



Durham County:

Durham County Food System Assessment &
Strategic Plan

Response to Request for Proposal (RFP) No. 25-041

Submitted To:

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Tab #2

Tab 2 – Executive Summary

Durham County is embarking on an important effort to outline the resources, policies, practices, and programs necessary to achieve food and nutrition security for all Durham County residents for generations. Our team at Key Environmental Consulting is honored to propose a comprehensive, community-centered approach that addresses the food security of residents, builds on local assets, and leverages data-driven strategies for systemic change.

This project will unfold in two interconnected phases. First, we will conduct a countywide food system assessment paired with accessible stakeholder workshops. Through the formation of a Steering Committee, Learning Journeys, pop-up dialogues, spatial analysis, and policy reviews, we will build a shared, evidence-based understanding of the conditions shaping Durham's food environment. This work will intentionally center those most impacted by food insecurity, and will remove barriers to participation by offering multilingual, transportation-supported, and compensated engagement opportunities.

Second, we will collaboratively develop Durham County's Food System Strategic Plan, using findings from the assessment and community input to drive goal setting, strategy design, and action planning. Our role will be as interpreters and synthesizers, translating community-identified needs into actionable recommendations that fit Durham's unique policy and political context. We will integrate relevant state, regional, and local frameworks, including the NC Food System Resilience Strategy, Resilience: Counties Strengthening NC's Food Ecosystem, and the Tri-COG FEEDS Strategy, ensuring that Durham's plan is both locally grounded and regionally aligned.

Throughout the 18-month project period, we will foster transparency, broad involvement, and shared ownership at every stage. Deliverables will include a GIS-informed food system assessment, a prioritized strategic plan with phased implementation guidance, an implementation toolkit, a governance and partnership framework, and an evaluation plan focused on accessibility and accountability. Our ultimate goal is to leave Durham County with a living, action-ready blueprint for advancing food security, building strong local economies, and supporting the health and well-being of all residents for generations to come.



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Tab #3

Tab 3 – Corporate Overview

3.1. Firm History

Key Environmental Consulting is committed to advancing opportunity through high-quality scientific, technical, and administrative services. Founded with a mission to center integrity in problem-solving for our clients, our firm has grown into a trusted partner for communities, nonprofits, and government agencies seeking practical and actionable solutions.

Based in the Raleigh-Durham region of North Carolina, we have built a national reputation for delivering effective technical assistance, capacity-building programs, and training initiatives to communities, including rural agricultural regions and frontline neighborhoods affected by environmental burdens. Our team brings deep expertise in food systems, urban planning, agriculture, and community-centered engagement to co-create strategies that are impactful, relevant, and rooted in local knowledge.

We have successfully supported projects in North Carolina, across the southeastern United States, and in U.S. territories, working with diverse partners to improve food systems, water infrastructure, energy access, and community health. From strategic planning to implementation, Key Environmental Consulting is committed to helping communities not only access resources but thrive with them.

3.2. Financial Stability

Key Environmental Consulting maintains strong financial health and sound fiscal management practices. The firm has a stable revenue base, a positive cash flow, and maintains appropriate reserves to ensure the timely execution of contracts and deliverables. We have consistently managed federal, state, and private grant funds in compliance with applicable regulations and reporting requirements. Our financial stability enables us to scale resources as needed and ensure uninterrupted project performance throughout the contract period.

3.3. Contact Information

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Tab #4

Tab 4 – Approach

4.1: Assessment and Community Approach

To effectively address Durham County's food system, our approach to this project is grounded in strategic planning, shared decision making, and accessibility. The work will be delivered through two interconnected tasks: (1) a comprehensive assessment and community workshop facilitation, and (2) the development of a food system strategic plan that is co-created with stakeholders and reflects the needs and priorities of Durham residents.

4.1.1. Community-Centered Approach to Addressing Food System Insecurity

We understand that several factors contribute to the difficulties surrounding food insecurity for Durham communities. We also recognize that many other factors play an essential role in this issue and that no single project can address them all entirely.

Relying on the community's experiences and utilizing their unique positions will serve as the basis for forming a collective vision. Understanding that the problems within our food systems are not individual challenges, this project acknowledges that it will take more than a single organization to enact meaningful and lasting change.

4.1.2. Three-Phase Community Workshop Plan

Our community plan will unfold across three interrelated phases. Figure 1 illustrates our phased approach to community involvement, beginning with the co-creation of the engagement plan, followed by broad implementation of activities across Durham County, and concluding with a feedback and validation phase.



Figure 4.1. Three Phases of the Engagement Plan

Phase 1: Steering Committee Formation and Engagement Design

This phase focuses on establishing the foundation for all community outreach efforts. With guidance from Durham County, we will form a Steering Committee made up of community members, food system practitioners, and organizational stakeholders. The Steering Committee will help define what meaningful engagement looks like, shape the outreach strategy, and identify key groups to include.

Steering Committee members will be compensated appropriately for their time and contributions. They will meet regularly to guide decision-making and ensure that engagement strategies are aligned with community priorities. The final engagement plan will

be submitted to County Designated Representatives for approval before engagement activities begin.

Planned activities in this phase
Recruit Steering Committee members in collaboration with Durham County
Hold initial Steering Committee meetings to discuss goals and structure
Co-develop the research and engagement plan with Steering Committee input
Finalize and submit the plan to the County for approval

Phase 2: Implementation of Engagement Activities

Once the plan is approved by Durham County, our team will launch a countywide implementation process designed to reach a broad cross-section of residents, stakeholders, and food system actors. This phase will prioritize accessibility to ensure that all communities in Durham County, especially those most impacted by food insecurity, are able to meaningfully participate.

Engagement activities will take place in trusted community settings and will be offered in multiple languages. We will work closely with local organizations, neighborhood leaders, and community-based service providers to co-host events and ensure that outreach efforts build on existing relationships. Our approach will create safe, welcoming spaces where participants feel respected, heard, and empowered to influence the direction of the food system strategic plan.

To meet the County's goal of broad participation, we will employ a wide range of engagement methods, each designed to accommodate different levels of time availability, communication styles, and proximity. These methods are summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2. Community Engagement Methods Menu

Engagement Method	Purpose	Audience/Setting
Community Listening Sessions	Deep community dialogue and storytelling	Community centers, schools, faith-based spaces

Pop-Up Engagements	Quick interaction and visibility	Grocery stores, transit hubs, community events
Small Group Dialogues	Intimate, focused conversations	Libraries, co-ops, neighborhood centers
One-on-One Interviews	In-depth insights from key informants	Stakeholders across the food value chain
Surveys (digital and paper)	Broad reach, structured feedback	Online, paper-based, distributed through partners
Creative Tools (mapping, storytelling, visual facilitation)	Accessible, engaging participation techniques	All ages and literacy levels

Phase 3: Community Feedback and Validation

The last phase of engagement ensures that community members have opportunities to review and respond to the findings and recommendations that emerge from the assessment process. This phase is essential for closing the loop, maintaining transparency,

Planned activities in this phase include
Share draft themes and recommendations with community members through printed materials, small group sessions, and online formats
Facilitate follow-up listening sessions with groups who participated in earlier engagement activities
Conduct targeted validation interviews with community leaders and food system partners
Present refined recommendations to the Steering Committee for final input prior to inclusion in the strategic plan

and reinforcing community participation of the final strategic plan. Feedback collected during this phase will inform the refinement of recommendations and will be used to build trust and accountability across all stakeholder groups.

We will return to previous participants and continue outreach through the Steering Committee and community partners. Engagement methods will be adapted to focus on validation and refinement of findings while remaining accessible and responsive to participants' time and availability.

