

COLORADO

# FOOD SUMMIT

DECEMBER 7-8, 2023

## 2023 SUMMIT EVALUATION

The 2023 Colorado Food Summit (CO Food Summit) brought together food and agriculture stakeholders from across the state to build shared understanding of the complex opportunities and challenges facing our food and agriculture systems. This annual summit inspires collaborative action towards a more resilient and equitable food future in the face of uncertainty (e.g., pandemic, drought, inflation, supply chain shortages) through panel presentations, storytelling, interactive workshops, and facilitated networking. The 2023 Summit hosted **685 participants** from across Colorado, representing all parts of the food system, including **62 young leaders**.





# SUMMIT LEADERSHIP

The 2023 CO Food Summit was a collaborative effort, spearheaded by the Food Systems Institute at Colorado State University, the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC), the CO Food Summit Young Leaders Host Committee, and the Statewide Steering Committee. We recruited the Young Leaders Host Committee from across the state through 4-H, FFA, and other youth-targeted agricultural and food groups. The Statewide Steering Committee included the following representatives:

- **Jorey Billings**, Campo High School - Student
- **Mozhdeh Bruss**, Healthy Archuleta - Council Member
- **Jonathan Cable**, Colorado State University - Graduate Student
- **Libby Christensen**, Colorado State University - Extension Faculty
- **Dazha Creal**, Mile High Youth Corps - Community Climate Educator
- **Sydney Cure**, Colorado State University - FFA State Officer
- **Alex DeJoy**, Colorado State University - Administrative Support
- **Max Gibson**, San Luis Valley Food Coalition - Executive Director
- **Hollis Glenn**, Colorado Department of Agriculture - Deputy Commissioner of Operations
- **Mara Gwin**, Lake County Food Access Coalition - Food Access Facilitator
- **Jenileigh Harris**, Central Colorado Foodshed - Project Manager
- **Geonna King**, Pueblo Food Project - Fooducates
- **Delyla Kroenung**, Animas High School - Students
- **Becca Jablonski**, Colorado State University - Professor
- **Rachel Landis**, Good Food Collective - Executive Director
- **Mylo Lovejoy**, Campo High School - Student
- **Lezly Luna**, Young Leader
- **Jay Lynx**, Platteforum's ArtLab - Artist
- **Monique Marez**, Eptimizo, LLC - Founder
- **Liza Marron**, Colorado Food System Advisory Council - Councilmember
- **Taliah Martinez**, Denver East High School - Student
- **Joël McClurg**, Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger - Executive Director
- **Megan Moore**, Pueblo Food Project - Program Manager
- **Hallie Nelson**, Jefferson Food Policy Council - Director
- **Yazmin Perez-McGee**, Atlas Preparatory School Food Pantry - Pantry Lead
- **Angelique Pino**, Atlas Preparatory School - Pantry Lead
- **Penelope Powell**, Valley Food Partnership - Executive Director
- **Meredith Rose**, Northwest Colorado Food Coalition - Coalition Member
- **Serena Sakkal**, Pueblo Food Project - Program Manager
- **Letisha Steele**, Denver Food Rescue - Executive Director
- **Miguel Torres**, Atlas Preparatory School - Pantry Lead



# SETTING THE 2023 AGENDA

The work of food and agricultural groups, councils, and coalitions operating across the state shaped the CO Food Summit, with many elements designed in direct response to suggestions proposed in the 2022 post-summit survey and 2023 priority planning survey (see 2022 CO Food Summit Evaluation: <https://foodsystems.colostate.edu/events/foodsummit2022/evaluation>). Previous Summit attendees wanted more time, more networking opportunities, and sessions that allowed them to apply the shared concepts and ideas to their own work. We extended the event from one day to one and half, made efforts to facilitate connections through facilitated table discussions, and encouraged track organizers to incorporate activities and space for workshopping ideas to supplement panel discussions.

Further, in early 2023, summit partners identified 23 scheduled events across the state related to food and agriculture.

- 1. Regenerative Food Systems Investment** (Denver)
- 2. Economic Development Council of Colorado: Drive, Lead, Succeed Conference** (Pueblo)
- 3. Regenerate Conference** (Denver)
- 4. Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Annual Meeting** (Greeley)
- 5. ILF/Mountain Meat Summit** (Fort Collins)
- 6. 2023 Western Colorado Horticultural Society** (Grand Junction)
- 7. Western Colorado Soil Health, Food, & Farm Forum** (Montrose)
- 8. Governors Ag Forum** (Denver)
- 9. Sun Soil Water Ag Summit** (Pueblo)
- 10. "Farm to ..." meeting** (Denver)
- 11. SW Meat Field Day** (Montezuma)
- 12. AgriSummit** (Salida)
- 13. Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association Meeting** (Denver)
- 14. Southern Rocky Mountain Ag Conference** (Monte Vista)
- 15. Tour Grand Junction Business Incubator Center** (Grand Junction)
- 16. Ag Lender Meetings** (Monte Vista; Rocky Ford; Akron)
- 17. Expand Rural Engagement Health Summit** (Denver)
- 18. FIRA USA Conference** (CA)
- 19. USDA Grant Producers TA training meeting** (Denver)
- 20. Colorado Farm Bureau Annual Meeting** (Denver)
- 21. Colorado Counties Inc. Annual Meeting** (Westminster)
- 22. Road Map to Recovery Open House Series** (Sterling; Holyoke; Yuma)
- 23. Colorado Food/Ag Collision** (Denver)

