

ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP WITH THE COLORADO LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: EVALUATING PROGRAM IMPACT AND GROUNDING FUTURE PRODUCER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT THROUGH RESEARCH (STATEWIDE IMPACT)

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Mentors:

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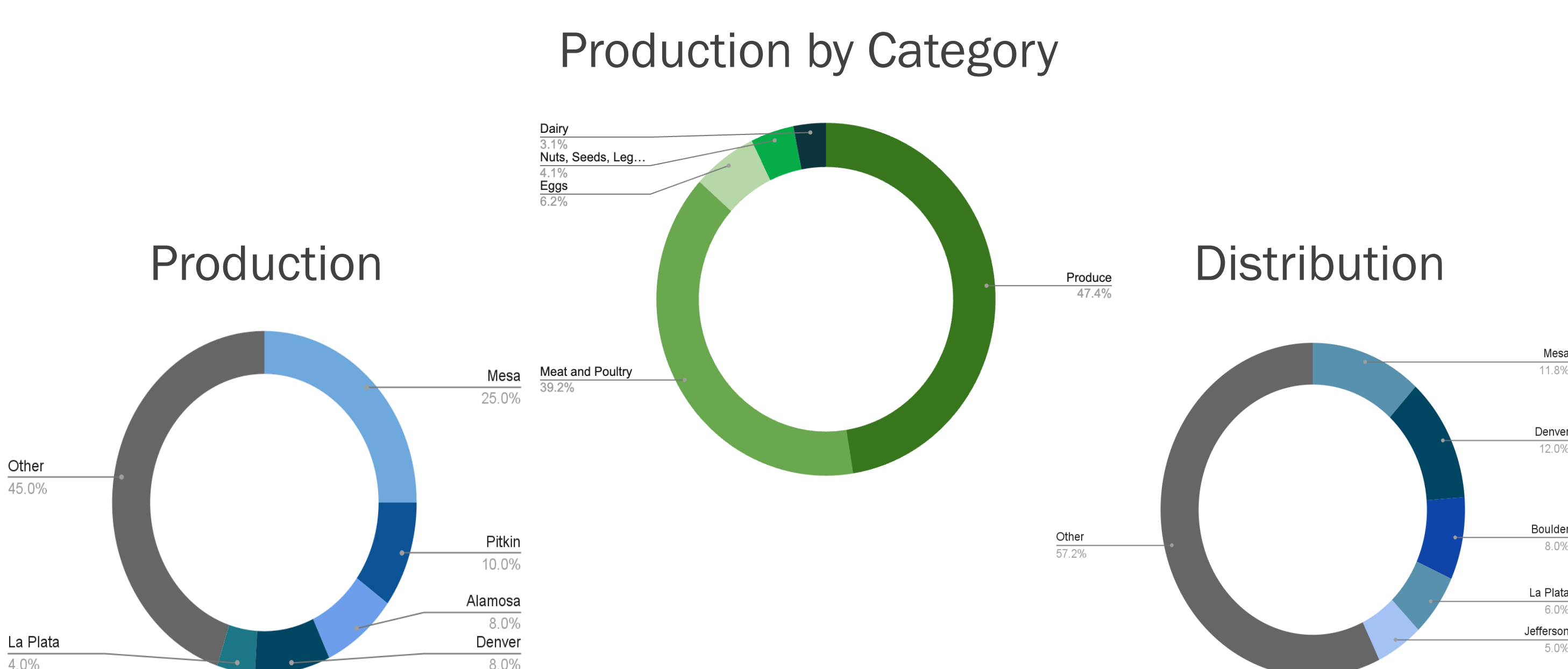
PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Local Food Purchasing Assistance Grant (LFPA) began in April 2022 and was extended until Spring 2025.

- The \$12 million program supports Colorado food systems by funding community food access points including food hubs, distribution centers, food banks, schools, non-profit organizations & food pantries.
- Nearly 88% of grant funds went to underserved distribution sites*.
- Nearly 80% of the procurement funds were spent on purchases from socially disadvantaged farmers, producers, and ranchers, a priority for the program.
- When the grant finishes in the Spring of 2025, many organizations will need to adapt to the decrease in funding and local food procurement. The main goal of this internship is to determine the impact of LFPA on food access points, distributors and producers.

*USDA defines underserved communities as "populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life" (USDA 2021).

