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Brightwater lettuce, photo courtesy of Valley Roots Food Hub

## CO4F METRICS

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2016

**\$8,300,000**  
Total Capitalization

**\$5,918,982**  
Funds Available



**\$2,381,018**  
Total Funded and Committed

## Valley Roots Food Hub Promotes a Healthier San Luis Valley

Local food hubs are the heart of healthy food systems, as distribution "from farm to table" as it is said, is essential. CO4F is pleased to support Valley Roots Food Hub (VRFH), a new enterprise of the San Luis Valley Local Food Coalition.



Nick Chambers, photo courtesy of Valley Roots Food Hub

In the predominantly agricultural region of the San Luis Valley, VRFH is the only food distribution system of its kind. Through its aggregation and distribution operations, it serves local farmers and ranchers, wholesalers and retailers, schools through its "Farm to School" initiative, and consumers through its Community Supported Agriculture Fresh Box program and online market. The majority of retailers VRFH serve are in areas where access to fresh, healthy food is limited.

In the summer of 2015, VRFH began its pilot operating year. As demand for a food hub had been building for years, it soon became evident that renovations and upgrades were necessary in order to properly store and distribute the inventory needed to serve VRFH's customers. In 2016, VRFH secured a \$10,000 loan and a \$30,000 grant from CO4F to support its capital improvements.

*Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund (CO4F) improves access to healthy food in underserved Colorado communities by financing grocery stores and other forms of healthy food retail.*

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"CO4F's investment made a huge impact in increasing our cold storage space, allowing us to manage all of our orders and inventory. Also, we were able to build a large bay door with a concrete pad that fits our trucks and allows for loading and unloading from pallets and forklifts. Before, we had to do everything manually and through a standard-sized door," explained Liza Marron, Executive Director of the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition.

Based in Mosca, Colorado, VRFH directly supports one full-time job, three part-time positions, and is in the process of hiring another full-time employee. Nick Chambers serves as General Manager.

"We're changing how food distribution works and therefore, this community really relies on us. We are a 100 percent fresh, local food purveyor and we operate year-round, which is unique," said Chambers. "The impact of CO4F has been significant. The improved efficiencies, alone, go a long way, especially with a small staff. The funding enabled us to step up and become a formidable vendor for our community and customers all over Colorado."

Long-term goals of VRFH include building the health of the local environment and sustaining a local food system that increases access to fresh, healthy food.

"We want to bring people back to having an intimate relationship with their food, from seed to plate. We want to foster living wages for farmers by educating on the value of the food they produce. Plus, investing our own dollars in our own community is really powerful, especially in a region of persistent poverty," said Marron. "To have CO4F come in with dollars that allowed us to renovate and create the capacity for storing and processing orders, was really timely and empowered us to be responsive to the enthusiasm from the community."

## Denver Launches Long-Term Food Plan

The City and County of Denver is collaborating with local residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to develop and implement the new Denver Food Vision. The Vision is a framework that will guide further development of Denver's food system into one that serves Denver's communities by improving access and affordability of healthy food, among other priorities.



Photo courtesy of City and County of Denver OED

"Residents and businesses in Denver care deeply about food. A lot of people are already engaged in ways to improve our local food system. We, at the City and County of Denver, asked ourselves, what is our long-term strategic focus and our role in helping build a better food system in Denver? We tried to consider how everyone is affected. For example, food can be one's job and livelihood, or an opportunity to make a difference socially, or for others food is a daily struggle. In developing the Denver Food Vision, our goal was to understand where our communities wanted our food system to go and what it would look like in 2030. The vision intends to build towards the future in a strategic and aligned way," said Blake Angelo, Manager of Food System Development for the Denver Office of Economic Development.



The need for improved food access and healthy options in Denver is clear in the statistics. According to the Denver Food Vision, nearly one in six households (one in five children) in Denver experience food insecurity or hunger. The vision will guide priorities, strategies, and goals related to land use, public investment, and public-private partnerships to make Denver a healthier place to live, and thus to reduce these statistics.

To develop the Denver Food Vision's draft plan, the city followed an intensive engagement process consisting of listening sessions, focus groups, and other means to garner feedback from the public and ensure an aligned approach.

"We are committed to doing community based planning that serves on-the-ground needs. To that extent, we did everything we could to be inclusive when gathering information to write the vision because we know that each part of the food system has unique needs. We wanted to learn about key successes and challenges for residents as well as businesses. After releasing the draft plan, surveying showed that 94 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that this is the right vision, so we are inspired by that," said Blake.

Upon finalization of the Denver Food Vision, which Blake expects to occur this year, the next step will be to develop three-to-five year action plans that achieve aspects of the Vision. The action plans will detail strategies to achieve key goals such as developing high impact projects, and strengthening partnerships and funding.

Read the [Denver Food Vision](#) draft to learn more and find out how to get involved.

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## CO4F Featured in *Planning Matters*

CO4F was recently featured in *Planning Matters*, a quarterly newsletter of the American Planning Association. The Colorado chapter's first quarter edition was themed "Health and Environment." The article included an overview of CO4F and its impact on various communities in Colorado. You may view the publication [here](#), and the article is featured on page 10.

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