

Local Food Fellows Complete Report 2024-2025

K-STATE
Research and Extension

Local Food Systems

Local Food Fellows Complete Report

Submitted by Amanda Lindahl, Local Food System Program Coordinator, K-State Extension

With funding provided by a Regional Food Systems Partnership Grant through the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we had the opportunity to launch the Kansas Local Food Fellows Program within our K-State Extension Local Food Systems.

In total, we had 38 completed local food fellow projects across the state of Kansas. Including 21 projects in 2025 and 17 projects in 2024. They were hosted by a wide variety of community partners, including some of our own K-State Research and Extension colleagues, county food and farm councils, local business owners, and several farmers markets. The fellow projects were 320-hour projects as determined by the host sites to best meet their needs in building capacity for local food systems in their communities.

To start our program operations, in fall of 2023, we opened the application in a series of three different periods for community partners to apply to host a fellow and present their project proposal. We selected 15 projects from a competitive list of 38 host applicants. These were separated into spring independent fellows, summer independent fellows, and then a specific group of K-State student fellows. We learned that having three different application periods created a challenge to reserve adequate fellow host spots for future open application periods so in fall of 2024 we decided to have only one application period. The second year of the program we received 40 applications and selected 19 final host sites. Our partners at Kansas Black Farmers Association, a subaward on our grant, also hosted two fellows each year although we were not directly involved with their hiring process.

Following the host applications, our coordinator worked with each selected host to produce a job description and then supported posting the position for employment. Our coordinator went through interviews with most of the host supervisors and then served as support in the hiring of the fellows to fill the roles. We provided an orientation to local food fellows training for all fellows and supervisors and worked with them throughout their projects as they were completed. At the completion of each project, fellows were invited to share a presentation summary of their project with time for remarks from site supervisors. Fellows and site supervisors also completed project reporting forms and program evaluations upon project completion.

Spring 2024 Fellows

These projects started in February and were completed in May.

Juniper Hill Farms, Lawrence, KS: Cassidy Perry

Project Summary: Creating tools to help Juniper Hill Farms pitch their products to new grocery stores. Fellow, Cassidy Perry, created a pricing sheet to communicate pricing efficiently, and designed a few marketing tools for inside grocery stores.

Success Story: “We have a stronger price list that we can more quickly generate reports from to send to specific customers.”

Healthy Bourbon County Action Team: Kelly Perry

Description automatically generatedProject Summary: Focusing on outreach and engagement with local food producers in the county, this fellow updated and enhanced an online food wholesale and food buyer directory for the region. The project included hosting an educational workshop for those selling at farmers markets or starting a food business. In partnership with Kansas Department of Agriculture, speakers shared and answered questions about labels, required licenses, and food safety. I also created four storytelling campaigns!



Figure 1: Kelly presenting during the community workshop in Fort Scott.

Success Story from Kelly: We had multiple people attend the educational workshop and I feel like it was extremely successful. We had several people attend and they were engaged and continued to email and follow up with me as a fellow and even people at the state level they continued to use as resources as we advised during the [workshop](#).

Success Story from HBCAT: The project came at a time the community had just had a boom in the farmers market attendance and many people were needing the resources and the connections the educational seminar was able to offer on proper labeling and samples at the Farmers Market. It was a huge help for vendors to understand proper licensing and regulations. Our food fellow was a local face that residents know and are familiar with and felt they could trust to ask questions and get answers. If she didn't know, Kelly would always follow up with resources or other individuals who did know via networks through HBCAT and K-State.

Fort Hays State University: Morgan Barba

Project Summary: First, a local directory was developed to identify these local producers more efficiently and, through interviews, better gauge how they would be willing to help provide local fresh produce year-round. This directory was developed through the assistance of the Cottonwood District extension staff and the Hays Convention and Visitors Bureau. The second part of this project included a community survey with Hays Eagle Radio station related to community interest in local fresh produce. Feedback from the community and the producers allowed the fellow to provide recommendations for continued progress to meet the needs of the Hays community.

Success Story from Morgan: “I was able to have a positive impact with the survey, which received 129 responses from community members in the Hays and surrounding communities. It offered some excellent insights such as community interest in bi-weekly local food shares program and community garden opportunities.”

Success Story from Dr. Sophie Ano, Site Supervisor: “Partnerships were a big part of this project including with producers and City of Hays employees. During meetings with producers, we were able to introduce them to other initiatives (From the Land of Kansas, Shop Kansas Farms, community gardens, etc.) and build those important networks.”

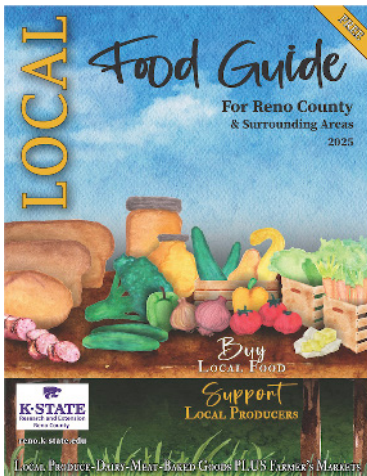


Figure 2: Cover of the Local Food Guide that Kelli created.

K-State Research & Extension Reno County: Kelli Snider-Short

Project Summary: Creating a digital local food producer directory for the Reno County area, this project focused on in-person site visits with local producers. Producer stories are compiled into a directory that is available on the K-State Research and Extension Reno County website [here](#). A printed version will be available in office as well.

