NOVEMBER 2024









City of Flagstaff
Community Food System Assessment (CFSA)
Community Engagement Report

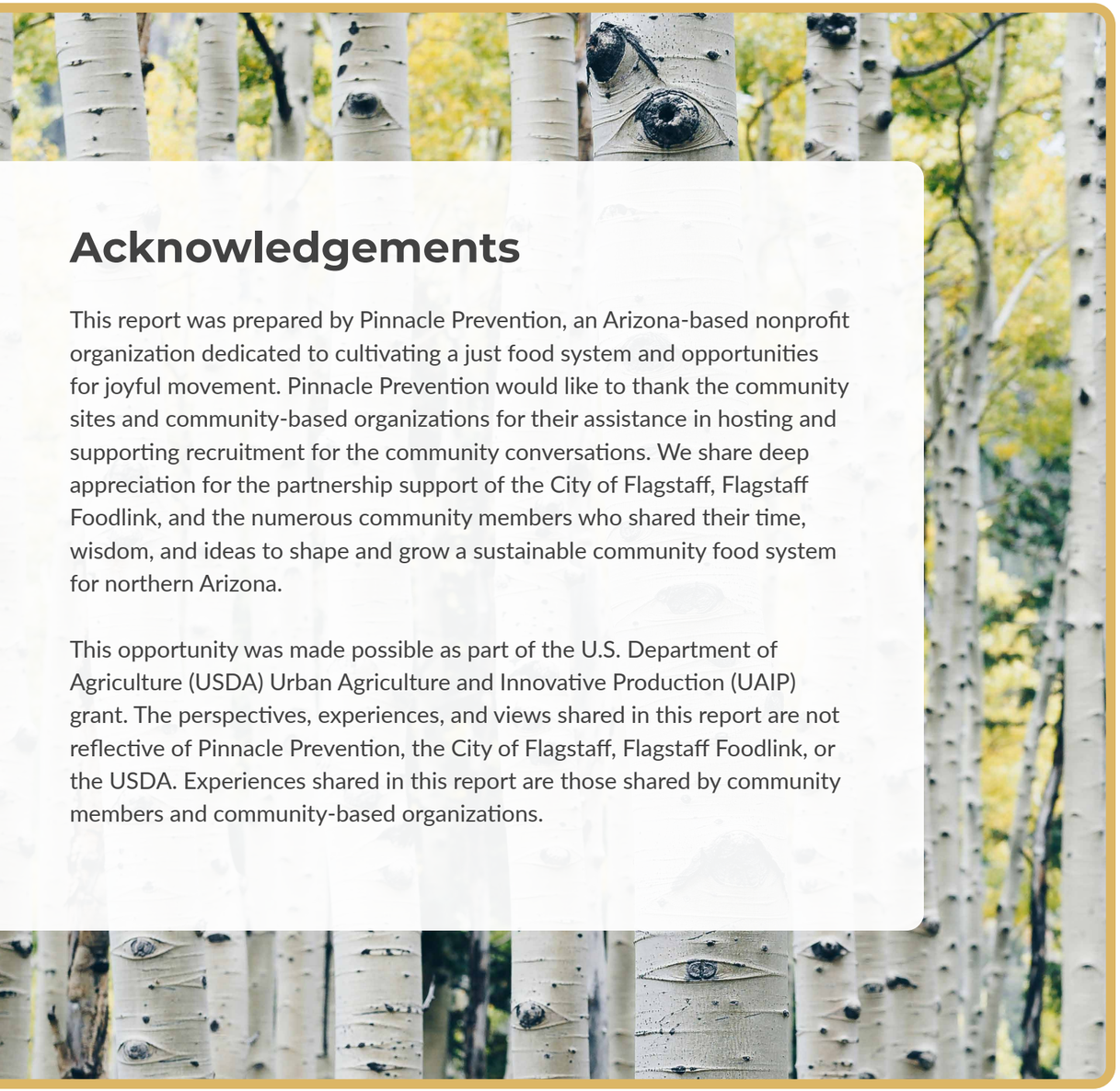
A Summary and Analysis of Community Conversation and Stakeholder Findings in Response to the Community Food System Assessment

Prepared By

PINNACLE PREVENTION

PinnaclePrevention.org

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Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Pinnacle Prevention, an Arizona-based nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating a just food system and opportunities for joyful movement. Pinnacle Prevention would like to thank the community sites and community-based organizations for their assistance in hosting and supporting recruitment for the community conversations. We share deep appreciation for the partnership support of the City of Flagstaff, Flagstaff Foodlink, and the numerous community members who shared their time, wisdom, and ideas to shape and grow a sustainable community food system for northern Arizona.

This opportunity was made possible as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) grant. The perspectives, experiences, and views shared in this report are not reflective of Pinnacle Prevention, the City of Flagstaff, Flagstaff Foodlink, or the USDA. Experiences shared in this report are those shared by community members and community-based organizations.

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Introduction

The City of Flagstaff Sustainability Office was awarded a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) planning project grant to support a three-year project to assess and grow a sustainable community food system. Phase one of the project started in 2023 with the completion of a 12-month long assessment of the regional food system. The assessment was conducted by food business consultants, New Venture Advisors, and included conducting surveys, interviews, and focus groups as well as examining secondary data to develop and provide a comprehensive picture of the current food landscape in Northern Arizona.

The assessment focused on six (6) distinct areas of the food system including:

1) The agricultural landscape and food production,
2) Food system infrastructure,
3) The food retail environment,
4) Food consumption and health,
5) Food access, and
6) Food waste and recovery.

Phase two of the grant project started mid-2024 following the conclusion of the assessment and focused on community engagement around the assessment. Phase two was led by Pinnacle Prevention, in collaboration with the City of Flagstaff and Flagstaff Foodlink. The purpose and goals of phase two of the project were to conduct community engagement with community members and stakeholders to share and reflect on the data and information from the assessment, to understand how the community is making meaning of the data, understand perspectives on overall needs, gaps, and barriers, and to listen and learn about what community members and stakeholders feel should be prioritized to inform future planning efforts.

The information in this community engagement report is intended to be used to inform the third and final phase of the grant, which includes the development of a food action plan as well as to guide decision-making for the city in future investments, resourcing, and approaches to ensure that strategies, initiatives, and policies are being delivered in a way that is most meaningful and impactful to community.

The community engagement conversation findings aim to complement the community food system assessment to better understand needs, strengths, and desires within the spectrum of participation that centers an opportunity for co-design and informs future efforts in collaboration with community members impacted by the decisions, plans, and services being offered. Findings can also be applied to Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) efforts beyond just the sustainability office, across all divisions with the City of Flagstaff – from community development to parks and recreation, to water services, and more.

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Methodology

Pinnacle Prevention utilizes a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method for conducting community engagement efforts. A CBPR model allows for authentic engagement with trusted partners supporting opportunities for community to work alongside the public sector and stakeholders to co-design more impactful shared outcomes. This methodology also allows for the integration of perspectives and needs prioritized by community members that are often not considered or left out of institutional decision-making. Participatory processes that offer authentic engagement offer great significance in improving outcomes among underrepresented populations disproportionately impacted by disparities within the food system. The CBPR engagement process also contributes to improved trust building, capacity building, and co-powerment in translating needs and findings into policy development and implementation of more impactful initiatives between local government entities and the community.

