COLORADO FOOD SYSTEMS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

Presented to:

Governor Jared Polis

Kate Greenberg, Commissioner of Agriculture

House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee



www.cofoodsystemscouncil.org



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) advanced its mission through research, engagement, and continued prioritization of strategic alignment with the focus areas outlined in the Senate Bill 23-159 Sunset Review. This included finalizing a key research project, disseminating findings and recommendations, and leveraging research insights to support future projects. Throughout the year, the council continued to seek opportunities to engage with statewide partners and policymakers.

The duties of the Council are to collaborate and coordinate with agricultural producers, relevant state and federal educational institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and consumers to connect state and federal agencies and to provide Colorado agricultural producers, including fruit and vegetable producers, with viable market opportunities. Areas of focus include:

1) Examining best practices to advance or improve distribution systems and develop new markets for Colorado agricultural producers,

2) Conducting research regarding national best practices regarding food and nutrition assistance, direct and intermediated market development, institutional procurement, and farm-to-school programs, and

3) Serving as a resource for research and support at the request of the governor, members of the general assembly, or any state agency in connection with the council's purpose and duties.

The legislative language is reflected in COFSAC's mission and vision.

MISSION: COFSAC PROVIDES COMMUNITY-INFORMED, RESEARCH-BASED POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO STATE LEADERS TO ADDRESS COMPLEX FOOD SYSTEMS CHALLENGES.

VISION: COFSAC IS A TRUSTED PARTNER COLLABORATING WITH POLICY MAKERS, THOUGHT LEADERS, AND COMMUNITIES TO CREATE A HEALTHFUL, PROSPEROUS, EQUITABLE, AND RESILIENT COLORADO-BASED FOOD SYSTEM.

In 2024, the council established a Food Access working group to ensure that food and nutrition assistance remains a priority area. This working group aims to engage with statewide anti-hunger coalitions and organizations. Given an evolving state funding landscape and delayed federal Farm Bill, the working group aims to support ongoing anti-hunger efforts in Colorado and contribute to research and policy guidance in this space.

COFSAC's key contributions to statewide engagement in 2024 included the facilitation of a public feedback and distribution process for the Farm to Loading Dock report, coordination of a



statewide Farm to Loading Dock webinar to share research findings, and the development of a quarterly COFSAC newsletter to strengthen communication with statewide partners. Additionally, council staff and members served on the statewide steering committee for the Colorado Food Summit Regional Convenings.

The council also participated in the 2024 Healthy School Meals for All (HSMA) Technical Advisory Group stakeholder engagement process. COFSAC utilized recommendations from the Farm to Loading Dock report and priorities outlined by the Institutional Procurement working group to join statewide food systems partners in emphasizing the importance of sustained funding for universal school meals as well as the reimbursement enhancements provided through the HSMA grant programs.

This past year, the council sought to increase engagement with young Coloradans pursuing careers and studies in food systems. To support this goal, the council solicited applications for two Young Leaders seats, which were filled in August from a qualified pool of young professionals and students. The council is committed to fostering professional development and leadership opportunities, particularly for young Coloradans entering agricultural and nutrition fields.

PRIORITIES FOR 2025

Institutional Procurement

Coordinate with state agency and NGO partners to support research on the use of public dollars for food procurement as a means to advance data transparency around local and nonlocal purchasing.

Distribute Farm to Loading Dock findings at the state and national levels, leveraging recommendations to advocate for funding for technical assistance and coordination to support farm to institution efforts.

Communications and Strategic Relations

Continue to establish clear, consistent, and high-value channels of communication and consultation with lawmakers and state agencies. Ensure that the COFSAC newsletter serves as a valuable resource for statewide partners and promotes council updates, statewide events, and food systems research.

Explore new approaches to showcase regional food systems work, utilizing the newsletter and other creative platforms to effectively engage partners and broader audiences with regional food and agricultural issues.



Membership and Engagement

Identify and develop strategic partnerships with aligned initiatives, councils, institutions, organizations and stakeholders to strengthen collaborative efforts and advance shared goals.

Develop a clear and engaging onboarding process to ensure support for incoming council members. Facilitate professional development opportunities for council members, food systems leaders, and young Coloradans entering nutrition and agricultural careers.