Success Story from Kelli: “I feel like each visit was its own enriching experience. It was so inspiring to hear everyone’s stories as to how they started producing food. Perhaps most inspiring was hearing about everyone’s unique backgrounds and yet almost all had the same driving force to produce natural, nutritious food, and to educate others about how local food can support our individual, community, and economic health.”

Lawrence Farmers Market:

Anna Skenadore

Project Summary: With the fellow funding, the Lawrence Farmers Market was able to hire their existing market manager full-time which allowed them the opportunity to plan more programming for vendors and customers. Additional projects included a Vendor Market Guide, SNAP education outreach, mapping the market with GIS software, and social media highlighted more live content.

Success Story from Emily Lysen, Site Supervisor: “Our Vendor 101 program was very highly attended and we were able to record the presentation to show to other vendors who were not able to make that exact meeting. The vendors were all better able to understand the nuances in the token programs and the differences between tokens.”

Children First CEO:
Sonya Nicholson

Project Summary: The project launched Grandma’s Kitchen to empower at-risk individuals in Wichita, KS by providing them an opportunity to learn to cook nutritious meals. Participants were provided a stipend for participating in food prep and cooking homemade casseroles utilizing locally produced meat that were later provided to families in temporary housing. The time was also used to share experiences and current challenges among participants.



Figure 3: Group of participants in Grandma’s Kitchen with casseroles.

Success story from Kathleen Webb, Site Supervisor: “One of the homeless women who really loved the program mentioned that she was a nurse but needed \$150 to renew her license. We jumped into gear and with other funding were able to pay the renewal fee. What a game-changer for her and her family!

Without this program, she would have never felt comfortable to share that information... the magic of a kitchen.”

Summer 2024 Fellows

Most of our summer projects started in April or May and finished up sometime in August, September, or October.

Allen County Farmers Market, Iola, KS: Jenna Morrison

Project Summary: This project focused on coordinating the Allen County Farmers’ Market including three locations throughout the summer. Fellow Jenna spent her time at the market booth during each market coordinating SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks voucher sales. She made efforts



Figure 4: Jenna writing receipt for tokens at Allen County Farmers Market.

to advertise the market at several local news outlets and included a Wednesday indoor market to encourage people to shop locally in a weather controlled environment for those who need it.

Success Story: “One of the engagement events I coordinated at market

was a pumpkin painting night. We had over forty kids attend and that was a huge success.”

Harvey County Health Dept. Newton, KS: Abby Deckert

Project Summary: This project was focused on coordinating outreach and events for the Harvey County Farmers Market located in Newton. She scheduled entertainment for the market including several music performances and reached out to

marquis in town to get the market advertised. She also made promotional materials, such as Facebook posts and flyers to distribute around town about SNAP and DUFEB in English and Spanish. In addition, Abby scheduled meal/food prep demonstrations at the farmers market to try to make produce more accessible to people.

Success Story from Abby: One week I was manning the DUFEB booth and a Honduran couple came who had just registered for SNAP. They did not speak English very well, and I was able to give them instructions in Spanish for how to use DUFEB. She thanked me and gave me her phone number so I could practice my Spanish. The couple continued to attend the market.

Central Topeka Grocery Oasis & Shawnee County Farm and Food Council, Topeka, KS: Becca Warta

Project Summary: The main task of this project was to survey the Central Topeka community about the future grocery store. To do this, the fellow created a one-page survey in English and Spanish and made it available online and in print. They surveyed around 250 people and collected that data for CTGO to use in future grant making and funding decisions. In addition, time was used to support the advisory council with projects including website copy and grant research.

Success Story from Sarah Karns, Site Supervisor: “Becca was able to get over 300 survey responses from the community! This data can be used to inform the CTGO board on what they need to do in order to best serve their shoppers.”

Liberal Area Coalition for Families: Laura Thomas

Project Summary: The primary purpose of this project was to expand outreach and engagement for the Liberal Farmers Market. The fellow went to over 90 locations in Seward County and the surrounding areas and shared information about SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks. They organized 10 events at the market to encourage participation and shared 44 Facebook lives to multiple pages and groups gathering attention and outreach.

Success Story from Market Manager, Debra Huddleston– “It was a life saver for our market! Because of the fellow and what we were able to offer at the market, we doubled our SNAP participation from last year, formed a lot of new partnerships, acquired a lot of new vendors (therefore increasing our customer participation), and formed a better relationship with the Spanish-speaking community by having translation services available to vendors and customers alike! The vendors made it a point to tell me how valuable it was to them to have someone who spoke impeccable Spanish and could communicate with Spanish-speaking people from countries other than Mexico. We had an average of 30 vendors per market this year and we were both struggling to keep up!”



Figure 5: Laura sharing information with vendors at Liberal Farmers Market.



Figure 6: Sophia sharing the pricing report details with a market vendor at the Overland Park Farmers Market.

Thunder Ridge School USD 110, KSRE SNAP-Ed, Kensington, KS:

Alexandria Randall

Project Summary: The fellow was able to implement the second chance breakfast program at Thunder Ridge High School, providing students with an extended opportunity to access breakfast. They also worked to increase the number of items procured through the local grocer and began the planning steps for a program to accept local beef donations for the school food service program.

Success Story from Janelle VanKooten, Site Supervisor: “The implementation of second chance breakfast more than doubled the amount of students participating in school breakfast. Before the

implementation of second chance breakfast, an average of

12 students participated. Now, an average of 29 of the 64 students eat school breakfast.”