The Community Food System Assessment (CFSA) community engagement efforts were designed around a two-tiered approach based on engaging two different centered audience groups:

I) **(Community Members) Community Conversations:** Community conversations centered community members residing in or near the City of Flagstaff and the northern Arizona region reaching a total of 94 individuals across six (6) conversations. To ensure broad reach conversations centered different demographic groups from adults, youth, older adults and elders, Indigenous families, and individuals working in or with the education sector.

II) **(Stakeholders) Food System Stakeholder Gatherings:** Stakeholder gatherings centered professional stakeholders and food system advocates living and working in the City of Flagstaff and the northern Arizona region reaching a total of 47 stakeholders.

- # of Community Members Engaged = 94
- # of Stakeholders Engaged = 47
- Total Engagement = 141 Individuals

To protect the identities of participants, findings have been compiled and reported collectively. All conversations were recorded and transcribed. Transcribed notes from each conversation were analyzed through categorization analysis consistent with standard qualitative research protocols. Using this technique, categories within the text were then developed into major themes representative of the data. Those themes were then linked with examples and quotes from the discussions. Data was also analyzed for any unique findings specific to a particular demographic or location.

Summary of Findings

Community Conversations

The CFSA community engagement project included conversations with community members residing in or near Flagstaff.

The average community focus group size consisted of 16 people and lasted approximately one and a half hours. Participants were recruited through the conversation host sites, nearby community centers where community members frequently gather, through Flagstaff Foodlink partnerships, and through the City of Flagstaff resilience hubs. Community conversation population demographics are highlighted below.

Community conversations were hosted at the following locations between August and October 2024:

1) East Flagstaff Community Library (Centered audience: Adults, all ages)
2) Murdoch Community Center (Centered audience: Adults, all ages)
3) STAR School (Centered audience: Indigenous families)
4) Flagstaff Aquaplex (Centered audience: Young adults and students, ages 18-23)
5) Joe C. Montoya Community and Senior Center (Centered audience: Seniors, older adults)
6) Willow Bend Environmental Education Center (Centered audience: Educators, Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) partners)



Figure 1. Community Conversation Participation by Participant Zip Code

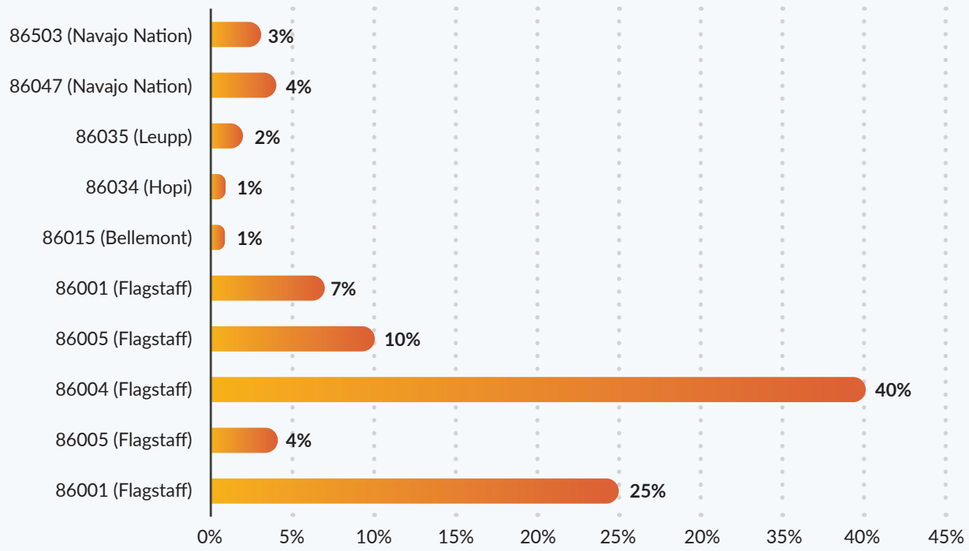


Figure 2. Community Conversation Participation by Age

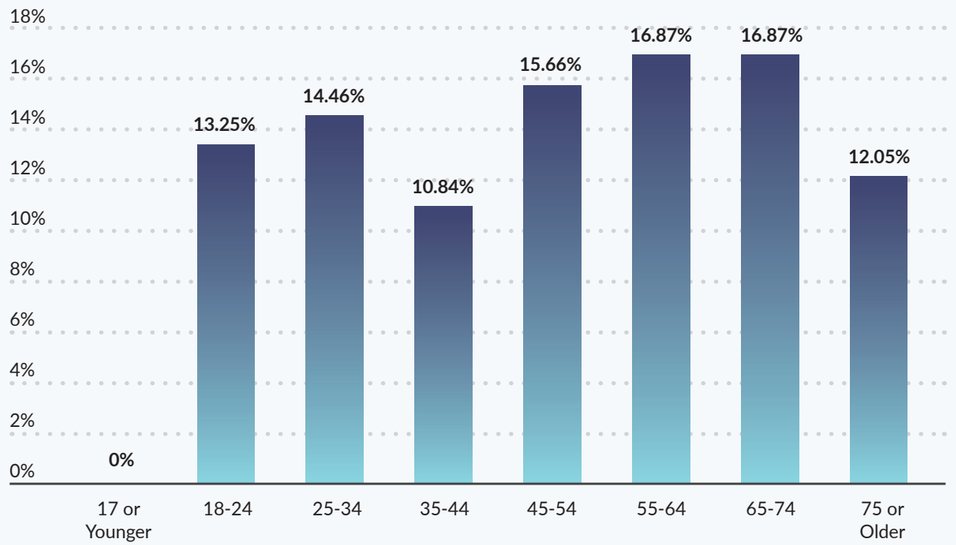


Figure 3. Community Conversation Participation by Race-Ethnicity(ies)

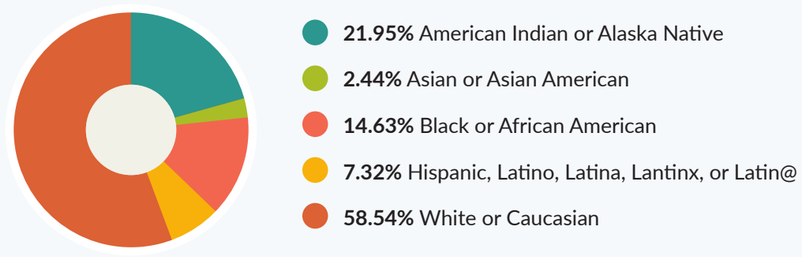


Figure 4. Community Conversation Participants Participation in Community Food Program(s)