4.1.3. Policy and Comprehensive Plan Analysis

Analyzing how food and local food systems are addressed in county and city comprehensive plans is essential for understanding the extent to which planning documents support access to healthy, affordable food and promote a strong local food economy across the supply chain, from production to processing, distribution, and consumption.

This analysis examines the integration of food-related goals, policies, and strategies

across key planning elements such as land use, economic development, public health, and transportation. By identifying strengths, gaps, and opportunities within existing comprehensive plans, the analysis can inform future updates and guide the development of more intentional, coordinated approaches to strengthening local food systems. This process also supports alignment with broader community goals related to health and economic growth.

We will conduct a comprehensive review of both national and local planning efforts to identify effective strategies for integrating food systems into comprehensive plans. Our team will begin by examining municipalities and counties across the United States that have successfully embedded food system goals within land use, public health, transportation, and economic development frameworks. From this research, we will develop a best practices document highlighting transferable policies and planning components that support an improved food system.

Building on these findings, we will evaluate the existing Durham County and City Comprehensive Plans using adapted assessment tools, in collaboration with the Steering Committee. This evaluation will result in a report identifying Durham's current assets, gaps, and opportunities to strengthen food systems through comprehensive planning and local policy alignment.

4.1.4. Food System Spatial Assessment

The purpose of this spatial analysis of the food environment is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the local food system within the county by examining the geographic distribution and accessibility of food retail outlets, residents who are eligible for or enrolled in nutrition assistance programs, and land uses that support or impact food production and distribution. This analysis will inform planning, policy, and programmatic strategies to improve food access, support food security, and promote healthier communities across the county.

4.1.4.1. Conduct Local Foodshed Analysis

Foodsheds are geographic areas where food is produced and consumed. For Durham County, a local foodshed analysis will examine the flow of food within and into the county, as well as the flow of food leaving the county. While American foodsheds are often considered global, there are significant opportunities to increase the local demand for and production of food. We will work with stakeholders to identify strategies for strengthening a more localized foodshed by gathering input from producers and consumers through community meetings and public engagement sessions.

4.1.4.2. GIS Spatial Analysis of Food Access and Vulnerability

To conduct a GIS spatial analysis of food access and social vulnerability at the county level, we will begin by mapping the geographic distribution of food retailers, categorized by type, including supermarkets, grocery stores, corner stores, farmers markets, and convenience stores. Using business licensing data, the USDA Food Access Research Atlas, and local datasets, we will identify locations that accept SNAP and WIC benefits and then overlay this with data on SNAP/WIC-enrolled households from the American Community Survey or state-level administrative records. This analysis will reveal spatial mismatches between benefit-eligible populations and access to appropriate food retail outlets.

To further assess neighborhood-level transit accessibility, we will integrate public transportation data (GTFS files) with road network data to evaluate travel times and walkability from residential areas to food retailers. We will apply network analysis to determine transit time thresholds, such as 15-minute and 30-minute access zones and identify transit-dependent communities with limited access to healthy food outlets.

Additionally, by overlaying these layers with a Vulnerability Index, including demographic indicators, vehicle access, and housing instability, we will identify communities

with compounded risk factors for food insecurity. This integrated spatial analysis will support targeted policy and planning

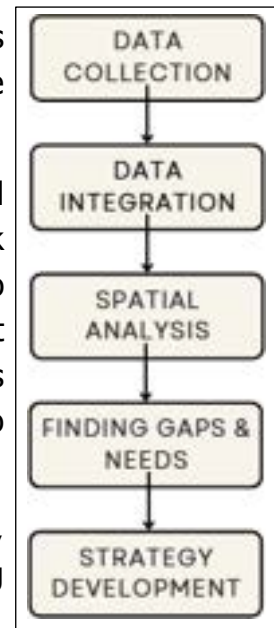


Figure 4.2.
Spatial Analysis Workflow

interventions aimed at addressing structural barriers to food access. The data collection and integration process for this spatial analysis is illustrated in Figure 4.2, which outlines the workflow we will use to synthesize demographic, retail, transit, and vulnerability data into a comprehensive GIS-based assessment.

4.1.4.3. Analyze Existing Food System Infrastructure and Assets

To analyze the existing local food system infrastructure and assets using GIS, we will compile and map spatial data on key components of the food supply chain. This includes production sites such as farms and urban agriculture operations, processing and aggregation facilities such as food hubs and community kitchens, distribution networks including transportation routes and warehouses, and retail outlets including grocery stores, farmers markets, and co-ops.

We will assess the spatial relationships between these assets and overlay them with demographic and socioeconomic data to evaluate how evenly infrastructure is distributed across the community. Additionally, we will identify potential gaps, redundancies, and opportunities for improved connectivity within the local food system, such as areas lacking aggregation facilities or cold storage near small-scale farms.

This analysis will provide a visual and data-driven foundation for strengthening the local food system, optimizing resource allocation, and informing strategic planning and investment.

4.1.5. Participatory Strategic Development

Our strategy for advancing local food systems is grounded in the co-creation of knowledge and the co-development of strategies through participatory, community-driven methods. Central to this approach are Learning Journeys and Charrettes, which serve as dynamic platforms for engaging a variety of stakeholders, including residents, farmers, planners, public health professionals, and policymakers, in shaping a shared vision for Durham's food system.

Learning Journeys offer experiential, on-the-ground opportunities to explore local food environments, identify assets and gaps, and build collective understanding across sectors. Charrettes complement this process by providing structured, collaborative design sessions where stakeholders come together to generate, refine, and align strategies that reflect community values, experience with food security, and data-informed priorities. Together, these tools foster trust, opportunity, and innovation in creating a sustainable and productive local food system.

4.1.5.1. Learning Journey in Understanding the Local Food System

The goal of Learning Journeys for food systems is to provide opportunities for stakeholders to learn from each other in an interactive and participatory way. These learning journeys aim to build a strong food system, improve food and nutrition security, and address technical skills, community action, and environmental considerations across value chain development, production, and harvesting techniques.

We will conduct two 2-day Learning Journeys, with one focusing on the Supply side (food supply, value chain development, and food production) of the local food system, and the other focusing on the Demand side (food access, availability, and affordability). For each Learning Journey, the agenda will include:

- Day 1: Tours and discussions with stakeholders at relevant facilities
- Day 2: Workshop with Steering Committee members and stakeholders

The team will work closely with the Steering Committee in identifying stakeholders and arranging site tours based on the information gathered up to that point. Following Day 1 for each Learning Journey, we will synthesize the information and identify highlights, assets, opportunities, and challenges. This information will guide the workshop discussions on Day 2, during which Steering Committee members and stakeholders will convene in a collaborative setting to identify and develop strategic recommendations.

4.1.5.2. Convene a Stakeholder-Driven Charrette

The purpose of charrettes focused on the county's local food system is to engage a diverse group of stakeholders in a collaborative, solutions-oriented planning process that addresses challenges and opportunities within the local food landscape. An overview of the process is provided in Figure 4.3.