Cultivate KC: Sophia Ong

Project Summary: With goals to provide a metro-wide price report, this fellow project involved visiting 19 farmers markets across the Kansas City region to gather weekly prices of local produce and meat. These price reports serve as a resource for farmers to use as they price their goods. Sophia also got to participate in the work Cultivate KC does in supporting urban farms in Kansas City by attending meetings and volunteering on farms- providing an opportunity to connect with the farmers and relate more to their work. The June and July 2024 Pricing Reports can be viewed on the Cultivate KC website as well as detailed [blog posts](#) written by Sophia.

Success Story by Sophia: “I got to meet some of the coolest people each week at farmers’ markets. As I would be making stops four times at each one through the summer, and see many vendors at different markets, I had vast opportunities to connect with them, hear their why and their passion behind the work that they do, and share with them the work that I was doing. In meeting them and hearing their stories, it allowed me to connect more with the work I did, and aside from the goal itself of the project being completed, gave me my own “why”

as I did my work each week. Some of the vendors it was bittersweet telling them it was my last visit in this project, but now I have many markets and farmers that I can come back to as a customer and keep the connection up!”

**Riley County and City of Manhattan Food &
Farm Council:
Ellie Bellerive**

Project Summary: This summer project focused on an educational campaign for the Riley County Food and Farm council. This involved addressing the need for more community members to know what nutritional programs and opportunities are available to them. Ellie created educational produce videos, social media posts, new program signage, surveys, and program development to help the Food & Farm council programs better reach their desired audience and educate people on how to reduce waste, eat local, and decrease food insecurity. View many of these resources on the [Nourish Together website](#).

Success Story from Ellie: “Working at the Power of Produce stand one Saturday this summer (Manhattan Downtown Farmers Market) a mother came up to me and thanked me for all the work we do for this program. She mentioned that her child would never eat carrots when she tried to feed them to her. But now that her daughter had the freedom and independence to buy produce with her own money (dollar tokens), they feel more empowered to eat and cook with what they bought. This was great reassurance that all the hard work put into the programs are bearing good fruit!”

**K-State Research and Extension Wabaunsee
County:
Hannah Gilpatrick**

Project Summary: This fellow coordinated Summer Lunch programs in Wabaunsee County three days a week and over the course of eight weeks served about 660 balanced meals to kids. Hannah worked very closely with Community Care in Alma to provide these meals for kids and also worked at Harvesters mobile food events in Maple Hill, Alma, and Eskridge. There they handed out information about SNAP and other programs going on in the

county and supported the Harvesters distribution. In addition, they supported new SNAP participants with applications. This project also included engagement and educational outreach including bread and butter making day where kids learned about grains and dairy, creation of a cookbook with resources about meal prepping, reading food labels, and balanced diets, as well as creating lesson plans for Farm-To-Fork involving dairy, chicken (layers and broilers), plants, and food groups. Each lesson includes activities, engagement, and information about topics not only in Kansas but also specific to Wabaunsee County.

Success Story from Hannah: “During Summer Lunch there was one specific little boy that always stood out to me as each day he would walk up and survey the food and would be so excited and each meal was his “favorite”. Not only was it rewarding to feed so many kids throughout the summer as they were not receiving meals from school but even more so as the kids presented us with hand-made thank-you cards at the last lunch writing about how much they appreciated not only the food but the lessons/activities provided after.”

**Riley County and City of Manhattan Food and
Farm Council:
Adelaide Easter**

Project Summary: Developing a strategic plan to integrate the Flint Hills Food Recovery (FHFR) program into Kansas State University’s broader efforts. FHFR focuses on recovering safe, nutritious food that would otherwise be wasted and redistributing it to local food pantries and shelters, having successfully recovered over 45,000 pounds of food in two years. Key aspects of the project included assessing the current state and identifying barriers in Manhattan and Riley County, examining food recovery efforts at other higher education institutions, and developing a strategic communications plan. Fellow Adelaide also met with key university administration and external stakeholders, and created a guidebook to help other universities implement effective food recovery strategies. Take a look at the [FHFR at K-State](#).

Success Story from Adelaide: “I doubled the amount of donors in the FHFR system! All of the meetings I had were positive and I have been able to watch events on campus recover food on a regular basis.”

Success Story from Vickie James, Site Supervisor: “Adelaide met with 8/9 University College Deans and staff members, Health Promoting University Chairs First Lady Sally Linton and Kathleen Hatch, Student Government, Greek Life, School of Leadership Studies, Library Services, Graduate School, and still more meetings planned. Those are leaders of the University and not easy to get time with let alone engage them in new efforts. This will set the baseline and establish a means of communication and education about our local food system, our local farms/food businesses and increase partnerships and grow relationships from University to community not just with food recovery but how can they work together for marketing, support and promotion of local foods.”

**Kansas Black Farmers Association:
Kemiyah Sims**

Project Summary: A subaward on our RFSP grant, the Kansas Black Farms Association (KBFA), also hired a summer fellow to work on a member directory for their organization. Since she had the same timeline for her project as our K-State student fellows, she was able to join in their cohort of fellows and present alongside of them. Kemiyah met with producers, sent out surveys and completed follow up to gain member details about their farm operations. This member directory will be an internal database for KBFA leadership to learn from and use as they continue to serve their members.

