



Feeding Champaign County2026
Addressing Food Access and Security

4th Annual

Food Summit

**Stories from the
Ground Up**



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outstanding design work on this report.*

2026 Food Summit Sponsors

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

City of Champaign

City of Urbana

CU City Farms

Common Ground Food Co-op

Down at the Farm

DREAAM

Eastern Illinois Foodbank

Faith in Place

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Healthy Champaign County

OSF Healthcare

Sola Gratia Farm

The Land Connection

United Way of Champaign County

University of Illinois Extension

University of Illinois Office of Public Engagement

Organizing Committee

Anya Knecht – Anya Farm and Knecht Research
Consulting & Design

Becky Parks – Eastern Illinois Foodbank

Carolyn Butterfield – United Way of Champaign
County

Celina Trujillo – UIUC Interdisciplinary Health Science
Institute*

Jennifer Lotton – Champaign-Urbana Public Health
District

JR Lill – Champaign-Urbana Public Health District*

Lynnette White-McIntyre – Eastern Illinois Foodbank

Megan Murphy – University of Illinois Extension

Monica Turchyn – Healthy Champaign County*

Rachel Mannen – University of Illinois Extension*

Ric Weibl – Community Member*

Sarah Buckman – United Way of Champaign County

Soop Kish – Cunningham Township Supervisor's
Office

Sophie Rasmus – Sola Gratia Farm

Teri McCarthy – Champaign Urbana Public Health
District

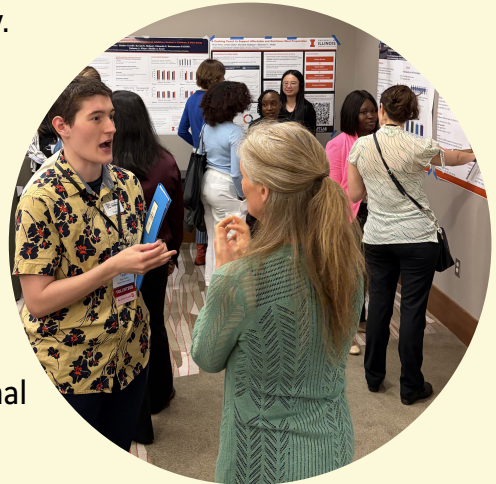
Traci Barkley – Sola Gratia Farm

Tracy Bowden – University of Illinois Extension

*Healthy Champaign County Board Members

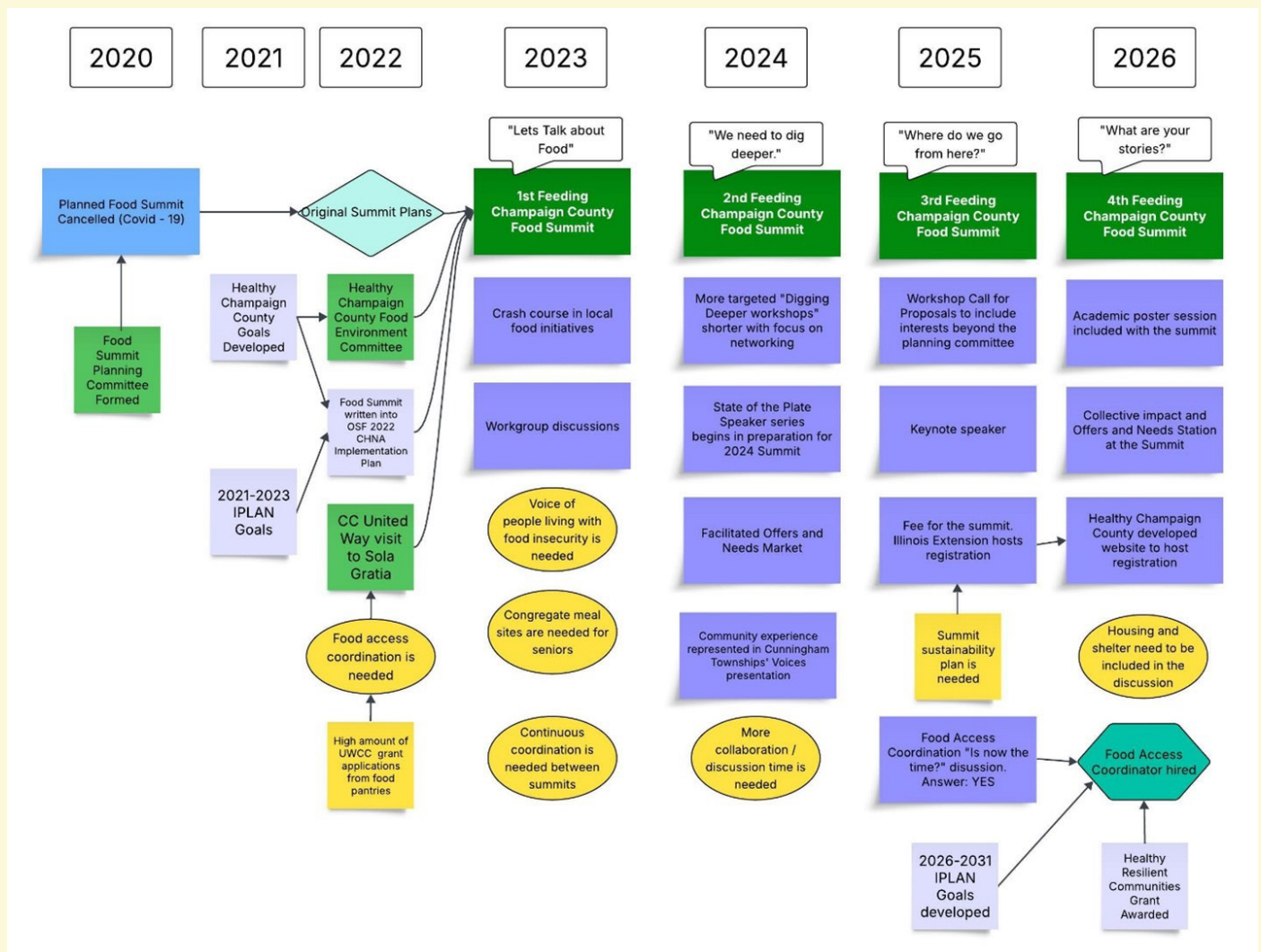
Summit Goals

1. Strengthen and build new partnerships working in Champaign County.
2. Create a space to hear the voices of people who are food insecure.
3. Identify action items for future collaborative and small group efforts.
4. Celebrate our great local food culture in Champaign County.
5. Increase our understanding of the many different facets of food and nutritional insecurity.
6. Inspire new strategies and partnerships to meet the food and nutritional needs of our neighbors.
7. Share ideas, resources, and challenges we face in our day to day work.



Evolution of the Food Summit

The story of this Food Summit begins in 2020 – many who participated in those earliest conversations were in the room in 2026. For the “new” folks, here is a quick tour of the evolution of the Feeding Champaign County Food Summit.



Healthy Champaign County

Healthy Champaign County is a charitable, not-for-profit organization dedicated to fostering a healthier community in Champaign County, Illinois. Our mission is to promote a safe, sustainable, and accessible food environment, while also creating inclusive, equitable opportunities for active living and overall health and wellness initiatives.

Learn more about Healthy Champaign County on our website;
www.HealthyChampaignCounty.org.

Monthly meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month from 12 to 1 pm at the Martens Center in Champaign.



Welcome and Call to Action

More than 25,000 (11%) residents of Champaign County routinely experience food insecurity, and nearly 20% of those residents are children. This means they lack access to enough nutritious food to maintain an active, healthy life.

Food and nutrition security programs are facing new political headwinds threatening their very survival. Food security is a stubborn problem locally and nationally. Solutions require sustained, enduring commitment. This is the fourth year we have convened leaders and community members of Champaign County to address our collective work to see that the residents of Champaign County have affordable access to nutritious foods essential to a healthy, active life.

