



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Best Practices and Challenges of Food Policy Councils

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Abstract

As food insecurity, financial crises, and recognition of flaws in our global food systems become increasingly apparent, food policy councils (FPCs) have emerged as a way to address a number of intersecting problems by intentionally crafting local, sustainable food systems. Composed of representatives from various segments of the local food system, food policy councils generally aim to create a space to discuss food issues, promote intersectoral coordination, influence policy, and spearhead programs and services (Harper et al. 2009). Over the past few decades, food policy councils have sprung up in cities across the country as testing grounds for new and innovative ideas.

As part of background research for the Center for Regional Food Studies and the Pima County Food Alliance, a literature review of 35 food policy council reports, plans, and summary articles from various cities and regions was carried out. Information was drawn from a combination of annual reports from individual FPCs and summary reports reviewing FPCs across the country. The following working document attempts to synthesize information from this literature review to identify common themes and best practices implemented by FPCs and organizations that work with FPCs. Information is organized into major themes, such as farm to institution purchasing, streamlining access to supplemental nutrition programs, and utilizing vacant land for urban agriculture, among others. Each theme will be supported with specific examples from case studies highlighted in the aforementioned reports. This document may be used in the future to identify gaps in Tucson's food policy and inform the actions of a revitalized Pima County Food Alliance to help achieve the ultimate goal of creating a robust and health food system in Southern Arizona.

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Background on Food Policy Councils

The first food policy council sprang up as a response to intensified inequities in the food system of Knoxville Tennessee. To address growing issues pertaining to food supply, cost, and equitable distribution, the University of Tennessee's Graduate School of Planning spearheaded the creation of an interagency task force made up of representatives from various sectors of local government. Through the support of a city council resolution, the Knoxville Food Policy Council became the first of its kind in 1982 (Dinwiddie, 2012). Since then, numerous food policy councils have sprung up across the country, with varying degrees of success.

Food policy councils (FPCs) attempt to democratize power and decisions over the food system by bringing together diverse stakeholders representing different sectors of the local food system and different sections of the local population. As their name implies, food policy councils aim to address gaps in policy related specifically to food. While many cities have transportation, housing and land use policies, comprehensive policies around the food system are often absent. Thus, food policy councils have become an important platform for local government and community members to come together to address local food issues (Gupta et al., 2018). While there are several different ways to organize FPCs, ideally, they have representation from 5 different sectors of local food system: production, consumption, processing, distribution and waste (Harper et al., 2009). In the early days, FPCs were often established through local city council or state government resolutions, positioning them within local government. In more recent years, as representation and food equity have become central issues, food activists have begun to organize FPCs outside of local government as non-profits focused on building coalitions of more diverse stakeholders (Gupta et al., 2018).

There are advantages and drawbacks to organizing both associating with local government and forming independently. FPCs that are housed within local governmental departments such as health, urban planning, or sustainability, for example, often enjoy more stability and benefit from having more direct access to local legislators. They also run the risk of losing their autonomy and control over the direction of the council, as well as being vulnerable to changing political climate (Burgan and Winne, 2012). A change in administration can lead to an unsupportive political climate, which can strip an FPC of its influence, as was the case with the Utah Food Council, who found it difficult to garner support for their initiatives. Another example is the Dane County Food Council, who faced opposition from local government and had to remove "policy" from their name after pressure from local politicians. Situations like these can turn FPCs into talking shops that have no real teeth to influence policy.

Grassroots community based FPCs often enjoy more autonomy over their decision-making but may struggle to maintain stability and live and die by grant funding. These can be seen as two ends of a spectrum and there are increasingly also hybrid councils that are a combination of the two, which bring their own set of challenges. These FPCs often straddle two different worlds, having to balance competing interests and pressures from both (Harper et al., 2009). Burgan and Winne (2012) have created a particularly useful illustration of this which can be viewed in Appendix A.

It is a false dichotomy to think of FPCs as being either strictly non-profit or governmental, as most at this point have one foot in both camps, often having both local government and nonprofits represented on the council. Nevertheless, as FPCs begin their work, they should think through these trade-offs and decide what is most important to them, which will inform how they choose to position themselves along this spectrum (Harper et al., 2009). FPC organization and structure can vary widely, as they tend to orient themselves to the specific context of the locations in which they work, and the issues and needs that exist in those contexts may differ. While FPCs present an exciting opportunity to tackle systemic issues in ways that other institutions cannot, there is a serious dearth of literature on the efficacy and long-term outcomes of FPC which can make it hard to discern what practices work best. The following sections attempt to identify some best practices gleaned from the literature.

First, a Note on Staffing and Funding

Securing both staffing and funding for FPCs is a perpetual challenge. Just as there is a diversity of structures among FPCs, there is similarly a diversity of funding sources. When FPCs are able to secure funding, it normally comes from one of three places: local government, public-private partnerships or from grants. Government agency funding can allow FPCs to gain access to general funds not originally specified for food policy, although they may lose some autonomy over the programs direction. Grant funding can allow for more independence from local government, but also may come with drawbacks, including a loss of productive time to fundraising and potentially restrictive bureaucratic stipulations to abide by. Finally, public-private partnerships usually entail collaborating with universities or local businesses and can increase the resource and knowledge base for an FPC (Gupta et al., 2018).

Interestingly, funding sources vary based on the level at which an FPC works. The largest funding source for state level FPCs is government. For county level FPCs, the largest funding source is individual donations (i.e., funding from interested individuals), and for local level FPCs, the top funding source is grants from foundations (Harper et al., 2009). While there is some variability, FPCs generally have a patchwork funding from different sources regardless of the level at which they work. An example of this patchwork and how it varies by level is shown in the pie charts in Appendix B.

In terms of staffing, as of 2009 the vast majority of FPCs had no paid staff at all, or only a part time staffer. This number seems to have gone up since then but is still low. Of the 198 FPCs that responded to a 2020 food policy network survey, around 35% employed paid staffers. A report from the same year stated there were only 19 paid food policy positions in local government across the US (Berglund et al., 2021).

If funding for staffer does come from local government, staffer usually housed within variety of departments, including sustainability, economic development, public health, the mayor's office, and county extension. It is common to have one full time staffer housed in local

government that acts as a go-between between FPC and elected officials (Harper et al., 2009). There are some major advantages to this:

(1) Coordination and collaboration – It can help break down the silos between organization, and it is useful to have someone who knows everything that’s going on across agencies. (2) Food system leadership – It is advantageous to have a clear leader with bandwidth to direct work, rather than a patchwork of part-time/volunteers. While it can be good to have a flat organizational structure in some cases, it can also lead to some decision paralysis/confusion of responsibilities. (3) Capacity building – Having a position like this helps gain access to additional resources, incubate programs, and foment strategic relationships. (4) Systems thinking – ability to dedicate time and space to understanding complex issues in order to build the best possible outcomes (Burgland et al., 2021).

Funding for this kind of position comes from number of different places, from city general fund, county general funds, county and state extension funds, city-county council budget, or through temporary grants and transitioned to city general funds (Gupta et al., 2018).

Best Practices

Structure and Function

Having a Clear Plan of Action

For the effective and efficient functioning of any food policy council, it is essential to have a clear and actionable plan to work from. In crafting a guiding document, incorporating elements of the SMART model are worth applying here (Holtzclaw, 2005). For a review of SMART model, see appendix C. First, it needs to be specific enough to be operationalizable. Often FPC have plans with admirable and rightly identified goals but lack a clear path to achieving them. The specific functions of FPCs are not always clearly defined, which can cause them to stagnate (Harper et al., 2009). The “how” needs to be answered here, not just the “what” and “why.” It can be useful to break up goals into smaller, actionable steps. With each step, one should think through the potential public and private partners, the resources, and the time needed to carry it out. Making goals timebound can create a sense of urgency and accountability around an issue.

Furthermore, plans also need to be realistic. Goals should be concrete, attainable, and grounded in the local reality. This includes the reality of the stakeholders that the FPC aims to engage with, as well as the political reality they must work within. An understanding of the local food system and the actors involved ideally comes from a food assessment carried out by the FPC, but not all FPCs have the time and resources to do this. In lieu of this, an approximation of the information normally obtained in a food assessment can be obtained through a patchwork of previous reports carried out by local government, NGOs, or research institutions. In order to gain perspective on the political reality, FPCs often have ex officio members on the council from pertinent sectors of the local government (Borron, 2003). Additionally, to further ground an

FPCs plan in the local political reality, it is worthwhile, to the extent that it is possible and in keeping with the FPCs aims, to ground it within the verbiage and priorities of plans already put forth by local government agencies. If there are already municipal county, or state sustainability, health, or community development plans, using shared language that local policymakers can understand ensures the plan actionable and able to be fit within the broader scope of policies being enacted at local to state level.