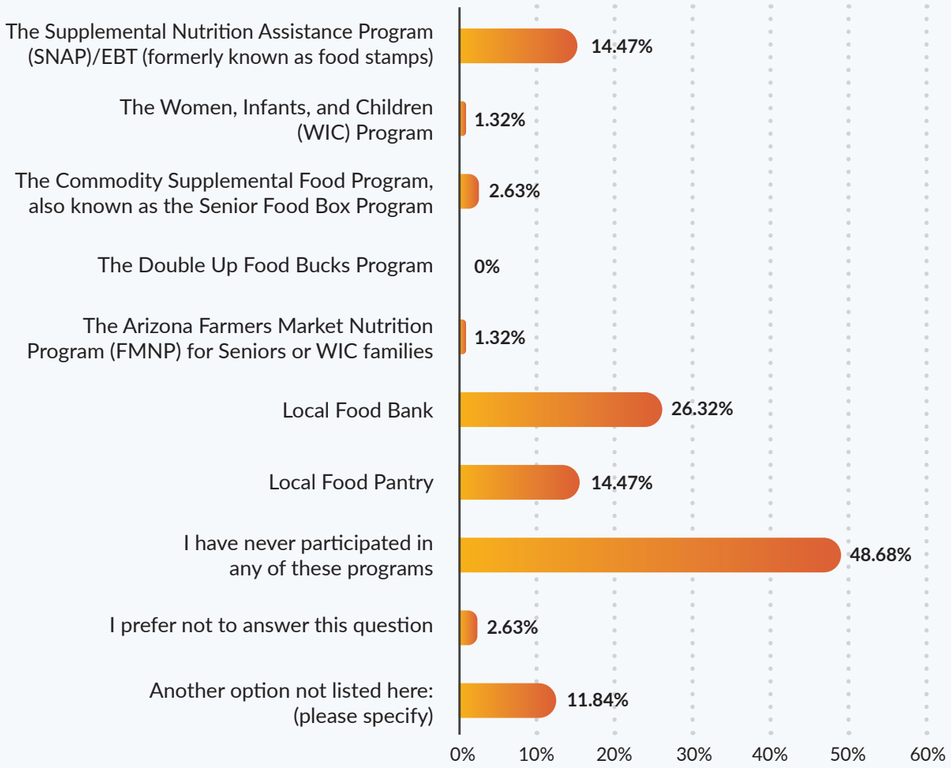


Figure 5. Community Conversation – Participant Food Production Practices

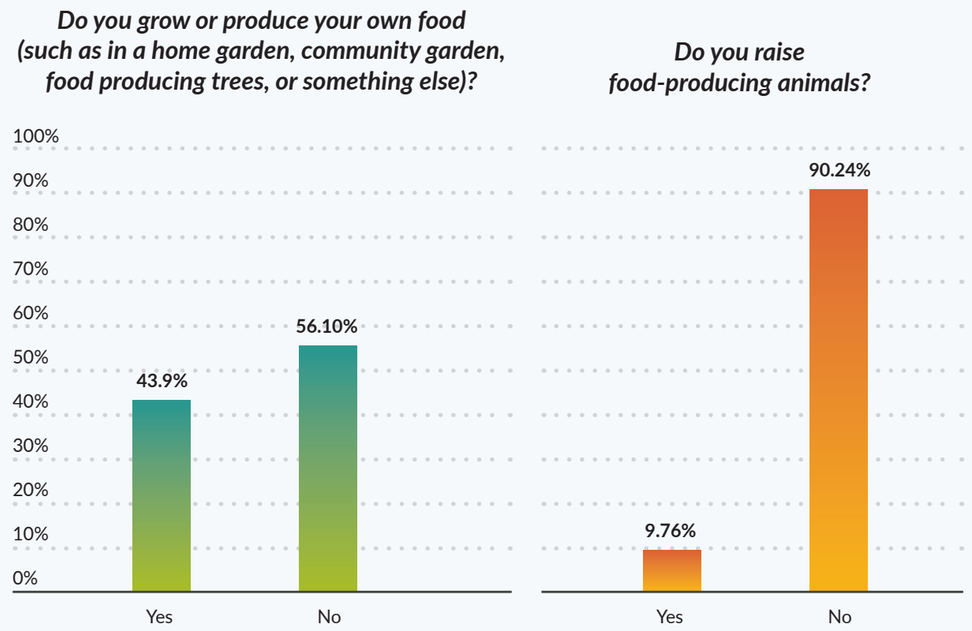
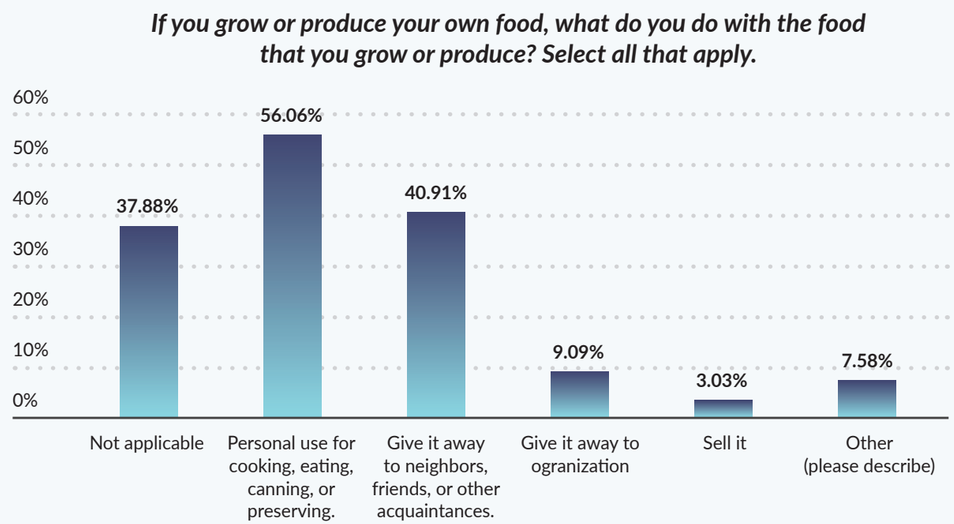


Figure 6. Community Conversation – Participant Food Production Sharing Practices



Community Conversation Themes

The goals of the community conversations were to:

- Reflect on key data highlights from the community food system assessment and how community members are making meaning of the data;
- Understand perspectives on overall needs, gaps, and barriers;
- Listen and learn about what should be prioritized in future food action planning and policy efforts; and,
- Identify possible future food business opportunities the city could focus on developing.

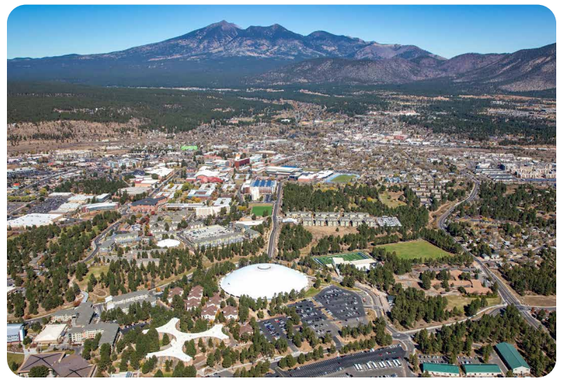
General discussion findings were consistent across all community conversations with some noted differences in perceptions and needs as indicated in participant comments, but not in overall trends. Findings around desired priorities varied by the centered audience group. A summary of findings was categorized into the following overarching areas:

- CFSA data that sparked curiosity within each of the six focus areas.
- Making meaning of the data and points of confusion.
- Food system barriers and challenges that should be a priority future focus area for the City of Flagstaff.

