

Funding Food Policy Councils: Stories from the Field

Case Studies

- Colorado Food Policy Advisory Council
- Douglas County Food Policy Council (Lawrence, KA)
- Metro Food Access Network (Minneapolis, MN)
- Duval County Food Policy Council (Jacksonville, FL)
- Baltimore Food Policy Initiative
- New Mexico Food & Agriculture Council



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Summary

Food policy council (FPC) leaders consistently report challenges in securing and sustaining funding for staffing, council activities, and general operations. Initial funds may only provide for a few years of a council's operations; a council may decide to transition its focus areas, changing which funders the FPC attracts; local government resources may become available (or dry up). As a FPC's initiatives grow, it may need to increase its staff support. All of these reasons and more make funding a continuous challenge for FPCs.

Since FPCs exist at a variety of jurisdictional levels, and with a variety of organizational structures and priorities, it follows that there is no single model for successfully funding an FPC. In this report, we describe the stories of how six city, county, and state FPCs across the country have funded their efforts over their years of existence.

Although the stories vary greatly, one of the recurring themes indicates that most councils pursue multiple funding streams to support their work. Other notable lessons are summarized in the bullet points below. Commentary provided by Mark Winne.

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Key Takeaways:

- Engage funders from a variety of angles (health, environment, community development, etc.) for maximum support.
- Reach out to funders with distant but related priority areas.
- Diversify support by requesting small amounts from multiple government agencies and/or foundations.
- Understand which food system issues resonate most with your target audiences.
- Demonstrate success to attract additional resources to your council.
- Collaborate with other FPCs to reduce duplicative efforts.
- Expand initiatives across county and other jurisdictional boundaries to be eligible for state or regional funding, as well as enhance policy collaboration and systems change.
- Extension positions can play a key role in networking stakeholder groups and attracting support for food system policy changes.
- In some instances, funders interested in policy, advocacy, and systems change provide the impetus for the launch of FPCs.
- Model funding transitions on successful ones by other community groups and coalitions.
- Leverage support from academic partners to assist in research, grant collaboration, and other council activities.



Colorado Food Policy Advisory Council

Wendy Peters Moschetti, Staff

The Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) was created as a state advisory body of 15 governor-appointed members via state legislation passed in 2010 (and renewed in 2013). As no financial support was attached to either bill, the council's staffing and operations have been supported by LiveWell Colorado, a state nonprofit that initiated the legislative process to create the council. In-kind resources, including meeting space, photocopying capabilities, and conference call lines, have been provided to the council by some government agencies on the council (Departments of Public Health and Environment, Human Services, Agriculture, and Education).

LiveWell Colorado was created as a partnership between Kaiser Permanente, The Colorado Health Foundation, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to curb increasing rates of obesity through healthy eating and active living initiatives. Since the council's inception, LiveWell Colorado knew that it would be contributing a significant amount of its funding. In addition to funds from Live Well, CDPHE allocated \$50,000 from its 2010 American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Prevention & Wellness state funds to LiveWell to support the council for two years (primarily used to pay staff) to focus on obesity prevention through food policy.



Council members learn about getting apples to market at Ela Family Farms.

LiveWell Colorado originally hoped that other foundations would also contribute to the council, never intending to be the long-term sole funder. Thus, it began phasing out its funding to end in 2015. Currently in transition, the council is requesting a small amount of funds from each of the four government agencies, in addition to continued in-kind support, to provide fiscal sustainability.



Council members visit a small, fully integrated farming operation on the Western Slope.

Challenges arose due to the mandate that the state advisory council must only provide recommendations on increasing healthy food access across the state and cannot directly make or endorse specific policies. Thus, as time went on, members of the state council realized the need for a Colorado Food Policy Network, which coordinates collective statewide action and builds the capacity of local coalitions to effect change at the local level. The network seeks to develop a collaborative structure to fill in the gaps between what the advisory council can do, and what councils and other stakeholders around the state would like to pursue. LiveWell Colorado has been providing funding for Wendy Peters Moschetti, a food systems consultant, to manage the network and will continue providing this funding.

Wendy discussed other strategies they have used to fund their specific projects. As food policy is such an interdisciplinary field, they have begun reaching out to funders who may not specifically recognize their link to food systems, and then proposing where their common interests lie. She discussed the connection between food systems and health equity with The Colorado Trust, a health equity foundation. Although the council did not qualify for one of the foundation's specific grant requests, it was able to receive a \$25,000 grant with discretionary funds to support a regional action institute to build skills for councils, telecommunication, and a peer mentoring networking. It also received a \$7,500 grant from the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union to design a shared digital backbone to support its state-wide networking work. Another helpful tip she learned is that many foundations do not require going through the full review process for grants under their discretionary level – which could be \$15,000 to \$25,000.



