San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition



Annual Report 2025

Message From Our Director

Dear Friends,

Over the course of my career, I've worked with people and communities under extraordinary stress: patients in an emergency room or psychiatric unit, villages affected by conflict and disaster, and teenagers navigating mountains in whiteouts with ill-fitting boots. Throughout it all, I've seen the same pattern: crises sweep away the petty dramas and reveal unseen strengths—in people's creativity, in a community's ability to focus on vital tasks, and in how much we can accomplish together. But resilience doesn't appear by accident. It requires a lot of unglamorous work. Systems and relationships both have to be built before they're tested.

This year, we focused on exactly that. We welcomed new leadership at both the Valley Roots Food Hub and the Rio Grande Farm Park. We completed the San Luis Valley Community Food and Agriculture Action Plan, creating a shared roadmap for the future. We also strengthened our administrative and financial systems in preparation for the public launch of the Rio Grande Farm Park Endowment, ensuring this work can continue for generations.

That unglamorous work proved essential, because the year tested us. We made difficult decisions at Valley Roots Food Hub, ending catering, baking, and most direct-to-consumer sales so we could focus on wholesaling to our network of small local grocery stores, restaurants, and schools across the SLV and the state. Then federal funding cuts forced us to reinvent Cooking Matters almost overnight; rather than let our oldest program disappear, we transitioned it to a small fee-for-service model that preserves its foundation while we pursue opportunities to bring it back stronger than ever.

If this year reinforced anything for me, it's that local food systems are about far more than food. They're about building communities that can weather uncertainty together. Every farmer supported, every grocery store strengthened, and every young person who discovers a connection to the land adds another layer of resilience to the San Luis Valley.

Thank you for believing in this work and for helping build that future alongside us.