2025 Projects

**Cultivate KC:
Cara Harbstreet**

Project Summary: My project consisted of interviewing each of the farmers/growers at the 14 sites that participated in the 2025 Urban Grown Farms and Gardens Tour. Using an open interview format, I collected their stories that highlighted the histories of their farms or community gardens, challenges and struggles, and successes or future plans. These recordings were edited into podcasts to engage listeners in an immersive experience they could listen to before or after their visit to the tour sites.

Success Story from Cara: I was able to introduce the podcast and the tour to my cohort of fellow students in my Sustainable Food Systems masters program. As the only student located in the Midwest, this was their first time hearing first-hand accounts of what community gardens and urban farms are doing in Kansas City. It also introduced them to Cultivate KC as an organization and highlighted the other work they are doing for land access and farmer training. Additionally, my interviews gave me context and history of urban farming in KC and I increased my awareness of which farms are offering CSAs or participating in farmers markets near me. I subscribed to a CSA from one of the tour sites and plan to continue supporting growers each season now that I know how important this is for planning and revenue purposes.

**Columbus KS Farmers Market:
Hannah Plank & Liz Simpson**

Project Summary: This project involved creating social media graphic and regular posts to promote the Columbus Farmers Market. We also promoted SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks and held educational and social activities at the market. Due to the position, we were able to find local funding for the senior farmers market vouchers when the regular release was delayed. We also used local funds to host Triple Up food bucks nights for shoppers.

Success Story: By hosting more “social events” like watermelon feeds, we unexpectedly created multi-generational gatherings – with three or more generations from families joining us at the market.

**Douglas County Sustainability Office:
Grant Misse**

Project Summary: This project included speaking with leaders of food policy and action about their experience in supporting retailers through applying for and hosting SNAP. After gathering information from field leaders, they then spoke with local food retailers, both in storefronts and on farms about their experiences with SNAP. Grant gathered information about perception, experience, and difficulties, and then used this information to generate a report. The Local SNAP Retailer Report was presented at the Douglas County Food Policy Council on June 16, 2025 and is available on their [website](#).

Success Story from Grant: The report created will be displayed on the Douglas County website as a publicly available document for use across the County and the U.S. by an interested retailer or leader in the SNAP field. For Grant, this project introduced him to leaders in food policy at both the local and national level and helped reveal the many paths for a future in food-related professions.

**Fort Scott Farmers Market:
Teri Hamilton**

Project Summary: We established and implemented the SNAP token program at the Fort Scott Farmers’ Market for the 2025 season. This enabled vendors and farmers to sell to SNAP recipients. This will enable us to be prepared to offer Double Up Food Bucks in the 2026 season. As part of the project, we created promotional materials and distributed them throughout the community to promote the market and the ability to use SNAP at the market.

Success Story: One customer was delighted to be able to use her SNAP benefits at the farmers’ market. She prefers fresh, locally grown foods and was pleased to be able to use her benefits to purchase

those foods. She became a regular customer and used much of her SNAP dollars to purchase locally raised beef each week. This was a benefit to her household as well as the local rancher who provided her with close to 20 pounds of meat each month.

**Full Circle Sustainability:
Justine Greve**

Project Summary: Expanding the capacity, reach, community profile, and business sense of Full Circle in a wide variety of ways. First was researching and contacting new suppliers and products (bringing on new suppliers for flour, Kernza grain, dairy, barbecue sauce, and goat milk products as well as making promising contacts for fruit and several additional types of meat). Justine made essential new contacts at the Kansas Rural Center, Prairieland Market, and KC Food Hub that will help move Full Circle into the wholesale market and create a “northeast Kansas local food corridor,” connecting central Kansas and Kansas City in a more systematic and efficient way. Other unique projects included participating in the Columinate Mighty Markets Grocery Bootcamp to gain insights on topics like pricing and merchandising as well as facilitating a compost bucket-swap program with Compost Collective KC. Justine worked on the Full Circle website and social media presence to improve product listings and producer profiles including writing blog posts, analyzing customer surveys, weekly e-mail newsletter gave multiple community presentations. Looking toward the future Full Circle will host a new regular event--a Fix-It Clinic--which will debut in September to keep waste out of the landfill and help raise the profile of the organization in the community so that people see them as a go-to resource for anything related to sustainability, including local food.

Success Story from Justine: “One success most relevant to local food was establishing a partnership with KC Food Hub. I was blown away by the enthusiasm we received from the KC Food Hub when we met to talk about what Full Circle is currently doing and the ways in which they hope to expand. After talking about Full Circle’s vision for a “northeast Kansas food corridor” and becoming a larger aggregator, KC Food Hub immediately (no

exaggeration) jumped in to start making that vision a reality. They acquired a large wholesale customer in Topeka within two weeks of our first meeting, intending to serve that customer until Full Circle has the capacity to take over—helping show them the ropes and providing mentorship along the way. They plan to do that with several more customers, and they have concrete ideas for funding sources that can help them realize their vision more quickly. Establishing this partnership has accelerated Full Circle's timeline for moving into wholesale accounts, allowing them to move more local food for more local farmers and serve many more individuals. Helping establish this relationship was certainly one of the greatest successes of the Local Food Fellow project."

Grass Institute of Kansas, Inc:
JoEllyn Argabright



Figure 7: JoEllyn with interns at Grassroots Community Kitchen in Atwood,

Project Summary: The primary focus was to build capacity in the Grass Roots Community Kitchen in Atwood. The goal was to increase utilization of the kitchen space, as well as provide a primary area of focus for the Community Kitchen to assist regional producers. This was accomplished through an open house and targeted social media campaign. Targeted resources, including information on sales tax collections, government specialty crop programs, crop insurance, and cottage food laws were provided to regional producers based on feedback from the initial open house.

