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• Resources: “Doing Food Policy Councils Right,” “Good Law, Good Food: Guide to Food Policy,” “Good Law...State Food Policy,”
• [www.foodpolicynetworks.org](http://www.foodpolicynetworks.org) : FPC resources, directory, and list serve
Why Have a Food Policy Council?

“No major famine has ever occurred in a functioning democracy with regular elections, opposition parties, basic freedom and relatively free media (even when the country is very poor).”

Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate Economist
Purposes of Food Policy Councils

• Influence government food policies, especially ones that promote justice, equity, and sustainability

• Coordinate efforts of food system stakeholders within a specified geography and jurisdictions

• Tend to favor policies over projects, but...

• Tend to not take on the most controversial food issues of the day

• Conduct food assessments and prepare food plans
Food Policy Council Growth & Orientation

• Specific geographic and jurisdictional focus: municipal, county, state (about 20), regional, and tribal
• Considers all elements of the food system
• Multi-stakeholder orientation
• 2010: 111 FPCs
• 2012: 193 FPCs
• 2014: 202 FPCs
FPCs: What They Do

• There are no “Departments of Food”; FPCs can be a de facto Dept. of Food
• FPCs are food system planning venues
• Membership: government, academia, community members, farmers and gardeners, food banks, distributors, restaurants, retailers, and faith communities
• Focus gov’t functions – health, planning, econ. development, education, agriculture, social services – on food system concerns
• FPCs advise policy makers, address food-related regulations, budgeting, legislation, programs and administration
Organizational Structure

FPCs can be created by:

• State statute (Conn.) or local ordinance (Douglas County, KS)
• An executive order (North Carolina) or local resolution (Santa Fe, NM)
• May be independently organized (government agencies participate but FPC is not a part of government: California, Cleveland)
• Can also be organized as non-profits (Iowa) or operate under the aegis of an existing non-profit (New Mexico)
• May operate with direct support from a state agency (Alaska Health Dept.)
Equity

- Composition of Food Policy Council members: Does it reflect the community?
- Commitment to community engagement: Do your food assessment and public consultation processes target lower income communities?
- Selection of policy issues: Do your primary public policy interventions address the community’s health, social, and economic disparities?
- Is there balance between policy makers, food system stakeholders, and grass roots? Ex: Top down – Mayors direct the work; bottom up – grass roots and private sector stakeholders direct the work
Determining Focus of a FPC

Use **Food System Assessments** to:
- Inform the work and focus of a FPC
- Engage the wider community
- Develop your community’s food profile
- Educate everyone about needs, gaps, resources and features of food system

**How:**
- Use existing studies, reports and stats; **supplement** with original research such key stakeholder interviews
- Conduct public forums and hearings

Often lead to: **Food Plans, Strategies, and Charters**

Remember: Don’t over do it! Stay grounded!
Purpose of Food Plan or Charter

• Secure stakeholder buy-in and participation in food system change
• Develop common policy agenda
• Identify food system opportunities and challenges
• Gather food system data
• Develop measurable goals
• Organize and coordinate stakeholders: Plan is more a means than an end
• Nurture the development of local and regional networks
Minnesota Food Charter (about 5 states have food charters) [www.MNfoodcharter.com](http://www.MNfoodcharter.com)

- Minnesota Blue Cross/Blue Shield Foundation played a major role
- No single backbone organization
- Cooperative Extension heavily involved
- About a two-year effort
- Local FPCs were involved
- Used collective impact approach

2500 participants, 200 events and convenings (some had 8 people; some 100), surveys and focus groups
Minnesota Continued:

- Major investment in relationship and network building is probably biggest outcome
- Some policy recommendations: 1) Establish Healthy Food Financing Initiative to combat food deserts; 2) Offer more high nutrition food at state food pantries; 3) provide tax credits to farmers for donated food to food pantries
- Political pushback: because MN is a big sugar beet state, the only major item left out of Charter was tax on sugary soft drinks.
Food Policies and Actions

• Supermarket Development (food to the people):
  - New Haven, Conn. (Dwight CDC)
  - Fresh Food Financing Initiative (Penn.)

• Optimizing impact of Federal nutrition programs
  - Improving WIC caseload and services in Hartford
  - Bringing EBT to farmers’ markets

• Public transportation (people to the food)
  - new bus routes in Hartford

• Procurement regulations that favor the purchase of locally produced food and support local economies – New Mexico and Los Angeles
Local & State Food Policy

• Farmland Preservation (Connecticut and Montana)

• Nutrition Rules in Schools and Farm to School (New Mexico)

• Improved farm economy (Michigan)

• Developing a local and sustainable food economy (Illinois)

• Comprehensive food planning (Massachusetts)
FPC Actions and Accomplishments

Cleveland/Cuyahoga County FPC:

• Secured zoning changes to promote urban agriculture and raising of chickens and bees

• Expanding food businesses with city economic development funds and using city/county purchasing funds for locally grown food

• Healthy Cleveland Initiative – Banning trans-fat; clash between public and private interests.
Funding and Staffing

• Funding
  – Federal: Community Food Projects; Center for Disease Control; Community Development Block Grants
  – Community funding: foundations; state, county, and city sources
  – In-kind support: colleges and universities, larger non-profits, Cooperative Extension

• Staffing: Most FPCs use one, half to full-time person; in-kind staffing from public agencies and larger non-profits
Lessons Learned (Challenges)

• Organizational effectiveness in a coalition setting determined by strength of vision and leadership
• Inclusivity of food system interests
• Engage community and policymakers
• On conflict: work for consensus; foster climate of healthy debate; evaluate and rate policy options
• Educate your members, the general public, and policymakers constantly; develop strong internal and external communication
• Set measurable goals and evaluate regularly
• Community food assessment is an on-going enterprise, not a one-time act
• Look for synergy between all levels of government
• Practice good facilitation skills