Food Access

Contribute to statewide policy coordination focused on growing local food economies within which all Coloradans have access to fresh, affordable and healthy foods.

Facilitate informational sessions for the Governor's Office and legislature on food access issues to strengthen existing programs that address agriculture, nutrition, and food insecurity in Colorado.



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Per the requirements of House Bill 18-1236, this update on the work of the **Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC)** is being provided to Governor Jared Polis and his office, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Commissioner of Agriculture, and the House Health and Environment Committee, Senate Health and Human Services Committee, House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee, and Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

APPOINTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

(AS OF 12/24)

Co-Chair, Ann Cooper, Grand Junction
Rep. institutional procurement, educational setting

Co-Chair, Nicholas Marquez, Aurora
Rep. expertise in federal food nutrition service programs

AJ Roche, Greeley
Representative of a food bank

Al Goodman, Aurora
Rep. food wholesalers or food retailers

Angelika Sunie, Pueblo
Recipient of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Deb Trevor, Steamboat Springs
Rep. of institutional procurement from an educational setting

Derrick Hoffman, Greeley
Rep. agricultural production, sells agricultural products to public schools/school districts

Geonna King, Pueblo
Rep. Young Leader in an urban setting

Jessica Wright, Denver
Rep. of a statewide healthy food systems organization

Juli Babcock, Hotchkiss
Rep. of specialty crop production and as a specialty crop producer

Julie Moore, Aurora
Rep. food wholesalers or food retailers, direct market retailer

Kaydee Lucero, Grand Junction
Rep. Young Leader in a rural setting

Larry Pollart, Sterling
Academic specialist in economic systems, agriculture, or health care

Liza Marron, Saguache
Rep. expertise in rural community and regional development, or community and economic development programs

Mandy Nuku, Lafayette
Rep. of statewide anti-hunger organization

Marci Cochran, Pueblo
Rep. of federal food assistance program

Tamaan Osbourne-Roberts, Denver
Rep. nutrition expert, licensed physician, or registered dietitian

Tessa Hale, Boulder
Rep. institutional procurement, healthcare setting

Vacant Seat
Rep. of food distributor or food hub

STATE AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

(AS OF 12/24)

Joan Brucha
Rep. Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment

Krista Garand
Rep. Colorado Department of Education

Libby Christensen
Rep. Colorado State University

Michele Meyer
Rep. Colorado Department of Agriculture

Samantha O'Neill Dunbar
Rep. Coloardo Department of Human Services

Wendy Stewart Martinez
Rep. Office of Economic Development and International Trade

STAFF

The council received staff support in 2024 from Dr. Libby Christensen and Ms. Lily Lake as Staff Director and from Ms. Alex DeJoy as Administrator. Dr. Christensen, Ms. Lake, and Ms. DeJoy are CSU employees. Ms. Lake stepped into the role of Staff Director in August.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

The Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council held four quarterly meetings during the 2024 calendar year in February, May, September, and December. It hosted three of the meetings as online public meetings using Zoom and held an in-person meeting at the Routt County Health and Human Services Building in Steamboat Springs in September. All meeting dates and times were published via the COFSAC website: https://cofoodsystemscouncil.org. Meeting agendas and minutes are also available on the website.

Additionally, COFSAC's Institutional Procurement, Membership and Engagement, and Communications and Strategic Relations working groups held 23 public meetings in 2024: eight on Institutional Procurement, eight on Communications and Strategic Relations,and seven on Membership and Engagement.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Three seats were vacant in 2024. Two of these vacancies were occasioned by delayed appointment orders from the General Assembly. The remaining vacant seat was due to a current member stepping into a state agency representative seat.

Applications were solicited between June and October for terms beginning in 2025. Eleven applications were received and reviewed by an internal committee. On October 25th, 2024, the application committee finalized recommendations to the appropriate appointment office for the following seats: 1) Representative of food wholesaler or food retailers, and as a direct market retailer, 2) Nutrition expert, licensed physician or registered dietitian, 3) Recipient of a federal food assistance program 4) Representative of institutional procurement from a health care setting, 5) Member with expertise in rural community and regional development programs or community and economic development programs, 6) Representative of agricultural production and as a member who sells agricultural products to a public school or school district, and 7) Representative of a food distributor or food hub. As of December 2024, no appointment orders were received by the Governor or General Assembly for these seats.

