

Science for Georgia: Report to the Georgia Senate Study Committee on Improving Access to Health Foods and Eliminating Food Deserts

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About Science for Georgia

Formed in 2017 to build a grass roots network of science-friendly people who believe S&T can solve the world's biggest problems. First, we must turn findings and innovations into action in the communities where they are needed the most.



To improve communication among scientists and the public



Increase public engagement with science



Advocate for the responsible use of science in public policy

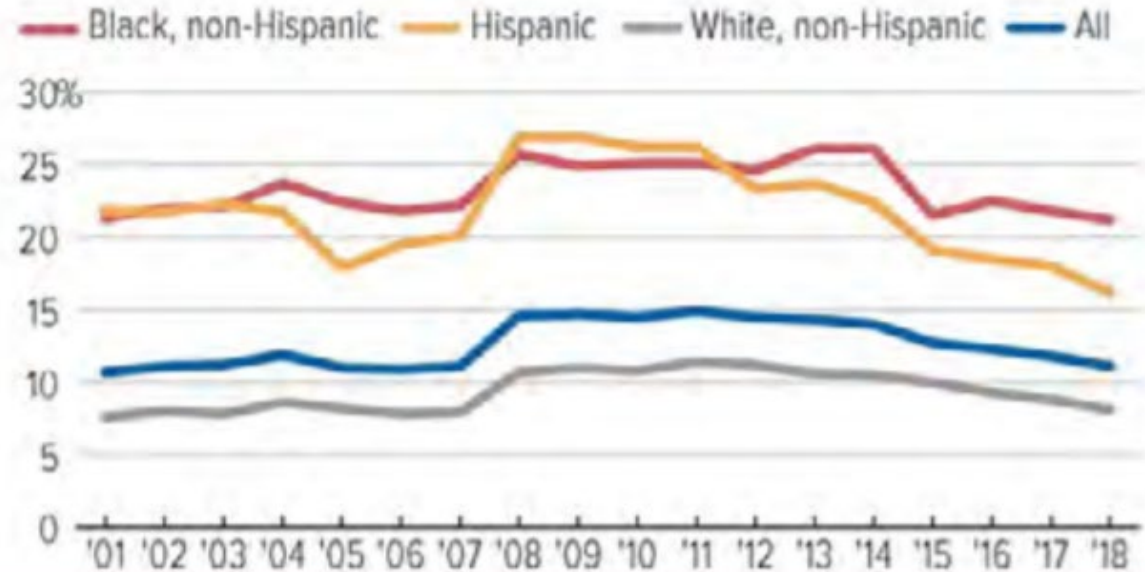
<https://scienceforgeorgia.org/>

The Food Insecurity Big Picture

Current food policy is based on a 1969 White House Conference. Pre-pandemic, insecurity rates had not changed much in 20 years.

The needle isn't moving...

Percentage of households that lacked access to adequate food at some point in the year, by race and ethnicity, 2001-2018



Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) analysis of U.S. Department of Agriculture data

<https://www.politico.com/f/?id=00000171-0e13-d270-a773-6f5ff7ea0000>
<https://sites.tufts.edu/foodnutritionandhealth2019/>

But...



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Food is very personal and cultural.

