THE FUTURE OF FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY
County Assessment and Strategic Framework for Change

A Project of the Stark Community Foundation

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Prepared September 2014

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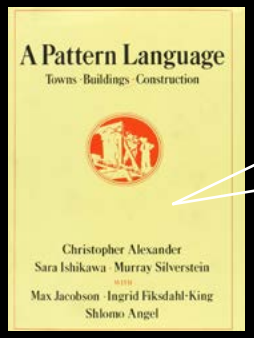

A "Pattern Language" is a guidebook for intentional design around more connected and healthy communities. Each section is split with a sample Pattern applied to a healthy food system. These provide visual cues to the information in the report. Click the book cover to learn more!

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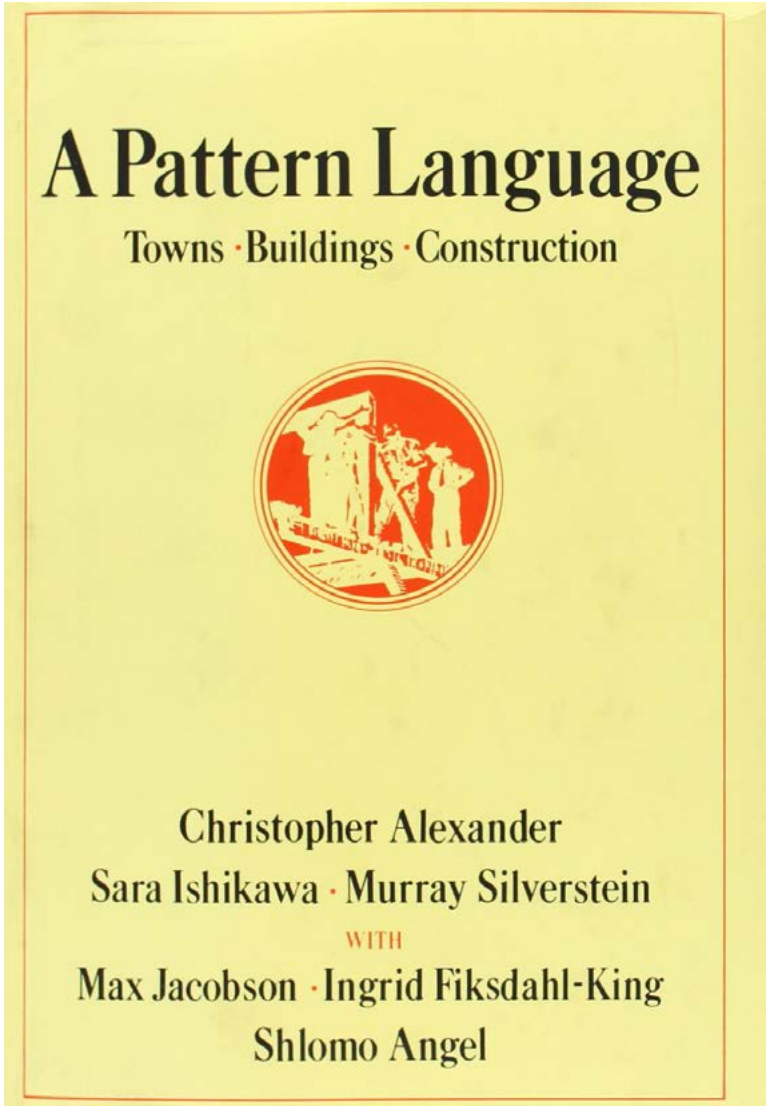

Local food systems will thrive to the extent that there are supporting patterns in urban centers that encourage more direct connections between people, food, land, and community. From urban agriculture to efficient food distribution, embedding a local food system into the fabric of a city can improve quality of life, community connectivity, rural and urban interaction, and a healthy relationship to nature.

Christopher Alexander's *Pattern Language* offers an alternative approach to urban development that reinforces patterns that:

- improve connectivity between neighbors and community members;
- mix and disperse the basic functions of living, working, shopping, and civic spaces to make them accessible by foot;
- blur the sharp edges between municipal boundaries and the surrounding rural countryside;
- encourage opportunities for people to commune with others from their community through more intentionally designed buildings, landscapes, neighborhoods, businesses, and common or civic areas; and
- introduce the elements of a functioning democracy and civic engagement more intentionally throughout urban space.

Patterns in this report include:

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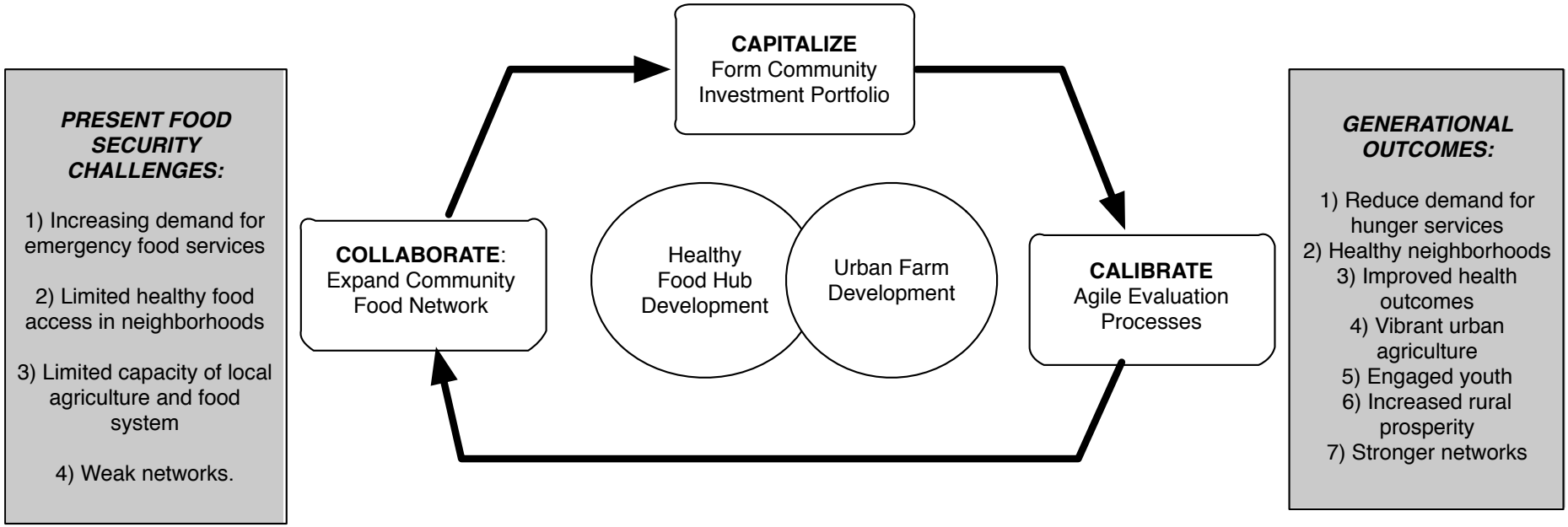
THE FUTURE OF FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY--- BRIEF OVERVIEW

Stark County faces continuing food security challenges. Emergency food relief agencies report **a continuing demand for emergency food services** despite improvements in economic indicators for the county over the past three years. **Access to healthy foods** in food programs or neighborhoods is limited in the county. There are **few economic or social linkages between urban rural communities,** despite a strong and diverse agricultural production base. **Collaborative networks around food security** are under-developed, limiting capacity for long-range and systemic responses to food security needs.

In response, we propose **three areas of capacity development** that will help to facilitate a more comprehensive and long-term solution to hunger and food security challenges. The groundwork for this process has already been laid through the support of the Stark Community Foundation. The three part process includes **development of a community food network** to facilitate a stronger, more diverse, and better connected network among stakeholders who can impact food security. This network can utilize a **Community Investment Portfolio** to better track the assets that different stakeholders can bring to support food security efforts, including land to grow food, networks of farmers or businesses, political influence, financing, or under-utilized buildings or equipment. The Community Investment Portfolio will also identify gaps or areas where capital can be cultivated to better address food security challenges. A process of calibration and feedback allows the network to **evaluate, learn, adapt, and grow** in its capacity to impact key hunger issues, continuously evolving its efforts through an agile process. Based on community interest, this three-part process can initially be directed toward the formation of **a healthy local food hub** and establishment of an **urban farming initiative**. Mastering this process will build capacity and confidence to address these and other future challenges.

The good news is that Stark County possesses the assets needed to support this. From well-organized and experienced hunger organizations, established educational and health care institutional, rich urban and rural land, philanthropic resources, and a diverse base of local agricultural production, Stark County can improve its capacity to build a food secure future through better connections between people and assets. This framework is intended to build on these assets to support more healthy and connected communities that can: **reduce demand for hunger services, build healthier neighborhoods, support a more vibrant urban agriculture, engage youth and local schools, promote rural prosperity, and weave stronger networks**.



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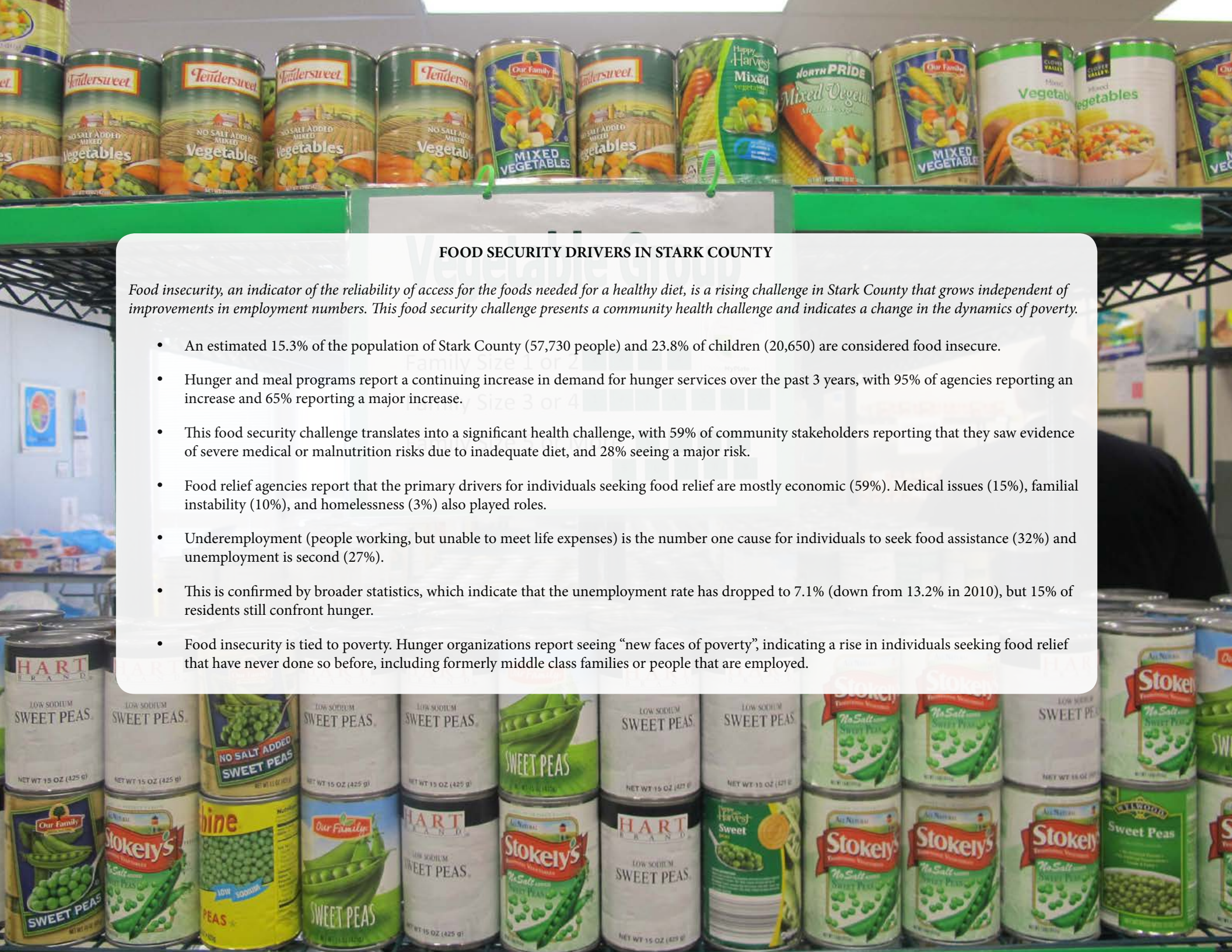
KEY FINDINGS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the support of the Stark Community Foundation, the key findings listed below resulted from a 6 month process that included grant report reviews, stakeholder interviews, stakeholder surveys, network mapping, census data analysis, literature review, and community forums and meetings.

The key findings include coverage of:

- **Food Security Challenges**- key drivers, health impacts, and agricultural capacity
- **Food Security Networks and Response Capacity**- organizational review, survey results, network mapping
- **Future of Food Security**- summary of results of community forums and participatory meetings
- **Strategic Framework**- review of recommended core capacities and flagship projects

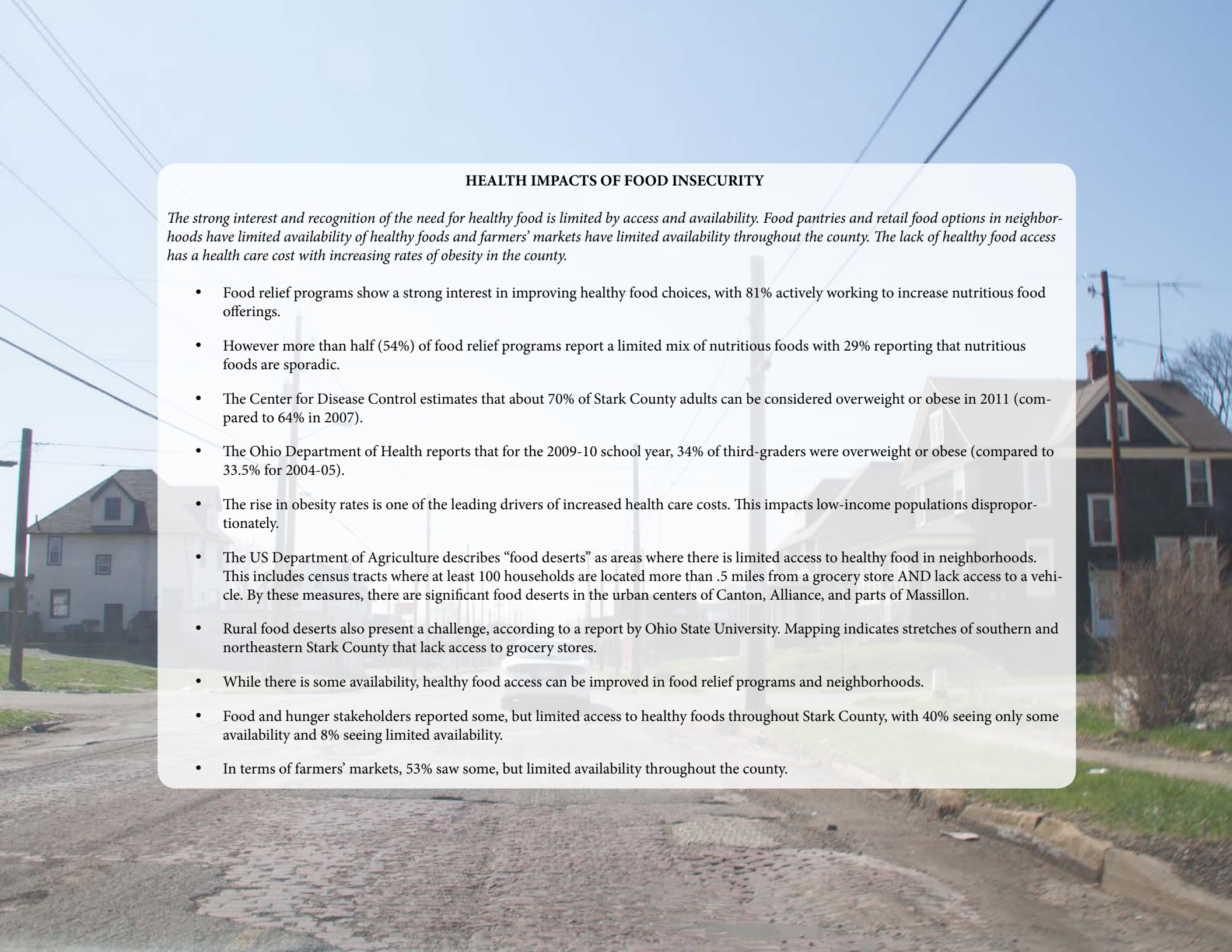
Image from Canton Development Partnership, http://www.events.downtowncanton.com



FOOD SECURITY DRIVERS IN STARK COUNTY

Food insecurity, an indicator of the reliability of access for the foods needed for a healthy diet, is a rising challenge in Stark County that grows independent of improvements in employment numbers. This food security challenge presents a community health challenge and indicates a change in the dynamics of poverty.

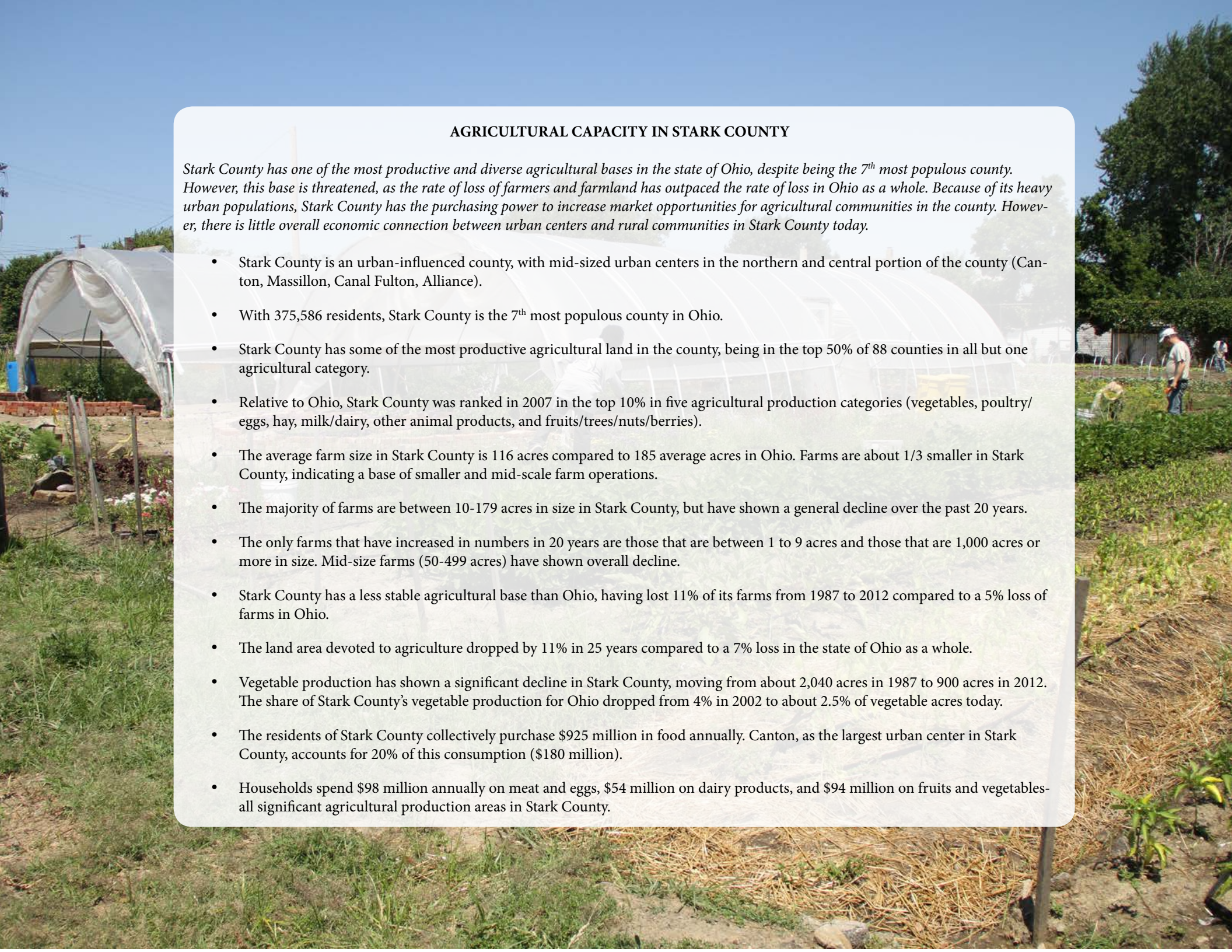
- An estimated 15.3% of the population of Stark County (57,730 people) and 23.8% of children (20,650) are considered food insecure.
- Hunger and meal programs report a continuing increase in demand for hunger services over the past 3 years, with 95% of agencies reporting an increase and 65% reporting a major increase.
- This food security challenge translates into a significant health challenge, with 59% of community stakeholders reporting that they saw evidence of severe medical or malnutrition risks due to inadequate diet, and 28% seeing a major risk.
- Food relief agencies report that the primary drivers for individuals seeking food relief are mostly economic (59%). Medical issues (15%), familial instability (10%), and homelessness (3%) also played roles.
- Underemployment (people working, but unable to meet life expenses) is the number one cause for individuals to seek food assistance (32%) and unemployment is second (27%).
- This is confirmed by broader statistics, which indicate that the unemployment rate has dropped to 7.1% (down from 13.2% in 2010), but 15% of residents still confront hunger.
- Food insecurity is tied to poverty. Hunger organizations report seeing “new faces of poverty”, indicating a rise in individuals seeking food relief that have never done so before, including formerly middle class families or people that are employed.



HEALTH IMPACTS OF FOOD INSECURITY

The strong interest and recognition of the need for healthy food is limited by access and availability. Food pantries and retail food options in neighborhoods have limited availability of healthy foods and farmers' markets have limited availability throughout the county. The lack of healthy food access has a health care cost with increasing rates of obesity in the county.

- Food relief programs show a strong interest in improving healthy food choices, with 81% actively working to increase nutritious food offerings.
- However more than half (54%) of food relief programs report a limited mix of nutritious foods with 29% reporting that nutritious foods are sporadic.
- The Center for Disease Control estimates that about 70% of Stark County adults can be considered overweight or obese in 2011 (compared to 64% in 2007).
- The Ohio Department of Health reports that for the 2009-10 school year, 34% of third-graders were overweight or obese (compared to 33.5% for 2004-05).
- The rise in obesity rates is one of the leading drivers of increased health care costs. This impacts low-income populations disproportionately.
- The US Department of Agriculture describes "food deserts" as areas where there is limited access to healthy food in neighborhoods. This includes census tracts where at least 100 households are located more than .5 miles from a grocery store AND lack access to a vehicle. By these measures, there are significant food deserts in the urban centers of Canton, Alliance, and parts of Massillon.
- Rural food deserts also present a challenge, according to a report by Ohio State University. Mapping indicates stretches of southern and northeastern Stark County that lack access to grocery stores.
- While there is some availability, healthy food access can be improved in food relief programs and neighborhoods.
- Food and hunger stakeholders reported some, but limited access to healthy foods throughout Stark County, with 40% seeing only some availability and 8% seeing limited availability.
- In terms of farmers' markets, 53% saw some, but limited availability throughout the county.



AGRICULTURAL CAPACITY IN STARK COUNTY

Stark County has one of the most productive and diverse agricultural bases in the state of Ohio, despite being the 7th most populous county. However, this base is threatened, as the rate of loss of farmers and farmland has outpaced the rate of loss in Ohio as a whole. Because of its heavy urban populations, Stark County has the purchasing power to increase market opportunities for agricultural communities in the county. However, there is little overall economic connection between urban centers and rural communities in Stark County today.

- Stark County is an urban-influenced county, with mid-sized urban centers in the northern and central portion of the county (Canton, Massillon, Canal Fulton, Alliance).
- With 375,586 residents, Stark County is the 7th most populous county in Ohio.
- Stark County has some of the most productive agricultural land in the county, being in the top 50% of 88 counties in all but one agricultural category.
- Relative to Ohio, Stark County was ranked in 2007 in the top 10% in five agricultural production categories (vegetables, poultry/eggs, hay, milk/dairy, other animal products, and fruits/trees/nuts/berries).
- The average farm size in Stark County is 116 acres compared to 185 average acres in Ohio. Farms are about 1/3 smaller in Stark County, indicating a base of smaller and mid-scale farm operations.
- The majority of farms are between 10-179 acres in size in Stark County, but have shown a general decline over the past 20 years.
- The only farms that have increased in numbers in 20 years are those that are between 1 to 9 acres and those that are 1,000 acres or more in size. Mid-size farms (50-499 acres) have shown overall decline.
- Stark County has a less stable agricultural base than Ohio, having lost 11% of its farms from 1987 to 2012 compared to a 5% loss of farms in Ohio.
- The land area devoted to agriculture dropped by 11% in 25 years compared to a 7% loss in the state of Ohio as a whole.
- Vegetable production has shown a significant decline in Stark County, moving from about 2,040 acres in 1987 to 900 acres in 2012. The share of Stark County's vegetable production for Ohio dropped from 4% in 2002 to about 2.5% of vegetable acres today.
- The residents of Stark County collectively purchase $925 million in food annually. Canton, as the largest urban center in Stark County, accounts for 20% of this consumption ($180 million).
- Households spend $98 million annually on meat and eggs, $54 million on dairy products, and $94 million on fruits and vegetables- all significant agricultural production areas in Stark County.

FOOD SECURITY NETWORKS AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

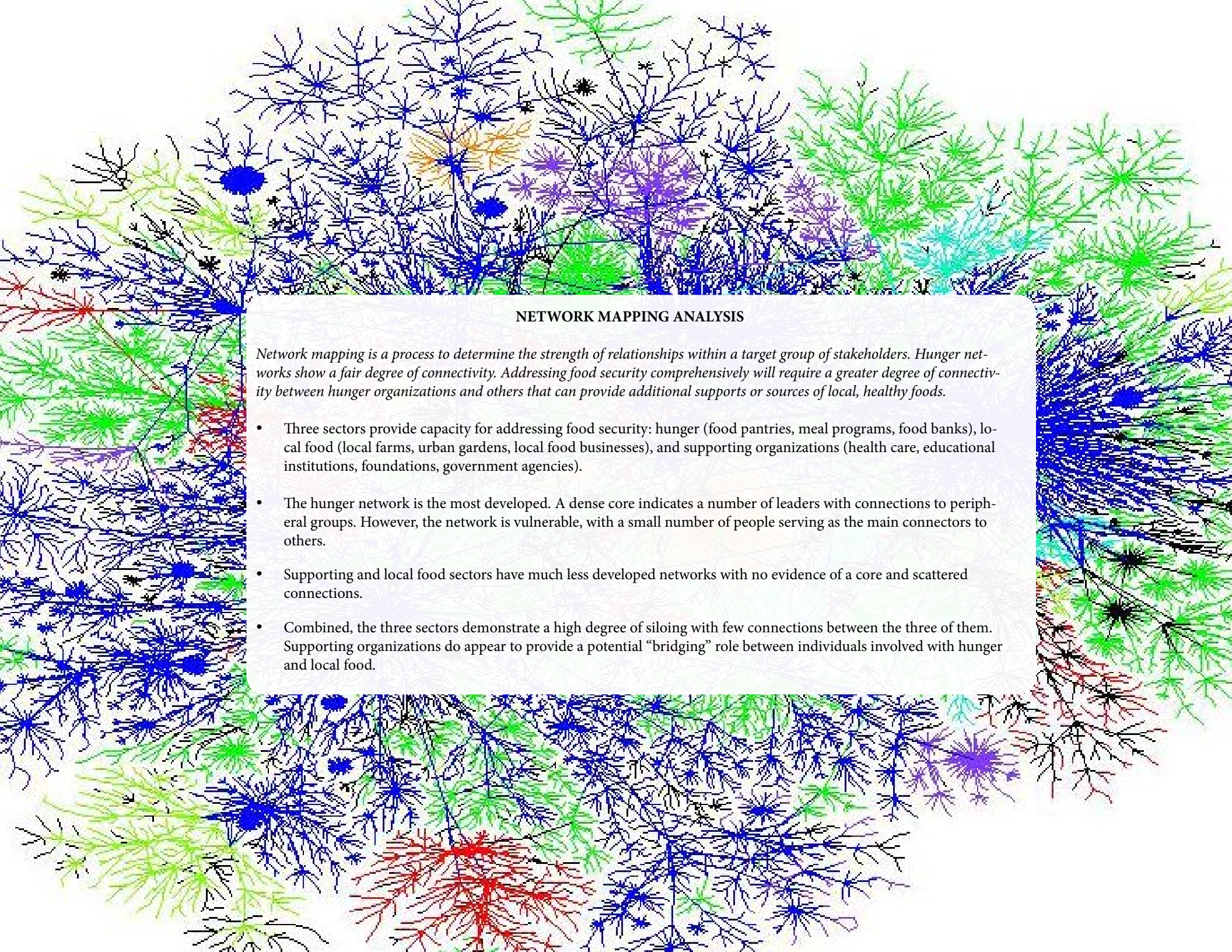
There is evidence of an overall need to improve network collaboration and connectivity, including more connections between leaders in key sectors, greater interaction between faith-based and non-faith-based groups, the inclusion of diverse ethnic groups, and greater urban and rural connectivity. The inability to effectively collaborate is a common concern among many food security stakeholders. Despite this, there is a high degree of interest in collaborating or actively convening projects in the food security network. Network building activities might emphasize greater connectivity between emergency food relief, community education, healthy food access, and community development in the local food system.

