unique case by case basis, ensure the parcel of land will be used for agricultural purposes, enable long-term agricultural building development (but not other commercial development), and allow for a flexible one-time parcel split for the farmer to sell a portion of their land in case of the land owner needs to liquidate their asset. See Graphic 5 Future Land Use, Graphic 6 Prime Farmland, and Graphic 7 Slope Map below, which includes mapping from the AFID team and from Page County's comprehensive plan.

Graphics 7: Mapping from Page County's Comprehensive Plan

Results

SOAR ANALYSIS

The SOAR (strengths, aspirations, opportunities and results) Analysis was chosen over a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) in order to place emphasis on future-oriented activities for the benefit of developing strategic goals and clarifying the results derived from the 3 month timespan of the AFID grant. SOAR Analysis is provided for continued evaluation upon closure of the AFID grant (See: Appendix page 50, Graphic 18 page :).

Table 6: SOAR Analysis

<p>STRENGTHS: What can we build on?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich culture of farming in Page County • County support for agriculture • Wholesale market connection • Agriculture Subcommittee development • Community event success 	<p>ASPIRATIONS: What do we care deeply about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural preservation and continued education • Knowledgeable labor • Developing the next generation of farmers • Community advocacy around farming
<p>OPPORTUNITIES: What are our stakeholders asking for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and support for producer/buyer marketplace • Local networking and collaboration efforts • Business support (resources, RFP submitting, marketing, labor, regulations, grants) • Local meat processing facility • Community programming to develop local and next generation workforce as well as consumer engagement and increased local food tourism opportunities • Increased access to local, healthy food 	<p>RESULTS: How do we know we are succeeding?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing an increase in new and upcoming farmers • Increase in mid-sized producer growth • Increase in Farm to Fork initiatives and increased local spend from restaurants, businesses, and institutions • Marketing and identity around local food • Programming and education within the school system and local organizations • Local farmers markets • Producer/market communication • Diversity in product options on the market (e.g. canning, fruit, vegetables) • Utilization of community resources (further education, training programs, even attendance, website visits)

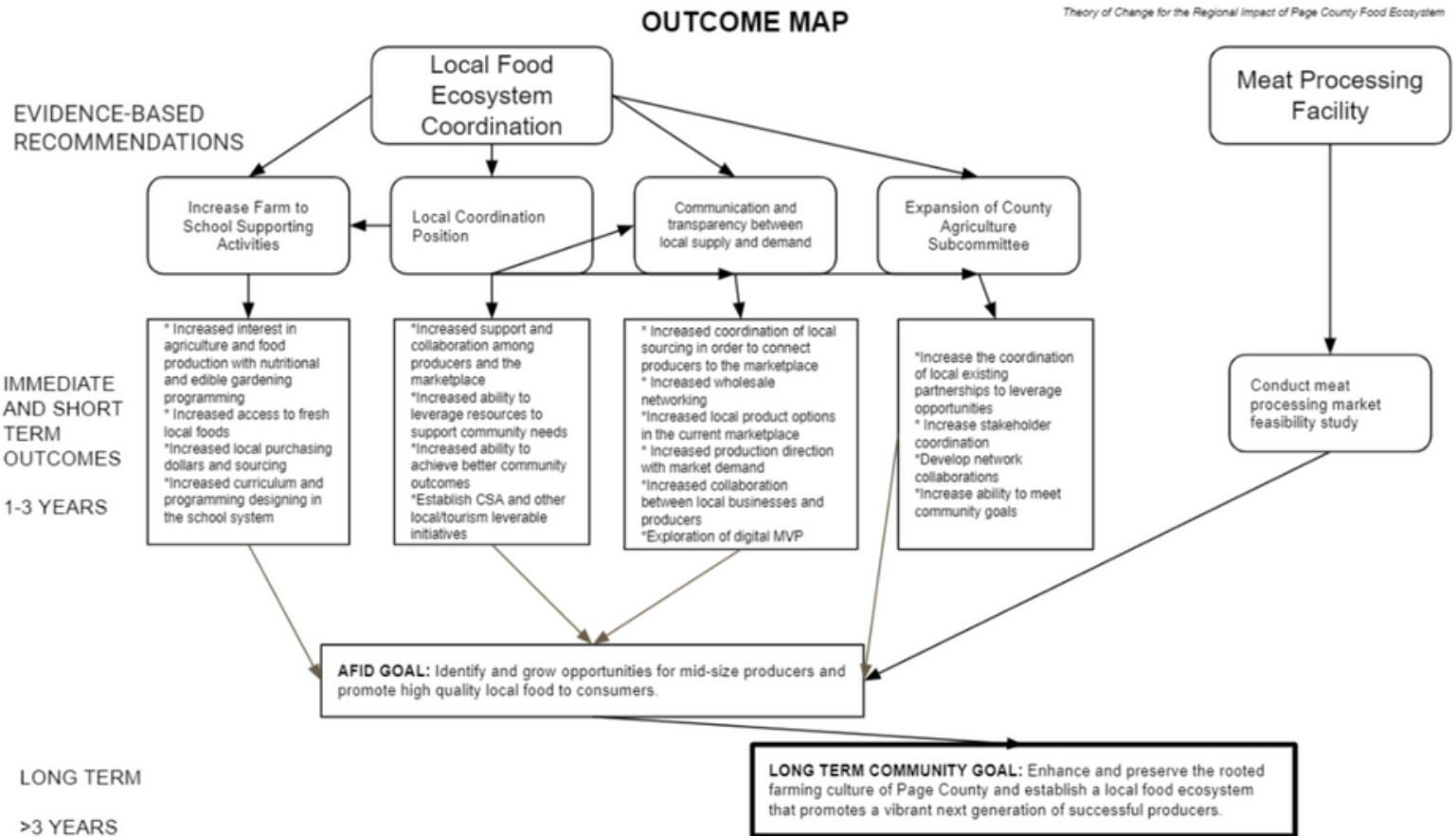
Results

OUTCOME MAP

Outcome mapping is a practice for approaching evaluative thinking and interconnecting social and systemic change. The Outcome Map puts the Page County community at the center, defines outcomes, and supports measuring complex change processes. The shared, long-term goal is to enhance and preserve the rooted farming culture of Page County and establish a local food ecosystem that promotes a vibrant next generation of successful producers. It is therefore critical to explore solutions in a dynamic and nonlinear way in order to see how relationships might need to evolve as organizations, producers, businesses and the community work together.

The three greatest recurring themes that arose during qualitative interviews was the lack of connectivity in: i. The marketplace (producers with purchasers) (See: Appendix page 46, Graphic 13: Value Structure Chart) and ii. Community coordination of initiatives; and iii. Lack of next generation continuation of the farming practices, businesses and culture of Page County. Without these three core activities, there are no opportunities for producers, and no high-quality local food for consumers or tourists. Only by developing a leadership position that coordinates value-chain and food ecosystem connection, in addition to a county-wide subcommittee to meet community goals and increase multi-disciplinary collaboration efforts, will efforts made throughout the AFID Grant sustain and advance long-term (See: Project Outcomes, Community Action).

Graphic 9: The outcome map connects strategies, with short and long term measurable outcomes in relation to the AFID and long term community goal.



Project Outcomes

Community Action

Table 7: Future and Current Community Initiatives

As part of the community research and coordination of efforts, the assessment team identified and collaboratively mobilized and/or supported the following 16 businesses and initiatives.

<p>VCE Farmer's Market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June–October, Wednesdays 1PM–5PM • Currently seeking vendors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Have received two applications back, with several others picking up applications • Project is partnered with PACA
<p>Shenandoah Farmers Market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized by Courtney Nelson • Has received permission from the town council to do the market at Big Gem Park • Recently established nonprofit “Daughters of the Stars Farmers Market” • Currently seeking vendors
<p>Homegrown Luray, LLC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sean Ryan is currently seeking to rent out his space to hold a market. • He has interest from several people to rent out the space and is meeting with them throughout the next week or so to get more details • He is also meeting with a few restaurant owners to be able to provide produce locally
<p>PACA Community Gardens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with youth and the community • Offering “Teach Me Tuesdays” for gardening education and “Free Market Friday’s” to provide produce to high food insecurity areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Have gardens in Shenandoah, Stanley, and Luray

Project Outcomes

<p>Formation of Agriculture Subcommittee under EDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-led by Dennis Flemming and Bart Price • Allows farmers a voice with local officials and in county decision making - their current focus is meat processing • Currently working to appoint members of subcommittee • EDA donated \$500 to future farmers market marketing signage
<p>Pre-School Greenhouse at Mt. Carmel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal efforts led by Nina Fox • Creates more opportunities around gardening education and inspiration for youth
<p>“Picked in Page”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted grant to provide expansion of storage in Massanutten Country Corner • Would provide CSA opportunities for locals (both at market level and to address food accessibility) • Would provide market connection to a handful of farmers through participation • Would provide SNAP/EBT benefits through Massanutten Country Corner • Merging with program through recreation center to engage support from youth to harvest produce and make boxes to be sold at Country Corner or to be handed out for “Porch Visits” through PACA • Partners with PACA, VCE, Massanutten Country Corner, Page Free Clinic, Valley Health, & Recreation Center • Possible opportunities to collaborate with rural small business owners who were identified via AFID interviews (e.g., Wadel’s Farm Wagon, Wholesome Foods, etc.) to expand the reach of this program, if needed or desired. For example, partnering storage facility owners and distributors could pick up CSA boxes (or D2C orders) and deliver them to a market in the Northern VA/DC area.