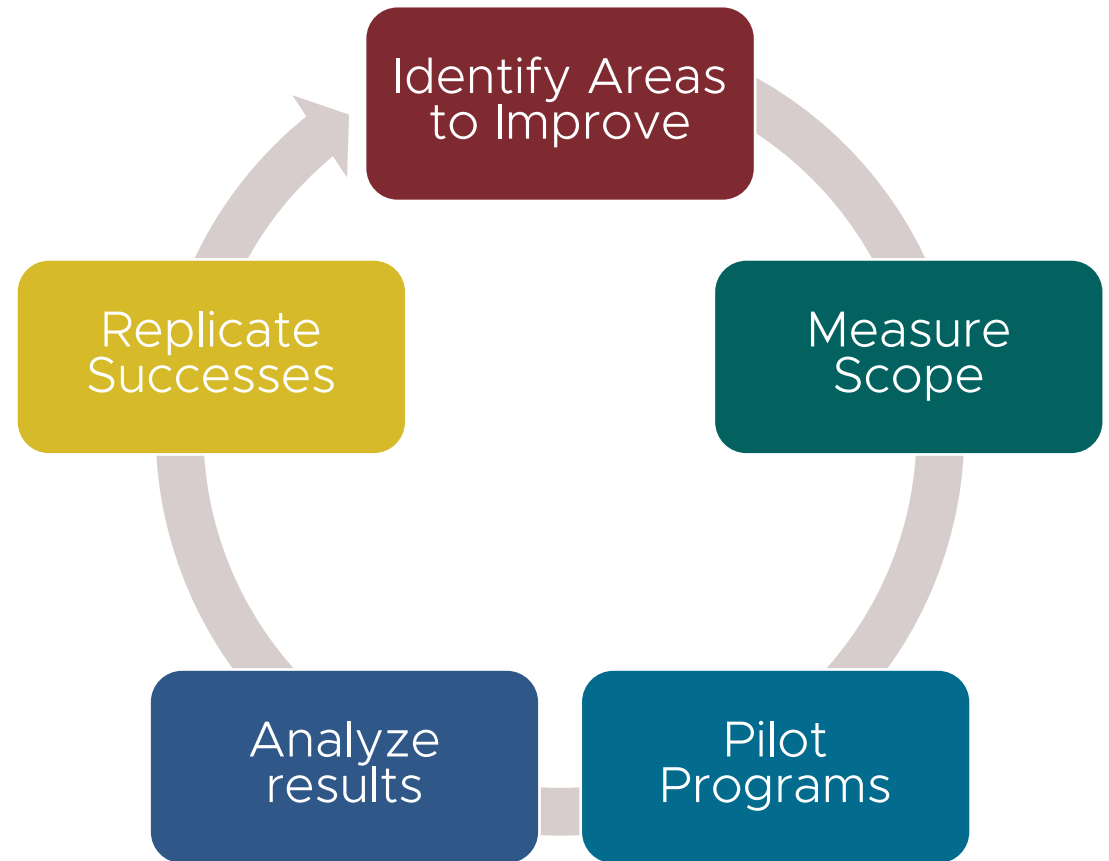
Food insecurity has deep seated systemic causes.

Food policy spans: agriculture, natural resources, education, health.

There is no silver bullet...

What does the science say?

- Vicious cycles can become virtuous cycles.
- Programs to lift economic standing have lasting effects.
- Economic incentives are key.
- That which can be measured can be achieved / improved.

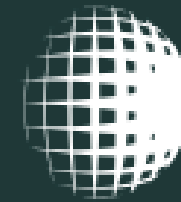


Measure: True Cost of Food

The True Cost of Food

- Food cost is more than the price tag you see at the grocery store
 - There are 'hidden costs', from its impact on human health and environment, to its social and economic inequity.