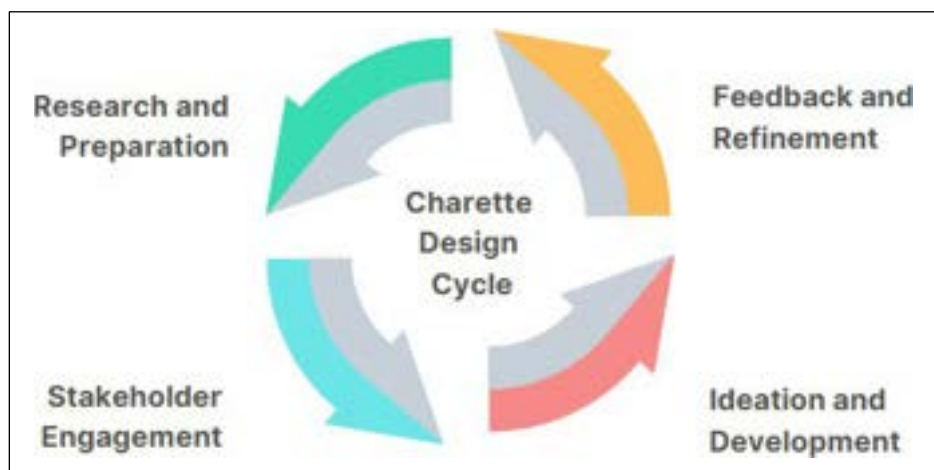


Figure 4.3. Charette Design Cycle

These intensive, participatory sessions bring together community members, farmers, food retailers, public health professionals, planners, local government officials, nonprofit organizations, and representatives from nutrition assistance programs to co-create strategies that enhance food access, security, and affordability.

Charrettes serve as a platform for shared learning, visioning, and consensus-building, with potential outputs including policy recommendations, land use strategies, infrastructure needs, and programmatic priorities that reflect the values and experiences of the community.

We envision this as a three-day charrette comprised of a series of short sessions with groups of stakeholders, as well as select one-on-one discussions with stakeholders that may warrant individual attention. Emphasis areas for this charrette will include project, program, and policy interventions that may be needed to achieve the goals of the overall plan.

4.2: Develop Durham County Food System Strategic Plan

4.2.1. Strategic Planning Values and Approach

The development of Durham County's Food System Strategic Plan will be guided by values of accessibility, , transparency, and community input. Our team is committed to producing a plan that not only reflects the community's experience with the food system, but also sets a foundation for action that is feasible, comprehensive, and transformative.

We view our role in this effort as interpreters, professionals who listen deeply to what the community shares, synthesize that input, and translate it into actionable strategies. This process includes taking what we hear in engagement sessions and community analysis, identifying strategies that align with those needs, and contextualizing those tools to fit Durham County's unique policy, political, and administrative environment.



Figure 4.4. Strategic Planning Approach for Durham County

We recognize that North Carolina's status as a Dillon's Rule State limits the authority of local governments to enact certain policies without state authorization. As part of the

strategic planning process, we will work with the County and stakeholders to identify any local policy barriers rooted in state law. If a community-supported recommendation cannot legally be implemented under current conditions, we will work with the County to determine the best course of action. This may include omitting the recommendation from the plan or clearly framing it as a promising idea that would require future state-level support to become actionable.

Throughout this process, our Steering Committee will play an active and ongoing role, not just as reviewers of draft and final documents, but as partners in shaping content and strategy. We believe in putting Steering Committees to work in meaningful ways. Our goal is to design interactive, focused meetings that tackle specific issues or priorities, allowing the committee to help us sort through opportunities, assess feasibility, and ground our work in real-time community and political dynamics. Steering Committee members will also serve as critical connectors to community networks and as a voice for ensuring the strategic plan is both accessible and implementable.

4.2.2. Integration of State, Regional, and Local Strategies

4.2.1.1. Review of Existing Food System Strategies

Our team has experience working at the intersection of planning, public health, agriculture, and policy implementation. We will conduct a focused review of:

- **NC Food System Resilience Strategy:** We will draw from this framework's emphasis on local food access, community capacity building, and accessible funding. Building on our history of leading federally funded capacity-building initiatives, we will integrate this strategy's approach to systemic change and community development.
- **Resilience:** Counties Strengthening NC's Food Ecosystem: Having worked with county governments, Cooperative Extension offices, and USDA agencies throughout the state, we will leverage our existing relationships and local knowledge to connect Durham's planning process with lessons learned from other NC counties. Through workshops and peer-to-peer learning with County staff and community members, we will identify promising practices and local applications.
- **Tri-COG FEEDS Strategy:** Recognizing the importance of regional coordination, this strategy will help inform how Durham's plan considers cross-county partnerships, value chain development, and regional food infrastructure. Our team's work with small agricultural producers across Eastern North Carolina positions us to support a strategy that strengthens both local and regional food economies.

4.2.1.2. Gap and Opportunity Analysis

To identify gaps and opportunities in the local food system, we will use a triangulated analysis approach that combines community and stakeholder engagement, spatial data analysis, and policy and programmatic reviews. First, input gathered through Learning Journeys, charrettes, and stakeholder interviews will be thematically coded to identify recurring priorities, concerns, and community-defined needs. Concurrently, spatial analyses using GIS will be conducted to map and quantify gaps in food access, retail environments, transportation to food sources, and proximity to food production and distribution infrastructure. Policy and planning documents will be reviewed to assess existing efforts, regulatory barriers, and institutional alignment with food system goals. These three streams of information will be synthesized in a comprehensive gap-and-opportunity matrix, highlighting mismatches between community needs, geographic realities, and current policies. This integrative process will inform the development of data-driven, community-informed strategies to improve accessibility, strength, and opportunity in the local food system.

SWOT or Gap-Opportunity Matrix

- Develop a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis or a customized matrix to crosswalk findings from the three inputs.
- Prioritize gaps that are high-need and high-feasibility for intervention.

Synthesis Workshops or Strategy Labs

- Convene small group sessions to reflect on findings and co-interpret maps, data, and policy implications.
- Translate insights into preliminary goals, actions, or policy recommendations.

After reviewing these frameworks, we will conduct a gap and opportunity analysis to:

- Identify areas where Durham County is already well-aligned with statewide and regional food systems goals
- Highlight gaps in policy, infrastructure, or programmatic support
- Uncover specific opportunities for innovation, partnership, or investment that may not yet be addressed in broader frameworks

4.2.1.3. Crosswalk with Durham’s Community Findings

To ensure this plan reflects both strategic alignment and local relevance, we will conduct a crosswalk between engagement findings (Task 1) and the strategies surfaced in the NC, county, and regional plans. This will allow us to:

- Validate that statewide strategies resonate with local experiences and needs
- Identify when and how community priorities diverge from or expand upon existing frameworks
- Ensure that Durham’s strategic plan is uniquely tailored while also contributing to a cohesive food systems vision for the region

4.3.3. Synthesis of Engagement and Research Findings

To ensure that the strategic plan reflects rigorous analysis, our team will synthesize findings from all engagement activities, secondary data review, policy research, and spatial analysis. This process is designed to elevate community knowledge, validate observed trends through quantitative data, and identify the systemic conditions that must be addressed to create a more accessible, food system in Durham County. This integrative process is illustrated in Figure 4.5, which depicts how community input, policy and secondary



Figure 4.5. Community Input and Data Synthesis Diagram

data, and spatial analysis converge to shape strategic recommendations.

4.3.3.1. Thematic Analysis of Community Input

Through focus groups, pop-up engagements, storytelling sessions, surveys, interviews, and Steering Committee feedback, we will gather qualitative data from a wide cross-section of Durham County residents. Our team will use thematic coding and synthesis methods to identify key concerns, recurring ideas, and innovative solutions surfaced during engagement.

We anticipate emerging themes may include barriers to healthy food access (e.g., affordability, transportation), economic exclusion from food value chains, and the desire for community-led control of food resources. These themes will be clearly documented and directly connected to the plan's goals and recommendations.

4.3.3.2. Synthesis of Secondary Data and Spatial Analysis

Our research team will triangulate community perspectives with a robust analysis of quantitative data. This includes demographic trends, food assistance participation (e.g., SNAP, WIC), land use patterns, transit access, and social vulnerability metrics. Using GIS, we will map key variables such as food retailer locations, local production sites, and proximity to transit, overlaying these with indicators of need and accessibility.