CFSA Points of Interest

Agricultural Landscape and Food Production and Food System Infrastructure

Of the six CFSA focus areas, the two areas that sparked the most interest and conversation were agricultural landscape and production and infrastructure. Many community members expressed surprise by the number of farms and ranches in the region, as well as disappointment about the loss in the number of farms and farmland acreage. When asked about what factors they believed were contributing to the loss in farms in the region responses ranged from perceptions about the impact of development, to lack of water, to wildfires. There were themes in conversations around the link between housing development and loss of land with viable water sources for farming and concerns about young and new farmers not being able to access and afford land. Community members recognized that many farmers are 'aging out' of the profession and felt that there are not many young adults that see a financially viable future in farming and do not have mentors to show them how to farm in northern Arizona's unique climate.



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Reflecting on food production:

"I grow at home, trying to grow stuff, but it's a battle. The winds are always knocking things down, critters get things, there's grasshopper infestation, hail and snow, hail took it all out. The soil is rocky and not really friendly - I spend hours tending to soil and making raised bed gardens to sift rocks out. The soil is just different here and we need education, resources, and support to help us grow our own food. I might be able to increase what I produce to sell it if I had some help."

Reflecting on the agricultural landscape:

"We need a better assessment or tracking system to understand the processing capacity of the area, we need a tracking app, especially one that can address food waste diversion. We also need to track farms to understand how much is going into production in our own local area."

Many participants went on to compare data from the CFSA agricultural landscape and production section to the food system infrastructure section data with themes in concerns around the lack of distribution infrastructure. Participants shared feelings that the infrastructure is not matching the needs, especially for individuals residing on reservations. Conversations related these concerns to the isolation of the region and the impact that major weather and highway closures have on supply and demand in the area. Participants shared experiences with lack of supply as it related to the most recent COVID-19 pandemic and the scarcity of food supply within the major supermarkets in the region. They discussed the importance of not wanting to rely on imported foods and a desire to modernize systems to better understand local production capacity with a desire to adopt and scale more efficient and sustainable systems for farmers and those producing food in the area.
Participants offered reflections on the value of mobile markets, food hubs, and community kitchens as a way to address transportation and mobility barriers, especially in the more rural parts of the region. Themes emerged around the value of co-locating food processing and food business incubator services within existing infrastructure. Participants felt that there are many community kitchens in the region, from schools to churches, that are under-utilized. It was felt that the city should invest in kitchen infrastructure to support more back-to-scratch cooking opportunities and also invest in workforce development within the areas of growing, cooking, processing, and transporting the region's food.

Food Retail Environment and Food Access

When participants were asked what stood out to them in the food retail environment and food access data the most frequently cited data points were what was felt to be a high number of restaurants and eateries in comparison to a low

Reflecting on affordability:

"The farmers market is not cheap. I go through there because I like to be there, but I can't afford to buy anything or any of those good foods. We need more food pantries that prioritize choice."

"As far as the farmers markets are concerned when you go to a farmers market the produce is more expensive, so the farmers market feels bougie. It would be nice to have a farmers markets that caters to all income levels."

"Food donations without choice is really demoralizing and hard."

number of retailers that accept and participate in different nutrition assistance programs. At least half of the individuals who participated in the community conversations identified as currently participating in at least one form of nutrition assistance. Participants shared various experiences with participating in nutrition assistance programs that helped to stretch their food dollars. Food cost barriers emerged as a key theme impacting food purchasing and consumption practices. Participants expressed an interest and appreciation for the farmers markets in the area, but also shared that purchasing local food at the farmers market feels cost prohibitive.



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Reflecting on Indigenous foodways:

"We need to go back to the traditional way of learning how to produce, instead of solely relying on stores which has been a difficult way to keep food on the table. Today's teachings on the food system do not happen, the children must travel back home to see it. A lot of students today have not been around livestock or traditional practices. Many students come from reservations, but they all come from a different background (ranches, homes, etc.). Those living in the homes may have land with cattle, but they do not sell it. It is mainly to sustain their family and to keep familial traditions. The mindset is not to make a large amount of money, it is mainly about helping others and being self-sustaining."

The quality and freshness of the food were also frequently identified as a motivational factor that impacts food purchasing behaviors. Participants described dissatisfaction with the quality of produce at the surrounding grocery stores. Participants shared a desire to have confidence in the quality of products. There was strong motivation to have local options, and this included a desire to know where the produce comes from and how it was grown, as well as increasing opportunities for community members to be able to have the tools and education to know how to grow their own foods. Indigenous participants described the impacts of the loss of traditional food systems. They acknowledged that the CFSA recognized many of the farmers in the region as Indigenous, yet felt the traditional growing practices and knowledge are not being passed down to younger generations. This included the need for supporting Indigenous meat processing facilities and infrastructure. Participants expressed importance in traditional foodways being taught both in schools, and outside of school settings.

Food Consumption and Health

When participants were asked what data stood out to them in the food consumption and health section of the CFSA, most participants were not surprised to see that none of the northern Arizona counties are meeting fruit and vegetable intake recommendations. Participants expressed a desire to consume more healthy, fresh, local food options, but went on to describe cost as the biggest barrier to being able to afford the healthy food they want to consume. Many individuals went on to describe and relate to the fact that the high cost of housing is impacting almost every aspect of life and living. Many participants described depending on food banks and food pantries and shared concern about the lack of healthy options. Of the few individuals that were familiar with nutrition incentive programs, many described a desire to see the city invest in more healthy food incentive options and increase awareness about opportunities, such as the Double Up Food Bucks SNAP fruit and vegetable incentive program. Participants also shared a desire for the city to incentivize more healthy

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food retail options, both restaurant eateries and grocery stores. They expressed a desire for fewer fast-food options that were perceived to be less healthy and a demand for healthier options. Educators who work with children and young adults and individuals with children shared a desire of wanting children to have a chance to try new healthy foods. They expressed interest in seeing a comprehensive approach to supporting healthy food options for children from what is served in schools, to more school gardens, to more education and cooking demonstrations on how to cook and prepare healthy foods. It was felt that efforts such as these would improve the health of children and their families. Educators also described the value of having young adults work and help out on the farms in the region. It was felt that this would increase awareness of how food is grown and healthy options, while also meeting a job needs for both students and farmers.

Food Waste and Recovery

Participants in all conversations and across all age groups and demographics were overwhelmingly surprised and shocked by the food waste data in the CFSA. They expressed concerns that Arizona as a whole was identified as producing the most food waste in the nation. Different themes emerged in each conversation regarding perceptions of what was contributing to and impacting food waste the most in northern Arizona. Participants cited concerns with the amount of grocery and restaurant waste. They expressed varied understanding of beliefs around the associated liability issues and expressed a desire for the city to work with the area pantries on improved hot food recovery options and perishable community fridge options to improve access for those most disparately impacted by food insecurity. There was differences in understanding of composting practices with a theme emerging around beliefs that only those growing food would also participate in composting. This correlation was especially evident within the community conversation that centered young adults. Within demographic trends, young adults and seniors expressed the greatest concern in prioritizing food waste and recovery practices.