We are community leaders representing government entities, social service organizations, educational institutions, faith-based groups, health care organizations, and direct service providers such as food pantries, food banks and soup kitchens, as well as those who produce, process and sell food in the communities of Champaign County.

We are working together, creating together, supporting one another, and remembering that what brings us together is our neighbors who are struggling to secure an active, healthy life.



Welcome Speaker

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser



For over 16 years, Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser has pastored Community United Church of Christ (CUCC), a just-peace, theologically progressive, LGBTQIA+ open and affirming congregation in the heart of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. CUCC is the home of Jubilee Cafe. She is also a clergy-spouse, momma, and co-host

of Sex Positive God Pod: Progressive Pastors Answer Your Sex and Relationship Questions. Pastor Leah writes for the Enter the Bible and on Substack as your average tattooed lady pastor of a little church with big love to share. She's a dedicated One Direction fan, avid thrift store shopper, and watcher of The Walking Dead reruns...because, let's face it, sometimes the fictional apocalypse is better than the one we're all living through.

Summary: Reverend Leah came to us as pastor and long-time host of Jubilee Café. The Jubilee Café offers a free sit-down dinner every Monday evening at the church. Rev. Leah provided an exceptional presentation featuring the voices of some Jubilee Café guests who were asked “what they wanted to tell people who planned the Food Summit.” The guests’ answers gave us an important reminder that the people we serve are neighbors and deserve to be treated as such.

Keynote Speaker

Julie A. Pryde

Julie Pryde served as Public Health Administrator of Champaign-Urbana Public Health District from 2007 – 2026. Ms. Pryde earned her Master of Social Work from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and her Master of Public Health from the University of Illinois, Springfield. She has been published in professional journals and has presented at national conferences on topics related to public health. Ms. Pryde began her career at C-UPHD in 1995 working with the HIV/AIDS Program. She served as the Director of the Division of Infectious Disease Prevention and Management at C-UPHD until 2007 when she was appointed as the Public Health Administrator.



Summary: Julie gave an informative, insightful and light-hearted reflection on her pathway to becoming a public health professional and her experiences at C-UPHD. Her anecdotes spoke about the many public health challenges that have confronted Champaign County over the years. She highlighted the ways in which our community has worked together and the evolving public understanding of the role of public health professionals. When asked what she thought would be the single most impactful thing to end food insecurity, she called out the critical role of access to stable and affordable housing.

Special Closing Guest

Dr. Mamadou D. Tounkara



Dr. Mamadou D. Tounkara joined the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (C-UPHD) in June 2025 as Deputy Administrator. In 2026, he was appointed Public Health Administrator. Before joining C-UPHD, Dr. Tounkara served for several years with the Utah Department of Health and Human Services, where he held multiple epidemiology roles, including

Epidemiologist for Hospital-Acquired Infections, Epidemiologist for Disease Prevention and Control, Epidemiologist for Emerging and Re-emerging Diseases, and Analytic COVID-19 Epidemiologist.

