



**2020-2022**

# Report

*June 26, 2023*

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# Introduction



*CAFN Circle Structure*

Capital Area Food Network (CAFN) is a community-led all-volunteer collaborative of Wake County, NC, dedicated to improving the local food system. CAFN's organizing structure relies on Circles focusing on four specific areas of Wake County's food system. These Circles are Food Access & Security, Farm Advocacy, Food Recovery, and Economic Development. They are all interconnected through the Coordinating & Race Equity circle, a group of CAFN's primary leadership that supports the complete integration and implementation of race equity across all aspects of CAFN's activities and Wake County's food system.

Like most organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted CAFN's participation, volunteer capacity, and activities. As such, this message will cover significant projects, circle activities, and budget from 2020-2022 instead of focusing on just one fiscal year. Despite the challenges caused by the pandemic, CAFN volunteers collaborated with Wake County Agricultural Extension Food Security staff to undertake several successful initiatives (some directly responding to the pandemic). Notably, Sydney Klein Meirap, serving as the Food Security Program Manager of Wake County Agricultural Extension and the Food Access & Security Lead of CAFN, has played a pivotal role in driving CAFN's accomplishments. The breadth and success of these efforts would not have been possible without the expertise and dedication of Sydney and other Wake County Agricultural Extension staff and interns, whose work continually inspires and builds a more resilient and equitable Wake County food system.

# Projects

## **ARPA Advocacy Academy (2022-2024)**

Capital Area Food Network was one of eight North Carolina Food Councils the [ARPA Advocacy Academy](#) selected to receive advocacy training and coaching to help guide local governments in equitable disbursement of allocations of American Rescue Plan Act (2021) funding. This 20-month-long opportunity allows CAFN leadership to learn about financial processes, government advocacy, and other topics that help channel government funding to food system projects related to health equity.

## **Wake County Food Security Plan Update (Fall 2022)**

The [Wake County Food Security Plan Update](#) is built on the original 2017 Food Security Plan. In 2022, Wake County's Cooperative Extension Food Security Coordinator and staff led this effort in collaboration with the CAFN Food Access & Security Circle and community-level input. The updated Food Security Plan expands access to a nutritious local food supply, supports local farmers, and builds local markets. In early 2023, The Wake County Commissioners funded the Plan with \$7.2 million in American Rescue Plan funds.

## **Wake County Local Food Supply Chain and Food Hub Feasibility Study (Summer 2022)**

In September 2022, Wake County Cooperative Extension received funding to complete a Food Hub Feasibility Study. In partnership with several local organizations, including Capital Area Food Network, the Cooperative Extension collaborated to release [a report](#) asserting that actionable strategies and investment in Wake County Food Hubs would lead to positive community impact, economic impact, and local farm sales in Wake County. This report helped define Food Hub activities and infrastructure and encourages Food Hub support in food security planning initiatives in Wake County. The final plan and suggested funding were included in the 2023 Food Security Plan Update. Wake County Cooperative Extension received funding for implementation in the spring of 2023.

## **Color of Farming Project (Fall 2021)**

The Color of Farming Project was started in 2020 to highlight the contributions of minority farmers to local food systems through video interviews and footage of minority farmers and their farms. In 2021, CAFN leaders helped collect interviews and video recordings of a Black-owned farm in Wake County. In 2023, CAFN will facilitate interviews with farmers of the Karen Community Farm to create a final video that educates and advocates for the livelihoods of BIPOC farmers to improve local food systems.

# Circle Activities

Circle Name	# Meetings	Projects/Activities Accomplished
Coordinating & Race Equity	2022 - 10 2021 - 9 2020 - 11 Total - 30	<u>Coordinating Accomplishments:</u> 1. Wake County Local Food Supply Chain and Food Hub Feasibility Study 2. Wake County 2023 Food Security Plan Development 3. Selection of new CAFN Board of Directors 4. COVID-19 Resources and Communications 5. Receive a Communications Intern through the Food Inspired Resilience & Equity Program
		<u>Race Equity Accomplishments:</u> 6. CAFN Statement for Race Equity 7. Establish a Foundation for Integrating Race Equity into the Local Food System 8. Collaboration with Partners to Increase Equity in the Food System 9. Integrate Race Equity Goals and Metrics into CAFN's Strategic Plan
<b>Food Access &amp; Security</b> <i>(Led by Sydney Klein Mierop)</i>	2022 - 8 2021 - 7 2020 - 10 Total - 25	1. Wake County Local Food Supply Chain and Food Hub Feasibility Study 2. Wake County 2023 Food Security Plan Development 3. Latinx Community Outreach 4. Partner Mapping & Resource Sharing
<b>Farm Advocacy</b> <i>(Led by Trevor Hyde)</i>	2022 - 4 2021 - 7 2020 - 11 Total - 22	1. Green Rural Redevelopment Organization Partnership 2. Farmer Panel Discussion 3. Farmer Database
<b>Food Recovery</b> <i>(Led by Bianca Howard)</i>	2022 - 6 2021 - 0 2020 - 4 Total - 10	1. Wake Wasted Food Web 2. Curbside Composting Collection Workgroup
<b>Economic Development</b> <i>(Led by Cindy Sink)</i>	2022 - 0 2021 - 4 2020 - 13 Total - 17	1. Webinar: Living Wage Impacts: An Analysis of Food Security and Equity in Wake County, NC 2. Webinar: Wages That Work: An Employer-Led Conversation on Living Wage 3. Webinar: Make it Work: Equity and Opportunity for Employees and Employers

# Summary

Although the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Capital Area Food Network's activities and capacity, volunteer members of all five circles contributed to activities and projects to improve Wake County's food system. The most significant CAFN-supported projects during the 2020-2022 years are the Wake County Food Security Plan Update and the Wake County Local Food Supply Chain and Food Hub Feasibility Study. With the help of CAFN's members, the Wake County Food Security Plan Update was approved by the Wake County Board of Commissioners in March 2023 for \$7.2 million. This plan will help address food insecurity on multiple fronts: farmers' markets, a food hub, community gardens, community health workers, mobile markets, produce prescription programs, and food pantry support.

Finally, CAFN's mission of convening, connecting, educating, and advocating might best be illustrated by visiting the [Resources page](#) of its website. General resources are divided into four categories: race equity, policy & planning, data, and media & blogs. For circle-specific resources pertaining to [food access & security](#), [food recovery](#), [farm advocacy](#), and [economic development](#), visit the [Circle pages](#) and scroll down to the bottom of each page.

CAFN has remained committed to its mission to cultivate healthy food systems in Wake County, despite the unique challenges faced in the past three years. By pursuing projects that center health and race equity and increasing collaboration with community stakeholders, CAFN will continue to enhance Wake County's local food system.

## 2020-2022 Budget

### **Total Funding: \$7,900.00**

- Community Food Strategies Grants (2020-2022): \$7,900.00

### **Total Expenses: \$6,500.00**

- Color of Farming Video Production (2020): \$4,000.00
- Grant to Black Farmers Market (2022): \$2,500.00

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### **Capital Area Food Network Board of Directors:**

- Dr. Monique Bethell, [Secretary & Race Equity Lead](#)
- Bianca Howard, [President & Food Recovery Circle Leader](#)
- Gideon Adams, [Treasurer](#)
- Cindy Sink, [Economic Development Circle Leader](#)