Making Meaning of the Data and Points of Confusion

Participants shared appreciation for all of the various CFSA data in helping to provide an overall picture of the northern Arizona food system, while also expressing confusion with how to make sense of the data. Themes emerged in all conversations in questioning whether a data point was 'good' or 'bad'. Participants often questioned how to understand data sources. There were themes in confusion around percentages that were offered and a desire to understand how interconnected issues may be impacting metrics. Participants expressed a desire for comparative

Reflections on healthy students and opportunities:

"We all love community gardens, but the maintenance is hard. Gardens do not have summers off and that is the hardest thing with school-based gardens. We need to create more opportunities to take kids out to farms to assist farmers. This both lightens the load with farmers and serves as a path forward for kids who need jobs. Grants could pay kids to help farmers. High school students want jobs and want to be on the land and want to be healthy. We should incentivize something like that here in Flagstaff."

"I can really relate to the data point that none of us are meeting fruit and veggie intake recommendations. I grew up not eating fruits and veggies and now it's hard because I don't know what to do. My kids and I have been taking classes in how to incorporate more fruits and veggies into our diets, but it's a struggle because I didn't know anything."

Reflections on food waste and recovery:

"It's strange that 44% say they are composting, but only 14% report growing their food. What's the purpose of composting if you aren't going to grow? This is a strange percentage, so the city should dig into this more. Maybe people are composting, but unsure what they are doing with it. I don't know."

"I live in an apartment, and I would like to have a community garden. The city should provide an incentive for a community gardens and recycling and composting at all apartments. We have so much passion and knowledge in this room. People just need more information and incentive. This would cut down waste."



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data sources with similar 'peer' communities and with statewide averages across different counties. Participants also expressed a desire to dig deeper into trends over time.

Reflections on How to Make Sense of the Data:

"How do I know that I should be concerned about these data points and with so many different data points they all seem concerning and hard to prioritize where to focus."

Participants shared an interest in digging deeper into food insecurity data in particular and described opportunities to tell the larger story around food insecurity, especially as it is associated with high housing costs and the high cost of living in general. Participants also expressed a desire to better understand the data around how many individuals and households are growing and producing their own foods. In making sense of the data, participants shared that a better understanding of home food production could serve as an opportunity to grow small businesses and opportunity to bring in additional money be selling small, such as selling through farmers markets.

Food System Barriers and Challenges that Should be a Priority Focus Area for the City of Flagstaff

Overall, community conversation participants expressed the greatest challenges to the regional food system stem from lack of infrastructure and distribution. Participants felt that the biggest barrier to overcoming challenges in this area were cost related. Participants shared that lack of funds exist to expand food processing infrastructure and shared a concern that food producers do not have enough personnel, or 'human power', to expand capacity to improve distribution. Many participants expressed feelings that tourism is prioritized over community resident needs and that this contributes to funding gaps that aren't being filled. Participants cited a belief that taking care of community first would result in a healthier region overall.

Reflections on the intertwined connections with tourism:

"I understand we are dependent on tourism, but it seems their needs are prioritized over the residents. How do we change that?"

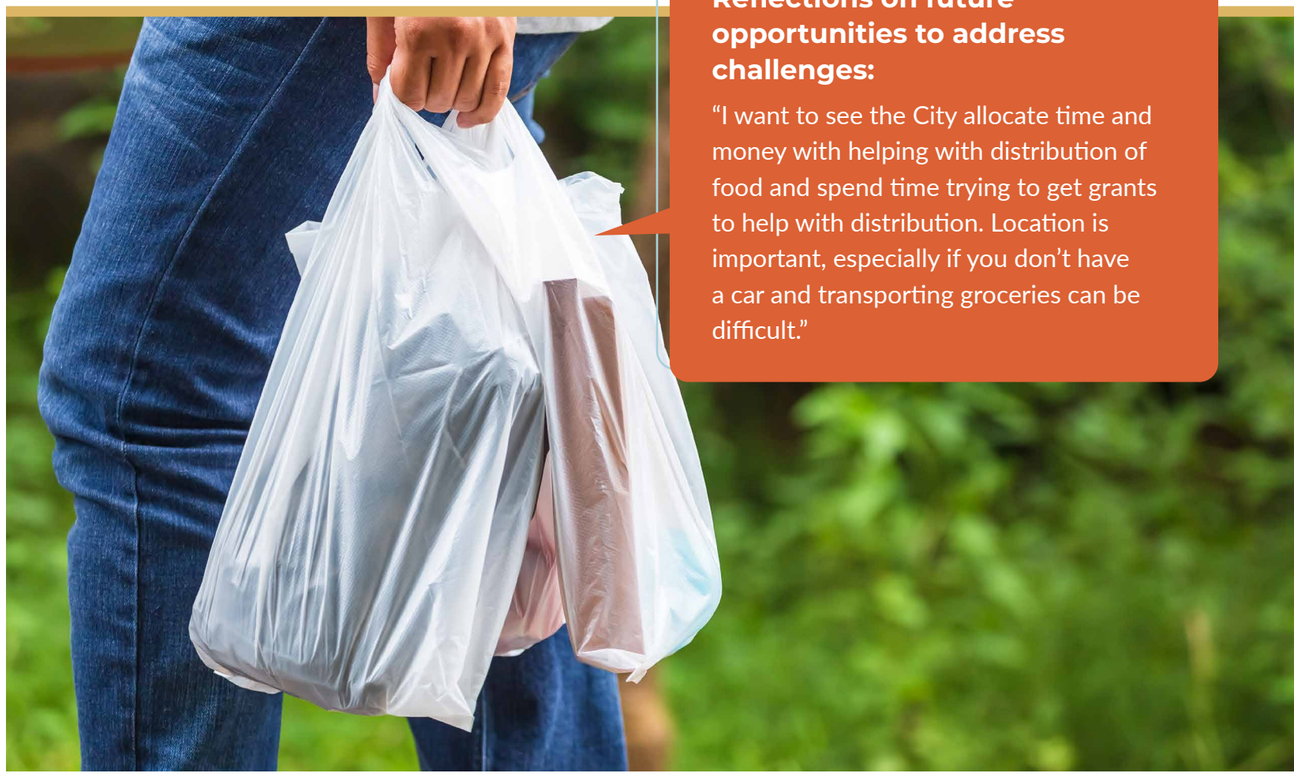
"Tourism brings in a lot of money for Flagstaff, however the community is still struggling to afford food and housing. There is a need for local-only discounts, policies on short-term and long-term rentals, and more affordable grocery stores rather than restaurants."

"Do not forget about the community. Flagstaff needs to say no to tourists, and yes to its community."

When asked to think to the future and where community members would like to see the City of Flagstaff invest time, energy, and resources themes emerged in the following areas:

- Priority opportunity theme 1: Increasing food hubs across northern Arizona.-
- Priority opportunity theme 2: Improving partnerships that are focused on food distribution challenges and innovations.
- Priority opportunity theme 3: Incentivizing healthy food options to be more affordable.
- Priority opportunity theme 4: Making it more possible/accessible for northern Arizona to grow their own food.

