



## **Framing the Future:**

A planning resource for  
food policy councils

**FoodPolicyNetworks.org**  
Creating Opportunities to Strengthen Food Systems



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Throughout their evolution, many food policy councils (FPC) turn to strategic planning to help guide their efforts. Strategic planning helps councils focus efforts to fulfill their mission and vision by setting policy priorities and goals. Documents created through the planning process serve as engagement and advocacy tools, as well as roadmaps for the future. This resource is designed to guide you through the basics of a strategic plan and provide you with examples of plans from multiple jurisdictions.

FPCs do not have to start with a strategic plan to be effective. The planning process can be time consuming and a council may not yet have all the information or resources needed to develop a comprehensive plan. At some point in the process, not having a plan can lead to conflicting council interests, council efforts lacking in coordination, and time focused on non-priority work.

## What is a strategic plan?

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This resource includes both strategic plans and food plans. These terms, strategic plan and food plan, are often used interchangeably by FPCs. There are slight nuances between the two definitions:

**Strategic plan:** A strategic plan is developed and owned by a single entity, like a FPC, and provides a high level of detail on the direction of a council's work. A strategic plan is an outline of food policy activities to be accomplished by the council usually within a 3-5 year time period. The plan may include input from multiple stakeholders. A strategic plan can also include guidance on the structure, governance and operation of a council, including its working groups and committees.

**Food plan:** A food plan has the elements of a strategic plan but is owned by multiple stakeholders throughout the community. A FPC may be the primary convenor, sometimes called a backbone organization, for the plan but accountability and responsibility are more loosely defined and widely diffused among partner organizations throughout the community. A food plan represents a general degree of community consensus about what needs to be done and who should be doing it.

Both plans:

- Include community and stakeholder input
- Are driven by the mission and vision of the FPC
- Are a roadmap for future direction of food system work within a community

Most importantly, both strategic plans and food plans are informed by data. Some FPCs conduct their own research, through community food assessments, and others may rely upon secondary data sets from member organizations, or publically available data sets such as the agricultural census.

- If your council is interested in conducting an assessment, secondary data sets can be found here: [Maryland Food System Map Project: Data and Sources, 2016](#)
- When possible, goals, priorities, and policy recommendations should reflect assessment data

Developing any type of plan can be daunting. Some FPCs choose to begin with a food charter, which is shorter in length than a food plan but is developed with significant community buy-in. Its purpose is to function as a framework for council efforts and as a public document to influence the decision-making of local, regional or state governments.

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*“This plan is our map.  
When we find ourselves  
getting lost in the woods,  
we come back to this plan.  
It’s our basis.”*

*-Miles Gordon, Mendocino County  
Food Policy Council member*

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Often, FPC planning documents combine features of both strategic plans or food plans. For purposes of this resource, examples below include both strategic plans and food plans, without differentiation. It will be important for each FPC to decide which document is the most appropriate to achieve its goals.

### What is a plan's purpose?

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The purpose of a plan is to set priorities for a FPC, focus the energy and resources of members and partner organizations, ensure that stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes and metrics to evaluate council progress, and allow for flexibility in response to changing food systems and political environments.

A plan articulates an organization's vision, mission and goals, and the actions needed to achieve those goals with maximum efficiency and impact. Effective plans inform stakeholder activities, with both short and long-term goals in mind, and serve to bring together multiple sectors that may not typically work together to consider food system policies. Additionally, plans will specify the resources (time, money, staff, etc.) needed to accomplish actions and achieve goals, and how to measure success.

### Who develops the plan?

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Ideally, members of a FPC create a strategic plan with stakeholder input, within and outside of FPC membership. Stakeholders may include community members, community leaders, academic institutions, government offices, individuals involved in the local food system, etc. Plans include ideas and suggestions from stakeholder interviews, community meetings, town halls, planning meetings and retreats, and needs assessments.

