

Visioning the Heartland Food Hub & Strengthening the Kansas Food System

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Hello, I'm Sheila aka a farmer adjacent Master Gardner who is always down for a farm tour dedicated to expanding access to nutrient- dense, culturally appropriate food by championing and supporting local farms.



Comm Resilience Kansas Wesleyan

*Creating healthier, more resilient
communities through education,
action and advocacy.*

What we know:



We are a 140-year-old private liberal arts institution



Farming, the food system, and food hubs have not really part of our ministry



80% of our students are athletes and we recognize the importance of what the use to fuel their body



The university is nestled between two major highways that see more than 9 million folks a year



Food supply chains have more room for failure the wider that precurent net is casted



Aaaaand lastly here at the Community Resilience Hub we are **NOT** Experts

Driving Questions:



HOW DO WE LEVERAGE OUR BUYING POWER
AND MOTIVATION TO SUPPORT FARMERS
THROUGH OUR FOOD PROCUREMENT



HOW DO WE POSITION OURSELVES IN THE
FOOD SYSTEM TO DO GOOD/SUPPORT



MOST IMPORTANTLY HOW DO WE CENTER
FARMERS VOICES AS WE MOVE FORWARD

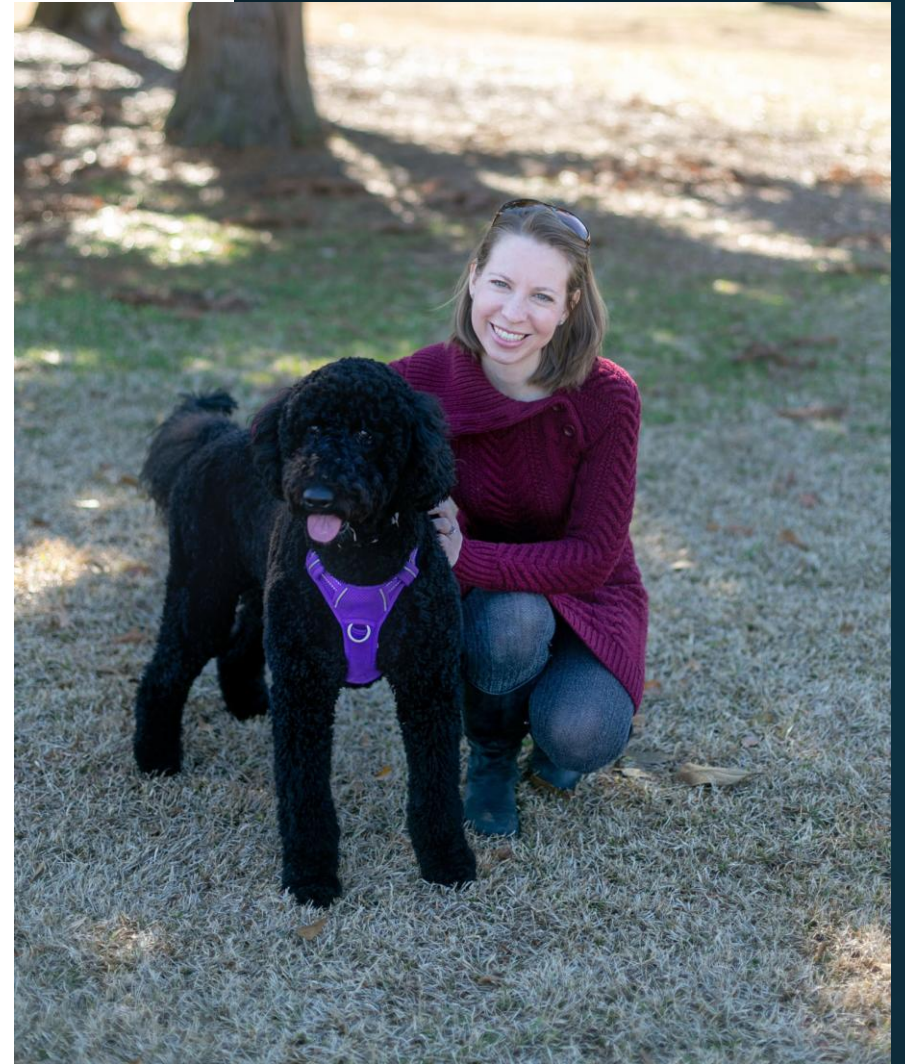
" If you have seen one food hub, you have seen one food hub"

-Tom McDougall, 4P Foods



Hi, I'm Stephanie!