When reflecting on the possibility of a future strategic food business opportunity community kitchen business incubator spaces were named as a feasible focus area. Participants shared opportunities to utilize underutilized kitchen spaces that could nurture business development and influence many of the data metrics across all sections of the CFSA from addressing production, processing, hunger, and waste. Participants shared successful examples from other states, such as Colorado and Oregon, that they believed could be replicated in Flagstaff and in partnership with existing resources.



Reflections on future opportunities to address challenges:

"I want to see the City allocate time and money with helping with distribution of food and spend time trying to get grants to help with distribution. Location is important, especially if you don't have a car and transporting groceries can be difficult."

Stakeholder Gatherings Summary of Findings

Stakeholder Gatherings

The CFSA community engagement project included two (2) stakeholder gatherings. In-person stakeholder gatherings were hosted at the Coconino Center for the Arts in October 2024. The gatherings had a total of 75 people register and an actual participation reach of 47 stakeholders with the average group size consisting of 24 stakeholders and lasting approximately two and a half hours. Stakeholders were invited through the City of Flagstaff and Flagstaff Foodlink networks. Stakeholders were defined as professionals, partners, and advocates who have a vested interest in improving the northern Arizona food system. Participants represented the following sectors: emergency food, private business, transportation, academia, farms, faith-based, city government, county government, nonprofit, healthcare, and tribal organizations.

Stakeholder Gathering Themes

The goals of the stakeholder gatherings mirrored the community conversations and focused on reflecting on key data points from the CFSA report and sharing priorities to inform the development of the future food action plan and strategic food business opportunity. A summary of themes that emerged from the stakeholder gatherings were categorized into the following overarching themed areas:

- CFSA data themes that sparked curiosity within each of the six focus areas.
- Priorities for Flagstaff's food future.
- Stakeholder recommendations.

CFSA Points of Interest

Agricultural Landscape and Food Production Themes

In reflecting on the agricultural landscape and food production data stakeholders were most curious about the **number of farms and ranches** in the region and surprised at the **number of Indigenous producers**. There was interest in better understanding more about who the farmers and ranchers are. Small group conversations shared interest in making Indigenous farming 'more visible' and interest in understanding if Indigenous producers were interested in scaling and selling at markets. There was also interest expressed among stakeholders in increasing direct to consumer sales opportunity.

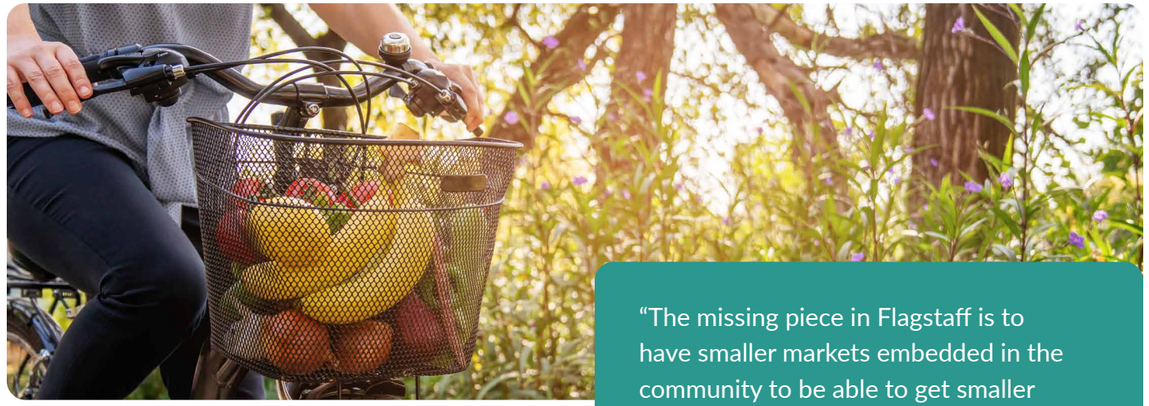
> "We still don't have the full data and picture to see the impact on agriculture landscape and production post COVID. We are still feeling the impact of so much loss from the pandemic." - *Stakeholder*

Food System Infrastructure Themes

In reflecting on the food system infrastructure data stakeholders were most curious about the **dissatisfaction with zoning regulations** and wanting to better understand what specific zoning regulations were impacting food businesses the most and what opportunities there were to streamline and improve zoning challenges. Stakeholders also discussed interest in **improving access to commercial kitchens and food production spaces that already exist** for shared use opportunities to address the most immediate infrastructure needs. Staekholders that are or represented farmers also noted that you can't address infrastructure without also addressing labor and the importance of increasing on-farm labor support for all farmers across the region. Small group discussions also touched on the need for culturally relevant processing facilities, especially to support traditional foodways among Indigenous producers and ranchers.

> "There are so many hidden costs related to infrastructure and business operations that make it hard. There's hidden costs in distribution - from fuel, to where the food is coming from, to licensing fees, to liabilities and making sure no one is getting sick from your food and how it is processed. We need to address all of those barriers." - *Stakeholder*

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> "The missing piece in Flagstaff is to have smaller markets embedded in the community to be able to get smaller necessities and have it within walking and biking distance." - *Stakeholder*

Food Retail Environment Themes

In reflecting on the food retail environment data stakeholders were most curious about what was perceived to be a **high number of restaurant eateries versus a low number of food grocery outlets**. There were also themes in conversations around the **cost of local food** and curiosity if there was capacity or interest among local food producers to get more local foods into local food retail outlets. Stakeholders also discussed concerns about what is perceived to be a low number of retail outlets that accept SNAP and WIC benefits.

Food Consumption and Health Themes

In reflecting on the food consumption and health data stakeholders were most curious about the **percentage of income being spent on food** and how that impacts the quality and types of food being purchased. Stakeholders also remarked on the high cost of food and how that impacts **affordability** of 'healthy' versus 'unhealthy' options for northern Arizona residents.

Stakeholders also discussed the importance of making healthy food options available in **schools** and offering growing, cooking, and nutrition education to support health of students of all ages.

> "There's an assumption here that people have choices and the ability to make healthy choices, but the truth of the matter is that they might not. The cost of living in Flagstaff is high and it is compounded with high cost of food prices and this limits choice and therefore impacts health." - *Stakeholder*

Food Access Themes

In reflecting on the food access data stakeholders were most curious about the perceived **low percentage of people interested in growing food** and perceived **low number of people interested in increasing access to more farmers market** opportunities. Stakeholders continued to discuss other local food access outlet opportunities beyond farmers markets to interest in community fridges, food hubs, and more delivery options.

> "The data tells me that people seem to be comfortable shopping at the large grocery stores. Markets seem to be more of a cute thing rather than a place for getting weekly groceries." - *Stakeholder*

Food Waste and Recovery Themes

In reflecting on the food waste and recovery data stakeholders were most curious about the **amount of waste**. Small group conversations focused on the perceived misinformation around **liabilities around food recovery** and re-distribution and the amount of food that is thrown out at grocery stores if it is perceived to be 'flawed'.





