

LA PLATA COUNTY

FOOD PLAN

SHARED-USE KITCHENS

Shared-use kitchens enhance local and regional food businesses by offering commercial kitchens for business use. Shared-use kitchens provide comprehensive and diverse approaches for creating value-added products, where businesses can prepare, cook, package, and store products in a shared-location. Small businesses like restaurants and bakeries often use shared use kitchens when they do not have the capital to afford a store front. Different models of shared-use kitchens can include incubators, innovation centers, accelerators and demonstration kitchens.



BENEFITS

- Increase availability of safe, fresh products
- Provide culinary and business training opportunities for community members
- Increase dollars spent locally
- Promote partnership and community opportunities for infrastructure space:
- Improve job opportunities and entrepreneurship
- Incorporate collaboration and shared values
- Provide affordable space when businesses don't have capital to purchase store front
- Access to equipment and storage space

CHALLENGES

- Enabling cross-contamination of products from multiple people using the kitchen
- Ensuring clean and proper food safety standards are met by all users
- Accessing equipment, storage, and necessary infrastructure
- Managing site appropriately for safety and quality
- Securing enough storage and work space in a facility
- Identifying funding streams for management and other inputs
- Locating proper facility within a community

Focus groups revealed the desire for additional processing for value-added producers and food businesses. While shared-use kitchens are more likely to be seen in urban centers, they can also be successful in rural setting when there is demand. Shared-use space can exist as stand-alone spaces or in locations that already have licensed kitchen infrastructure in place such as churches and schools.

The Skip Garden and Kitchen in London combines the concept of a community garden with a shared use kitchen in order to improve accessibility to those who would otherwise not have access to that food or that type of kitchen equipment (Marovelli, B.).

Kitchens often offer a broad public purpose from renting space to entrepreneurs, holding cooking classes, and hosting events. Through this, they celebrate local culture and bring together many different partners in a connection to food, wellness, and culinary experience.

Within focus groups, it was shared that there is "an increase in desire for accessing processing options, and need for improved trainings and education around culturally relevant food products." Shared-use kitchens can help with this, as their programming can increase positive social interactions between community members.

These types of businesses offer an incubator-like model that offers affordable space to test and grow a business. These locations thus reduce start-up costs and initial overhead for beginning entrepreneurs

and allows a space to consider goals and needs for that business owner. Shared-use kitchens can build community capacity to create new economic development in the form of new food businesses.

Tenants of shared-use kitchens are required to follow regulations set at the federal level all the way down to specific policies set by individual kitchens. Federal regulations are set by USDA and the FDA and include regulatory programs such as the Food Safety Modernization Act training and programs that regulate allergen free-label requirements.

Educational opportunities such as cooking classes and demonstrations can be offered in a shared-use kitchen. There can also be offerings for users to learn about food safety, nutrition, and business strategies and development. Some kitchens partner with local high schools, colleges and universities to provide such programming, as well as mentoring opportunities and technical skill building.



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