This planning document can take on many different forms. The most common form is a strategic plan. A strategic plan provides a detailed outline of the direction and policy priorities of an FPCs work normally within a 3-5 year period. While it may incorporate input from various stakeholders, it is owned by a single entity, the FPC. Another similar document is a food plan. It is similar to a strategic plan in that it is based on the mission and vision of the FPC, but it differs in that it is communally owned by various stakeholders from the food system (Rigby, n.d.). Another common document is a food charter. Normally shorter and less of a heavy lift to create than a strategic plan, a food charter can act as an initial framework and public facing document off of which an FPC can base its efforts. Because it is developed with significant community input, it can be a good tool for facilitating engagement between important actors in the food system (Hardman & Larkham, 2014). Finally, an additional foundational document of an FPC is its bylaws. Bylaws refer to the set of rules an FPC makes for its own internal affairs. They dictate things like organizational structure, duties and responsibilities, how often members meet, how FPCs make decisions, and how they select their membership. Selection may take on different forms, including for example, self-selection, appointment, invitation, recruitment, application and review, or hybrid combination of multiple methods (Fitzgerald & Morgan, 2014).

While the internal operations of an FPC may seem like minor details compared to the actual food related policy work one aims to engage in, having these things fleshed out and codified early will make the lives of its members easier in the long run. As Harper et al. put it, “Unless a specific strategic plan, evaluation model, decision making model and a strong understanding of the local food system are in place, councils may have a promising form, and still not function well” (2009). Even so, not all food policy councils create all of these documents. Some have just one guiding document that contains all their planning and operational information. Some have a combination of documents with overlapping information as needed.

Examples:

Sacramento FPC

The Sacramento FPC runs several campaigns that stem from the long-term policy goals outlined in the strategic plan they developed. They prioritized elevating food as a main concern within Sacramento city and county general plans, as well as ensuring that Sacramento City Unified School District constructs a central kitchen that engages the community. By using campaigns in their strategic plan, it helps the council focus on its policy objectives while also structuring the council in a way that allowed for community leadership and involvement. Additionally, employing campaigns made it easier for government staff to justify going to FPC meetings, as

they could draw a clear connection to their governmental department's mission. (Gupta et al., 2018)

Forum for Food System Issues/Coordinating Between Sectors

Food Policy Councils function at their best when they are able to create a space for discussion among various segments within the food system. Different players such as farmers, environmentalists, food security workers and local businesses have different issues and priorities. Creating a forum for their concerns to be heard allows diverse issues to be integrated and worked on from a systems-level perspective. This ensures that all 5 sectors of the food system – production, consumption, processing, distribution and waste – are represented and coordinating with each other. Connecting NGOs and government agencies who can then pool resources and knowledge can have a multiplier effect that heightens everyone's impact. A good way of creating these spaces is to hold events. Organizing conferences and summits can bring together different groups within food systems and facilitates the exchange of ideas, resources, and best practices. It also helps build capacity and create community across regions and sectors.

Examples:

[Chicago Food Policy Action Council:](#)

The Chicago Food Policy Action Council excels at acting as community connectors and bringing people together. The CFPAC recently held its 15th annual Food Policy Summit. Aiming to connect various food systems in dialogue, the event featured speakers from the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network and Navina Khanna, Executive Director of HEAL Food Alliance. The summit also involved workshops, resources and vendors, with over 600 people from various food systems backgrounds participated.

Additionally, the CFPAC also helped organize the Cook County Food Summit. The aim of this summit is to connect the public health community and the broader public and demonstrate how the county is working to improve access to healthy food for everyone. It had more than 250 virtual attendees, 64 speakers, and 20 learning opportunities.

Example:

[2018 Santa Fe Food Plan Report:](#)

A successful example of this is the synergy between 3 different sectors of the New Mexico Food system. New Mexico FPC, the NGO Farm to table, and the Santa Fe School Food Service worked together towards the common goal of providing healthy, local meals for school children. Among their accomplishments include the creation of the New Mexico Public Education Department's Farm to School and Nutrition Position, establishing a local food week in

October in which they serve “all-local” lunch, and assuring that the “statewide school food service programs bought nearly \$878,000 of local foods without state-allocated funding.”

Evaluation of Policy

One of the primary purposes of FPCs is to advocate and shape policy. They provide the necessary link in bringing the unique concerns of the various food sectors to the attention of local policy makers. This often works best if the council has a direct connection to local government, such as being housed within a board or department.

Examples:

[Toronto Food Policy Council:](#)

An example of this in practice is the Toronto FPC, which was established as a subcommittee of the Toronto Board of Health. From this advantageous position, the TFPC has advised on a variety of policy initiatives, including the Toronto Environmental Plan, Toronto Food Charter, The City of Toronto Official Plan, the Toronto Food and Hunger Action Plan, among others.

Establishing Working Groups:

If an FPC is large enough and has enough members, it can be beneficial to create smaller working groups to tackle specific issues. These are often temporary subgroups organized around a particular policy priority. Creating a working group centered on a “campaign” can be effective because it allows allied organizations with similar agendas to join on short-term instead of having to align themselves more formally with the long-term goals of the FPC. This makes for more immediate, pointed, and results oriented action (Gupta et al. 2018).

Examples:

[Baltimore’s Emergency Food Working Group:](#)

Urban food systems need to become more resilient, yet there is often a lack of focus on food system resilience codified within local city planning. To address this gap, a city-university collaboration between Baltimore’s municipal department of planning and Johns Hopkins Center for a livable future came together to form an Emergency Food Working Group. They met over a 3-month period and produced an emergency food access protocol for responding to acute crises. This led to the Baltimore Food System Resilience Advisory Report, which assessed preparedness and vulnerability among stakeholders to hazards and shocks.

2018 Santa Fe Food Plan Report:

To achieve the policy goals in their 2014 strategic plan, the Santa Fe FPC organized a number of working groups around specific policy priorities. One such working group was the Sustainability Working Advisory Group. In collaboration with local government, the group made a number of short-term and long-term recommendations to embed sustainability and local procurement into municipal policy and practice.

California Food Policy Councils:

A case study involving 10 California based FPCs found creating short-term working groups as an effective tool for policy change. For example, the Los Angeles FPC created an urban agriculture working group whose work led to the passage of an ordinance to allow gardening in parkways in the city. Often, the FPCs used these policy oriented working groups to push food systems language into county general plans. For example, the Marin County FPC attended meetings related to the county plan and worked with an ex-officio insider to craft language that was eventually incorporated into the plan.

Communications

Effective communications can be an essential component to an FPC's success. Functional FPCs are built from the relationships they form. To maintain these relationships, it is vital to be able to communicate to the many different policymakers, communities, and members that support the FPC's work. With a diversity of membership from different walks of life, this can be difficult, and it is important to identify forms of communication that work best. To this end, it can be useful to create a strategic communications plan. In creating a communications plan, it is important to already have clearly defined goals and an idea of the target audience one intends to engage with. These should stem from a previously established mission and vision statements the FPC has developed (or overall strategic plan, if the FPC has created one), which will serve as the foundation for outreach work (Palmer et al, 2022).

It is important to ground planning in the reality of the community the FPC is working in. An important first step is to collect data as evidence to support the FPC's goals. Johns Hopkins Food Policy Networks recommends this [policy resources site](#) with publicly available data as a good starting point. The next step is outlining the FPC's audience. Part of knowing the community is knowing how they consume information. Different people prefer different methods of communication, and so it is important to meet people where they are at. To connect, it may be advantageous to utilize social media, create a website or dashboard to post updates and progress, and create a captivating logo that people can identify with (Harper et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2022). To ensure that enough time is devoted to creating an effective communications strategy, it may be worthwhile to establish a communications committee or working group to guide the work. Palmer et al. have provided a number of helpful resources related to communications on page 19 of their guide, which can be found [online here](#).