> "I want to better understand what percentage of food waste is occurring in each local food level. What is the amount of food waste here in Flagstaff at the production, transportation, and store levels? This would help to inform us what to do next or what level to address or prioritize first that could result in the biggest impact." - *Stakeholder*

Stakeholder Priorities for Flagstaff's Food Future

Stakeholders were asked to reflect on the six domains within the CFSA and then asked to rank and prioritize the top areas that they feel should be prioritized in the development of the food action plan. Stakeholder priorities by CFSA domain ranked as follows:

Priority focus areas from most important to least with 1 being the top priority and 6 being the lowest stakeholder priority	
1	Food access
2	Agricultural landscape and food production
3	Food retail environment (Tie with #4)
4	Food system infrastructure (Tie with #3)
5	Food waste and recovery
6	Food consumption and health

Stakeholder Recommendations

Stakeholders were asked to share one priority recommendation that the city of Flagstaff could focus on for future food business development and themes emerged in focusing on supporting food recovery businesses, encouraging climate-smart crop production among existing farm businesses in the region, implementing innovative incentive programs to assist with local food distribution, and ensuring that all city-owned businesses and spaces are equipped with climate-smart infrastructure, such as water catchment systems, solar, and free publicly accessible composting stations to support the production of food on city-owned spaces.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings from the CFSA community engagement project provide direct insight into community member and stakeholder experiences, perceptions, and needs to shape and grow a sustainable community food system for northern Arizona. Recommendations offered by the community and stakeholders, including opportunities to consider, are highlighted in each of the engagement sections. In addition, general recommendations that summarize and highlight overall findings offer the following:

Food Action Plan Development Recommendations:

- Priority focus areas to consider in the development of the food action plan are food access, food production, food infrastructure, and the food retail environment.
- Integrate culturally-relevant cross-cutting strategies that center Indigenous food ways across all priority areas.
- Consider including city-led strategies that focus on city-owned spaces including integrating climate-smart infrastructure and practices that supports food production and digging into city zoning regulations that are perceived to be most impacting food businesses.
- Align food action plan efforts with other existing plans, such as general plans and community health improvement plans to avoid duplication of effort and maximize resources.
- Center youth and student-led development opportunities that engage the next generation in food system initiatives.

Strategic Food Business Development Opportunities:

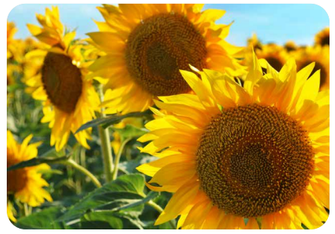
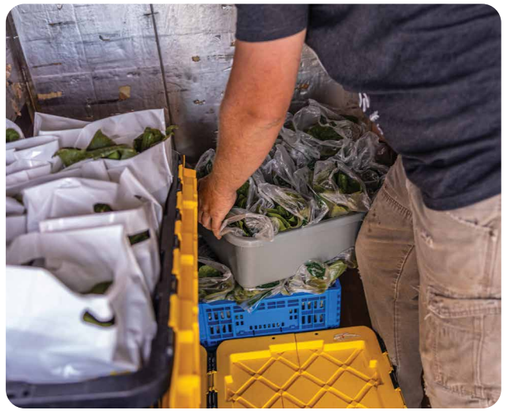
Consider developing or resourcing the following potential food business opportunities based on combined insight from both the community conversations and stakeholder gatherings as informed by the CFSA data:

- **Business development opportunity 1:** Food hub development with a focus on aggregation and distribution. This could be developed in conjunction with the existing resiliency hubs.
- **Business development opportunity 2:** Expand access to commercial kitchen business incubator spaces. This could leverage existing spaces and infrastructure for shared cooperative opportunities.
- **Business development opportunity 3:** Develop a farmer workforce/apprenticeship initiative. This could be youth-focused and implemented in collaboration with FUSD with a focus on developing future career pathways and addressing existing workforce shortages among area farmers.

In conclusion, the community engagement efforts found that the CFSA provided a comprehensive picture of the northern Arizona food system and sparked deep curiosity among community members and stakeholders that are passionate and committed to growing a more robust and sustainable local food system. The engagement effort served as an opportunity for nurturing connection, building trust, and setting pathways to continue shared decision-making between the city of Flagstaff and northern Arizona community members.






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Appendix

City of Flagstaff Community Food Conversation Discussion Guide







Introduction	Hello, my name is (insert name) and I am joined by (insert notetaker/translator names). We work with Pinnacle Prevention, an Arizona-based nonprofit, working on behalf of the City of Flagstaff and Flagstaff Foodlink. We have invited you here today to reflect on the findings from the recent community food system assessment and share your wisdom with us on the findings and the issues that feel the most pressing to you to prioritize to support the growth of a sustainable food system within the City of Flagstaff and the Northern Arizona region. When I say 'food system' I am referring to the many different elements of a cycle that bring food to our tables from growing, transporting, processing, buying, preparing and cooking, as well as disposing and reuse. Your input is part of a collaborative multi-year commitment by the city and partners that will inform the development of an action plan to make improvements in how we grow, access, buy, and support local food producers. There are no right or wrong answers during our conversation today. When we talk in a group like this, it allows for people to agree or disagree depending on their personal beliefs or experiences. This is a good thing, so it is important that we respect each other and any differences that may be shared. Remember, you are the experts and know your community the best. You hold power in the wisdom you share. We are here to listen and learn from you.
Goals/ Purpose Summary	So, in summary, the goals for our time together today are to: • Reflect on and be in conversation around some key highlights from the community food system assessment; • Understand your perspectives on overall needs, gaps, and barriers; and, • Listen and learn about what should be prioritized in future planning and policy efforts.
Supporting Safety, Trust, and Transparency	Your voice and the wisdom that you share today are important. Some of what you identify as priorities today may be things that can be implemented and addressed in the near future and then some things that you may request may be things that will take a couple of years to plan and implement as they may require securing additional resources, funding, or changing policies. Even though you may not see action right away, leaders take what you share seriously and are committed to supporting long-term change. Everything you share will be summarized in a final report provided back to the City of Flagstaff for them to use in designing their future planning efforts around your needs. While we are using nametags today so that we know who you are, your names and information will not be identified or used in the final report. We will not be asking very sensitive questions today, but you don't have to share anything that you don't feel comfortable sharing. You will see us taking notes to make sure that we accurately capture the important wisdom that you share with us. This report will be made available on the city website for you to see and access in late fall and you may also request copies of the final report from the community conversations from us as well. Our contact information will be shared with you at the end of our time together today. Feel free to get up to use the restroom or attend to anything you need to during our time together today. We respect your time. We are scheduled to be together for approximately one and a half hours. After the discussion you will be receiving a Visa gift card in appreciation for your time and participation today. What questions or concerns can I answer before we begin?
Ice-Breaker and Introductions	Let's start with introductions and have you share the following: 1) Your first name, and 2) Your favorite food.
Introducing the Community Food System Assessment Key Data Highlights	The City of Flagstaff completed a 12-month long assessment of the regional food system last year, in 2023. This includes conducting surveys, interviews, and focus group conversations as well as examining data to give us a picture of the current food landscape here in Northern Arizona. The assessment focused in on six (6) distinct areas including: 1) The agricultural landscape and food production 2) Food system infrastructure 3) The food retail environment 4) Food consumption and health, 5) Food access, and 6) Food waste and recovery The final assessment is available on the city website, and you also have a printed copy available to you today. We are going to reflect on some key highlights from each of those six areas. We will also refer to some summary handouts that we will share with you as we go and as we reflect together.