Council member presents on the state's WIC Farm to Family pilot project to a local coalition.

The vast majority of food systems work in Colorado has been driven from a health perspective – with most funding and support coming from public health foundations and departments. Focusing on the importance of health and access in Colorado has been an effective strategy for this council, more so than pursuing support from agricultural, environmental, or economic development interests. Each state and locality will be different, however, and FPCs should consider which food system issues resonate most with their public, non-profit, and policy stakeholders.

Commentary

State food policy councils like Colorado's have often had difficulty raising funds, i.e. getting an appropriation, from their state governments. Ongoing work with legislatures and state agencies is necessary to educate public officials about the value and role of FPCs, and specifically how they add value to the work of state government. This kind of education should be part and parcel of a strong communication strategy that conveys the purpose, issues, and actions of the FPC to the public and policy makers alike.

All FPCs, both state and local, have tended to be reluctant to request government funding during their development phase, especially when the FPC is formally connected to government. It is advisable to make it clear from the outset that the government entity creating the FPC should also contribute funding on an annual basis to the FPC budget. At the same time, the FPC can and should also seek supplemental funding from other public (e.g. federal) and private sources, such as foundations.

One other note of caution: FPCs should be careful about relying too much on so-called project funds – funding that is too narrowly focused on one aspect of an FPC's work may drain time and resources from core activities that support the broader work of the FPC.

Douglas County Food Policy Council (Lawrence, Kansas)

Eileen Horn, Sustainability Coordinator for Douglas County and the City of Lawrence, Staff

The Douglas County Food Policy Council received its initial funding (\$7,000 annually) through a county commission resolution that established the council in 2010. This funding has been used to send FPC members to conferences, host educational events, pay an intern \$2,500 during the year, and support small projects. In December 2013, the FPC became a joint effort between the city (Lawrence) and county commissions, which both provide funding for Sustainability Coordinator Eileen Horn's time as staff support for the FPC. In addition, four hours of monthly staff time is provided by the commissions to fund the Assistant Director of Planning to attend the council meetings.



The FPC is supporting small and medium sized producers explore the creation of a regional food hub to expand their markets beyond direct-to-consumer to wholesale.

Due to the council's success so far, it will be receiving additional staff support soon. In September 2014, the Health Department was awarded a CDC Partners in Community Health grant (\$1.3 million) to fund four staff positions and various projects. One of those positions has been designated as the Food Systems Coordinator who will work full-time for three years solely on food systems projects, allowing Eileen to return to broader sustainability ones. The position will be paid \$45,000 a year fulltime with benefits.

One strategy that the council has used has involved framing access to healthy foods and local foods together as interconnected issues. By overlapping these health and sustainability issues, council has received funding from new places such as the Kansas Health Foundation and the CDC.



The FPC worked with the City of Lawrence to start the Common Ground community gardening program that offers city-owned vacant properties to citizens for free.

A majority of the council's funding over the past two years has been project-related. They received a \$58,000 USDA Rural Development grant, and an additional \$10,000 from the Kansas Health Foundation, to conduct a Food Hub Feasibility study. At the same time that this study was underway, the Kansas City Food Policy Coalition was also pursuing one. Eileen worked with their coalition to ensure that the different consultant teams hired by the two groups would collaborate on data collection. Once the Douglas County FPC and the Kansas City Coalition received their separate reports and recommendations, they then

combined members from both councils to create a food hub implementation team through which to carry out the recommended next steps for creating a single regional food hub. They are in the process of working with producers and attracting investors now.



The FPC coordinates a Market Match program, raising funds from public bodies and private foundations to match SNAP benefits dollar-for-dollar at regional farmers markets.



The FPC also hosts the annual Chefs Challenge at the Douglas County Fair; an event which promotes local food and healthy eating at our County's signature agricultural event.

The Douglas County FPC has worked with the Health Department and LiveWell Lawrence to solicit funding for a SNAP dollar matching program at farmers markets. The program was initially funded by the city, county commission, and Health Department, and had only two markets in 2014 (about \$12,000 spent). The council sought additional charitable donations for 2015 from the Topeka Community Foundation and Kansas Health Foundation to expand to a more regional focus. Thus, this year, the program will be hosted at all farmers markets in Douglas County as well as additional regional markets, for a total budget of \$40,000.