- Started in food and agriculture as a crop researcher at the University of Georgia
- Shifted focus to ag policy, planning, and communications at USDA (2015-2022)
- Began working in local food systems in Alabama (2021)
- Founded Adaptive Roots Consulting (2022)
- Relocated to Kansas (2024)
- Began work with Kansas Wesleyan (2025)



About our food hub feasibility study

Key questions:

- How much does it cost to run a food hub?
- Can we aggregate and sell enough food to financially sustain a food hub?
 - Do we have enough demand?
 - Do we have enough supply?
- Area of focus:
 - Demand: Salina-area institutions
 - Supply: 100-mile radius of Salina

How much does it cost to run a food hub?



Approximately \$180,000/year

Includes annual costs of employee salaries/benefits, facilities, transportation, supplies/packaging, advertising, order software, and licenses

Does not include startup costs (e.g., walk-in refrigerator/freezer, distribution vehicle)



To cover costs, food hubs typically add a 20% upcharge

To meet annual projected costs in sales alone, we would **need to aggregate and sell \$900,000** in food

How much institutional interest exists in procuring local foods?



Institutions we interviewed:

KWU Dining

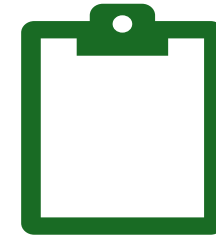
USD 305 & 306

Salina Regional Health Center

Restaurants: Seraphim Bread, Yaya's Euro
Bistro, Barolo Grille, JRI Hospitality

Salina Senior Center

St. Francis Ministries



Key questions:

Interested in serving locally procured foods?

Currently procuring local foods?

Past or anticipated barriers, challenges, or
concerns in procuring local foods?

Institutions are
largely interested
in buying local, but
cautious

Concerns

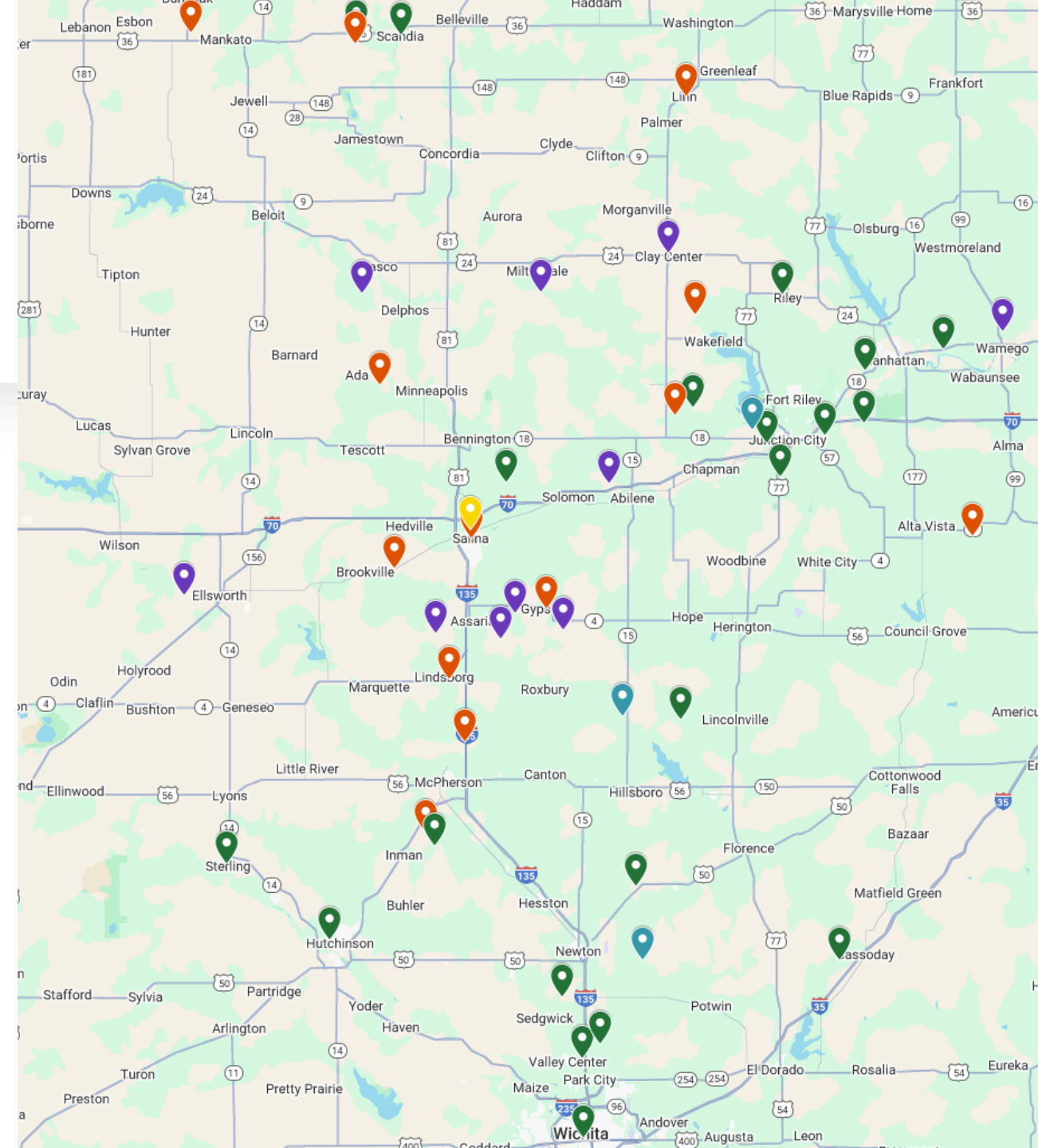
- Price: How much more expensive? Who is able and willing to pay?
- Quality and Consistency: Will there be supply gaps? And will the product be something customers want?
- Food safety: Hospital has strictest standards, but this is a common concern
- Time: for navigating procurement and chopping fruits and veggies
- Skill: for integrating local, seasonal foods into restaurant menus