Example:

Beaufort County HEAL Collaborative and Food Council Communications Plan

Beaufort County created a short draft document detailing their communications plan. In it they identify their communications goals. They break each goal down into action items as well as name each of the target audiences they aim to reach out to related to each action item. Their goals and communications strategy stems from their overall mission.

Community Engagement:

An important corollary to effective communication is open and continuous community engagement. It is good to engage with the community directly, as often as possible. This creates more community buy-in, trust, and involvement. Furthermore, it facilitates the creation of relationships, which as has been discussed is an essential component of a functioning FPC. Equally, it promotes accountability on the part of the FPC, and ensures that the priorities of the FPC stay aligned with the priorities of the community it aims to serve. While continuous and creative community engagement is difficult and time consuming, it is an essential step towards democratizing the food system, which is a major goal of FPCs (Fitzgerald & Morgan, 2014).

Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships:

Leveraging public-private collaborations – whether it be with a local government office, local food related non-profit, or with a university or research institution – can greatly increase the bandwidth of an FPC and have a multiplier effect on what they can get done. Support from these outside entities often comes in the form of in-kind donations of time and resources. These might take the form of office space for meetings, administrative support, and research done in support of the FPCs policy priorities. Support can also be monetary, as a local government might pay a part- or full-time staffer position to staff an FPC.

Example:

California Food Policy Councils:

For many of the California FPCs, these collaborations take the form of working with the UC system and UC cooperative extension. The University plays a role in informing FPC about broader trends happening outside the local arena and keep them up to date on relevant university research. The FPCs role is seen to be understanding the local context and organizational landscape. Therefore, there is a robust combination of community knowledge and research data. As the report by Gupta et al. notes, it is important to have a diversity of different kinds of “knowledge brokers” in order to create compelling arguments to policy makers. They stress the “numbers and stories” combo, combining data and personal narratives (2018).

Baltimore Food Policy Initiative:

As previously mentioned, one of the best examples of city-housed FPC-university collaborations is the one between Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, housed in Baltimore City

Office of Sustainability and Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future. They joined forces to assess/improve the resilience of Baltimore City's food system. Through their "Emergency Food Working Group," they met over the course of 3 months and created a number of documents related to disaster relief and food systems that aided the city in its planning process. They were able to work quickly and effectively due to the long-standing relationships that had already been formed between the university and the city. This allowed for easy data sharing and a quick translation of research findings into policy recommendations and action. The university helped the city get a lay of the land with stakeholder interviews and research, while the office of sustainability helped frame the university's findings in a way that urban planners could use in formal plan development.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

While it is usually a step that many FPCs are unable to reach due to budget and time constraints, devoting time to monitoring and evaluation can improve partnerships and programming, as well as help the FPC to better understand the work it is doing. Evaluating results helps an FPC determine the progress they have made towards their stated goals and holds the FPC accountable to the community they aim to benefit. An additional benefit is that it can help make the work an FPC is doing more visible to outside organizations and foundations, which can be useful for applying to funding. It is worth considering creating a monitoring and evaluation working group with someone knowledgeable of evaluation methods as well. The Michigan Department of Community Health developed an assessment tool to evaluate coalitions which can be found [online here](#). Additionally, the CDC has created a guidebook for partnership evaluation which can be found [online here](#) (Burgan & Winne, 2012).

Example:

[2018 Santa Fe Food Plan Report:](#)

As is shown by the numerous metrics provided in their annual reports, the Santa Fe Food Policy Council has rigorous record keeping and monitoring mechanisms. They keep track of their progress towards each of the goals enumerated in their 2014 plan in a way that is quantifiable and measurable. They are able to do this because they have ample funding, but also because they prioritize within their budget. Looking at their budget, they allocate \$9000 to assessment and \$5000 to council development, so they devote a lot of resources towards continually evaluating and improving the council (Burgan & Winne, 2012).

Programs and Interventions:

Farm to Institution Initiatives:

Farm to institution programs help grow the local food system by creating a stable market for farmers to sell to. They connect local farmers to public institutions like schools, hospitals, colleges, prisons, and other government institutions.

The Public Plate in New York State:

This report by Libman, Li, & Grace (2017) provides an overview of how New York State's farm to institution program works. An estimated 6.6 million people use New York's Public Plate program. Of that, about 45% are using the emergency food system. Farm to Institution New York State (FINYS) aims to bump spending institutional spending on food grown in NYS from 10% to 25% through several means, including creating purchasing targets and mandating reporting of local food purchases. It is estimated that "spending 25% of Public Plate dollars on minimally processed food grown in New York would cost \$143 million but create almost \$208 million of new economic output in NYS."

Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative:

Metro Chicago's Good Food Purchasing Initiative (GFPI) strives to use the institutional food purchasing model to "advance an equitable, healthy, fair, local, humane, and sustainable food system while creating good food access for all." Some of the main goals of the program are to develop a racial/socially equitable regional food supply chain, support pathways for BIPOC food producers and food businesses to scale operations for sales to public and normalize values-based procurement across public institutions in Chicago. Notably, the program paid the cost of 23 growers to receive their produce safety alliance certificate. GFPI has also helped execute a food hub feasibility study on the potential for a co-operatively owned, BIPOC-led food hub. (Wilson et al., 2020).

2018 Santa Fe Food Plan Report:

The Santa Fe Food Policy Council partners closely with the non-profit Farm to Table New Mexico, which plays an active role in many aspects of the regional food system. In conjunction with the New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council, New Mexico Public Education Department and New Mexico Department of Agriculture, the two partnering organizations secured \$425,000 in state funding for school food services to buy produce grown by local farmers. Additionally, Farm to Table worked with the NM Farm to School Alliance and schools across NM to promote National Farm to School month, serving an "all local" school meal on October 6th. Finally, Farm to table helped establish a permanent farm to school and

nutrition position within the New Mexico Public Education Department, strengthening school's ability to source locally for their school lunch program.

Farm to Institution New Orleans:

Farm to Institution New Orleans represents a collaboration between the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee and several other nonprofit organizations. These include Propeller, which focuses social and environmental well-being, and the Wallace Center at Winrock International, whose goal is promoting resilience in farming and the food system. The aim is to create a values-based supply chain that values "equity, environmental and economic sustainability, food quality, and mutually beneficial business relationships." A feasibility and pilot study was undertaken, which helped build relationships between institutions and local food actors and immediately helped growers increase their sales and ability to scale up.

Farm to Institution New England:

Farm to Institution New England (FINE) is comprised of a network of private, public, and non-profit organizations spread out over a 6-state region. As with other farm to institution organizations, FINE acts a community connector, linking colleges, k-12 schools, hospitals, and other public institutions to local producers. Acting as a forum for connecting stakeholders, FINE creates opportunities for young leaders, collaborates on research, and holds biennial summits like the F2iSummit.

Urban Agriculture/ Utilizing Empty Plots:

The practice of reappropriating currently vacant land in urban settings to promote agricultural production. Urban agriculture can increase the availability of local food for consumers and create a source of employment, appreciation for gardening, and positive mental health benefits among participants. Furthermore, it can contribute to increased green spaces, and build community by providing a place for people to come together and connect with each other and the Earth.

Examples:

Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council:

While a short-lived policy council, the Portland-Multnomah FPC made two major contributions to Urban agriculture. 1) They started a 'Beginning Urban Farmer Apprenticeship Program' in which they trained aspiring farmers and community land stewards. 2) They updated the urban food zoning codes, which eased regulations to expand urban agriculture.

Chicago Food Policy Action Council:

The Chicago Food Policy Council has instituted the ‘Productive Landscapes Project’ which aims “to map, assess and transform underutilized public lands into productive multipurpose landscapes that solve multiple issues and create opportunities for local healthy food production, community engagement, economic & resource development, and environmental improvement.” The project analyzes a myriad of locations across the city as potential sites for urban agriculture, with an ultimate goal of successfully repurposing these sites as productive assets within the respective communities in which they are located.

Growing Food Equity in New York City:

There are several programs that support urban agriculture in NYC. GreenThumb provides education and support such as workshops on urban agriculture to more than 550 community gardens and 22,000 community gardeners within NYC. They additionally organize an annual GreenThumb Grow Together conference. Farm School NYC is another program focused on urban agriculture and food justice. It offers certificate programs and individual courses to grow future leaders in the field.