The council is also looking at partnering with local home and garden stores to figure out how SNAP recipients can learn that they can use benefits to buy seeds, and marketing market worksite CSAs to SNAP recipients.

The Kansas Health Foundation has been seeking to support more policy/systems/environmental change work, and has supported the development and work of other FPCs in the state through planning (up to \$10,000 for food system assessments and foundation building) and implementation (up to \$40,000) grants.

Commentary

The Douglas County Food Policy Council has benefited from “getting its foot in the door” for government funding right from its outset. Like other Kansas organizations, the Douglas County FPC has also benefited from the presence of the Kansas Health Foundation, which clearly understands the importance of supporting community-based food system and policy initiatives. Additionally, the FPC has leveraged its position within government to secure staff support, partner with other initiatives (e.g. sustainability), and participate in a federally funded grant.

While it has pursued separate funding for more project-specific work, namely a food hub feasibility study and a SNAP project, the FPC has done so efficiently and in partnership with other groups. The project work has not appreciatively distracted the FPC from its core policy functions.

Metro Food Access Network (Minneapolis, MN)

Jamie Bain, Health and Nutrition Extension Educator

The Metro Food Access Network (MFAN) aims to leverage collective capacity of partners to advance equitable access to healthy food for all Twin Cities metro residents. The network began in 2012 with initial pilot funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield's Center for Prevention Healthy Eating Minnesota grant, which was non-renewable and lasted 18 months. The local public health department in Hennepin County provided additional funding under Minnesota's Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), which supports healthy eating, active living, and tobacco cessation initiatives. The funding supported the University of Minnesota Extension Health and Nutrition program's role as the backbone organization for MFAN, along with



MFAN partners networking at a quarterly meeting.

other administrative costs such as room reservations, refreshments, travel, and printing costs. Additionally, Extension's SNAP-Ed funding supports Jamie Bain, a Health and Nutrition Extension Educator, as MFAN coordinator. As a public employee, Jamie's role as staff support for the network has some restrictions. For example, she cannot advocate for specific policies or calls to action; she can facilitate interactions between network members.

As it transitioned out of the Blue Cross Blue Shield funding, MFAN expanded its funding in 2014 to include SHIP dollars from not only Hennepin County, but also Ramsey and Dakota counties. As the network develops and begins to garner success in policy and systems work in the metro region, it hopes to expand funding to all eight of the metro health departments currently funded under SHIP dollars in 2015. The SHIP program is written in as a line item in the state budget, thus it is a relatively sustainable long-term funding source. MFAN works in collaboration with other food system groups in the Twin Cities region including Homegrown Minneapolis and the St. Paul – Ramsey County FPC (also funded through SHIP).

With this funding structure, MFAN has galvanized strong support from local public health departments, nonprofit organizations, small food retailers, hunger relief agencies, university and extension staff, and since it covers multiple counties in the metro region, numerous state agencies including the Departments of Health, Education, Agriculture, and Human Services.

Commentary

This case illustrates the funding value of taking regional approaches. This may be easier in larger metro areas with broader jurisdictional funding authorities, but it's also worth considering in rural areas where foundations and government agencies may support multi-county initiatives.

Similar to an increasing number of FPCs, metro Minneapolis has taken advantage of the inclusion of food systems in the broader area of health funding. Minnesota's SHIP is a good example of that.

While not all states may have a SHIP or Blue Cross/Blue Shield Foundation, continuing to educate potential funders on the connection between food policy and health is one long-term strategy.

Duval County Food Policy Council (Jacksonville, Florida)

Laureen Husband, Director of Healthy Jacksonville at Florida Department of Health

The Duval County Department of Health received a four-year Healthy Kids, Health Communities grant in December 2009 from the Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) Foundation. As one of RWJ's strategies for food systems change encouraged starting FPCs, the department helped launch the Duval County Food Policy Council in 2011 using some of the grant funds.

One of the Health Department's roles is to convene community partners to address issues related to social determinants of health, including food access. Thus, the food policy council concept has fit very well with the department's strategic plan and mission. As the FPC has evolved, it has transitioned to a stand-alone group – completely community-based in which the Health Department merely facilitates and staffs the organization. 1.5 FTE staff members are dedicated to the council – funded by the Statewide Healthiest Weight Initiative and partly by Florida Blue Foundation (a health insurance foundation). The Health Department also provides in-kind support such as a place for meetings and conference call lines.



Mary Puckett from the University of Florida Extension Service educating a summit attendee on how to grow food seasonably.