Following his tenure at the state level, Dr. Tounkara transitioned to local public health, joining the Tooele County Health Department (UT) as Lead Epidemiologist. He was later promoted to Director of Population Health. During his leadership, he played a pivotal role in completing the Community Health Assessment (CHA), developing the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), and guiding the department through a successful Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) submission.

Summary: Dr. Tounkara joined Summit participants for a post-event social hour where he had an opportunity to get to know more of the community leaders involved in food and nutritional security work in Champaign County. The conversations were wide ranging and full of energy following the day's events.

Workshop Overview & Takeaways

The summit's workshops, like those in the past, come from the community. We asked you to share what you've learned in the last year, to explore the ideas and dreams that stir your passion, the practical and new ways in which you do what you do for our neighbors. We are blessed to have a community rich in talent and insight willing to share and help us learn.



Faithful Food Sovereignty: A Panel Discussion

Workshop Description: How does the concept of Food Sovereignty shape how people of faith respond to food insecurity and food access issues in their communities? This panel will both describe the principles of Food Sovereignty and explore how their faith communities/organizations attempt to support healthy, sustainable food systems.

Presenters: The Rev. Angela Bradley, Assemblies of God, Founder of Heartstrong Ministries & Owner of Heartstrong Grocery, The Rev. Leah Robbins-Mosser, Pastor of Community United Christian Church; Cook and Spiritual Director, Jubilee Cafe, Lisa Sheltra, Community Engagement Director, Salt and Light Ministry, and The Rev. Cindy Shepherd, Energy Builder Director, Faith in Place.

Takeaways:

- Food sovereignty is the right of people to choose and control how food is grown, produced and distributed. No corporations, profit motives or “big agriculture”.
- Prioritizes human relationships, encourages shared decision making, connects producers and consumers, encourages ecological farming methods.
- Many people can only afford low-cost foods that negatively affect their health. There is difficulty encouraging people to eat food they are not familiar with.
- Households often feel confused about what to eat.
- Structural issues such as food deserts were highlighted: lack of access to grocery stores.



Radical Markets: Activating Farmers Markets as Third Space Infrastructure



Workshop Description: The “farmers market” is a modern sociological anomaly: a genuine third space outside of home and work where local food and art are celebrated, and where diverse ideologies and values intersect in generative ways around economic development, sustainability, and health. And yet the truly radical benefits of farmers’ markets remain largely underdeveloped. In this interactive workshop, we will collaborate on how best to activate these third spaces to reimagine our relationships with food, our community, and our world. By grounding our conversation in a Health in All Policies framework and drawing on The Land Connection's programming as a jumping-off point (SNAP matching, Buy One Give One, Kids Kits, Make and Take events, Little Library of Cooking Things), this workshop will explore the ways markets can function not merely as hubs for healthy food and spontaneous social interaction, but as essential infrastructure serving healthcare, economic development, education, and social equity goals. Breakout discussions will aim to facilitate not only

invigorating idealist speculation, but coalition building and partner identification for concrete action in the coming year.

Presenter: Ian Nutting, Food Access Manager, The Land Connection.

Takeaways:

- Defined “radical” as grasping things at the roots to deal with issues at their core and which is often unseen to the naked eye.
- Farmers Markets are a 3rd space infrastructure that has been around for centuries and have gained more traction in the 20th century. We just keep adapting them to meet our current needs. Serves not only as a place to purchase food/goods but also provides critical need for more interaction with others and less social isolation which carries an incredibly high mortality risk.
- Also provides opportunities to interact with growers, makers, people of different socio-economic status, backgrounds, ages and ethnicities. Offerings currently happening depending on the season including winter tokens; WIC and senior FMNP which doubles the values of what can be purchased; Neighbor Food low barrier access when they ask for help and get 15 tokens to use for food purchase; Buy One, Give One program; Kids Kits to introduce concepts of cooking with local ingredients; the Little Library of Cooking Things that provides free kitchen items like can openers; IDEA Store craft projects on site at the market
- New ideas for the Farmers Markets included: Recipe exchange and Recipe library; Booth with cultural center featuring rotating cultures including food, clothing and activities; Food cooking and prep booth to introduce new foods and how they can be used and to encourage diversity, Using the market as a hub for public health screenings.

Accessible Urban Foraging: Discussing Logistics and Safety of Nutrition through Wild Food

Workshop Description: Wild food is closer than you think. It is in our lawns and on the trees that line the street. With proper knowledge, resources, and care, wild food can add a hefty dose of nutrition to meals. This discussion will begin with a demonstration of common urban wild foods, the resources for correctly identifying them, how to handle and clean them, and how to use them. We will also review the ethics, laws, and the importance of correct identification. The discussion will focus on the perceptions of foraging, potential risks and possible solutions, misconceptions, and pathways toward the education and practice of eating wild food.