With gratitude,

Max Gibson



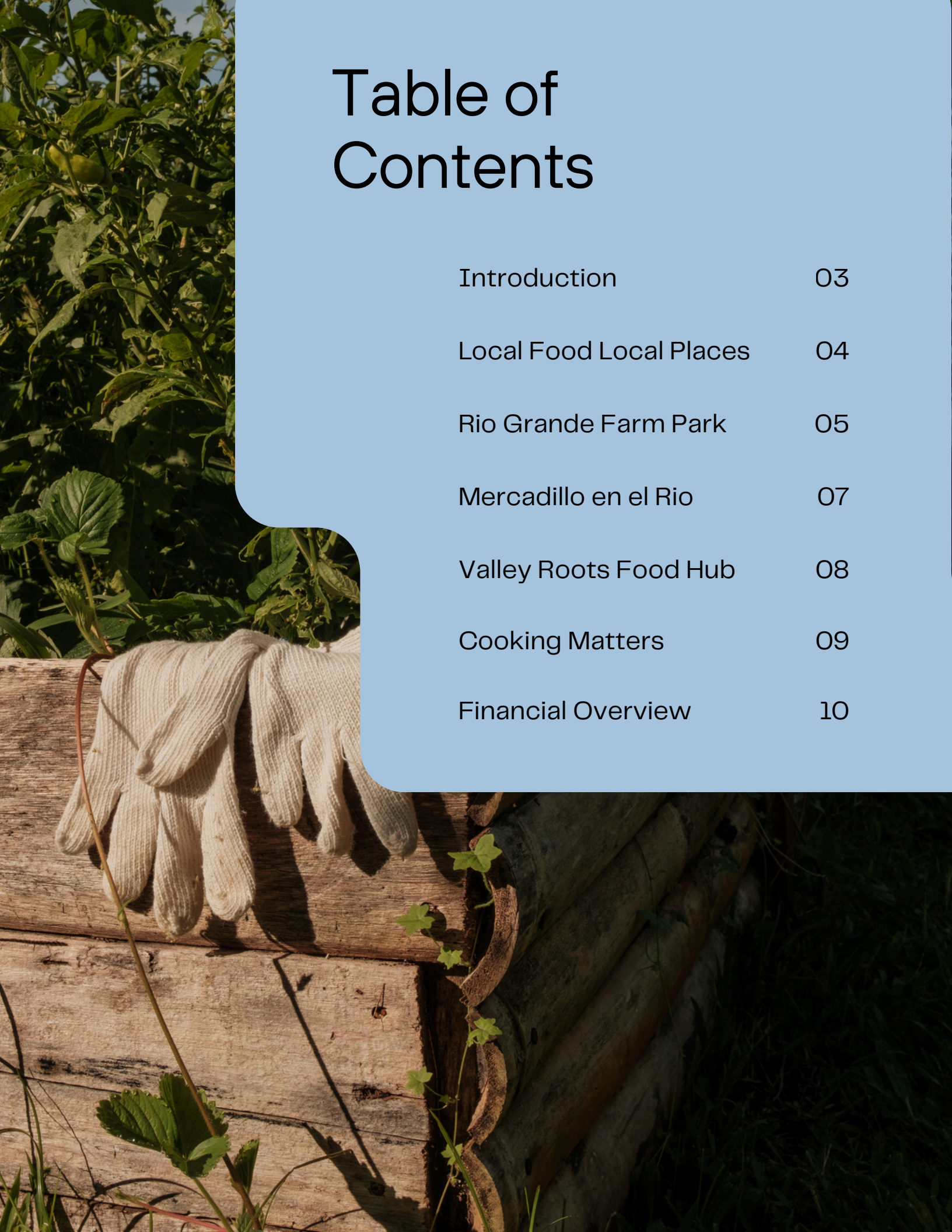


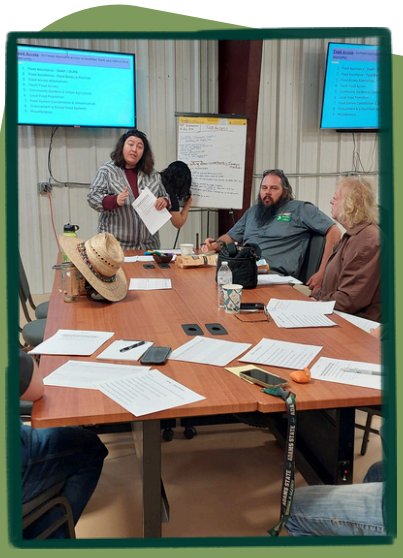
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Introduction

Since 2009, the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition (LFC) has worked to foster an equitable local food system that restores the health of people, community, economy, and ecosystem.





Local Food Local Places





In 2025, Local Foods Local Places continued to strengthen local food businesses across the San Luis Valley. The program supported 30 food producers and retailers in 8 counties, engaging 2,493 individuals and businesses. Through grants, tax credits, and related opportunities, $140,091 was brought into the region, directly benefiting local food enterprises.

"…support went straight to the businesses and farmers who needed it most."

A major focus of the year was the San Luis Valley Food System Action Plan. Building on the 2024 Assessment, the team gathered input from across the region and brought the plan close to completion. This included 24 presentations and events engaging 445 participants, ensuring many voices helped shape the path forward.

The program also continued its partnership with the Colorado Department of Agriculture, providing one-on-one support to food retailers navigating funding. One local business secured over $80,000 in tax credits through that work.

Collaboration with Valley Roots Food Hub and Mercadillo en el Rio helped deepen community connections and expand food access. With the Action Plan wrapping up and strong regional partnerships, Local Foods Local Places is well-positioned to start implementing the plan in 2026.

$140,091
Brought Into the Region

30 Producers and
Retailers Supported

445 Participants
Across 24 Events

rio grande
FARM PARK
PRESERVING & CREATING

~2,000 Individuals Engaged
37 Food Producers Supported
6+ Counties Reached

In 2025, the Rio Grande Farm Park continued to grow as a hub for education, agriculture, and community. The park engaged approximately 2,000 individuals across 6 counties and supported 37 food producers, welcoming more people than ever to learn, gather, and connect with the land.

"What a special place."

New brochures and a renovated website helped more community members discover the park. Collaboration with the City of Alamosa advanced trails, signage, and visitor amenities. Partnerships with the Colorado Department of Forestry and the Colorado Garden Foundation supported tree planting and an outdoor classroom, while the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies brought ecological research to the park.

Youth programs like Rising Stewards and Gen Wild kept young people connected to agriculture and the outdoors. The Farm to Pantry program continued delivering fresh produce to local food pantries.

Historic drought conditions in 2025 underscored the need for water-conscious, resilient farming—a priority the park is actively addressing heading into 2026.











In 2025, Mercadillo en el Rio kept growing as a vibrant community market connecting local farmers, fresh food, and culture. Across 9 weeks, the Mercadillo welcomed approximately 1,530 attendees—an average of 170 visitors per market with a 28% increase from 2024, even with fewer market days.

"This market helps me connect directly with my community."

The market supported more than 20 vendors, including 5 keystone farmers, and distributed an estimated 2,400 pounds of locally grown produce. Peak days saw up to 250 visitors and over 350 pounds of produce sold. Farm Fresh Tours brought 15 to 25 participants into the fields each week, deepening the connection between farmers and the community.