Overview of Organizations:

- Of 15 food security stakeholders interviewed, almost half (47%) focus strictly on emergency food relief, including community distribution and meal preparation.
- Other capacities for addressing food security, including community education, healthy food access, and community development, had less coverage. Two organizations (13%) combined emergency food relief with education or other social services. Two organizations (13%) focused on healthy food access in low-income neighborhoods and two organizations (13%) focused on community development in the local food system. About 4 organizations (27%) covered 3 or more areas in their work.

Survey Responses:

- Among stakeholders responding to the food security survey, 45% focus on urban communities 50% said they serve a mix of urban, rural, and suburban communities.
- In terms of scale, 16% of stakeholders work region-wide, 33% county-wide, 15% city-wide, and 36% are neighborhood-based.
- In terms of organization types, 59% are faith-based, 24% are non-profit, 11% are social service, and 6% educational institutions.
- The overall food security network is somewhat siloed with little interaction between faith-based and non-faith-based groups.
- More women than men participate in food security efforts and there is good gender balance and mixing among key leaders.
- The ethnic base of stakeholders was 93% Caucasian, 4% African-American, and 3% mixed. This does not match demographic distributions in Stark County, especially in urban centers where most food assistance services are offered.
- Among stakeholders interviewed, the most commonly expressed concern about the future of food security efforts in Stark County is a lack of collaboration between food security groups. Common examples included a lack of collaborative projects, geographical divisions, turf battles, and a sense of competition for limited funds.
- Stakeholders show a strong willingness to collaborate with others, with 36% saying they are very willing and 38% saying they are somewhat willing. Those most willing to collaborate were among the core of the network. Those on the periphery with fewer connections were less interested in collaborating.
- For convening, stakeholders show high leadership potential with 43% either actively convening or willing to convene groups around food security projects and 25% being somewhat willing.



NETWORK MAPPING ANALYSIS

Network mapping is a process to determine the strength of relationships within a target group of stakeholders. Hunger networks show a fair degree of connectivity. Addressing food security comprehensively will require a greater degree of connectivity between hunger organizations and others that can provide additional supports or sources of local, healthy foods.

- Three sectors provide capacity for addressing food security: hunger (food pantries, meal programs, food banks), local food (local farms, urban gardens, local food businesses), and supporting organizations (health care, educational institutions, foundations, government agencies).

- The hunger network is the most developed. A dense core indicates a number of leaders with connections to peripheral groups. However, the network is vulnerable, with a small number of people serving as the main connectors to others.

- Supporting and local food sectors have much less developed networks with no evidence of a core and scattered connections.

- Combined, the three sectors demonstrate a high degree of siloing with few connections between the three of them. Supporting organizations do appear to provide a potential "bridging" role between individuals involved with hunger and local food.

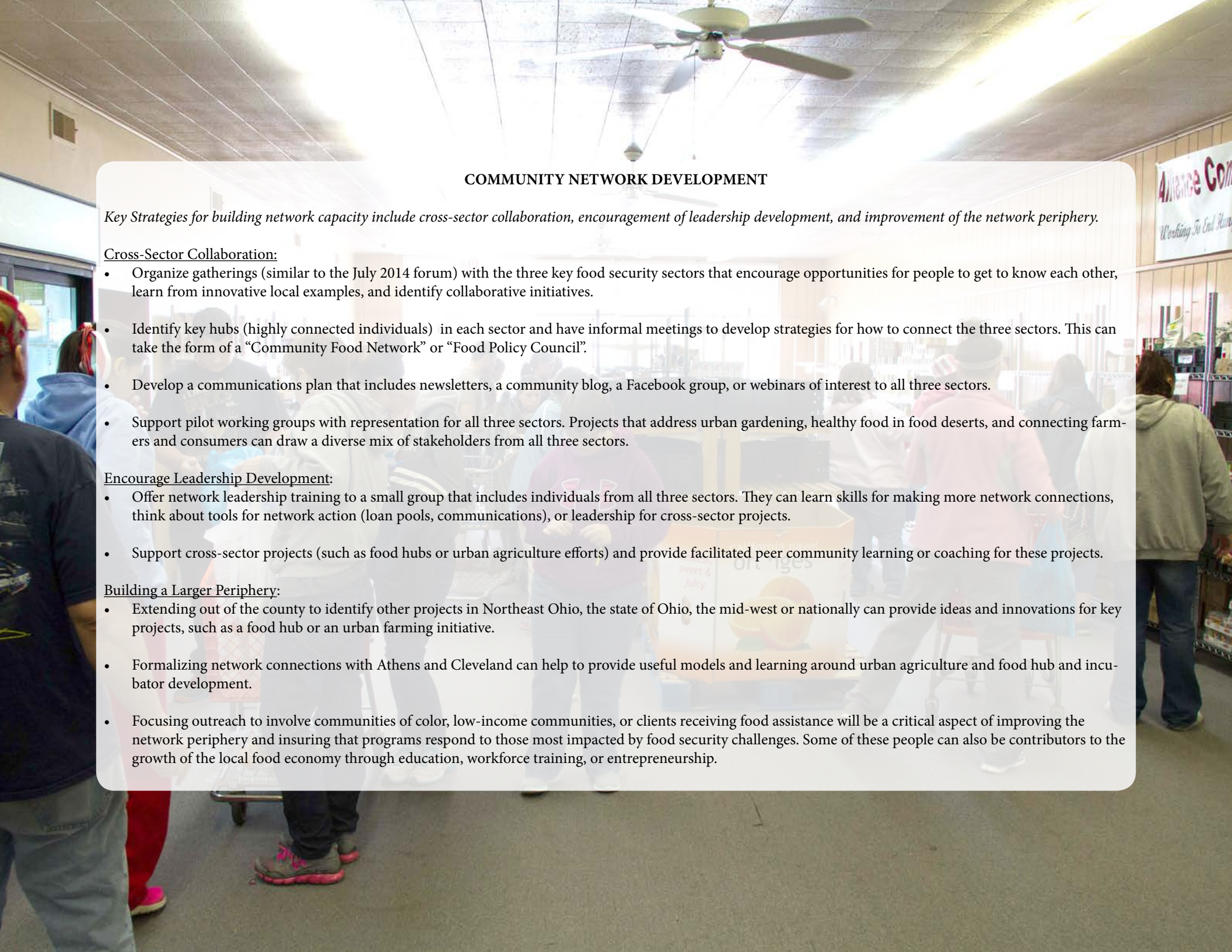
FUTURE OF FOOD SECURITY

Emphasizing work in expanding core capacities and catalytic projects can lead to generational changes regarding food security. A community forum of stakeholders favored core capacities that could potentially be enhanced through a Community Food Network (facilitate network strength, asset development, and collaboration) and Community Education (build individual capacities for health, entrepreneurship, food preparation, and food production). Catalytic projects that can build local capacity to address food security and grow the local food economy include growth of urban agriculture in urban centers and establishment of a local food hub to foster farmer connections and provide critical local food system services, including warehousing, food processing, and food distribution.

- A July 9th community forum brought together the three key sectors involving 75 participants. This provided the first event where interactions between all three sectors were encouraged and collaborative projects first identified.
- Long-term visions for a more healthy and food secure future in Stark County emphasize improved health outcomes, expanded educational programs, improved healthy food access, and a stronger local food system.
- Two year benchmarks to measure progress toward these larger generational changes include collaborative processes, access to capital, growth in urban agriculture, improved farmer connections, improved public awareness, stronger school education, improved hunger relief delivery, better health outcomes, and productive infrastructure for local food systems.
- Shorter term projects that can make steps toward these two year indicators include facilitating development of urban gardens and farms, forming a community food network, developing school-based curricula, public awareness campaigns, reaching out to local farmers, increasing local food in food relief programs, nutrition and cooking programs, composting initiatives, and development of facilities for food storage, processing and distribution.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR FOOD SECURITY

Based on a review of the results of interviews, surveys, network mapping, and community input, we recommend development of a strategic framework that focuses on strengthening networks, community asset development, and evaluation processes. These core capacities can initially be directed toward the development of a Healthy Local Food Hub and an Urban Farming initiative.



COMMUNITY NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Key Strategies for building network capacity include cross-sector collaboration, encouragement of leadership development, and improvement of the network periphery.

Cross-Sector Collaboration:

- Organize gatherings (similar to the July 2014 forum) with the three key food security sectors that encourage opportunities for people to get to know each other, learn from innovative local examples, and identify collaborative initiatives.

- Identify key hubs (highly connected individuals) in each sector and have informal meetings to develop strategies for how to connect the three sectors. This can take the form of a "Community Food Network" or "Food Policy Council".

- Develop a communications plan that includes newsletters, a community blog, a Facebook group, or webinars of interest to all three sectors.

- Support pilot working groups with representation for all three sectors. Projects that address urban gardening, healthy food in food deserts, and connecting farmers and consumers can draw a diverse mix of stakeholders from all three sectors.

Encourage Leadership Development:

- Offer network leadership training to a small group that includes individuals from all three sectors. They can learn skills for making more network connections, think about tools for network action (loan pools, communications), or leadership for cross-sector projects.

- Support cross-sector projects (such as food hubs or urban agriculture efforts) and provide facilitated peer community learning or coaching for these projects.

Building a Larger Periphery:

- Extending out of the county to identify other projects in Northeast Ohio, the state of Ohio, the mid-west or nationally can provide ideas and innovations for key projects, such as a food hub or an urban farming initiative.

- Formalizing network connections with Athens and Cleveland can help to provide useful models and learning around urban agriculture and food hub and incubator development.

- Focusing outreach to involve communities of color, low-income communities, or clients receiving food assistance will be a critical aspect of improving the network periphery and insuring that programs respond to those most impacted by food security challenges. Some of these people can also be contributors to the growth of the local food economy through education, workforce training, or entrepreneurship.

COMMUNITY ASSET DEVELOPMENT

Key strategies for building community assets to address food security locally include adopting a wealth creation model, encouraging collective impact philanthropy, and fostering local investment tools.

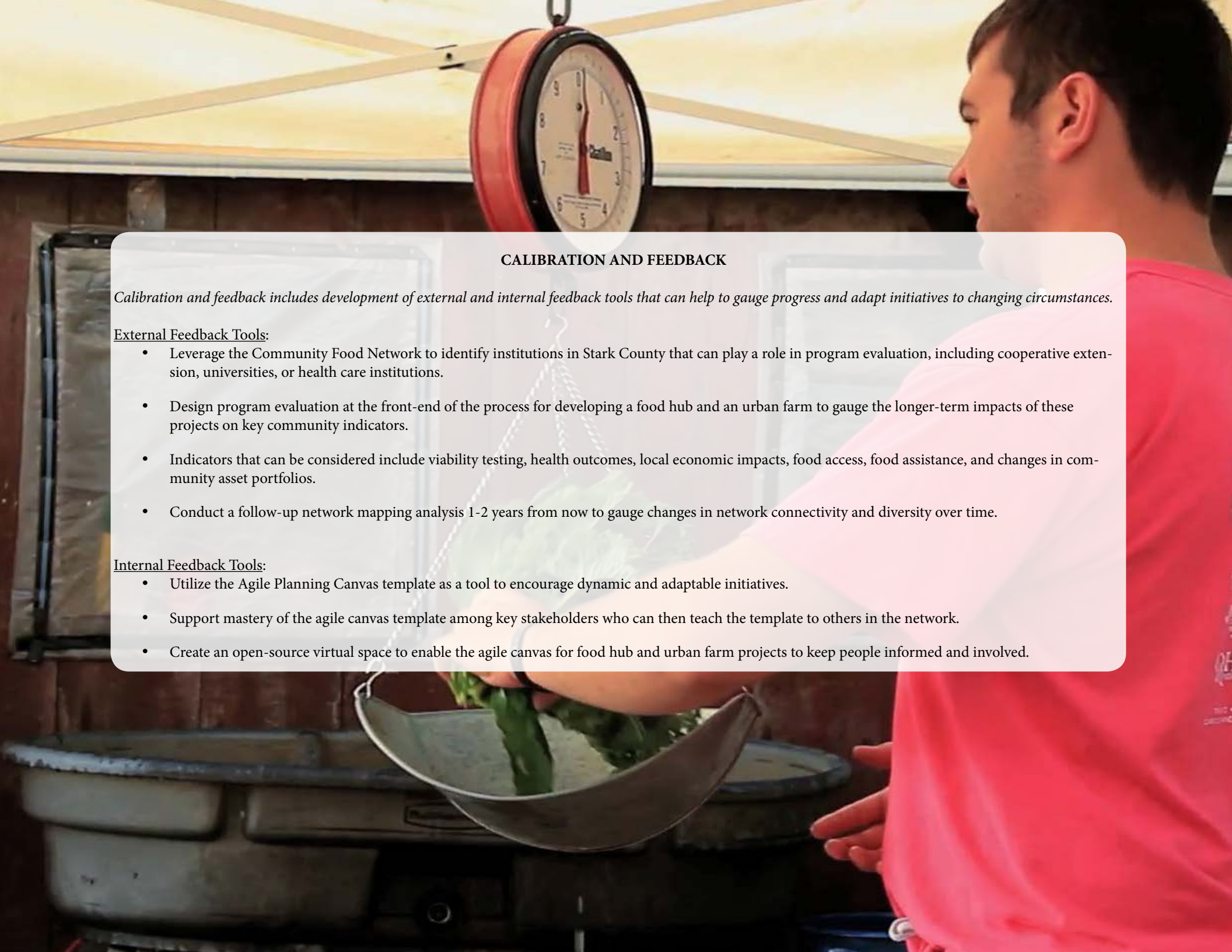
Wealth Creation Model:

- Organize a community asset portfolio that lists the forms of capital that can be leveraged in the community to better address food security.
- Emphasize processes to better connect and leverage existing resources in the community to build individual capital (skill-building and education), social capital (networks and volunteerism), and knowledge capital (innovation and research).
- Work through a Community Food Network to fill out a matrix of forms of capital that can be leveraged and forms of capital that need to be cultivated to support a local food hub and an urban farm development, including commitments from stakeholders that can supply capital.

Collective Impact Philanthropy:

- Encourage events (like the July 9th forum) that provide an opportunity for funders, non-profits, businesses, and other community stakeholders to work toward a shared vision and priorities.
- Initiate collaborative funding projects that can spread benefits across multiple stakeholders, including training or capacity building for network collaboration, or urban farm development funds to support growth of urban gardens and farms.
- Provision of funding by local foundations to build collaborative projects that can increase the capability of Stark County to attract state or national philanthropic or government funding support.

Image from Stark Fresh/JRC, http://www.mrcfarmersmarket.org



CALIBRATION AND FEEDBACK

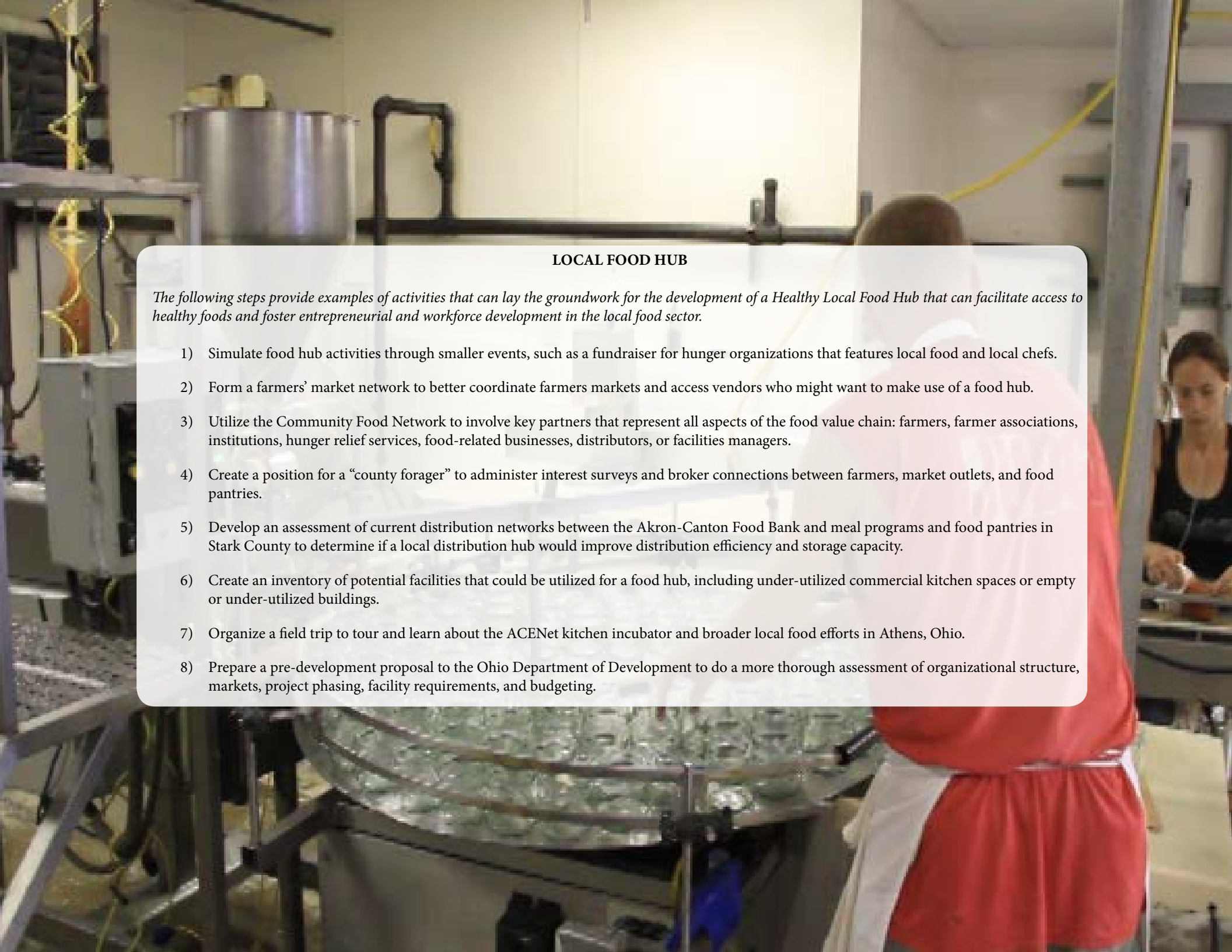
Calibration and feedback includes development of external and internal feedback tools that can help to gauge progress and adapt initiatives to changing circumstances.

External Feedback Tools:

- Leverage the Community Food Network to identify institutions in Stark County that can play a role in program evaluation, including cooperative extension, universities, or health care institutions.
- Design program evaluation at the front-end of the process for developing a food hub and an urban farm to gauge the longer-term impacts of these projects on key community indicators.
- Indicators that can be considered include viability testing, health outcomes, local economic impacts, food access, food assistance, and changes in community asset portfolios.
- Conduct a follow-up network mapping analysis 1-2 years from now to gauge changes in network connectivity and diversity over time.

Internal Feedback Tools:

- Utilize the Agile Planning Canvas template as a tool to encourage dynamic and adaptable initiatives.
- Support mastery of the agile canvas template among key stakeholders who can then teach the template to others in the network.
- Create an open-source virtual space to enable the agile canvas for food hub and urban farm projects to keep people informed and involved.



LOCAL FOOD HUB

The following steps provide examples of activities that can lay the groundwork for the development of a Healthy Local Food Hub that can facilitate access to healthy foods and foster entrepreneurial and workforce development in the local food sector.

1) Simulate food hub activities through smaller events, such as a fundraiser for hunger organizations that features local food and local chefs.

2) Form a farmers' market network to better coordinate farmers markets and access vendors who might want to make use of a food hub.

3) Utilize the Community Food Network to involve key partners that represent all aspects of the food value chain: farmers, farmer associations, institutions, hunger relief services, food-related businesses, distributors, or facilities managers.

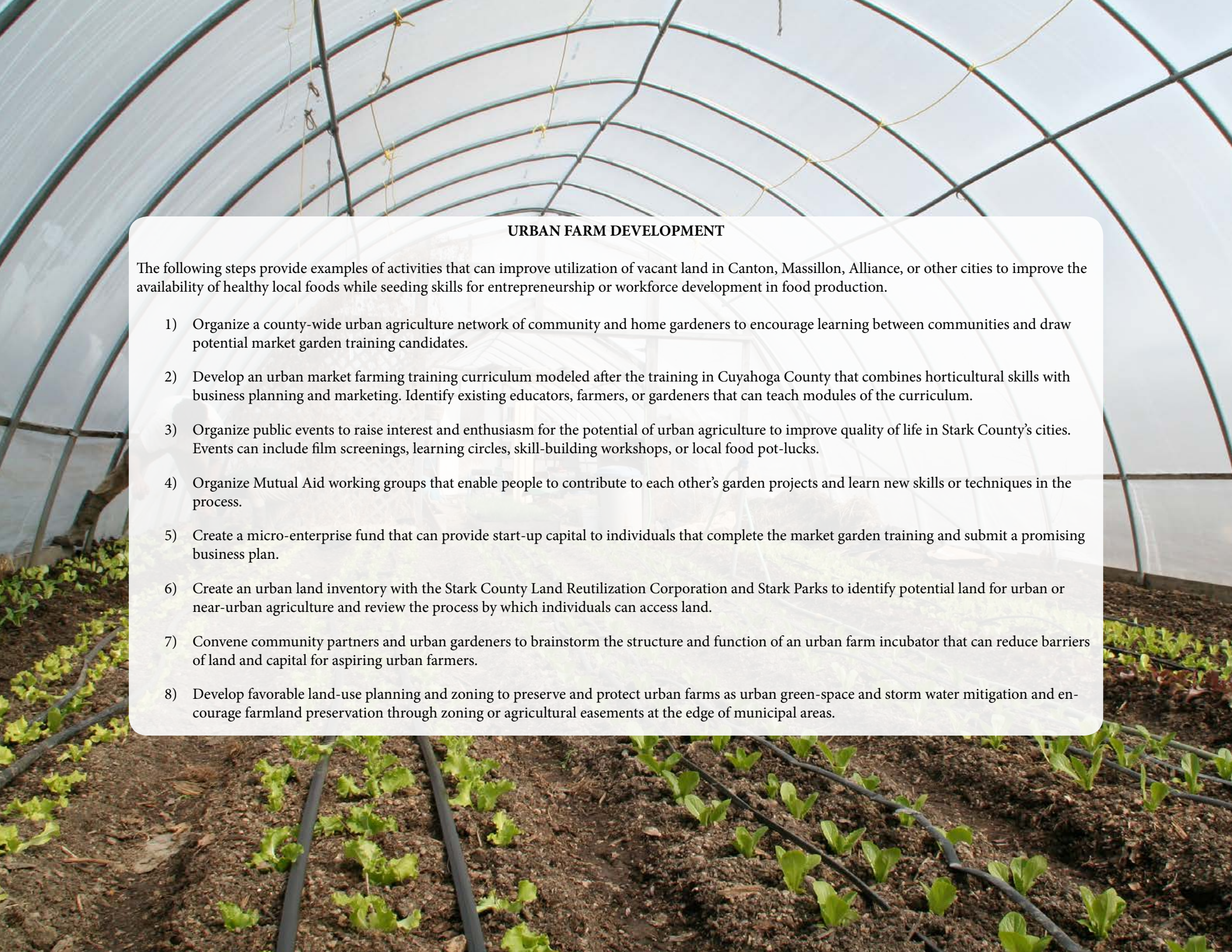
4) Create a position for a "county forager" to administer interest surveys and broker connections between farmers, market outlets, and food pantries.

5) Develop an assessment of current distribution networks between the Akron-Canton Food Bank and meal programs and food pantries in Stark County to determine if a local distribution hub would improve distribution efficiency and storage capacity.

6) Create an inventory of potential facilities that could be utilized for a food hub, including under-utilized commercial kitchen spaces or empty or under-utilized buildings.

7) Organize a field trip to tour and learn about the ACENet kitchen incubator and broader local food efforts in Athens, Ohio.

8) Prepare a pre-development proposal to the Ohio Department of Development to do a more thorough assessment of organizational structure, markets, project phasing, facility requirements, and budgeting.



URBAN FARM DEVELOPMENT

The following steps provide examples of activities that can improve utilization of vacant land in Canton, Massillon, Alliance, or other cities to improve the availability of healthy local foods while seeding skills for entrepreneurship or workforce development in food production.

1) Organize a county-wide urban agriculture network of community and home gardeners to encourage learning between communities and draw potential market garden training candidates.

2) Develop an urban market farming training curriculum modeled after the training in Cuyahoga County that combines horticultural skills with business planning and marketing. Identify existing educators, farmers, or gardeners that can teach modules of the curriculum.

3) Organize public events to raise interest and enthusiasm for the potential of urban agriculture to improve quality of life in Stark County's cities. Events can include film screenings, learning circles, skill-building workshops, or local food pot-lucks.

4) Organize Mutual Aid working groups that enable people to contribute to each other's garden projects and learn new skills or techniques in the process.

5) Create a micro-enterprise fund that can provide start-up capital to individuals that complete the market garden training and submit a promising business plan.

6) Create an urban land inventory with the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation and Stark Parks to identify potential land for urban or near-urban agriculture and review the process by which individuals can access land.

7) Convene community partners and urban gardeners to brainstorm the structure and function of an urban farm incubator that can reduce barriers of land and capital for aspiring urban farmers.

8) Develop favorable land-use planning and zoning to preserve and protect urban farms as urban green-space and storm water mitigation and encourage farmland preservation through zoning or agricultural easements at the edge of municipal areas.

Pattern #1
REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

The six acre Ohio City Farm creates an agrarian corridor at the edge of the Ohio City neighborhood, along an eastern bluff of the Cuyahoga River and within view of downtown Cleveland.