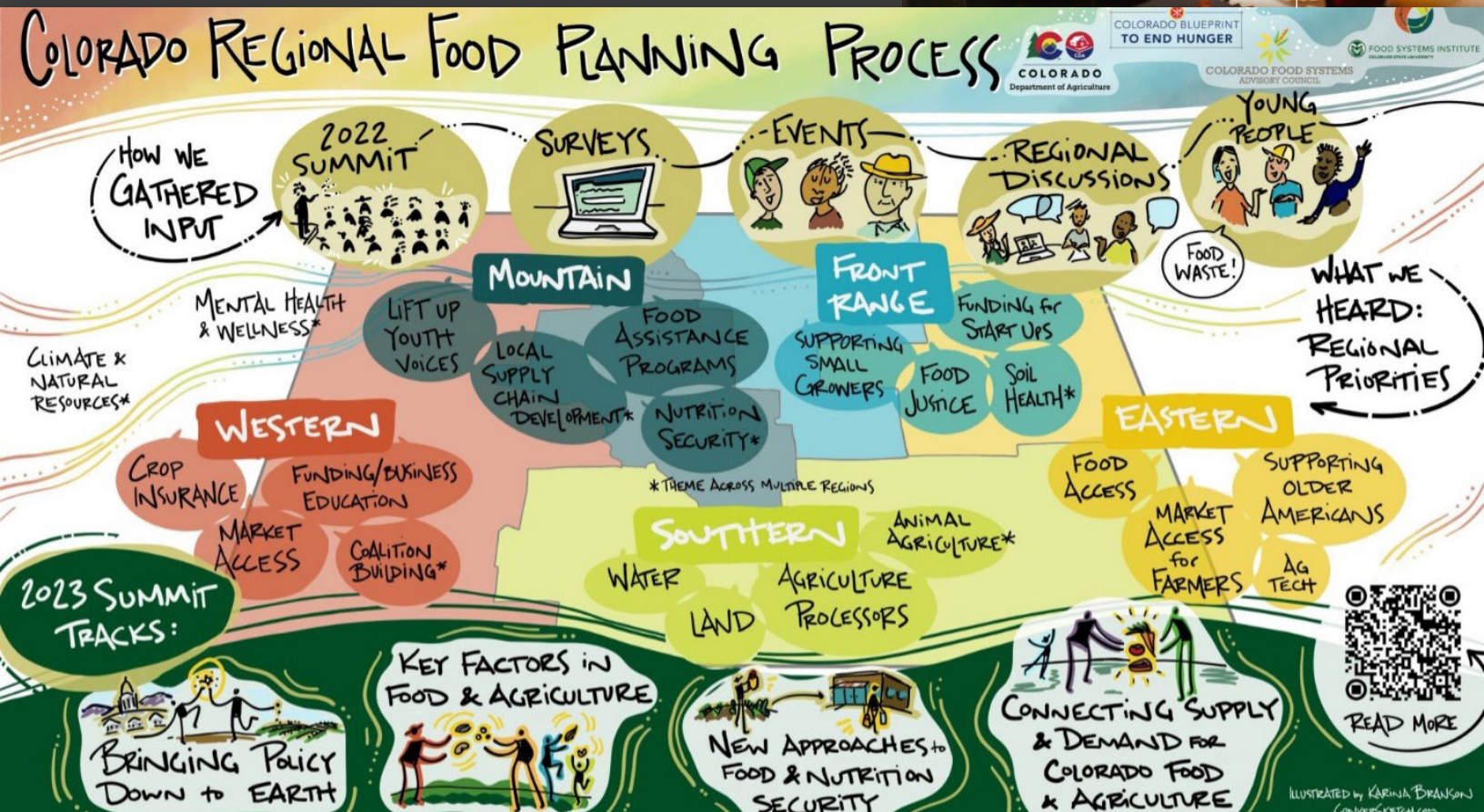


# EVENT ANALYTICS

We collected and analyzed relevant planning documents, reports, assessments, meeting notes and agendas from these events. For events that did not supply relevant documents, we made every effort to collect the information, including through discussions with key informants. We then identified regional priorities, categorized them by theme, and synthesized them into four conference tracks for the 2023 CO Food Summit (Figure 1).



Figure 1: CO Food Summit Planning Process





# YOUNG LEADERS PLANNING PROCESS

With support from the Colorado Department of Agriculture, the Young Leaders Host Committee developed a young leaders track. Their planning process started with observations from their own communities, which led to conversations

among the Young Leaders Host Committee to surface similarities and differences. From there, the group decided on the goals and purpose of the Young Leaders Tracks, making sure it complemented the other tracks.

## 2023 SUMMIT TRACKS

### 1 BRINGING POLICY DOWN TO EARTH:

This track offers a useful 101 for any food system stakeholder looking to be a more effective advocate. Learn foundational food and ag policy concepts and frameworks, how policy affects our ag and food systems, and practice skills to enable individual and collective impact. Come with questions you've always wanted to ask but have never felt comfortable asking (because you thought you should already know the answer).

### 2 KEY FACTORS IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE:

Building resilient food systems requires a deep understanding of how interdependent stakeholders truly are. Hear from experts across the food system discuss how connectivity and scalability can help address the biggest challenges and opportunities facing communities in Colorado.

### 3 CONNECTING SUPPLY AND DEMAND:

Connecting supply and demand for Colorado food products is at the crux of initiatives across the state. Join engaging and interactive sessions to identify practical action steps stakeholders can take across the state to assure the food grown is consumed in our state. Sessions will explore different supply chains, including food access programs and institutional procurement.