The spatial analysis will allow us to visualize accessibility issues in the food system and target strategies where inconsistencies are most acute. For example, we will identify neighborhoods with high rates of SNAP eligibility but low access to healthy retail options, and evaluate transit gaps that compound food insecurity in carless communities.

4.2.4. Development of Strategic Goals and Recommendations

The development of strategic goals and recommendations for the County's Food Systems Strategic Plan will be informed by an integrated, participatory process that:

1. Ensures access to affordable, safe, nutritious foods that meets individual dietary needs and food preferences.
2. Provides economic opportunities for communities and people in the food value chain to flourish and live.
3. Incorporate practices that encourage protection of natural resources and strengthen connections between land, people, and food in Durham.

4.2.4.1 Synthesis of Findings

We will begin with a comprehensive synthesis of key insights from community and stakeholder engagement activities (e.g., Learning Journeys, charrettes, interviews), spatial analyses, and the policy and program review. These data streams will be triangulated to identify recurring themes, structural gaps, and emerging opportunities. This synthesis will be documented in a working brief to serve as a foundation for collaborative goal setting.

4.2.4.2 Collaborative Goal Setting

Using the synthesized findings, we will convene a goal-setting session with a cross-sector advisory group of community stakeholders, government representatives, nonprofit leaders, and food system practitioners. Through facilitated workshops, we will co-develop a set of strategic goals using logic models and theory of change frameworks to align challenges, root causes, and desired outcomes. This participatory approach ensures the goals are reflective of local realities and informed by those most impacted.

4.2.4.3 Strategy and Policy Development

Each strategic goal will be supported by a suite of evidence-based and context-specific strategies. These may include policy recommendations, programmatic initiatives, investment priorities, and partnership models. Strategies will be organized across core food systems domains, such as:

- Food access and accessibility
- Local food economy and procurement
- Sustainable agriculture and production
- Infrastructure and transportation
- Nutrition and health

Strategies will also be evaluated for feasibility, impact, and alignment with existing county plans and funding opportunities.

4.2.4.4 Prioritization Framework

We will develop a prioritization matrix in collaboration with county staff and advisory stakeholders to assess each recommendation based on key criteria such as:

- Potential for community impact
- Implementation feasibility
- Scalability and opportunity

- Alignment with accessibility goals This process will result in a phased implementation roadmap that distinguishes between short-term actions and longer-term systems- level strategies.

4.2.4.5 Indicators and Implementation Support

To support accountability and ongoing monitoring, each goal and recommendation will be paired with suggested metrics, drawing from national frameworks (e.g., USDA, CDC, Johns Hopkins Food Policy Networks) and local priorities. Where possible, we will identify existing data sources and propose new tools to capture progress. We will also identify potential funding and technical assistance opportunities to support implementation and scale.

This responsive and comprehensive approach ensures that the strategic goals and recommendations reflect the interests of residents, the perspectives of key stakeholders, and the broader vision for a more accessible, strong, and useful local food system.

4.2.5. Roles, Partnerships, and Governance

Durham County's food system is shaped by a diverse network of public institutions, nonprofit leaders, grassroots organizers, local producers, health advocates, and residents who have long been committed to integrity, and community-driven solutions. As part of Durham County's Food Systems Strategic Plan, we will establish a clear framework for roles, partnerships, and governance that honors the County's collaborative spirit while enhancing coordination and long-term accountability.

4.2.5.1 Defining Stakeholder Roles

We will begin by identifying and mapping key actors across Durham County's food system, including County departments (e.g., Public Health, Cooperative Extension, Transportation, Soil and Water Conservation, Planning, Economic and Workforce Development), City of Durham partners, Durham Public Schools, local growers and farmers markets, faith-based organizations, and trusted community groups such as Rooted in Durham and Feed My Sheep. Through interviews, focus groups, and surveys, we will define the current and potential roles each stakeholder plays in advancing access, procurement, land use, and nutrition,. This role mapping will clarify responsibilities and reveal opportunities for deeper coordination across sectors.

4.2.5.2 Strengthening Cross-Sector Partnerships

Durham has a strong foundation of collaboration, from food coalitions to health initiatives. We will build on these strengths by identifying opportunities to formalize partnerships between sectors—for example, aligning the efforts of local farmers and growers with institutional procurement goals at Durham County Government and Durham Public Schools. We will also explore partnerships with Duke University and other anchor institutions to leverage research capacity and institutional purchasing power.

4.2.5.3 Proposing a Governance Structure

To guide the implementation of the strategic plan and ensure accountability, we will propose a governance model grounded in and co-creation. This may include strengthening or formalizing an existing food systems advisory body, such as the Durham Farm and Food Network, or developing a Durham County Food Systems Implementation Task Force with cross-representation from government, community, and private sectors. This body would:

- Provide oversight and guidance for implementation of the strategic plan
- Coordinate activities and funding opportunities across sectors
- Monitor and report on progress through publicly available metrics
- Center community voice in decision-making

We will also provide recommendations on County staff roles, interdepartmental collaboration mechanisms, and the integration of food systems goals into broader planning efforts like Durham’s Comprehensive Plan.

4.2.6. Implementation and Evaluation Plan

A well-crafted strategic plan must be actionable and accountable. Our approach to implementation and evaluation ensures that the goals of Durham County’s Food Systems Strategic Plan are translated into measurable progress and lasting systems change. The implementation and evaluation framework will be designed in partnership with stakeholders to reflect shared priorities, community values, and Durham’s commitment to access and transparency.

4.2.6.1 Phased Implementation Approach

The strategic plan will include a phased implementation roadmap organized into short-term (0–2 years), mid-term (3–5 years), and long-term (5+ years) strategies. This structure will help Durham County, and its partners prioritize actions based on impact, feasibility, funding readiness, and alignment with existing initiatives. For each recommended action, we will identify:

- Lead and supporting agencies or partners
- Estimated resources and staffing needs
- Relevant policy or regulatory considerations
- Potential funding sources (local, state, federal, philanthropic)

We will also identify early-win opportunities—initiatives that can demonstrate visible progress, build momentum, and deepen community trust within the first year of implementation.

4.2.6.2 Roles and Accountability

Durham County Government will serve as a primary convener and backbone organization, coordinating across departments such as Public Health, Planning, Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water, and Environmental Services. The governance body proposed through the strategic plan (e.g., a Food Systems Task Force or enhanced Durham Farm and Food Network) will oversee implementation, provide ongoing guidance, and maintain cross-sector coordination. This structure will support clear lines of accountability while allowing for flexibility and adaptation over time.

4.2.6.3 Evaluation Framework

To assess progress and outcomes, we will co-develop an evaluation framework that includes:

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): For each goal and strategy, including measures of food access, retail density, local procurement, farmland preservation, community participation, and accessibility impacts.
- Baseline Assessment: Drawing on initial GIS, policy, and stakeholder data to establish a pre-implementation snapshot.
- Monitoring Plan: Including data collection responsibilities, frequency of updates, and reporting formats.
- Community Feedback Mechanisms: Such as annual forums, focus groups, or storytelling sessions to ensure community accountability and responsiveness.

Wherever possible, we will leverage existing data systems (e.g., USDA, CDC, County health assessments, Durham Neighborhood Compass) and recommend new tools or partnerships to fill data gaps.

4.2.6.4 Learning and Adaptation

Recognizing that food systems are dynamic and complex, our evaluation plan will emphasize learning, iteration, and continuous improvement. We will recommend a biennial review of progress by the governance body, with opportunities to adjust strategies in response to new challenges, emerging opportunities, or community insights. This adaptive approach will ensure the strategic plan remains relevant and responsive to Durham County's evolving needs.