Two Young Leaders seats were created by the council in 2024. Applications for these seats were solicited between June and August. Four applications were received and reviewed by an applications committee. On August 15th, 2024, the application committee finalized selections for these seats. These Young Leaders serve as non-voting, ex officio members, who are appointed directly by current COFSAC members.

New members appointed to partial terms ending October 31, 2026:

Deb Trevor, of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, to serve as representative of institutional procurement from an educational setting.

Jessica Wright, of Denver, Colorado, to serve as representative of a statewide healthy food systems organization.

State agency representatives appointed:

Michele Meyer, of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, to serve as representative of the Department of Agriculture.

Libby Christensen, of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, to serve as representative of Colorado State University Extension.

Wendy Stewart Martinez, of Salida, Colorado, to serve as representative of the Office of Economic Development and International Trade.

New ex officio members appointed to full terms ending October 31, 2027:

Geonna King, of Pueblo, Colorado, to serve as a Young Leader in an urban setting with a term ending October 31, 2027.

Kaydee Lucero, of Grand Junction, Colorado, to serve as a Young Leader in a rural setting seat with a term ending October 31, 2027.

AREAS OF FOCUS FOR 2024

In 2024, the Institutional Procurement, Communications and Strategic Relations, and Membership and Engagement working groups completed and disseminated ongoing research while initiating new projects and engagement opportunities.

During the September quarterly meeting, council members reviewed working group initiatives for the coming year. This included an assessment of the council's duties and focus areas, which encompass:

1) Examining best practices to advance or improve distribution systems and develop new markets for Colorado agricultural producers,

2) Conducting research regarding national best practices regarding food and nutrition assistance, direct and intermediated market development, institutional procurement, and farm-to-school programs, and

3) Serving as a resource for research and support at the request of the governor, members of the general assembly, or any state agency in connection with the council's purpose and duties.

Insights gathered during this discussion led to the proposal of a Food Access working group, aligning with the council's duty to highlight best practices in food and nutrition assistance. By forming this group, COFSAC seeks to ensure that the council is equipped to provide research and guidance that is relevant and useful on key issues affecting Coloradans.

2024 council meetings also resulted in a renewed emphasis on strengthening communication with the Governor's Office and Colorado General Assembly leadership to ensure that the council's research is both guided by the priorities and needs of Coloradans, and readily accessible to policymakers and state agencies.

INSTITUTIONAL PROCUREMENT

Focus and Rationale

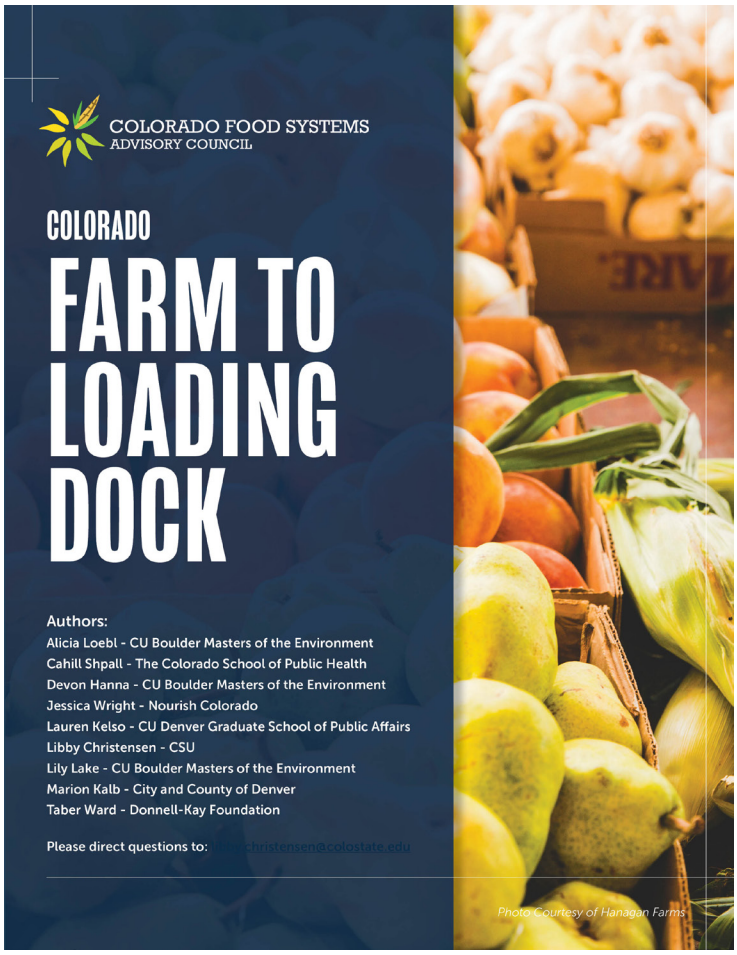
Despite shifts in the funding available at the state level for local food procurement, private organizations, nonprofits, legislators, state agencies and food systems stakeholders across Colorado continue to channel funding and support to improve food access and strengthen regional food economies.