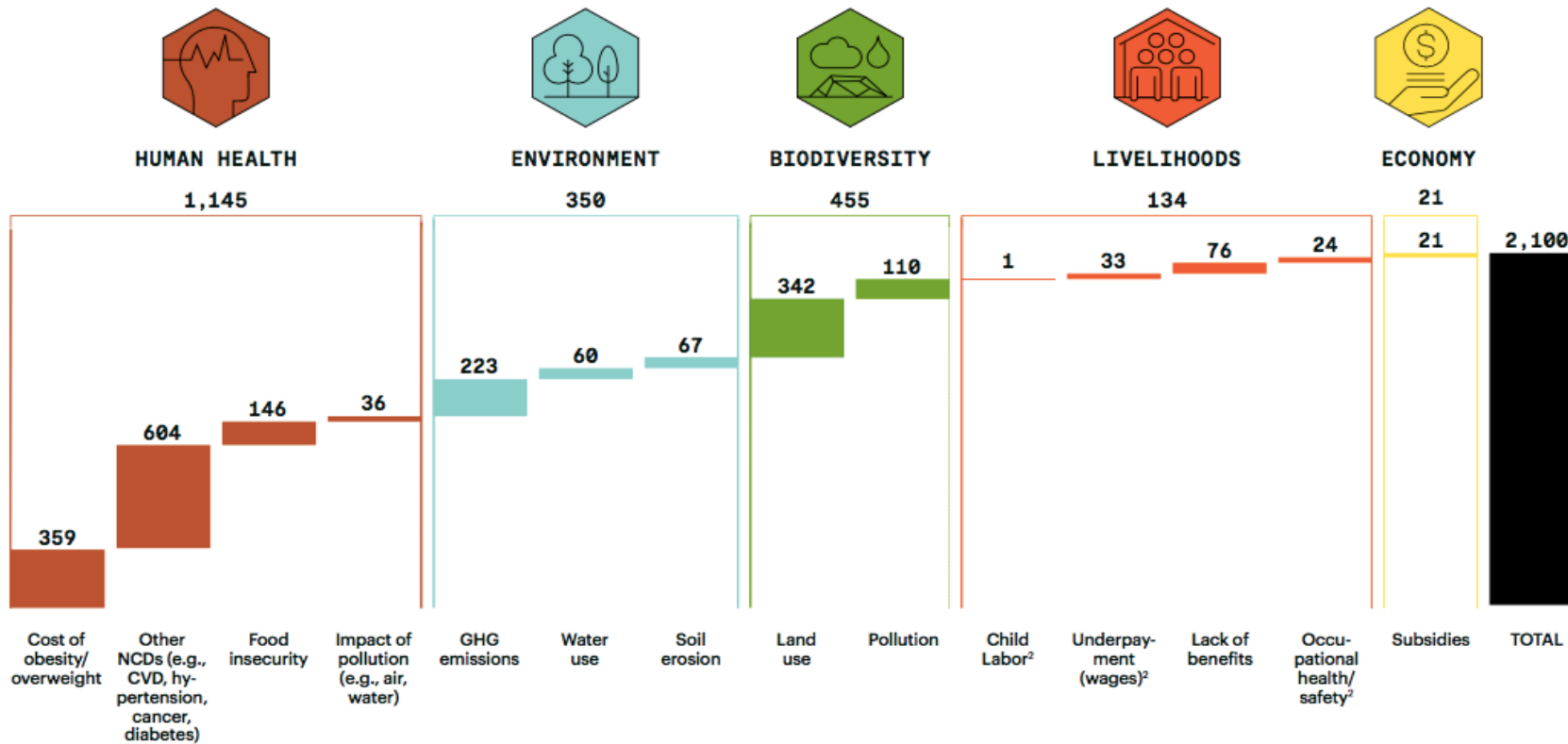
**An Urgent Need
to Transform the
U.S. Food System**



The
**ROCKEFELLER
FOUNDATION**

The true cost of food in the U.S. is at least \$3.2 trillion a year, compared to the estimated current cost of \$1.1 trillion a year.

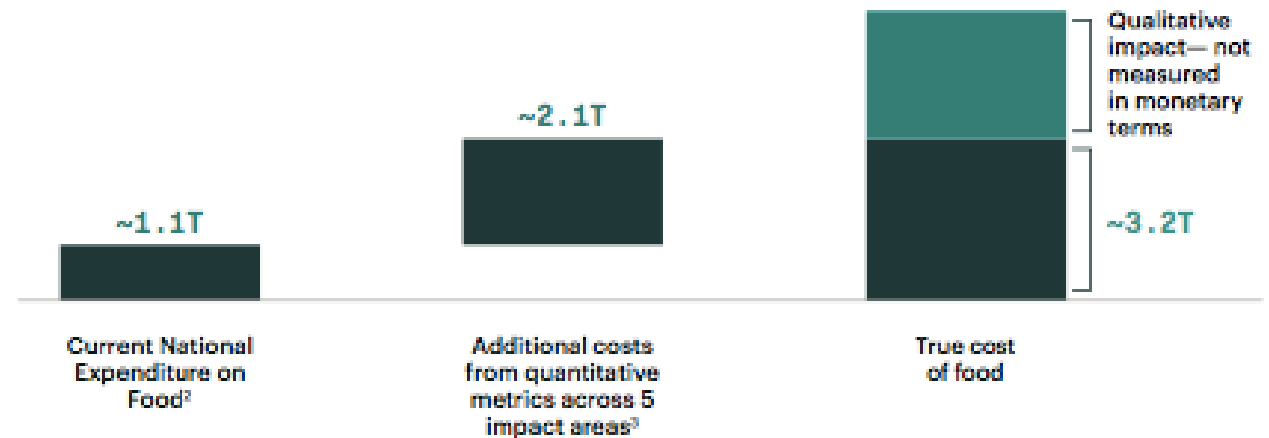
COSTS FROM QUANTITATIVE METRICS ACROSS 14 KEY METRICS¹, ANNUAL (bn USD)



