

# “Closing the Loop”: Overcoming barriers to locally sourcing food in Fort Collins, Colorado

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## Overview

- Internship with City of Fort Collins’ ClimateWise program
- Research investigates restaurants’ barriers to locally sourcing food and solutions to those barriers in Fort Collins
- The goal is to provide restaurants and other businesses with a list of specific solutions to successfully overcome barriers to local sourcing
- Comparison with literature made to identify similarities and differences between restaurants in Fort Collins and other areas

## Justification

- ClimateWise consults Fort Collins businesses on ways to become more sustainable
- ~83% of greenhouse gases (GHGs) associated with food are emitted before food leaves the farm (Weber and Matthews, 2008)
- Locally engaged farmers are more likely to have sustainable practices in order to meet customer demand (DeWeerd, 2011)
- Therefore, identifying barriers and solutions enables restaurants to support local farmers to mitigate GHG emissions from farms and from food transportation (by decreasing food miles traveled)

## Research Methods

- Two employees of LoCo Food Distribution were interviewed to identify four research subjects:
  - **Tim Granahan**, chef at Gravity Ten Twenty, sources almost entirely locally
  - **Kevin Grossi**, chef at Jax Fish House, sources almost entirely locally
  - **Skyler Thimens**, sourcing supervisor for Colorado State University dining services, sources a few products locally
  - **Erich Whisenhunt**, kitchen manager for Rio Grande and El Monte, sources a few products locally
- Semi-structured interviews of four subjects about their barriers and solutions were conducted
- Findings were compared to the literature to identify similarities and differences in barriers and solutions

## “Closing the Loop”

- Money spent on local food circulates around local economies 7 times more than money spent on conventional food (Schuman, 2007)
- Spending money on local food “closes the loop” by enabling the community to sustain itself and promoting personal connection to one’s place and environmental awareness (Kloppenborg, 1996)

## Findings

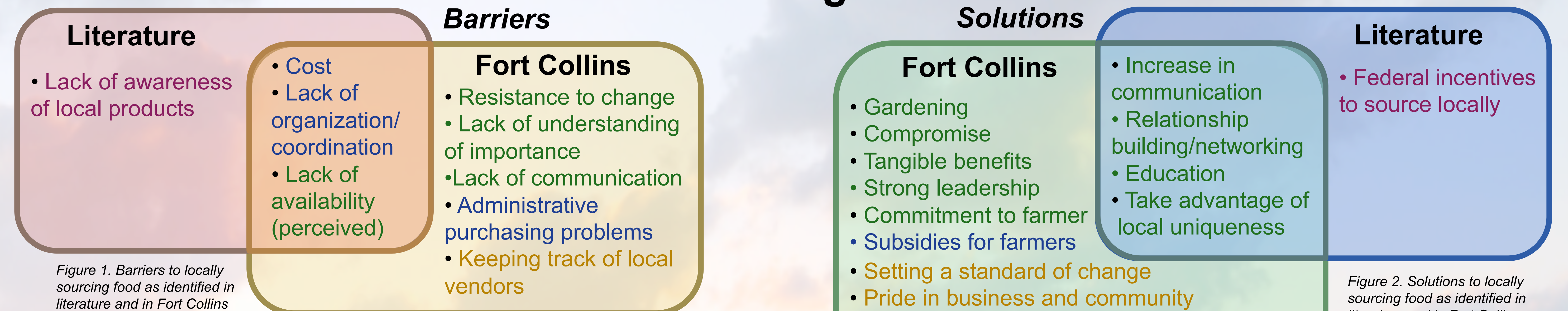


Figure 1. Barriers to locally sourcing food as identified in literature and in Fort Collins

Figure 2. Solutions to locally sourcing food as identified in literature and in Fort Collins

**KEY**  
 Literature  
 All subjects  
 Skyler and Erich  
 Tim and Kevin

• 4 barriers and 9 solutions were identified by all subjects.  
 • Both Skyler and Erich identified certain barriers and solutions not identified by Tim and Kevin, and vice versa.  
 • Skyler and Erich are still working through primary barriers, while Tim and Kevin have moved beyond these and now face more “advanced” barriers.

Certain barriers and solutions indicate level of progress toward local sourcing. Based on this, Fort Collins restaurants appear to be relatively advanced in their progress toward source locally.