Pattern 3- City-Country Fingers: ***Continuous sprawling urbanization destroys life, and makes cities unbearable. But the sheer size of cities is also valuable and potent.***
The idea of city-country fingers is to blur the distinction between town and country, encouraging urban development patterns that maintain an active network of small farms in close proximity to the city. This creates greater continuity and interaction between urban and rural communities. It also maintains productive greenspace within and around the city. The notion of a "green-belt" can be thought of as a series of fingers extending into the urban space rather than a continuous ring surrounding the city. This balances the density of urban interaction with the preservation of greenspace that supports the rural economy and provides local food, habitat, stormwater retention, carbon sequestration, and clean water.

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FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY

In a food secure community, individuals or families have reliable access to the foods needed to support a healthy and complete diet. Food insecurity presents a significant community challenge, whether it involves the risk of hunger, the inability to access healthy or nutritious foods, or the local capacity to grow, process, and distribute foods.

For the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), food insecurity "refers to a lack of regular access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods".

The Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank estimates that 15.3% of the population of Stark County (57,730 people) and 23.8% (20,650 children) are considered "food insecure". A lack of adequate nutrition affects physical and mental health, life expectancy, the ability to maintain employment, or the capacity for learning in school. The resilience of a community is dependent upon its capacity to actively address problems of hunger wherever and whenever they appear.

The experiences of hunger organizations in Stark County indicate that individuals face hunger as a result of life challenges that can affect anyone, including unemployment, under-employment, familial changes, domestic abuse, health issues, mental health challenges, addiction, or homelessness. A common stigma about people facing hunger is that they have made bad choices in their lives. While that is true in some cases, most people confront hunger as a result of circumstances largely beyond their control. Addressing hunger in the long-term requires breaking the underlying cycles that perpetuate hunger, food insecurity, and poverty.

The network of organizations providing emergency food assistance provides an essential safety net that supports individuals or families during times of disruption or instability. Some individuals, such as those facing chronic illness or disability, will require long-term food assistance. But many individuals have the desire for self-sufficiency and, given the right tools and opportunities, can achieve it.

The Mahoning Avenue Corridor in Canton has been identified as one of several food desert neighborhoods.

Over the past five years, hunger organizations in Stark County have noticed that a significant increase in "situational poverty"- poverty resulting from unexpected circumstances that affects people's lives. This is a new phenomenon for a sector that traditionally confronted more "generational poverty"- which mostly focused on low-income populations that faced legacy challenges around poverty. Increasingly, these "new faces of poverty" include working class Americans or low-wage workers that cannot make ends meet without additional assistance. Many of these individuals even include middle-class families that have faced employment changes and have had to access food assistance for the first time in their lives. For many families, each month is a balancing act between utilities, housing, medicine, and food. The availability of food pantries or meal programs frees up resources for other priorities in their lives. However, organizations originally set-up as "emergency food relief" for temporary relief are moving toward regular sources of food for many individuals or households.

Economic challenges remain the primary factor contributing to food insecurity in Stark County today. Even though the unemployment rate has dropped to about 7.1% (down from 13.2% in 2010), 15% of the residents of Stark County still confront hunger. And most hunger organizations see a continuing growth in the demand for their services, mostly related to economic challenges.

Another challenge remains provision of healthy food options in emergency food relief. Food pantries surveyed in Stark County indicated that 81% are working to improve healthy food choices. However, 54% reported a limited mix of nutritious foods with 29% saying that nutritious foods are sporadic.

***Click here** for a more detailed overview of food security challenges in Stark County.*

Another key challenge to food security, identified by several organizations addressing food or hunger issues, is a lack of collaboration between communities and organizations. Many sited geographic barriers between communities which might limit the extent to which people will work together. Additionally, many organizations feel territorial about their programs, seeing similar initiatives as potential threats to membership, donors, or philanthropic support.

The network of organizations and volunteers dedicated to hunger relief offer an immediate response to hunger challenges. This needs to be balanced with longer-term responses that address the roots of the challenge, including the ability to access healthy foods or local economic challenges. Addressing these more systemic issues requires tighter collaboration between hunger organizations and broader efforts to address health, education, and local economic development that lead to hunger challenges in the first place.

Food Security and the Challenge of Access:
Beyond the immediate threat of hunger, food insecurity affects residents in urban

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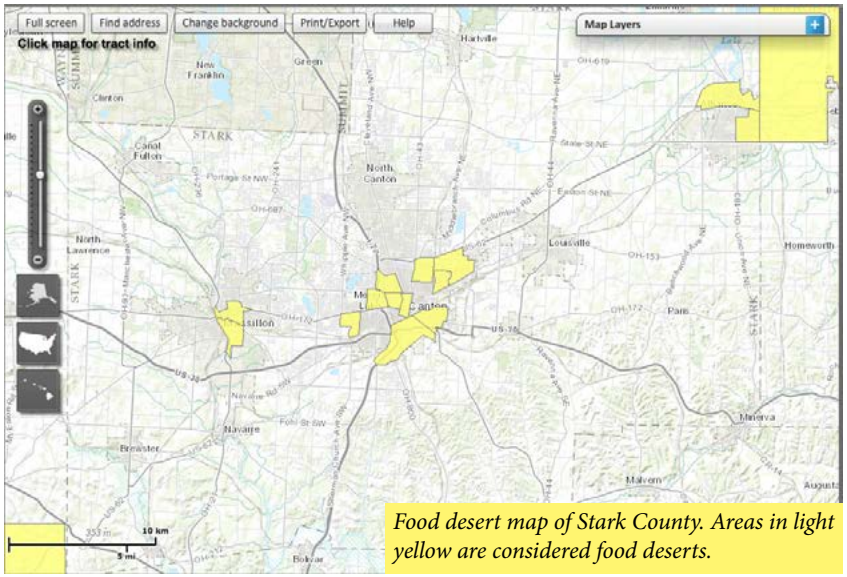
Food Security expert Mark Winne describes the challenge of rural food deserts.

Rashidah Abdulhaqq with the Cleveland Hunger Network describes urban food deserts.

neighborhoods with a dearth of healthy food options. In many neighborhoods, grocery stores have shuttered operations and gas stations or convenience stores remain the only food options for many people. Similarly, many rural areas are also challenged by a lack of healthy food options. The food that is available tends to be highly processed convenience foods or fast food. As a result, there are corresponding increases in rates of obesity or diet-related ailments such as diabetes or heart disease.

According to a national Center for Disease Control report, about 70% of Stark County's adults can be considered overweight or obese in 2011. This compares to 64% of residents who could be considered overweight or obese in 2007. For children, the Ohio Department of Health indicated that for the 2009-10 school year, 34% of Stark County third-graders were overweight or obese (compared to 33.5% for 2004-05 school year). This rising condition is one of the leading causes of increased health care costs nationally.



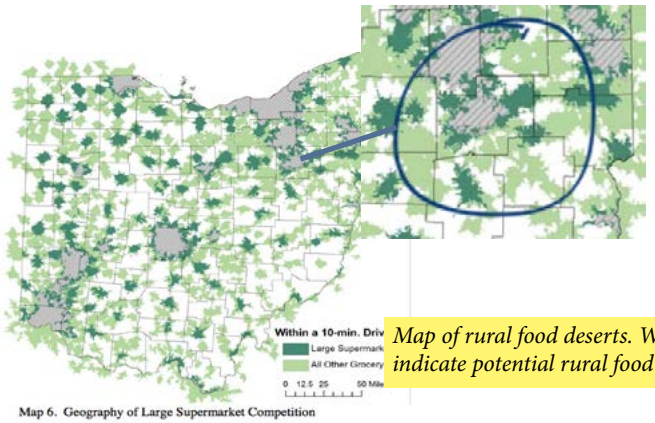
Food desert map of Stark County. Areas in light yellow are considered food deserts.

Access to healthy and nutritious foods and the reduction of sedentary activity are two of the most important aspects of obesity reduction. While access to healthy foods affects everyone, the challenge is particularly acute for low-income residents. The primary barriers include limited availability of healthy foods in food pantries or nearby retail operations, the higher price of some healthy food options, and transportation barriers (lack of vehicle ownership or poor transit availability).

A "food desert" describes an area where there is limited access to healthy and affordable food that can lead to a better diet. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Agriculture developed a "national food desert" inventory that considers several measures of food store access for individuals and neighborhoods. The first measure looks at "low access", defined as how many people in a census tract are far (more than .5 mile) from a supermarket or larger grocery store. The second measure looks at socioeconomic factors, such as household income or vehicle ownership. The third measures look at neighborhood-level factors that can impact access, such as a low-income neighborhood (tract with more than 20% poverty rate) or limited public transit.

***Click here** for a more detailed report of food deserts and food access challenges in Stark County.*

When considered together, food deserts in Stark County affect large portions of Canton, Alliance, and a smaller portion of Massillon, all urban centers in Stark County. This indicates census tracts where at least 100 households are located more than .5 miles from a grocery store AND do not own a vehicle.



Map 6. Geography of Large Supermarket Competition

Map of rural food deserts. White areas indicate potential rural food deserts.

Food deserts also impact rural areas. According to a study conducted by Ohio State University, an estimated 3.8% of rural Ohioans do not live within driving distance of a supermarket (10 miles) AND do not have access to a vehicle. According to their map, there are stretches in northeast and northwest Stark County as well as the southern portion of the county around East Sparta that indicate potential rural food deserts.

Improving access and consumption of healthy foods will be an important factor in reducing long-term health care costs, economic productivity, and quality of life for

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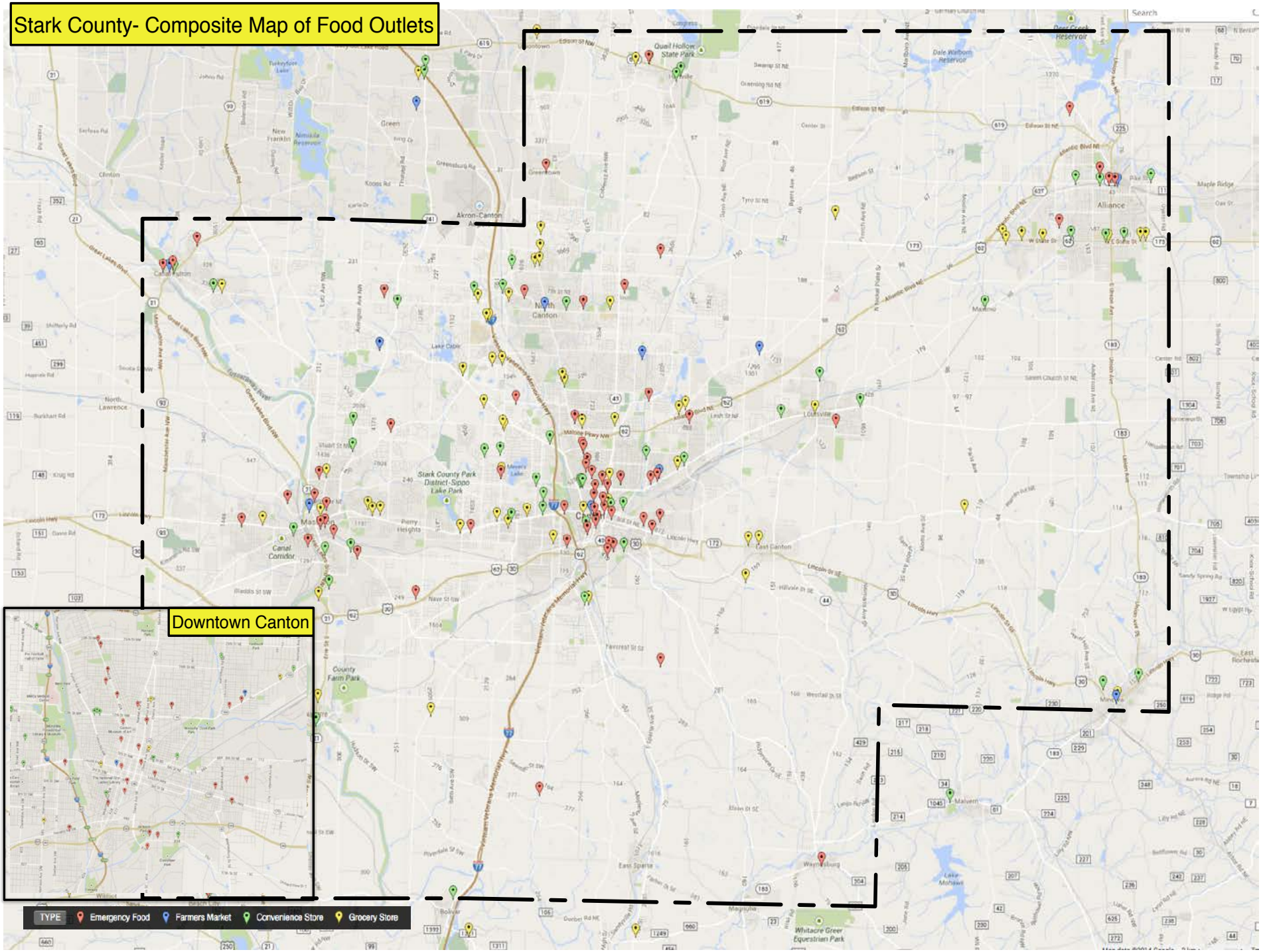
Stark County- Composite Map of Food Outlets



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residents in Stark County. Increasing the flow of healthy foods to food pantries or retail operations in low-income neighborhoods will be an important first step. Improving the capacity for these foods to be grown, processed and distributed locally can both increase the ability of Stark County to feed itself while providing new opportunities in the local food and agriculture sector.

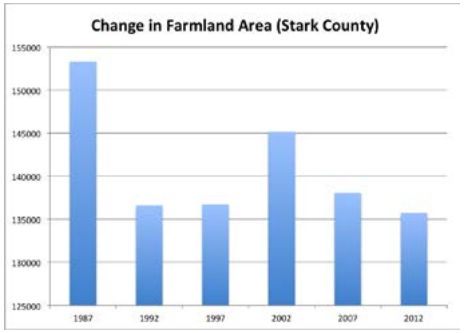
Food Security and Local Agricultural Capacity:
Despite being a fairly urbanized county, Stark County has some of the most productive agricultural land in the state of Ohio. As of the 2007 agricultural census, Stark County ranked in the top 10% in five agricultural production sectors (vegetables, poultry/eggs, hay, milk/dairy, other animals/products, and fruits/tree nuts/berries). It is in the top 50% of 88 counties in all but one agricultural category, indicating a diverse base of agricultural production enterprises. Figures for 2012 were incomplete as of this writing, but did indicate declines in some of these state rankings.

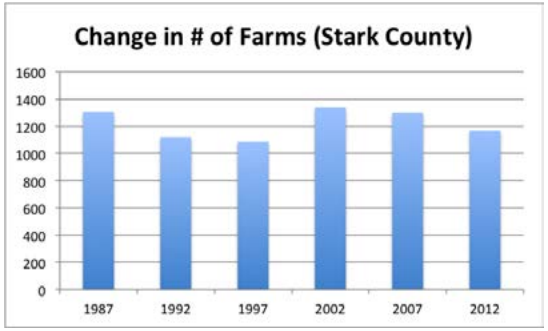
The average farm size in Stark County, as of 2012, is 116 acres, compared to an average farm size of 185 acres for the state of Ohio. This means that farms, on average, are 1/3 smaller than the rest of Ohio. This typically indicates a more diverse production base of more intensive food crops. Larger average acreages typically indicate more extensive, high-acreage commodity agriculture (corn, soybeans, wheat).

Over the past 25 years, trends in agriculture in Stark County indicate a less stable base than the rest of the state of Ohio. For example, Stark County has lost 11% of its farms from 1987 to 2012 compared to a 5% loss in the number of farms for the state of Ohio as a whole. Similarly, the land acreage devoted to farmland in Stark County dropped by 11% in 25 years, compared to a 7% loss for the state of Ohio as a whole. Most likely, this disproportionate loss of farmers and farmland result from development pressure, mostly in the northern portion of the county around Canton and Massillon. This also indicates the need to invest in preserving land resources to support agricultural production,

STARK COUNTY OVERALL STATE RANK

ITEM	QUANTITY ($1K)	STATE RANK	%	Tier
Other crops and hay	2828	3	3%	Top 10%
Poultry and eggs	57126	3	3%	Top 10%
Vegetables, melons, sweet/potatoes	6222	5	6%	Top 10%
Milk and other dairy products from cows	32137	5	6%	Top 10%
Other animals/products	1024	9	10%	Top 10%
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	1386	10	11%	Top 20%
Total Value of Ag Products Sold	135671	10	11%	Top 20%
Cut Christmas tree, woody crops	136	14	16%	Top 20%
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	4935	18	20%	Top 20%
Aquaculture	38	25	28%	Top 30%
Cattle and Calves	5560	31	35%	Top 40%
Horse, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	268	33	38%	Top 40%
Sheep, goats, and their prodcuts	127	38	43%	Top 50%
Hogs and pigs	2119	43	49%	Top 50%
Grains, Oil seeds, dry beans, peas	21,762	49	56%	Top 60%
Tobacco	-	-	-	
Cotton and Cottonseed	-	-	-	





whether vacant lots in cities or more extensive farmland in rural areas.

The majority of farms in Stark County are between 10-179 acres in size, indicating a smaller-scale base of production. However, these farms have also shown a general decline over the past 20 years. The only farms that have increased over the past 20 years are between 1 to 9 acres or 1,000 acres or more. This indicates a bifurcation of the local agricultural system, favoring the growth of very small-scale farms and very large-scale farms. The "farms in the middle (between 50-499 acres) have shown an overall decline, mirroring trends across the country. The growth in small-scale agriculture is evidenced by the increase in farmers' markets or farm-to-table programs that have risen in popularity over the past decade. The growth of large-scale farm results from a continuing consolidation of mostly commodity farms into much larger operations, a trend that has been consistent for the past 50 years.

On the consumption side, the 375,586 residents of Stark County collectively purchase $925 million in food annually. As the most dense urban center of Stark County, households in Canton purchase about $180 million in food annually or about 20% of total county purchasing. About 43% of consumer spending targets food eaten out (restaurants, fast food, institutional dining) with the remaining 57% spent on food at home. Overall, households spend about $98 million on meat and eggs, $94 million on fruits and vegetables, $76 million on cereals and baked products, $54 million on dairy, and $209 million on other food at home (prepared

***Click here** for a more detailed report of food and agriculture in Stark County.*

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NEO CANDO Data Export

City/Village	Total population (100 percent count), number, 2010	Consumer Units	Food	Food at Home	Cereals & Bakery Products	Meats, poultry, fish, eggs'	Dairy products	Fruit and vegetables	Other food at home	Food away from home
Alliance city	22,282	9,687.83	54,881,535	31,514,498	4,514,527	5,812,696	3,206,670	5,599,563	12,381,042	23,367,037
Balance of county	181,240	78,800.00	446,402,000	256,336,400	36,720,800	47,280,000	26,082,800	45,546,400	100,706,400	190,065,600
Beach City village	1,033	449.13	2,544,324	1,461,021	209,295	269,478	148,662	259,597	573,989	1,083,303
Brewster village	2,112	918.26	5,201,948	2,987,103	427,910	550,957	303,944	530,755	1,173,537	2,214,845
Canal Fulton city	5,479	2,382.17	13,495,015	7,749,212	1,110,093	1,429,304	788,500	1,376,897	3,044,418	5,745,803
Canton city	73,007	31,742.17	179,819,415	103,257,292	14,791,853	19,045,304	10,506,660	18,346,977	40,566,498	76,562,123
East Canton village	1,591	691.74	3,918,702	2,250,227	322,350	415,043	228,966	399,825	884,043	1,668,475
East Sparta village	819	356.09	2,017,233	1,158,351	165,937	213,652	117,865	205,818	455,079	858,882
Greentown CDP	3,804	1,653.91	9,369,417	5,380,179	770,723	992,348	547,445	955,962	2,113,701	3,989,238
Hartville village	2,944	1,280.00	7,251,200	4,163,840	596,480	768,000	423,680	739,840	1,635,840	3,087,360
Hills and Dales village	221	96.09	544,333	312,571	44,777	57,652	31,805	55,538	122,799	231,762
Limaville village	151	65.65	371,920	213,567	30,594	39,391	21,731	37,947	83,903	158,353
Louisville city	9,186	3,993.91	22,625,517	12,992,199	1,861,163	2,396,348	1,321,985	2,308,482	5,104,221	9,633,318
Magnolia village	712	309.57	1,753,687	1,007,016	144,257	185,739	102,466	178,929	395,624	746,671
Massillon city	32,149	13,977.83	79,184,385	45,469,868	6,513,667	8,386,696	4,626,660	8,079,183	17,863,662	33,714,517
Meyers Lake village	569	247.39	1,401,472	804,764	115,284	148,435	81,887	142,992	316,166	596,708
Minerva village	1,942	844.35	4,783,230	2,746,663	393,466	506,609	279,479	488,033	1,079,077	2,036,567
Navarre village	1,957	850.87	4,820,176	2,767,879	396,505	510,522	281,638	491,803	1,087,411	2,052,297
North Canton city	17,488	7,603.48	43,073,704	24,734,115	3,543,221	4,562,087	2,516,751	4,394,810	9,717,245	18,339,590
North Lawrence CDP	268	116.52	660,096	379,045	54,299	69,913	38,569	67,350	148,915	281,050
Perry Heights CDP	8,441	3,670.00	20,790,550	11,938,510	1,710,220	2,202,000	1,214,770	2,121,260	4,690,260	8,852,040
Richville CDP	3,324	1,445.22	8,187,157	4,701,292	673,471	867,130	478,367	835,336	1,846,988	3,485,864
Robertsville CDP	331	143.91	815,267	468,149	67,063	86,348	47,635	83,182	183,921	347,118
Uniontown CDP	3,309	1,438.70	8,150,211	4,680,077	670,432	863,217	476,208	831,566	1,838,653	3,470,134
Waynesburg village	923	401.30	2,273,389	1,305,443	187,008	240,783	132,832	231,954	512,867	967,946
Wilmot village	304	132.17	748,765	429,962	61,593	79,304	43,750	76,397	168,918	318,803
TOTAL	**375,586**	**163,298.26**	**925,084,648**	**531,209,243**	**76,096,990**	**97,978,957**	**54,051,724**	**94,386,395**	**208,695,177**	**393,875,405**

CONSUMER UNIT=2.3
Cleveland-Akron MSA

Population Distribution	
Population of Cities	159,591
Population of Villages	15,278
Population of CDP's*	19,477
Balance of County	181,240
TOTAL	**375,586**
*Census Designated Place	

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or processed foods mostly). A 10% shift in consumer purchasing would put about $92 million into the local agricultural economy. This could help to stabilize agricultural production in Stark County in addition to other nearby agricultural counties (Wayne and Holmes). Additionally, this local spending will have a "multiplier effect", helping to induce hiring and income for other local businesses that provide services or inputs to local agriculture or the local food sector.

Framework for Addressing Food Security:
Based on a review of hunger issues, food deserts, and overall agricultural production capacity, some of the following factors will need to be addressed to promote longer-term food security in Stark County:

- **Cultivating a Culture of Collaboration** will be key to overcoming territoriality and mis-trust among food and hunger organizations. Key interventions include an orientation to relationship building and development of shared assets. In service delivery, treatment of the whole person can be supported by linking food provision with education, skill-building, or social services offered by collaborating agencies.

- The need to **improve access to healthy food** remains a key challenge in Stark County in both emergency food relief and retail sectors. Key interventions include consistency in the availability of healthy foods in food relief, increase in local food or healthy food outlets, expanded nutrition education, and transportation for improved access to food (public transit, mobile markets, distribution, etc.).

- The **integration of rural and urban** solutions to hunger is needed with key interventions focused on assessing overall rural access to food security efforts. Additionally, solidifying connections between area farmers and hunger relief efforts will be important.

- **Raising public awareness of food and hunger** issues involves both increasing general community knowledge of local hunger challenges and providing resources to let people know about options if they experience hunger. Key interventions include leveraging university resources, collaboration among organizations around outreach on hunger awareness, working with health care providers, and targeting outreach to youth and schools.

- **Increasing the local food production capacity** was identified as something that could both increase the availability of healthy foods for emergency food relief while also providing opportunities for potential job or enterprise creation through local food systems development. Interventions include improving the capacity for urban garden production, encouraging entrepreneurial urban market gardens, supporting the growth of local farms in rural areas, and developing shared infrastructure to expand local food distribution, storage, and processing.

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Pattern #2
NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRITY

In Oberlin, a garden plot provides locally grown produce for the Oberlin Community Service Center, which operates a monthly community food pantry. The garden is integrated into a larger open-space that includes a children's play area and benches where residents or elders can sit and converse or enjoy the scenery.

Pattern 26- Life Cycle- ***Make certain that the full cycle of life is represented and balanced in each community.***

Much of urban design in America has focused on dis-aggregation, separation of use, and urban monocultures. Young people are concentrated in schools, families in single-use residential zones, and elders in retirement homes. With little common space to encourage healthy mixing, quality of life suffers. A healthy community has spaces that support people at all stages of their life cycle (infants, young children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and elders). A healthy distribution of common spaces that encourage mixing or activity between groups can further improve the social health of a neighborhood. Each person, whatever their place in the life-cycle, has unique needs and unique contributions that they can make. Local food systems can create a number of spaces that contribute to the full-life cycle of a community, including community gardens or markets that encourage a mixing of ages or community food preservation activities that match elders and youth. Local food spaces throughout the city should be designed deliberately to encourage participation of mixed-age groups.

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FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE CAPACITY

Stark County possesses a strong base of organizations dedicated to addressing local hunger challenges, including food pantries, meal programs, mobile delivery, community education, and an emerging set of organizations focused on food access and health in urban neighborhoods. This provides essential resources for responding to immediate hunger challenges. Addressing food security from a long-term, systemic perspective will require continuing support of emergency food relief efforts with lateral improvements in the capacity for healthy food access, community education, and local food systems development.

Effective food security efforts will balance the more immediate needs of individuals or families facing hunger with longer-term initiatives that build tools for greater resilience and self-reliance. In Stark County, four areas of attention can provide a comprehensive response to food security challenges:

1) Emergency Food Relief: Providing immediate food assistance to vulnerable families or individuals who would otherwise risk hunger or malnutrition.

2) Healthy Food Access: Increasing the availability throughout the county for a diverse range of nutritious foods that are needed to support a healthy diet, including whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and protein sources. Healthy foods include nutrient-dense foods that are not overly processed and do not contain excessive amounts of refined sugar, saturated fat, or sodium.

3) Community Education: Pursuit of a healthy life-style requires more than just the distribution of food. Education and training is needed to increase skills in food production (gardening), preparation, storage, and safe-handling of food while also emphasizing healthy lifestyle (exercise, proper diet, social relationships). This empowers people with the tools needed to insure long-term health and longevity. Programs can also leverage the capability of food to create positive social connections between people, whether it involves growing, cooking, eating, or selling.

4) Community Development in Local Food Systems: Community development encompasses a larger effort to raise the capacity for the local provision of healthy and nutritious foods, including farmer networks, urban food production, food storage and processing, enterprise creation, workforce development, and productive utilization of food waste.

Fifteen locally-funded initiatives related to food security were charted on a spectrum between these four areas of work. The majority of organizations work in Emergency Food Relief/Safety Net work, including programs that provide food through food pantries, meal programs, backpack programs, or mobile distribution. Most of these organizations tend to focus their volunteer and financial resources on the distribution of food to clients in need. Some, including the Stark County Hunger Task Force and the Akron-Canton food bank, provide some additional capacity for training and education for food pantry operations. The Salvation Army in Massillon and Refuge of Hope both provided "bundled services" that combined emergency food relief or meal programs with other services, including counseling, transitional housing, or linkages to health care or social services.