At the federal level, in October of 2024, the USDA announced an investment of $1.7 billion for purchase of local and regionally produced foods through the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program, Local Food in Schools, childcare facilities initiative, and Emergency Food Assistance Program.

In 2022 Colorado voters passed the Healthy School Meals for All Program, which in addition to providing universal access to school meals for students attending public school, includes the Local Food Program. This program is intended to provide participating K-12 school districts $0.25 per lunch served during the previous year to reimburse purchases of CO-grown, raised, or processed food and agricultural products.

At the time of this report, the Local Food Program remains delayed due to budgetary shortfalls. However, while the complete Local Food Program under HSMA has been delayed, the Local School Food Purchasing Pilot Program established through HB 19-1132 was extended through July 2025.

HSMA also includes $5 million dollars available in the form of a grant to a statewide nonprofit for promotion of Colorado products to participating School Food Authorities (SFAs) to assist them with preparing meals using basic ingredients with minimal reliance on processed products (HB 22-1414). Grants may be used for training, technical assistance, physical infrastructure for SFAs, growers' associations, and other organizations that aggregate products for



producers, as well as for education, outreach, and promotion for schools and growers to engage with school communities (HB 22-1414).

While this funding has also been delayed, it demonstrates the significant investment of Colorado voters, statewide food systems organizations, and legislators in both local food procurement and technical assistance to support this work moving forward.

Research and Engagement

To better develop strategies to deploy and coordinate the financial resources available across federal and state programs, grants, and legislation, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council, Nourish Colorado, CU Boulder, CU Denver, and the Colorado State University Food System Institute conducted a landscape assessment of existing and proposed technical assistance available in the state throughout 2023. The assessment focuses on technical assistance delivery to actors pre-loading dock including farmers, ranchers, food hubs, intermediaries, and processors. The assessment includes stakeholder convenings and interviews.

In the spring of 2024, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council and partners initiated a public comment period to solicit feedback on the Farm to Loading Dock landscape assessment. The report draft was distributed through the COFSAC website and newsletter, and through partner networks. A committee formed of the report authors and Institutional Procurement working group members incorporated edits into the report.

The finalized Farm to Loading Dock report has been disseminated through a variety of channels. In October, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council, Nourish Colorado, and the Colorado State University Food Systems Institute hosted a webinar to share the report results with statewide stakeholders. This webinar engaged over 90 participants and covered report findings, recommendations for next steps, and local food program data. The Farm to Loading Dock report has also been distributed through the COFSAC website and newsletter, and to working group members to be circulated to their networks.

Since publication, the Farm to Loading Dock report has been leveraged as a basis for future research on values-based procurement in Colorado and has been cited in the Healthy School Meals for All Technical Advisory Group's final report to the legislature and Joint Budget Committee. In the HSMA report, the Farm to Loading Dock findings are utilized to underscore the importance of dedicated funding for technical assistance to support SFAs with procurement of local food and relationship building with farmers and ranchers.

The Farm to Loading Dock findings also served as the basis for the creation of a directory of Colorado technical assistance providers. This directory, created by Dr. Christensen in collaboration with the Institutional Procurement and Communications and Strategic Relations working groups, addresses Farm to Loading Dock recommendations and is linked in the report alongside state resources that support farm to institution efforts.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The Farm to Loading Dock findings and strong statewide engagement with this research demonstrate the importance of investments in local food procurement and technical assistance to support Colorado food economies.