Toronto Food Policy Council 2019 Annual Report:

Urban Agriculture is a major focus of the TFPC. They launched the GrowTO Urban Agriculture Action Plan, which was unanimously adopted by the Toronto City Council. The initiative brought together stakeholders in urban agriculture and identified social and economic development opportunities for local communities through urban agriculture, linking growers to land and space. Additionally, due to the influence of the TFPC, Mayor Tory created Urban Agriculture Day in 2017, followed by Urban Agriculture Week in 2018-19, accompanied by 14 events across the city.

Elderly Food Support Programs

The elderly are often neglected as a marginalized community with inadequate access to healthy food. There are many seniors who are not connected to services in their respective cities and unaware of the programs available. Furthermore, they may lack the transport and technological knowhow to access assistance programs.

Examples:

Growing Food Equity in New York City:

As a result of the advocacy work carried out by the NY city council, the NYC Department for the Aging will increase funding for previously underfunded senior meals program to \$10 million in 2020 and up to \$15 million in 2021. Additionally, the city council will consider legislation that would obligate the Department for the Aging and Human Resources Administration to develop a plan to identify and enroll isolated seniors in SNAP benefits. Finally, because of the city council's advocacy, NYS has applied to create an Elderly Simplified Application Process (ESAP), which would cut much of the red tape that inhibits elderly individuals from successfully navigating the application process for SNAP benefits.

2018 Santa Fe Food Plan Report:

Santa Fe has several unique policies aimed at supporting senior citizen food security. Santa Fe County has started a monthly "Grocery Day" at senior centers in which seniors are transported to fresh food markets. From legislation drafted by the Santa Fe FPC, the state also has a Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program that serves 17,000 seniors and a Senior Meal Pilot Program. Santa Fe County Senior Services also provided \$25 vouchers to seniors to purchase fresh produce at local farmers markets. Additionally, the mobile food pantry run through the Road Runner Food Bank serves 5 senior housing communities.

Food Information Resources/Food Access Maps

Providing detailed information of what food resources are available and where they can be found can promote food security for marginalized communities that may have limited options. Food access maps are a good way for locals understand their local food system further and locate resources such as farmers markets, grocery stores and food pantries.

Examples:

2018 Santa Fe Food Plan Report:

In coordination with Santa Fe County, Santa Fe FPC helped initiate AgriGate, which serves as "a clearinghouse of local agricultural information and an online platform designed to cultivate connections and networking opportunities in the local food community." One of the central features includes a searchable "food community map" that identifies the key actors in the local food shed.

Chicago Food Policy Action Council:

The CFPAC worked in collaboration with the Chicago Department of Public Health, Cook County Department of Public Health, and Chicago State University, among others, to develop a food access map. The purpose was to aid researchers as well as organizers and the general public in knowing where Chicagoans obtain their food. This partnership arose in

response to the increased inequity in the food system stemming from unrest caused by COVID-19 and the George Floyd protests.

Streamlining access to SNAP/Connecting SNAP to farmers Markets

Everyone has the right to nutritious, local food, regardless of their socioeconomic status. That is why various FPCs have advocated for expanding where people can use their SNAP benefits and streamlining the process of gaining access to their benefits. Ensuring these two steps will increase access to healthy food and decrease food insecurity among economically disadvantaged communities.

Examples:

Growing Food Equity in New York City:

The New York City Council is taking some innovative steps in improving access to supplemental nutrition. The city allocated \$1 million to fund a pilot program to increase access to food for university students experiencing food insecurity at CUNY as part of the Access to Healthy Food and Nutrition Education Initiative. In addition, they are looking into how they can increase access to SNAP benefits for students, which is currently somewhat limited, as well as working to increase funding for the Healthy Bucks, which can leverage SNAP benefits to be used by community-based organizations to fight food insecurity and support nutrition education. The City Council is also advocating for NYS to pass legislation which “would allow disabled, elderly, and homeless SNAP recipients to use their benefits for hot meals and other prepared foods at participating grocery stores, delis, and restaurants.”

2018 Santa Fe Food Plan Report:

Santa Fe’s Southside farmers market, started by the SFFPC, has a unique program called Double Up Food Bucks, in which all food purchased with EBT is half off, increasing the reach of SNAP and WIC funds for those experiencing food insecurity. Since the start of the program, sales total over \$1,000,000. They also have a resource called The Santa Fe Farmers’ Market Institute information booth, which helps connect potential SNAP recipients to the Road Runner food bank, who in turn helps users navigate the process of applying for SNAP benefits.

Operationalizing social equity in food system planning

Our food systems are a product of a settler colonial state that has been viewed as inherently white supremacist in nature. Structures of power and privilege exist in the food system, leading to unequal health outcomes for non-white communities. Thus, it is important to

identify these flaws and mobilize resources towards BIPOC and other historically disadvantaged communities to create more equity in the way food is distributed and consumed.

Examples:

Toronto Food Policy Council 2019 Annual Report:

The TFPC has integrated an equity lens to food policy work by increasing representation of indigenous and other diverse communities on the food policy council as well as meeting with the city's racial justice groups, such as the Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit and the Indigenous Affairs Unit. From these meetings came various training sessions for both the TFPC and Toronto Youth Food Policy Council (TYFPC) members on both Black and Indigenous cultural competency. Additionally, the TFPC worked with CABR and members of the black community to establish a Black Food Sovereignty Network. They also created a partnership with the Hospitality Workers Training Centre (HWTC), "which provides training and job placements in the food sector for people facing multiple barriers to employment."

Chicago Food Policy Action Council:

With the aim of addressing white fragility and disrupting white solidarity, the CRPAC organized "Interrogating Whiteness" circles for white-identifying food system actors motivated to dismantle white supremacy. The program consisted of 4 months of bi-weekly meetings where guided discussion engaged topics from "podcasts, articles, and participants own experiences specific to race, equity, and whiteness within the food system."

Moving from Disaster Preparedness to Disaster Justice:

Disasters disproportionately affect parts of society that have been historically disinvested in by governments, businesses, and policy. To understand and change this impact, the Praxis project promotes the concept of Disaster Justice. The idea is "centered on acknowledging the expertise arising from the experiences of directly affected communities, with an emphasis in the transformation of institutions and policies that cause marginalization and inequity." Hence, best practices from this framework included creating equity criteria within the planning process for disasters and incorporating the voices of those directly affected into the planning process.

North Carolina Food System Strategy:

To better understand how historic inequities in the food system were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the North Carolina Food Resilience Advisory Board organized focus groups representing rural and BIPOC from across the NC community. Many of the participants engage in grant writing and working with the philanthropic community to fund their projects. The focus group created a space for them to express their observations about the prevalence of

white supremacy culture in grant writing and other problems with philanthropy. Based on feedback from the focus group, critical action recommendations were crafted.

Identifying and Countering White Supremacy Culture in Food Systems:

The World Food Policy Center based out of the Sanford School at Duke University examines how whiteness permeates both policy and practice within food systems. Their article elucidates how commonly held narratives are white supremacist in origin and reinforce inequalities. As such, programs designed with these underlying narratives will often fail to resonate with BIPOC communities. By becoming aware of the narratives that underpin, food policy workers can begin to make changes in operation, policy, and practice to create a more equitable food system.

Eat Local Initiatives

Eat local challenges serve to raise awareness about the benefits of eating local for the regional economy but also in terms of sustainability on a global scale. These challenges are usually short term, time-limited events aimed at engaging the public and pushing them to action. They may be spearheaded by local and state governments, or through partnerships with non-profits.

Examples:

The 10% Local Food Shift Challenge:

In 2010, Boulder County, in coordination with Transition Colorado, a nonprofit dedicated to transitioning away from fossil fuels, launched the 10% Local Food Shift Challenge. Their goal was to motivate residents, restaurants, and institutions to buy at least 10% of their food from local sources by raising awareness and gamifying buying local by turning it into a challenge. They put together a detailed campaign strategy including, among other things, creating a website where residents could take the pledge, working with local restaurants to create coupons for those who sign up for the pledge, and developing school educational programs around eating locally. While innovative, it is hard to gauge how effective the campaign was from available resources.