Presenter: Karla Griesbaum, MS, Illinois Extension

Takeaways:

- Food foraging has been done for ages and can happen year-round (Spring and Fall offer the most variety) and includes plants, fungi, nuts and seeds. Foraging is legal on public state and private properties (if you have permission). It's not legal anywhere with "preserve" or "reserve" in the name or private land with public access.
- Risks of foraging include Toxicity; Proper handling and storage; Herbicides; Environmental hazards like terrain or weather; Overharvesting (trampling, natural resource depletion); Unlawful harvesting that may result in fines.
- Education and feedback from skilled foragers is helpful. Ideas like providing a course about cooking wild foods and how to safely/ethically gather this food were suggested. Statewide assessment of school meal nutritional quality (like healthy eating index).



Partnering for Impact: Lessons and Strategies for School Food Security Collaborations

Workshop Description: The session will begin with facilitators presenting their ongoing food insecurity research in Illinois school settings, including a nutrition and physical activity summer camp intervention in Bloomington and Champaign; a high-protein breakfast and physical activity intervention in Chicago; and a statewide study examining school meal nutrition quality. Following these brief presentations, participants will engage in structured discussions addressing barriers and facilitators for community-researcher collaborations in food insecurity initiatives. The discussion aims to identify strengths and needs across sectors, including academics, schools, farmers, producers, and other food systems stakeholders. Schools serve as critical intervention points where children access up to two daily meals and snacks. Since food insecurity is a multidisciplinary challenge, effective solutions require cross-sector collaboration. This workshop directly addresses this need by generating actionable strategies to build and enhance partnerships for future programs, such as farm-to-school initiatives, ultimately strengthening the local food system's capacity to reduce childhood food insecurity.

Presenters: Ruyu Liu, PhD, RDN, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Health and Kinesiology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Naiman A Khan, PhD, RDN, Associate Professor, Department of Health and Kinesiology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Shelby A Key, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Health and Kinesiology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Paige Witte, BS, PhD student, Department of Health and Kinesiology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Takeaways:

- Food insecurity widens academic disparities. There is currently no comprehensive statewide assessments of school meal quality.
- Lutein and Carotenoid is linked to academic achievement and cognitive function. You can increase these by eating fruits and vegetables.
- School based intervention pilot programs featuring high protein breakfast and morning physical activity yielded results including improved attention span and off task attention was reduced.
- Lunch is often the only guaranteed meal that children receive. Summer months are when children have less access to food.

Moving from Food Security to Nutrition Security in Early Care and Education Settings

Workshop Description: Food security ensures that all individuals have consistent access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for an active, healthy life. However, having sufficient food does not necessarily mean having access to foods that support optimal growth, development, and prevent diseases. Nutrition security expands this concept by emphasizing equitable, stable access to affordable, health-promoting foods that support well-being, prevent disease, and address diet-related disparities.

This distinction is particularly important in early care and education (ECE) settings, where many young children spend a significant portion of their day and consume a large share of their daily meals. While federal nutrition assistance programs like the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) support access to meals and snacks, gaps remain in ensuring overall diet quality and nutrition security.



In this workshop, presenters highlighted the meals and snacks commonly served in ECE settings and how current practices align with nutrition security goals. Participants compared commonly served foods at ECEs with the updated U.S. Food and Drug Administration “healthy” food labeling criteria and explored practical strategies to improve the nutritional quality of foods.

This interactive session guided participants to (a) conceptualize food and nutrition security within their own programs, (b) identify strengths and gaps in current ECE practices, and (c) explore tools for assessing both food security and nutrition security. By engaging with the Feeding Champaign County Food Summit network, participants were encouraged to think beyond food access and toward building systems that ensure all children have consistent access to nutritious foods that support healthy development and lifelong well-being.

Presenters: Saima Hasnin, PhD, MS, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Progati Bakshi, MS, PhD Student, Graduate Research Assistant, Hasnin Research and Extension Team (H.E.R.T), Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Takeaways:

- In Illinois, approximately 15.5% of children experience food insecurity, and nutrition insecurity is likely more widespread but less visible.
- Achieving optimal child health requires moving beyond food security toward nutrition security.
- While CACFP improves access to meals and supports food security at ECEs, current guidelines and implementation gaps (e.g., limited focus on sodium, fat, and best practices) mean that full nutrition security is not yet achieved.

Gardening for Good: Addressing Food Security Through Home and Community Gardening

Workshop Description: Small-scale food growing - in community gardens, backyard boxes, and even on balconies - has many potential benefits for food access and overall wellness in our community. Participating in a home or community garden can not only help people access healthy, nutritious food options, it also provides opportunities for social connection, food sovereignty, and cultural food access. Sola Gratia Farm, Solidarity Gardens, and First Followers will share their successes and obstacles in developing small-scale food growing partnerships over the last several years and open a community discussion into how we can build more support and capacity for community members growing food on a small scale for themselves and others

Presenters: Fiona Munro, Sola Gratia Farm, soop kish, Cunningham Township Supervisor's Office, Pierre Wilhite and Janice Walker, First Followers Top Soil

Takeaways:

- Small-scale food growing improves food access while also fostering community connections, skill building, intergenerational learning, and long-term community empowerment.
- Gardening programs address community needs by providing fresh produce, supporting self-sufficiency and confidence, especially among youth, and creating flexible opportunities for community engagement.
- Barriers and opportunities for expanding local gardening efforts include neighborhood-based gardening models, shared gardening spaces, and connections to emerging projects.
- Ways to engage additional partners include childcare and early childhood education programs and balancing goals of food production with broader community-building outcomes.