The role of COFSAC in next steps to support farm to institution work in Colorado includes drawing on the Farm to Loading Dock recommendations to advocate for local food purchasing programs and funding for technical assistance to support these efforts. Efforts to continue distributing this report, facilitating discussions around findings, and engaging legislators and statewide partners with the recommendations are intended to guide key stakeholders in taking steps to advance farm to institution efforts.

The Farm to Loading Dock report also serves as a framework for future research. Moving forward, the Institutional Procurement working group will collaborate with Nourish Colorado, the Colorado State University Food Systems Institute, Denver Department of Public Health and the Environment, the Donnell-Kay Foundation, Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment, CU Boulder, and more key food systems partners to conduct research aimed at understanding and increasing transparency around the use of taxpayer dollars on food.

Colorado institutions allocate millions of dollars each year to food procurement. This research seeks to deepen understanding of the guidelines that inform these purchasing decisions, examine local versus nonlocal procurement, and identify opportunities for increased transparency in the procurement process.

Institutional Procurement working group meetings will serve as a forum to gather insight and guidance on the development and outcomes of this research from community members, state agencies, and NGOs.

COMMUNICATIONS AND STRATEGIC RELATIONS

Focus and Rationale

The Strategic Relations working group focuses on establishing clear, regular, and high value channels of communication and consultation with state lawmakers and state agency staff. This group is committed to engaging statewide partners and increasing awareness about council research and initiatives.

Research and Engagement

The Strategic Relations working group continues to identify the need to strengthen relationships with statewide partners and legislators, as well as to increase awareness of council research and events. In 2024, the group launched a quarterly newsletterto share council events, working group research, and state agency updates.

The newsletter also serves as a platform to showcase the work of statewide partners, including featuring statewide market channels to support the council's duty to "advance or improve distribution systems and develop new markets for Colorado agricultural producers." Since the first edition in May 2024, newsletter reach has grown to over 300 subscribers. The Strategic Relations working group aims to increase subscription by 50% in the coming year through social media, partnerships with statewide organizations, and sign-up opportunities associated with webinars and other council events.

Additionally, the council participated in the statewide steering committee for the Colorado Food Summit Regional Convenings throughout 2024. The Food Summit Regional Convenings, hosted by statewide organizations, will occur from January through April 2025 and will center regional food and agricultural priorities. Ms. DeJoy has provided significant administrative support to the statewide steering committee meetings and host committees, while Dr. Christensen has served a key role on the steering committee as both the COFSAC Staff Director and as Statewide Agriculture and Food System Specialist and COFSAC representative for Colorado State University.

The council continues to highlight events, conferences, and coalition meetings around the state at quarterly meetings, encouraging staff and members to participate in order to stay informed about regional initiatives and priorities.

Recommendations and Next Steps

In 2025, the Strategic Relations working group is committed to increasing engagement with the Governor's Office and Colorado General Assembly leadership. The group aims to facilitate educational and networking opportunities that bring together legislators and statewide food systems organizations. Efforts will center around increasing dialogue with these key partners, including ensuring that Colorado policymakers are represented at quarterly meetings.

Over the coming year, the Strategic Relations working group will also continue to explore ways to utilize the newsletter and other creative platforms to strengthen communication with statewide food systems partners, showcase market channels, and engage a broader community.

MEMBERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Focus and Rationale

The Membership and Engagement working group is focused on streamlining the onboarding process for incoming Council members and engaging both council and community members through professional development opportunities. The group remains dedicated to creating pathways for Coloradans, including students and young professionals, to enter and develop in the food systems space.

Research and Engagement

In 2024, the Membership and Engagement group outlined seat descriptions for two Young Leader roles on the council and solicited applications for these positions. This process resulted in a qualified group of applicants who are early in their food systems careers or pursuing their education in related fields. An application committee made up of COFSAC staff and council members from the Membership and Engagement working group reviewed these applications and selected two representatives to serve as the first Young Leaders on the council. Council staff conducted a series of orientation meetings to onboard the Young Leaders.

The Membership and Engagement group is committed to refining the onboarding process for all new members, and in 2024 initiated discussions and council-wide surveys to solicit feedback on potential options including a mentorship program, resource packet, and series of orientation meetings.

