

Doug Calahan, founder and CEO of Local Roots, started and operated an enterprise software company for 17 years, but didn't believe in the mission anymore, so he sold it. Then Calahan took some time to think about what he really wanted to do. He became somewhat obsessed with the food supply; particularly how to bring the food supply back to the local level.

Originally, Calahan wanted to sell the tools to get individuals in local neighborhoods to grow, bake, and share or sell their food locally, but the customer acquisition cost was too high. So he looked ahead of that plan and asked, "if we built this business, what would success look like?" The answer is an online marketplace for local growers, bakers and other food vendors to sell to local people that looks similar to "Etsy for local food."

Local Roots was born in July 2014, and they've raised \$500,000 in convertible debt from New Enterprise Associates, in Washington, DC. The six person team has created an app that currently serves customers and vendors inside the perimeter in Atlanta, which is the Local Roots test market. With fourteen vendors, Local Roots has early traction, and is working on creating a repeatable, scalable model before they expand.

The app is simple but complete. Users enter their address into the app, which uses licensed technology from Maponics to designate which neighborhood the user is in, and then which of the 14 current vendors deliver to that neighborhood. The user then orders food from those vendors, and the vendors deliver it to the user's door.

The future looks strong for Local Roots as they prepare to compete in the Finals of the TAG Business Launch Competition May 11. Their goals include self-service vendor onboarding, viral word of mouth marketing in local neighborhoods, and suspending their 20% fee of transactions in neighborhoods that are underserved by major food outlets, in order to better support and encourage local urban farmers and bakers to do business in those areas.