Success Story from JoEllyn: "This project allowed me to form and strengthen connections related to the food system around NWKS. Development of the regional food directory provided an avenue for many conversations and new relationships, as well as helped promote the Grass Roots Institute Community Kitchen."

Harvey County Health Department:
Emily Judd

Project Summary: I hosted a garden-to-table summer camp. We did 3 two-week sessions, meeting on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. We had campers in 2nd-4th grade participate. We had a successful camp with 10-15 kids in each session. We made over 13 different recipes using things we grew in the garden. Kids spent time outside, learned about gardening and plants, made art and tried new foods. Everyone was sent home with a recipe booklet.

Each camp day we worked in the school garden,



made a nature-based art project, and worked together to make a recipe using ingredients we harvested from the garden. As this was our first year, one challenge was knowing what produce would be readily available during certain weeks of the summer and adjusting to some crops not having as big an output as we expected. It was also a challenge to find enough tasks for each child to do while we prepared a recipe but as the weeks went along, I was able to make sure kids felt helpful and included in the recipes we made.

Success Story: I had some kids sign up for all three

sessions of camp and their parents told me that the garden camp was the highlight of their summer. One camper told me that after she made pickles at camp, she made them 4 more times at home with her family. We propagated mint and basil and sent that home with kids and one camper told me that her mint plant is thriving!

K-State Extension Barber County: Jennifer Tillotson

Project Summary: This project focused on both awareness and education about the Medicine Lodge community garden. Activities to increase engagement in the garden including making smoothies and salsa, planting seeds with young readers, to increasing media presence.

Success Story from Jennifer: “One of the positive experiences that I encountered during this project was while working with young children at the local library, their parents were also in attendance. I was surprised to hear that only one of the parents knew about the community garden that has been in place for the past several years. I was able to educate and inform more about the garden during this time.”

K-State Extension Cottonwood District: Kiley Whipple

Project Summary: This fellow project involved planning, coordinating and teaching a youth farm to plate summer camp in partnership with Fort Hays State University, hosted at the University Farm. The two week-long camps invited youth age 9-11 to learn about local food from production through processing, marketing and consumption. In addition, the project worked with a local garden, Harvest Hays, to market fresh products grown in their high



Figure 8: Kiley Whipple engages youth at the Farm to Plate Camp at FHSU.

tunnels through a new online platform.

Success Story from Kiley: “As a result of the first Farm to Plate Camp, 12 youth in the Hays community were exposed to local food systems and got to have real-world farm experiences.”

Take a look at a [highlight video](#) we had the opportunity to capture during the Farm To Plate Camp.

K-State Extension Cowley County: Erin Meyer

Project Summary: This project worked on education of food preservation methods and preparation steps for a kitchen incubator space for the county. Erin attended a master food preservation training and then worked with other staff to host several food preservation workshops including water bath canning and pressure canning. In addition, she supported healthy food outreach programs including POP club at the local farmers markets.

Success Story from Erin: “During the project I taught food preservation classes and many people told me that they had gained lots of new and updated knowledge. I also was told that people were planning on using these new strategies in their own homes and were planning on buying new equipment that they had been introduced to in the classes. This was such an impactful and positive moment because it proved to me that we were, within these classes, able to make a long-term impact on their food preservation experiences.”

K-State Extension Douglas County: Olivia Ellett

Project Summary: The local food study examined the availability and accessibility of locally grown and produced food within the community. It focused on key factors influencing access, including acceptance of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) benefits at farmers markets and food retail outlets. The study also evaluated the role of transportation—such as proximity to food sources and public transit options—in shaping access for low-income and rural populations. Additionally, it analyzed how

“local” the food offerings truly were by assessing sourcing practices, vendor origins, and supply chain transparency across various markets and stores.

Success Story from Site Supervisor, Kaitlyn Peine: “The food fellowship work significantly deepened our understanding of access to local food by examining the experiences of both consumers and food vendors, including food pantries. Through community engagement and data collection, the fellowship highlighted key barriers such as limited transportation options that prevent individuals—especially those in low-income or rural areas—from reaching vendors that offer local food. It also revealed gaps in access to vendors who accept SNAP and WIC, identifying both logistical and administrative challenges that restrict benefit usage. The fellowship’s findings have informed strategies to expand equitable access by supporting vendor certification, improving transit connections, and fostering stronger networks between local food producers and emergency food providers.”

Take a look at the digital [food access map](#) that Olivia created for Douglas County.

K-State Extension Reno County: Kelli Snider-Short

Project Summary: I coordinated a local farm tour and farm to table dinner. One challenge we faced was getting enough farms on the tour but it worked out very well with 5 tour stops. Another challenge was finding specific foods for the dinner locally. We had to pivot a little with some ingredients by purchasing from a local distributor instead, but the majority of the food provided was grown/produced locally.

Success Story: There were many success stories! The producers were so pleased with the amount of traffic and visibility this event provided them and they established lots of new relationships. I had at least ten people approach me at the dinner asking when we were doing it again. And finally, both the tours and dinner went beautifully and according to plan. I couldn’t have hoped for better weather conditions (we were able to hold the dinner outdoors), food, music, raffle prizes. Everything was perfect!



Liberal Area Coalition for Families: Perla Fraire

Project Summary: This project promoted SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks through engaging the community, distributing literature, making sure there was adequate signage at the market, and ensuring that vendors displayed the correct signage. We also helped with special events to get more customers to attend the market to use their SNAP benefits.