Project Outcomes

<p>Luray Elementary & Springfield Elementary Gardens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both schools have gardens and have teachers leading these efforts for education • Needing support for tending to gardens throughout summer • Potential to merge with “Picked in Page” programs • Provides food to cafeterias
<p>Fields of Gold Shenandoah Valley Farm Trail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agritourism initiative • Page County is a participant • https://www.fieldsofgold.org/
<p>4-H</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspiration for youth in agriculture • Can partner in creating youth programs and initiatives
<p>FFA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved in selling produce to community members • Currently selling local strawberries • Can be partnered with to provide more agricultural education and initiatives within school system • Regional Model <u>Example</u>
<p>Canning/Preservation & Cooking classes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current initiatives to combine local organizations wanting to offer classes and support in empowering community around food • Partnering with VCE, Page One, PACA, the Recreation Center
<p>PCPS Summer Programing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal being developed to create 3 week program to allow students to visit various farms in the county and learn agricultural skills

Project Outcomes

<p>Local Food Request for Proposal (RFP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Director of Nutrition Services is seeking to purchase local product for public school lunches
<p>Opportunity for grain producers in Page County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common Grain Alliance is willing to partner with Page County grain producers through their FRESHFARM's 2022 Spring Market Share
<p>Low Hanging Potentials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth program of 16-22 y/o with interest in farming, school official advocacy, hoop house/greenhouses grants to extend growing season, monthly gatherings for farmers, re-entry further connection of farmers to market/restaurant owners, classes/seminars around farming business formation, collaboration with Dayton Market to create "sister auction" in Page County, offering connection to farmers as community service opportunity for local drug court and sheriff's department

Project Outcomes

Business and Stakeholder Community Gathering

Table 8: In-Person Outreach Event Stakeholder Data Collection

The following list outlines the breakdown of stakeholder attendees who attended and signed-into the community gathering. Names and organizations are omitted for privacy purposes. Outcomes of this event included: gathering of over 100 people discussing needs and the future of farming for Page County, panel of diverse food system perspectives, the development of the Agriculture Subcommittee of the EDA, meat processing feasibility study exploration, ED Office grant specialist supporting local RFP applications, and collaboration on two county farmers markets.



Photo: Taken during Business and Stakeholder Community Gathering

Project Outcomes

Business and Stakeholder Community Gathering

Page County In-Person Outreach Event
Stakeholder Data Collected From Sign-in Sheet

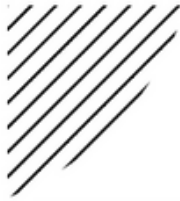


Graphic 10: Page County AFID In-Person Outreach Event Interview Industry Breakdown

StakeholderType	Qty.
Agricultural Producer	42
Community Partner	5
Financial Institution	1
Local Government	6
Virginia Cooperative Extension	3
Institutional Buyer	1
Local Press	1
Unidentified Role	9
TOTAL	68

Project Outcomes

Business and Stakeholder Community Gathering



PAGE COUNTY AG PRODUCER RESOURCES

FEDERAL + STATE + LOCAL



LOCAL RESOURCES



Figure 1. LOCAL-I shared-infrastructure asset map

Local Logistics Partners. The Local Ordering, Communication, and Logistics Initiative (LOCAL-I), administered by the Common Grain Alliance and in partnership with Local Food Network, has identified dozens of shared-infrastructure opportunities for Virginia food and beverage producers through a surveying effort supported by GO Virginia Region 8. This includes dry or reefer truck space and dry or cold storage that may be available for Page County producers. If you wish to explore this opportunity further, or share with LOCAL-I your own logistical needs or services that you can offer, please contact them directly at: local.i.program@gmail.com

Local Lending Partners. Virginia Foodshed Capital, certified by the U.S. Treasury as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), offers 0% to 5% loans to agricultural producers, including producers in Page County.

Contact them at: michael@foodcap.org, or learn more at: www.foodcap.org/

Local USDA Processing. Wholesome Foods, located in Edinburg, VA, is offering processing of beef, pork and lamb with USDA Label and Custom-Exempt (not for sale). This includes vacuum packed, frozen and boxed on site. They can design and add your own custom label, with your logo. They can also set up with other companies to have your animals killed. Please call for details: [1.800.723.6637 ext. 2](tel:1.800.723.6637)

Programs for Page County Grain Producers. The Common Grain Alliance connects and supports farmers, millers, bakers, and grain artisans to build a vibrant, integrated, equitable and regenerative grain economy in the Mid-Atlantic.

Growing Food Grain for the Local Market. CGA offers online videos and resources to address the educational barriers to growing grain for the local market.

Possible Market for Grain Producers. In partnership with FRESHFARM, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that operates the largest network of farmers markets in the Mid-Atlantic, Common Grain Alliance will conduct a grain stand pilot at farmers markets in the DC-metro area, with the goal of increasing consumer consumption of local grains. Contact: Libby Lyon, FMPP Project Manager, Email: [libby\(at\)commongrainalliance.org](mailto:libby(at)commongrainalliance.org).

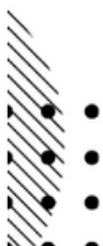
STATE AND FEDERAL RESOURCES

State Resource Highlights.

- **The Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund (VFFLF)** is a \$10 million revolving loan fund to address food projects in VA. Contact: food@vccva.org or [804.344.5484](tel:804.344.5484)
- **Small Business Development Center** offers dozens of opportunities that include consulting, training, and other resources. Contact: help@virginiabdc.org
- **Virginia Cooperative Extension** offers training and certification, education materials, and general support to Virginia's producers. Contact: [540.231.9347](tel:540.231.9347)

Federal Resource Highlight. The Farm Service Agency offers 1.5% to 3.2% loans (as of February 2022) to help farmers and ranchers get the financing they need to start, expand or maintain a family farm. Find the loan that's right for you at: www.farmers.gov/loans

RESOURCE FACTSHEET BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE PAGE COUNTY AFID PLANNING TEAM +
THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM OF PAGE COUNTY



Graphic II: Agricultural Producer Financial Resource Factsheet distributed to the local community at in-person outreach event, developed by AFID Assessment Team

Next Steps

AFID Phase II Mapping and Technology Pilot + Regional Efforts And Opportunities

Market Maker (MM) and Future Harvest (FH) offer online maps designed to connect buyers to farmers and markets, however, Page County is underrepresented on both maps. Though there are hundreds of producers in Page County, only one (1) agricultural producer is included on the FH map and only fourteen (14) producers are included on the MM map. Additionally, in spite of FH and MM providing the general public useful contact information, both website sites have limitations in regards to streamlining the process for buyers to understand what is available for purchase. Due to the lack of representation and data of Page County producers, and the limitations of each online map to display local food and beverage availability to buyers, there is a clear need to (i) initiate a data collection campaign for Page County producers (e.g., products, product availability, contact information, logistics information, etc.) and (ii) pilot and expand existing solutions such as Local Food Network (LFN) asset mapping technology to digitally aggregate farmer product availability and logistical information while increasing transactions between local producers and regional buyers, in a secure manner which respects the confidential data provided by producers. LFN technology is also being leveraged by other funded programs which allows Page County to collaborate with Food Works Group to support surveying and data collection efforts from Page County and the surrounding counties. This could inform future regional work as a proof of concept, including with the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative (EFC), who has been awarded an RFSP planning grant to take stock of regional supply chain and food hub assets to leverage resources, increase efficiencies, and identify needed infrastructure investments.

Additionally, the VDACS AFID analysis indicates that there are dozens of Page County agricultural producers and local food initiatives that are not coordinated, including the lack of coordination between local supply and local and regional demand. There are local institutions (i.e., schools and hospitals) and small businesses (i.e., retail outlets and restaurants) that are willing and interested to source local food (See: Outreach List, Interview: Institution A), but the buyers do not have systems in place to access products from Page County. Conversely, Page County producers report not having a strong enough local market to serve, even though there are compatible buyers willing to purchase their products. This lack of transparency and communication between local supply and demand further supports the need for a Page County data collection campaign and shows how important it is to expand and pilot LFN asset mapping technology to digitally aggregate local availability and increase the connectivity between stakeholders throughout the supply chain.

Conclusion

Page County is abundant with agricultural heritage, recognized for its pristine farmland beauty, a nationally ranked poultry and livestock performance level, and attracts tourists from around the world. The AFID Planning Grant confirmed there is promising potential to support small and mid-sized farms in the County. This focus will develop the farmers' access to local and regional markets, provide access to resources and development through a paid food ecosystem coordinator, and foster the next generation of farmers with emphasis on community and institutional programming. As a result these short and immediate term actions will cultivate the already prioritized tradition of farming, provide access to new market opportunities and lastly, strengthen the local food, farming and tourism economy. The implementation of local food system specific leadership, in addition to physical and digital infrastructure uniquely designed for the challenges of Page County, will be essential for sustainable and supportive change. Page County has the passion, geography, history, and community necessary for a thriving, vibrant local food economy; the AFID Planning Grant exemplifies what happens when the community is united under one common vision, what's needed next is the coordination of efforts to support these initiatives collectively across the County.



Appendix

Table of Contents

36 Market/Producer Interview
Report Data Table **Table 4**

41 Gap Analysis and
Implementation Plan **Table 5**

45 Farm to Plate Network
Graphic 12

46 Value Structure Chart
Graphic 13

47 Funded Infrastructure
Projects **Table 10**

48 Outreach Methods
Table 11

49 Ag Feasibility Study
References **Graphic 14, 15, 16**

50 SOAR Model
Graphic 17

50 Future Grant Funding
Abstract **Graphic 18**

Appendix

Market/Producer Interview Report Data Table

Appendix Table 4: Market/Producer Stakeholder Interviews

The following table is a comprehensive list of stakeholder and community outreach efforts conducted in the primary research phase of the study. The Table also highlights the Gap Analysis and market data collected. Names are omitted for privacy purposes.