By grounding implementation and evaluation in data, Durham County's Food Systems Strategic Plan will serve as a blueprint—empowering local leaders, partners, and residents to move from vision to action in building a safe, affordable, and nutritious food system.

4.2.7. Strategic Plan Deliverables

The final deliverables for Durham County's Food Systems Strategic Plan will provide a comprehensive and actionable roadmap for advancing a more accessible local food system. All deliverables will be designed to support long-term implementation, cross-sector collaboration, and accountability, while being accessible and useful to diverse stakeholders—from County departments and elected officials to community organizations and residents.

4.2.7.1 Final Food Systems Strategic Plan

A professionally designed, full-length strategic plan document that includes:

- Executive Summary
- Background and context on Durham's food system
- Summary of community and other stakeholder input
- GIS-based spatial analysis and data visualizations
- Assessment of current policies, programs, and governance structures
- Strategic goals, objectives, and prioritized recommendations
- Phased implementation roadmap with timelines and responsible parties
- Evaluation framework with proposed metrics and indicators
- Appendices with technical references, community input summaries, and methodology

4.2.7.2 Implementation Toolkit

A companion toolkit to support County staff and partners in launching and managing implementation, including:

- Action plan templates
- Funding and resource guide (e.g., grant opportunities, state/federal programs)
- Communication and messaging templates for public engagement
- Roles and responsibilities matrix
- Policy briefs or one-pagers for key recommendation areas

4.2.7.3 Governance and Partnerships Recommendations

A formal set of recommendations for governance, including:

- Options for food systems leadership and coordination (e.g., Food Policy Council, Task Force)
- Proposed structure, roles, and membership guidelines
- Operating procedures for decision-making and accountability
- Integration with existing County planning and sustainability initiatives

4.2.7.4 GIS Maps and Data Assets

A curated set of geospatial datasets and maps that can be integrated into the County's GIS system or planning platforms, including:

- Food retail access by neighborhood
- SNAP/WIC accessibility and enrollment hotspots
- Local food infrastructure mapping (production, aggregation, retail, etc.)
- Layers representing vulnerability and food insecurity
- Transit access to food outlets

All data and metadata will be provided in standard formats (e.g., shapefiles, CSVs) for future use and updates.

4.2.7.5 Presentation Materials and Public-Facing Summary

- Slide decks and talking points for use by County staff and stakeholders to present the plan to decision-makers, partners, and the public
- A 2–4 page visually designed summary of the strategic plan for broad distribution

These deliverables will not only reflect the County’s vision and community voice but will serve as practical tools to guide real change across Durham’s food system—ensuring transparency, alignment, and long-term impact.

4.3. Project Timeline and Phasing

To ensure orderly, strategic, and timely completion of all project components, we have developed a high-level timeline for the 18-month period of performance. This timeline organizes major activities into clear phases, ensuring that assessment, engagement, analysis, strategy development, and final deliverables are efficiently sequenced.

The timeline reflects the project's commitment to iterative stakeholder involvement, integrated research synthesis, and participatory strategy development. Each phase is intentionally designed to build on the previous one, with opportunities for community validation and partner collaboration embedded throughout the process.

Table 3 provides a visual overview of the project timeline by quarter, highlighting when key activities will occur across the full project lifecycle.

Table 3. Project Timeline by Quarter

Timeline of Activities	Year 1				Year 2	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Project Kickoff and Planning						
Stakeholder Involvement (Phases 1–3)						
Policy and Spatial Analysis						
Strategic Plan Development						
Governance and Partnerships Framework						
Implementation and Evaluation Planning						
Final Deliverables and Closeout						

4.4. Durham County Food Assessment Budget Narrative

1. Budget Summary:

Budget Category	Total Cost
Direct Labor (3 personnel)	\$66,207
Other Direct Costs	\$16,340
Participant Support Costs	\$15,000
Travel	\$560
Materials and Supplies	\$3,750
Contractual	\$74,000
Total Project Cost	\$159,547

2. Direct Labor:

The total personnel cost of \$66,207 reflects rates that are loaded to account for general administrative costs, including legal, human resources, accounting, computer usage costs, and fringe benefit costs. An overview of each person's role is described below.

The **Project Director** manages and oversees the entire project. They are responsible for leading all engagement and administrative efforts. The director will work directly with Durham County to form appropriate relationships with the community and other stakeholders, establishing an effective outreach strategy. The Project Director will lead engagement events and be responsible for formulating a wide range of engagement methods to ensure appropriate accommodations for community participation.

The **Outreach Coordinator** will provide project support on logistics, community support, and data collection. Responsible for ensuring community involvement throughout project timeline and conducting surveys and interviews for feedback and final dissemination of results. Will collect data and other information on Durham County demographics, history, and experience with food systems, implementing it into project operations.

The **Food Specialist** is responsible for leading small focus groups and other interviews with residents on food security issues in the community. Provide project support on community experience with food systems and development of our strategic plan to mitigate food insecurity.

Name	Service	Number of Project Hours
Project Director	Project administration and Steering Committee direction	350
Outreach Coordinator	Overall project support and community involvement	530
Food Specialist	Lead listening sessions and small group discussion on food	120
Total		1,000

3. Other Direct Costs:

3.1. *Participant Support Costs: \$15,000*

Two types of participant support costs are budgeted.

(1.) Stipends for the community members who participate in the workshops/events, provide feedback on the project, complete surveys, etc. The amount of stipends budgeted for the community members is \$10,000.

(2.) Stipends for Steering Committee members who will provide guidance and direction for the project. The amount budgeted for the Steering Committee member stipends is \$5,000.

3.2. *Travel:*

Travel funds are requested to support staff trips for workshops, engagement activities, and Steering Committee meetings. We anticipate four (4) trips for engagement sessions and three (3) trips for Steering Committee meetings. Each trip will include two (2) staff members to facilitate activities, manage logistics, and provide community support.

Trip Type	# of Trips	# Staff	Cost per Trip	Total Cost
Community Engagement Sessions	4	2-3	\$70	\$280
Steering Committee Meetings	3	2-3	\$70	\$210
Total				\$590

3.3. *Materials and Supplies:*

Printed Materials: Printed Materials- Materials for educational handouts, flyers, notebooks, maps, final documents, etc.

Rental Spaces: (X) Number of rental spaces for workshops/educational trainings, community events, and the final dissemination of project findings/results

Food: Refreshments during community events

Item	Cost
Printed materials (graphics, handouts, and maps with results)	\$500
Rental Space for community events/meetings	\$750
Refreshments for community members during meetings	\$2500
Total	\$3,750

4. Contractual:

A subcontract will be issued to Planning4Health Solutions, LLC to support the development of the

Durham County Food System Strategic Plan. The outreach partner will lead key components of the project, including strategic planning framework development, integration of state and regional strategies, facilitation of participatory goal-setting workshops, and the preparation of governance and implementation recommendations. Their expertise in food systems planning, policy development, and community-based strategies will enhance the quality, relevance, and sustainability of project outcomes. The total contractual cost allocated for this subcontractor is \$74,000.



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Tab #5

Tab 5 – Organization and Staffing

5.1. Overview of Organization and Staffing

This project will be carried out by a multidisciplinary team, shown in Figure 5.1 with deep expertise in public health, food systems planning, anthropology, and work. The core team is led by Key Environmental Consulting and includes additional capacity through a subcontracting firm specializing in food systems and built environment policy planning. Together, the team brings a strong track record of community-centered project delivery, policy integration, and strategic planning.

Each team member plays a critical role in ensuring that the Durham County Food System Assessment and Strategic Plan is grounded in equity, responsive to local needs, and methodologically rigorous. Below are the individuals who will lead and support implementation across all phases of the project, including engagement, research, analysis, and strategy development.