Additional funding for special events that the council hosts, such as its annual food summit, has come from the FPC's 60+ members and community partners. For the FPC, being housed under the Department of Health poses some limitations in terms of the agency accepting funds for a community group. Once those funds are in the state system, access to them is cumbersome due to the rigorous processes in place. To avoid these barriers, the FPC has often designated other credible agencies in the community to serve as the fiscal agent.



Attendees waiting for the keynote speaker at the 2012 Food Summit.

The Health Department plans to transition the FPC from an initiative under its management to a 501(c)(3) organization with its own fiscal agent and funding. It plans to follow a similar trajectory to other coalitions it has launched, such as the First Coast Worksite Wellness Council. That council began as an initiative of Healthy Jacksonville, and transitioned into community-based 501(c)(3) organization with its own funding streams. The Health Department retains a seat at the table as a board member. As the Food Policy Council undergoes this process over the next few years, the Health Department will continue to provide staff support until it can find and fund a director.



Chartwells chefs demonstrating how to make healthy snacks to summit attendees.



State Representative Mia Jones discusses the importance of food policies, while Phil Bors (at the podium), from Active Living By Design, speaks about the journey Jacksonville has made from the creation of the FPC to the present.

Commentary

Duval County FPC finds itself in the position of being a “start-up,” in a quasi-entrepreneurial fashion, of the Florida/Duval County Health Department. This may be a unique role, but it’s entirely replicable if a government agency sees its role as empowering citizens and smaller community organizations rather than simply treating them as program extensions or grantees of their larger functions. In effect, the Health Department has assumed the role of capacity builder for the FPC, and it has also provided assistance in finding additional sources of funding.

On the transition of the FPC to its own 501(c)(3) status, it would be advisable to carefully analyze this option. Developing and maintaining your own non-profit corporation should only be done if there is no other option, e.g. a suitable fiscal sponsor or umbrella organization is not available, or if the work of the FPC has become so substantial that it truly warrants its corporation. Fiscal sponsorship and other kinds of support can free the FPC from additional administrative duties that can be more efficiently shared with other groups, some of which may be members of the FPC.

Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

Holly Freishtat, Baltimore Food Policy Director

Baltimore City used an innovative strategy to launch its food policy initiative through pooled funding from foundations, which led to local government support. In 2009, the Baltimore Food Policy Task Force – a body convened by the Mayor, Health Commissioner, and Department of Planning – released ten recommendations related to healthy and sustainable food. This “roadmap” for action laid out a clear plan to increase access to healthy affordable food, and stated the need for a full-time position to coordinate all food policy-related efforts. The Task Force recognized that the position would require outside funding to establish early successes and create buy-in, but acknowledged that a truly sustainable policy initiative would eventually garner local government support.

The Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers hosted a forum to educate member funders on supporting food systems work. Four foundations –Abell Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF), and Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic – agreed to jointly provide \$70,000 to fund a food policy position in 2010. To facilitate that process, BCF created the Sustainability Food Fund to support the City’s food policy work and serve as the fiscal agent to hire a Food Policy Director. The part-time contractor position was housed in the Department of Planning’s Office of Sustainability, with the intention that once additional funds were secured, it would become full-time.

With the support of Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Holly Freishtat began her duties as Food Policy Director by establishing the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI), an intergovernmental collaboration of city agencies. BFPI also convenes Food Policy Advisory Committee (Food PAC) – Baltimore’s version of a food policy council, comprised of 60 stakeholder organizations – to collaborate and drive the coordinated implementation of the Task Force recommendations.



Mayor Stephanie-Rawlings Blake (center) and Holly Freishtat (far left) are joined by farmers and participants of the Homegrown Baltimore Employee Wellness CSA.

After one year, Freishtat became a City employee and no longer relied on grant funding for her salary, yet the relationship between the City and the Sustainability Food Fund remains very important. When BFPI proposes new permanent positions in City government, it comes to the table with matching grant funds for programmatic and implementation expenses. Through this strategy, BFPI has grown to include three additional full-time City-funded positions, plus several grant-funded employees. Over the last five years, BFPI has secured approximately \$1.2 million in grants to address food access from seven foundations, with continued support from Abell Foundation and Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic. More than half of those funds have gone to support other agencies and organizations, including the Lexington and Public Markets, Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts, and Baltimore City Public Schools' Food and Nutrition Services.



Baltimore Farmers Market and Bazaar, a program of the Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts.

With this unique funding structure, BFPI can foster leadership on food policy within City government and throughout funding and partner organizations. Building credibility and showing success early on helped BFPI solidify the importance of food policy work in Baltimore and bring many partners to the table to create meaningful accomplishments. In turn, these accomplishments have helped BFPI leverage additional funding, creating a sustainable way to continue to create change in Baltimore's food system.