***Click here** to access detailed descriptions of organizations involved with food security efforts.*

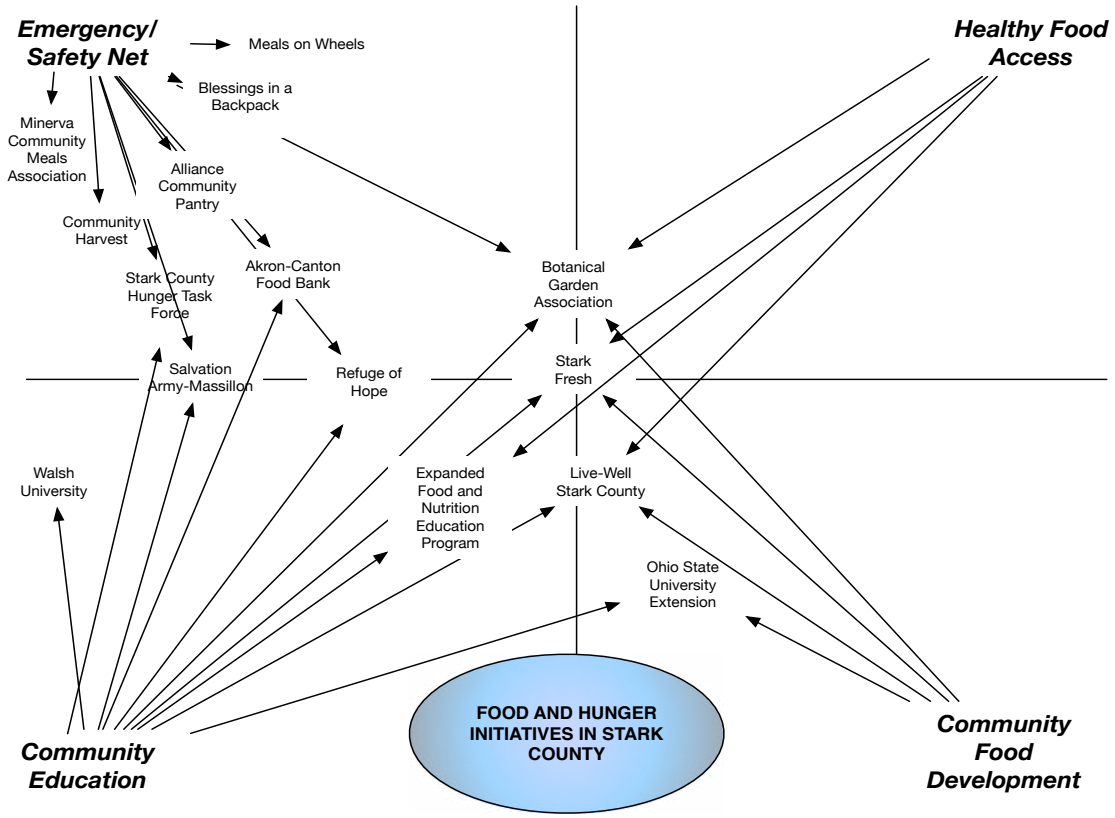

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Image from Live Well Stark County, http://www.livewellstarkcounty.org

Live Well Stark County promotes wellness and healthy food access through a community gardening effort.

A couple of organizations exhibited more emphasis on community education, including Walsh University which has an active service learning program that supports hunger initiatives and the sponsorship of public programs aimed at raising awareness on the issue of hunger in the community. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), a program of OSU Extension, provides nutrition education and healthy lifestyle skill trainings for low-income individuals. Live-Well Stark County encourages healthy living and nutrition through community gardening and active living programs. Live-Well also networks with the five institutions of higher learning in Stark County to promote sustainability initiatives.

In the Community Food Development area, Ohio State University extension has programs promoting local food systems development, farm to school, youth education, urban gardening, and connections between rural farmers and urban initiatives. The Stark Fresh initiative of the JRC emphasizes programs that relate to all four quadrants, including the Corridor Farmers' Market which emphasizes healthy food access for low-income residents, a backyard gardening campaign, a gleaning project for food pantries, and plans for development of an urban market farm. The Botanical Garden Association operates a youth gardening program that provides education and job training for at-risk youth in Alliance. Food grown by the youth was given to the Alliance Food Pantry and nutrition education, science learning, art, and horticulture are included as a part of a curriculum. The initiative provides another example for how all four quadrants can be integrated. This integration can occur through the activities of one organization or by several organizations collaborating together.

Food Security and Best Practices: It is not reasonable to expect organizations to do work in all four quadrants. However, reducing the rapid growth in demand for food assistance and creating longer-term responses to hunger challenges requires capacity development in the broader community in all four quadrants. Much of this capacity already exists in the community, but needs to be connected to a larger, more strategic process. This requires a greater degree of collaboration between groups than has been exhibited in the community to date.

Some of the best practices observed by organizations in the hunger and food space include:

1. Encouraging Collaboration: The Alliance Community Pantry (ACP) provides a demonstration for the benefits of collaboration in hunger efforts. The ACP represents a multi-denominational food pantry that consists of four churches that previously operated smaller food pantries with limited hours and days of operation. By combining resources and pooling volunteers, they were able to expand hours, days of operation, and establish a more tightly run operation. The pantry thrives as a result of a broad range of community partnerships that helped to increase local food provision, provide volunteer support, and leverage the skills of local businesses for building renovations.

2. Facilitating Communication: The Refuge of Hope facilitates a meal program forum for agencies or churches that supports shared learning and coordination of services. The forum helped to assess hours and days of operation between agencies to insure that there was broad coverage client needs throughout the week. Similarly, the Stark County Hunger Task Force is a coalition of about 30 hunger organizations in Stark County. The Task Force helps to facilitate coordination and learning between the organizations in their coalition. They also provide funding support to food pantries and support for logistics and distribution of food from the Akron-Canton Food Bank. The Akron-Canton Food Bank has a network of around 80 food relief programs in Stark County. The food bank hosts an annual gathering that enables food pantries to learn from each other and stay abreast of challenges and opportunities in food security.

3. Bundling Services: Good models for emergency food relief address both immediate needs while addressing longer-term solutions, such as encouraging self-sufficiency, providing education, or promoting community development. Several organizations exhibited these bundled services which approach client assistance from a more wholistic perspective. The Live-Well Stark County initiative has a diverse base of stakeholders. Some of their community garden


Image from Stark Fresh/JRC, http://www.mrcfarmersmarket.org

Stark Fresh Mahoning Corridor farmers' market helps to bring local food to this food desert neighborhood.

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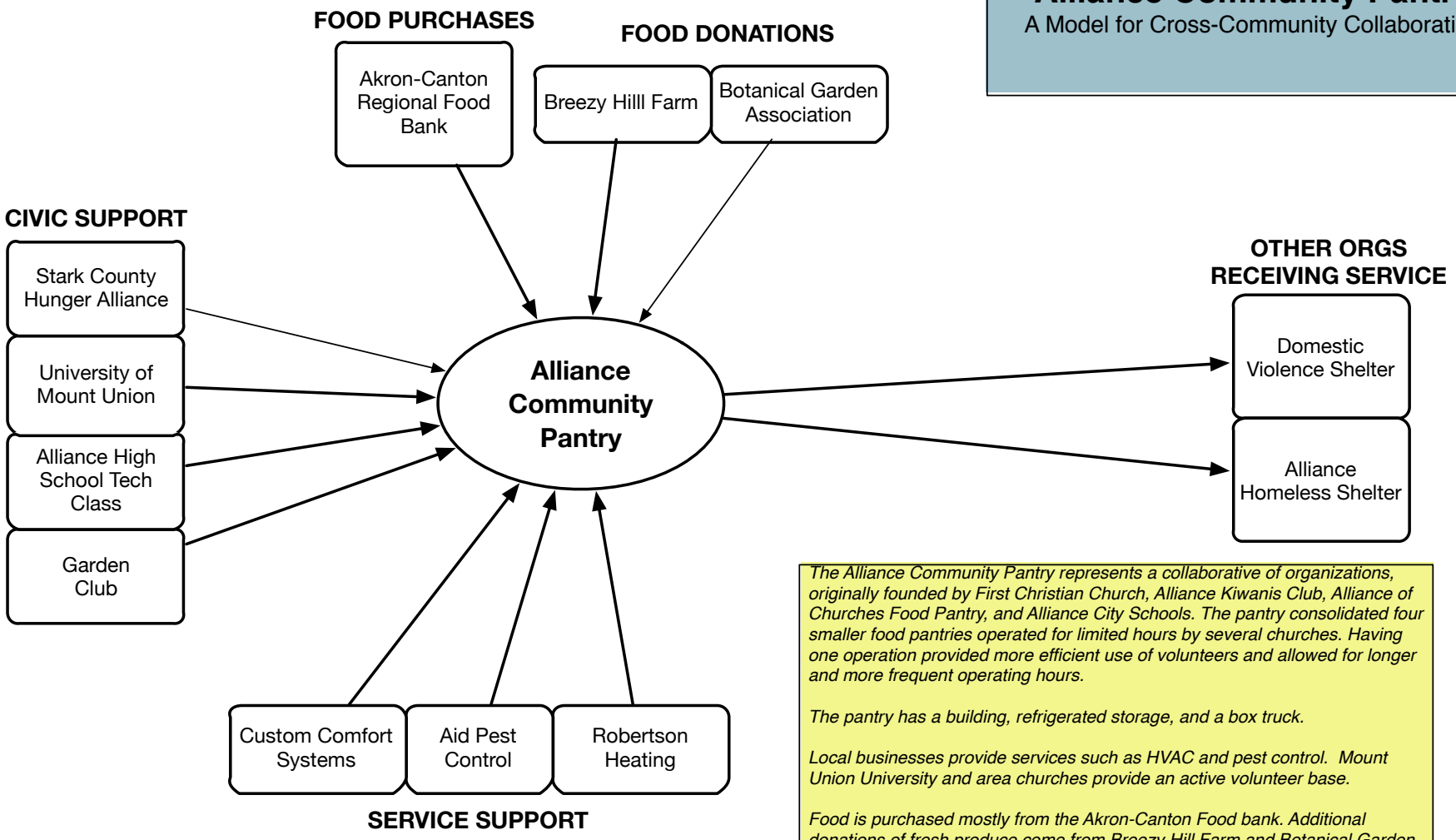
Alliance Community Pantry

A Model for Cross-Community Collaboration



The Alliance Community Pantry represents a collaborative of organizations, originally founded by First Christian Church, Alliance Kiwanis Club, Alliance of Churches Food Pantry, and Alliance City Schools. The pantry consolidated four smaller food pantries operated for limited hours by several churches. Having one operation provided more efficient use of volunteers and allowed for longer and more frequent operating hours.

The pantry has a building, refrigerated storage, and a box truck.

Local businesses provide services such as HVAC and pest control. Mount Union University and area churches provide an active volunteer base.

Food is purchased mostly from the Akron-Canton Food bank. Additional donations of fresh produce come from Breezy Hill Farm and Botanical Garden Association.

Food Pantry capacity also utilized in the past to provide support to Domestic Violence Shelter and Homeless Shelter in downtown Alliance.

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installations also included nutrition education workshops offered by EFNEP. Both Refuge of Hope and the Salvation Army of Massillon connect clients to other services, including job placement, training, health care, or housing. The Stark Fresh effort focuses on improving the availability of healthy local foods in a food desert neighborhood in Canton through a combination of a farmers' market that accepts food stamps, community education programs, and the promotion of backyard and community gardening.

The Alliance Community Pantry formed when smaller food pantries combined to allow for better access and use of volunteer time.

Food Security and Systems Response:
Based on interviews, a review of hunger work in Stark County, and a consideration of broader challenges, some of the following conclusions can be made about the future of food security.

1) Economic Development- It is clear that jobs and a stagnant local economy is the most significant factor affecting food security in Stark County. Even people that have jobs are struggling to make ends meet. Living wages and positive economic development will be important long-term factors in the reduction in food insecurity. Some of this involves broader national policies that affect the costs of health care or minimum wage. But this can also include local efforts to create jobs or enterprises in the local food sector.

2) Seasonal Challenges- Winter tends to be a particularly difficult challenge for people to get food assistance. Most food shelters note a significant drop in January and February for services and the winter of 2013-14 was particularly brutal. Consideration must be given to insuring that people do not fall through the cracks in the winter.

3) Public Benefits- There are a number of signs that public benefits are declining. The reduction in SNAP (food stamp) funding benefits and the reduction of unemployment insurance are increasing the vulnerability of many individuals and placing increasing pressure on food and hunger organizations.

4) Urban and Rural Divide- Stark County has a rich and productive agricultural base, but there seem to be few connections between rural and urban communities. A more engaged agricultural community can provide opportunities for increasing the availability of healthy local foods in emergency food distribution. They can also help to create new economic opportunities in the growth, processing, and distribution of local foods in Stark County and the broader northeast Ohio region. But this will require new investments and support to raise local agricultural production and processing capacity.

5) Rural Food Insecurity- Consideration must be given also to discrepancies between urban and rural communities in terms of access to food pantries. Most food pantries and hot meal programs are concentrated in urban centers. People are often drawn from rural areas to cities where services are concentrated. Rural food insecurity needs to be considered in county-wide food and hunger efforts.

6) Fostering Collaboration- It is clear that the greatest potential for improving the capacity to address food insecurity in Stark County lies in improving collaboration among people involved with food and hunger work. Additionally, a more thorough inventory needs to be conducted to determine other assets in the community that can play an important supporting role in food and hunger, including health care organizations (5 in Stark County), colleges and universities (5 in Stark County), local farms and businesses, and community development agencies.

7) Climate Change- Climate change is a complex scientific phenomenon. The probabilities of areas experiencing more severe climate events is increasing, whether it is prolonged drought, flooding, or more extreme storms. Climate can have a local effect, potentially reducing the productivity of local farms. Conversely, increasing the local capacity for food production can be an important hedge against extreme events elsewhere, such as the prolonged drought in California which is predicted to impact fruit and vegetable prices in 2015. The impacts of a changing climate on food and agricultural systems and adaptation strategies need to also be a part of an effort to address long-term food security. This is especially important, as low-income communities will face the greatest vulnerability for climate-based disruptions.

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Pattern #3
FLUID NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES

The Village Garden in Oberlin provides a space not just for residents and high school students to raise food, but it sponsors community events. Here students and residents celebrate an Indigenous People's Festival, dancing to jazz music played by jazz majors from Oberlin's Conservatory of Music.

Pattern 30- Activity Nodes- ***Create nodes of activity throughout the community.***

Activity nodes occur where a number of paths or roads in a community converge. Activity nodes are better dispersed throughout a community, with each neighborhood or work area having walkable access. Cooperative clustering can take place too around complementary activities. Examples of activity nodes that can be organized around local food systems include a local food hub for distributing local food to businesses or households, a community food processing kitchen, a composting and waste hub, learning farms around schools, or community gardens in neighborhoods. Each of these spaces draw multiple people together for shared activity, exchange (whether food, recipes, or growing techniques), and learning.

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NETWORK ANALYSIS

Based on a network mapping analysis, there is evidence of an overall need to improve network collaboration and connectivity between three sectors related to food security: organizations involved with direct hunger relief, organizations that can serve a supporting role for food security, and local farmers and food-related businesses. Greater interaction between dis-connected groups can foster stronger collaborative networks too, including faith and non-faith based groups, the inclusion of diverse ethnic groups, and greater urban and rural connectivity. Despite challenges around collaboration, there is high interest collaboration and leadership among hunger and food system stakeholders.

Network mapping provides a helpful tool for assessing the degree of connectedness within a community. To what degree do people collaborate on projects, share information, or work across communities typically bound by geography, professional background, or socio-economic status?

For Stark County, network mapping provides a tool to understand where individuals work separately or together, who has influence, who provides information or knowledge, where perspectives might differ, and where dis-connected clusters might be connected for greater collective impact. The degree of network connectedness is one indicator for the capacity within the county to address complex long-term challenges like hunger or food access.

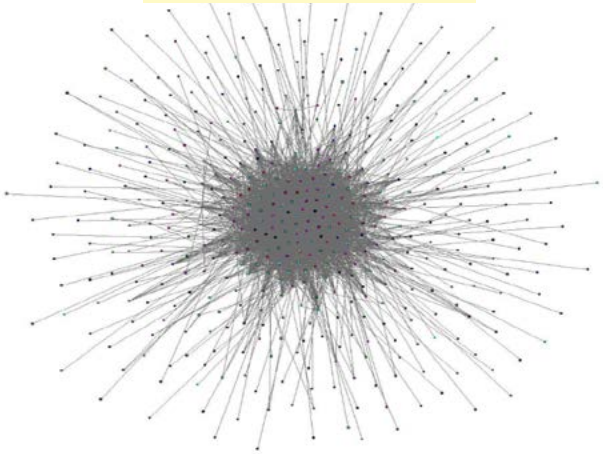
***Click here** to see a complete presentation of network maps and survey results.*

To set-up the network mapping process, three sectors were identified that can impact food security in Stark County: Hunger, Supporting, and Local Food. The **Hunger Sector** includes organizations working directly on hunger relief efforts- food pantries, food banks, hot meal programs, or organizations that collect or distribute food. Next, the **Supporting Sector** does not play a direct role in hunger relief, but provides essential supporting services- private or public foundations, universities or colleges, government agencies, health care institutions, cooperative extension, or businesses. Third, the **Local Food Sector** covers the local capacity for producing, processing or distributing healthy local foods- farmers, urban gardeners, farmers markets, or local food entrepreneurs.

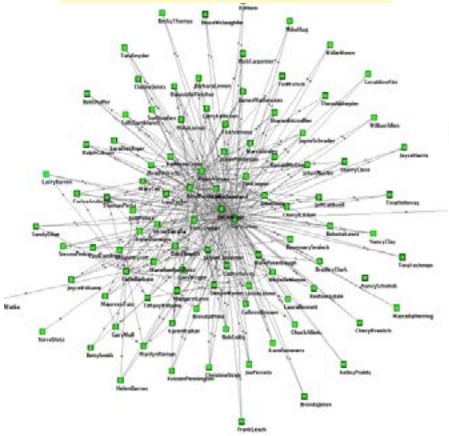
About 200 individuals from all three sectors were invited to participate in a network mapping survey during the summer of 2014 to measure perspectives on hunger and assess the strength of network connections. With a 52% response rate slightly over 100 individuals responded to the survey. This provided a snapshot in time of the network of individuals impacting food security in Stark County as of the summer of 2014.

A robust network will feature a tight central core of diverse stakeholders and a deep periphery of individuals who are connected to the core through one or two people. A dense core indicates strong relationships between key leaders in the network. A deep periphery indicates that people distant from the core leadership still have connections to the network and the ability to bring new ideas, perspectives, or resources into the network.

Smart Network (Ideal)



Hunger Network



Local Food Sector

Supporting Organizations

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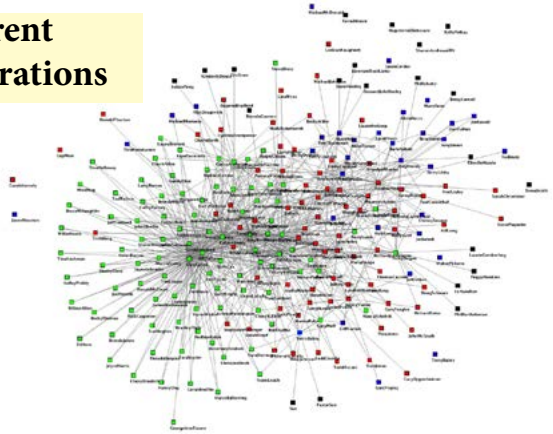
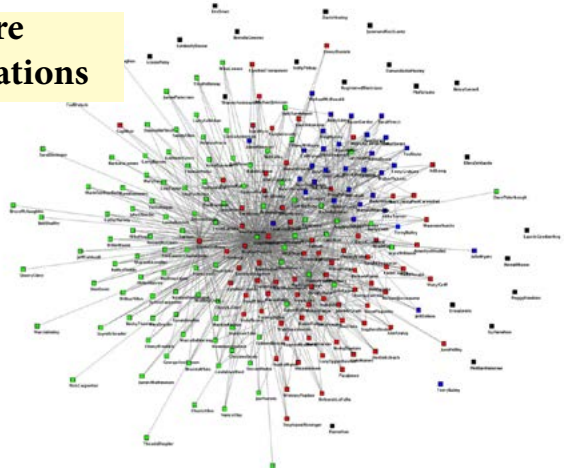
The network maps of Stark County reveal that the Hunger Sector has the most developed network, with a fairly strong core of individuals in key organizational leadership positions connected to each other. The periphery (mostly individual food pantries or meal programs) showed moderate connections to the core leadership. The Supporting Sector indicated a less developed network with some small and scattered hubs of connection and no evidence of a strong core. Many individuals were isolated and had no connections to others in this sector. The Local Food sector was the least developed network, featuring a couple of small hubs and a lot of isolated individuals.

Current Collaborations



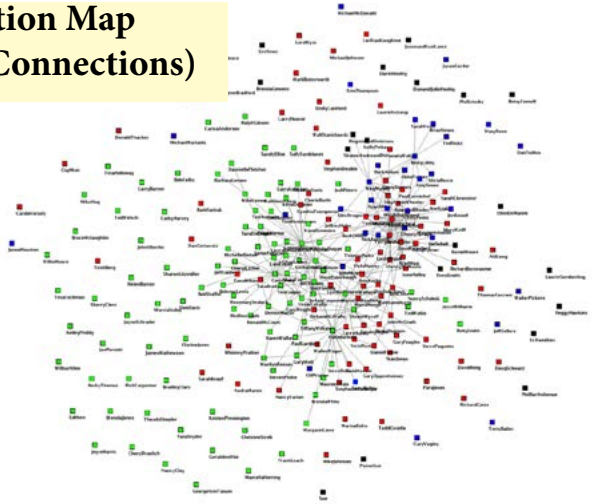
Addressing long-term food security will require stronger connections between these three sectors of activity. When combined, the three sectors showed high degree of siloing. The Hunger and Supporting Sectors had a few bridges, but remained relatively separate from each other. The Local Food Sector was far removed from the Hunger Sector with very few connections between the two. The Supporting Sector shows potential for providing a critical bridge for connecting hunger and local food efforts.

Future Collaborations



When asked who they would like to collaborate with in the future, the network map shows a slight improvement in connectedness, but is still fairly siloed. Even considering future connections, there is a tendency for people to connect with others in their own sector. Networking events should encourage opportunities for diverse stakeholders to meet each other, share information, and identify projects on which they might collaborate. Projects can be selected on the basis of those that bring together all three sectors.

Innovation Map (Learning Connections)



The "innovation map" reveals who people go to when seeking information or advice. On this map, connections were limited to a few individuals and most people had no learning connections with anyone else in the network. This indicates a need to encourage stronger learning connections throughout the network. This can be accomplished through community workshops led by key innovators and learning events that engage diverse communities on common topics (such as how to connect community gardens to food banks or how to teach people to cook with local foods). Other informal learning events might include mentoring or peer-to-peer learning connections. For example, a farmer might teach another farmer how to access local markets or members of an established community garden might help to start a community garden in another community. Institutions with a capacity for formal education (schools, universities, extension, etc.) also provide an important source of information in communities.

Combined, the three network maps (current collaborations, future collaborations, and learning connections) reveal a need to improve connections between diverse sectors and to improve mechanisms to encourage more information sharing across the network.

The network mapping process also included a formal survey that provided a more detailed understanding of experiences and perspectives on hunger, access to healthy foods,

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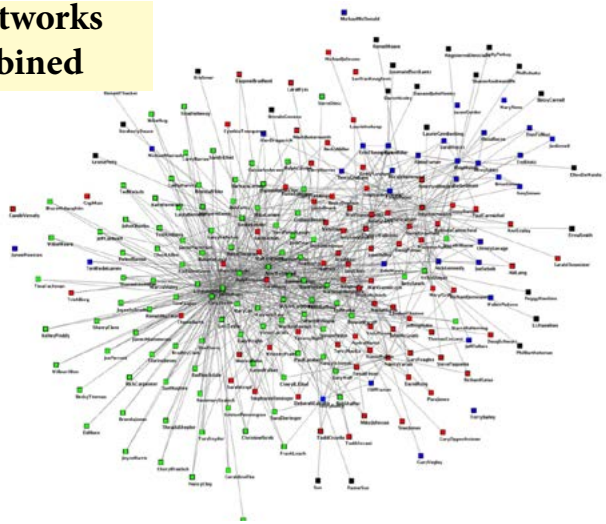
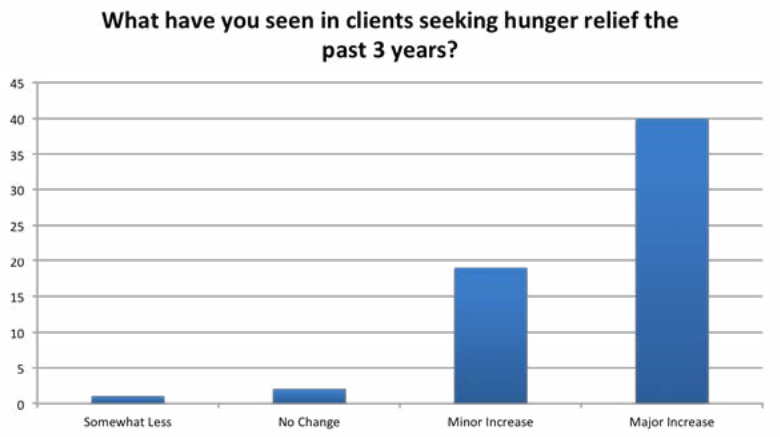
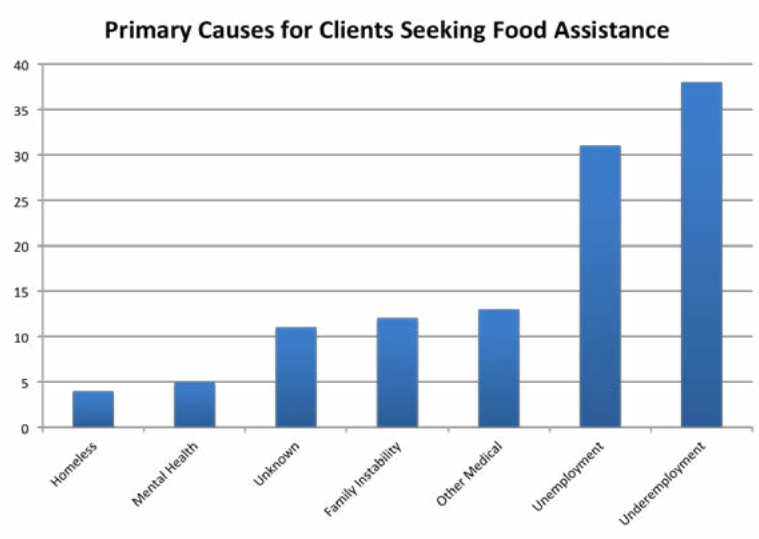
All Networks Combined



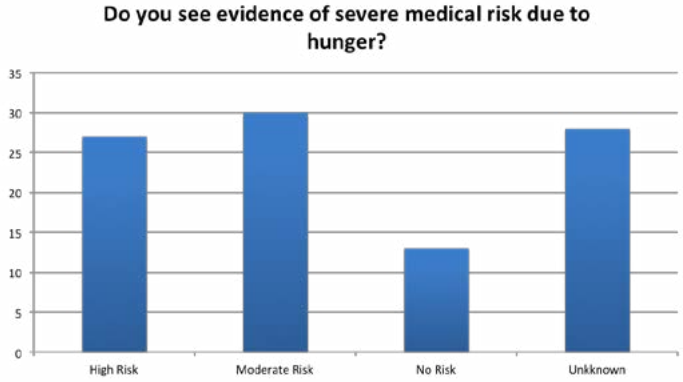
and areas of interest for future work. Mapping survey results across the network can provide a more comprehensive understanding of where there might be areas of common agreement and areas where opinions or perspectives might diverge.