Figure 5.1. Overview of Key Personnel



A. Kibri H. Everett - Project Director

Summary of Professional Experience

Ms. Everett is a seasoned environmental scientist and foodpreneur. With over two decades of experience advancing environmental and public health initiatives, Ms.

Everett brings deep expertise in food systems, agriculture, spatial analysis, and community-driven planning. She has successfully led multi-stakeholder projects, supporting rural, urban, and tribal communities in designing strategies for capacity building and long-term community health. Ms. Everett has a proven track record in managing complex

federal and county-funded initiatives, facilitating participatory engagement processes, and translating community knowledge into actionable policy outcomes.

Project Role

As Project Director, Ms. Everett will provide overall leadership, coordination, and strategic direction for the Durham County Food System Assessment and Strategic Plan. She will be responsible for ensuring the project stays on schedule, aligns with County expectations, and maintains a consistent focus on accessibility, community voice, and actionable outcomes. Ms. Everett will oversee all workstreams—including stakeholder involvement, policy analysis, spatial assessment, and strategy development—and will serve as the primary point of contact for the County. Drawing on her two decades of experience in environmental science, food systems, and community-based technical assistance, she will guide the project team in delivering a high-quality, comprehensive process that supports long-term systems change.

B. Derrick L. Sauls, Ph.D. - Health and Food Advisor

Summary of Professional Experience

Derrick L. Sauls, Ph.D., is a researcher, professor, consultant, mentor, and farmer dedicated to health initiatives aimed at preventing and eradicating barriers to food access. He brings extensive experience in public health, nutrition, and physiology, with a research focus on food insecurity, health gaps, and the social determinants of health. Dr. Sauls has authored numerous peer-reviewed publications, including studies on food insecurity among university students, the implementation of Farm-to-University programs at HBCUs, and the use of GIS to assess food environments.

Project Role

Dr. Derrick Sauls will serve as the Health and Food Advisor for this project. In this role, he will guide the integration of health accessibility metrics throughout the assessment and strategic planning process, contribute to the design and evaluation of engagement activities, and support the development of data-informed, community-driven recommendations. His work will ensure that public health outcomes and resident needs are central to understanding and transforming Durham County's food system.

C. Darius Collins Jr. - Community Coordinator

Summary of Professional Experience

Mr. Collins is a recent graduate of North Carolina State University with a master's in environmental Anthropology.

His work focuses on assembling, organizing, and synthesizing qualitative and quantitative information to support the production of structured, accessible reports. He has managed data collection efforts, coordinated interviews, facilitated community workshops, and prepared supporting materials such as budgets, presentations, and communications products for a range of stakeholders. His administrative and analytical contributions strengthen the firm's capacity to deliver high quality work products on schedule and in alignment with project objectives.

Project Role

With training in participatory methods and direct experience supporting stakeholder engagement efforts, Mr. Collins will serve as the Community Coordinator. In this role, he will manage key logistics for Steering Committee meetings and public engagement events, coordinate communication with community partners, and ensure the smooth implementation of the engagement plan. Drawing on his anthropological background, he will also support qualitative data collection and help document resident experiences in ways that highlight Durham County residents' experience with their food system. This role is critical to ensuring that the project remains both community-responsive and well-organized throughout its implementation.

5.2. Subcontracted Services

5.2.1. Reasons for subcontracting

To ensure the project benefits from specialized expertise in food systems planning and built environment policy, Key Environmental Consulting will subcontract with a consulting firm with a proven track record in these areas. This partnership enhances the project's capacity to integrate planning best practices, support systems- level thinking, and align with Durham County's policy and land use goals. Subcontracting also supports our commitment to procurement and expands the bench of experienced professionals available to support complex components of the work, such as comprehensive plan review, policy analysis, and strategy development. This collaborative approach ensures the project will be both community-driven and grounded in sound planning principles.

5.2.2. Proposed subcontractor's responsibilities

The subcontractor has technical expertise in food systems, urban planning, and public health. Therefore, their role will include robust analyses, including strategies to facilitate community and stakeholder participation in the co-creation of knowledge and the co-development of strategies. This would complement the community facilitation and environmental expertise from Key Environmental Consulting.

5.3. Identifying Contractor Information

Name: Planning4Health Solutions, LLC

Location: Charlotte, North Carolina

5.3.1. Relevant personnel and experience:

A. Michelle Eichinger, Ph.D.

Summary of Professional Experience

Over 20 years of experience in comprehensive public health and urban planning practices and policies including leadership and administration. Her expertise and extensive experience are food systems planning; community health; data science/GIS, , interdisciplinary stakeholder engagement, and community participation. She is also skilled in grant writing and epidemiological methods, including mixed-method design, quantitative, qualitative, and spatial analysis. Her work in research, community analyses and program development aim to support people- and place-based policies and interventions.

Dr. Eichinger has experience working in government agencies, including as Physical Activity, Nutrition and Obesity Prevention director at the Delaware Division of Public Health and subject matter expert in healthy, affordable food access and health in the built environment at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Having this background in providing technical assistance for local agencies provides the experience to support and facilitate local governments in strategic planning, program and policy development, and community and stakeholder engagement.

As Principal and Owner of Planning4Health Solutions, Dr. Eichinger has worked with state and local agencies, hospitals and nonprofits in conducting planning and design charrettes in collaboration with planning and architect firms. In addition, Dr. Eichinger has facilitated strategic planning workshops and reviewed and analyzed comprehensive plans. Her niche is in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Food Systems Planning performing spatial

analyses community participatory methods to examine the food retail environment, local and regional food sheds, and food supply chains.

B. Don Kostelec

Summary of Professional Experience

Don Kostelec has worked with built environment policy for nearly 25 years on various efforts related to community development, food systems, transportation, and active living. His work on food systems has led to the integration of the topic and related strategies into regional, countywide, and neighborhood-scale plans. This has led to roles with the international organization Blue Zones, where he works to assess communities and integrate built environment policies for active movement, healthy eating, and socializing into plans and actions. For nine years, Don based his consulting work in Asheville, NC, where he worked with several communities across the state on community planning.



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Tab #6

Tab 6 – Qualifications and Experience

6.1. Project History

Previous Client Information	Scope of Work	Previous Project Description	Applicability to Proposed Work
Client: Clemson University Email: LHOSSFE@clemson.edu Phone: 864-656-7640 Date: 2020-2021	Conducted interviews and analyzed qualitative data on food security and food access. Organized the annual food research summit which brought together an interdisciplinary research and programmatic team focused on food systems science.	Responsible for grant writing and project management for Clemson's Land Grant Local Initiative for applied research in food systems, including community food security and agricultural land use protections and support for disadvantaged farmers, assisting local non-profit organizations.	The Land Grant Local Program focuses on addressing food security and local food systems. This includes conducting community surveys, convening a food systems summit, and collaborating with cross-sectoral partnerships in developing programs to improve food security in rural areas.
Client: South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) Email: Zandile.Mchiza@mrc.ac.za	Provided technical support and advice for spatial analysis and developing program and policy recommendation. Developed a mobile application to collect data of soft drink and unhealthy food advertisements.	The FoodSAMSA: Improve Local Food Environment was European funded three-year project that aimed to address malnutrition in all its forms, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, unhealthy diets and obesity, by assessing its determinants and by exploring interventions at the macro (policy), the meso (community) and the micro (interpersonal) level.	Collaborated with cross-sectoral partners in developing strategies to address healthy foods and developed a tool to map food and beverage advertising.
Client: Allendale County, Councilmember	Conducted Walk Audit with community	The 3-year South Carolina Department of	This pedestrian planning grant focused on