Opportunities

- Institutional dining: large purchase quantities
- Restaurants: fewer barriers/restrictions, greater value proposition to the customer in Salina's emerging local foods scene

What does supply look like within 100 miles of Salina?

- Identified **50** specialty crop, meat, dairy, and honey producers
- Interviewed producers about operations, sales channels, and interest in a food hub
- **Meat:** Typically more established, better positioned to reach new markets
- **Produce:** Mostly newer, smaller, selling direct-to-consumer, and rarely with excess product
 - Two regularly sell wholesale



How do supply and demand meet?

- **Produce:**
 - Asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, cucumbers, onions, potatoes, spinach, cherry tomatoes, slicing tomatoes, yellow squash, zucchini quash
 - Projected demand quantities: 20-100 lb/week
- **Pork:**
 - Bacon, butt, sausage, chops, loin, roasts
 - Projected demand quantities: 10-115 lb/week
- **Beef:**
 - Ground beef, top round roasts, stew meat, brisket, tri-tips
 - Projected demand quantities: 10-200 lb/week
- **Whole chicken fryers:** 100 lb/week

Can we aggregate and sell enough food to financially sustain a food hub?



Target: \$900,000 gross annual sales



Actual projected: \$191,405 gross annual sales



Projected shortfall: \$708,595

Answer: We cannot, as currently envisioned

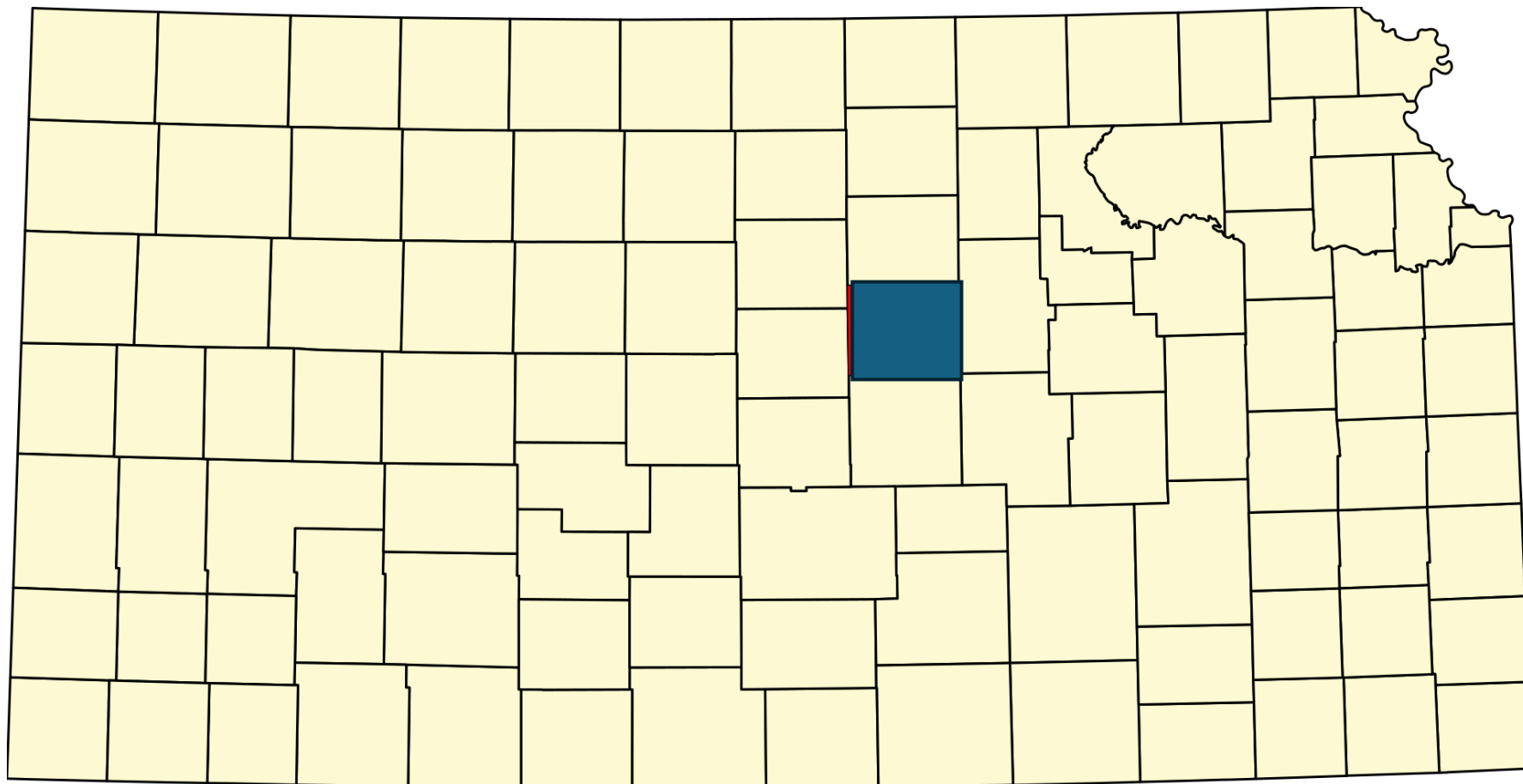
Additional Challenges:

- Local food prices cannot compete with those of food distribution companies
- Buying entire animal shares doesn't solve the problem
 - Prices are still high