EXTERNAL DATA						
Interviewee	Role	Products	Markets			Gap
			Challenges	Opportunities	Customers/Partners	
Local Farmer A	Cattle Farmers	Beef, hay	Struggle to be successful in market, having to work full time jobs in addition to farming	Transitioning/developing other approaches to farming	Gores, no current customers	Support and access to resources, local processing for beef, business development
Local Farmer B	Cattle/Dairy Farmer	Beef, dairy, dirt, wood shavings	Regulations, farm succession, local meat processing, lack of support from county	Created own business to sustain farming, local meat processing facility, community advocacy for farmers	Local farmers, businesses, organizations	Education for succession farming, farmers and elected officials, education on regulations, beef processing
Local Farmer C	Dairy Farmer	Milk & dairy products	Labor, support for farmers	Connecting to labor, community advocacy/education around farming	Contracted with Moala	Care for farming among generations, labor, support for farmers
Local Farmer D	Cattle Farmer/Tucking Business	Beef, transporting cattle	Farming resources, struggles with process of succession, local meat processing	Local processing facility, educational opportunities around farming, bringing back farming skills	Gores, local family processing, local farmers needing support with transporting cattle	Connection to education, resources, meat processing
Local Farmer F	Cattle Farmer	Beef	Labor, county support for agriculture, collaboration among farmers, policy advocacy for farmers	Combining efforts among farmers, agricultural representation among local officials, bringing skill opportunities (i.e. butchering and processing) to community		Representation of agriculture on local councils, policy advocacy for farmers
Restaurant Owner	Owner	Coffee Shop/Bakery	Don't know how or where to order produce; not connected to producers; With a rotating menu they would use tomatoes, berries, milk, cheese and mushrooms; need a pricing sheet of availability and open market communication	Opportunity for wholesale market and connection of producers to businesses; Approach next generation/young farmers at Page County Farmers; Delivery system to get local product (restaurants need an ordering system); Need for two-way conversation on a platform where markets share their demand and farmers/producers can support supply	Right now goes the farmers markets to find producers to purchase local product; Bread from Woodstock	Communication between farmers and markets re: supply/demand; developing awareness of availability and communication around making orders

Appendix

Market/Producer Interview Report Data Table

Appendix Table 4 continued

EXTERNAL DATA						
Interviewee	Role	Products	Markets			Gap
			Challenges	Opportunities	Customers/Partners	
Local Farmer E	Horse farmer	Horses	Cost of land, lack of incentives for farmers, lack of support for farmers,	Looking at other successful models	-	Incentives, support around local processing and approaches to this
Market Owner A	Farmers Market Owner	Local products	Finding location, vendor contact, resources for starting	Need for local food and to support local farmers/vendors	VA Ext. Office, PACA, Page One	Resources, connecting with farmers
Local Grower/Market Owner	Produce Market Owner	Farm grown produce	Support for small farmers, market pricing, weather changes, struggles to maintain with aging	Community/policy advocacy for farmers	Locals, tourists, campers	Market prices for small farmers, succession of business
Business manager/Local Farmer	Produce grower/Co-op manager	Berries, asparagus	Labor, inspiring next generation, farmer's to plan, lack of county support for agriculture, lack of growers, lack of produce diversity	Educational opportunities for youth, collaboration among farmers, encouraging more growers, expanding markets	Locals, tourists, Page County Public Schools, Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction, Page Farmer's Association, local farmers	Produce similarities, need for more growers for market, county support for ag
Community Support B	Meat Processing Researcher		Bottleneck in processing; skilled labor	Access to education/training programs		Training programs to fulfill labor shortage
Local Farmer G	Cattle Farmer	Beef, soy beans, corn	Labor, access to/lack of local market, regulations, county support of tourism over agriculture	Connecting to regional market, education among financing for farmers	Gores, Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction, local processing facilities, local farmers	

Appendix

Market/Producer Interview Report Data Table

Appendix Table 4 continued

EXTERNAL DATA						
Interviewee	Role	Products	Markets			Gap
			Challenges	Opportunities	Customers/Partners	
Local Farmer H, Farmer's Association	Cattle Farmer, Trucking Business Owner, Farmer's Association President	Beef, cattle transportation	Lack of inspiration/education for youth, local meat processing	Bringing educational programs to local agriculture classes	Gores, local processing facilities, local farmers needing support in transporting cattle	Youth into farming
Market Owner B	Owner/Founder	Local Goods	Challenge in selling produce when organizations will give it away for free; no functional orchard (and wants to sell local fruit like apples, red/golden delicious); challenge to find produce producers; lack of cultural farming emphasis (particularly around canning/preservation); lack of understanding around consumer demand	Apple growers, canning/preservation classes, retail ready bags of frozen produce (fruit/veg), companies to accept WIC (or else they really struggle)	Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction; Valley Produce and Supply (for equipment)	Data around availability or expressing demand in order to drive production in the county

Appendix

Market/Producer Interview Report Data Table

Appendix Table 4 continued

EXTERNAL DATA						
Interviewee	Role	Products	Markets			Gap
			Challenges	Opportunities	Customers/Partners	
Local Farmer I	Cattle Farmer	Beef	Gentrification (land prices going up), lack of collaboration among farmers, local meat processing, lack of support for small farmers, current inflation on farming needs	Collaboration among farmers, education on farming in Page County	Local meat processing facilities	Lack of connection between locals and those moving to community, meat processing, advocacy/support for farmers
Local Farmer J, Teacher	Cattle and Sheep Farmer, Educator	Beef, sheep, wool, education	Lack of local meat processing, education for youth in farming	Bringing in agriculture education at a young age, local processing facility, incentive for farmers to participate in group efforts	Local meat processing facilities, Page County Public Schools	Education, local resources, meat processing, farming succession support
Market Owner	Owner/Founder	Local Goods	Capacity: Staffing shortage; - Time/Skills for marketing: not enough people know about their business; trouble finding/being connected with growers in the County	- See's viability for many additional revenue streams and partnerships with the support of labor and a larger team; marketing and awareness could be increased by strategic partnership connections; thorough local sourcing document/supply list on website; having their own teaching garden to promote growing in Page County; putting up a greenhouse to grow their own food; being connected with local interns/students to support in marketing or/and gardening	50% local market, 50% tourism market;	

Appendix

Market/Producer Interview Report Data Table

Appendix Table 4 continued

EXTERNAL DATA						
Interviewee	Role	Products	Markets			Gap
			Challenges	Opportunities	Customers/Partners	
Nonprofit Director A	Nonprofit	Workforce, resource connection and education, local food pantry	Food access, cooking/preserving education	Connecting to local farmers and other gardens	VA Extension Office, PACA, Recreation Center	Connection to farmers, county support for local food hub
Nonprofit Director B, School Board	PACA, School Board Chairma n		Connection to local, healthy food	Community Gardens, youth involvement in local markets, gardening/cooking/preserv ing education	VA Extension Office, Page County Public Schools, Choices, Recreation Center	Connection to local food
Local Farmer K	Producer s	Hydroponi c Lettuce (produce)	Labor	Connecting to other farmers and community for support	Massanutten Country Corner, Page County Public Schools, local markets	New to community, not very tapped in
Local Farmer L, Market Space Owner	Business Owner	Locally grown produce	Access to larger market in Page County, struggle to find vendors to run market	Creating a local farmers market, connecting/encouraging producers	Locals, tourists	Not from Page County, vendors for market, building market in Page County
Vineyard Owner	Business Owner	WIne	Upcoming farmer	Connecting to community, labor, support in establishing vineyard	Locals, tourists	Not much experience farming
Master Gardener	Communi ty Garden Coordina tor	Gardenin g Education	Local, healthy food	Community gardening & gardening education	PACA, VA Extension Office	Connection to other farmers/growers/organizat ions
Local Farmer M	Business Owner	Farm Produce, Wedding, Cattle, Agritouris m, Farm to Table, Hospitality, Horseback Riding	Electricity prices, marketing and infrastructure, affordable and knowledgeable labor, organic farming support and supplies, finding market for crops	Electric relief/fund small solar project, a county person to find market for producers, a local farmers market, farm to fork gathering to connect growers and restaurants		Resource support, labor, education, market connection

Appendix

Gap Analysis and Implementation Plan

Table 5: The Gap Analysis defines the immediate/short and long term goals that emerged through the AFID grant by identifying the gap between the current state and future state, and the suggestions for next steps.