### 4 EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING HUNGER:

The nature of work on hunger, food security, nutrition security, and food apartheid continues to grow and evolve alongside addressing our shared understandings of the root causes underlying inequality and injustice in our food system. Locally convened by the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, these sessions center the experience and expertise of directly impacted stakeholders and elevate innovative and community-driven solutions that reduce stigma and foster equitable, healthful, and delicious access to nutritious foods for all Coloradans.

### 5 YOUNG LEADERS:

This track encourages young leaders to learn about food and farming systems. From the basics like Food Systems 101, to the essentials like Systems Thinking, they learn about what it takes for systems as large as food and farming to function, from scattered cities to grass-strewn rural communities and everywhere in between. Young Leaders discuss problems and opportunities surrounding food and farming systems, how they impact government decisions, and how personal actions and stories can uplift and motivate others to create positive change within community food and farming systems.

Summit collaborators nominated session speakers. Leveraging these partnerships resulted in a diverse and engaging set of 75 different speakers. The complete list of speakers is available here:

<https://foodsystems.colostate.edu/events/food-summit-2023/speakers>



# EVALUATION APPROACH

The goal of this evaluation is to learn about the experiences of attendees, gather feedback to help improve future Colorado Food Summits, and understand the impact(s) of the event.

We invited participants to provide feedback, make suggestions, and evaluate the event in several ways. When participants registered, they filled out questions about their demographics and their role in the food system. After the event, non-youth participants received

a more extensive survey, followed by three emails in January 2023 to increase the response rate. The post-survey included questions about the attendee's role in the food system, the impact of the Summit, and potential topics to be explored at future events. We coded open-ended responses from the survey to provide additional clarification about topics and issues that emerged during the Summit.



622

PARTICIPANTS FILLED OUT  
THE PRE-EVENT SURVEY

91%

173

PARTICIPANTS PROVIDED  
USABLE POST-EVENT  
SURVEY RESPONSES

25%



# SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

The Statewide Steering Committee is committed to engaging diverse stakeholders to build a shared understanding of the complex opportunities and challenges facing food and agriculture systems. The more than \$330,000 that partners and sponsors contributed to support the event allowed for an expansive, equitable access initiative that included providing approximately \$50,000 in financial assistance (complimentary registration, lodging, childcare, and other travel costs) to all 148 individuals who completed requests for support. It also provided financial assistance to nearly all of the young leaders, equivalent to 31% of attendees, as well as supporting simultaneous translation and interpretation.

We also made significant efforts to recruit participants from across the state, representing all sectors of the food system and having diverse lived experiences related to where they live and work and their racial, ethnic, and gender identity. This resulted in diverse attendee participation when it came to both roles in the food system (Figure 2) and geography (Figure 3 - following page).