How Are Our Costs Vastly Miscalculated?

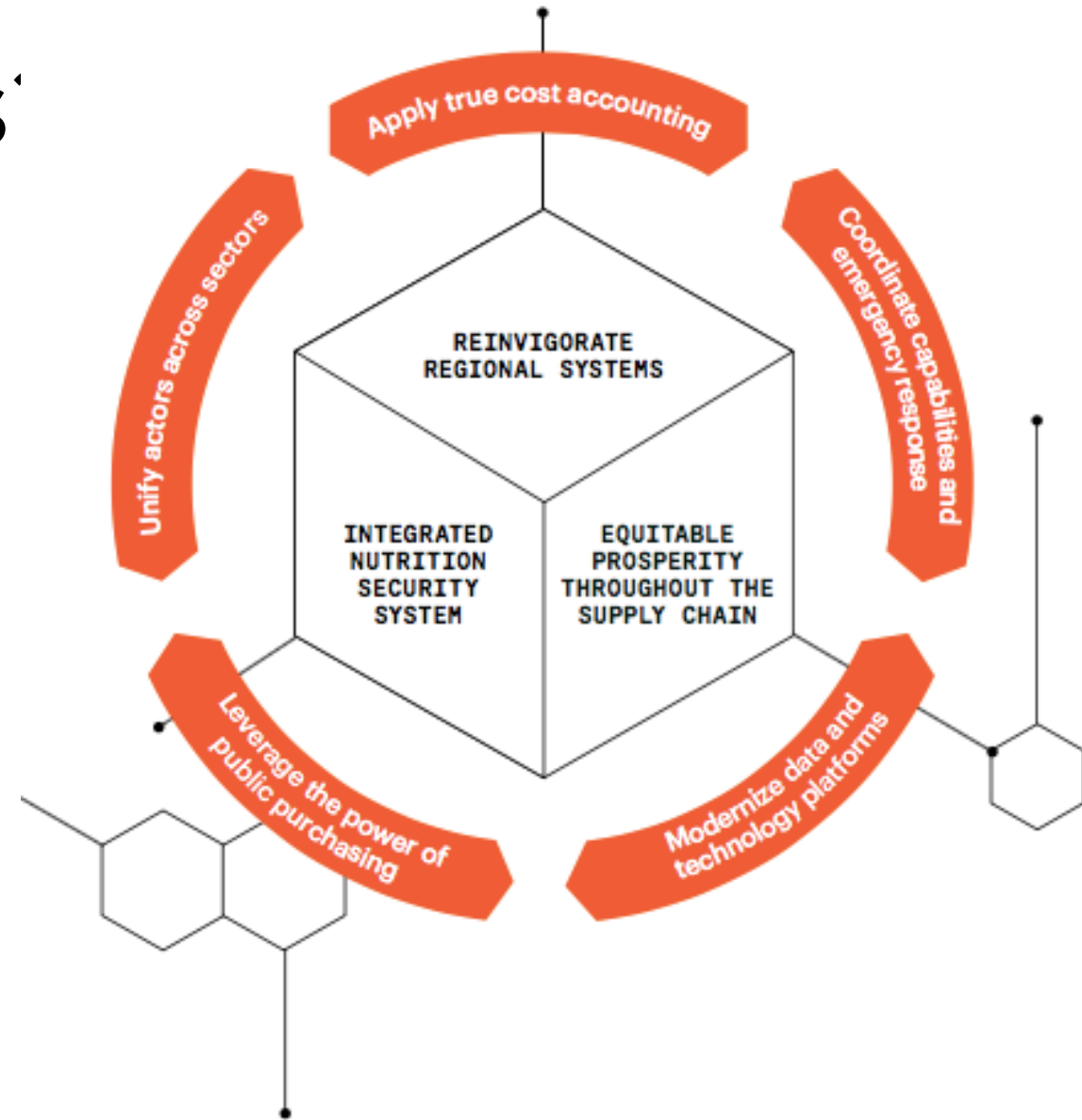
- The current food system does not consider things like...
 - Societal costs
 - Agriculture subsidies
 - Disproportionate costs of the food system (marginalized communities)
 - Improved nutrition and healthy food access (mental/physical health)