### Should a plan have a timeline? If so, what is an appropriate time period?

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Timelines provide a framework for achieving goals and measuring success. Plan timelines are generally 3-5 years, but at least 2 years. Plans should be regularly reviewed to assess progress, preferably bi-annually. Keep in mind that flexibility is critically important, regardless of the timeframe covered by the plan. Reviewing a strategic plan should be with the intention of modifying it where necessary. This may mean changing objectives, timelines, and the implementation plan.

## What's in a plan?

Feature	Description	Answers the Question(s):
Mission Statement	Overarching statement of the council's purpose, or the desired influence of a council's work on the community or constituencies in the jurisdiction	Why do we exist? What, at the most basic level, do we do?
Vision Statement	One-sentence description articulating the desired future state of the community food system	Where do we want to be? What is the impact of our work?
Values Statement	The principles on which a council is built, that guide its planning, operations and programs	How we accomplish our goals?
Goals	Specific, desired outcomes for a council's operation or programs Tied to mission and vision	What do we want to accomplish?
Objectives	Short to medium term steps taken to reach goals Measurable and quantifiable More focused and specific than goals	What steps do we need to take to achieve our work?
Activities	Consist of approaches or sets of actions that contribute to achieving the objectives	How will we actually accomplish our work?
Implementation Plan or Work Plan	A "user's guide" to the strategic plan that spells out the cost, duration, priority order and accountability for each strategy Can be formatted as a chart or table	What are our specific priorities? How can we pursue our plan in a logical and feasible fashion?

# Plan Examples

## **Jurisdiction: State**

### Vermont 10-Year Strategic Plan – Executive Summary

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*Description:* This plan was developed and written by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund following state legislation for the Vermont Farm to Plate program. It informs Vermont’s farmers, entrepreneurs, consumers, legislators, and nonprofit organizations about the importance of the state’s food system. The plan encompasses all types and scales of agricultural production and processing, with the ultimate purpose of encouraging policies and strategic investments that promote strong local and regional food systems. Vermont is home to approximately 627,000 residents, with a strong historical and current agricultural industry.

*Key Topics:* State food system infrastructure, education, leadership and collective impact, economic development, environment

*Unique Features:* Comprehensive state-level plan with a heavy focus on rural agriculture. Developed in 2010, this plan features a 20-year outlook.

*Plan Timeline:* 20 years

*Scope of Plan Development:* Developed as a result of state legislation in 2009, which enacted the Farm to Plate (F2P) program. The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund interviewed 250 individuals, conducted focus groups throughout the state, reaching over 1,200 community members, and held in-depth working sessions with designated stakeholders. This plan was facilitated with assistance from the state and local government, philanthropic funders, researchers, and local organizations.

*Time Commitment for Plan Development:* 18 months

*Related Document:* Full Plan

## West Virginia's Road Map for The Food Economy: A Tool for Focusing Action, Measuring Progress and Celebrating Success

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*Description:* “Road Map for the Food Economy” was developed by the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition with support from government departments – both state and local – individuals throughout the state and academic institutions. The plan offers a vision for West Virginia’s local food economy and provides ways of measuring how statewide and local policies, programs, and community efforts are contributing to the strength of the food economy. It contains two parts: an action plan for building a food and farm economy over the next five years, and a “Food Economy Score Card” which allows the state to measure collective progress towards the main goals. West Virginia has approximately 8.5 million residents and is predominantly rural.

*Key Topics:* Food access, procurement, economic development, agriculture, farmer development

*Unique Features:* Each overarching goal features “change needed”, next steps, and success measurements; features a “score card” for state food-related trends, with issue descriptors, indicators of progress, and if the issue is getting “better” or “worse”.

*Plan Timeline:* 5 years

*Scope of Plan Development:* To develop this plan, the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition collaborated with multiple partners, convened over 300 participants through six regional roundtables, issue-focused day-long action planning meetings, and stakeholder based working groups.

*Time Commitment for Plan Development:* 1 year

## Feeding Kansas: Statewide Farm & Food System Assessment with a Plan for Public Action

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*Description:* Written by the Kansas Rural Center (KRC), as part of a state-wide partnership with other food and health-related organizations, “Feeding Kansas” calls for a food system that better incorporates state farms into the supply chain that provide Kansans with healthful foods. The report has a heavy policy focus - with calls to action for both policymakers and community members. Kansas is home to more than 2.9 million people and has a strong agrarian history.