Free Market Initiatives in Champaign-Urbana: Model, Impacts, and What's Next

Workshop Description: As community need for food assistance increases, so does the necessity of direct and effective avenues to access for those who are experiencing food insecurity. Through a partnership between Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, Sola Gratia Farm, Cornerstone Fellowship, Niemann's, and the Housing Authority of Champaign County, a Free-Market program emerged in our home community to directly support neighbors with nutrition and resources. What began as a Free Friday Market in one Urbana neighborhood nearly ten years ago has now expanded to Champaign, and brings local produce, dry goods, and important resources to two additional locations. Attendees are invited to join in a discussion of the Free Market program; how it serves our neighbors, what it needs, and how it can grow or be replicated in other spaces to further serve our community.

Presenters: Sophie Rasmus, Mission Coordinator, Sola Gratia Farm; Jennifer Lotton, Community Nutrition Programs Coordinator, C-UPHD; Paul Kaiser, Market Lead, Sola Gratia Farm



Takeaways:

- Free markets in our area started with a partnership between C-UPHD and Sola Gratia nearly 10 years ago whereas Sola Gratia provides fresh produce and food producing plants and C-UPHD supplies some food items, hygiene products and period products free.
- Free markets are set up like a Farmer's Market for 1-2 hours where people can grab what they need; get nutritional information; and target specific locations.
- Locations chosen where there is an intersection of food needs and harm reduction needs (where overdose deaths have happened).
- Low barrier access with minimal data tracking and customer service emphasis.
- Positive impacts of the free markets include the sharing of cultural connections; instills leadership in individuals to care for plants; instills caretaking rolls from patrons; sharing meals and food with neighbors from what they received at the free market
- Challenges include explaining the order of operations; language barriers; literacy barriers; understanding deescalation strategies
- Annually survey to see what people need.

From Vision to Evidence: Using Evaluation Techniques to Build Stronger Programs

Workshop Description: During this hands-on workshop, participants will be guided through the complete program evaluation process. Start by clearly outlining your program's objectives and activities using a logic model and then moving on to selecting and utilizing the appropriate data to evaluate your impact. Faculty and students from the University of Illinois will offer practical frameworks, examples, and data sources to help participants identify successes, pinpoint areas for improvement, and effectively communicate achievements to stakeholders.

Whether you're new to evaluation or seeking to refine your approach, this session offers the tools and time to develop your program's evaluation design. Participants will leave with:

1. An organization specific draft logic model outlining how their programs achieve desired outcomes.
2. Practical ways to identify useful data sources (from methods like group discussions to local and public data sets).
3. Advice from other organizations and session leaders on what to do next and possible community and university partners to help with ongoing evaluation work.

Presenters: Celina Trujillo, Ph.D., Research Development Manager, Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Institute, UIUC, Jenna L. Riis, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Health and Kinesiology, Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Institute, AHS, UIUC, Benjamin Campbell, MA, PhD Candidate, Department of Health and Kinesiology, AHS, UIUC, and Cedrick Wabwire, PhD Student, Department of Health and Kinesiology, AHS, UIUC

Takeaways:

- A logic model is a way to visualize a program's purpose and success
- Logic models have the following components: Start with a long-term outcome (ex: all kids have a healthy balanced diet). Look along short-term outcomes to help support your long-term outcomes.
- Create activities and outputs to reach desired outcomes as well as inputs (resources) are needed. It is best to create a logic model before program initiation.
- Moving Logic models to data table, to demonstrate results to improved programming starts with deciding what the key metrics to keep the program on track.
- Data sources can include surveys, questionnaires, behavioral and observation data, physiological data, participant narratives and secondary data (medical, attendance records).

From Ogle ACTION to Champaign County: Sparking Ideas for Strengthening Local Food Security

Workshop Description: The Illinois Health Evaluation Collaborative (IHEC) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign serves as the evaluators for the CDC-funded Ogle ACTION project. Ogle ACTION is a multi-component initiative serving Ogle, Carroll, Lee, and Whiteside counties in northwestern Illinois. The project aims to reduce stigma surrounding food insecurity and expand access to affordable healthy food across the four-county catchment area. Core activities include a stigma reduction media campaign, free 24/7 mini food centers offering refrigerated, frozen, and shelf-stable foods, community microgreens production and distribution, poverty simulations, and growing classes.

Through collaboration with more than 30 local partners, the Ogle ACTION project has helped make more than 81,000 pounds of donated food available to residents and has distributed microgreens with the nutritional value of over 3,000 vegetable servings since September 2024. Their stigma reduction campaign has been viewed more than 4.3 million times. IHEC's evaluation has generated evidence that viewing campaign ads is associated with reduced stigma and increased beliefs that people deserve help accessing food.



This discussion will be informed by key findings from IHEC's evaluation, highlighting successes, challenges, and lessons learned from the Ogle ACTION project. Insights will be used to spark ideas through discussion for strengthening food security initiatives in Champaign County.