Table 1. Patterns across Suppliers and Buyers of LFPA

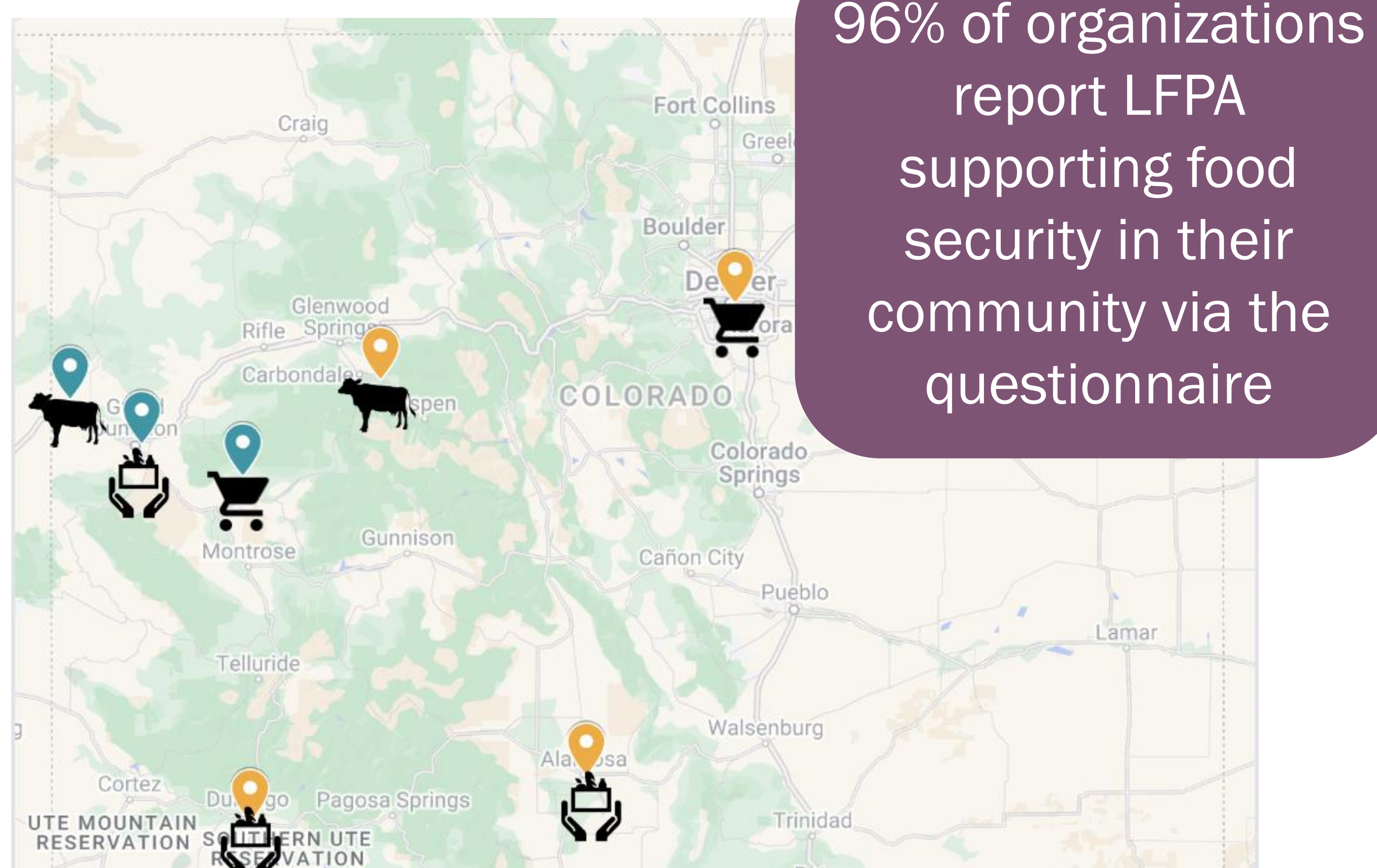


INTERNSHIP GOALS

1. Understand and analyze LFPA quantitative data
2. Develop qualitative interview and survey protocols
3. Conduct interviews and gather data from project participants
4. Create comprehensive report of the LFPA impact

INTERNSHIP TASKS/OPPORTUNITIES

- **Data Analysis / Presentation** - researched meaning of data, drew conclusions and summarized main quantitative ideas about the LFPA data and presented them to the team
- **Interview Preparation / Coordination** - prepared questions and ideas for interviews, scheduled 3 in person interviews and 4 virtual interviews
- **Interviews** - conducted 3 in-person and 4 virtual interviews
- **Questionnaire Creation** - created a survey and sent it to 34 LFPA grant recipients and secondary beneficiaries of LFPA
- **Impact Report** - created an executive summary with impacts of LFPA



- In-person Interview
- Virtual Interview
- Rancher/Producer
- Community Food Bank
- Food Pantry



Figure 1. Harvest Mobile Market partnered with Community Food Bank of Grand Junction

LESSONS LEARNED

While LFPA has increased the ability for many organizations to feed their communities, the impact of this grant is much greater:

- Allowed organizations to expand their community programming, increase staffing at their operation, and provide a variety of food products their communities would not have access to without LFPA (72% of questionnaire respondents reported LFPA increasing the nutritional diversity for their community),
- Created and deepened partnerships between organizations and their local farmers/producers/ranchers, and
- Benefited communities and local economies.

The end of LFPA will bring changes for producers and distribution organizations who expressed a desire to maintain a local pipeline for food sourcing and distribution, but if there is not money to do so, it will no longer be possible. This leaves distribution organizations, such as food pantries, with the task of finding continued funding or distributing less local food.

NEXT STEPS

LFPA has had an enormous impact on food systems in Colorado, and if there is future LFPA money, it would continue to having a huge role in feeding community members in Colorado. Unfortunately, there is no further LFPA funding. This leaves some organizations advocating for the federal farm bill and others trying to find other sources of money at the state or local level or preparing to make significant changes to their sourcing or distribution.

RELEVANCE TO EDUCATION & FUTURE CAREER

This internship has deepened my understanding of food systems, local food consumption, food security, and the complexities of grants and regulations around grants. As a nutrition major, on the path to be a dietitian, understanding potential barriers to food access as well as resources for communities facing food insecurity is extremely important. In my future career, I now have a better understanding of the behind-the-scenes components of food pantries, food banks, and food systems to better support my future clients who are facing food insecurity.