*Key Topics:* Food access, local and state food system infrastructure, policy, community and stakeholder engagement, food procurement

*Unique Features:* Strong policy focus on food access and increasing healthy food for state residents; comprehensive section detailing the report development process; includes recommended food policy position descriptions, both independent and extension-based, and includes an appendix on the impact of pollinators and the food supply.

*Plan Timeline:* 2.5 years

*Scope of Plan Development:* “Feeding Kansas” developed through stakeholder engagement and qualitative research conducted by the Kansas Rural Center. This report captures the Center’s findings after engaging with hundreds of community members, farmers, policymakers, and others about the capacity of the state’s food system. Technical assistance was provided by the Public Health Law Center at William Mitchell College of Law.

*Time Commitment for Plan Development:* 1 year



## ***Jurisdiction: County***

### Kitsap County Strategic Agricultural Plan and Inventory

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*Location:* Kitsap County, WA

*Description:* This plan was developed and written by the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners, with contributions from other government representatives, local institutions, organizations, and community members. With a focus on agriculture, land usage and preservation, the plan uses those topic areas to inform other goals such as education and economic development. Kitsap County has approximately 250,000 residents, is located between Seattle-Tacoma and Olympic Peninsula, and features diverse agricultural outputs - crops, horticultural products, livestock, and fish.

*Key Topics:* Local food production, land use and preservation, education, economic development

*Unique Features:* Focuses on rural agriculture, farming, land preservation

*Plan Timeline:* N/A

*Scope of Plan Development:* With assistance from a \$25,000 grant from Washington State Conservation Commission the Board convened multiple interdisciplinary stakeholders to develop the strategic plan. GIS (geographic information system) and data from the Kitsap Conservation District, National Cooperative Soil Conservation Service, the County Assessor's Office, the Department of Community Development, the County Health District, and the Kitsap Community and Agricultural Alliance were utilized to complete the plan.

*Time Commitment for Plan Development:* N/A

## Mendocino County Food Action Plan

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*Location:* Mendocino County, CA

*Description:* This plan was developed and written by the Mendocino County Food Policy Council with support from local government representatives, local organizations, and community members. The plan features a series of goals and actions, with five supporting principles guiding the priorities. Mendocino County has approximately 88,000 residents, with a historically agrarian industry, and is impacted by disparities between food produced and consumed in the county, and food imported and exported.

*Key Topics:* Economic development, healthy food access, environment, community engagement

*Unique Features:* Use of the term “our” throughout the plan conveys a sense of shared responsibility, values, and community engagement.

*Plan Timeline:* N/A

*Scope of Plan Development:* Developed as a result of a local food summit, three political stakeholder events, one “public at large” meeting with approximately 150 county members in attendance, and followed by town halls in three different regions throughout the county, with 40-60 community members at each.

*Time Commitment for Plan Development:* 3 year

## Planning for Santa Fe's Food Future: Querencia - A story of food, farming and friends

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*Location:* Santa Fe, NM (City and County)

*Description:* "Planning for Santa Fe's Food Future" was developed by the Santa Fe Food Policy Council. This report bridges local, state, and national issues pertaining to food. The Council itself is committed to recommending policies that create and maintain a reliable and sustainable food system, which is reflected throughout the report. The Santa Fe FPC resulted from a joint city/county resolution and the report pertains to both the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County. Santa Fe County is home to more than 144,000 residents, and features produce and crop farming, as well as ranching.

*Key Topics:* Food security, food access, education, food system infrastructure, environment, land stewardship

*Unique Features:* This plan is divided into three sections: "Getting Food," "Growing Food," and "Learning About Food." Each section provides a list of recommendations supporting organizations that should take responsibility for action item implementation.

*Plan Timeline:* 3 years

*Scope of Plan Development:* This report resulted from extensive community-level research with stakeholders, including 60 one-on-one interviews and six community dialogue sessions. A review of current food system policies, programs, and regulations was also conducted. The report aims to align council recommendations with existing city and county plans.