Wisconsin's Eat Local Challenge:

In 2008, Wisconsin launched an eat local challenge. Led by the state's first lady, Jessica Doyle, Wisconsinites were challenged to spend at least 10 percent of their food budget on Wisconsin foods for a 10-day period in September. The idea was to generate revenue for the local economy, as it was estimated that "If every Wisconsin household spends 10 percent of its food budget on locally produced foods, we will have a \$2 billion impact on our state's

economy.” Two websites were launched to sign up for the challenge and connect residents with local producers. The project was supported by \$225,000 from the state.

New Orleans Eat Local Challenge:

Originally Started in 2010, the Eat Local Challenge is a program of the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC). As of 2019, it has evolved into a “30-day celebration and exploration of New Orleans' agricultural and seafood resources.” Every June, FPAC publicizes the challenge as a way to push residents to support their local farmers and fishermen. They help organize parties, classes, tours, and other events to support the program.

Pitfalls, Stumbling Blocks and Challenges

Overdependence on One Key Figure

Often FPCs are spearheaded by a charismatic figure or tied to a prominent organization. If that person or organization ends their involvement in the FPC, it can lead to the collapse of the FPC. Similarly, if an FPC is created by executive order or is too closely tied to the current mayor, it is vulnerable to political change. A change in leadership can also lead to the dissolution of the FPC.

Example:

The Iowa Food Policy Council: A case study

The IFPC is an example of an FPC created by executive order under the leadership of the governor of the time, Tom Vilsack. While it can be argued that the IFPC was successful under his tenure with a legacy of work that lives on, it ceased to function after he left. The executive order was not reissued and the IFPC was disbanded. While being so directly attached to the governor may have given the IFPC a predetermined life span, and it also arguably lent legitimacy, recognition, and access to resources.

Scarcity of Funding

The biggest issue facing FPCs is a lack of funding. All too often, council members have full time jobs outside of the council and volunteer their time and efforts. This can be unsustainable and lead to burn out. FPCs tied to local government often rely on part time staff, and while grants can provide additional funding, they can be inconsistent as funding can change from year to year (Harper et al., 2009). FPCs that rely entirely on grant funding tend to be more vulnerable, whereas FPCs that receive funding from a sponsoring government agency are relatively more secure. There are pros and cons to housing FPCs within local government, within NGO/external organizations, or having a hybrid structure (Schiff, 2007).

Focusing on a Singular Issue/ Specific Program

Councils that set out with one distinct goal run the risk of losing purpose and momentum once the primary issue is resolved. Additionally, focus paid to a specific program can take up the bandwidth of councilmembers who already have limited time to volunteer. This can be a detriment to a larger range of food issues that could be addressed.

Lack of Well-defined Mission, Goals, and Structure:

FPCs that begin without first establishing a clear organizational structure, mission, and goals run many risks. Confusion about the roles, responsibilities, and priorities of members of the FPC can cause the FPC to flounder. A lack of clear decision-making protocols may hinder a council's ability to address issues effectively, leading to stagnation. Perceived ineffectiveness can lead to the dissolution of the FPC.

Examples:

[Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council:](#)

Established in a region known for its local food scene, the PMFPC was seemingly well situated for success. While the council undoubtedly achieved some noteworthy accomplishments including a "healthy corner store initiative, a beginning farmer training program, and changes to zoning codes to expand urban agriculture," it was ultimately dissolved for a few different reasons. One major contributing factor was a lack of clarity about how it was supposed to operate. It was originally envisioned as a decision-making body working in partnership with the local government, connected by a staff liaison. There was misunderstanding and disagreement over what the role of the liaison and the PMFPC was, leading to frustration on the part of both officials and councilmembers. Local officials saw the role of the liaison as a means to get the PMFPC on board and helping with initiatives, while councilmembers viewed the role as communicating the issues they saw as important to local government thus empowering citizens. As a result, PMFPC members felt unheard and lacking in influence. The PMFPC was disbanded in 2012, after local officials stated it was "losing relevance."

[LA Food Justice Network:](#)

There were a few major issues that caused the LAFJN to disband. While funding was a large issue, another major issue was a lack of a clear focus and delineated roles. As such, members dropped out as their responsibilities to their own organizations trumped that of the FPC. Another problem was that there were already a variety of other groups working on food justice issues in LA, and the LAFJN was often duplicating work that was already being carried out by these other organizations.

Limitations:

In researching for this document, the author noted that many project ideas were “in the works” or “being strongly advocated for”. From many of the reports, which are often brief, it is hard to tell what the end result has been. As far as can be ascertained, when projects do finally move from being advocated for to being implemented, there is very little monitoring and evaluation being done. This is likely due to the lack of funding to pay for such efficacy studies. Nevertheless, without such metrics, it is hard to gauge how successful these programs are. As such, what may be construed as a best practice on paper may not be a best practice in implementation. As Harper et al. (2009) note, “lack of evaluation procedures also makes it more difficult to identify successes” and determine what ‘best practices’ for FPCs might be. Consequently, conclusions drawn from these examples still require more critical, in-depth, and ongoing evaluation.

Additionally, the majority of the reports outlining FPCs here were produced by the FPCs themselves. While the authors undoubtedly intend to be as objective as possible, there is an inescapable element of report bias. This is important when considering many FPCs must justify their own existence with such reports, and so have an incentive to present programs in their best light (that is if they are able to implement programs at all). A common criticism of FPCs is that they are “talking heads” that only advocate, but rarely produce tangible changes. This is often because of the limited resources at their disposal. More funding is needed for FPCs to be able to implement, then sustain, programs for which they advocate, and to assess the results and effectiveness of those programs. Without a comprehensive National Food Policy, FPCs will have to be creative with how they are able to obtain funding (Harper et al., 2009).

Appendix A: Useful figures from Burgan and Winne 2012

Non-Profit FPC

Strengths

More control by food advocates
Fewer bureaucratic restraints
Diverse sources of funding

Weaknesses

Less public accountability
Lack of official standing with elected officials
Lack of staffing

Public Sector FPC

Strengths

Public accountability/legitimacy
Public involvement
Access to government staff
Coordination of food system across different departments

Weaknesses

Bureaucratic inefficiency
Political infighting
Less attention to community desires
Changing levels of support