Overall Food Security Perspectives of Stark County Food and Hunger Organizations: Concerning perspectives on hunger, the survey reveals that there has been a significant increase over the past 3 years of individuals seeking the services of food relief agencies. The primary reasons for this increase in demand related to economic circumstances, including unemployment or under-employment (working, but not earning enough to provide all household needs). Medical and familial instability were also sited as less common, but significant contributing factors. Overall, hunger issues seem to be driven more by external circumstances outside of someone's control than resulting from poor individual choices.





Despite improving economic benchmarks, hunger and food insecurity are growing problems in Stark County. This leads to a corresponding potential health crisis, where respondents noted that residents face a potentially severe medical risk due to inadequate diet. This food access challenge comes with a high economic cost, including lost productivity and increased health care costs.



Concerning healthy food access, almost all food pantries actively seek healthier food options, but face limited or sporadic healthy options. Similarly, retail food outlets in Stark County also have limited availability. Farmers' markets, which generally feature a mix of healthy, unprocessed or whole foods also have limited availability across Stark County. Common barriers to accessing healthy foods include affordability, knowledge about healthy food choices, limited availability of healthy foods in neighborhoods, and a lack of skills in food preparation.

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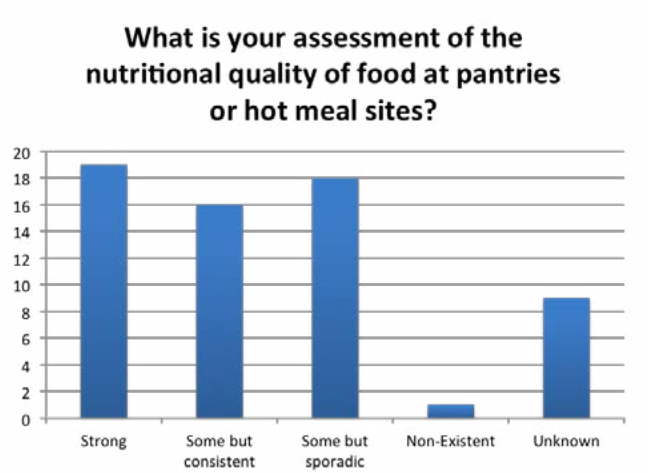
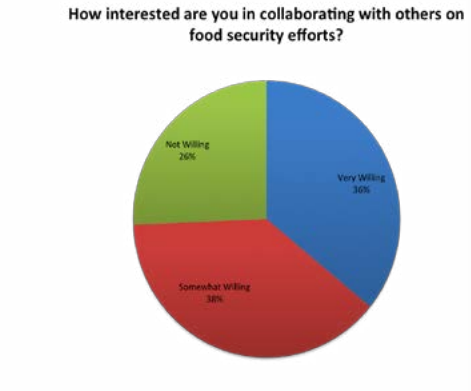
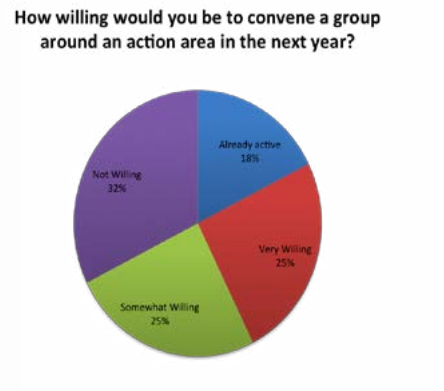


Healthy food is somewhat limited in Stark County, both within food relief and in retail outlets in most neighborhoods. Price and access will remain key challenges, especially because the price points that most farmers need to stay in business are not at the level that low-income people can afford. Additionally, health and nutrition education programs will be critical for developing the skills that people will need to know for growing, finding, or preparing healthy foods.

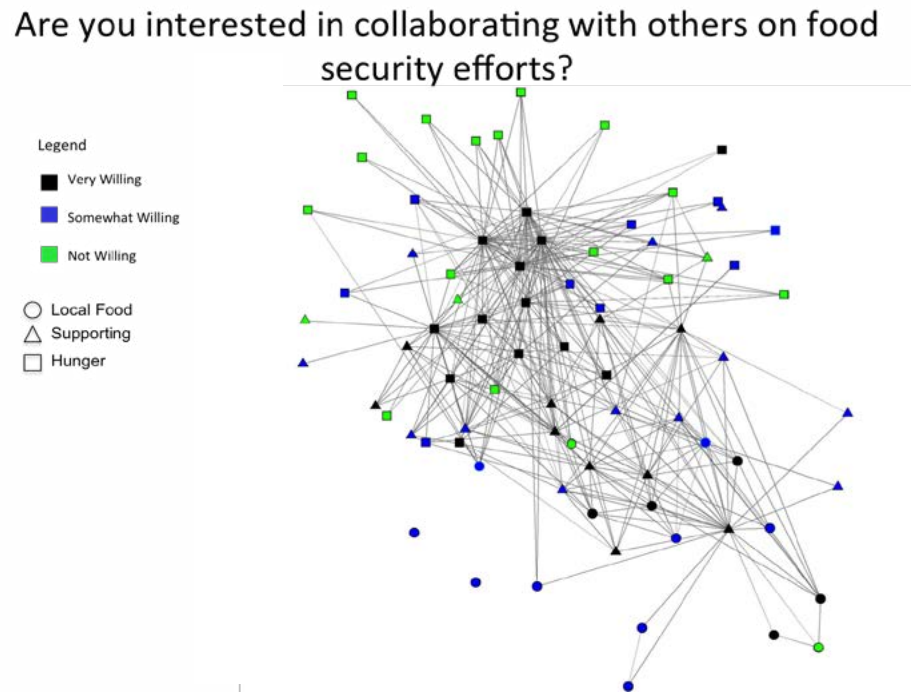
In terms of potential future actions to address hunger and food access, respondents were somewhat evenly split between initiatives to improve healthy food in food relief, increase retail access to healthy foods, and develop new enterprises or workforce development opportunities in the local food sector.

In terms of projects, the area that drew the highest number of interested individuals was increasing healthy food in emergency food relief. However, this project mostly contained people in the Hunger Sector without necessary connections to Supporting or Local Food sectors that would be needed to make it work. Improving healthy food outlets in neighborhoods, expanding urban gardening/farming, connecting local farmers and consumers, and community development in the local food sector were also areas of strong interest.





There is a strong interest among stakeholders in collaboration, especially among the core leadership of food and hunger organizations. However, there is less interest in collaboration at the local level of the individual food pantry or meal program. Network collaborations should be encouraged to increase collaborative opportunities at the level of neighborhood food pantries or meal programs. The stakeholders also reveal a strong propensity for leadership, with a majority of individuals showing interest in playing an active role in convening projects or collaborating with others.



In assessing the projects that have the most potential for drawing together diverse stakeholders from all three sectors (hunger, supporting, local food), improving healthy food retail (especially in food desert neighborhoods), connecting local farmers and consumers, and expanding urban agriculture appeared to draw the most diverse mix of individuals. While there was strong interest in healthy foods in hunger relief, it was mostly among people already in the hunger sector.

The strong interest in improving healthy food in food relief can be met by linking to other initiatives that have more diverse partners, such as urban gardening, farmer/consumer linking, or food access. Expanding urban food production, strengthening linkages between farmers and consumers, or encouraging local food enterprise development will be important precursors to improving healthy food access in retail or food pantries.

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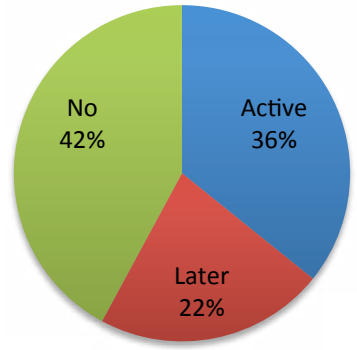
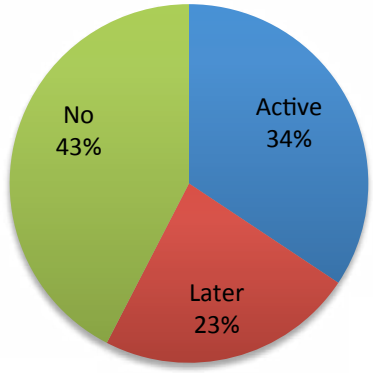
Are you interested in…

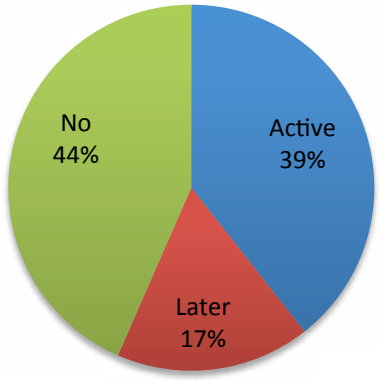
Nutrition Education Programming



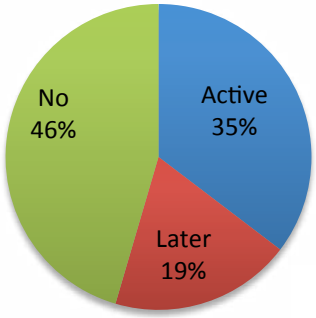
Urban Gardening Programs



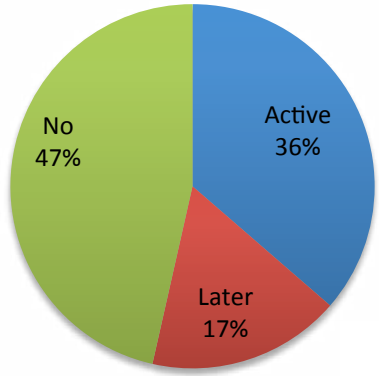
Backpack Program



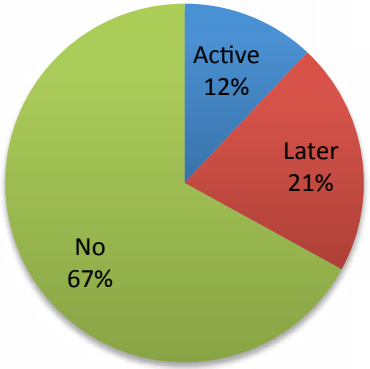
Cooking Programs



Fresh Produce in Emergency Food Distribution



Farm to School



Respondents were asked which project areas they might be interested in getting involved with in the future. They showed pretty even interest in being involved with Urban Gardening (57%), Nutrition Education (58%), Backpack Programs (56%) and Cooking Programs (54%). About 53% were interested in fresh produce distribution, but only 33% were interested in Farm to School initiatives.

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Pattern #4
SELF-GOVERNING COMMUNITIES

The atrium of the Science Center at Oberlin College provided a day-long gathering space for students, local residents, farmers, and businesses discussing options for converting food waste generated by Oberlin institutions and businesses to an input for local agriculture.

Pattern 45- Necklace of Community Projects- ***The local town hall will not be an honest part of the community which lives around it, unless it is itself surrounded by all kinds of small community activities and projects, generated by people for themselves.***

Having a robust grassroots sector enlivens the democracy of a small community. Grassroots movements, often unpopular at their inception, provide an important place in challenging established ideas or providing services to community members otherwise overlooked. Grassroots initiatives can be supported through the provision of low-cost or free storefronts, offices, or meeting spaces (often buildings that might otherwise be empty). Organizing open forums for ideas to get into the public for consideration can also help to change the life of a community and its openness to new ideas or perspectives. Many, if not most, healthy local food efforts are largely driven by grassroots communities, including farmers markets, community gardens, or collaborative marketing among a number of small farmers. Local food systems will grow to the extent that grassroots participation and innovation is encouraged. Creating a "necklace" of local food projects throughout the community can encourage an acceleration of local food consumption and innovation that will drive growth in the local food economy. Creating physical spaces for meeting or temporary offices on community gardens or neighborhood-based initiatives in the city can help to increase participation. Organizing an open knowledge commons can enable people to contribute and share ideas that others can learn from, refine, or critique.

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COMMUNITY VISIONING

A strategic vision begins with a consideration of generational changes that would indicate that food security challenges in Stark County have largely been solved, resulting in healthier communities and a more robust local economy. Progress indicators offer mile markers along the road toward these generational changes to track progress over time. Ultimately, the locus of action resides in what immediate steps can be taken in the next six months to take smaller steps toward these larger goals. Short-term projects identified by community stakeholders will be those that address community food network strengthening, school-based initiatives, public awareness campaigns, increased access to healthy food in food relief and neighborhoods, better connections between urban centers and farmers, nutrition and cooking programs, composting initiatives and facilities to increase the productivity of the local food system. Ultimately, efforts that can address several of the above projects at once will have the greatest catalytic impact.

On July 9th, a mix of food security stakeholders from across Stark County came to Walsh University to participate in a forum on the "Future of Food Security in Stark County". The forum also provided the first opportunity to bring together and encourage mixing between stakeholders representing the three sectors that can impact food security: Hunger, Supporting, and Local Food. The forum included an assessment of current food security networks in the county and a strategic visioning exercise to begin to identify future activities that can lead to systemic changes to impact long-term food security in the county.

NETWORK MAPPING

The first section of the forum included a presentation by June Holley that highlighted some of the results of the network mapping survey, covered in the previous section of this report. June provided an overview of the importance of collaborative networks in addressing hunger challenges. Holley suggested that network mapping can be conducted as a part of a four-part process that includes mapping, analyzing, developing strategies to improve the network, and future re-mapping to gauge improvements in network connectivity over time.

Holley presented a map of an optimal "smart network" that features a well-developed, dense, and highly diverse core; a deep periphery to bring in new ideas, perspectives or networks; a number of successful collaborative projects across sectors, and high levels of communication and learning throughout the network.

Holley shared a sampling of key network maps along with some of the following observations:

1. The current network map reveals a need to foster greater communication, mixing, and collaboration between the hunger, supporting, and local food sectors to move toward more of a "smart network" formation. A smart network will be a much more powerful driver of comprehensive change around complex issues like hunger.

2. Hunger networks remain largely dis-connected from local food networks, indicating opportunities to link growth of the local food economy with improvements in food security.

A Community Forum on the Future of Food Security in Stark County took place in July 2014 with a mix of community stakeholders.

***Click here** for detailed summaries of ideas and projects generated at the forum.*

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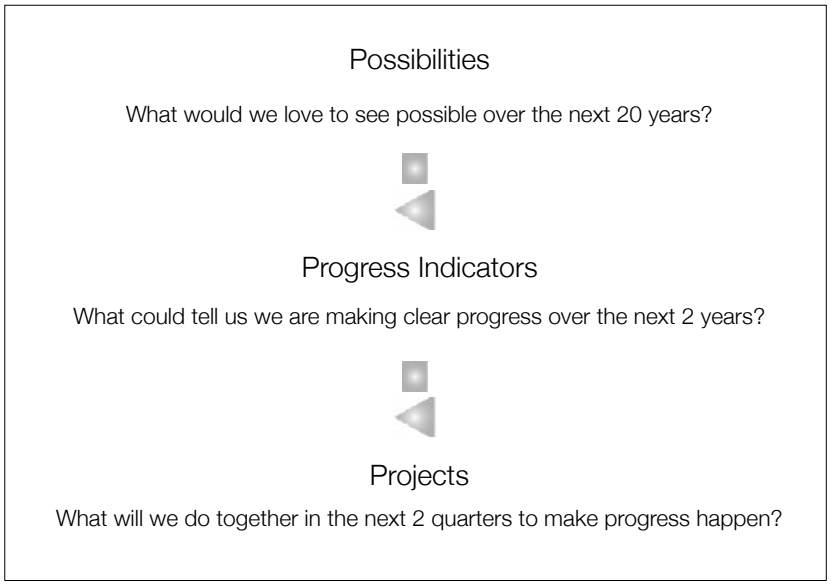

3. While a lot of siloing was revealed in current network maps, there is a large interest in collaboration among stakeholders. This indicates a need to focus on training or capacity building in collaborative processes.

4. Beyond just collaboration, the network indicates a high potential for leadership, with a large number of people indicating a willingness to actively convene new projects or initiatives.

5. Projects that focus on connecting local farmers and urban consumers and promoting urban agriculture had the greatest degree of interest across all three sectors. These projects might be considered first as a way to build connections between the three sectors.

6. People of color were largely absent from the overall network and those that were present were on the periphery. Greater attention needs to be placed on the inclusion of people of color and mixed socio-economic groups.

STRATEGIC VISIONING

The strategic visioning session took place in three phases. The first phase involved a discussion of what systems-level changes people would like to see in the next generation related to food security. The second phase identified two-year indicators or benchmarks that demonstrate progress toward this long-term vision. The third phase included proposals for short-term projects that could be completed in the next six months while providing the first steps toward a larger vision.

Within the next generation, stakeholders envisioned a more collaborative culture and stronger alignment with public policy to address food security as a long-term challenge.

Some of the long-term outcomes envisioned included:

- **better health outcomes** (measured by diet and obesity levels),
- **expanded educational programs** (including food production, cooking, and nutrition in schools and universities),
- **improved community food security** (access, affordability, reduction of food deserts, wider availability of healthy foods),
- and a **stronger local food system** (widespread urban food production, a more connected rural farm economy, and shared infrastructure for storage, processing, and distribution).

Some of the two-year benchmarks identified to indicate progress toward these goals included:

- **collaborative processes** (increased diversity and denser network connections),
- **capital** (better access to capital),
- **urban agriculture** (number and connectedness of urban farm operations in urban centers),
- **better farmer connections** (measured by number of farmers, diversity of products, and increases in retail sales and food pantry distributions),
- a **more educated public** (visibility of available support programs, better awareness of food security issues, increased farm-to-table participation),
- stronger **school education** (number of classes and educational opportunities available to youth),
- improved **hunger relief services** (mobile services, improved local donations, county-based storage and distribution facility),
- **health outcomes** (changes in diet, reductions in obesity, healthier lifestyle practices), and
- improved **local food infrastructure** (square footage dedicated

June Holley and Brad Masi at the Community Forum.

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OVERVIEW OF THE STARK COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The community engagement process was nested into initial conversations about the role of networks in food system transformation and the group's collective reflections on their own system network maps.

Among the prime takeaways, the group developed a sense that the current network is somewhat fragmented into functional sectors like services and producers. It will benefit from a more fully developed periphery of people more connected to people, ideas and resources outside the current network core. They also learned that there is a strong presence of people in the network who want to collaborate with others across the network.

We then leveraged these outcomes to engage the entire group into three new conversations. They focused on the group's consideration of growing access to healthy, affordable and ideally locally and personally grown food in the region. The questions included the following.

1. Given the opportunities for network growth and the intention of this focus, what would you love to see possible looking out over the next two decades?

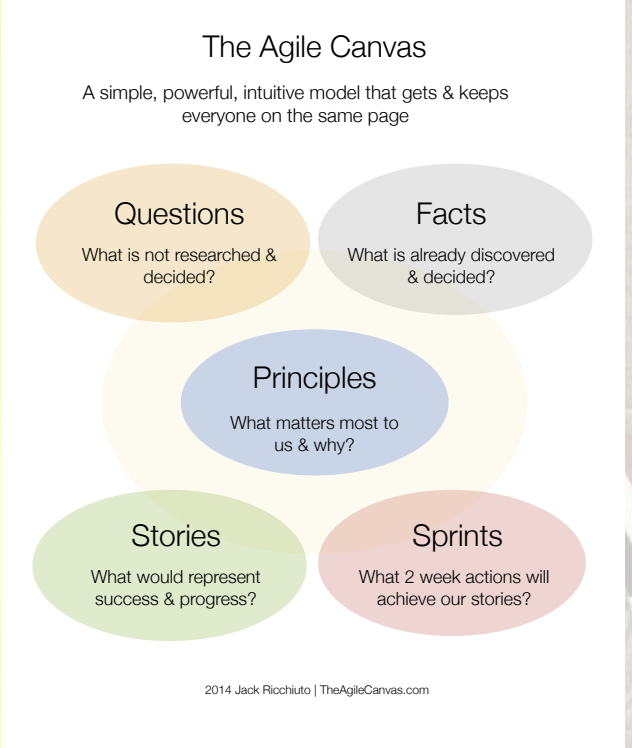
2. For these possibilities, what would represent measurable progress over the next two years?

3. For these progress indicators, what kinds of projects could we accomplish over the next two quarters to make proportional progress toward these indicators and their respective possibilities?

People worked on each question in small mixed groups. Everyone without exception was engaged and all data was recorded and collected.

The over four dozen two quarter projects generated were posted on a common wall so people could sign up to those they had interest in. People could sign up in any of three categories of participation: leader, contributor and inviter. This process is referred to as "voting with our feet." It is an organic collective process of identifying projects that hold the most energy and commitment. These are typically diverse and most prone to success.

The energy and new synergies in the group we're strong throughout the process. People we're genuinely excited about the projects, evidenced by the classic indicator of good gatherings when more people stuck around to connect than people immediately leaving the event.



We utilized the Agile Canvas framework with a small leadership group that emerged from the forum process. The Agile Canvas is a flexible collaboration tool that creates a dynamic and productive process for groups to use. More on the process is at TheAgileCanvas.com.

Natural leaders in the network are emerging to help catalyze and facilitate the process. Typically two kinds of projects will emerge. There will be projects that can bootstrap their own success with available resources. There will be projects that will seek funding and other resources to move them forward. These approaches together will make future efforts more sustainable and strategic.

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to warehousing and processing, number of converted urban buildings, increase in acreage of rural and urban land to support agricultural production for local consumption).

About 52 short-term projects were identified at the forum and 15 individuals signed up to play a leadership role in one or more projects. The proposals broke down across the following more general project areas:

- **urban gardening** (community garden network, urban market farming education, dedicated urban farm site),
- **collaborative capacity** (community food network, local government involvement, regional connections),
- **school education** (university-level food and hunger courses, service learning, farm-to-school, cooking and school gardening),

- **public awareness** (campaign elevating hunger and poverty, directory of local services, local food guide, community events),
- **farmer connections** (connecting farms with food pantries, local sourcing, grower collaborative),
- **food pantry distribution** (mobile markets, gleaning program, farm-to-food-bank program),
- **health outcomes** (nutrition education, community cooking programs, healthy food tastings),
- **local foods infrastructure** (kitchen incubator, local food hub), and
- **waste utilization** (city-wide composting, bio-gas generation).

ASSEMBLING THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

The Food Security forum began at the wide-end of the funnel, generating a healthy amount of ideas, directions, new connections, and projects. To create a more refined focus, four major areas of focus seemed to hold the greatest potential for addressing food security while improving health outcomes and local economic opportunities. These four areas also seemed to hold the most potential for connecting multiple issues and attracting diverse stakeholders.

The first and most important project is to **formalize a Community Food Network (CFN)** for Stark County. Similarly referred to in many communities as "Food Policy Councils", the idea of a CFN is to provide an organized forum for diverse stakeholders to meet, coordinate activities, and collaborate on broader projects. The CFN can also serve as a driver for diversifying stakeholders who will be critical to changing the complex challenge that food security presents. It should focus on bridging mixed stakeholders, including urban and rural, multiple cities, diverse ethnic and socio-economic groups, business-to-business linkages, and food-banks and local food efforts. The initial focus of the CFN can be two-fold: first to organize a number of public events that help to build and educate the network and second, to serve as a convener and catalyst for the following three other projects: Community Education, Urban Agriculture, and a Local Food Hub.

Community education will be key to increasing the capacity for Stark County to address its food security challenges. Education can serve two important purposes: awareness and empowerment. **Awareness** focuses on raising the understanding of food security in the community, including raising local knowledge about the challenge of food insecurity and where to go for support (whether as a client or a contributor). **Empowerment** focuses on practical actions that people and communities can take to improve their own health and contribute to the local economy. Empowerment education provides people with the skills to grow, prepare, process, or eat healthy foods. Empowerment education can have three tracks: education in K-12 schools, universities and colleges, and the general public.

Urban agriculture initiatives provide an ideal opportunity to both strengthen collaborative networks and to empower people with the ability to grow and utilize their own food in cities where food insecurity is the most concentrated. Urban agriculture involves the cultivation of land within urban communities for the provision of food. It can include **home production** in backyards, **community gardening** on publicly accessible plots, or **market farming** where food is grown and sold to local markets. Urban agriculture also provides an opportunity to more productively utilize the abundant reserves of vacant land in Stark County's urban centers. A robust urban agriculture system will require the participation of all members of the community (from youth to retirees). There are two

tools that are critical to growing the productive capacity of Stark County's urban centers: **strengthening learning networks** between cities of people involved with urban agriculture and **establishing larger urban farms** that can combine a variety of agricultural techniques to maximize output on limited amounts of land while providing a powerful educational tool to improve across-the-board production in cities.

A Local Food Hub provides an important infrastructure for the growth of the local food economy. The function of a "local food hub" is to provide a facility that fosters connections between local growers, local food businesses, and market outlets. Food hubs work at two levels. First they provide the **physical infrastructure** needed to optimize local food production, including space for aggregation, warehousing, food processing and distribution. Second, they support more **social functions**, including networking services to connect groups of farmers with potential market outlets or providing training and education to improve the production capacity of farmers through soil management, season extension, or the production of specialty crops. There are approximately 180 identified food hubs in the United States. The food hubs span a variety of purposes, from supplying food to institutional markets to increasing the supply of healthy foods to low-access communities. Given the interests and needs of Stark County, a "healthy food hub" might provide a good template for increasing the availability of healthy food in food relief, neighborhoods, and institutions.

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PART V- STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The previous sections addressed key food security challenges in Stark County, network mapping and analysis, and strategic visioning around the future of food security. This solidifies these components into a Strategic Framework for addressing the systemic causes of food insecurity. This framework will help to move toward longer-term or generational outcomes identified at the Community Forum in July.

ON-GOING CHALLENGES:

The strategic framework begins by addressing four on-going challenges for food security in Stark County:

1. Rising demand for emergency food relief services despite improvements in employment statistics in the county;

2. Limited access to healthy food in food pantries, urban neighborhoods, and rural communities;

3. Challenges in local agricultural capacity, including loss of farmers, farmland, and weak linkages between rural and urban centers in Stark County; and

4. Overall weak networks and siloing between sectors that can impact food security, including hunger organizations, supporting organizations and agencies, and local food systems.

GENERATIONAL OUTCOMES:

The following generational outcomes will indicate improved long-term food security and healthier communities in Stark County:

- **Reduced Demand for Hunger Relief**- The number of people seeking emergency food relief,particularly due to economic circumstances, is reduced.

- **Improved Healthy Food Options in Food Relief**- Access to healthy foods in emergency food relief and improved capacity for utilizing those healthy foods is achieved.

- **Elimination of Food Deserts**- All urban and rural residents have reliable access to healthy foods, regardless of location and socio-economic status.

- **Improved Health Outcomes**- Improved access to food in combination with healthier lifestyles reduces obesity, occurrences of diet-related diseases, and leads to an improved quality of life.

- **Vibrant Urban Agriculture**- Urban agriculture is widely practiced in urban centers, leading to improved food access, economic opportunity, and better utilization of vacant or under-utilized spaces, including yards, school or institutional properties, parks, and vacant lots.

- **Engaged Schools and Youth Self-Reliance**- Schools actively provide youth with the aptitudes and skills to lead healthy lives and be capable of growing and preparing healthy foods.