Presenters: Heather N. Graham, MPH, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Joyce Lewis, Ogle County Health Department

Co-Authors: Cassandra Johnson, MPH, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Cherie Rucker, BA, Ogle County Health Department; Melissa Spangler, MHA, Ogle County Health Department; Marcus Shapiro, MPH, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Fatima Naveed, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Sarah D. Geiger, PhD, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Takeaways:

- The Ogle ACTION Project is a CDC-funded initiative aimed at addressing food insecurity that started in the Fall of 2023. The project includes 6 Mini Food Centers (MFCs); 25 microgreen sites and a stigma reduction campaign with Shaw Media.
- Additional program components included a UIUC Extension gardening program; Healthy Cents nutrition education; Poverty simulations to build empathy; and Community Gardens.
- Mini food centers are low barrier, 24/7-hour access to all types of food in trusted community locations. These are unmanned centers that were built by local students in woodshops at the high school.
- Microgreens sites include Hydroponic systems for growing microgreens and lettuce. There have been several hands-on learning sessions at local libraries with students getting a take home kit from Happy Leaf. The goal is to increase food access and grant skills and to show that healthy food is attainable. The data from 15 of these sites indicate that 2,424 cups of microgreens were distributed with the nutrition equivalence of 8,080 servings of veggies.
- The media campaign was designed to address food insecurity stigma and to help people understand resources are a hand-up, not a hand-out. More than 4.7 million people were reached through multiple platforms online, on television and audio platforms which normalized conversations about food access. The evaluation process for this component involves a survey, with initial findings indicating that stigma has gone down since the campaigns launch.
- Partnerships with trusted voices in media are critical for the backbone of these types of efforts. It is important that these relationships be collaborative, not transactional.
- An important lesson learned is that continuous communication is needed to improve the program. Visibility (in person) builds trust as well as meeting people where they already feel comfortable. Stickers on mini-food centers can help to increase survey response rates and having incentivized online survey.

Brainstorming action plans to help local grocery stores address a root cause of food/nutrition insecurity

Workshop Description: Although large chain grocery stores such as Walmart and dollar stores boast low prices, a long-term effect of these stores is impoverishing a community where these stores are located by forcing locally owned stores to close, impacting local economies. Also, nutrition security of a community could be compromised by these chain stores because inventory in their stores is based on profitability not on long-term health of customers. Therefore, grocery stores that are locally owned and serve local stakeholders, would play a pivotal function to alleviate food and nutrition insecurity.

Presenters: Krystal Hodge, Assistant Professor, Food Science & Human Nutrition, UIUC, Mani Nakamura, Associate Professor, Food Science & Human Nutrition, UIUC, Bobby Smith, II, Associate Professor, African American Studies, UIUC. Panelists: Nathan Montgomery, Executive Director, Salt & Light (S&L), and Kelly Parker, Carle Mobile Health Services. Due to personnel changes, a representative of Common Ground Food Co-op participated the workshop as an audience.

Takeaways:

- The brainstorming continued into lunch time in smaller groups, providing actionable suggestions:
- Switching our regular grocery shopping to local stores from the one based outside of our community could enhance the capacity of local stores to serve our community with little financial sacrifice to customers.
- A student group of UIUC mentioned that this is feasible action to students, but transportation (~2.5 miles from campus to S&L) could be an obstacle
- To enhance nutrition security by adding healthier options to the store, the panelist Nathan Montgomery suggested to set up a tasting table for a new item together with a flyer of health benefit of the product. Faculty and students of UIUC can contribute to this activity
- The Carle Mobile Market is operated together with Carle Mobile Clinic. Mobile Clinic can develop a patient base, and eventually a permanent clinic could be built. However, because of the scope of Carle Foundation, there is no plan to build a permanent grocery store instead of the visit of the Mobile Market
- Dr. Hodge suggested to create a local group of grocery network to continue brainstorming and actions.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Workshop Description: The Food Summit organizing team invites participants to join in conversation to explore next steps for Feeding Champaign County. Should we organize a 5th Food Summit? Should we move the Summit to February or April to make it easier for you to attend? Should programming emphasize more expert voices, research talks, public policy information, or showcase County-wide programs? Who would you like to hear as a keynote speaker? Join us for an informal feedback session.

Presenters: Sophie Rasmus, Sola Gratia Farm, Food Summit Organizing Team Member and Ric Weibl, The Urban Gardens Company, Food Summit Organizing Team Member

Takeaways:

- Consider topics like “Food and Aging” including focus on nutrition but also on access to food with limited mobility, etc.
- The acoustics of some rooms made it difficult to hear.
- Invite people in housing complexes and without addresses for input on the Food Summit.
- The “salad bowl” centerpieces, poster sessions and lunch were a highlight
- Lunchtime logistics need work, need to include a protein item in both the breakfast and lunch offerings.
- Find ways to connect with people individually, like a speed dating setup.
- Storytelling helps organizations feel more motivated, a very important part of feeling like their work matters.
- The opening remarks from Pastor Leah was an excellent way to convey the “humanness” of the work being done and especially the people being served.
- Bring in more community members rather than just organizations.
- Increase accessibility to include more voices. More clear signage.
- More info on the utilization of foods and how to prepare them. Perhaps we can have some food/cooking demonstrations on site.
- Consider food utilization and different approaches to food. People with limited access to housing may have trouble utilizing food for lack of prep area, tools, cooking or refrigeration.
- Labels matter. The people we serve are guests or neighbors. Avoid client or consumer.
- Food Summit planning team may wish to learn more about the Collective Impact process to determine if it is a process to use for their collaborative efforts.
- Some of the breakout sessions could be used for highlighting food access-specific efforts, offer engagement to participants in these efforts, and/or use identified needs to inspire discussions on how best to mobilize solutions.
- Speaker suggestions/topic ideas included plenary panels of “research”, “service”, and “grower” experts. Several UI based scholars recommended. Highlight specific demographic – aging, children, immigrants, students.