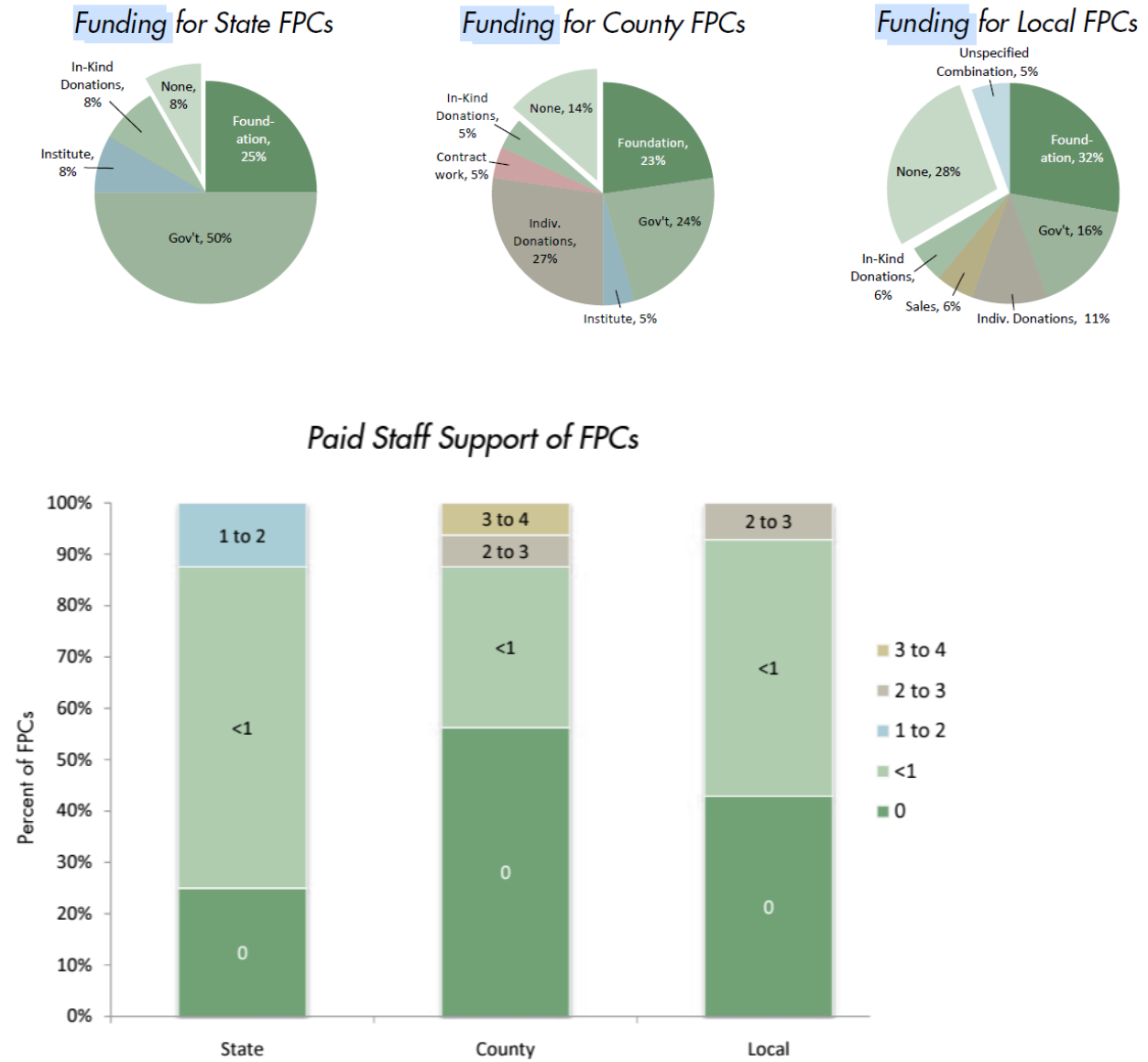
New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council	Expanded farm to school funding; expanded funding for NMSU Extension support for tribal nations; stopped the sale of sugary soft drinks in schools and replaced them with fruit juices and water
Cleveland/Cuyahoga County FPC	Secured zoning changes to protect community gardens, urban farms, and the raising of chickens and bees
Missoula, Montanan FPC	Worked with county land use board to direct development away from prime farm and ranchland; mapped prime agricultural soils
Boulder County, Colorado FPC	Developed sustainable agriculture use plan for 25,000 publicly owned acres of farmland; rejected proposal to plant GE sugar beet seeds on public land
Hartford, Connecticut FPC	Worked with city WIC agency to improve service delivery; restored WIC caseload to 10,000 from 6,000 persons
Kansas City, Missouri FPC	Prepared several policy briefs; modernized KC's agriculture zoning code; co-hosted food summit; conducted a food issues survey with candidates for local office
New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee	Helped formulate the Fresh Food Retailer Initiative, which leverages public and private funds to provide low-interest and forgivable loans for food retailers who commit to sell fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods.
Muscogee (Creek) Nation Food and Fitness Policy Council	In 2012, began working on new procurement policies that will help tribal groups buy more locally grown fruits and vegetables.

A Sample Budget

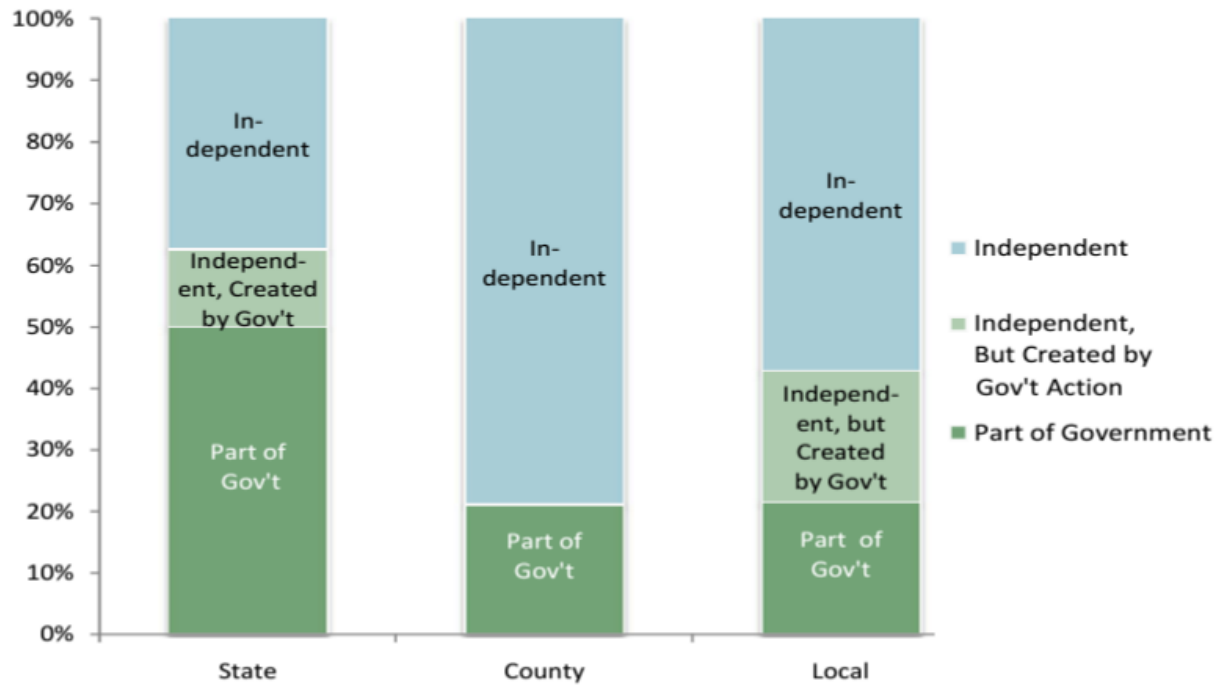
Here's a sample budget taken from the Santa Fe Food Policy Council:

INCOME		EXPENSES	
<i>Foundations</i>		<i>Direct</i>	
Simon Foundation	5,000	Personnel (Contract)	21,638
Santa Fe Community Foundation	10,000	Office Supplies	100
NM Community Foundation	5,000	Phone	400
McCune Foundation	5,000	Postage	100
		Printing – Copies	400
<i>Government</i>		Fiscal Sponsor Fees	2,850
Santa Fe County	8,500	Meeting Supplies & Support	200
City of Santa Fe	10,000	Travel	2,000
<i>Individuals</i>		0	
<i>Special Events</i>		<u>0</u>	
Total Income	43,500	<i>Committees</i>	
		Education and Outreach (Printed Materials/ Website)	1,500
		Assessment	9,000
		Policy	500
		Governance/Council Development	<u>5,000</u>
		Total Expenses	43,688
<i>Additional Resources Invested</i>			
Food Depot (in kind, meeting support)			4,428
Farm to Table (administrative support, in kind)			8,240
Mark Winne Associates (in kind, research and policy support)			4,500
Earthcare			18,240
Cooking with Kids			1,440
Kitchen Angels			2,225
City of Santa Fe – Environmental Services Division			7,600

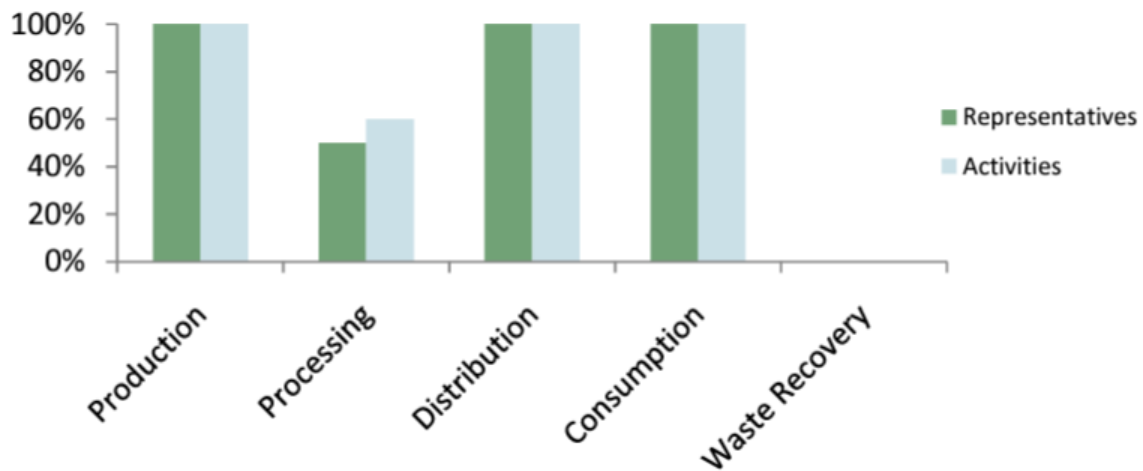
Appendix B: Useful Figures from Harper et al. 2009