- **Effective Re-Utilization of Waste**- Organic wastes are diverted from the waste stream and utilized as productive energy or nutrient inputs to local agriculture.

- **Prosperous Rural Economies**- Increased local spending and value-added production activities lead to improve earnings and economic vitality of rural farmers and surrounding communities as well as improved healthy food supply.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The following strategic framework was developed to address core capacities and flagship projects that can address move from modern challenge and to generational change.

Core Capacities

- Cultivating Stronger Networks: The diversity and connectivity of stakeholders will be the first critical step to long-term improvements in food security.

- Creating a Community Investment Portfolio: Leveraging financial and non-financial assets in the community will provide the capital for sustained effort.

- Calibration and Feedback: Continuous learning and evaluation will provide feedback on progress toward key indicators and flexibility and adaptation in project implementation.

Flagship Projects

- Local Food Hub: A local food hub provides critical infrastructure to support the capacity of local food systems to improve food security and provide economic opportunity through connecting, warehousing, distributing, and processing.

- Urban Farming: An urban farming initiative facilitates greater participation in the utilization of vacant space in cities to improve the quality of the local food supply, build important social connections, and provide skills and economic opportunities.

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Pattern #5
ACCESSIBLE LANDSCAPE DESIGN

In the Tremont neighborhood of Cleveland, dishes at Lucky's Cafe often feature locally grown foods, including herbs and vegetables harvested from a garden in a side-lot next to the cafe. The garden includes areas for seating. Weekly City Fresh meetings took place at the cafe. It also provides a space for mixing between neighborhood residents. Youth from the neighborhood are hired to maintain the garden.

Pattern 148- ***Small Work Groups***- People generally don't resonate well with large groups or masses of people nor do they like to work in isolation. Creating businesses or work areas that support work groups of between 3-8 people can create more engagement, productivity, and creativity in work environments. People also tend to have more productive interaction in smaller groups, adding to the economic life of a business or cooperative. Small work groups can also be encouraged through garden design as well.

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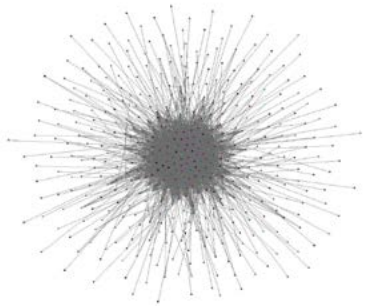
CORE CAPACITY #1- CULTIVATING STRONGER NETWORKS

Food insecurity is an inherently complex issue. Building a more healthy and food secure future in Stark County requires efforts on multiple levels. This assessment considers several dimensions of food insecurity in Stark County: increasing the supply of healthy foods in emergency food relief, improving the availability of healthy foods in food desert neighborhoods, and meeting these two needs by raising the capacity for local food systems development. These goals transcend the capacities of any individual agency, organization, or business.

What is recommended here is a framework to balance short-term emergency food needs while developing long-term initiatives that get at the root causes of hunger and food insecurity. Reducing hunger long-term will require a systems transformation- an inherently complex undertaking that will require new forms of collaboration and a strategic leveraging of local assets.



June Holley, co-founder of the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACENet) and an international network trainer and consultant, provides a variety of practical tools for collaborating and strategic leveraging in her *Network Weaver Handbook*. Holley discusses how dynamic and diverse networks enable broad-scale social and economic transformations. Challenges like climate change, improved health care access, or food security require more than just individual or isolated programs. They demand a more comprehensive and coordinated response- a strategic leveraging of all of the assets and strengths that a community might possess.

Holley writes:

> *Systems change when new networks supplant the old. Underneath every system is a set of networks. First, there is a network holding the old ways in place that needs to be exposed to the world and opened up for change. In addition, there is a network (often much larger than we realize) of unconnected or loosely connected individuals who want a healthier system. One of the most effective ways to change a complex system is by connecting these individuals and helping them take action to change the system.*

Core to the network approach is for more people to see themselves as leaders and innovators, seeding change through their own small acts in concert with others that can complement or support their individual efforts. Holley discusses how a network approach aligns much more effectively with major shifts taking place in the 21st Century.

A combination of emerging technologies, declining effectiveness and faith in traditional institutions, and contemporary challenges have motivated some of the following shifts:

20th Century	**21st Century**
Broadcast	Engagement
Few leaders	Everyone a leader
Cause and effect	Complex causes
Told what to do	Many people initiate
One right way	Many different perspectives
Assembly line	Experimentation
Predictable	Unexpected
Control	Support
Television	Social web

** Source- June Holley, Network Weavers Handbook, 2012*

Holley notes that one thing we know about transforming systems is that the process requires tremendous amounts of innovation and experimentation. This will be most useful when the results of numerous experiments are shared widely in a context of learning, sharing, and improving.

Core to the transformation of a food system is the creation of what Holley refers to as "an innovation periphery" which provides a continuous stream of new information and ideas, organizes learning clusters with diverse partners around key topics, and accelerates the spread of successful projects to other communities.

Why A Network Approach is Critical to Addressing Food Security:

To assess the capacity for leveraging networks for long-term change, June Holley and Brad Masi conducted a comprehensive network analysis. This assessed the strength of networks between individuals that have the ability to affect some aspect of food security in Stark County. To organize the assessment, three primary clusters were identified, including hunger organizations (food banks, food pantries, hot meal programs),

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LEVERAGING THE POWER OF NETWORKS IN ATHENS, OHIO

One of the best examples of leveraging the power of networks to cultivate stronger local food economies is right here in Ohio. Located in Athens, the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACENet) has been cultivating the development of a sustainable local food system since its formation in the mid-1980's. Based in Southeastern Ohio, ACENet works with the 18 Ohio counties that are part of an extended Appalachian region that spans 11 states. While rich in natural resources, Appalachia has struggled with high rates of economic poverty, mostly related to the decline of the coal, timber, and other extractive industries that brought a large number of short-term jobs to the region, but not long-term economic stability. This largely rural region of Ohio has among the highest poverty rates in the country, with about 35% of its residents at or below the poverty level.

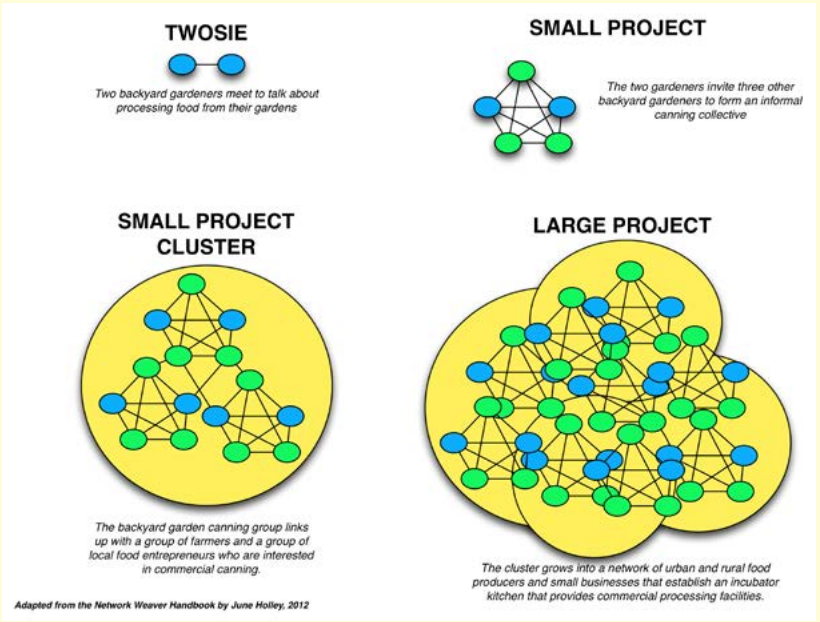
The impacts of 20 years of relationship building and network cultivation have had a noticeable impact on this region. Today, the work of ACENet and the hundreds of farmers and entrepreneurs have woven together a local economic tapestry that includes:

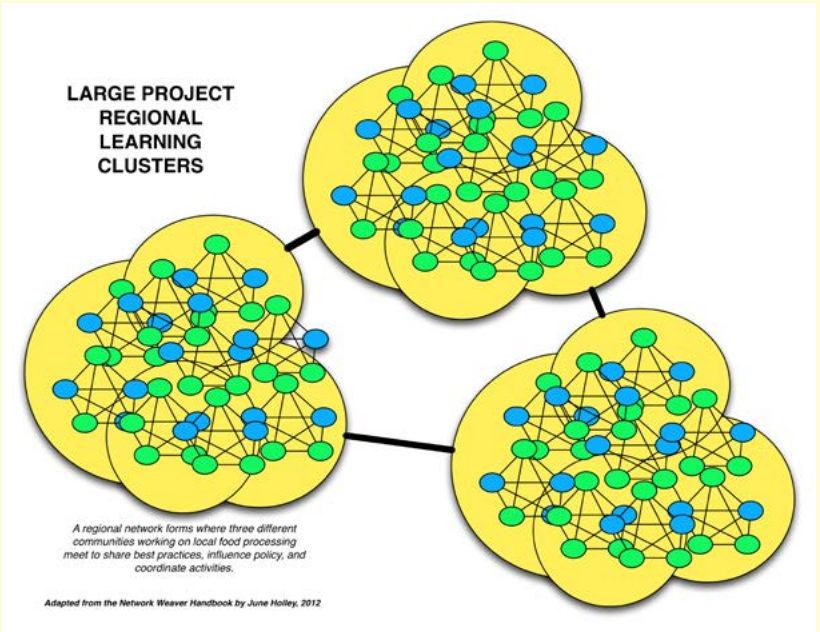
- over $3 million in annual sales at the Athen's Farmers Market;
- the start-up of seven additional farmers markets in Trimble, Nelsonville, McConnelsville, Chesterhill, Shawnee, Somerset, and New Lexington;
- over 200 unique farm and local food businesses utilizing the ACENet shared-use kitchen facility each year;
- tenants and clients of the ACENet kitchen had an aggregate of over $28 million in annual sales in 2011, supporting over 220 self-employment, full-time, and part-time jobs; and
- their 30 Mile Meal brand has over 130 collaborating partners working to leverage their local food work to make Athens a destination for tourists and improve quality of life for residents.

Leslie Shaller, worker-owner and financial manager for Casa Nueva restaurant and Food Ventures director for ACENet also notes the importance of collaborative network culture, "having folks who get that culture of deep reciprocity who understand the relationship based step. It's not like we all love each other and aren't sometimes competitors, but there's a real interesting collaborative, cooperative spirit that has come out of the work over the past 20 years, whether it's the Athens Farmers Market or the Food Ventures Center, people have learned the win-win of strong relationships."

A thermal processing unit enables entrepreneurs to process their own food product in sealed jars.

It Only Takes Two People to Start a Network





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supporting organizations (universities, hospitals, extension, foundations), and local food enterprises (farmers, food businesses, farmers' markets). Using the Smart Network Analyzer software, the assessment revealed an overall lack of connection between these three sectors and weak network development within them.

A long term effort to address food security will require a much greater degree of relationship-building and connection between these three sectors, all of which have valuable assets that contribute to long-term food security challenges. For example, health care institutions can connect healthy food access with preventative healthcare. Universities and Cooperative Extension can provide research, service learning programs, or evaluation services. Farmer organizations such as the Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, or Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association can help to link area farmers to initiatives to improve market access for healthy foods.

The most effective way to build more diverse networks is through the development of collaborative projects. These projects bring together diverse sets of stakeholders who can combine skill-sets, expertise, facilities, resources, or social networks that, when combined, can have a much larger impact on food systems than each would have in isolation. Each of these stakeholders bring critical assets to the table- assets that they draw upon daily in their own efforts. These assets can be cultivated through a Community Investment Portfolio, the second strategic tool for addressing food security long-term.

After a meeting and discussions with local stakeholders who expressed interest in taking leadership on food security challenges, two projects were identified that both have the potential to greatly increase network strength and diversity across Stark County. The Food Hub and Urban Farm development both will improve the capacity to grow, process, distribute, and use healthy foods in Stark County. This will be especially important for improving healthy food access for lower income or food insecure populations.

Building Network Capacity in Stark County

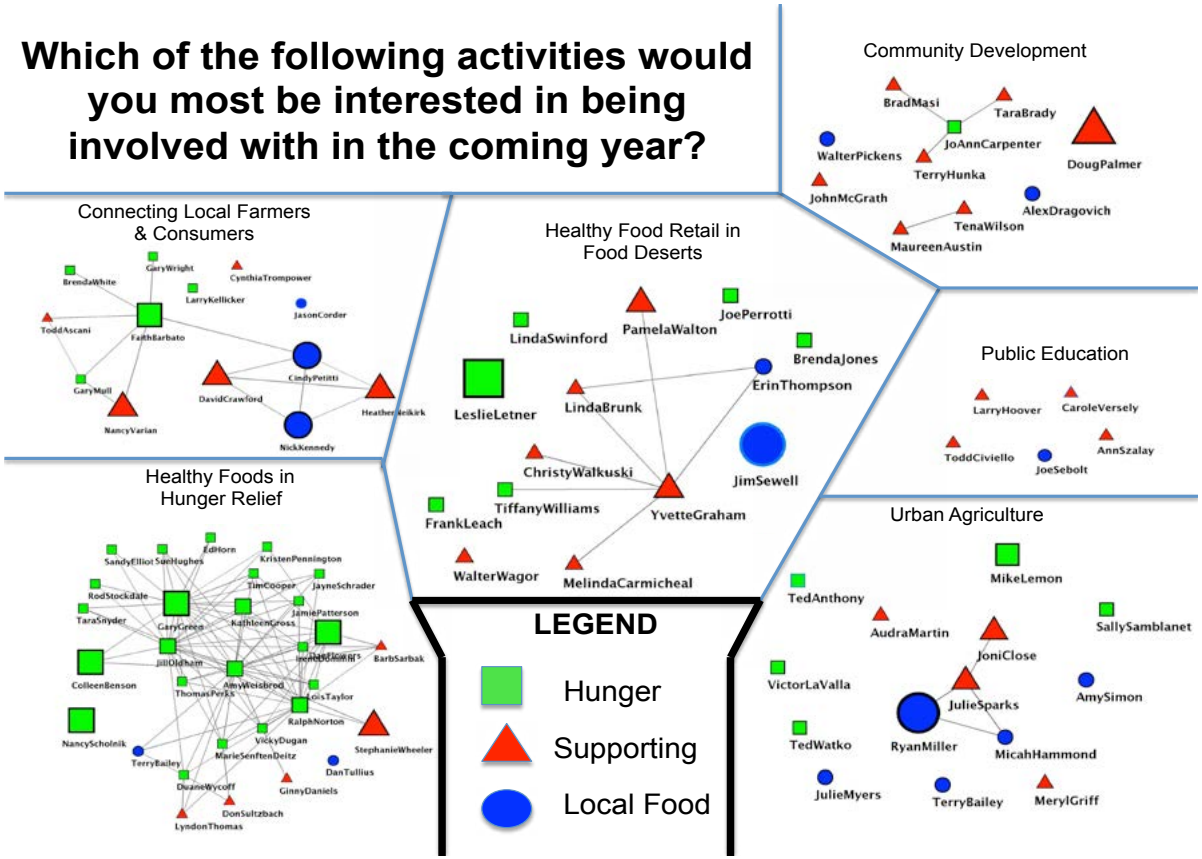
The following key steps can be taken to improve and enhance networks in Stark County: increasing cross-sector collaboration, encouraging leadership development, and improving the periphery of the network.

<u>Cross-Sector Collaboration:</u>
The highest priority is to better connect the three sectors identified in the network analysis– hunger organizations, local food organizations, and supporting organizations. Possibilities for facilitating connections between these three sectors include:

- Have gatherings (similar, but perhaps smaller than the July Community Forum on Food Security at Walsh University) where all three sectors are invited, and include activities such as Speed Networking and Affinity Groups that provide opportunities for people to get to know each other.

- Identify key hubs (well connected individuals) in each sector and have an informal meeting with them to develop strategies for better integrating the three sectors. Identify needs and interests of each sector and how they could help each other. Many communities have done this by creating food policy councils that encourage the three sectors to work together to identify key focal areas. A food policy council is a county-wide group that meets to identify and discuss policy changes that could be implemented to increase food access, support the local food economy, and other related food issues. North Carolina, for example, has over 40 county food policy councils.

- Develop a communications plan that includes all three sectors, including:
  * an e-newsletter or email group that goes to all three sectors;



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    * a blog or Facebook group that includes topics of interest to all three sectors; or

    * webinars on topics of interest to all three sectors.

- Support several pilot Working Groups, especially those that include individuals from all three sectors (see attached map). Urban gardening, Healthy Food Retail in Food Deserts, and Connecting Local Farmers & Consumers would all be good starting choices. Healthy Food in Food Relief, also an area of expressed interest, can also be enhanced by strengthening farmer and consumer connections and increasing the availability of healthy food in food desert neighborhoods that many food pantries serve.

To get these groups started, a small number of individuals can take responsibility for convening a group interested in the topic. Names can be obtained from the network mapping survey to focus on individuals with the greatest degree of influence, awareness, or innovation. Foundations might want to consider developing a small pool of funds to which these projects could apply to get seed funding for the initiative.

Encourage leadership development.
As shown in the map above, the network is quite dependent on a small number of individuals, especially to connect the different sectors. One of the keys to success in any network is that many people in the network feel competent and encouraged to take leadership and initiate and coordinate new action. This requires explicit attention to network leadership development.

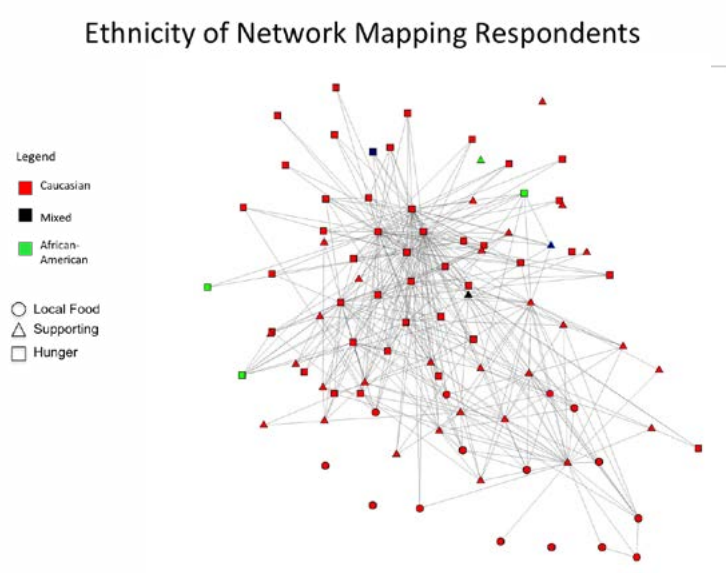
Building leadership can occur two ways:

- Offer network leadership training to a small group that includes individuals from all three sectors. They could learn skills needed for making more connections in the network, thinking about infrastructure to support network action (loan pools, communications, etc) and for leading cross-sector collaborative projects.

- Support several cross-sector collaborative projects and provide coaching and/or a peer community of practice for the coordinators (or better yet co-coordinators) of those projects.

Building a larger periphery.
Very few of the connections in the periphery are from outside of Stark County. For the county to access new ideas to increase food access and food quality, individuals will need to have relationships that help them find out about exciting innovations that are occurring in other parts of the Northeast Ohio region or even in other parts of the United States. For example, if the county decides to focus on a food hub/kitchen incubator, there are very successful examples around the country that could provide great learning models.

The ACEnet incubator in Athens, Ohio offers storage for local farmers distributing their produce locally, a distribution spot for the Donation Station (which gets donations of food from Farmers Market shoppers and then distributes this produce to the pantries), a place where low-income entrepreneurs can rent the use of equipment to bottle or bake products, and an educational space where people can learn to process food. Taking a van load of people to visit the Kitchen Incubator (and other food access projects in the community) would be a great way to expand Stark County's network periphery. Cleveland is also an innovator in urban agriculture and programs to improve healthy food access. Efforts can be made to better link Stark County groups with some of these innovators.



A critical aspect of building the network periphery involves focused outreach on communities of color. The network assessment revealed a limited involvement of people of color in core leadership around hunger issues. Projects will generally be more successful when they include the people that they serve and include a wide diversity of individuals. The percentage of minority individuals taking the survey was much smaller than the percentage of minority residents of the county. Food access efforts would greatly benefit by doing explicit outreach to "clients" of the pantries and people of color. For clients, listening groups – where small groups of clients share ideas they have for improving food access and quality and hunger groups simply listen to those ideas – are often less intimidating than trying to invite clients to large meetings or networking events.

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Pattern #6
COMMUNITY NETWORK INTERDEPENDENCY

In the Ohio City neighborhood, a branch of the Cleveland public library enables residents to check out books about gardening and healthy eating remotely. The book table is integrated into a City Fresh share distribution site (called a Fresh Stop) which distributes share-bags of locally grown produce to neighborhood residents, offering subsidies to improve accessibility for low-income residents.

Pattern 18- Network of Learning- Creative, active individuals can only grow up in a society which emphasizes learning instead of teaching.

Cities contain a number of learning resources and a well-designed city serves as an embedded curriculum that supports life-long learning for all residents. A learning network de-centralizes education, expanding the notion that learning does not just occur within the walls of school buildings or universities. A healthy community offers a number of opportunities for learning, particularly relying on the rich diversity of its residents and their collective experiences. Developing intentional learning spaces interspersed throughout the community helps to keep people engaged. Robust local food systems rely on a largely decentralized form of education. Learning activities include workshops offered by experienced gardeners or farmers, peer-to-peer learning, sharing information through community workshops, informal exchanges of information, or offering apprenticeships to young people. Learning spaces that encourage mixing and exchange of information can include kitchens, gardens, home workshops, formal schooling, libraries, or art galleries.

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CORE CAPACITY #2- COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

A Community Investment framework goes beyond leveraging financial resources to support initiatives. It involves cultivating, connecting, leveraging, or introducing multiple forms of capital, including social networks, individual skills and knowledge, political leadership, or under-utilized buildings, land, or equipment. Collective impacts can be improved through the co-design of priorities and actions between multiple community partners. Deploying emerging local investment tools can help to improve the flow of capital to support and grow enterprises and initiatives.

Many food security challenges can be addressed through a more effective leveraging of local capital resources. A Community Investment Portfolio can help to deploy and utilize capital assets that already exist in Stark County. This can help to more effectively address immediate food security needs while opening up investment to grow enterprises and a workforce for the local food economy. A healthier local food economy can improve access to healthy foods while addressing some of the economic issues that are increasing demand for emergency food services today. Three aspects will be critical to developing a community investment framework that connects and grows local assets:

1) Nurturing Multiple Forms of Capital
2) Collective Impact Social Investing
3) Local Investment Tools

NURTURING MULTIPLE FORMS OF CAPITAL

Wealth Creation as Local Economic Principal

As a region that has confronted significant economic challenges, including high rates of poverty and the boom and bust waves of extractive industries, southeastern Ohio shares some common challenges facing Stark County, including challenges of poverty, economic disinvestment, over-reliance on extractive. In Southeastern Ohio, the move toward a stronger, more sustainable, and healthier local food system has been embraced as a more long-term economic development strategy that preserves the cultural and ecological assets of the region. The growth of local food systems helps to reduce long-term poverty, improve food security, create opportunities for low-income communities, leverage the rich natural and cultural assets of Appalachia, and keep long-term control of the economy in the hands of local communities. The Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACENet), in partnership with a number of regional and local organizations and businesses, has played a central role in nurturing this form of place-based economic development.

At its core, ACENet has embraced a "wealth creation" model for growing the local food economy. The wealth creation approach differs from traditional economic approaches by emphasizing linkages between systems of assets within a community and its broader region. The wealth creation approach features four primary aspects:

1. **Moving from the parts to the whole**- The wealth creation model connects players in rural and urban communities, leveraging the economic benefits of regional collaboration. Rural producers are connected with processors, distributors, marketers, and urban consumers. The model emphasizes partnerships with farms that invest in healthy soil, which translates into healthier food for urban markets. Working from a whole systems perspective, everybody recognizes their particular niche and contribution to the larger system.

2. **Emphasizing investment for long-term gain**- Traditional economic development tends to focus on short-term consumption measures including: how much money do people have to purchase things today and how does the economy grow this quarter? An exclusive focus on consumption does not usually lead to a sustainable system in the long-term. Continual re-investment in local assets insures an income stream that balances today's needs with those of tomorrow.

3. **Understanding the difference between wealth and income**- Like consumer activity, development strategies tend to focus public funds on creating jobs. However, jobs are often something over which a given community has little control. Factories close down, companies leave town, mines shutter, and gas wells run dry. The wealth creation approach creates enduring assets over which communities maintain control. Forms of wealth do not just concern finances, but also include knowledge, economic innovation, political voice, or capacity for entrepreneurship. In traditional systems terms, income is a flow that can stop and start whereas wealth is a stock that is more enduring and, if well-managed, can sustain flows of income over time.

4. **Collaborating for mutual benefit**- Wealth creation is not about charity as much as it is about meeting market needs and making economic connections in ways that create mutual benefits. It emphasizes certain understood values that are needed to insure long-term stability, including clean water, healthy food access, vibrant and stable families, healthy soil, and responsible energy use. Economic connections created through shared values lead naturally to mutual benefits.

In Appalachia, ACENet has identified four principles at work in their local wealth creation initiatives:

1. **Focus on Place**- The rolling hills of Appalachia feature some of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the country. The geography supports a variety of agrarian enterprises, including food production, grazing, and sustainable timber management.

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2. **Incentivize Collaboration**- Collaboration often involves mutual gain. If multiple farmers collaborate to support development of processing facilities, it benefits each of their individual enterprises. Working together creates better individual opportunities.

3. **Create Multiple Forms of Wealth**- A healthy food system will be based on access to clean water, healthy and productive soils, skilled growers, opportunities for continuous learning, and infrastructure to support overall growth.

4. **Emphasize Local Ownership**- Emphasizing locally-owned businesses helps to insure that enterprises have longevity in the communities in which they are located. The further the distance of ownership, the less accountability to the local community and its health.

Community Investment Portfolio

The above strategies for place-based economic development can be enhanced through the organization of a "Community Investment Portfolio (CIP)" - a mechanism that leverages multiple forms of capital within a community to support the development of greater self-reliance, local or community ownership, retention of wealth, and the creation of new enterprise clusters.

CIP's differ from traditional financing in two significant ways: First, CIP's leverage multiple forms of capital, including financial capital, deployment of existing stranded or under-utilized equipment or facilities, and time and volunteerism. Second, CIP's help to direct investment capital (time, money, or physical assets) to support clusters of inter-related enterprises or organizations rather than focusing on just one individual business.

The purpose of a CIP is to more effectively utilize the assets that already exist within a community. Often times, people stall action on a good idea because of the lack of immediate financing to support the project. However, a number of local food businesses began by leveraging time investments among a group of individuals. For example, in Kent, Ohio, Abbe Turner, a local farmer and cheese producer and owner of Farm Girls Pub and Grub in Alliance, began the Lucky Penny Creamery with very few financial resources. She matched her own volunteer time with contributions of time from family, friends, or farmers to get things up and running. The Local Roots Cooperative in Wooster, Ohio transformed two empty storefronts in downtown Wooster into a 600 member producer/consumer cooperative that features all local foods. With few financial resources at the beginning, other than small contributions from founding members, Local Roots initially relied on volunteer labor. Farmers pooled their equipment, skills, and time to renovate the space and get it operating. Community volunteers assisted with set-up and operation of the market.

Steve Bosserman worked with the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, Ohio to develop ideas for how a CIP might help to spur local food systems development.