Participating Organizations Represented

Birth to Five Illinois	Cunningham Township Supervisor's Office	Illinois Department of Public Health	Sola Gratia Farm
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois	DREAAM	Illinois Enactus	St. Matthew Lutheran Church
Carle Health	Eastern Illinois Foodbank	Illinois Extension	The Land Connection
Champaign Church of the Brethren	Faith in Place	Illinois Senate-Office of Paul Faraci	UIUC Adapt Lab
Champaign Township Office	Feeding our Kids	Inner City-Muslim Action Network	UIUC Animal Sciences
Champaign Urbana Public Health District	First Followers	National Farm to School Network	UniPlace Food Pantry
City of Champaign	Good Shepherd Lutheran Church	Ogle County Health Dept.	UIUC Nakomura Lab
Common Ground Food Co-op	Grace Lutheran Food Pantry	OSF Healthcare	Unitarian Universalist Food Justice Team
Community United Church of Christ/Jubilee Café	Healthy Champaign County	OSF On Call	United Way of Champaign County
CU City Farms	HeartStrong Grocery	OSF Peace Meal	University of Illinois 4-H
	Housing Authority of Champaign County	Promise Healthcare	Urbana Park District
		Salt & Light Ministries	Urbana School District #116
			WPGU/Illini Media

Resource Fair Participants

Birth to Five Illinois	Eastern Illinois Foodbank	The Land Connection
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois	Faith in Place	UIUC Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition
Champaign Urbana Public Health District-WIC	Family Service of Champaign County	UniPlace Pantry & Community Meal
City of Champaign Township	Healthy Champaign County Active Living Committee	University of Illinois Extension
Common Ground Food Co-op	Housing Authority of Champaign County	University of Illinois Extension - Animal Sciences
Cunningham Township Supervisor's Office	Promise Healthcare	Urbana School District #116 Farm to School Program
	Sola Gratia Farm	

Research Posters

Pre-Pandemic SNAP Participation and Household Food Insecurity: Evidence from NHANES (2017– 2020) and Implications for Community Food Systems

Ramatu Sarbah, MS, UIUC Department of Health & Kinesiology

A cooking coach to support affordable and nutritious meal preparation

Shannon Mejía, PhD, and Wan Wen, PhD Candidate, UIUC Department of Health and Kinesiology

Support the Whole Family—Pets Included

Amy Fischer, PhD, Illinois Extension, Animal Sciences

Food Insecurity and Nutrient Deficiencies Among U.S. Women of Childbearing Age: NHANES 2017–2020

Tayo Nafisat Folorunso, PhD, UIUC Department of Health and Kinesiology

Effects of a School Based Nutrition and Exercise Intervention on Inhibitory Control in Children: A Pilot Study

Paige Witte, PhD Student, UIUC Department of Health and Kinesiology

Green Leaf Ideas

Participants of the Food Summit were encouraged to write down fresh "Green Leaf" ideas on the cut-out leaves provided at each of the tables. The Green Leaf ideas could be any ideas or activities, big or small, that would advance the work to help eliminate food insecurity in our community. The leaf cut-outs were then attached to an artificial tree that was displayed in the commons area of the summit for all to see.

- Little/Mini free produce pantries. They could schedule pick-ups so it wouldn't have to be refrigerated. Run by neighborhood ambassadors.
- Brainstorming sessions to write grants and letters of support. Gather local organizations based on interest to get funding.
- Increase utilization of available foods and beverages.
- Preserving donated produce before it goes bad so people can enjoy frozen/canned produce.
- Collaborate with data and gaps related to food access. Extension has lots of sharable info (county, region, state) we are willing to share.
- Work collaboratively to change laws pertaining to excess food, leftover food, dated food, etc. to more effectively and efficiently repurpose and distribute. Many other countries are able to do this, so there are already working models as a foundation for change.
- Food prep and cooking demonstration at every Farmer's Market. People can eat healthily when they are introduced to new foods. They can see how to prep and cook it.
- The importance of deworming.
- Teach backyard wild food foraging for added nutrition to easily affordable foods.
- One universal referral system for Champaign County where all organizations can send/receive referrals and view which are available by category.
- Build neighborhood coalitions in targeted areas by hosting big Block Parties with music, food giveaways and info/resources as the way to begin the relationship building process.
- List of pantries and organizations that offer food delivery; which could create access to food.
- Free workshops on how to plant a garden, native plants and how to preserve food. Also community dinners and potlucks.
- A traveling bus that is outfitted with shower and laundry services that travels to specific places on a schedule



Collective Impact

The Collective Impact model was introduced to the 2026 Food Summit participants at the beginning of the day. Participants were asked to keep this model in mind throughout the day as an effective way to bring people together to work towards a common goal.