Success Story: We had a Kid’s Day at the market and had several SNAP transactions that day.

Pittsburg Farmers’ Market: Kayla Howard

Project Summary: A dedicated social media outreach plan for the Pittsburg Farmers market. This fellow helped plan, coordinate, and execute different activities at the market to increase participation including music, kids days, etc.

Success
Figure 9: Kayla Howard poses with her camera beside vendors and customers at Pittsburg Farmers Market.



Story from Kayla: “I would say a positive experience from this would just be listening to the vendors at the farmers market say how much different the market this summer was compared to last summer. They saw more customers and they got more sales this summer.”

RISE Cowley c/o Legacy Regional Community Foundation:
Dorita Bloyer

Project Summary: Support Walnut Valley Farmers Market and Ark City Farm & Art Market through creation of social media content and assistance with Power of Produce Club Activities. Hosted seven educational events and weekly garden maintenance at Irving Elementary Garden. Additional summer programs in Cowley County including commodities, health and safety fair, Junior Chef Camp, family food lab, food preservation lab, & garden get-togethers.

For a closer look with incredible photos of Dorita’s project, take a look at the [youtube video](#) she created.

Success Story from Dorita: “Reached kids to have extra healthier options to eat. Reaching Spanish population to be part of government health and safety programs, farmer markets visits and hydroponic gardens to grow healthy options at home, to help people with health problems. Reaching online views in both farmers markets websites, increasing from 40% views up to 60% to 90%.”

Success Story from Becky Reid, Site Supervisor: “The Cowley Farmers Market Association board has extended an offer to provide a stipend to Dorita for her assistance with the remaining farmers market season. Youth and families involved with her programs were very appreciative. She also served as a translator for Cowley County Extension’s Hunger Free Kansas grant project with three households with Spanish speaking participants.”

TOAST:
Arianna Perkins

Project Summary: The primary objective of this project was to produce a marketing campaign to promote TOAST’s bread share program SPREAD

THE LOAF. This included developing marketing materials like flyers, QR codes, social media posts, and BREADucation handouts that were included in outreach initiatives. Arianna helped organize and put together four different outreach events that served as platforms to discuss what SPREAD THE LOAF was all about with new community partners. In addition Arianna made connections with local producers and vendors to support a more localized ingredient source list for the bread program.

Success Story from Arianna: “Throughout this project I have learned a great deal about KS food systems and value-added foods. Through contacting both KS farmers and local food bank directors, I have learned about the specifics of wheat farming and the innerworkings of food pantry operations. I was able to assist in educating the public about the USDA’S Resilient Food Systems and Infrastructure (RFSI) grant in light of the federal funding freezes that occurred during the course of this project. The big win here is that I have gotten to play a part in helping my employer promote their bread share program and advance them towards their goals of producing a sustainable, long-lasting program. Despite setbacks my employer is continuing a mission to provide access to delicious and nutritious bread for the Southeast Kansas community as a whole.”



Figure 10:
Arianna Perkins and TOAST business owner and host supervisor Heather Horton share the Spread the Loaf

Johnson County K-State Research & Extension: Andie-Kate White

Project Summary: Through the fellowship Andie-Kate researched, mapped, and interviewed community gardens in Johnson County in addition to locating food pantries that could accept and distribute locally grown produce. To increase cohesion among garden operators, she created a Microsoft Teams page to provide space for garden managers to share resources and communicate more easily as well as a group chat with gardens and food pantries to ease the planning required to coordinate produce donations. Andie-Kate also created a map that will be located on the JoCo Eats website to direct residents to nearby community gardens and food pantries stocking local produce.

Success Story from Andie-Kate: Through my interviews with both community gardens and food pantries, several agencies expressed their excitement at finally having a hub to connect with others doing similar work. It felt incredibly fulfilling to hear firsthand that my work would directly support these agencies in a meaningful way.

Success Story from Anthony Reardon, Site Supervisor: “One major success of the project was the comprehensive mapping of community gardens across the county, including several new sites previously unknown to our office. Along with mapping these spaces, Andie-Kate gathered valuable information about the needs of gardens and food pantries, as well as which organizations are already working to address them. This groundwork will be instrumental in shaping future programming that aligns with the priorities of our local foods community.”

K-State Extension Local Food Systems: Jenna Fiscus

Project Summary: I was tasked with creating and distributing marketing materials for the Local Foods Summit during the summer of 2025. I curated social media posts, flyers, signage for the event, the conference booklet for the event and other miscellaneous materials for the summit.

Success Story: During the Local Food Summit, I got to go to all of the different sessions taking pictures and gathering content, and I had the privilege of hearing a lot of really cool people speak about improvements and additions that they are making in their communities. I got to hear people share how they have provided local grocery shopping opportunities to their rural communities, how they have increased education about locally grown foods, and lots more.

K-State Extension Meadowlark District: Lily Thompson

Project Summary: This summer, my project was to make a local foods directory for the Meadowlark District. I started the project with preliminary research of my district, exploring it with my supervisor, and doing research from the USDA - ERS fact sheets. I learned from the reported data, and from personal experience what food access looks like in the Meadowlark district. I started my research by mapping farmers markets, I checked well known state and university websites that have farmers markets directories but came up short. I started mapping markets from word of mouth and extensive facebook research.

Initial mapping was a challenge, so the grassroots approach of Facebook and direct conversations with community members yielded a lot of results. Through this, I uncovered the interconnected but largely unseen local food system that included farm-store small businesses to farmstands. Many of these producers had no web presence beyond facebook, which made relationship-building and outreach essential.