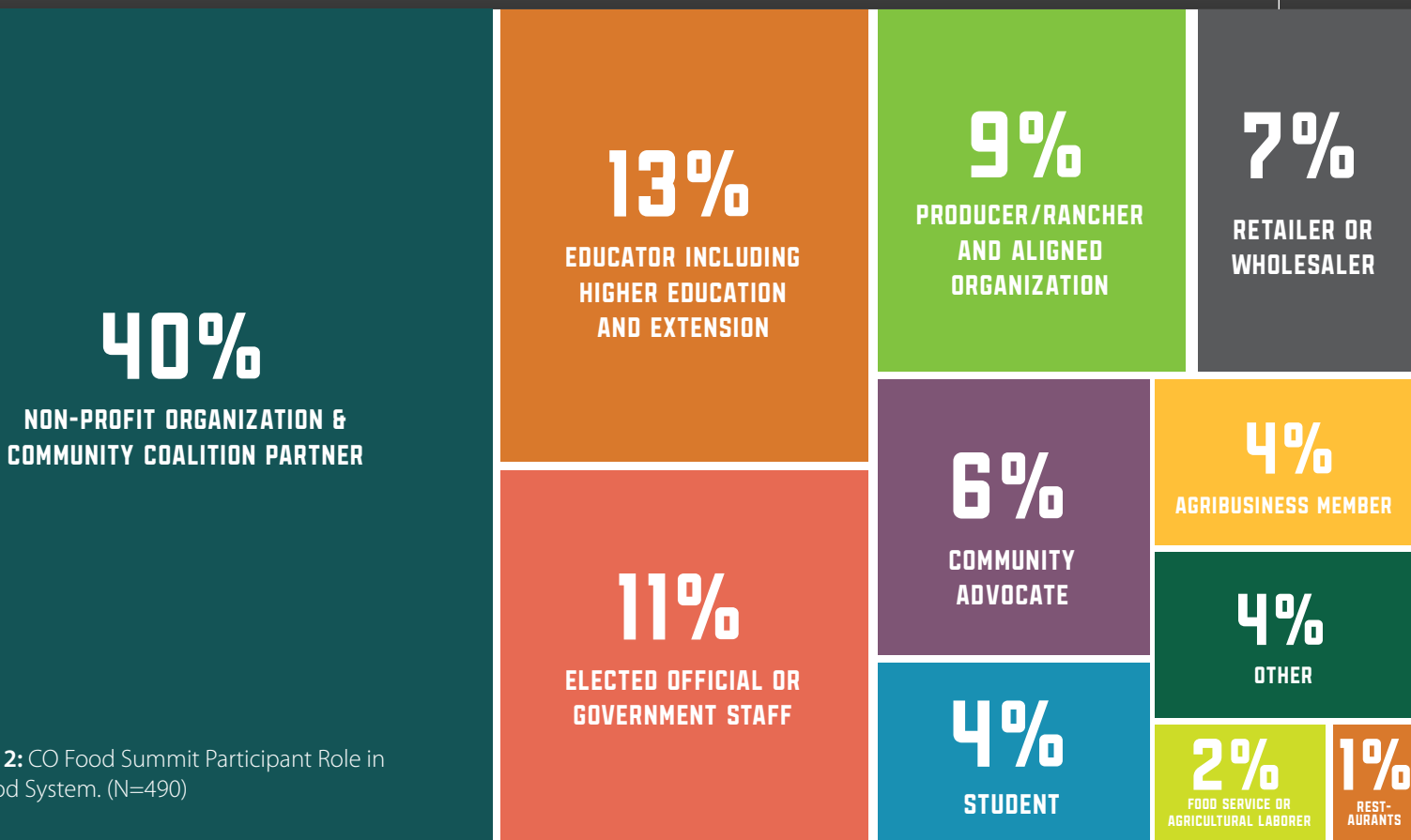


Figure 2: CO Food Summit Participant Role in the Food System. (N=490)





# PARTICIPANT RACE & ETHNICITY

We asked participants to share their race and ethnicity, allowing them to identify with multiple races (Figure 5). According to the 2022 US Census, white alone makes up 86% of the Colorado population, Black or African American alone is 5%, American Indian or Alaska Native alone is 2%, Asian alone is 4%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone is 0%, and two or more races is 3%. Twenty percent of Summit participants identified ethnically as Hispanic or Latino, which is the second largest racial or ethnic group in Colorado at 22.5% of the population.

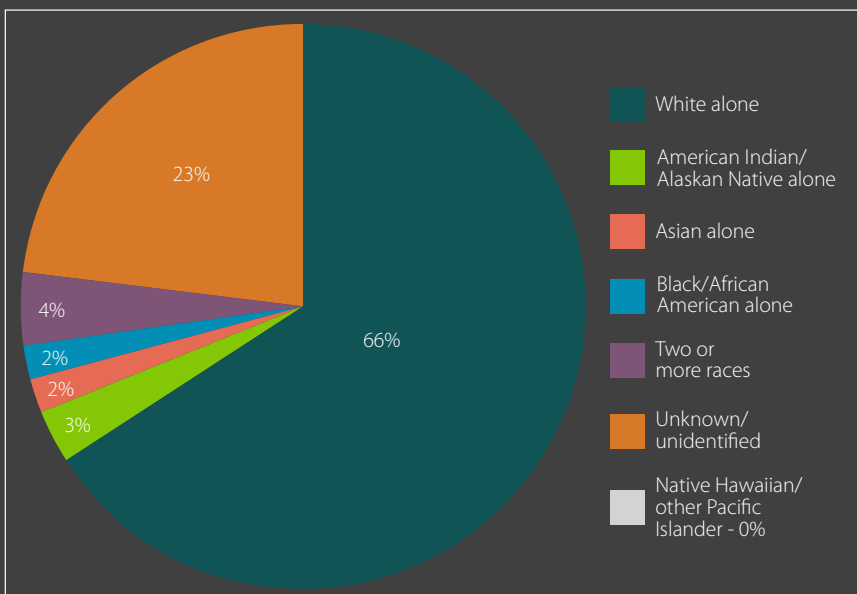


Figure 5: CO Food Summit Participants by Race. (N=626)







## PARTICIPANT PRONOUNS

We also invited participants to share their preferred pronouns. Seventy-one percent preferred she/her, 24% preferred he/him, 3% preferred they/them, and 2% would like to use their own pronoun combination (Figure 6). Females make up 49% of the Colorado population, indicating that Summit participation was highly skewed towards women.