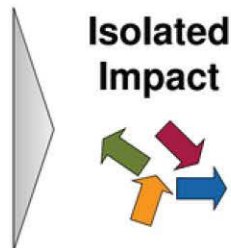
After talking about collective impact, there was a survey that participants could fill out. Survey results help inform steps to strategically build collaboration around the shared goal, “Improving Food & Nutrition Security in Champaign County”. The survey responses highlight a strong need for increased funding, staffing capacity, and sustainable resources to support community food programs and outreach efforts. Many respondents emphasized improving access to nutritious food, particularly for underserved groups such as older adults, people with mobility challenges, immigrant communities, and those with dietary restrictions. Collaboration and coordination across organizations were recurring priorities, including shared food distribution systems, community meal events, and better referral networks. Respondents also identified infrastructure gaps, such as the need for more pantry space, storage, updated facilities, and transportation solutions like delivery services. Education and community engagement, especially around cooking, gardening, and nutrition, were seen as critical opportunities, particularly for youth and families. Overall, there is a clear interest in building stronger, more connected systems that address food insecurity while fostering long-term community resilience.

Why Collective Impact?

The Collective Impact process has been demonstrated to successfully support group efforts in addressing complex issues - issues that require more than one sector to work together. This process helps us align and connect our efforts so that they are complementary and moving in a shared direction.

Traditional Approaches Are Not Solving Our Toughest – Often Complex – Challenges

- Funders select **individual grantees**
- Organizations **work separately** and **compete**
- **Evaluation** attempts to **isolate** a particular organization's impact
- Large scale change is assumed to depend on **scaling organizations**
- Corporate and government sectors are often **disconnected** from foundations and nonprofits



Achieving Large-Scale Change through Collective Impact Involves Five Key Elements

- 1 Common Agenda**
 - Common understanding of the problem
 - Shared vision for change
- 2 Shared Measurement**
 - Collecting data and measuring results
 - Focus on performance management
 - Shared accountability
- 3 Mutually Reinforcing Activities**
 - Differentiated approaches
 - Coordination through joint plan of action
- 4 Continuous Communication**
 - Consistent and open communication
 - Focus on building trust
- 5 Backbone Support**
 - Separate organization(s) with staff
 - Resources and skills to **convene** and **coordinate** participating organizations

Source: Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work, 2012; Interviews and Analysis

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Local Food Security Efforts Using Collective Impact Lens

examples shown do not represent an exclusive list

Common Agenda	Improving Food and Nutrition Security in Champaign County, IL	
Shared Measurement	• Food Security % • Pounds of Food Grown / Distributed • # of Community Gardens	• \$ SNAP Match • \$ WIC Match
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	• Food Summit • Food Pantries • Farmers Markets	• Local Produce Sold at Grocery Stores • Farmers Markets
Continuous Communication	• HCC Monthly Meetings and Mailings • State of the Plate Speaker Series • Community Coalition	
Backbone Support	• Sola Gratia • Eastern IL Food Bank • IL Extension • University of IL	• The Land Connection • HCC • Local Government • Many More

Collective Impact Efforts Tend to Transpire Over Three Key Phases

Components for Success	Phase I Initiate Action	Phase II Organize for Impact	Phase III Sustain Action and Impact
Governance and Infrastructure	Identify champions and form cross-sector group	Create infrastructure (backbone and processes)	Facilitate and refine
Strategic Planning	Map the landscape and use data to make case	Create common agenda (common goals and strategy)	Support implementation (alignment to goal and strategies)
Community Involvement	Facilitate community outreach	Engage community and build public will	Continue engagement and conduct advocacy
Evaluation and Improvement	Analyze baseline data to ID key issues and gaps	Establish shared metrics (indicators, measurement, and approach)	Collect, track, and report progress (process to learn and improve)

For more information on the Collective Impact Process, there are multiple papers and resources written by the Stanford Social Innovation Review.

Check out '[Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work](#)'

Evaluation Summary

Overall, participants praised the Food Summit for its strong emphasis on connection, collaboration, and learning, highlighting the value of networking with like-minded individuals and gaining inspiration from speakers, workshops, and interactive sessions. Attendees especially appreciated creative and engaging elements that fostered idea-sharing and community-building.

Areas for improvement focused primarily on logistics and time management, including longer sessions, more structured networking opportunities, better space/layout, and improved meal options. Participants also recommended expanding engagement through intentional networking formats, diverse and dynamic speakers, and increased outreach, while maintaining the event's strong foundation, which many felt was already highly successful.



Thank You and Closing

This isn't the end, it is the beginning of the next chapter. Food security is a stubborn problem, solutions require sustained, enduring commitment. Even as our understanding, following four Feeding Champaign County Food Summits, has evolved and responded to new challenges, the need for action persists.

Nearly 130 participants, community leaders and neighbors representing 45 organizations convened for the 2026 Food Summit. New ideas have been shared, new partnerships are being explored, and a renewed sense of community commitment has been affirmed.

Healthy Champaign County will continue to provide the leadership to sustain this momentum. Videos of selected workshop sessions, plenary addresses, and other activities can be found on our YouTube Channel; updates will be shared at our monthly meetings and in our newsletter, and we are eager to embrace the progress represented.

This report was made possible by funds received from the Illinois Department of Public Health and our generous sponsors.



Feeding Champaign County 2027
Addressing Food Access and Security

Save-the-Date 5th Annual Feeding Feeding Champaign County Food Summit

Wednesday, March 31st, 2027
I Hotel and Conference Center



If you'd like to get more involved with the 5th
Annual Food Summit, please reach out to
Healthy Champaign County at
healthychampaigncounty2016@gmail.com