<p>IMMEDIATE + SHORT TERM</p> <p>Local Food Ecosystem Coordination: <i>leading community collaboration, + communication</i></p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION</p>	<p>CURRENT STATE</p>	<p>DESIRED FUTURE STATE</p>	<p>GAPS</p>	<p>SUGGESTION</p>	<p>ACTIONS</p>
	<p>1</p> <p>Hire Local Food Ecosystem Coordination Position</p>	<p>63% of farmers said that they did not feel connected to resources/support</p> <p>“There really is a lot of potential here. We just need someone to come in and connect it all together. Us farmers are too busy to do it.” <i>Local Farmer F</i></p> <p>Many of the educational and business resources are unknown in a time of skyrocketing input costs, reduced reliable labor, and increased pressure on farms/business owners</p>	<p>Support and collaboration among producers and the marketplace</p> <p>Leverage resources to support community needs</p> <p>Ability to achieve better community outcomes</p> <p>Coordinate local/tourism levevable initiatives</p>	<p>During the AFID community gathering event: “There are so many more local resources and /like-minded individuals than I previously knew off!”</p>	<p>Applying for local food promotion grant funding would support the facilitation of connecting farmers to local and regional market and support community upward economic mobility link</p>	<p>Apply for grant funding for coordination position (See Appendix, Graphic 18 , for example)</p> <p>Example Model of Programming Supporting Upcoming Farmers link</p>
	<p>2</p> <p>Create Communication and Transparency between Local Supply and Demand</p>	<p>The limited access to market connections leaves business owners feeling that the market doesn’t exist</p> <p>83% of farmers/market owners expressed that they did not feel connected</p>	<p>Producer and market connection and collaboration to allow for a successful, vibrant local food system for the local community and regional outlets</p>	<p>Connecting the demand and communication from local markets (ie Mass. Country Corner, emerging Farmers Markets, Farm to School sourcing, local restaurants), with the supply from local producers.</p>	<p>Applying for local food promotion grant funding would support the facilitation of connecting farmers to local and regional market</p> <p>Create an MVP that is a producer/market database to increase coordination and transparency of availability/demand in order to connect producers to the marketplace</p> <p>Producer/market database</p>	<p>Leveraging other existing programs and strategically collaborating with Food Works Group on the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative (EFC) geospatial tool initiative - enabling Page County producers to be embedded in a regional network that intends to increase agricultural economic impact across the Mid-Atlantic region</p> <p>Example of Model Site link</p>

Appendix

Gap Analysis and Implementation Plan

Table 5 Continued

<p>IMMEDIATE + SHORT TERM</p> <p>Local Food Ecosystem Coordination: <i>leading community collaboration, + communication</i></p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION</p>	<p>CURRENT STATE</p>	<p>DESIRED FUTURE STATE</p>	<p>GAPS</p>	<p>SUGGESTION</p>	<p>ACTIONS</p>
	<p>3</p> <p>Development of County Agriculture Subcommittee</p>	<p>"There are many separated efforts- organizations are doing similar things that are not connected" Local Farmer I & Nonprofit Director → <i>Lack of connection to funding, connection to viable farming options</i></p>	<p>Collaborative mindset between producers</p>	<p>"The key is getting everyone together at the same point and on the same page" - Local Farmer F</p>	<p>Expand the Ag Council to support coordination of Page County's food ecosystem by leveraging partnerships, stakeholders, and collaborative networks (e.g. roles across nonprofits, economic development, conversation, food access, business owners, VCE extension officers, institutions, farmers, producers, etc.).</p> <p>Establishing collaborative programming with local organizations (e.g. farm labor support, higher education training, and apprenticeships; rehabilitation/service programs for community to help farmers; advancing food access and community food security)</p>	<p>Action Taken: Ag Council was created</p> <p>Apply for Grant Funding: Food systems leadership and value-chain coordination of Page County's food ecosystem by leveraging partnerships, stakeholders, and collaborative networks (e.g. EDA, Ag Subcouncil, facilitation of networking)</p> <p>See: <i>Appendix: Resource for Building a Food System Steering Committee</i></p>

Appendix

Gap Analysis and Implementation Plan

Table 5 Continued

<p>IMMEDIATE + SHORT TERM</p> <p><i>Emphasis on Cultural Preservation and Farming in Page County</i></p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION</p>	<p>CURRENT STATE</p>	<p>DESIRED FUTURE STATE</p>	<p>GAPS</p>	<p>SUGGESTION</p>	<p>ACTIONS</p>
	<p>1</p> <p>Expansion of Community Programming</p>	<p>"We are 7 generations removed from farm to table. Average person has no idea where food comes from" - Local Farmer C</p> <p>Next generation of farmers are not taking on the farms</p> <p>48% of farmers shared concern over the lack of food system education for upcoming generation</p>	<p>"Importance of getting youth back to these skills, bringing in classes and education to teach people value of self-sufficiency" - Local Farmer D</p> <p>"Bringing back what was in the culture and lost" - Regional Market Owne</p>	<p>Next generation knowledge of food system, connection to food, involvement in agriculture/education</p>	<p>School gardens & gardening education</p> <p>Agritourism business development support (example model) link</p> <p>Fields of Gold</p> <p>Apprenticeships with farmers for agriculture</p>	<p>Gardening/Preservation/Culinary Education</p> <p>Involvement of farmers in educational opportunities (e.g. organic farming, regenerative ag education program example) link</p> <p>Establish community education partnerships, (e.g. Fauquier Education Farm, local colleges/universities), link</p>
	<p>2</p> <p>Farm to School Programming Support</p>	<p>Farmers and school system are not connected to bring produce to school cafeterias</p> <p>School gardens are not sustainable due to lack of capacity of school staff to maintain</p> <p>Upcoming generations are disconnected from local food system</p>	<p>"This is about building from the ground up, and that means engaging and empowering the next generation" - Round Table Attendee</p>	<p>Next generation knowledge of food system, connection to food, involvement in agriculture/education</p>	<p>Support local growers and producers with RFP to develop farm to school institutional sourcing partnerships</p> <p>Grant fund after-school gardens & garden programming</p>	<p>Economic Development office support with RFP applications</p> <p>Pilot curriculum with identified school partners (See: Community Action) link</p> <p>Example Model of Farm to School Hub</p>