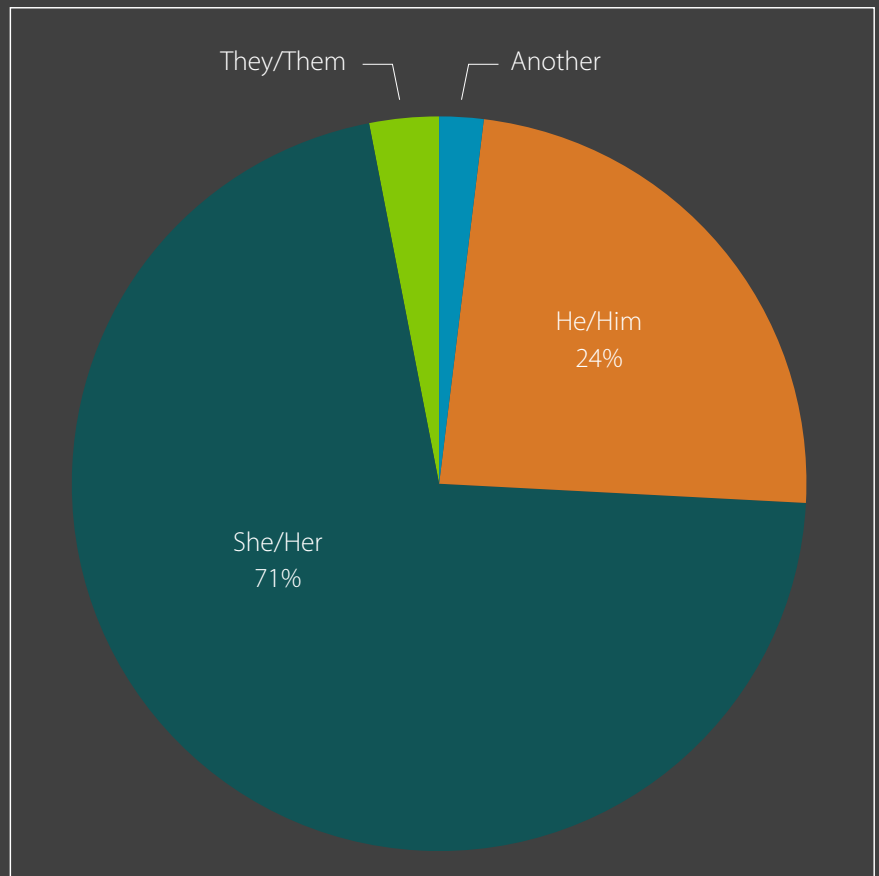


Figure 6: CO Food Summit Participant by Gender. (N=603)



# AREAS OF GROWTH TO FOCUS ON AS WE MOVE FORWARD:

**1** CONTINUE TO BUILD MORE SECTOR, GEOGRAPHIC, RACE, ETHNIC, AND GENDER DIVERSITY WITHIN THE STEERING COMMITTEE, PRESENTERS, AND ATTENDEES.

**2** CONTINUE TO COLLECT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FROM PARTICIPANTS AND SPEAKERS TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY.

**3** CONTINUE TO USE A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE BUDGET TO REDUCE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION.

**4** EXPLORE HOSTING THE EVENT ON A WEEKEND TO ENABLE GREATER PARTICIPATION FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE UNABLE TO TAKE A DAY OFF WORK OR ARE NOT COMPENSATED BY THEIR EMPLOYER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EVENT.



# SUMMIT CONTENT

## REASON FOR ATTENDING

## SATISFACTION WITH ELEMENTS

## ACTION TAKEN BECAUSE OF PARTICIPATION

The Statewide Steering Committee is committed to fostering a program that inspires collaborative action towards a more resilient and equitable food future. To this end, we created content that reflected participant priorities, met or exceeded their expectations, and motivated action.

### WHY THEY ATTENDED

We asked participants why they attended the CO Food Summit. Overwhelmingly, participants came to the event to network (Figure 7). At the 2023 Summit, 67% of respondents felt they had a chance to work with others to experiment and solve problems.

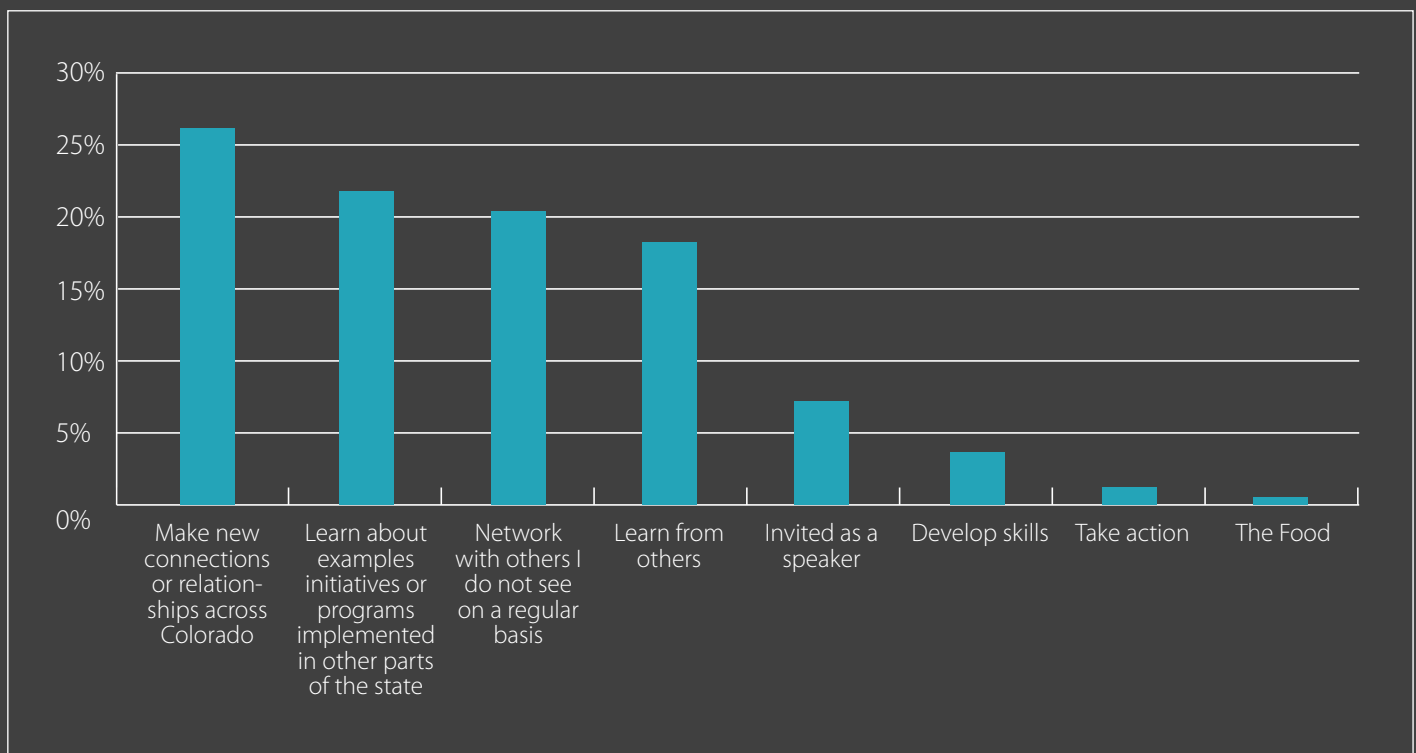


Figure 7: CO Food Summit Participants' Primary Reasons for Attending the Summit. (N=168)