Lottie Lewis via State of South Carolina Email: lottiemlewis@att.net Phone: 803-360-0443	members and stakeholders for Allendale County, SC to identify opportunities for equitable transportation and healthy food access. Developed an Equity Composite Index and network analysis for healthy foods.	Health and Environment Control pedestrian planning grant focused on underserved areas to improve the health of marginalized residents through equitable active transportation plans and policy.	communities with limited resources and high socioeconomic vulnerability by improving resident access to food and services. This project included innovative strategies to improve healthy, affordable food through mobile markets and leveraging public lands for agriculture to increase local food procurement.
Client: Delaware Chapter of the American Planning Association Email: david.edgell@state.de.us Phone: 302-739-3090 Award: \$135,000	Project Management Developed Health and Equity Composite Scores and maps for Comprehensive Plan. Developed Food Retail Environment Index.	Plan4Health: Creating a Model to Integrate Health in Comprehensive Plans was a project funded by the American Planning Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This project focused on integrating strategies to improve active living and healthy food access in local comprehensive plans in Delaware.	Worked with planners and public health practitioners to develop tools to assess comprehensive plans for health and equity which would prioritize equitable strategies for land use changes to support healthy behaviors, including access to healthy, affordable foods and improve local food systems for economic development. The Food Retail Environment Index allowed planners and policy makers to examine the proportion of healthy and unhealthy food retail outlets to identify areas for increasing healthy food availability.
Client: Delaware Chapter of the	Project Management	Planners4Health: Delaware leveraged the success from the	Coordinated and facilitated multi-sector

American Planning Association Email: david.edgell@state.de.us Phone: 302-739-3090 Award: \$45,000	Community Asset Mapping Facilitated statewide summit to identify planning and policy priorities through roundtable of stakeholders.	Plan4Health funded project to identify state priorities to address chronic disease and obesity through two determinants of health, healthy food access and active living.	stakeholders to identify statewide priorities
Client: SERVE Communities Email: servecommunities@gmail.com Date: Oct. 2023-Present Contract amount: \$162,000	15 counties served, including Durham County Conducted workshops to assist farmers in owning & operating successful farms and to improve participation among farmers in USDA programs/opportunities	Perform project implementation for historically underserved farmers through technical assistance, training, and accessing federal funding opportunities. Over the past year, our team has provided technical assistance and led capacity building workshops to over 100 underserved farmers across 15 North Carolina counties.	The KEEP-NC project emerged through prior work in low-income and food insecure neighborhoods in Southeast Raleigh. Our capacity building workshops have led underserved farmers and home-gardeners to grow healthy produce in these marginalized communities. Additionally, our team has successfully built strong, and respectful relationships between USDA county offices and community members to address resident needs and their access to equitable food and agricultural resources.

Kibri Hutchison Everett

keverett@keyenvi.com

Summary

Ms. Everett is an environmental and community planning professional whose work is rooted in community voice and data. Skilled in working with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and historically marginalized communities, Ms. Everett works to advance food systems equity, sustainable development, and resilience. Her expertise includes community-based participatory research, GIS spatial analysis, program design, and grant-funded project management. She is committed to co-creating solutions that build community ownership and disrupt systemic inequities. She has been successful at guiding multi-stakeholder planning efforts from assessment through implementation, with a strong focus on transparency, collaboration, and long-term impact.

Education

MS, Earth Science (GIS concentration; graduated magna cum laude), North Carolina Central University, Raleigh, NC, 2006.

BS, Environmental Science, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, 2003.

Professional Experience

2023 to date. Key Environmental Consulting, North Carolina.

Principal. Provide grant writing, strategic planning, GIS support, and technical assistance to characterize environmental inequities for communities with environmental justice concerns. Assist with the design of environmental projects to solve environmental problems (i.e. developing an air monitoring action plan for a community in Southern Georgia). Manage all aspects of the pre-award process, including opportunity assessments, digesting information contained in NOFOs, creating schedules, using spatial data from government mapping tools, technical writing, budget and pricing analyses, document creation, and proposal submission. Identify teaming partners (project evaluators, technical trainers, support staff), facilitate meetings, and cultivate relationships among stakeholders with varying technical and non-technical backgrounds.

2006 to 2023. RTI International, Research Triangle Park, NC.

Environmental Scientist. Provided data, analysis, research, writing, GIS, and engagement services to multi-disciplinary teams of economists, engineers, scientists, and community groups.

Selected Project Experience

Knowledge, Education, and Elevation for Producers in North Carolina (2023 to date) — Program Manager. Design and develop training materials and outreach activities. Deliver workshops and perform ongoing project monitoring to ensure the team is working towards the goals of the programmatic mission areas. Gather data on the key activities in the activity model and create all required reports. Develop surveys to establish the baseline from which we will measure and track progress. Collect data so that barriers and problems faced by farmers can be identified and will provide recommendations for how to work towards minimizing or alleviating those issues so that participation in USDA programs can increase. Responsible for tracking the project's outcomes, impact, and success stories.

Regional Food System Analysis and Model Development Services (2022 to 2023) — Senior Technical Advisor. Advise team on economic development, data management practices, NC-specific data sources, perform geospatial analysis, and produce maps. Facilitate meetings with key actors in the food system, supply chain, and County extension office.

Epic Vegan Food Truck (2021-2023) — Owner and Operator. End-of-the-chain food system business providing access to healthy food, and disrupting the food system: one plant forward meal at a time.

Pure Juicery & Vegan Food Bar (2019-2020) — Owner and Operator. Formulated, designed, and developed the Pure Juicery C Vegan Food Bar concept at every stage of the process that is involved with starting a new business. Disrupted the local food system and established the menu trends currently seen in plant-based food & beverage operations in the Raleigh-Durham area.

Michelle A. Eichinger, MPA, Ph.D.

Meichinger@live.com

Summary of Professional Experience

Over 20 years of experience in comprehensive public health and urban planning practices and policies including progressive leadership and administration. Expertise and extensive experience in food systems planning; community health; data science/GIS, , interdisciplinary stakeholder engagement, and community participation. Skilled in grant writing and epidemiological methods, including mixed-method design, quantitative, qualitative, and spatial analysis. Research and analysis on people-and place-based policies and interventions.

Education

Ph.D., Planning, Design, and the Built Environment, Clemson University, Clemson, SC

Dissertation Title: *Spatial Planning to Examine Regional Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Obesity and Diabetes by Analyzing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Retail Environment: Applying a Machine Learning Approach*

Master of Public Administration (Concentration: Organizational Leadership and Health Policy), University of Delaware, Newark, DE, 2010

MS, Health Promotion, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 2003

BS, Physical Education Studies, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, 2000

Professional Experience

2024 to date. Orbis Inc., Charlotte, NC.

Director, Research and Data Science. Lead a new data science team of GIS technicians and analysts focusing on remote-sensing and artificial intelligence solutions for climate measurements. Establish a new GIS service and solution to calculate carbon sequestration for clients. Created a novel methodology and global solution to assist the timber industry in meeting the compliance and due diligence requirement for the new European Union Deforestation Regulation.

2021-2023. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Post doctorate Research/Project Coordinator. Managed and served as coordinator for the Urban Food Resilience under Climate Change Challenges (UrbanFOSC) and Food4Citeis research projects. Coordinated research activities from institutions in South Africa, Kenya, Algeria and France to meet funding requirements. Developed and performed GIS models analyzing impact of climate on agrifood systems.

2020-2021. Clemson University, Clemson, SC.

Food Systems Research Lead. Responsible for grant writing and project management for Clemson's Land Grant Local Initiative for applied research in food systems, including community food security and agricultural land use protections and support for farmers, assisting local non-profit organizations. Conducted interviews and analyzed qualitative data on food security and food access. Organized the annual food research summit which brought together an interdisciplinary research and programmatic team focused on food systems science.