ESTIMATED TRUE COST OF FOOD IN THE U.S., ANNUAL (T USD)



How Can We Fix This?

- We need...
 - Transparency
 - True cost accounting (TCA)
 - Meaningful ways to address the true cost of food
 - Investment in sustainable production practices and technology



Solutions: Short Term →
Long Term

Science for Georgia Food Insecurity Roundtable

25 folks: food, farms, public health

We asked: How do we eliminate the need for SNAP and food banks?

Their response was to focus on three things:

- Uniform / Transparent Reporting Metrics
 - Community Food Coalitions
 - Support Farm to School

Uniform / Transparent Reporting Metrics

One state agency to:

- Set standards
- Collect data
- Report to public

- Prevents
 - Duplicative efforts
 - Falling through the cracks

Example Data Types:

- Availability and locations of fresh food
- Cost of healthy vs. unhealthy food
- Income levels
- Participation rates in programs of eligible recipients
- Grocery delivery access and food delivery ranges
- Data that is a proxy for, or directly related to, food insecurity
- Location of green space, agriculture space, community gardens

Community-Based Food Coalitions

Share information

- Each community has unique needs and ecosystems
- Share who is doing what
- Effective programs
- Needed outreach and resources
- Prevents
 - Duplicative efforts
 - Falling thru the cracks

Share infrastructure

- Permanent infrastructure builds community confidence and buy-in
- Provides resilience during times of crisis
- Combine needs
 - Healthy food access
 - Education services
 - Family services
 - Health services

Support Farm-to-School

In 2019 in Georgia:

- 68 participating districts
- 1406 school gardens
- 119M locally grown meals

What is it?

- Programs to source school food from local farms
- Benefits:
 - Nutritious food to kids
 - Guaranteed, expanded market for farmers
 - Nutrition education
 - Build agriculture worker pipeline

How do we support it?

- Infrastructure support
 - Nutrition coordinator
 - Meal prep facilities
- Markets for schools to find farms
- Meal prep ideas for all that okra...

In conclusion...

Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative

- Detailed map of access
 - Enabled people to qualify for federal connectivity aid
- Assessing and categorizing local readiness levels
- Encourage Public-Private Partnerships to expand access
- Policies
 - Allow EMCs & telephone coops to provide broadband
 - Streamline infrastructure access



Are we maximizing existing programs?