# SUMMIT CONTENT

We made efforts to create sessions and spaces for participants to accomplish the goal of networking, connecting and building relationships with others. The opening session was a facilitated introduction, where we invited participants to sit at tables with different food and agricultural sectors (identified by name tag colors) and answer four questions:

- 1) What is your name, organization, location, scale at which you work (community, regional, state, etc.), and one ag/food system work-related thing that you are excited about?
- 2) What unique assets or resources do you have? Are there any that you could share across the food system, or that would strengthen the intersectional food system?
- 3) What is one challenge that you are facing in your ag/food system work? Is there something specific that you need (new partnerships, knowledge, infrastructure, etc.) to solve this challenge?
- 4) How might you leverage your assets/resources to solve a problem that someone else at your table identified?





# SUMMIT CONTENT

## SATISFACTION WITH ELEMENTS

These discussions, which created opportunities for cross-sector sharing and networking, were followed by a bridge builder panel featuring Brandon Francis, a plant researcher and food justice educator with New Mexico State University; Julie Moore, Director of Nutrition and Education with the Colorado Beef Council; Jay Linx, a Denver political artist; Tash Mitchell, Director of Programs and Impact with Metro Caring; Professor Devon Peña, founder and president of the Acequia Institute; Taylor Drew, farmer and Executive Director of Veterans to Farmers; and Patience Kabwasa,

Executive Director of Food to Power. The panelists represented production agriculture, livestock operations, food access, retail, education, and food justice. Many participants identified this session as one of the most valuable components of the event.

*“The Bridge Building session was the best. I’d love to see more breakouts centered around this type of work. There’s so much diversity within agriculture, everyone has different needs, values, and understandings of the current context of agriculture. I think that more sessions that are about sharing these concerns, solutions, and perspectives can bring about collaborative relationships and real understanding.”*  
 - Summit Participant

The first day of the Summit ended with a CO Proud and EAT Denver Happy Hour networking event featuring 9 restaurants and caterers; it exceeded participants’ expectations (Table 1).

	Average Satisfaction	Responses
Registration	4.39	157
Catering and food options at lunch	4.35	154
CO Proud and EAT Denver Happy Hour	4.35	121
Bridge Builders Panel	4.13	110
Morning Joint Session	4.13	135
Translation Support	4.01	72
Venue	3.49	158

**Table 1:** Average Participant Satisfaction with Conference Elements on a 5-point Scale (1 = Very unsatisfied to 5 = Very satisfied)

# SUMMIT CONTENT

## SATISFACTION WITH ELEMENTS - DAY TWO

The second day was dedicated to the specific tracks. Track organizers included an interactive or workshop component in each session. We asked participants if the information in each session was presented in a useful format and if attending the session was a good use of their time on a scale from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree” (Table 2). The results from the survey indicate that some sessions were better received than others. Session organizers will continue to work towards more engaging and informative sessions.

	Responses	Useful Format	Good Use of Time
Session 1: Coalition Building to Support Mental Health	23	4.39	4.65
Session 1: From Soil to Supper: A Holistic View of Colorado’s Food System	16	4.31	4.50
Session 1: Pinpoint Your Potential	2	4.00	4.00
Session 1: “Road Mapping” Farm to School: Lessons from California	41	4.37	4.02
Session 1: Understanding Our Collective Power, Roles, and Responsibilities	32	3.53	3.75
Session 1: Telling Your Story: How to Connect, Talk, and Influence Media & Politics	33	3.94	4.15
Session 2: What the “Right to Farm” Means in 2023	25	3.48	3.80
Session 2: Useful Tech That Scales	16	4.25	4.31
Session 2: Sourcing Your Colorado Specialty	4	4.75	4.75
Session 2: Collaborating Through Community	18	4.28	4.44
Session 2: How to Navigate Food Waste & Scrappy Cooking	7	4.29	4.86
Session 2: Developing a Colorado Farm to School Road Map	45	4.29	4.29
Session 2: Beyond Free Food: Changing the Status Quo on Hunger Relief	39	4.00	4.08
Session 3: From Community Food and Agricultural Advocacy to City and State Policy	28	4.11	4.11
Session 3: Connecting Local Needs with Statewide Resources	33	4.00	4.24
Session 3: Colorado Food System Jeopardy Challenge	1	3.00	4.00
Session 3: Matching State Resources with Infrastructure Demand	26	4.19	4.04
Session 3: Moving Through the Mess Together: How Food Coalitions Are Fumbling Towards More Equitable Local Food Systems	35	4.23	4.11

**Table 2:** Average Participant Satisfaction with Conference Elements on a 5-point Scale (1 = Very unsatisfied to 5 = Very satisfied)