I had learned during my preliminary research that large parts of these areas were designated food deserts, but I came to really grapple with it as I tackled the challenge of the grassroots investigation needed to map local food. I wanted the project to truly live up to its name, so I expanded the directory reach to find ALL local food, including food banks and pantries, and to some extent blessing boxes.

Through conversations with community members, I realized many community members were not aware of what KSRE does and the programming that is specifically offered in the Meadowlark district. So, my supervisor and I pivoted further and expanded the directory to make a second booklet explaining

KSRE and what specific programming was offered in the area, such as EMG, stay strong, stay healthy, and other nutrition courses, and kids’ summer camps.

Success Story: I have had so many positive experiences from this project, but this one is my favorite. I met Donna McNichols when I was driving around Denison looking for a market I had heard from another community member was held on Mondays at “the bar”. After a few minutes of driving around this tiny town’s streets, I found what must have been “the bar”. Sure enough, a woman was sitting on the back of a truck bed with one table with jams, jellies and produce from her large garden. I came up to her, introduced myself and explained my project. Donna thought it was a great idea and invited me to sit with her. Donna and I talked for about an hour and she told me about her work in the Jackson county farmers market, the history of Denison and how she has watched it decline. I watched how she greeted people coming to buy her goods like old friends, and she told me that her daughter was a nearby dairy farmer. Conveniently, Donna’s daughter, Sherry, was on my list of vendors I had located. I was amazed at being able to hear about vendors I had researched and mapped repeated back to me. Donna and I talked about food access in the area, and she told me that for bulk items, she drives 45 minutes to Walmart, eats what she grows, and then relies on harvesters for the rest. I realized that the local food system was not a niche “support local” luxury, but essential to community life.

Outcomes

Fellows reported numbers on several outcomes including:

	2024	2025	Total
Contacts made during project activities:	3,468	10,593	14,061
Contacts that gained knowledge on how to access, produce, prepare or preserve locally produced agricultural products:	2,213	6,576	8,969
Partners or collaborators engaged during the project:	403	331	734
Fellows that provided technical assistance or training to partners:	4	5	9

We had the opportunity to work with the K-State Communication Media team to produce two project videos in each year of the program. In 2024 we decided to film two projects located in Manhattan with the Riley County Food and Farm Council. In 2025 we filmed one video in Hays during the Farm to Plate Camp at Fort Hays State University Farm. The second video in 2025 featured the Reno County Farm Tour and Local Food Dinner. These videos highlight the project impacts and direct viewers to find more resources on our Kansas Local Food website. The videos can be viewed on YouTube.

- [Riley County Farm & Food Council](#)
- [Flint Hills Food Recovery](#)
- [FHSU Farm to Plate Camp](#)
- [Reno County Farm Tour](#)

At the completion of projects, each fellow and site supervisor were provided a survey to submit their project reporting including the data counts and summaries of their project. We also asked them to complete a program evaluation to improve the program for future projects.

Fellow Responses:

2024 Data:

- 100% of fellows agreed or somewhat agreed that they gained knowledge or skills while completing their project.
- 85% of fellows agreed or somewhat agreed that they gained knowledge on how to access resources related to local and regional food system.
- 85% of fellows agreed that they learned more about the local food system while completing their project.
- 69% of fellows agreed or somewhat agreed that they were more interested in working with the Kansas local food system after completing their project.

2025 Data:

- 100% of fellows agreed or somewhat agreed that they gained knowledge or skills while completing their project.
- 95% of fellows agreed or somewhat agreed that they gained knowledge on how to access resources related to local and regional food system.
- 100% of fellows agreed or somewhat agreed that they learned more about the local food system while completing their project.
- 89% of fellows agreed or somewhat agreed that they were more interested in working with the Kansas local food system after completing their project.

What additional training or resources would have helped make your project more successful?

2024 Data:

Five fellows indicated that they would have appreciated additional training or access to resources as they started their fellow projects. Two of those were wanting additional training on technology use, for example excel and website development while the other three indicated that they'd like more resources and information about food insecurity, Double Up Food Bucks, and requirements for SNAP. This is excellent feedback and will inform how we can expand upon our orientation in the future.

2025 Data:

Fellows responses varied with they types of projects. Two fellows indicated that additional experience or training in Excel would have been helpful. A

few fellows would have liked to have had more direction from their supervisors with either daily tasks or more concrete goals to accomplish. Several fellows mentioned a need for better connection with resources such as organizations working in policy, Kansas food sales information, local food curriculum and activities, or a listing of local farmers and producers for their area.

What skills did you learn during this fellowship that support your professional goals?

2024 Data:

Responses to this question ranged from experience organizing a 30+ page publication and other technology skills. Other mentioned effective communication with community partners and strengthened networking skills which are very important as well and directly related to our collaborative grant theme. Other skills were more personal people skills, interacting with customers and how to be effective with independent work as well as data collection. Bookkeeping was mentioned twice as well. Only one person indicated that they did not learn any new skills.

2025 Data:

Fellows learned a wide range of skills, from professional skills of time management and communication to learning how to advocate for resources. Several developed skills in social media, public communications, and development of informational materials. Fellows also developed technical research skills. Of note, one fellow indicated that the program set them on a path to a career, and they are now pursuing a degree in agricultural communications due to their fellow experiences.

What other feedback do you have about the Local Food Fellows Program to help us improve for next year?