Community Coalitions: GA Family Resource Centers

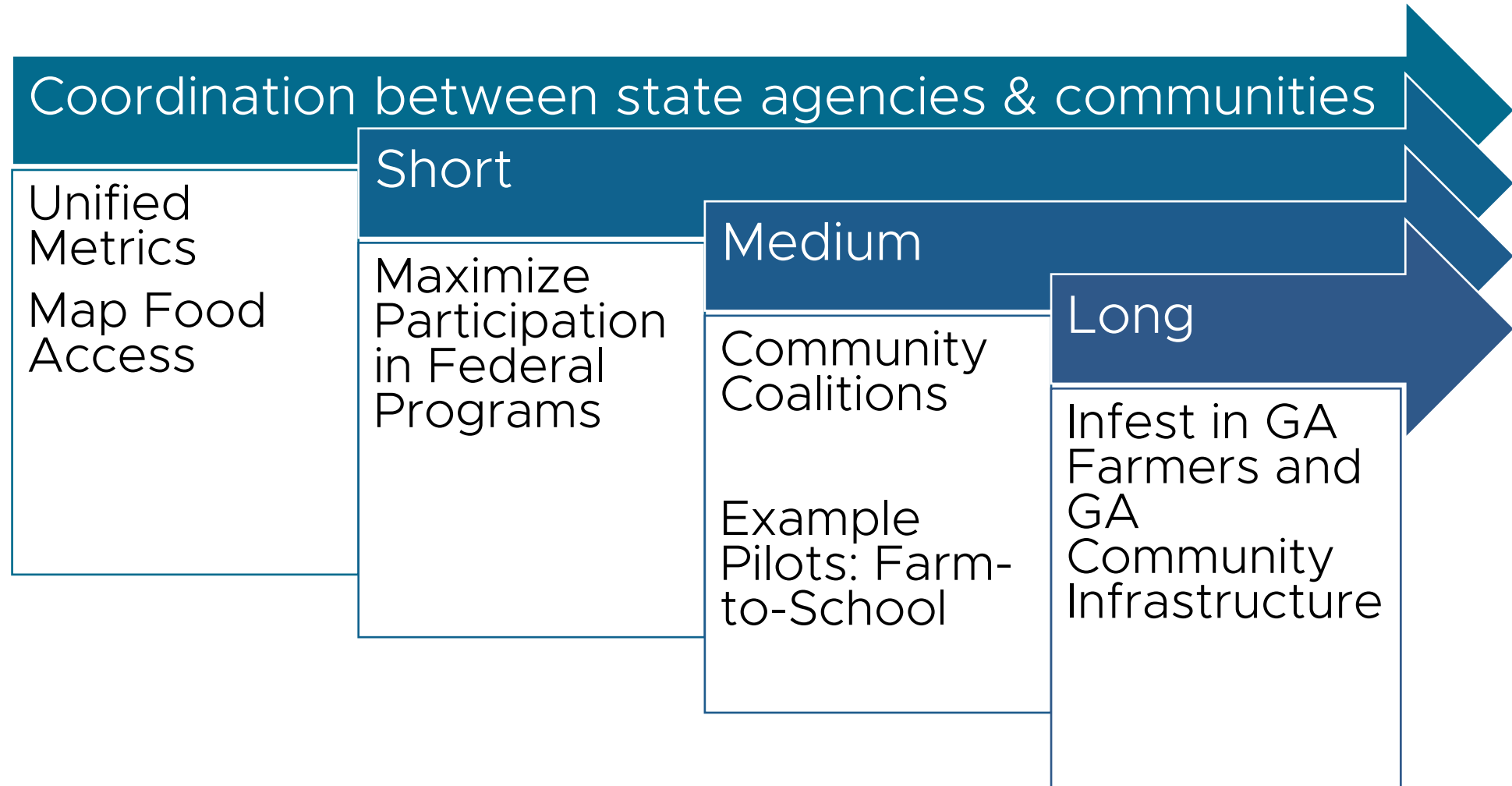


Supporting and growing programs: Farm to School



Must be SNAP for 1 year before WIC

Science Loves a Well-Executed Plan



Thank You and Questions?

Find us:

