

# Learning from the Leaders:

## Creating a just, responsive, and resilient local food economy

### Introduction

In recent years, a patchwork of local food initiatives has emerged in rural and urban communities in response to the absence of a just, sustainable food economy and the problem of enduring food insecurity.

These initiatives include Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farm-to-table restaurants, and a host of community-based initiatives organized specifically to respond to unmet needs.

While the focus of each initiative varies, they share a common purpose: generating capacity to access sources of healthy food locally and regionally.

### What Is Needed

To achieve this purpose, these initiatives:

- Created dynamic youth leadership programs
- Trained and employed community cooks and growers
- Created food preservation, landscape restoration and seed saving programs
- Operated community kitchens and cultivated foods culturally relevant to BIPOC communities
- Organized food sovereignty programs grounded in traditional ecological knowledge, foods, skills, and practices of indigenous communities

These initiatives demonstrate what can be achieved, but they lack necessary policies and economic infrastructure to support their operations.

Unlike the dominant industrial food economy (which receives broad support from a powerful combination of federal and state subsidies, policies, and created markets for their products), small-scale, local initiatives scramble to access limited funds from complicated, competitive grants, and must create their own markets and delivery systems. They do not receive the automatic subsidies provided to commodity producers.

Currently, there is no infrastructure to support these initiatives or to generate any capacity to create and operate a robust, sustainable, locally-adapted, and coordinated food economy to be climate resilient.

### Models to Follow

Examples of community-based initiatives include: [\*Healthy Roots Institute\*](#), [\*Appetite for Change\*](#), [\*Urban Roots\*](#), [\*Dream of Wild Health\*](#), [\*Sharing Our Roots\*](#), [\*Sprout-MN\*](#), [\*Project Sweetie Pie\*](#), [\*Women's Environmental Institute\*](#), [\*Big River Farms\*](#), the [\*Finland Food Chain\*](#) and indigenous food sovereignty initiatives such as [\*NATIFS\*](#).

These initiatives are models to guide in the development and operation of a just, resilient, locally-adapted, source-to-table, food web economy that can meet the demands of food, water, and climate.