Appendix

Gap Analysis and Implementation Plan

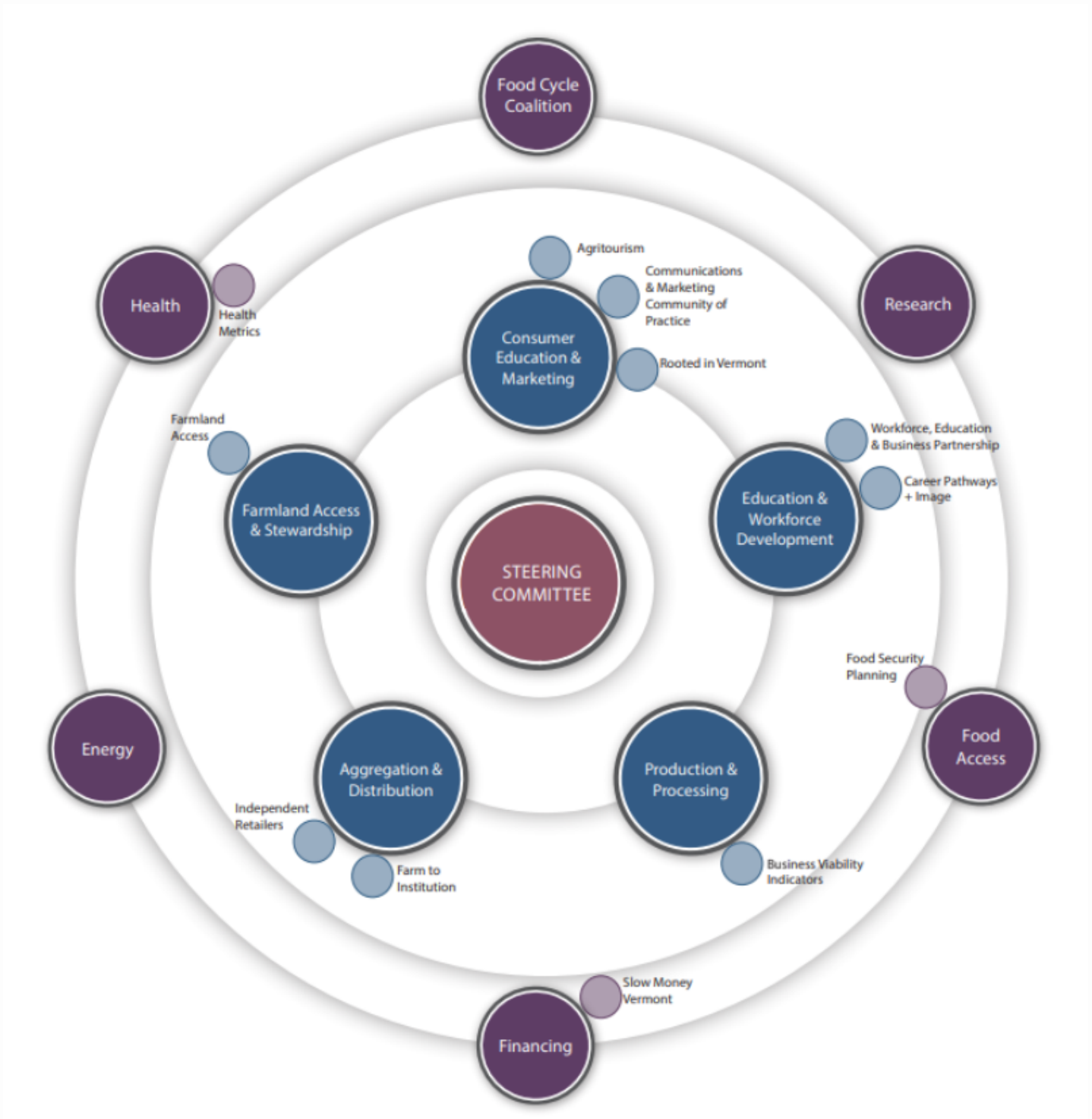
Table 5 Continued

<p>LONG TERM</p> <p><i>Local Food Facility Infrastructure to Support Increased Production, Processing, and Logistical Expansion</i></p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION</p>	<p>CURRENT STATE</p>	<p>DESIRED FUTURE STATE</p>	<p>GAPS</p>	<p>SUGGESTION</p>	<p>ACTIONS</p>
	<p>1</p> <p>Develop Localized Livestock Processing Facility</p>	<p>"Private individuals do some butchering here in Page County. They can butcher beef for you but not for you to sell . With butchering to sell you have to go through inspection and stuff like that which can be a lot for most farmers." - Local Farmer D</p> <p>44% of farmers shared struggles with accessing, maintaining, and/or supporting labor</p>	<p>"Labor on farm-most people want \$20 an hour to start off. Farmers can't do that." -Small Business Manager/Local Farmer</p>	<p>"We need something that is hands-on and immersive to bring skills to the community."- Local Farmer J, Teacher</p>	<p>Marketing Feasibility Study for Livestock Processing Facility</p>	<p>Collected and presented data on local livestock processing study (See: Qualitative Data)</p>
	<p>2</p> <p>Design of a Multi-Purpose Community Center (Food Hub)</p>	<p>In line with the emphasis of lacked connection to a marketplace/local product, markets are seeking local "canning/preservation" Market Owner B, and growers are seeking "marketing and infrastructure", "a local farmers market", and "bringing local restaurants and growers together for a farm to fork" - Local Farmer M</p>	<p>A connected marketplace with a consolidated one-stop-shop of resources and support for the community and tourism opportunities</p>	<p>A physical infrastructure to conduct classes, workshops, sell product</p> <p>People to coordinate</p>	<p>Grant funding support to develop physical infrastructure</p> <p>Farmers market pavilion, commercial kitchen, community garden, educational and recreational activities, etc.</p>	<p>Approval by food school system to pilot test local food distribution</p> <p>Pilot and measure community distribution capacity through a Farm to School Hub</p>

Appendix

Farm to Plate Network

Graphic 12: Resource and interdisciplinary model for key roles necessary when developing the Ag Council (Source: VT Farm to Plate Network,)



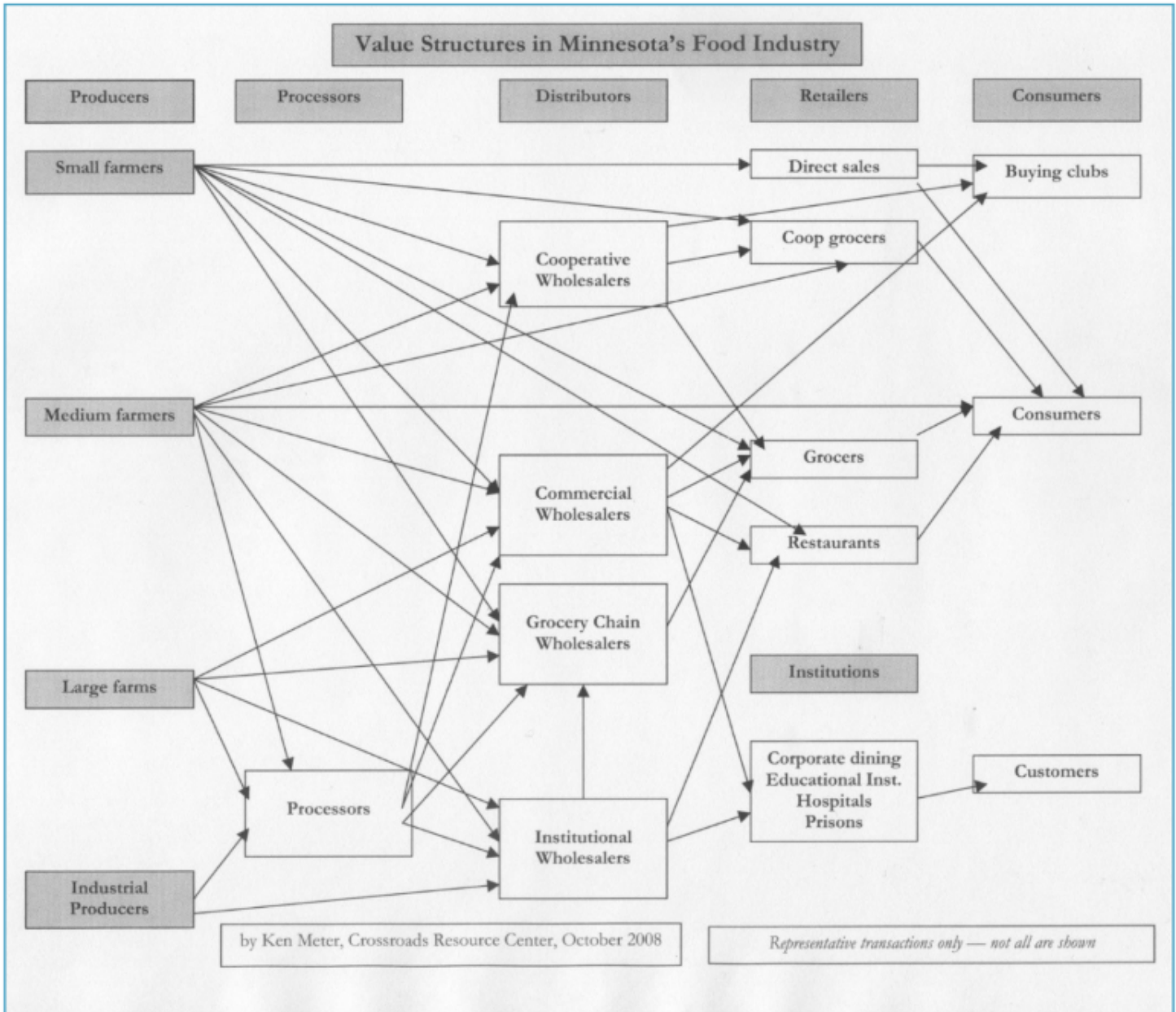
Appendix

Value Structure Chart

Graphic 13: Value Structure Chart

This chart demonstrates the food industry value structure coordination of producer and market relations (Source: US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, 2016)

Figure 1.6: Values Structure in Minnesota's Food Industry¹⁰



Source: Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center.

Appendix

Funded Infrastructure Projects

Table 10: 2021 Virginia AFID Infrastructure Program funded projects; Source, Northam 2021; LOCAL-I report

Project Title	Grant Description
Equipment for New Meat Processor, Floyd County \$23,124	The Economic Development Authority of Floyd County is partnering with Firehouse Farms to establish a new meat processing facility for local livestock farmers. The facility will open as a custom-exempt facility later this winter and will become a USDA-inspected facility in two to three years. Funding will be used to purchase needed equipment for the facility, including meat saws, a meat grinder, and a vacuum sealer.
New Boilers for Community Canneries, Franklin County \$25,000	Funding for this project will support infrastructure improvements for the Callaway Cannery and Glade Hill Community Canneries. The canneries allow for community members and local producers to support each other and preserve their harvests. Funds will go toward replacing the boilers at the facilities, which have been in operation for 80 years.
Meat Processor Improvements, City of Harrisonburg \$25,000	The City of Harrisonburg seeks funding to make necessary infrastructure improvements to T&E Meats, a small, USDA-inspected red meat slaughterhouse and meat packing facility that has been in operation since 1940 and serves roughly 300 producers each year. Funding for this project will be used to replace the packing room's outdated cooling system and purchase a new patty making machine.
Farmers' Market Improvements, Henrico County \$16,000	The County of Henrico seeks funding to support the Dorey Park Farmers' Market (DPFM). DPFM recently completed their fourth year in operation, hosting 25-30 vendors, 17 of whom are producers or create value-added agriculture products from Virginia-grown products. DPFM offers SNAP benefits and a SNAP Match program for purchases of fresh food. Funding will be used to add electricity for vendors, landscaping to outline the market space, signage, and a structure to house market management and SNAP benefits.
Processing Equipment for Goat Dairies, King William County \$16,675	King William and King & Queen Counties partnered to apply for funding for new equipment that will serve three goat dairies (Bees Knees Farm, Riverwatch Farm, and Cardinal Lane Farm). The farms practice sustainable agriculture, source local hay, and sell their products to local retailers and wineries. Funding will be utilized to purchase a commercial milking system, cheese processing equipment, and milk house expansion.
Farmers' Market Improvements, City of Martinsville \$4,088	This project will assist the City of Martinsville in improving the Uptown Martinsville Farmers' Market. Funds will be used to purchase shades to protect produce and vendors from the sun, new commercial grade scales to speed transactions, and a storage shed. In addition to securing valuable items when the market is closed, it will serve as an office for the market manager and provide an easily identifiable location for customers to go to take advantage of SNAP benefits.
New Boiler for Community Cannery, Prince Edward County \$25,000	Prince Edward County seeks funds to replace the nearly 50 year old boiler system at the Prince Edward County Cannery, which has been unable to keep pace with growing demand. As an FDA-registered Food Canning Establishment and VDACS-inspected commercial kitchen, the facility serves both public and commercial clients through an innovative partnership with the non-profit Virginia Food Works.
Produce Aggregation Infrastructure, Shenandoah County \$25,000	Shenandoah County, in partnership with Town of New Market, requests funding to enable local produce aggregator Jon Henry General Store to flash-freeze high volumes of Virginia-grown fruits and vegetables from producers in the Shenandoah Valley region and then package the frozen produce into retail ready bags for wholesale distribution to local retailers. Funds will be used to offset the cost of the purchase and installation of a new flash freezing unit and walk-in freezer.