Programming grew to include health fairs, art events, children's activities, and live music—creating a welcoming, family-friendly space rooted in the culture of the region. Combined digital reach between Mercadillo and the Rio Grande Farm Park surpassed 200,000 views, a 149% increase from 2024, alongside bilingual radio promotions across all SLV counties and beyond.



1,530 attendees across 9 markets
2,400 lbs of produce distributed
149% increase in digital reach

$1.2M+ In Sales

180 Producers Supported

500+ Market Channels



In 2025, Valley Roots Food Hub continued connecting producers to markets across Colorado and beyond. The program supported approximately 180 local producers and facilitated access to over 500 market channels. From January 2025 through April 2026, the Food Hub generated more than $1.2 million in sales and secured over $420,000 in grants to support operations and future growth.

"They stick to their values, and that really matters."

This year brought major operational changes. New software systems, leased delivery vehicles, and a second trial warehouse expanded capacity and improved logistics. A partnership with Kitchen Sync Strategies will help grow institutional sales, and a decade of operational data is being analyzed to guide long-term strategy.

The Food Hub also piloted a Fresh Box program for seniors in partnership with Food Bank of the Rockies—a promising step toward food-as-medicine approaches in rural communities.

Work this year focused on building a stronger foundation through better financial oversight, transparency, and staffing. With these efforts underway, the Food Hub is focused on long-term sustainability and better serving producers and communities across the region.



COOKING MATTERS®







In 2025, Cooking Matters reached over a thousand people across the San Luis Valley, offering hands-on classes for adults, families, and children in both English and Spanish. This continued more than a decade of helping people build the confidence and skills to shop wisely, prepare healthy meals, and stretch limited food budgets.

For the first time, the program partnered with AgSocio to offer culturally relevant cooking classes for H-2A agricultural workers during the potato harvest. Participants learned practical cooking and nutrition skills while adapting recipes to fit their traditions, budgets, and the unique demands of seasonal agricultural work.

The year also brought unexpected challenges. Federal cuts ended the SNAP-Ed funding that had supported the program for many years. Rather than let this work disappear, we began transitioning Cooking Matters to a fee-for-service model while pursuing new partnerships and funding opportunities. Although the program is entering a new chapter, our commitment to practical nutrition education and healthier communities remains unchanged.

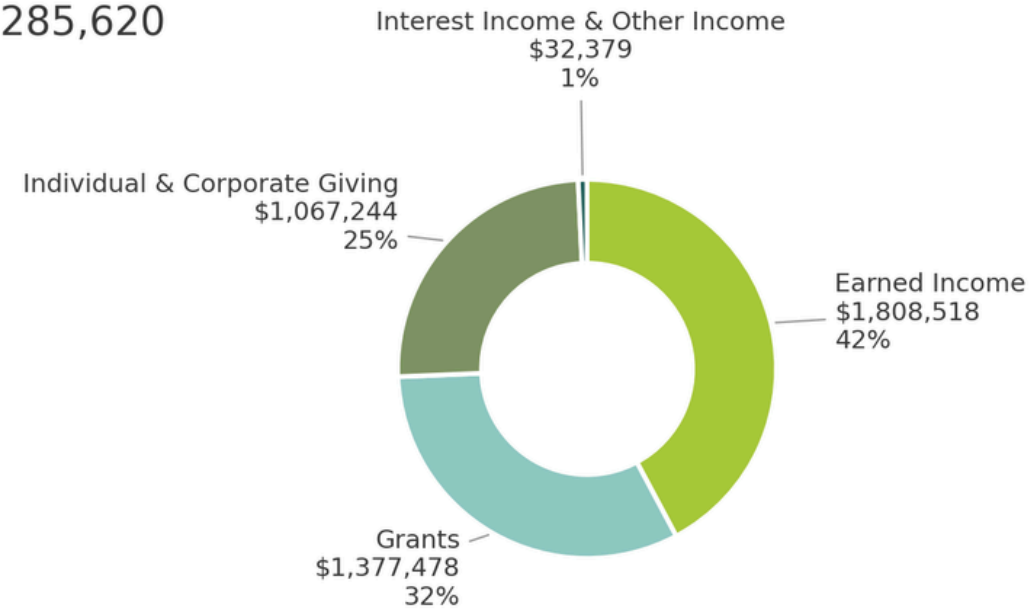
1,145 Participants Reached
59 Nutrition Education Sessions
52 Community Events



Financial Overview

Revenue

Total
$4,285,620



Expenses

Total
$4,256,173