Volunteerism of this nature is not entirely an altruistic act. For the individuals contributing time to the start-up of Lucky Penny, the return on their time investment was access to high-quality, artisan goat cheese that they wanted to have available to them. In the case of Local Roots, farmers invested their own time helping to renovate the coop storefront, knowing that it would create new market sales that would pay off for them. Especially in the start-up phase of new enterprises, the value of time investments should not be under-estimated. In fact, these time investments create "social capital". Financing often goes much further and is used more efficiently when there is a well established base of social capital to allow that financial capital to reach and support a number of inter-connected individuals.

In addition to leveraging latent time resources, many communities contain under-utilized physical assets. These come in a number of forms, including empty or under-utilized store fronts, old manufacturing buildings, idle equipment owned by a business or individual, commercial kitchen space that might only be utilized for part of a day, or the equipment and facilities left behind by a school closure. A new local food enterprise can look to these stranded assets within a community as a more cost-effective way to start-up a new business. In many cases, these facilities can be donated or offered for a short-term lease.

The Ford Foundation, in its publication *Wealth Creation in Rural Communities*, developed a broad-based approach to capital formation in communities that goes beyond a strict focus on financial capital. Their report identifies seven forms of capital that a community can leverage to support local food systems development, applicable to both urban and rural communities:

- **Individual**- the stock of skills and physical and mental health among people in a community;

- **Social**- the stock of trust, relationships, and social networks supporting civil society and the openness of these networks to community participation;

- **Intellectual**- the stock of knowledge, innovation, creativity, and research capacity within a community;

- **Natural**- the stock of natural resources that underpin a local economy, including soils, bio-diversity, clean water, stable climate, watersheds, and forests;

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- **Built**- the stock of available land, buildings or facilities that might be deployed or re-purposed for local food systems activity;

- **Financial**- the stock of unencumbered financial resources in a community that might be available to invest in the growth and development of local farms or local food enterprises; and

- **Political**- the stock of available power held by individuals, groups, or organizations that can be leveraged for broader change in a community.

Financial resources can be more productively leveraged if a community has pooled together its time and identified existing assets that can be deployed. Both of these activities actually strengthen social networks which can be an important prerequisite to financial investment. In the area of food incubators, June Holley notes that many kitchen incubators struggle because of a singular focus on brick-and-mortar development and a neglect of social network development. As a result, there is a high rate of failure among many kitchen incubators nationally. They are not built to meet the specific needs of a group of individuals or businesses that eventually plan on using it or developing an ownership stake in it.

As an agency, the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACENet) has focused on cultivating multiple forms of capital that are all needed to support a sustainable local economy. Investments in **natural capital** include agricultural enterprises that restore and renew environmental assets and services and natural resources. This enables investment in the land base and ecosystems that support long-term agricultural production, from specialty crop production to harvesting wild and edible species from forests. Investments in **individual capital** involve training and technical support to improve business management capacities, financial planning, and technical details, such as water management or greenhouse operations. **Intellectual capital** builds on investments in individuals by increasing the quality of peer learning networks or customized curriculum at local educational institutions. Intellectual capital spreads innovations and best practices through training, conferences, networking events, coaching, or mutual support. **Social capital** grows through the cultivation of trust, relationships, and networks. Social capital involves creating environments that encourage peer learning or allow for business-to-business connections. Social capital can also be leveraged through activities such as volunteerism or networking events. **Financial capital** involves increasing products or partnerships for micro loans or small business loans. Financial capital can also be raised through community investment mechanisms such as crowd-funding, unsecured loans, or advanced purchases of products or services. Collaborations with non-profit organizations can enable leveraging of financial capital for incubation, such as the Food Ventures center at ACENet which includes 130 clients that produced $28 million in value in 2011. Built capital often results from financial capital investments. **Built capital** provides the needed infrastructure to raise the productivity of the local food system, including on-farm season extension, packing, retail and storage, or shared kitchen equipment or warehouses. Finally, **political capital** helps to maintain and continue the momentum started through localized or grassroots initiatives. An Athens Food Policy Council helps to link local food efforts with elected officials and agency staff, leading to public investments and enabling policies in economic development, public health, or zoning. A rising number of local food entrepreneurs or farmers are now running for political office and becoming more engaged in political processes.

Applying Lessons to Stark County

In terms of achieving long-term food security in Stark County, "generative investments" are what the Ford Foundation identifies as creating wealth by leveraging multiple forms of capital. The food hub and urban agriculture projects that community stakeholders identified both hold the potential to increase the portfolio of capital stocks available in Stark County. For example, investing in the development of stronger networks between farmers, consumers, and food security organizations builds **social capital** that will help to make a food hub successful. That social capital can be leveraged to increase **political capital** for the support of local food enterprise development among municipal or county policy-makers. Municipal or county governments can inventory **built capital** to identify potential vacant or under-utilized buildings that could support food hub activities (such as vacant land or industrial or commercial buildings). **Individual capital** can be enhanced through nutrition education classes that help to build the market demand for healthy local foods. A kitchen incubator could be developed as a part of the food hub to encourage development of new products, creating a base of **intellectual capital** that can spur innovation in the local food sector. The food waste generated by the food hub and kitchen incubator can increase **natural capital** by building soils on farms through compost or bio-gas production. Private philanthropic capital provides an important source of **financial capital** that can help to support the growth of these other forms of capital. By building capital assets, the system becomes increasingly self-reliant and capable of producing and sustaining its own income over time.

The same pattern can be applied to the development of urban agriculture. An urban farm incubator can provide land and skills for people to improve their capacity to grow food in small urban lots in the city. The farm can be a connecting node within a surrounding neighborhood, providing a place where people can share knowledge or form new collaborations to reach local markets. The soil quality of the urban farm can be enhanced through the application of compost from restaurant or residential waste in the surrounding neighborhood. The farm can provide a model for the productive re-utilization of land bank properties, creating a stronger base of political support that can lead to more enabling policies.

Leveraging these multiple forms of capital provides an effective new model for building wealth in low-income communities. The Ford Foundation recommends "reconceptualizing the purpose of economic development from a focus on short-term job creation

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO FOR STARK COUNTY
Leveraging Multiple Forms of Capital for Local Food Systems Development

CAPITAL	HEALTHY FOOD-HUB	URBAN FARM
Individual: *skills and physical and mental health of a community*	Improved skills for cooking, preparing, storing healthy foods and knowledge about personal health spur market demand for healthy food hub products. Early stage entrepreneurs introduced to self-employment skills and workforce specific job skills for sorting, packing, packaging, labeling, tracking, food handling and distribution activities.	Improved skills for utilization of urban space (yards, vacant lots, community/public space) for production of healthy local foods.
Social: *trust, relationships, and networks that support civil society*	Density of network relationships between diverse partners that together can improve the availability of healthy foods in Stark County (including food relief agencies, farmers, local food businesses, social service organizations, educational institutions). New financial frameworks between for-profit and non-profit organizations or agencies are grounded first in social networks in which supply chains are initially co-designed and prototyped.	Inter-connected networks of neighborhood based initiatives to improve the availability of healthy foods grown, processed, distributed, and disposed of within urban boundaries. Includes networks of home, community, and market gardeners.
Knowledge: *knowledge, innovation, creativity, or imagination in a region*	Capacity for development and spread of collaborative projects, new food-based enterprises, innovative designs for addressing food security. Educational institutions, vocational schools, extension educators and agency partners can provide entry level training on season extension, Good Agricultural Practices, food safety and distribution to kick start supply and demand in food hubs.	Urban spaces that allow for the experimentation, development, and spread of urban farming practices that optimize productivity while facilitating more connected neighborhoods.
Natural: *unimpaired environmental assets-land, water, air*	The availability of land, quality soil with high organic matter, water, and micro-climates needed to support a productive local agriculture. Opportunities for local food demand channels can encourage farmers and producers to transition to more specialty crop production, sustainable agriculture practices and season extension which will increase acreage and appropriate agricultural systems for local/regional demand for quality and food safety.	Inventory of vacant or un-built land that can be utilized to support agricultural production, stock of uncontaminated land, and the cycles of waste that can be used to re-generate urban soils.
Built: *fully functioning infrastructure or built assets*	Street and highway networks and buildings for storage and processing, vehicles for distribution, and facilities for re-utilization of food waste. Private or publicly managed food hubs can foster the early stage development of regional infrastructure. Food hub infrastructure raises capabilities for farmers and producers to manage risk to innovate, increase acreage and invest in on-farm storage and handling.	Facilities to support productive agriculture, including heated greenhouses, high tunnels, irrigation and stormwater collection systems, and facilities for post-harvest-handling and energy-efficient food storage.
Financial: *unencumbered monetary assets that can be invested*	Stock of local, state-wide, or federal capital that can be invested in the development of healthy food hub facilities. Food hub facilities can attract financial participation from established food distributors and larger farmers looking for new channels to supply to schools, institutions and locally-held retail operators. Food and farm entrepreneurs are more likely to invest when they have partners investing in some of the necessary value chain infrastructure	Stock of local or neighborhood based capital that can be invested in productive farm operations.
Political: *power and goodwill held by individuals and groups that can be used to achieve desired ends*	Organized constituencies of farmers, businesses, and consumers can leverage local political power to create public investments and enabling policies that support local food-based enterprises and utilization of waste food for emergency food relief system. Private and public partnerships can encourage elected officials, lenders and economic development professionals to maximize investment by focusing on one node in the supply chain for aggregation, warehousing and distribution.	Organized networks of backyard gardeners, community gardeners, urban market farmers, and educational institutions that can support development of city policies and investments supportive of urban agriculture.

and income production to longer term wealth restoration, creation, and maintenance." In other words, investing in capital stocks provides a more sustainable approach to economic development. Increasing job creation numbers might spur short-term employment (such as construction, oil and gas extraction, or other jobs that are based on a short-term infusion of income), but often do not lead to long-term employment. The boom and bust cycle that has impacted many Northeast Ohio communities demonstrates the risks of depending solely on short-term job creation measures that do not build the community assets needed to sustain jobs and income in the long-term.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT PHILANTHROPY

In terms of jump-starting local wealth-creating initiatives, philanthropic organizations or donors are uniquely situated to make initial investments that support growth across the portfolio of community capitals. Over-time, this capital can help to create local knowledge, entrepreneurship, skills, and infrastructure that can lead to longer-term economic development. In this sense, philanthropic capital can become generative if it helps to build the stocks of other capital that a community-based economy needs to grow and thrive.

Another term commonly applied to this type of investment is "**collective impact investing**", profiled in a recent article in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Impact investing is an innovative finance tool originally developed by the Rockefeller Foundation. The foundation developed an "emergent approach" to funding in which it co-creates a funding strategy with a variety of organizations, creating an ecosystem of organizations capable of producing shared outcomes over a long time horizon. This differs from the more conventional approach of what they term "strategic philanthropy" which focuses on a more linear chain of pre-planned objectives, actions, and outcomes. Strategic investments focus on supporting individual organizations that do not collaborate and often view each other competitively. Often, this traditional model creates a rigidity that makes it difficult for organizations to adapt to changing circumstances or pursue directions that did not come up in the original proposal creation. It also focuses on singular, short-term actions to address problems in a community. It does not focus as much on broader systems change that might address the root causes of these problems.

The article references the work of complexity theorist David Snowden who identified problems that are simple, complicated, and complex in health care. Snowden describes how the construction of a new hospital is a **simple problem**. It requires a lot of work and planning, but it follows a well-established and understood formula. Developing a new vaccine is an example of a **complicated problem**. It is not something that can be immediately solved and requires a successive series of failed attempts before a solution is reached. And once the solution is reached, it can be repeated with fairly consistent results. Addressing the health of an entire community he describes as a **complex problem** and one that does not follow the formulaic or predictable approaches of the first two. Community health is the result of the interplay between multiple independent factors that influence each other in ever-changing ways. The health of a population is influenced by the availability and quality of health care, but also by economic conditions, social norms, daily diet, inherited traits, familial relationships, weather patterns, and psychological well-being. The interplay of these factors creates a kaleidoscope of causes and effects that can shift the momentum of a system in one direction or another in unpredictable ways. Each intervention is unique. Successful programs cannot reliably be repeated with the same results. Learning from past efforts does not necessarily contribute to better future results.

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Foundations are uniquely situated to address more complex social problems because they can "operate on a longer time horizon", insulated from the shorter cycles of election cycles or quarterly investment returns. However, addressing complex problems will require some changes in how philanthropy is done, moving to more models where strategies are co-created and co-evolve among a number of participating organizations.

How Does Collective Impact Philanthropy Work?

Addressing food security in Stark County is a complex problem. A variety of factors will affect food security, including employment, income, access to food, vehicle ownership, education and skills, mental or physical health, the price of food, and the productivity of local agriculture. Hunger is a unique challenge to address, because there is an immediacy to getting food relief to the people that need it. However, addressing the root cause of hunger is a more long-term and complex challenge. Given that economic factors (unemployment or underemployment) are key drivers for the growth in demand for food assistance programs today, a solution that does not address long-term economic development will likely fail to stem the tide of families seeking hunger relief. Effective solutions will simultaneously address food access, health, and economic development in the local food sector. Such solutions can increase the supply of healthy local foods, improve knowledge for how to use healthy foods, and create skills that can drive development of new entrepreneurs and workers.

To better understand how this might be developed in Stark County, it is helpful to learn from models developed elsewhere in the mid-west. The **Re-AMP network** features an initiative between 125 non-profit organizations and multiple funders from 8 states to address the climate change impacts of energy generation in the mid-west. **The Appalachian Funders Network** features a collaborative of organizations and funders serving Appalachia who have an annual gathering and together identify the key strategies and investment areas needed to promote health and economic vitality, including the **Startup Appalachia** initiative. **The Appalachian Ohio Funders Group** involves a collaborative of funders in Athens and Southeastern Ohio that work together on initiatives mostly related to local food systems and health care. Although these examples describe multi-state or multi-county initiatives, these models can inform efforts in Stark County or the broader Northeast Ohio region.

Case-Study #1-
The Re-AMP Network

The Monitor Institute recently published a study of the Re-Amp Energy Network, an initiative between 125 non-profit organizations and funders across eight states in the mid-west working to reduce global warming emissions through the development of alternative energy and energy efficiency. As a region with heavy reliance on coal energy and manufacturing, the carbon impacts of mid-western states are larger proportionately than the rest of the country. National efforts to address climate change are often blocked by mid-western states out of concern of protecting jobs, leading to a long-term inability to spur innovation and public engagement in an important global challenge.

The Re-Amp project began in 2003 with the goal of reducing mid-west global warming emissions 80% (from 2005 levels) by 2050. This shared goal provided the glue that held the participating organizations together. While there was dis-agreement among some organizations about technical details (such as whether or not nuclear energy is a part of this mix), the larger goal provided the momentum for the broader network. The process has led to the passage of energy efficiency measures in six states, prevented development of 28 new coal-fired plants, supported programs for alternative or clean energy development, and looked at processes for capturing the cost of carbon emissions. The process has also helped to strengthen ties between foundations and non-profit organizations, creating a dynamic and evolving learning network.

The genesis for the Re-Amp initiative centered around the realization that, at the ground level, organizations were doing great work. However, the work was fragmented and often dis-connected. Jennie Curtis, executive director of the Garfield Foundation which helped to catalyze the effort, observed that "there was NOT a lot of collaboration among grantees and there was NOT a lot of aligned grant making among foundations". As a result, long-term impacts on how energy is produced and used in the mid-west were not being adequately addressed.

The Monitor Institute identified six principles that embodied the approach followed by Re-Amp members to work collaboratively toward larger systems changes. Those key principles are listed below.

1) Start by Understanding the System you are trying to change. Many funded efforts often focus on one small piece of a larger system. While they may be successful, their overall impact on the larger challenges are minimal. Understanding the system means knowing the players, identifying critical points of leverage, and addressing under-lying causes of the problem. *Addressing food security in Stark County requires identifying the players outside of the hunger network that can have a more long-term impact on the problem, such as health care or universities. Finding ways to invest in the local capacity for communities to provide healthy and accessible food will help to address some of the underlying problems of economic development or health. An example of this might be to fund an effort to coordinate the resources of key hospitals and universities to address health and nutrition education.*

2) Involve both Funders and Non-Profits as Equals from the Outset. This acknowledges that both non-profit organizations and funders are important players in the larger system. Co-designing strategies and priorities creates a more effective allocation of resources for larger and more coordinated impacts. Consultant Ruth Rominger emphasizes that "there are multiple nodes: huge non-profits, tiny non-profits, big foundations, small foundations, family foundations, national organizations… they all do different work but they come to the table as equals. Everyone is a player in this system, and we need to optimize the experience and resources of all parties". *In Stark County, this might*

involve establishing a collective fund with contributions from multiple foundations, the aim of which is to invest in long-term solutions to address hunger. An example of doing this might be to co-design a fund to provide seed capital for entrepreneurial urban farmers or to support a planning process for a Healthy Access Food Hub.

3) Design for a Network, not an organization- and invest in collective infrastructure. At the front-end of the process, the Garfield Foundation invested resources not in individual organizations, but in cultivating the larger network. In other words, they supported a "collective process" by supporting communications infrastructure, group facilitation, and network capacity building. This enabled participating organizations to behave in new ways. *For Stark County, this could involve identifying and cultivating the leadership capacity of key leaders across hunger, supporting, and local food systems to work collaboratively. An example of this might involve funding for training programs that foster network collaboration or to fund a position that focuses on weaving networks of farmers, customers, and food relief agencies- something that could benefit multiple organizations.*

4) Cultivate Leadership at Multiple Levels. The network approach involves a more distributed approach to leadership that enables people to be leaders at multiple scales within the network. It is not enough to just have the usual suspects (i.e. political or institutional leaders), but to draw leadership from "funders, facilitators, consultants, staff, or members" across the system. The Re-AMP effort utilized a "network coordinator" to help keep people connected and organize the network. Elizabeth Wheeler, Re-Amp's network coordinator noted "network leadership [involves] listening to what other people want to do and not advance your own agenda… my job is helping everybody connect a bunch of dots and plug into the right areas of the network". *For Stark County, funding a person or organization that can play a convening or connecting role for the larger network can help to keep everybody connected and working together on larger and more impactful projects.*

5) Create Multiple Opportunities to Connect and Communicate. In Re-AMP, efforts were made to create a "communications commons", which helped to keep people connected between face-to-face meetings or events. Activities for the Commons included list-serves by working groups to communicate with members, conference calls to provide updates on projects, and on-going webinars led by partners or by consultants to provide training. *Stark County could utilize social media tools (such as Facebook, NEOFoodWeb.org, or other tools) to keep people aware of events, activities, or to share information.*

6) Remain Adaptive and Emergent and Committed to a Long-Term Vision. The network will continue to learn and adapt as it grows and evolves. Thus, design and shared resources will also need to evolve as circumstances or needs become more clear. This process acknowledges that feedback loops are more important than detailed five-year plans. Feedback involves collective evaluation and adjustment in response to where things seem to be effective at the systemic level. Experimentation and learning are built into the approach and successful efforts become amplified and replicated across the network. Challenges become the focus of collective attention. *For Stark County, an annual or quarterly convening among key players in the food security space can be set-up to provide updates on progress, highlight innovations or successful projects, devote collective attention to areas of continuing struggle, and identify avenues for collaboration that can lead to more significant funding from outside of the county.*

In conclusion, the Re-Amp process reveals the power of bringing together non-profit organizations and funders together into a more lateral network focused on systemic change. While the Re-Amp project works across eight states, the same process can be employed at the level of a county or multi-county region.

Case-Study #2-
Appalachian Funder Network Collaboration

The Appalachian Funders Network (AFN) is a group of public and private grantmakers who envision an entrepreneur-based Appalachian economy that provides wide opportunity while sustaining and improving the environmental and cultural assets of the region. The AFN work is focused in Central Appalachia, which includes the Appalachian counties of Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina. As a network, the AFN offers grantmakers the opportunity to develop a shared analysis and collective strategies to address the challenges and opportunities unique to the Appalachian region. The AFN formed in March 2010. Since then, the network has hosted four annual gatherings throughout the targeted sub-regions. Each gathering has attracted additional grantmakers and, ultimately, members of AFN. Working groups continue to build on the energy and vision of the previous year's work by identifying key areas of common interest and potential collaboration.

Over the past four years The Appalachian Funders Network has synthesized a framework for learning and analysis by grant makers and the organizations that they serve. The framework (presented in the attached diagram) identifies the strategies, promising sectors, and partnerships that AFN has identified to most effectively advance Appalachia's economic transition. At the 2013 and 2014 Network Gatherings, AFN members agreed to share, build upon, and ultimately utilize this framework as a guide to create a more coordinated, scalable, and impactful body of development work in the region.

The Central Appalachian Network and the AFN

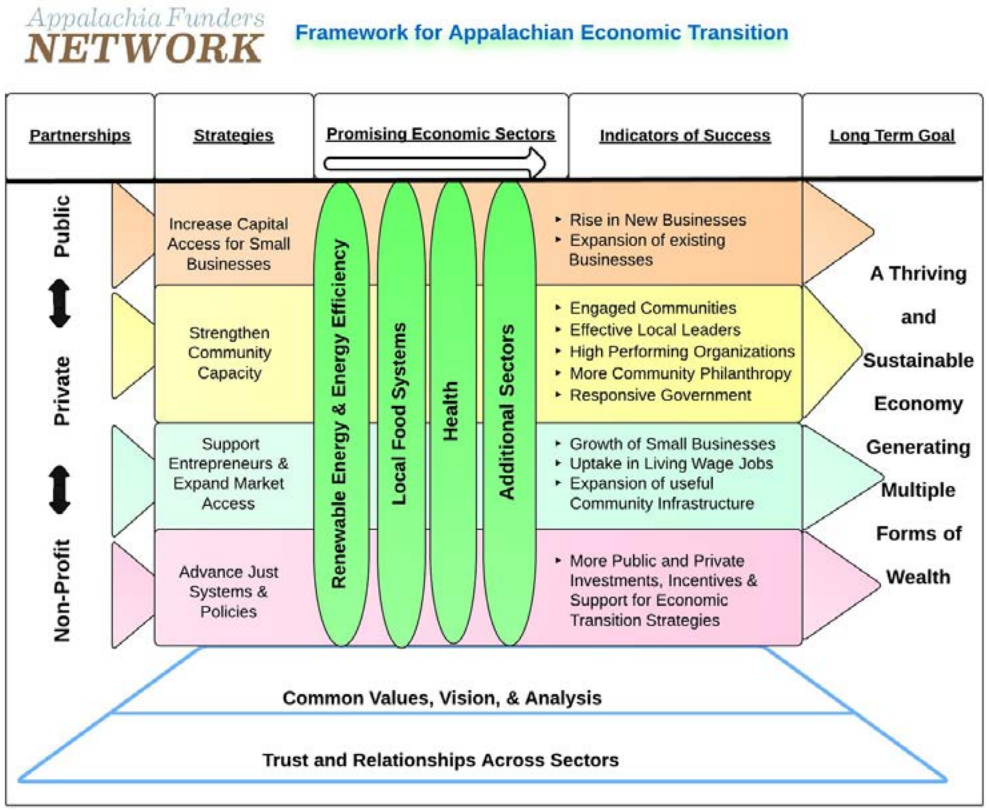
The Central Appalachian Network (CAN) is an important partner for linking the work of Appalachian organizations to the AFN. The CAN works to advance the economic transition of Appalachia by fostering the development of enterprises, organizations, and policies that promote and protect the health of the region's local economies, communities, and environment. The CAN consists of a collaborative of six organizations in the Central Appalachian region, including:

- The Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (Ohio)

- Appalachian Sustainable Development (Virginia/Tennessee)
- Center for Economic Options (West Virginia)
- Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (Kentucky)
- Natural Capital Investment Fund (West Virginia)
- Rural Action (Ohio)

CAN's vision for a more just and sustainable Appalachia focuses on valuing and restoring the economies, communities, and ecosystems of Central Appalachia. Their vision focuses on a supporting a system of locally based and regionally connected economies that create jobs and real opportunities to create a high quality of life in a region that has suffered from chronic poverty and dis-investment. CAN's focus on place-based economic development strategies support the people of the region while protecting its rich natural resource base. Their work highlights and enhances the strengths and assets of the land and people in an area of richness and resiliency.

CAN functions as a network of networks- a regional hub that connects sub-regional anchor organizations and their partners from across Appalachia. CAN's constituencies include farmers, consumers, landowners, entrepreneurs, local government officials, non-profit organizations, social enterprise businesses, schools and universities, students, youth, and other members of rural communities throughout a five-state Central Appalachian region. CAN's service area covers five states in Central Appalachia and includes 54 counties in Kentucky, 32 counties in Ohio, 52 counties in Tennessee, 25 counties in Virginia, and all 55 counties in West Virginia.



CAN and the Appalachian Funders Network have chosen to work together to strengthen the region's capacity for food systems development, connecting funders and practitioners within specific sub-regions across the multi-state area. To that end the two networks have formed a joint working group to

- create trusting relationships between food systems grant-makers and local food practitioners;
- foster deeper learning and analysis between grant-makers, food systems practitioners, and supporters within specific sub-regions and across the region;
- increase resources within the region focused on creating stronger local food systems; and
- enhance the organizational and leadership capacity of key food system actors.

<u>The Priorities for Managing a Network of Regional Funders</u>
The AFN has developed a set of priorities for managing networks of regional funders that focus on leadership development, shared evaluation measures, funder collaboration, network cultivation, and joint initiatives. These priorities include:

1. <u>Support regional collaboration and leadership development.</u> Several grantmakers help to connect communities across the region to share expertise and lessons learned and engage in open dialogue and mutual learning. AFN members are particularly drawn to the idea of developing ways of supporting the next generation of leaders across Appalachia and engaging more young people in philanthropy.

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2. Develop shared evaluation measures and results. AFN members are developing shared measurements and a common set of goals or results. AFN believes in the importance of measuring what really matters. The idea is to use these measurement tools to inform strategies for accelerating the economic transition and for influencing other grantmakers by validating and promoting proven strategies.

3. Promote collaboration among funders. Grantmakers are developing new partnerships to promote collaboration, including shared strategies, joint funding, co-funding, collaboratively funding regional efforts, and creating a pool of funds to disburse as a network. Collaboration would allow relatively small funders or nonprofits to develop successful ideas or approaches that can then be disseminated widely. Great ideas with proven impact at a relatively local scale can be spread across the region in a strategic, coordinated way. Collaboration also results in shared information that will create more effective investments with more information about what works in local communities. Finally, collaboration among funders can lead to better-informed network strategies, which makes investments more effective.

4. Deepen and broaden the Network and its work. AFN members are deepening the work of the Appalachia Funders Network by continuing to convene the Network and its members. This deepens the understanding of relevant issues. It also educates non-members about innovative funding opportunities in the region. AFN members are broadening their scope of work by exploring the possibility of collaborating with other networks on related economic development activities and working together to influence policy and systems change for Appalachia's economic transition.

5. Develop Network Initiatives. AFN members plan to continue to develop two existing initiatives, including the Food Systems Working Group and Startup Appalachia. They are also developing an action team around healthcare to identify intersections between sectors (e.g., intersections between local food systems and healthcare systems, such as local procurement or preventative health care and nutrition education programs).

Case Study #3-
Startup Appalachia

As another example of collaborative design and funding, the AFN launched the Start-up Appalachia Initiative in 2013 as a co-funding project. The information below outlines how the project and funding has begun to take shape in the region.