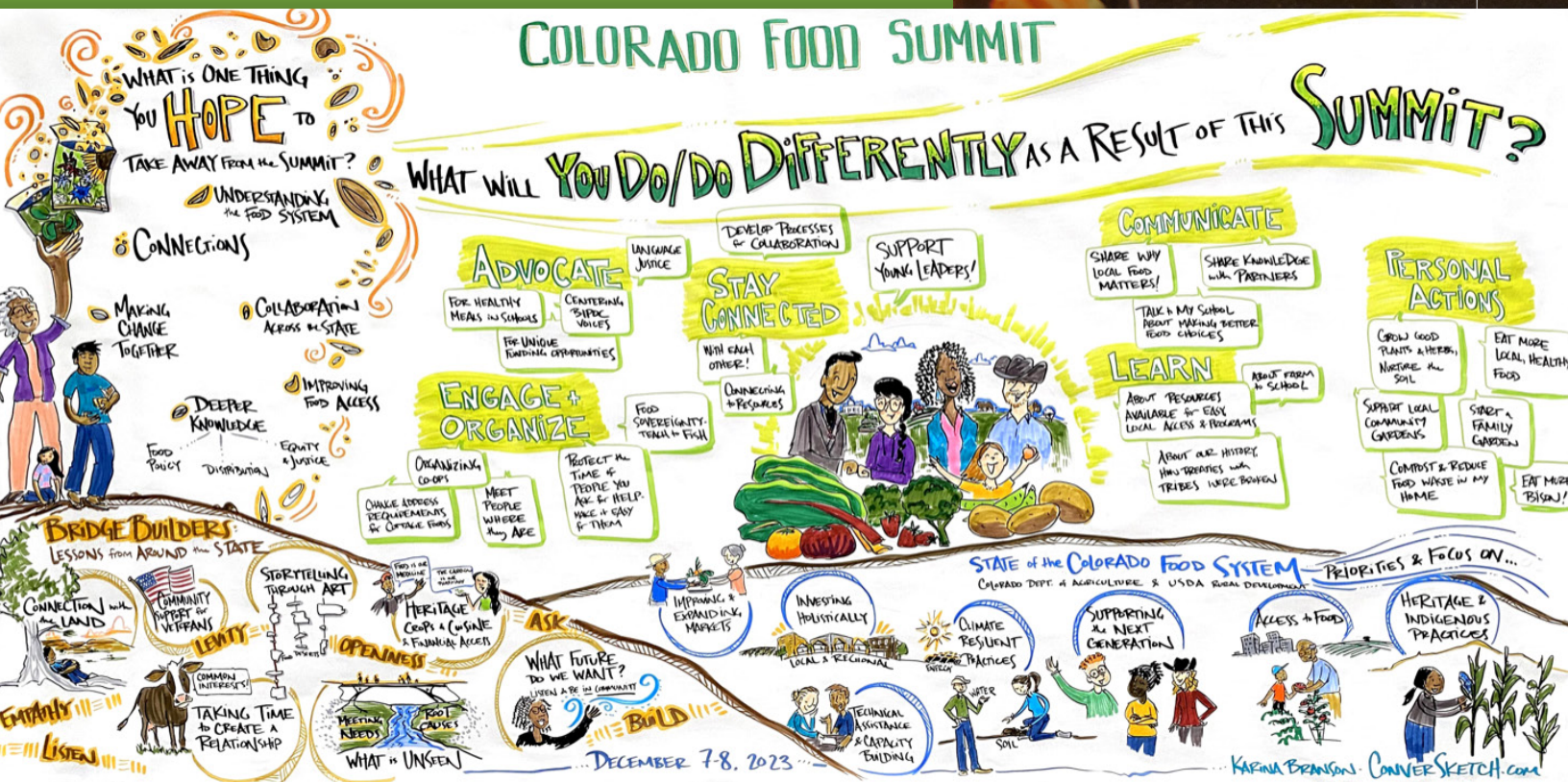
# SUMMIT CONTENT

## ACTION TAKEN BECAUSE OF PARTICIPATION

At the end of each session, we invited participants to share what they intended to do differently because of the Summit and then synthesized their responses into a graphic (Figure 8). Actions fell into six main categories – advocacy, engagement and organizing, connecting, communicating, learning, and personal actions. On average, Summit attendees made 24 new connections and reconnections, 6.4 of which they planned to follow-up with after the event. More than 97 percent of the participants surveyed were planning to follow up on connections made during the event.



Figure 8: Graphic of Colorado Food Summit Participants' Intended Actions



# SUMMIT CONTENT

## ACTION TAKEN BECAUSE OF PARTICIPATION

We were also able to capture actions motivated by previous Summit attendees. Sixty-two post-survey respondents attended the 2022 Summit and 17 attended the 2020 Summit. Nearly all of the past attendees (93%) had acted because of their participation in the Colorado Food Summit, with their actions falling into six main categories (Figure 9). We invited respondents to list additional action taken because of their participation. Responses included:

- I support the community by sharing my experience at these summits
- Learned and became more passionate around hunger
- Went to Washington DC to advocate for changes on the Farm Bill
- I have held workshops regarding budgeting, health choice and grant writing

- Support grants to small businesses from the CDA, support for small businesses to apply for SNAP
- I applied for and received money to both participate in and support others to participate in equity training

Unfortunately, as reflected in Table 1, the venue posed challenges and had the lowest participant satisfaction level, with 25% of respondents indicating they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the venue. Participants identified venue issues in 37% of the additional open-ended responses. As the CO Food Summit has grown, it has been difficult to find a conference space for the nearly 700 participants that allow product from local restaurants, chefs, and farmers. It was also difficult to hear breakouts on the first floor, and connectivity issues posed challenges for the event organizers who were trying to create an interactive digital space.