<https://scienceforgeorgia.org/>

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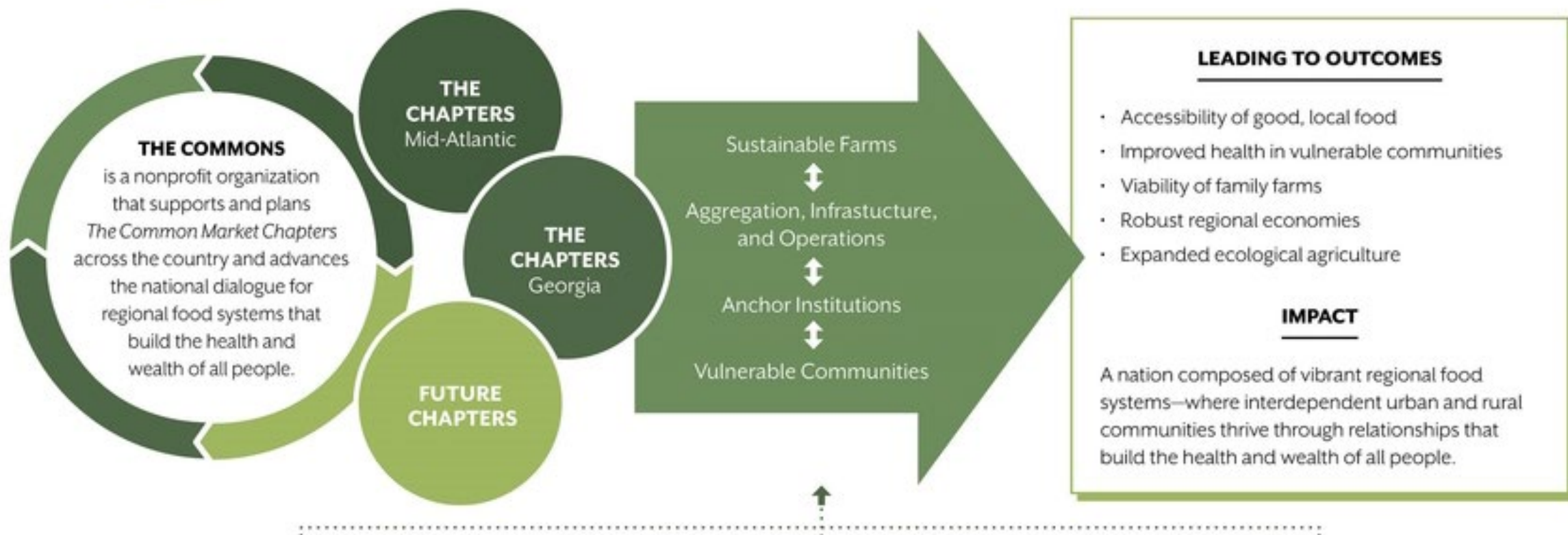
Backup / Further Reading

Examples of programs around the state that are doing good things



Pathways to Mission Success

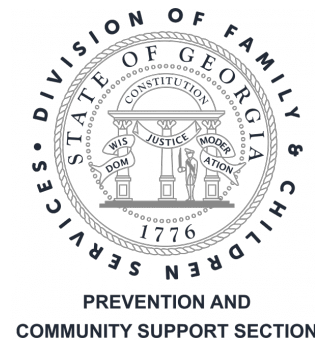
The Common Market's mission is to connect communities with good food from sustainable family farms. We strive to improve food security, farm viability, and community and ecological health. Improved food access and economic opportunities will have a positive impact on the health and wealth of vulnerable families and communities in regions across the United States.



Supply Chain Capacity Building | Wholesale Distribution | Stakeholder Collaboration

Georgia Family Resource Centers (FRCs)

- Co-location of resources
- Primary focus on children's wellbeing
- GA Family Support Network
 - created by DFCS
 - connect FRCs and other programs



<https://www.nationalfamilysupportnetwork.org/family-support-programs>
<https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/georgia-family-support-network/>



for **COMMUNITY
INNOVATION**
AUGUSTA



Community
FOUNDATION


for the
Central Savannah
River Area

<https://communityhubaugusta.org/>
<https://mcgfoundation.org/thehub/>

georgia 
fresh for less
wwg

georgia 
SNAP connection
wwg

georgia 
food for health
wwg

georgia 
plant 2 plate
wwg

Wholesome Wave



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
Office of Service-Learning



**CAMPUS
KITCHEN**

- Student program – rescue food (grocery stores, farms, etc).
 - Service-learning credit.
- Provide grocery bags and meals to 45 Sr-led families. Fresh produce to other non-profits.
- Athens has a food working group “Abundance Athens”
 - Local groups and govt officials

Virginia's Roadmap to End Hunger

Coordination between state agencies & communities

Metrics
Map Food
Access

Short

Maximize
Participation
in Federal
Programs
Distribution
of food via
schools &
daycare

Medium

Work with
local
communities
Corner Store
Initiatives

Long

Target &
invest in VA
grown food
Employment
and job
training

GA has a Senior
Roadmap