Appendix

Outreach Methods

Table 11: Market Outreach Methods

Method of Communication	Organization
Flyer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern States • Library - Luray • Page County Co-op • Tractor Supply • Massanutten Country Corner • Fairview Market • Hawksbill Diner • DRs Quick Stop • NAPA • Reeds Tire • Kites Store • Riverside gas station • Hawksbill Co-op • Page Co-op Feed Store • Shenandoah Library • Blue Ridge Convenience Store • Willow Grove Market • Valley Exxon
Email: Digital flyer and individualized messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Supervisors Members (2) • Page County Agriculture teachers • Local community members, stakeholders • Local Government • Page Farmers Association
Social Media Promotion (Facebook, Instagram)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shenandoah Valley Young Farmers Coalition • Page County Indivisible • Page County Word of Mouth • Page County Facebook page • Personal Facebook/Instagram page
Website and Newsletter Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism • Page Farmers Association
Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page News and Courier • Daily News Record • Page Valley Courier

Appendix

Ag Feasibility Study References

Graphic 14: Ag Center Feasibility Study

The chart demonstrates the relative local food supply and demand from 2017 in relation to the region. Referenced in Quantitative Data.

Market Supply and Demand

In all, most food grown in the CSV is sold outside of the region due to its close proximity to Washington D.C. and Charlottesville, Virginia. Using the Local Food *MarketSizer*® tool created by New Venture Advisors, Table 5 illustrates the local food supply and demand in the CSV using inputs from the 2017 USDA Agriculture Survey. The Local Quotient refers to the percentage of sales that is produced within each county.

“It’s hard to balance supply and demand—part consumer education and part price points. Have to travel to Charlottesville to make pricing work.”

– Stakeholder from Rockingham County

Table 5: Local Food Supply and Demand (2017)

	Augusta	Bath	Highland	Page	Rock-bridge	Rocking-ham	Shenandoah	State of Virginia	Washington D.C.
Fruits & Vegetables									
Local Quotient	18%	5%	59%	2%	15%	62%	61%	12%	0%
Local Demand	\$17M	\$1.3M	\$650K	\$5.9M	\$5.8M	\$18M	\$10M	\$1.8B	\$160M
Local Food Supply	\$3.1M	\$62K	\$380K	\$120K	\$850K	\$11M	\$6.2M	\$220M	-
Meat									
Local Quotient	488%	382%	2751%	252%	449%	412%	254%	53%	0%
Local Demand	\$6.4M	\$490K	\$240K	\$2.2M	\$2.1M	\$6.6M	\$3.8M	\$690M	\$60M
Local Food Supply	\$31M	\$1.9M	\$7.7M	\$5.5M	\$9.7M	\$27M	\$9.8M	\$360M	-
Poultry & Eggs									
Local Quotient	3401%	0%	6443%	7670%	205%	11190%	3263%	191%	0%
Local Demand	\$2.8M	\$210K	\$100K	\$950K	\$930K	\$2.8M	\$1.7M	\$300M	\$26M
Local Food Supply	\$94M	-	\$6.8M	\$73M	\$1.9M	\$320M	\$54M	\$570M	-

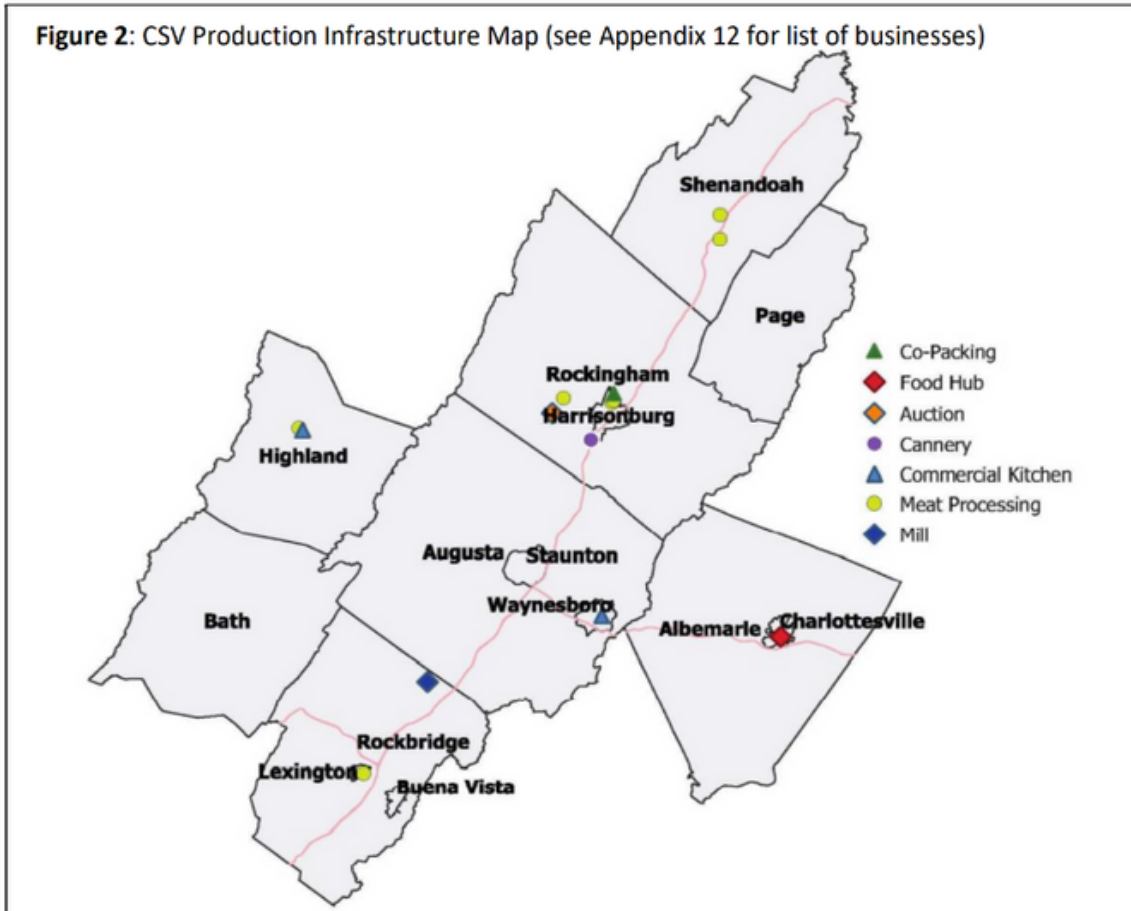
Table 5 reports that the local demand for fruits and vegetables cannot be met by current production within each county, whereas the production for meat and poultry/eggs far exceeds local demand. This means that these counties are shipping outside of the CSV region in order to sell product.²² This also shows how the demand for local meat and vegetables in Washington D.C. *alone* outstrips the supply of these items being produced in the

Appendix

Ag Feasibility Study References

Graphic 15: Ag Center Feasibility Study

The map demonstrates resources lacking in Page County, in particular the importance of meat processing and supporting local businesses (e.g. commercial kitchen/community space in the future)



Graphic 16: Ag Center Feasibility Study

Representation from Page County for Buyer Survey

Buyer Location (Q2 x Q3): Nine buyers responded to the Buyer Survey: two specialty distributors, four independent or specialty groceries, and three restaurants. A buyer responded from each county and city in the study area, with the exception of **Page County** and with the addition of a buyer from Charlottesville, which is outside the study area.

Q2 x Q3: Buyer location by type	Distributor	Grocery	Restaurant /Cafe	Total
Augusta	0	1	0	1
Charlottesville	1	0	0	1
Highland	0	1	0	1
Rockbridge	0	0	1	1
Rockingham	1	0	0	1
Shenandoah	0	2	0	2
Staunton	0	0	1	1
Waynesboro	0	0	1	1
Total Respondents: 9	2	4	3	

Appendix

SOAR Model

Graphic 17: The SOAR model was used to assess strengths, aspirations, opportunities and results. This example is included for further development of these areas. Source: (1, 2)

SOAR Model Analysis (Appreciative Inquiry)

S	Strengths: <i>What can we build on?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are we most proud of as an organization?• What makes us unique?• What is our proudest achievement in the last year or two?• How do we use our strengths to get results?• How do our strengths fit with the realities of the marketplace?• What do we do or provide that is world class for our customers, our industry, and other potential stakeholders?	Aspirations: <i>What do we care deeply about?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When we explore our values and aspirations, "what are we deeply passionate about?"• Reflecting on our Strengths and Opportunities conversations, who are we, who should we become, and where should we go in the future?• What is our most compelling aspiration?• What strategic initiatives (projects, programs and processes) would support our aspirations?
O		
A	Opportunities: <i>What are our stakeholders asking for?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do we make sense of opportunities provided by the external forces and trends?• What are the top three opportunities on which we should focus our efforts?• How can we best meet the needs of our stakeholders?• Who are possible new customers?• How can we distinctively differentiate ourselves from existing or potential competitors?• What are possible new markets, products, services or processes?• How can we reframe challenges to be seen as exciting opportunities?• What new skills do we need to move forward?	Results: <i>How do we know we are succeeding?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Considering our Strengths, Opportunities, and Aspirations, what meaningful measures would indicate that we are on track to achieving our goals?• What are 2 to 5 indicators that would create a scorecard that addresses a triple bottom line of profit, people, and planet?• What resources are needed to implement vital projects?• What are the best rewards to support those who achieve our goals?
R		

Future Grant Funding Abstract

Graphic 18: Example of future grant funding application abstract

Page County: Creating Program and Community Capacity and Strategy to Enhance the Food Ecosystem in and around Page County

The purpose of this project is to coordinate physical and digital infrastructure to scale up the regional economic impact of Page County agricultural producers. This project will be achieved via a four pronged approach: 1) developing Farm to School curriculum and programming in partnership with a committed cohort of Page County stakeholders (e.g., after-school edible garden and nutrition programs, increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetable and distribution capacity through a Farm to School Hub supporting community distribution and small, local and minority-owned farms, and local sourcing coordination), 2) simultaneously addressing the immediate needs of the producer cohort by implementing low-hanging fruit community projects identified by the Page County VDACS AFID planning grant (e.g., farm apprenticeship programs, CSA initiatives, wholesale networking events), 3) preparing for the future of Page County by leveraging other existing programs and strategically collaborating with Food Works Group on the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative (EFC) geospatial tool initiative, enabling Page County producers to be embedded in a regional network that intends to increase agricultural economic impact across the Mid-Atlantic region, and 4) create a sustaining Food System Steering Committee to support coordination of Page County's food ecosystem by leveraging partnerships, stakeholders, and collaborative networks.