Recommendations and Next Steps

In 2025, the Membership and Engagement group will continue to develop the new member orientation



COFSAC members and staff touring Community Ag Alliance in Steamboat Springs, CO.

process to ensure council members are supported and prepared to contribute their expertise from the start of their term. This includes building on current efforts to create an up-to-date, comprehensive resource packet and establishing orientation meetings to familiarize members with council processes and ongoing research.

The Membership and Engagement working group remains dedicated to fostering professional development within the food systems field. COFSAC's membership, which spans the nutrition, agriculture, and anti-hunger sectors, uniquely positions the council to connect emerging food systems leaders and community members with valuable opportunities. The Membership and Engagement group is committed to cultivating these connections and supporting professional growth opportunities in the food systems space.

FOOD ACCESS

Focus and Rationale

The Food Access working group was established in alignment with the duties and focus areas of the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council. Its goal is to collaborate on research and policy guidance that addresses food insecurity, which currently impacts 1 in 9 Coloradans (Feeding Colorado, 2022). This group's formation is guided by discussions with statewide anti-hunger coalitions and by the Governor's Office initiatives on healthy eating and leverages the expertise in food access and nutrition represented on the Council. Beginning in 2025, the group will convene to provide relevant research and foster continued collaboration among individuals, organizations, and institutions working to combat hunger in Colorado.

Colorado has a diverse network of public and private institutions, nonprofits, individual advocates, and coalitions dedicated to addressing food insecurity. These entities work closely together and in community to combat hunger at the local, state, and regional levels. With the formation of a Food Access working group, COFSAC seeks to support ongoing community driven research, map existing statewide resources, and elevate policy guidance to legislators to strengthen anti-hunger efforts.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The Food Access working group will begin meeting in early 2025 to develop a strategic plan for the year ahead. Initial goals focus on enhancing statewide policy coordination to strengthen local, regional, and statewide food economies, expand market opportunities, and improve access to fresh, affordable and healthy foods for all Coloradans.

The group plans to contribute to initiatives that maximize the impact of existing programs addressing the intersection of agriculture, nutrition, and food insecurity across Colorado. This work may include mapping relevant statewide anti-hunger programs and services. Recognizing the many organizations active in Colorado's anti-hunger space, this mapping project would aim to promote collaboration, streamline resource identification, and lay the groundwork for future policy and programmatic recommendations.



In 2025, the Food Access working group will engage partners to determine how COFSAC can best contribute to anti-hunger efforts and policy guidance in Colorado, whether by serving as a convener or by participating in targeted research identified by council members, community representatives, and statewide partners.

The group seeks to collaborate closely with individuals, organizations, and institutions already active in the anti-hunger space to align with existing efforts, avoid duplication of research, and ensure that the council's work supports and enhances statewide efforts to address hunger.

ADMINISTRATION

Significant effort was dedicated to transitioning staff leadership from Dr. Christensen to Ms. Lake in August of 2024. Ms. Lake has worked with Ms. DeJoy to learn internal administrative procedures and to become familiarized with the working group structure. During this transition, Dr. Christensen offered considerable support on the seat appointment process and contributed to the continuity of council research projects and partnerships. Dr. Dawn Thilmany provided valuable guidance in her role as a council member and as the CSU supervisor for the COFSAC Staff Director role, helping to ensure a smooth transition.

Ms. Lake is committed to continuing to strengthen communication between the council, the Governor's Office, and General Assembly leadership, while enhancing collaboration with diverse statewide organizations, coalitions, and institutions engaged in food systems work.

Since 2022, to support broader insight into state food systems issues, the council has requested quarterly updates from our state agency representatives on food system-related policies, programs, and opportunities. These reports are included in the written minutes and constitute the first comprehensive cross-agency compilation of food systems efforts. Beginning in 2024, written versions of these updates are also shared in the quarterly COFSAC newsletter and posted on the council website.

COLLABORATIONS

Per its legislation, one of COFSAC's key duties is to collaborate with agricultural producers, relevant state and federal educational institutions, nongovernmental organizations and consumers to connect state and federal agencies to provide Colorado agricultural producers, including fruit and vegetable producers, with viable market opportunities. To that end, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council and its members supported the following efforts in 2024.