For a more detailed description of the start of the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, read this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2014.043.012>

Commentary

Baltimore is a good illustration of how public entities and private foundations can collaborate from the outset to use private funding during the "start-up" phase of a FPC, and then transition to more permanent funding from the public sector. It also points to the growing trend, at least in larger cities, of having city staff assigned, full-time and even part-time, to food issues. The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future's role in helping convene stakeholders to create and support the work of the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (described [in this article](#)) demonstrates how universities can also prove valuable assets in the development of FPCs. One might imagine a synthesis of the Duval County approach to empowering citizen groups and the City of Baltimore's commitment to food issues in the form of permanent city staffing.

It should also be noted that the adage that "success breeds success" was never truer than with the Baltimore case. Holly Freishtat's track record in securing outside grants and demonstrating solid policy and program results earned the FPC deserved recognition that led to more city government support.

New Mexico Food & Agriculture Council

Pam Roy, Director

The New Mexico Food & Agriculture Council was established in 2002 through a series of convenings and a final strategic plan developed by a broad base of public and private sector organizations and agencies. This initial planning and development of the Council was supported by a USDA Community Food Project grant.

In 2003 a legislative memorial¹ provided definition to the role of the FPC and assured the governor's support. At the same time, a piece of legislation allocated initial funding of \$25,000 for the council, which was re-appropriated for three years. As the government's financial support began sun-setting, the council started developing relationships with several foundations.

The local foundations, including the McCune Foundation, Santa Fe Community Foundation, Albuquerque Community Foundation, Taos Foundation, and PNM Resources Foundation, came together to create a pool of resources to focus on ending hunger. Over time, the focus of this funding pot has changed from hunger to more food system/policy work. A portion of this funding is channeled through the nonprofit organization Farm to Table New Mexico, of which Pam Roy is the Executive Director. The council's largest supporter, the McCune Foundation, provides funding for a portion of the council's general operations and staffing (which includes 50% of Pam's time and occasional subcontracting for other food policy work).



Farm tour at Wagner Farms with leadership from State and Federal delegations, photo by Deanna Perez.

Some of the council's projects have been funded through specific partnerships. For instance, the Congressional Hunger Center provided two "fellows" for two research reports that created some of the most significant policy recommendations of the FPC – "Closing New Mexico's Food Gap" (2004) and "Healthy Kids, Healthy Economy: Farm to School Programs in NM" (2007). More recently, the Thornburg Foundation funded the council to produce a research paper on procurement, which now drives several of their specific policy aims.

Meanwhile, some of the council's specific policy successes, such as its Farm to School legislation and a new component to increase the Double Up Food Bucks program for New Mexico farmers markets, have been funded through the state appropriations process.

¹ According to the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law: "Memorials are a legislative measure containing a request or proposal to a named recipient (President of the United States, Congress, or federal agencies). They petition a recipient to act on an issue that the Arizona Legislature does not have jurisdiction to act upon itself. Memorials are merely requests and have no official standing or effect. Memorials may be presented for consideration in either one house (simple) or both houses (concurrent)."

Farm to Table New Mexico has helped fund local FPCs in New Mexico, too. The organization approached the Con Alma Health Foundation, which focuses on systemic approaches to improving health in New Mexico, and introduced them to the Convergence Partnership grant. Con Alma received the Convergence grant, and Farm to Table New Mexico has been one of their primary partners in implementing the grant initiatives. One of these includes funding new local FPCs throughout New Mexico, providing advocacy training, and hosting meetings to network at the state level. In addition to housing the statewide council, Farm to Table New Mexico houses the local Santa Fe Food Policy Council, and helped pass a resolution endorsed by the city and county to fund most of its operations.



New Mexico Food and Farms Day at the legislature, 2014.

Commentary

The New Mexico Food and Agriculture Council story demonstrates how a committed backbone organization – in this case Farm to Table – can make a significant difference in the development and operation of a FPC. It is one of many examples in which a non-profit food organization has played the lead role in developing and funding an FPC, whether it seeks funding from the public sector and/or the private sector, or even providing a significant amount of in-kind support.

This approach stands in contrast to FPC development efforts that grow directly out of government, and depend on the support – financial, political, and even emotional – of elected officials. It also demonstrates how a close working relationship with government is necessary for both funding and policy achievements, but how, at the same time, the independent status of the backbone organization and the FPC insulate it from changing political circumstances.