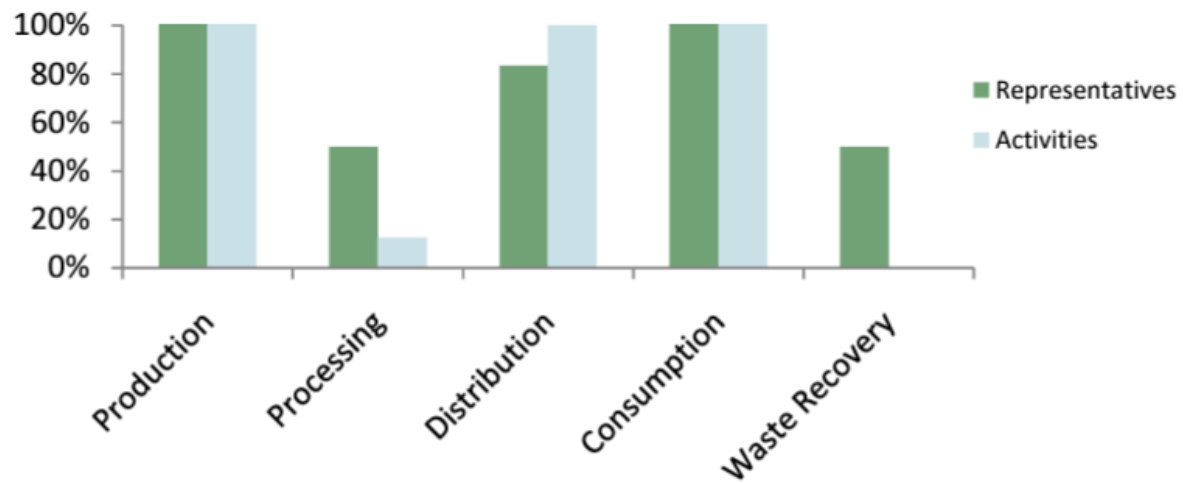
Connection to Government



State Representatives and Activities by Food System Sector



County Representatives and Activities by Food System Sector



Decision-Making Style of FPCs

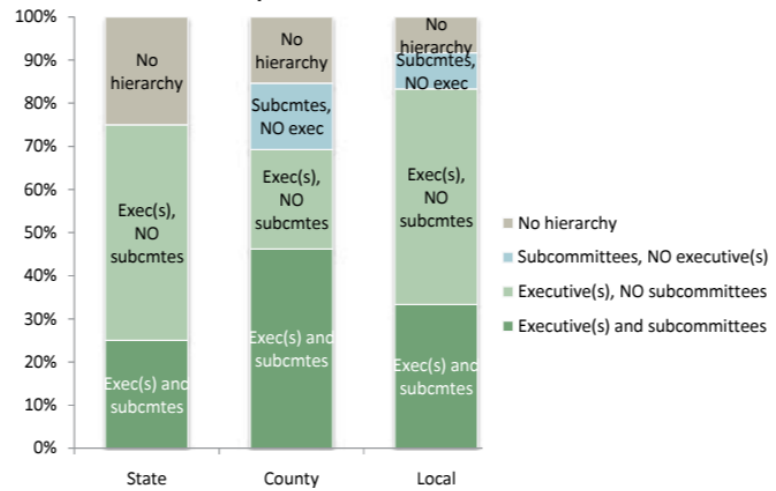


Selection of FPC Members

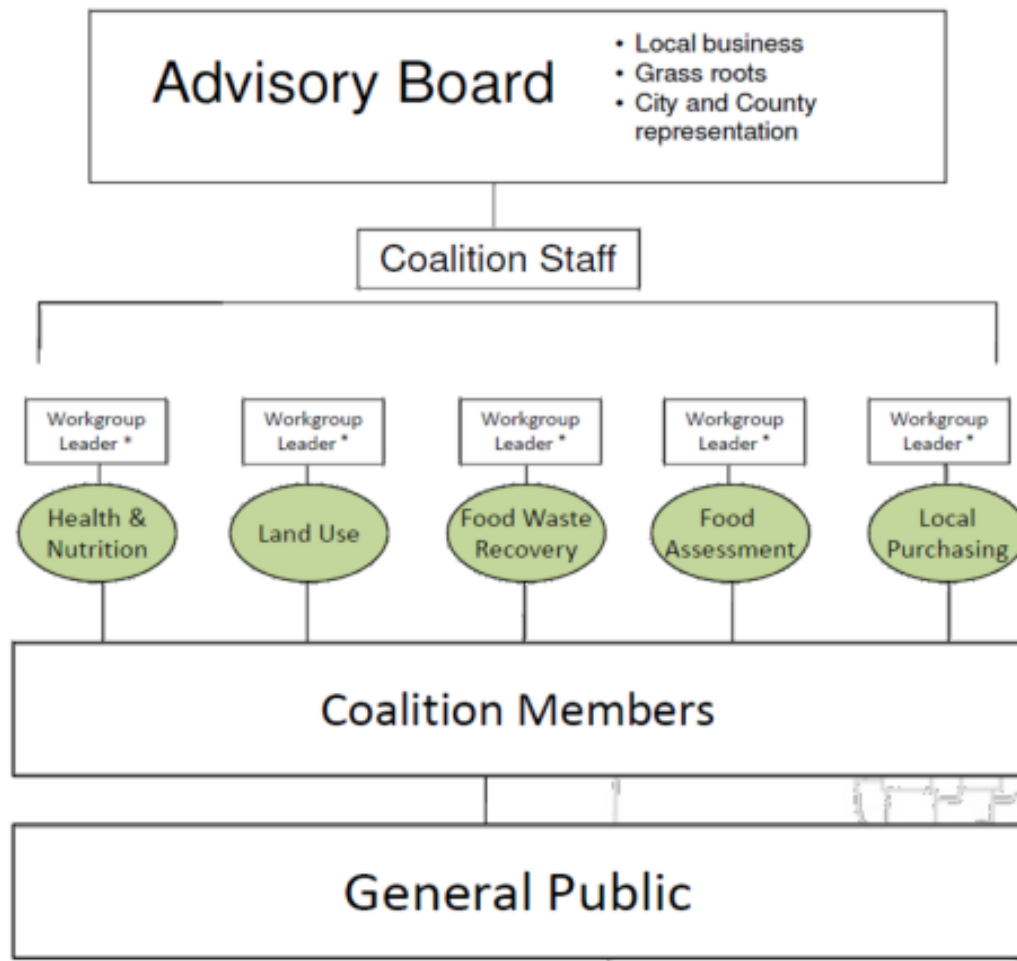
There are three main ways that FPC members have been selected:

1. **Self-selection**
2. **Application** (reviewed by the existing council, an executive board, or the initiating community members)
3. **Election, nomination or appointment** (chosen by governmental officials or an executive board)

Group Structure of FPCs



Appendix C: Useful Figures related to FPC Structures from Holtzclaw 2005



1. **Specific:**

- Objectives should provide the “who” and “what” of program activities.
- Use only one action verb since objectives with more than one verb imply that more than one activity or behavior is being measured.
- Avoid verbs that may have vague meanings to describe intended outcomes (e.g., “understand” or “know”) since it may prove difficult to measure them. Instead, use verbs that document action (e.g., “At the end of the session, the students will list three concerns...”)
- Remember, the greater the specificity, the greater the measurability.

2. **Measurable:**

- The focus is on “how much” change is expected. Objectives should quantify the amount of change expected. It is impossible to determine whether objectives have been met unless they can be measured.
- The objective provides a reference point from which a change in the target population can clearly be measured.

3. **Achievable:**

- Objectives should be attainable within a given time frame and with available program resources.

4. **Realistic:**

- Objectives are most useful when they accurately address the scope of the problem and programmatic steps that can be implemented within a specific time frame.
- Objectives that do not directly relate to the program goal will not help toward achieving the goal.

5. **Time-phased:**

- Objectives should provide a time frame indicating when the objective will be measured or a time by which the objective will be met.
- Including a time frame in the objectives helps in planning and evaluating the program.