COLORADO FOOD SUMMIT REGIONAL CONVENINGS

COFSAC continues to serve on the statewide steering committee for the Colorado Food Summit along with the CSU Food Systems Institute, the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, Project Angel Heart, and the Colorado Department of Education. The statewide steering committee convenes regularly to discuss event funding, organization, and resources, and engages with host planning committees across the state to provide input into the design of the regional convenings.



The Colorado Food Summit Regional Convenings will take place January through March of 2025. At the time of this report, eleven events are planned. Current locations include Fort Morgan, Sterling, Craig, Salida, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo. The convenings will gather food systems partners

from across Colorado to identify regional needs and priorities.

As both Staff Director and the CSU representative for COFSAC, Dr. Christensen has provided support to regional host committees, collaboratively developed resources for the event, and initiated discussions around how the regional convening process and outcomes can inform a 2025 Colorado Food Summit.

Over the upcoming year, COFSAC leadership and staff will continue to provide support through the statewide steering committee, attend regional convenings, and participate in planning processes for the 2025 Food Summit.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Working groups allow COFSAC to expand the breadth and depth of expertise and networks engaged in the council's work. COFSAC members engage in active promotion and recruitment for working group membership, including by providing working group information on the COFSAC website and promoting engagement opportunities through organization newsletters, food systems-related list services, and word of mouth recruitment via professional networks.

Serving in their capacity as subject matter experts and directly impacted stakeholders, community members contribute to the working groups' efforts by actively participating in group meetings, assisting in the development and revision of research and subsequent reports, and soliciting feedback from their broader networks, as appropriate.

The following organizations and agencies provided invaluable research support to the working groups in 2024:

Institutional Procurement: Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, Denver Department of Public Health and the Environment, Chef Ann Foundation, Nourish Colorado, Donnell-Kay Foundation, Growing Gardens, University of Colorado Boulder, CSU Food Systems Institute, and the Northwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center

CSU Extension has a dedicated seat on COFSAC, partly to assure that the work of the council connects with the campus, county-based offices, and issue teams that complement the mission of COFSAC. This has opened new lines of communication in the CSU Extension organization, both directly with COFSAC and with the state agencies and broader partners that were tapped to help with working groups during 2024.

COFSAC continues to deepen its collaboration with state agencies in support of our mission of serving as a trusted thought partner. In 2024, state agency council members and additional representatives actively participated in working group meetings, offering valuable guidance on state programs, legislation, and food purchasing. State agency partners are engaged across all working groups, including taking a leading role in the values-based procurement research through the Institutional Procurement working group.

COFSAC collaborated with several state agencies in 2024 to analyze data and coordinate research for state-administered programs. This included conducting quantitative data analysis and supporting a CSU graduate student in evaluating the Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Human Services.



PRIORITY AREAS FOR 2025

The council moves into 2025 with a commitment to expanding statewide engagement and collaboration with community to realize our mission and vision. Building on the priorities and strategies established during the sunset review process, the Council is pursuing the following initiatives:

Institutional Procurement

The Institutional Procurement working group will continue to disseminate and build upon Farm to Loading Dock report recommendations. This working group plans to engage with state agencies and NGO partners to conduct research on values-based procurement in Colorado, with a focus on increasing transparency around state food purchasing.

Strategic Relationships

The Strategic Relationships working group is focused on establishing clear, regular, and high-value channels of communication and consultation with lawmakers and state agencies. This group will strengthen awareness of the Council's research and ongoing initiatives through engagement with statewide partner organizations and individual advocates.

Membership and Engagement

The Membership and Engagement working group continues efforts to identify and develop strategic partnerships with other food-system aligned initiatives, councils, institutions, and organizations. In 2025, this working group will prioritize development of resources and processes that support Council members and will seek to offer leadership and professional development opportunities through the Council, particularly for young Coloradans pursuing careers in the food systems space.

Food Access

The Food Access working group seeks to contribute to statewide policy coordination focused on growing local food economies within which all Coloradans have access to fresh, affordable and healthy foods.

We continue to see a distinct need for a cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder and multi-institution council that can provide a balanced perspective on key challenges and opportunities facing the state.



COLORADO FOOD SYSTEMS
ADVISORY COUNCIL
cofoodsystemscouncil.org