AFID Planning Grant **Fresh Food Project Brief**



Overview

The Page County Economic Development Office was awarded \$12,000 for the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Fund Planning Grant program to support local agriculture initiatives. They recognized there was an opportunity to foster the potential of mid-sized producers and promote local food to consumers. The AFID grant is designed around the common challenge faced by roadside stands, farmer's markets, farm-to-table and other fresh food initiatives in Page County - few producers are growing for that market. Amanda Presgraves, Dustyn Vallies, and Taylor Alger, and Sara Levinson from SVSBDC were identified as the consultants to undertake a Gap Analysis and Planning Grant Assessment. The team began work on this project in February 2022 in order to explore options to connect producers and consumers in ways that creates a locally-grown food supply chain that benefits the farmers and community.

Project Goal

The goal of the project was to conduct a pre-development gap analysis to research viability of the locally-grown food supply chain, identify strengths and opportunities for value chain integrations for local farms and identify strengths and opportunities for consumers, tourist and regional partners.

Project Objectives

The project objectives included: 1) Research viability and identify opportunities for farmers to grow for local market (residents/tourists); and 2) Research viability and identify ways for residents, tourists and regional partners to engage proactively in meaningful, economically viable and healthy community activities that include a focus on buying, growing and using local fresh and value-added food.

Page County Vision

Throughout the research, 100+ community members were interviewed to create a future state vision, which guided the Gap Analysis and direction of recommendations outlined in the report. The core vision is to enhance and preserve the rooted farming culture of Page County and establish a local food ecosystem that promotes a vibrant next generation of successful producers.

Qualitative Data

Over the three-month timespan of the AFID grant, 40 in-depth, qualitative community stakeholder interviews were conducted through the methods of in-person, phone, or video call meeting with community members engaging in the Page County food system producer or market relations. Included roles were Agricultural Producer, Community Partner, Retail Outlet, Restaurant, Logistics Partner, Regional Ecosystem Builder, Financial Institution, Local Government, Industry Support, and School Institution.

Outreach methods for interview conducting began with internal relationships within the producer, market, policy, nonprofit, local organizations, and key stakeholder groups, which developed a comprehensive list of involved individuals throughout a broad community with multiple perspectives and experiences relevant to the area of study. In addition to the list of markets and producers, the team identified a list of key local and regional organizations that could be involved with various initiatives.

In addition to individual interviews, the team organized a local event which attracted more than 100 people including producers, local government, community members, nonprofit organizations and local buyers (restaurants, retail, etc.).

As part of the community research and coordination of efforts, the assessment team identified and coordinated collaboration across businesses and local initiatives in an effort to identify collaborations between value-aligned organizations. As a result of this work, a range of projects were identified that are now already underway or starting up. Many of these initiatives involve collaborations amongst a number of different local organizations including nonprofits, businesses and government.

Quantitative Data

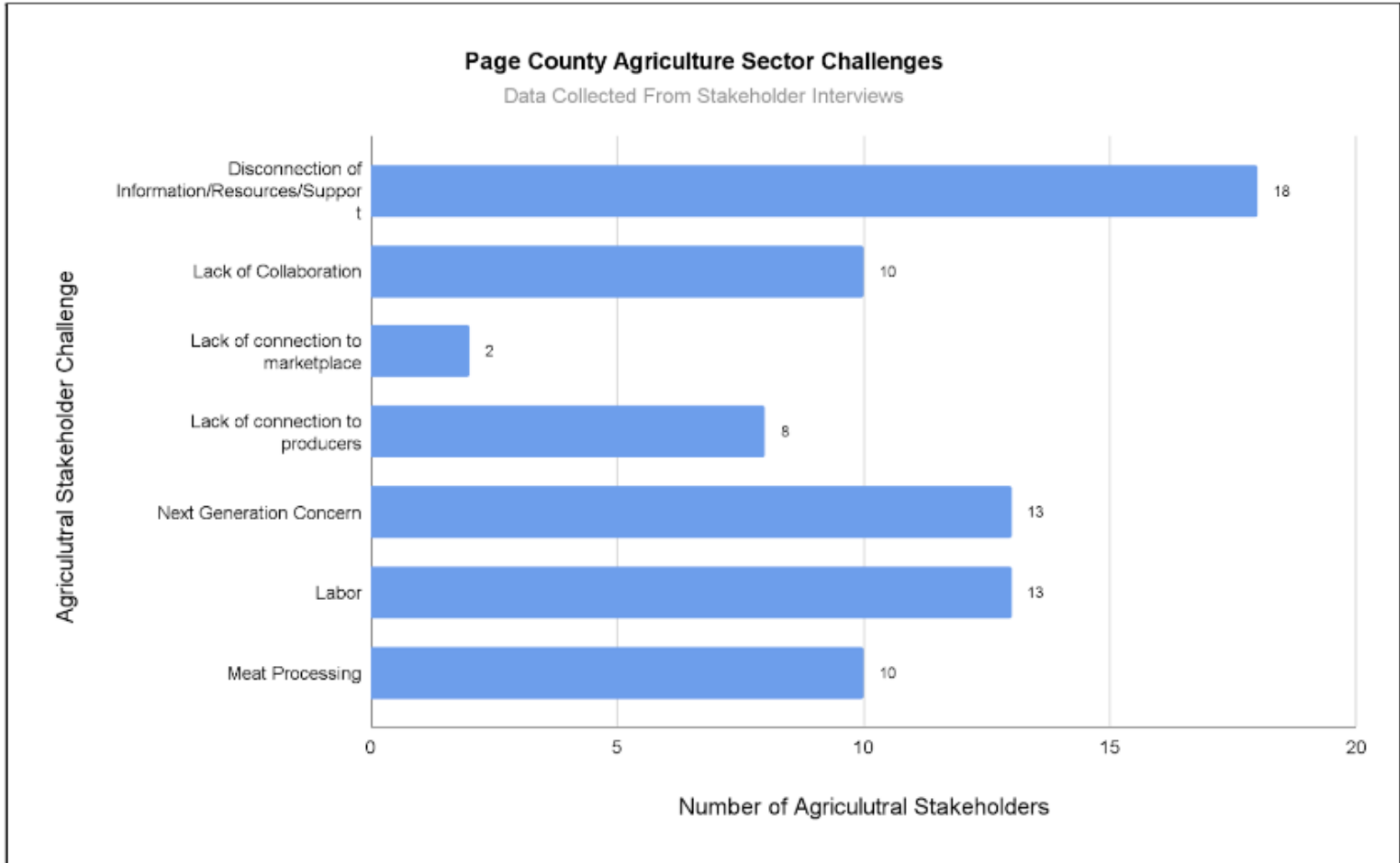
The five-year limit of time between censuses (2017) made it difficult to track emerging developments in production. There are considerable data gaps at the local level of these studies due to confidentiality. This issue is especially troublesome when it comes to data on fruit and vegetable production in the Census of Agriculture. Many farmers do not report specialty crop production as reliably as commodity production, and the USDA has also placed higher priority reporting on the larger cash crops, so there are often gaps in this data. Moreover, since the Census of Agriculture uses sampling methods, the survey may only reach commodity farms in any given locale, thus overlooking or undercounting the actual number of vegetable growers. Since the last census studies the economic impact of COVID-19, among other measurable changes, are not considered in the quantitative data. Due to these challenges, our team focused efforts on individual and focus group qualitative methods of data.

Local Food Network (LFN) used geospatial tools to identify high-priority areas for logistic partners, collaborations, programs and initiatives. Infrastructure and logistic partnership data was retrieved from the LOCAL-I GO Virginia Region 8 project. Land use maps were collected from the Page County Comprehensive Plan ([Source](#) Page County, 2020). Energy asset mapping was created using Esri mapping tools.

AFID Planning Grant Analysis and Results



The assessment resulted in the identification of immediate and short term, and long-term recommendations based on the opportunities and barriers identified.



GAP: Local Food Ecosystem Coordination: leading community collaboration, + communication

Current State: Many of the educational and business resources are unknown in a time of skyrocketing input costs, reduced reliable labor, and increased pressure on farms/business owners; 63% of farmers said that they did not feel connected to resources/support.