2013-2017. Planning4Health Solutions. Cumming, GA.

President/Consultant. Consulted for planners and public health managers in integrating public health in planning and design. Developed evaluation strategies for public health programs and community comprehensive plans. Conducted workshops, health assessments, and charrettes on community policy, planning, and design. Supported local and state governments and nonprofit organizations in grant research, writing and program development that awarded over \$10 million.

2010-2013. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA.

Public Health Advisor/Policy Analyst. Served as a subject matter expert in Health and Built environment for the *Communities Putting Prevention to Work* Communities program under the Americans Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Contributed data findings and lessons learned for program evaluation. Developed a tracking system for grantee program objectives and measures. Provided and coordinated technical assistance with project officers to state and local government agencies and non-profit organizations around policy, systems, and environmental changes to address healthy eating and active living in chronic disease prevention.

2007-2010. Division of Public Health, Newark, DE.

Public Health Treatment Program Administrator. Served as a physical activity, nutrition, and obesity prevention director for the Delaware division of public health and director of comprehensive cancer prevention and control. Managed CDC cooperative agreements, including program, contract, and fiscal management; wrote requests for proposals for program support and initiatives and managed program budgets of over \$2 million.

2005 to 2007. Division of Public Health, Newark, DE.

Trainer/Educator. Developed training curricula for peer educators and train-the-trainer education for community partners on HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Hepatitis C. Provide community education on HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Hepatitis C to local partners and community members. Developed a tracking system for training and educating participants for certification and CDC grant reporting. Served on the Delaware's Health Disparities Task Force.

Don Kostelec

dkostelec@vitruvianplanning.com

Summary of Professional Experience

Don Kostelec has worked with built environment policy for nearly 25 years on various efforts related to community development, food systems, transportation, and active living. Currently based in southern Oregon, he has worked across the United States in both the public and private sectors. For nine years, Don based his consulting work in Asheville, NC, where he worked with several communities across the state on community planning.

Don views his role as a translator for communities, taking local input and context into account while developing tangible and implementable recommendations. He takes feedback from agencies, the public, and area stakeholders to craft solutions that match the local abilities of agencies, stakeholders, and the public to understand and support.

His work on food systems has led to the integration of the topic and related strategies into regional, countywide, and neighborhood-scale plans. This has led to roles with the international organization Blue Zones, where he works to assess communities and integrate built environment policies for active movement, healthy eating, and socializing into plans and actions.

Education

Western Carolina Univ, Bachelor of Science of Political Science C Journalism, 1999

University of Illinois Chicago, Master of Urban Planning C Policy, 2001

Professional Experience

Blue Zones Ignite - Cabarrus County (NC). Built Environment Planner to look at the potential policies agencies in Cabarrus County could implement to achieve a healthier population.

Blue Zones Ignite - City of Irving (TX). Built Environment Planner tasked with evaluating the interconnectedness of the city's growth, food access, and housing policies.

AARP Age-Friendly Communities. Don has supported AARP's national office and numerous state offices in compiling the rural livability guidebook and generating Age-Friendly Action Plans for more than a dozen cities across the western US.

Morrisville (NC) Active Youth Strategic Plan. Project manager for this effort that identified strategies for projects, programs, and policies to promote healthier living among the city's youth.

MountainWise (Western NC) Health Impact Assessment on Comprehensive Planning and Food Systems. Project manager for this seven-county assessment on how comprehensive planning, and related policy interventions, could improve food systems in far western NC.

Pitt County (NC) Parks & Recreation Master Plan - Health Integration. Don led the health integration component of this plan in support of the prime consultant for the countywide plan.

Delaware Plan4Health. Don assisted in development and review of the Comprehensive Plan Scorecard tool for this effort in Delaware.

South Carolina Dept. of Health & Environmental Control - Health + Planning Toolkit. Don supported the lead consultant on facilitating workshops and developing the toolkit.

Derrick Sauls, PhD

docsauls@gmail.com

Summary of Professional Experience

Derrick L. Sauls, Ph.D., is a researcher, professor, consultant, mentor, and farmer dedicated to health initiatives aimed at preventing and eradicating barriers to food access. Dr. Sauls has been featured on National Public Radio, discussing the prevalence of unhealthy eateries around universities in North Carolina and their implications for campus obesity.

Dr. Sauls teaches a method of coping with mental health called "Agritherapy," a therapeutic approach to farming that addresses food insecurity. His agricultural efforts include growing muscadine grapes and blueberry bushes, with a vineyard established at Saint Augustine's University and consulting at a vineyard owned by the Chasten Family in Duplin County (Monique Vineyards).

Education

Doctor of Philosophy (2003): Nutrition and Food Science, Department of Food Science and Nutrition, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC

Master of Science (1990): Health Science, Department of Physiology, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts

Bachelor of Science (1981): Zoology, Department of Zoology, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC

Professional Experience

- **Consulting and training:** Raleigh Milbank Apartment Complex Urban Garden, established an educational agricultural garden for youth. Southeast Raleigh High School Community Garden.
- **Soul City Farms:** Established a grape vineyard in Norlina, NC.
- **James Family Farm** – Jamesville NC – established grape vineyard
- **Coleman Farm** – Wilson NC – established grape vineyard
- **Old 30 Dirty Family Farm** – Jacksonville NC – established grape vineyard
- **Community Partnerships:** Collaborate and consult with SERVE, Black Farmers HUB, Poe Center for Health Education, and SouthEast Raleigh High School to develop community garden and train high school students in agriculture and culinary arts.
- **Technical Training:** Established infrastructure for grape vineyards and soil remediation. Performing technical analysis of organic waste using compost (fruit/vegetable) and organic mulch.
- **Agri-Helpdesk:** establishing a helpdesk for small farmers to obtain information concerning establishment, maintenance, and sustainability of crops. Plus, aiding in finding, writing, and submitting support grants for farm.
- **Administrative:** Contact and recruit farmers to attend workshops, establish collaborations/partnerships. Teach at specific workshops as an ESM. Write up procedure manual for various planting techniques and establishment of vineyards and blueberry patches.

Darius Collins, Jr.

Dcollins@keyenvi.com

Summary of Professional Experience

His work focuses on assembling, organizing, and synthesizing qualitative and quantitative information to support the production of structured, accessible reports. He has managed data collection efforts, coordinated interviews, facilitated community workshops, and prepared supporting materials such as budgets, presentations, and communications products for a range of stakeholders. His administrative and analytical contributions strengthen the firm's capacity to deliver high quality work products on schedule and in alignment with project objectives.

Education

MA, Anthropology (Environmental Concentration), North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, 2023

Research: "Environmental Justice: What it means in the Walnut Creek Wetlands"

BA, Anthropology, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, 2021

Minor in Entomology

Professional Experience

2024 to date. Key Environmental Consulting, Cary, North Carolina.

Environmental Project Coordinator. Provide technical assistance, grant writing, and consultation services to organizations focused on a diverse set of goals and outcomes. Conduct research and analysis for all projects, review and score federal funding opportunities, and manage timelines to ensure projects stay on task and are completed in a timely manner. Collaborate with a diverse group of stakeholders and facilitate community specific workshops centered on current environmental and social issues and how to effectively implement mitigation strategies. Establish and maintain relationships with several agencies and community organizations that encourage future collaborations and promote an actionable future.

2024 to date. Palmetto Futures, Cary, North Carolina.

Environmental Project Coordinator. Assist in the development and implementation of environmental projects focused on addressing the environmental situations experienced by communities and community-based organizations (CBOs). Provide expertise in community outreach, marketing, strategic planning, and technical assistance. Create and provide concise graphical communication materials, evaluations on opportunity assessments, timeline construction, funding opportunities, budgets, and other technical writing.