 - Supply and demand do not match on a per animal basis

Opportunities

- Ways to make a food hub more financially viable:
 - Expand distribution beyond Salina
 - Supplement income with grants, donations
 - Collaborate with other existing efforts in Salina
 - Prairie Land Market
 - The Temple
- Leverage Salina's central location as a cross-Kansas storage and distribution hub:
 - Dairy (e.g., Hildebrand)
 - Flour (Farmer Direct)
 - Eggs (TJ Poultry/Chicken Tracks)

Where do we go next?



Community Roundtable Discussions

- **Overarching Question:** How might we advance local and regional food systems in Kansas?
- **Process**
 - Two rounds of discussion
 - A few report outs each round
- **Guidelines**
 - Inquire (vs. Advocate)
 - Share the Air
 - Observe time cues

Move tables!

One person can stay, everyone else disperse!

Round 1: Opportunities to strengthen the Kansas Food System



Questions

What is important to you about supporting the local and regional food system?

What opportunities do you see for promoting local and regional food systems in Kansas?



Instructions

Introduce yourselves

Assign a notetaker

Assign a reporter

Assign a host (ensures the conversation moves forward and everyone gets a chance to speak)

Round 2: Initial Steps Forward



Questions

What initial steps can you take to advance the opportunities named in Round 1?



Instructions

Assign a notetaker

Assign a reporter

Assign a host (ensures the conversation moves forward and everyone gets a chance to speak)

Thank you!

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