Recommendations: Hire Local Food Ecosystem Coordinator; Expand the Ag Subcommittee

Addresses Sector Challenges:: Disconnection of Information/Resources/Support; Lack of Marketplace/Producer Connection, Labor, Next Generation Concern, Lack of Collaboration

Immediate

- Apply for grants to fund a paid, dedicated local food ecosystem coordinator position;
 - Due to Page County's unique, community driven culture, the individual in this position would need to be local, trusted by farmers, market owners, and organization directors with the capacity to build relationships with and among these entities and connect them to necessary resources. It is imperative that they dedicated to supporting Page County's agriculture and food ecosystem, while holding an understanding of how these systems can benefit Page County and its community as a whole
 - Ex: local food promotion grant funding to support the facilitation of collaboration and connecting farmers to local and regional market and support upward economic mobility; enhance collaboration among producers and the marketplace, leverage resources to support community needs, and coordinate local/tourism levevable initiatives
- ED Office hold a community meeting to continue facilitating the low-hanging fruit projects activities created during the grant period (ie: producer/market relations, resource support, RFP, Farmers Markets in Page County, Farm to School support, community programming collaboration) until there is a paid position created
- Once established, the paid Coordinator will collaborate closely with the Economic Development office; reporting findings, identifying additional resources, and partnering to facilitate efforts to hold events and gatherings focused around Page County's food ecosystem

Short Term

- Develop Agriculture Subcommittee of the Economic Development Authority (Owner: ED/SVSBDC)
- Expand the Agriculture Subcommittee to support coordination of Page County's food ecosystem by leveraging partnerships, stakeholders, and collaborative networks (e.g. roles across nonprofits, economic development, conversation, food access, business owners, VCE extension officers, institutions, farmers, producers, etc.).

GAP: Communication and Transparency between Local Supply and Demand

Current State: The limited access to market connections leaves business owners feeling that the market doesn't exist; 83% of farmers/market owners expressed that they did not feel connected

Recommendations: Producer and market connection and collaboration to allow for a successful, vibrant local food system for the local community and regional outlets. Connecting the demand and communication from local markets (ie Mass. Country Corner, emerging Farmers Markets, Farm to School sourcing, local restaurants), with the supply from local producers

Addresses Sector Challenges:: Lack of Connection to Marketplace/Producers, Disconnection of Information/Resources/Support, Lack of Collaboration

Immediate

- Use Market Maker (existing platform) to increase coordination and transparency of availability/demand in order to connect producers to the marketplace. Owner: Coordinating position)

Short Term

- Applying for local food promotion grant funding would support the facilitation of connecting farmers to local and regional market

Leveraging other existing programs and strategically collaborating with Food Works Group on the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative (EFC) geospatial tool initiative

- Enabling Page County producers to be embedded in a regional network that intends to increase agricultural economic impact across the Mid-Atlantic region

GAP: Emphasis on Cultural Preservation and Farming in Page County

Current State: Next generation of farmers are not taking on the farms - 48% of farmers shared concern over the lack of food system education for upcoming generation

Recommendations: Establish community education partnerships, (e.g. Fauquier Education Farm, local colleges/universities), Gardening/Preservation/Culinary Education, Involvement of farmers in educational opportunities (e.g. organic farming, regenerative ag education, program example)

Addresses Sector Challenges:: Next Generation Support, Labor

Immediate

- Expansion of community programming (See: Community Action in Report)
- Farm to School Support
 - Support local growers and producers with RFP to develop farm to school institutional sourcing partnerships
 - Grant fund after-school gardens & garden programming
 - Pilot curriculum with identified school partners (See: Community Action in Report)
 - Example Model of Farm to School Hub

Short Term

- Successful partnerships, market viability and quality of life will enhance farmer retention,
- Agritourism business development support (example model)
- Establish Fields of Gold partnerships

GAP: Local Food Facility Infrastructure to Support Increased Production, Processing, and Logistical Expansion

Current State: 44% of farmers shared struggles with accessing, maintaining, and/or supporting labor

Recommendation: Develop Localized Livestock Processing Facility; Design of a Multi-Purpose Community Center (Food Hub)

Addresses Sector Challenges:: Next Generation Support, Labor, Lack of Connection to Marketplace/Producers, Disconnection of Information/Resources/Support, Lack of Collaboration

Short Term

- Apply for grant funding to support livestock marketing feasibility study; and development of infrastructure for community marketplace and programming

Long Term

- Feasibility study for livestock processing
- Grant funding support to develop physical infrastructure that will serve as a connected marketplace with a consolidated one-stop-shop of resources and support for the community and tourism opportunities (ie classes, workshops, store front, preservation/canning, farmers market pavilion, commercial kitchen, community garden, educational and recreational activities, etc)

GAP: Local Food Facility Infrastructure to Support Increased Production, Processing, and Logistical Expansion

Current State: 44% of farmers shared struggles with accessing, maintaining, and/or supporting labor

Recommendation: Develop Localized Livestock Processing Facility; Design of a Multi-Purpose Community Center (Food Hub)

Addresses Sector Challenges:: Next Generation Support, Labor, Lack of Connection to Marketplace/Producers, Disconnection of Information/Resources/Support, Lack of Collaboration

Short Term

- Apply for grant funding to support livestock marketing feasibility study; and development of infrastructure for community marketplace and programming

Long Term

- Feasibility study for livestock processing
- Grant funding support to develop physical infrastructure that will serve as a connected marketplace with a consolidated one-stop-shop of resources and support for the community and tourism opportunities (ie classes, workshops, store front, preservation/canning, farmers market pavilion, commercial kitchen, community garden, educational and recreational activities, etc)

AFID Planning Grant Implementation Timeline for Recommendation



Local Food Ecosystem Coordination

- Ag Council
 - June – Sept 2022: Develop network collaboration, resource development, grant project continuation through local relationship building (ie Farm to Fork Event, wholesale networking, roundtable)
 - Jan 2023: Expand Agriculture Subcommittee to include diverse food system perspectives
 - March 2023: Resources on website; Increase the coordination of local existing partnerships to leverage
- Coordinator Position
 - June – Sept 2022: Apply for grant funding that would enable leadership and value-chain coordination of Page County’s food ecosystem by leveraging partnerships, stakeholders, and collaborative networks (e.g. EDA, Ag Council Committee, facilitation of networking)
 - December 2022: Hand off responsibility of low-hanging fruit from ED Office to Coordinator; Develop Market Maker development in order to connect producers to the market; leverage available resources to support community needs
 - May 2023: Establish local/tourism leverage initiatives

Create Communication and Transparency between Local Supply and Demand

- Marketplace Connecting
 - June – Sept 2022: ED Office support with Farm to School RFP
 - December 2022: Increase coordination of local sourcing in order to connect producers to the marketplace through coordinator position → collaboration between local businesses and producers; Market Maker Campaign database development
 - Jan 2023–2024: Leveraging other existing programs and strategically collaborating with Local Food Network and Food Works Group on the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative (EFC) geospatial tool initiative - enabling Page County producers to be embedded in a regional network that intends to increase agricultural economic impact across the Mid-Atlantic region
 - Jan 2023–204 Increased local product options in the current marketplace; increase production direction with market demand

AFID Planning Grant Implementation Timeline for Recommendation



Emphasis on Cultural Preservation and Farming in Page County

- Increase Farm to School Supporting Activities
 - June - Sept 2022: Grant fund after-school gardens & garden programming
 - March 2023: Pilot curriculum with identified school partners (See: Community Action of report for list of organizations and partners to elevate)

Local Food Facility Infrastructure to Support Increased Production, Processing, and Logistical Expansion

- Meat Processing
 - June - Sept 2022: Meat processing marketing feasibility study
- Local Food Facility
 - December 2022: Grant funding to support to develop physical infrastructure
 - April 2023: Approval by food school system to pilot test local food distribution; Pilot and measure community distribution capacity through a Farm to School Hub



AFID Planning Grant

SOAR Analysis



STRENGTHS: What can we build on?

- Rich culture of farming in Page County
- County support for agriculture
- Wholesale market connection
- Ag Council development
- Community event success

ASPIRATIONS: What do we care deeply about?

- Cultural preservation and continued education
- Knowledgeable labor
- Developing the next generation of farmers
- Community advocacy around farming

OPPORTUNITIES: What are our stakeholders asking for?

- Coordination and support for producer/buyer marketplace; Local networking and collaboration efforts;
- Business support (resources, RFP submitting, marketing, labor, regulations, grants) Local meat processing facility
- Community programming to develop local and next generation workforce as well as consumer engagement and increased local food tourism opportunities Increased access to local, healthy food

RESULTS: How do we know we are succeeding?

- Seeing an increase in new and upcoming farmers
- Increase in mid-sized producer growth
- Increase in Farm to Fork initiatives and increased local spend from restaurants, businesses, and institutions
- Marketing and identity around local food Programming and education within the school system and local organizations
- Local farmers markets
- Producer/market communication
- Diversity in product options on the market (e.g. canning, fruit, vegetables)
- Utilization of community resources (further education, training programs, even attendance, website visits)



AFID Planning Grant Conclusion



Page County is abundant with agricultural heritage, recognized today for its pristine farmland beauty, nationally ranked poultry and livestock performance, and attracting tourists from around the world. The AFID Planning Grant confirmed the promising potential to support small and mid-sized farms in the County by developing their ability to connect to local and regional markets, provide access to resources and foster the next generation of farmers with emphasis on community and institutional programming. The result of these short and immediate term actions will provide access to new market opportunities and strengthen the local food, farming and tourism economy. The implementation of local food system specific leadership, in addition to physical and digital infrastructure uniquely designed for the challenges of Page County, will be essential for sustainable and supportive change. Page County has the passion, geography, history, and community necessary for a thriving, vibrant local food economy; the AFID Planning Grant exemplifies what happens when the community is united under one common vision. What is needed next is the coordination of initiatives involving the community and many local and regional organizations.