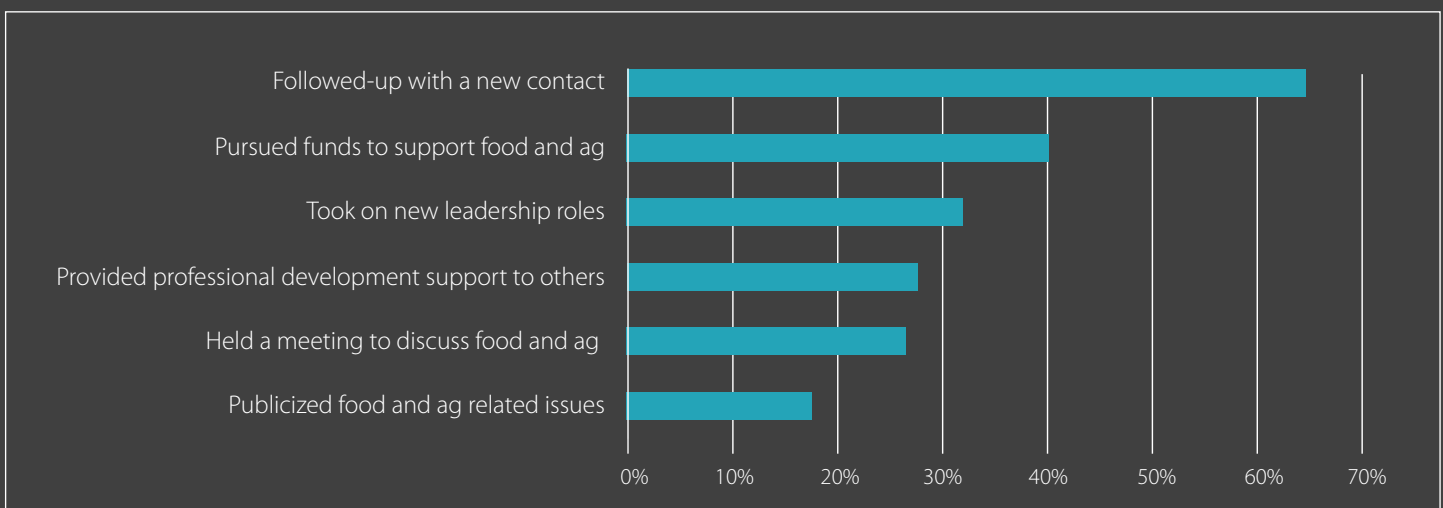


Figure 9: Past CO Food Summit Participants' Actions Taken as a Result of Attendance. (N=62)





## AREAS OF GROWTH TO FOCUS ON AS WE MOVE FORWARD:

**1** CREATE A MORE TRANSPARENT AND EQUITABLE CALL FOR PROPOSALS, INCLUDING CRITERIA DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY AND BREAK DOWN DOMINANT CULTURE IN PROGRAMMING. ELEVATE PROPOSALS THAT EXPLICITLY ADDRESS OPPRESSION AND INCREASING EQUITY IN THE FOOD SYSTEM.

**2** CONTINUE TO PUSH SESSION ORGANIZERS TO INCORPORATE SPEAKERS AND ACTIVITIES THAT BENEFIT PARTICIPANTS.

**3** RECOGNIZE THAT NEARLY HALF THE EVENT PARTICIPANTS HAVE LESS THAN 6 YEARS OF FOOD SYSTEM WORK. DEDICATE MORE TIME AND SPACE TO LEVEL SETTING.

**4** SELECT A LOCATION THAT FOSTERS NETWORKING AND COMMUNITY BUILDING. CREATE ADDITIONAL SPACE AND TIME DEDICATED TO MORE INFORMAL CONNECTIONS.



# CONCLUSION

At the 2023 CO Food Summit, participants gained knowledge from the Summit and found common ground with other food system stakeholders. As one Young Leader stated, *"I learned a lot about the farmer aspect and how it is difficult to do many things when you have a physical commitment to your land and other things, so it makes me think about how we could make it easier on them."* The event was a great opportunity for a general overview and introduction to the Colorado food system. As one participant stated, *"This was my first summit and I attended after only living in the state for 2 months. What a wonderful way to get plugged into the Colorado food systems world and meet so many amazing folks. This summit changed the way I think about food systems, the state, and my own work."*

Over half of the respondents expressed that their experience at the 2023 Colorado Food Summit changed their view of the food system in Colorado. We asked the Young Leaders what they learned from serving on the host committee, as one Young Leader summed it up, *"I learned a lot while serving on the host committee, but one thing I'll take away from this experience is that change is possible with a group of people interested in solving a common problem and or bettering it for future generations."* Another participant shared, *"todo estuvo muy bien y me encanta los temas que se tocan, esta muy completa la informacion que nos dan"* [Everything was very good. I love the topics that were covered, the information they give us is very complete]. Another shared, *"I feel that events like this are crucial for grassroots movements."*



**LOOK OUT FOR A REGIONAL CONVENING HAPPENING  
IN YOUR AREA IN 2024/2025! CONTACT MONIQUE  
MAREZ FOR MORE DETAILS: [MO@EPTIMIZO.COM](mailto:MO@EPTIMIZO.COM)**



THE 2023 COLORADO FOOD SUMMIT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT SUPPORT FROM OUR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS.

OUR ORGANIZING SPONSORS



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OUR CHEFS