*Time Commitment for Plan Development:* N/A

## ***Jurisdiction: City***

### Community Food Action Initiative: Project Overview and Kamloops Food Action Plan

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*Location:* Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada

*Description:* The plan was developed through a collaboration of the Interior Health Authority, City of Kamloops and the Kamloops Food Policy Council. The purpose of the Community Food Action Initiative is to increase the capacity of the Kamloops Food Policy Council (KFPC), City of Kamloops, and other identified stakeholders to further support food policy in and around Kamloops. The City of Kamloops has had a Food Charter since the 1990s and was incorporated into city policy in 2002. This plan builds on the charter's main goals and principles. Kamloops has approximately 83,000 residents.

*Key Topics:* Economic development, community engagement, healthy food access

*Unique Features:* The plan is organized by a Food Action Continuum, which features four elements: short-term relief actions, capacity building strategies, food policy development and redesign, and economic development.

*Plan Timeline:* 4 years

*Scope of Plan Development:* Over 75 individuals and agencies were consulted throughout the initiative. Participants commented on the current status of food security and policy throughout Kamloops. Recommendations were provided as part of these discussions and through the Food Action Forum. The Forum was a one day facilitated workshop to explore goals and actions to enhance food security in Kamloops.

*Time Commitment for Plan Development:* 1 year

## Transforming the Oakland Food System: A Plan for Action

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*Location:* Oakland, California

*Description:* This report was developed by the Oakland Food Policy Council, a 21-seat council created to analyze the Oakland food system from production through consumption and waste management, and recommend changes to make the system more equitable and sustainable. The council coordinates between food system sectors; bringing underserved populations to the food policy table and recommending policies for a healthier, more prosperous city. Four pillar goals supporting six values, with ten recommended steps make up the bulk of this plan. Oakland is home to approximately 414,000 residents, with a diverse population, and a strong focus on urban agriculture, sustainability practices and community engagement.

*Key Topics:* Zoning, healthy food access, procurement, food waste, environment

*Unique Features:* Priorities are set by values, with a fiscal impact listed for each goal. Also features a “Policy and Agency Scan Introduction” appendix, with details regarding a local policy database.

*Plan Timeline:* N/A

*Scope of Plan Development:* The Oakland Food Policy Council convened seven working groups, collaborated with multiple partners, and received significant funding to develop this plan.

*Time Commitment for Plan Development:* 1 year

## fresh: Edmonton's Food & Urban Agriculture Strategy

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*Location:* Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

*Description:* fresh was developed by a collaboration of interdisciplinary groups within the City of Edmonton. The plan's foundation consists of five goals, with nine strategic directions stemming from the goals, and each direction is supported by respective recommendations. The plan is considered a starting point. An implementation plan was subsequently developed after completion of the initial plan. It looks at both small and large scale innovation opportunities, and considers local, regional and provincial contexts in its approaches and recommendation. Edmonton is a growing urban city, with over 800,000 residents, and this plan focuses on urban agriculture.

*Key Topics:* Food system infrastructure, urban agriculture, economic development, land use, transit, education, community engagement, food waste

*Unique Features:* Main focus on local urban agriculture; dives into the concept of peri-urban and other levels of urban communities; extensive appendices.

*Plan Timeline:* N/A (see additional resources)

*Scope of Plan Development:* fresh: Edmonton's Food and Agriculture Strategy, was developed by an Advisory Committee comprised of 15 stakeholders and experts in agriculture, food systems, economic, community and land development, and supported by project consultants and City staff. Additionally, over 3,000 local citizens participated in various ways in order to engage stakeholders from many diverse areas of urban agriculture. This plan was developed to with existing City plans, priorities and budgets.

*Time Commitment for Plan Development:* 1 year

*Related Document:* fresh: Edmonton Implementation Plan

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For additional examples of plans, and other resources, check out our resource database <http://www.foodpolicynetworks.org/food-policy-resources/>

If you have a plan you want to share, email us at [contactus@foodpolicynetworks.org](mailto:contactus@foodpolicynetworks.org)