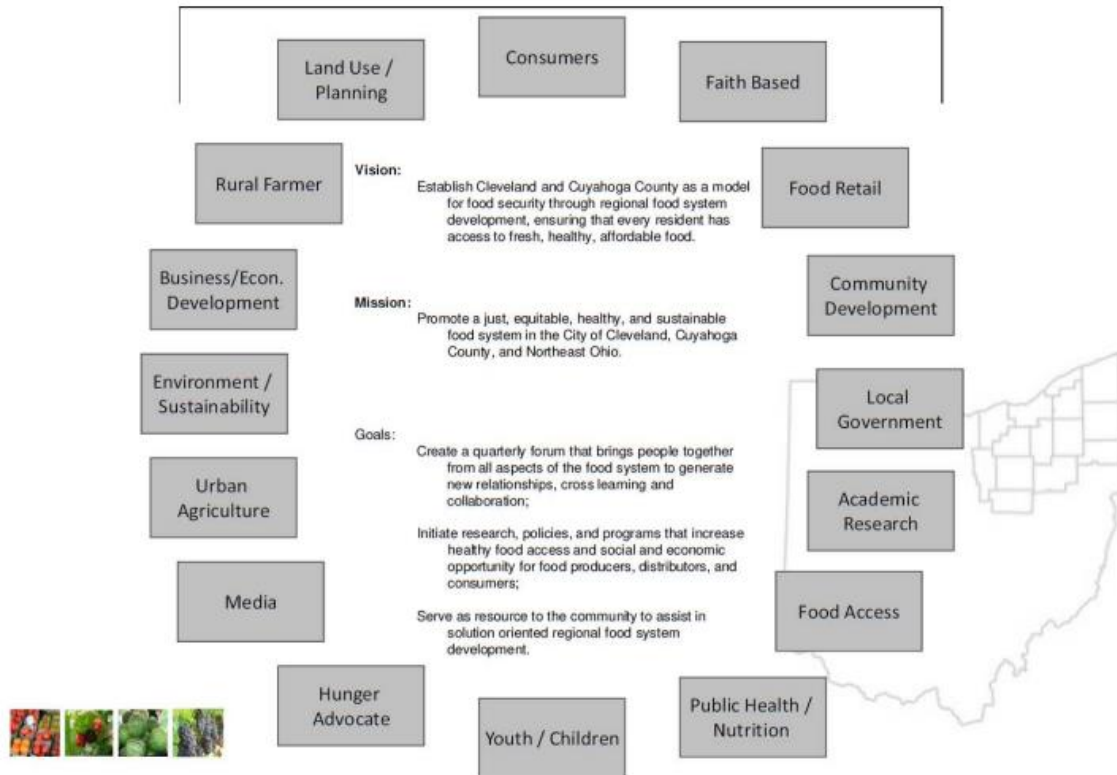
Sample budget for a local food policy council overseeing a population of 100,000:

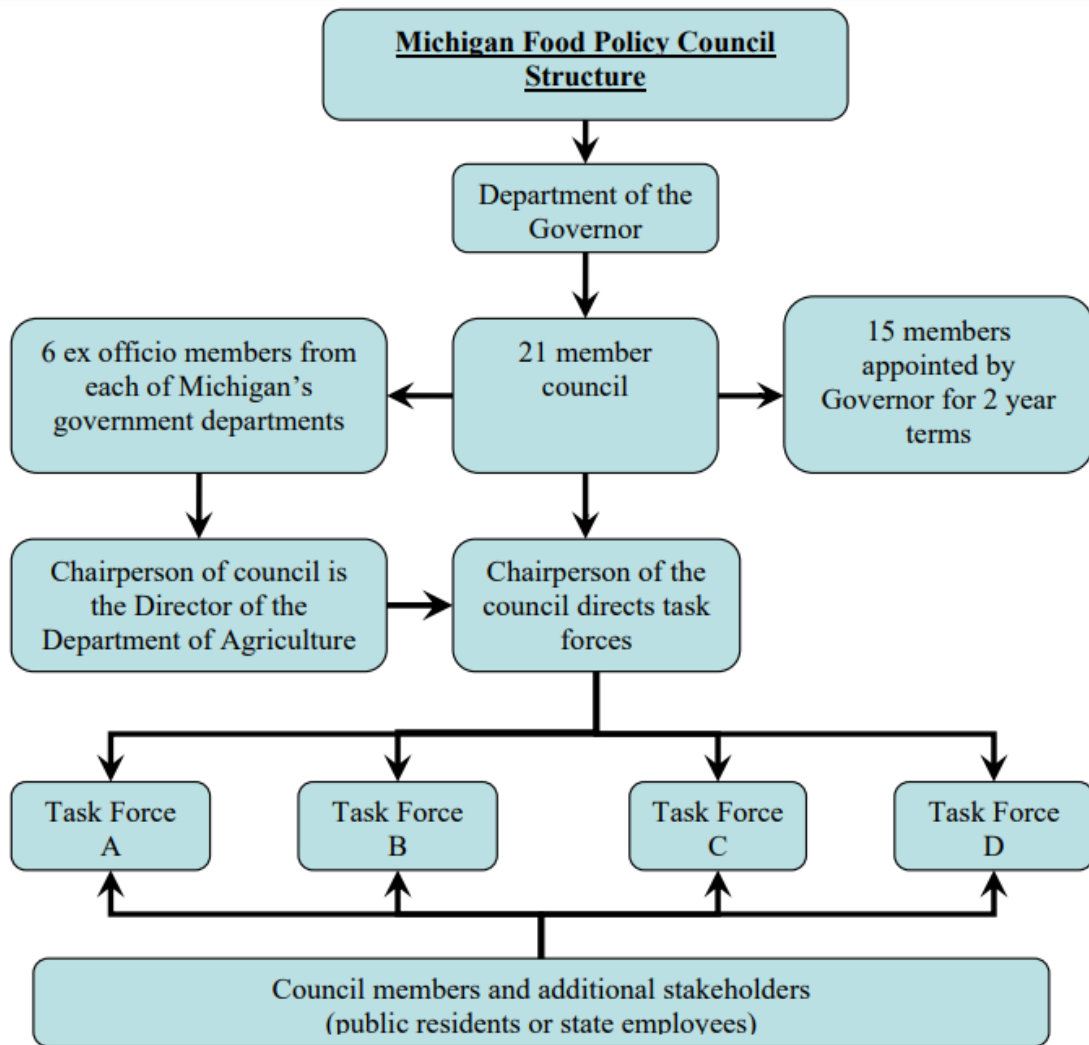
Food Policy Council Budget for 06-07					
	TOTAL	Community Foundation	City	Need unmet	TOTAL
Salary (of administrator)	\$4,375	\$3,750.00	\$625.00	\$-	\$4,375.00
Fringe benefits	\$787.50	\$250.00	\$537.50	\$-	\$787.50
Training	\$3,000.00	\$1,250.00	\$1,250.00	\$500.00	\$3,000.00
Forum	\$2,250.00	\$1,250.00	\$1,000.00	\$-	\$2,250.00
Supplies	\$275.00		\$87.50	\$187.50	\$275.00
TOTAL	\$10,687.50	\$6,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$687.50	\$10,687.50

*Source: Community Food Security Coalition

Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition

-Est. 2007-







It is important to move forward and alter the steps of this guide in order to best meet the needs of *your* local community. This Local Food Policy Council Guide is exactly that, a *guide*. It is not set out to be followed exactly, but rather to assist those who wish to create a food policy council in their community. It is important to note that the idea of local food policy councils is a relatively new concept so this guide will certainly be updated as new breakthroughs are discovered.

Appendix D: Additional Resources

<https://www.foodpolicynetworks.org/archive-directory/online/> Extensive directory of FPCs across the country (322 entries)

<https://www.foodpolicynetworks.org/archive-directory/> Pie chart of various FPCs and the level they operate under

[2020 Food Policy Networks \(arcgis.com\)](#) Interactive Map of FPC locations

<https://www.markwinne.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/FPC-manual.pdf> p51-54 of FPC manual, has tons of links to toolkits and resources on starting/running FPCs

https://assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod_clfResource/doc/Food%20Systems%20Data%20and%20Sources_October%202021%203.pdf food system statistics from across the US.

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