2024 Data:

One response indicated the timing of the project was not the best for meeting with producers. Another suggested being more scripted with the operations of the host sites and providing more consistent content and fellow activities across the project sites.

They felt like the work of the wholesale directory was redundant because there are already plenty of existing directories in KS that we could point people to. A few fellows indicated that they wanted more instructions and guidelines for the final project presentations so they could better prepare in advance. Lastly, one fellow expressed interest in interacting more with the other fellows.

2025 Data:

All responses were very positive and many were interested in future opportunities.

Site Supervisor Responses:

2024 Data:

- 100% of supervisors agreed or somewhat agreed that their organization gained knowledge or skills due to completing a project.
- 85% of supervisors agreed or somewhat agreed that they gained knowledge on how to access resources related to local and regional food system.
- 85% of supervisors agreed that they learned more about the local food system while completing a project.
- 85% of supervisors agreed or somewhat agreed that they were more interested in working with the Kansas local food system after completing a project.
- 92% of supervisors agreed or somewhat agreed that as a result of the program, they have more ideas for projects or policies to improve the local food system.
- 100% of supervisors will be looking for more funding for future local food system projects.
- 92% of supervisors would participate in the program again.
- 100% of supervisors would recommend the program to others.

2025 Data:

- 100% of supervisors agreed or somewhat agreed that their organization gained knowledge or skills due to completing a project.
- 86% of supervisors agreed or somewhat agreed that they gained knowledge on how to access resources related to local and regional food system.
- 86% of supervisors agreed that they learned more about the local food system while completing a project.
- 86% of supervisors agreed or somewhat agreed that they were more interested in working with the

- Kansas local food system after completing a project.
- 100% of supervisors agreed or somewhat agreed that as a result of the program, they have more ideas for projects or policies to improve the local food system.
 - 86% of supervisors will be looking for more funding for future local food system projects.
 - 100% of supervisors would participate in the program again.
 - 100% of supervisors would recommend the program to others.

What additional training or resources would have helped make your project more successful?

Two supervisors indicated additional funds to cover more hours and leads on more grants would be helpful. Another indicated that they needed more training on how SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks programs work. Similarly, another comment indicated collective learning with the fellows throughout the program would be valuable.

What other feedback do you have about the Local Food Fellows Program to help us improve for next year?

We received a lot of accolades about the great program and supervisors were very happy with the opportunity. They appreciated the flexibility of the program overall. A few indicated that applicants were difficult to get. The hiring process timeline was not ideal for getting K-State student applicants and they suggested posting it later in the spring semester to attract more students. Another indicated that adding a fellow period during the winter would be good. Lastly, one independent fellow host indicated it would be nice to receive the funds for the project at the beginning of the term so that they could pay the fellow monthly rather than at the midway and completion of the project.

Lessons Learned:

There were a few challenges that came up throughout the fellows program. In the first year of running the Local Food Fellow Program we had three different time periods to accept applications from

host sites so it was a busy fall season of 2023 reviewing applications and trying to reserve space for future projects. We had decided to accept 17 projects during the first year, however after posting the positions, we learned that filling the K-State student positions was more challenging than we had anticipated. We had to drop two projects because they did not get the interest in applicants from K-State students. The lesson learned is that K-State students were only interested in projects that were within short driving distance of Manhattan or alternately were in the KC metro area where they could live at home for the summer. In year two, we were better able to anticipate fewer K-State student fellows and adjusted our expectations and budget to reflect that.

Another challenge was supervising fellows from a distance. We had a few sites where the fellow was either working remotely or worked in a different location than the supervisor and keeping the fellow project on task was difficult. Our role at K-State was to support supervision but since we were not in the project locations, we had limited ability to directly supervise. To deal with this challenge, in year two we attempted to have quarterly check-ins with fellows to ensure that timely progress was being made. Increased communication supports distance supervision.

Conclusions:

It's evident after reviewing all 38 completed local food fellow projects, that they all had an impact on their communities. Some had more impact in regards to number of contacts or partners engaged. Some projects produced very tangible project outcomes like an online producer directory, a workshop, a growers pricing guide, etc. While others did more capacity building that included relationship building and internal surveying, perhaps a little more challenging to see or count, but still very worthy of time spent. Measuring success looks different for each project and that's okay.

As the Local Food System Program Coordinator managing the Fellows Program, it was my absolute delight to get to visit each of the fellows in person and see their project in action. Whether it was hearing from farmers market managers the sheer

joy of having a bilingual market assistant to communicate with Spanish speaking SNAP users or simple watching fellows interact with market customers and producers with sincerity and excitement to touring local farms for their spotlight in the producer directory, in-person visits were definitely the highlight.

I also feel very proud of the amount of content we were able to capture via video and preserve. The benefit of doing work remotely while supporting projects all across Kansas resulted in recorded presentations so we can hear the summary of projects from the fellow's point of view and share those with other stakeholders that were unable to attend. The promotional videos that our K-State communications team created also did an excellent job highlighting the important impact fellow projects have on communities.

As a Local Food System Team, we are incredibly grateful for the USDA resources that allowed this Local Food Fellows Program to operate. With the end of the Regional Food Systems Partnership Grant, we are uncertain how the fellows program may proceed in the future. Funding provided to our community partners to hire local food fellows is clearly impactful and important and we look forward to continuing the conversation with administration and funders in the future.



Agricultural Marketing Service

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Funding for this project was made possible by a grant (AM22RFSPKS1052-00) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.

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