## Solution Flowchart

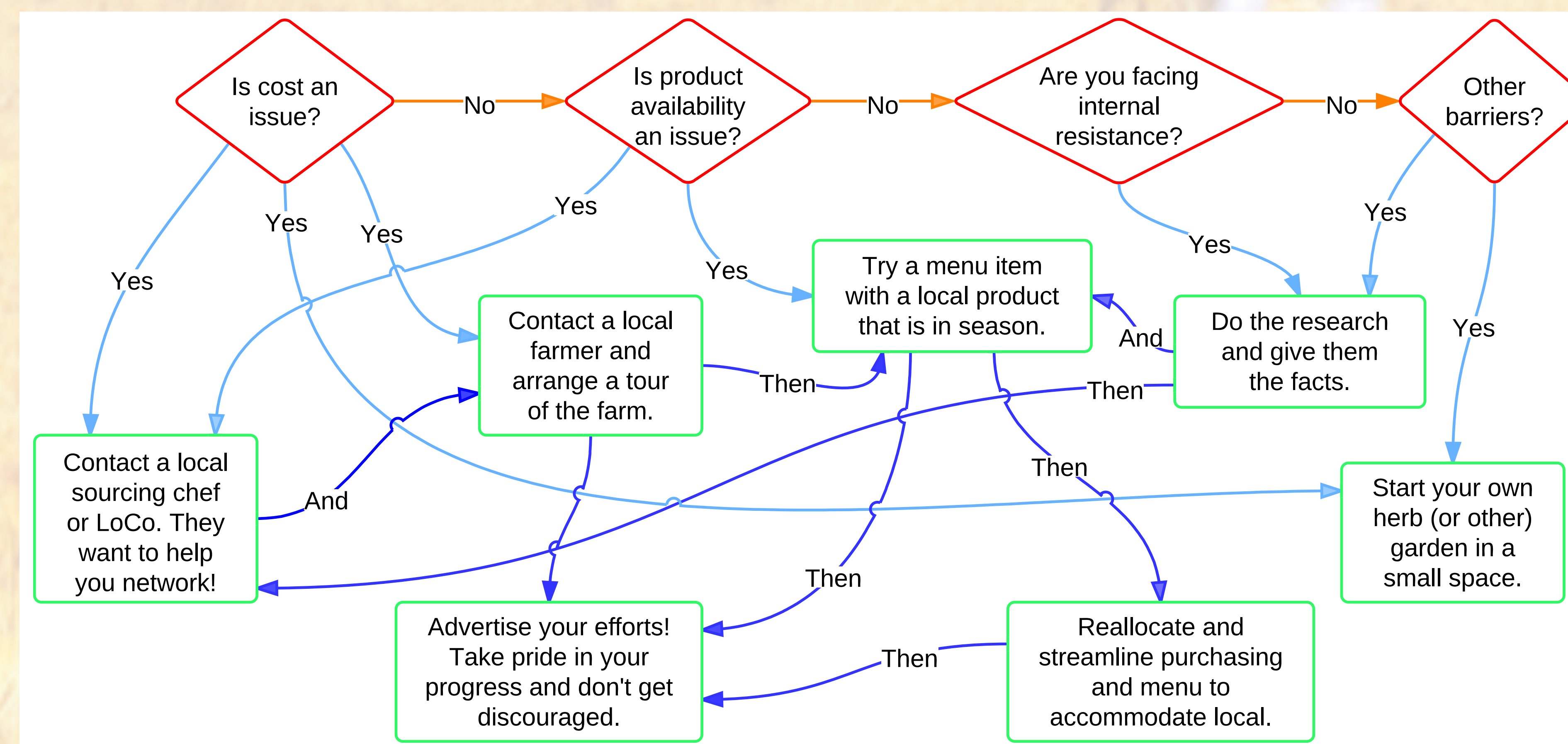


Figure 3. Solution flowchart for restaurants

- Based on findings, a basic solution flowchart was created to help restaurants move beyond primary barriers to local sourcing to multiple flexible solutions.
- A second solution flowchart was created for restaurants that have progressed beyond primary barriers and face secondary, more “advanced” barriers.
- By creating easy-to-use flowcharts, restaurants have a visual reference for their progress and will be encouraged to continue their efforts to source locally.

## Conclusions

- Vague barrier of ‘coordination and organization’ and solution of ‘federal incentives’, the latter of which reveals a lack of personal initiative, indicate preliminary stage in process of “going local” (i.e., most areas)
- Research subjects’ identification of broad, common barriers and solutions points to intermediate stage in sourcing locally (i.e., Fort Collins)
- Specificity of barriers and solutions identified by Tim and Kevin indicates significant success in local sourcing

## Future Work

- Talk to farmers about local sourcing to broaden perspective and find innovative solutions to barriers
- Engage schools in discussion of local sourcing
- Educate community about benefits of local sourcing
- Research ways to engage other businesses in local sourcing, such as employee farm volunteer days

## References

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