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Agricultural Landscape and Food Production	Let's start with the agricultural landscape and food production. (Refer to printed report and summary handout for reference). This looks at where our food comes from, from farming and ranching to backyard gardening. Some highlights on the agricultural landscape and food production section of the assessment identified that Northern Arizona is home to just over 11,000 farms and ranches; however, we are seeing a decreasing loss in the numbers of farms and ranches and agricultural acreage. Most producers in the region are Indigenous and the top five crops produced are hay for foraging, wheat for grain, corn, vegetables, and grass seed crops. • What stands out to you the most from the information in this section and why did it catch your interest or curiosity? Probes: o When you say [X], why do you feel that is important? • How would you like to see the City of Flagstaff collaborate with food producers to increase their production? Probes: o What resources would you like to see provided to food producers? o When you say [X], why do you feel that is important?
Food System Infrastructure	We are going to move on to the next section now, which is food system infrastructure. (Refer to printed report and summary handout for reference). When we say infrastructure, we are thinking about food is moved from farms and then processed and distributed out to the community. Some highlights from this section of the assessment identified that there are limited numbers of food processing facilities, especially livestock and meat processing facilities, in the region; 83% of survey respondents that manufacture a food product do so at home versus in a commercial/certified kitchen; 24% of food and farming businesses expressed dissatisfaction with zoning regulations that impact their businesses; and, there is a lack of distribution infrastructure in Northern Arizona limits food and farm business' ability to sell beyond their immediate communities. • What surprised you in the findings here? Probes: o When you say [X], why do you feel that is important? • In what ways do you think the City of Flagstaff can build infrastructure resources and support to benefit the northern region as a whole in producing and making more local foods available? Probes: o What have you seen or heard about that has been done elsewhere that you would like to see done here in Flagstaff?

Food Retail Environment and Food Access	Moving into the food retail environment and food access sections – this looks at how and where food is purchased by consumers from stores to restaurants, and more. Food access means looking at what community do or do not have access to when it comes to affordable, culturally relevant, and nutrient dense food options. (Refer to printed report and summary handout for reference). Some highlights from the food retail section of the assessment identified that the City of Flagstaff is home to 3 farmers markets, 1 community supported agriculture site (also known as a CSA where farmers provide produce boxes for direct purchasing and pickup to their customers), 18 grocery stores, 14 convenience stores, and 276 restaurants and eateries. The assessment also found that Flagstaff shoppers are mostly getting food from grocery stores; 14% of survey respondents grow, hunt, or fish for their food; 26% of survey respondents would buy more local food if it were affordable; and only 20% of shoppers are satisfied with their grocery options. When it comes to food access, the community food assessment identified that Northern Arizona experiences higher rates of food insecurity than the state average. The City of Flagstaff has 16 food pantries and/or food assistance sites, 12 retailers that accept SNAP EBT benefits (formerly known as food stamps), 7 retailers that accept WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) eWIC (or EBT) food benefits, and 3 sites that offer Double Up Food Bucks, which is the SNAP EBT fruit and veggie matching program. In addition, 19% of survey respondents reported wanting more farmers market options in the region and 14% of respondents want more information or knowledge on how to grow their own food. • What stands out to you the most from the information in this section and why did it catch your interest or curiosity? Probes: o When you say [X], why do you feel that is important? • In what ways do you think the City of Flagstaff elected leaders and other leaders in the region can support a stronger food retail environment and make local food more accessible? Probes: o What factors should leaders be aware of, that you feel most impacts you, your friends, and neighbors' ability to shop for local foods? o We know that the location of food retail environments is important. Where do you feel there are neighborhoods within the City of Flagstaff that should be prioritized and why those neighborhoods? • In what ways do you think the City of Flagstaff should be involved in reducing hunger to support a more food secure community? Probes: o What populations or groups do you feel should be centered or prioritized and why? o What do you think could be done to result in a more accessible and equitable food system?

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Food Consumption and Health	The food consumption and health section reflects on the food we eat and how that impacts the wellbeing of individuals and our communities. (Refer to board for visual and printed copies for reference). Some highlights from this section of the assessment identified that Northern Arizona shoppers spend 11% of their total consumer spending on food; 66% of food spending is on food consumed at home; None of the Northern Arizona counties are meeting fruit and vegetable intake recommendations; 21% of survey respondents report not being able to afford the healthy food they want; and, the high cost of housing was reported as a barrier to healthy eating. • What stands out to you the most from the information in this section and why did it catch your interest or curiosity? Probes: o When you say [X], why do you feel that is important? • In what ways do you think the City of Flagstaff can increase the availability of healthy and culturally relevant food options? Probes: o What would this look in the more rural areas of Northern Arizona and what factors should leaders consider?
Food Waste and Recovery	The last section of the assessment examined data around food waste and recovery. When we are thinking about food waste and recovery, we are talking about how food that doesn't get eaten is recovered, shared, composted, or landfilled. (Refer to board for visual and printed copies for reference). Some highlights from this section of the assessment identified that Arizona produces the most food waste in the nation of all of the states. 5.8 million pounds of food are wasted each year in the City of Flagstaff. There are 8 food waste and composting organizations operating in the City of Flagstaff, however there are limited options for hot food recovery from restaurants and caterers. 44% of survey respondents report already composting at home and 11% of survey respondents listed eliminating waste as a top personal food system goal. From the business lens, 19% of Flagstaff businesses indicated that a composting program would support their business development. • What surprised you in the findings here? Probes: o When you say [X], why do you feel that is important? • What efforts would you like to see the City of Flagstaff lead, implement, or expand to reduce food waste? Probes: o What have you seen or heard about that has been done elsewhere that you would like to see done here in Flagstaff?

Future Thinking	Now we want you to think to the future of one strategic food or farm business opportunity that you would like to see happen here in Flagstaff. There are some limitations in what can and cannot be done, but we just want you to dream together. So, based on all of the data we reflected on and discussed today - when it comes to food, farming, and wellbeing – where could the City of Flagstaff invest some and energy to test and pilot? This could be something like developing a more robust food hub or commercial community kitchen, or something completely different. Share with me what you would like to see. Probes: • What have people in your neighborhood said they would like to see more of? • When you say [X], why do you feel that is important?
Closing Reflection Prompt	What didn't we ask you that you feel is really important for leadership with the City of Flagstaff and other elected officials in the region to know when it comes to supporting a thriving and sustainable community food system? Probes: • What do you wish people understood better about the needs and desires of you, your neighbors, and community?
Wrap-Up	Thank you so much for taking the time to be here today and sharing your wisdom with us. As I mentioned at the beginning of our conversation, we will use the information you shared with us to help the City of Flagstaff and Flagstaff Foodlink develop a food action plan and identify policy opportunities that are the most meaningful to all of you and the priorities you shared. As a reminder, some of the recommendations you offered might be possible to implement soon and other recommendations may take some time. Other needs you shared may require resources and support outside of what the City of Flagstaff can offer, but the insight is still valuable for informing how the city can collaborate with others. You will be receiving a Visa gift card in appreciation for your time and participation before you leave today. (Facilitator explain how the Visa gift card works and obtain signature of receipt).