About Start-up Appalachia:
The Appalachia Funders Network Steering Committee is exploring Startup Appalachia, a framework for aligning the efforts of grantmakers, businesses, government, and nonprofits around the common purpose of accelerating the startup and growth of new enterprises in Appalachia. This partnership between the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Appalachian Funders Network, and USDA Rural Development offers the opportunity to deepen the alignment of current efforts while leveraging additional federal resources to accelerate Appalachia's entrepreneur-based economy.

The partners of Startup Appalachia all view entrepreneurship as a critical element in the establishment of self-sustaining communities that create jobs, build local wealth, and contribute broadly to economic and community development. While Appalachia has many outstanding examples of entrepreneurial organizations, and possesses many entrepreneurial assets, including the self-reliance of its people, it also faces many challenges. These shortcomings stem from the region's longstanding dependence on extractive industries and branch plant manufacturing, and the presence of many absentee landowners who have exported wealth from the region. Furthermore, the culture of entrepreneurship is neither broad nor deep throughout the region, and evidence suggests that there are many gaps in the infrastructure for supporting entrepreneurship, ranging from technical assistance to development finance. Appalachia has the opportunity to cultivate resourceful entrepreneurs who not only create value by recognizing and meeting new market opportunities, but who also attract national attention and resources to the region.

A Beginning Framework:
To continue efforts to build entrepreneurial ecosystems in Appalachia, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Appalachian Funders Network, and USDA-Rural Development are engaged in strategic discussions to develop Startup Appalachia, an effort to link public and private partners for the purpose of accelerating the startup and growth of new enterprises in the region. Startup Appalachia is not a new project, but a framework for stimulating new investment and aligning independent efforts around a common set of promising sectors and critical entrepreneurial supports. The Start-up framework focuses on the following areas listed below.

1. **Food Systems and Entrepreneurship**: Appalachia's agricultural and food-related assets provide a foundation on which local communities can build sustainable economic development efforts. Reflecting regional and national trends, sustainable food system development links many of the region's strengths to the growing demand for local, healthy, and safe food that supports the economies of those who produce it. Investments will support the expansion of the local food systems infrastructure and the provision of technical assistance to farmers, processors and packagers, marketing efforts, and non-profits throughout the region.

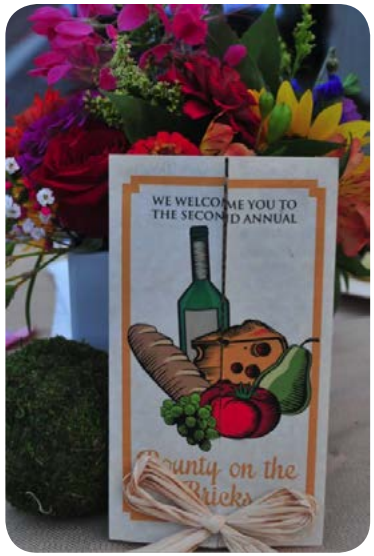
2. **Energy and Entrepreneurship**: Appalachia and energy have been closely linked throughout the history of the nation, from the first discovery and production of oil, the mining of coal to fuel industrial growth, or the development of hydro-power to bring prosperity and progress to remote rural communities. By using its full range of energy resources and staying at the forefront of emerging energy technologies and practices, the region has the potential to increase the supply of locally produced clean energy while creating and retaining jobs. Sup-

port for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects will be provided.

3. **Health Care**: Health Care is a significant industry in Appalachia with opportunities for growing enterprises and jobs ranging from primary care and hospital services, to the provision of elder care and child care, mental health and substance abuse treatment, physical and occupational therapies, and dental practices. These areas of practice are under-represented throughout Central Appalachia while demand for these services remains high.

Example #4-
The Appalachian Ohio Funders Group

The Re-AMP initiative and the Appalachian Funders Network both provide examples of multi-state and regional initiatives. A more localized example of funders collaboration that might match Stark County is the Appalachian Ohio Funders Group (AOFG), an informal group of corporate, community, public charity, and family and private foundations committed to strategically enhancing Appalachian Ohio assets. Their work focuses on supporting leadership, networking, financial and in-kind investments, leveraged resources, and collaboration. Membership participation is open to foundations committed to working together to advance the region's quality of life and serve one or more counties of the Appalachian Ohio region.



A core group of foundations has committed time and resources to the AOFG, including The Athens Foundation, the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio, Health Path Foundation, Ohio Children's Foundation, Osteopathic Heritage Foundation of Nelsonville, Scioto Foundation, Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund, and the Marietta Community Foundation.

The AOFG provides technical assistance and support related to key issues, challenges and opportunities facing the region; networking with others interested in enhancing Appalachian Ohio assets and co-investing, as appropriate, on mutual areas of interest. Most of the AOFG members also participate as members in the Appalachian Funders Network and utilize their Appalachian Transition Framework to guide activities. Food systems and healthcare have been their primary focus and approach to synchronize their investments in community organizations and agencies.

In 2013 and 2014, The Athens Foundation, Osteopathic Heritage Foundation of Nelsonville and Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund joined the *Bounty on the Bricks* annual event held in Athens to raise support for local food pantries. *Bounty on the Bricks* celebrates local farmers and fresh produce, the beauty of the city of Athens main downtown district, and the generosity of the Athens community to address food security challenges faced by rural residents. Held on the brick roadway of Court Street in downtown Athens, *Bounty on the Bricks* showcases the abundance of locally produced foods in southeastern Ohio. The annual meal is conceived, sourced and prepared by Hocking College McCleaghan Center for Hospitality Dean Alfonso Contrisciani, one of only 67 Certified Master Chefs in the United States. Local food is accompanied with local beers and wines from Jackie O's micro-brewery and the Shade Winery. Tickets for the fundraising event are sold for $75 and proceeds go to the network of food pantries working with the Southeast Ohio Regional Food Bank and Kitchen.

Funds raised through the *Bounty on the Bricks* are matched 1:1 by the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation of Nelsonville and Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund to support a parallel grant program called *Bounty in the Pantries*. This initiative works to enhance the capacity of food pantries and feeding programs to serve more healthy and, where possible, local foods to those in need. Susan Urano, director of the Athens Foundation said that the event raised $75,000 last year. Of that amount, $25,000 was raised through ticket sales and the Sisters of Saint Joseph Charitable Fund and the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation of Nelsonville each provided matching funds of $25,000. 2013 funding was distributed to 18 food pantries in the region. Last year, funds purchased commercial refrigerators, repaired vehicles and created new partnerships to increase fresh and frozen local produce.

Applying Collective Philanthropy Lessons to Stark County

Four examples of collective impact investing were presented in this section: the Re-AMP initiative to mitigate climate change impacts on the mid-west, the Appalachian Funders

Network, Start-up Appalachia, and the Appalachian Ohio Funders Group. These four initiatives work at different scales, including multi-state (Appalachian states) and sub-regional (southeast Ohio). Despite different scales, these lessons can apply to efforts in Stark County. Overall, extracting some key lessons can help to inform collaboration between funders and non-profits in Stark County.

Collective Impact Funding Addresses Long-Term Impacts on Complex Problems: Working toward a less fragmented and dis-connected landscape of funders and non-profit organizations, Collective Impact Funding processes can better align grant-makers and grantees around shared principles and strategies. Shared evaluation measures can be connected to such key indicators as health outcomes, economic activity, changes in food assistance demand, or network connectivity. The development of strategies and evaluation measures can be developed and adjusted through an annual participatory forum that involves input from both grantees and grant-makers.

Create a Shared Learning Environment: Create an open environment where stakeholders can share expertise, reflect on lessons learned, and engage in open dialogue and mutual learning. This can be done through regular networking events that help to highlight projects in the county and connect people that might not have previously been connected.

Identify Joint Funding Projects that Can Have a Catalytic Effect on Multiple Stakeholders: Identify strategic leverage points in the broader system that can have a catalytic effect across multiple sectors and multiple sets of stakeholders. For example, the development of a Healthy Local Food Hub operation can impact healthy foods in food relief, improve food access in neighborhoods, provide focused educational opportunities for nutrition and health, build a culture of entrepreneurship, invest in the productive capacity of rural farmers, and create employment for urban residents.

Consider Cross-Regional Initiatives: The development of a strong local food system is really a regional initiative that strengthens economic and social connections across Northeast Ohio. Are there opportunities to convene funders from multiple counties to develop regional strategies for economic development and quality of life measures? Involving multiple counties can enlarge the environment for learning and introduce people more effectively to best practices. For example, Cleveland provides a number of innovative urban agriculture models while Oberlin has a long history of leveraging institutional and downtown spending to support the local food economy. The Fund for Our Economic Future represents one example of regional collaboration around economic development in Northeast Ohio. A parallel regional initiative could be developed around food security and local food systems development in the region.

LOCAL INVESTMENT TOOLS

The Community Investment Portfolio (CIP) provides a mechanism for leveraging multiple forms of capital within a community. This does not diminish the importance, however, of financial capital as a critical driver for growing the capacity for healthy local food systems. This section identifies specific tools that can be utilized to increase the availability of local financing that can be invested in local food systems.

Creating an environment for local financing moves to new ways of thinking about economic development. Political and economic development leaders are often fixated on equating economic growth with the ability to participate in the global economy. To this extent, globalization has created an economic environment where export-earnings and competitiveness in the global market place has taken precedence over investments in local businesses and economies. Michael Schuman, economist and author of the book *Local Dollars, Local Sense* has worked on economic localization projects in Cleveland and Oberlin, identifying opportunities for communities to invest in their own businesses and economic well-being.

For Shuman, a global economic orientation is becoming a less attractive economic option for communities for three primary reasons. First, the emergence and growth of the service economy tends to largely favor local businesses whereas global trade tends to focus on goods. Second, the rising cost of fossil-based energy will continue to increase the costs of global manufacturing and distribution, especially as the cost of carbon becomes more accurately accounted. Third, in part with the rise of the Internet, there has been a recent rise in home-based businesses. All three of these areas will continue to favor the competitiveness of local enterprises over global companies.

***Click here** for detailed descriptions and examples of the local investment tools.*

Shuman listed six areas of focus for nurturing local businesses:

- **Planning**- plugging leaks in a local economy;
- **People**- supporting local entrepreneurs;
- **Partners**- increasing competitiveness through local collaboration;
- **Purse**- harnessing local capital investments;
- **Purchasing**- spearheading "local first" buying campaigns; and
- **Policymaking**- removing an anti-local bias in public policy.

Based on his Northeast Ohio workshops and information from his *Local Dollars, Local Sense* book, some of the following options can be considered for increasing the availability of financial capital in the broader community. This helps create a wider field for investment capital, creating options beyond philanthropic support. Additionally, philanthropy can invest in capacity building workshops or initiatives to improve the local investing landscape.

Local Banks and Credit Unions

Local banks and credit unions are community-based financial institutions that have the capacity to manage programs that can raise capital for micro-loans.

Purchase Targeted CD's- Specialty CD's can be set-up to enable unaccredited investors an opportunity invest savings in long-term CD's. The banks utilize capital raised through the CD's to collateralize loans to local businesses and investors gain the same rates of interest that they would with normal CD's.

Micro-Loan Fund- The Self-Help Association for a Regional Economy (SHARE) in Massachusetts worked with a local bank to set-up a micro-loan program for small or home-based businesses. About 70 depositors opened up saving accounts with the bank which provided collateral for 14 small loans administered by the SHARE organization. The program created 40 new jobs with no loss of loans, including a small milking parlor, a cheese room, and a knitting machine for a home knitter.

Cooperatives

Cooperatives provide an option for accessing local capital without the need for accredited investors. Members of the cooperative purchase shares, providing capital and a voice in the decision-making of the enterprise.

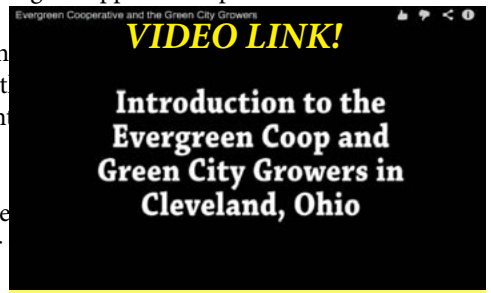
Some of the economic benefits of cooperatives include:

- **Investing in Fields that Others Won't Touch**- The Rural Electric Cooperatives provide one example of investing in rural infrastructure in an area that traditional financiers would not touch.

- **Consumers Drive Down Price**- When consumers have a share in the business, it helps to keep prices low and reduces the flight of profits outside of the community.

- **Higher Worker Productivity**- A number of studies indicate that worker-owners of cooperatives tend to have higher rates of productivity, due to their co-ownership of the company and place in the decision-making affairs of the enterprise.

- **Bulk Purchasing**- Bulk purchasing provides another advantage where local businesses can team up to do bulk purchasing of supplies or inputs.



Overview of a hydroponic-based farming cooperative based in a greenhouse complex that covers 3.5 acres of land.

Some examples of cooperative investment in

- Member Capital- Raising capital t equity share in the cooperative en inventory, or facilities.

- Member Lending- Coops can leve er loans to support expansions or

- Coop Loan Funds- Following one other coops, coops can provide ca of other cooperatives, especially th

business ecosystem.

- Investing Coops- Coops can be set-up to invest in community assets to foster broader local economic impact, such as a coop that invests in energy efficiency or renewable energy.

Co-founders of Local Roots Cooperative in Wooster reflect on the origins of their farmer-consumer cooperative hybrid.

- Cooperative Loan Funds- Coops can create special loan funds that direct resources toward supplying businesses to enhance their productivity, such as investing in distribution and storage for a network of small and mid-sized farms.

- Worker-Owned Coops- Workers can become a source of capital by folding a portion of their profits into a cooperative association that supports new businesses or business expansions.

Accredited Investors

Accredited investors include wealthy organizations or individuals that are permitted to invest in higher risk projects, including provision of seed money or venture capital.

Some examples of investment options for accredited investors include:

Community Development Finance Institutions- State and local government can infuse funds into revolving loan funds where interest from early loans covers the expenses of the fund.

Program-Related Investments- Mission-oriented business investment can come from private foundations who can make low-interest loans that might favor businesses with a social mission.

New Market Tax Credits- Provides opportunities for individuals to make loans in low-wealth communities and receive a 39% credit on federal taxes as an incentive.

Non-Securities

The greatest barrier for local food enterprise development remains access to capital, since many are home-based businesses, sole proprietorships, or small cooperatives.

A number of investment tools can be leveraged to provide capital to small enterprises, include some of the follow tools listed below.

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Crowd-funding Utilization of on-line platforms like Kick-starter or RocketHub enable individuals to pledge funds on-line. Funds are not returned, but investors are likely to benefit indirectly from the project, such as the creation of a micro-brewery that they might patronize or production of a documentary film about a topic that they care about.

Micro-loans- Kiva provides a common platform for micro-loans where capital is paid back, but at 0% interest, supporting a number of enterprises in low-wealth communities across the world.

Pre-Selling Goods and Services- A lot of small businesses can raise capital for start-ups or expansions by pre-selling goods that can be obtained at a later time. Community Supported Agriculture is a common example of this, but other businesses such as bakeries or cafes have also employed this tool.

Time Bank- A time bank allows people within a community to exchange services where an hour of work holds the same value regardless of the type of work that it is. They can provide an effective tool for getting work done when financial resources might be limited or time can be substituted for money for certain services.

Local Currency- A variation on time banks, a local currency features a local scrip that can be exchanged for goods and services within the geography of a given community, typically a city or region. Unlike time banks, local currency is fungible and can be exchanged, pooled, or shared.

Slow Munis- A bonding agency (such as a port authority or local government) issues municipal bonds that can be used to invest in local soils, land, or infrastructure for local food systems.

Local Investment Pools

Investment pools feature larger groups of investors who pool their resources into investment funds administered by the investors themselves, a partnering non-profit organization or a mutual fund. Some examples include:

Non-profit Revolving Loan Fund- A non-profit organization administers a loan fund and directs investments into companies that meet criteria for social or ecological responsibility. The fund can include a mix of unaccredited and accredited investors.

Investment Club- These clubs can be organized by a group of individuals interested in pooling small amounts of capital to invest in local food businesses. To meet SEC rules, every member participates in the decision making process and one person cannot contribute more than 25% of the total pool.

Local Mutual or Pension Funds- An estimated $56 billion in mutual funds and $172 billion in pension funds are invested among individuals and organizations in Northeast Ohio, but none of these funds are available for direct local investing. A local mutual fund would take significant infrastructure, but could be supported by a local stock exchange.

Self-Directed IRA's- A self-directed IRA requires a custodian, but can enable an investor to direct their IRA to provide capital for local businesses.

Applying Local Investing Lessons to Stark County

The above tools for local investing help to broaden the landscape of potential sources of capital for investing in local food systems. The idea here is to find ways to reduce the flow of individuals seeking emergency food relief for economic reasons. Investing in wealth creation strategies is a part of a larger effort to address the root causes of food insecurity by both increasing the availability of locally grown foods and growing the local food economy as a source of enterprise and job creation. Additionally, it creates multiple avenues for economic exchange. Low-income residents might lack cash for spending, but can initially exchange time.

Philanthropy can play an important role in the front-end of catalyzing local investment in these wealth creation strategies. However, identifying multiple sources of community capital outside of philanthropy will create a more dynamic economic development environment. Philanthropic investments can focus on workshops or trainings to introduce local investment tools, development of networks of investors, banks, or institutions that can dedicate portions of funds to local investments, or consider making program-related investments to help to catalyze facilities or capital investment for local food systems capacity.

FEDERAL FUNDING LANDSCAPE FOR FOOD SECURITY

Foundation and federal competitive grant programs have been the primary funders of local food organizations over the past twenty years. Local and state foundations and government programs have also targeted microenterprise grants that relate to key service areas and sectors. The USDA's *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2)* initiative launched during the first year of the Obama administration has had the most impact on program funding and capital investment in local/regional food system development.

KYF2 is a USDA-wide effort to carry out President Obama's commitment to strengthening local and regional food systems. A surge in consumer demand for locally-produced food is creating jobs and opportunity throughout rural America. Beginning farmers are finding an entry point into agriculture through local markets. Experienced farmers are diversifying their sales to capture added value through local branding. Small businesses are developing new packing, processing, distribution, and retail opportunities. And

consumers are learning more about where their food comes from and gaining access to fresh, local foods.

The new five-year Farm Bill passed in 2014, reflects shifting priorities over the past decade in which issues like local food and healthy food access have become priorities in rural communities and urban neighborhoods. The last two farm bills, in 2002 and 2008, brought about some important changes to support programs that directly and indirectly support local and regional food systems and rural economic development more broadly. The final farm bill builds on the growing investment in local and regional food systems, organic agriculture, and healthy food access, providing greater opportunities for small and mid-sized farms, specialty crop farmers, and farmers looking to diversify. While the advances for rural economic development programs are not as great, the farm bill still makes minor improvements to certain programs that serve as starting points for further work in future farm bills.

In total, the new farm bill will invest $501 million over the next five years directly into the local food, rural development, organic agriculture, and healthy food access initiatives that NSAC works on and supports, representing a nearly 50 percent increase over the previous farm bill.

Food Security Funding:
The new farm bill also provides gains in funding in providing low-income residents with better access to healthy and local foods. The bill creates a new Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant program to fund programs that encourage increased fruit and vegetable consumption by SNAP (food stamp) recipients at the point of purchase through increased purchasing power.

Farm Bill Program	2008 Farm Bill	2014 Farm Bill
Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program	$33	$150
Specialty Crop Block Grant [2]	$224	$100
Value Added Producer Grant Program	$15	$63
Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program	$15	$15
National Organic Cost Share Certification	$22	$57.5
Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program *	$28	$0
Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (SNAP Incentives)	n/a	$100
Community Food Projects *	no increase	$16 increase
Total	$337	$501.5

[1] http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF_MISSION
[2] These three programs have permanent funding. The chart therefore shows increases over previous farm bill levels only. The 10-year increase in the new bill for SCBGs is $250 million and the 10-year increase for CFGs is $36 million.

Building off of successful incentive programs in states like Michigan, California, and New York, with Wholesome Waves initiatives, the new program has mandatory funding at levels ranging between $20 million to $35 million per year for a total of $135 million over the course of this five-year farm bill. The bill also prioritizes projects that involve direct-to-consumer sales marketing, locally or regionally produced fruits or vegetables, and are located in underserved communities.

The existing **Community Food Projects** grant program, which supports the development of community-based food projects in low-income communities to improve the self-sufficiency of community members, saw a sizable increase in funding. The bill grants the program with $9 million in mandatory funding per year starting in fiscal year 2015, nearly double its $5 million funding level from the 2008 Farm Bill. Additionally, the bill extends the period of the grant from 3 years to 5 years.

Healthy food access at Farmers Markets and direct to consumers will also see greater support through a suite of provisions dealing with EBT (electronic benefits transfer) equipment that expands the ability of SNAP benefits to be used in more direct-to-consumer marketing outlets. One provision would allow SNAP recipients to use their benefits to participate in Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) ventures while another would allow an exemption for farmers markets and other direct-to-consumer marketing outlets from having to pay all of its EBT equipment and implementation costs- costs which often prohibit these types of retailers from being able to accept SNAP benefits. A third provision authorizes pilot projects to test on-line and mobile technologies for purchases made with EBT. The Farm Bill also maintains the status quo for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

The bill also authorizes USDA to house a **Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)** to provide healthy food retailers with grants and loans to "overcome the higher costs and initial barriers to entry in underserved areas." Among the priority categories listed for funding a project is that it "supports regional food systems and locally grown foods, to the maximum extent practicable." Although the program does not currently have funding, HFFI is authorized to receive up to $125 million in appropriated funds; whether it receives funding or not will be a function of future annual agriculture appropriations bills.

Local Food Systems Sector Development:
The Farm bill provides the same $3 million in mandatory funding per year as the previous 2008 farm bill to Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP). RMAP provides training, technical assistance, and microloans to very small rural businesses through grants to intermediary organizations. This level of funding falls far short of the $10 million per year that NSAC requested which would enable the program to grow beyond current levels to better meet the needs of small rural business owners. Additionally, the bill failed to provide any of the important no-cost improvements to the RMAP program that advocates, including NSAC, had asked for, including ones that would simply clarify statutory problems which have lingered since the last farm bill and now unfortunately will linger for another five years.

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On a positive note, the final farm bill retains the 5 percent floor, rejecting a House Farm Bill provision to substitute a cap. However, the final bill did not include various no-cost policy changes that would have facilitated the use of the local food enterprise loans. The no-cost changes would have, among others, provided for simultaneous approval of the loan and loan guarantee, encouraged the development of intermediated marketing channels for local and regional food as part of regional economic development strategies, allowed for non-rural siting of distribution facilities that expand rural and farm income, and created an outreach and transparency plan to help make more applicants and the public aware of the program.

Under the new bill, the Rural Business Opportunity Grant and Rural Business Enterprise Grant programs have been merged into one program, to be known as **Rural Business Development Grants**, with authorization for up to $65 million in discretionary funding per year over five years, but no mandatory funding. The bill limits the use of funds for certain activities previously funded by RBOG, allowing up to 10 percent of total appropriated dollars to be used for planning projects, technical assistance and training to existing or prospective entrepreneurs and managers, localized economic development planning, and certain business training centers.

According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, "Among the best news for local food and regional food systems is the expansion of the Farmers Market Promotion Program into **the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program** in the new farm bill. In addition to supporting direct farmer-to-consumer marketing channels such as farmers markets, community supported agriculture, and others, the new, expanded program will provide grants to farm-to-institution, food hubs, and other local and regional food enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, or store locally or regionally produced food products."

The bill also triples money for this program from the level provided in the final years of the 2008 Farm Bill, providing $30 million in annual mandatory funding. Fifty percent of funding will go to direct marketing, with the remaining 50 percent going to non-direct marketing regional food enterprises and supply chains. This increased funding and expansion of categories is expected to provide a big boost to the entire spectrum of the local and regional food value chain.

At the state level the Farm bill increases mandatory funding for Specialty Crop Block Grants. The block grant program, administered by state departments of agriculture, serves a wide variety of goals and interests, but can and often does include project or research funding in support of local and regional food systems. The new bill funds the program at $72.5 million in mandatory funding each year over the next 4 years and then, beginning in 2018 and on into the future, at $85 million, up from $55 million at the end of the last farm bill cycle. These levels represent a substantially increased level of funding than what was in the original Senate and House-passed farm bills, a rare occurrence. Specialty Crop Block Grant program dollars can be an effective tool in securing seed capital to support farm to school initiatives, farmer food safety training, food hubs, processing businesses, and marketing research. The increased funding for this program represents an improved opportunity for farmers, entrepreneurs, and community-based groups to find support for the development of local and regional food systems, at least with respect to activities specifically focused on fruits and vegetables. As more emphasis on the development of food hubs emerges in the state of Ohio this could be a strong funding stream through the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

***Click here** for a comprehensive list of USDA and other Federal funding opportunities for food security and local food systems initiatives.*

NEXT STEPS-
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT CAPACITY IN STARK COUNTY

Key strategies for building community assets to address food security locally include adopting a wealth creation model, encouraging collective impact philanthropy, fostering local investment tools, and leveraging resources from outside of the community, particularly some new and expanded USDA funding opportunities.

Wealth Creation Model:

- Organize a Community Investment Portfolio that lists the forms of capital that can be leveraged in the community to address food security.
- Emphasize processes to leverage existing resources in the community to build individual capital (skill-building and education), social capital (networks and volunteerism), and knowledge capital (innovation and research).
- Work through a Community Food Network to fill out a matrix of forms of capital that can be leveraged and forms of capital that need to be cultivated to support a local food hub and an urban farm development. These can also be translated into matching or in-kind contributions that might be required by some national or federal grants.

Collective Impact Philanthropy:

- Encourage events (like the July 2014 food security forum) that provide an opportunity for funders, non-profit organizations, businesses, farmers and other community stakeholders to work toward a shared vision and priorities.

- Initiate collaborative funding projects that can spread benefits across multiple stakeholders, including training or capacity building for network collaboration, or urban farm development funds to support growth of urban gardens and farms.

- Provision of funding by local foundations to build collaborative projects that can increase the capability of Stark County to attract state or national philanthropic of government funds, particularly from the recent Farm Bill re-authorization.

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Local Investing Tools:
Develop tools through workshops or collaborations that build local sources of capital that can be invested in local food systems capacity in Stark County, including:

- Community Banks or Credit Unions (Targeted CD's micro-loan funds)
- Cooperatives (member-based, loan funds, local ownership)
- Accredited Investors (Community development finance institutions, program-related investments, new market tax credits)
- Non-Securities (crowd-funding, micro loans, pre-selling goods and services, time banks, local currencies, slow municipal bonds)
- Local Investment Pools (non-profit revolving loan funds, investment clubs, local mutual or pension funds, or self-directed IRA's).

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Pattern #7
INTERNAL GATHERING SPACES

The Zenith art gallery and antique store in Pittsburgh offers brunches during weekends that feature vegetarian dishes sourced with local food. The space is a popular social gathering space surrounded by unique antiques. Zenith offers a creative mixed-use space that combines a retail store and a social gathering space.

Pattern 182- ***Eating Atmosphere***- Creating common areas of eating, whether in households, restaurants, or public eating spaces, help to bring people together and foster social interaction. Rooms should be arranged to encourage people to eat leisurely and comfortably while feeling part of a larger group. Round tables with lighting concentrating on the middle of the table creates an ideal format for people to relax, and enjoy food mixed with company.

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CORE CAPACITY #3- CALIBRATION AND FEEDBACK

A process of calibration and feedback creates a dynamic environment for addressing food security that encourages innovation, continuous learning, flexibility for experimentation, and opportunities to continuously adapt efforts to changing circumstances or unforeseen opportunities. Calibration refers to a continuous process of adjustment and adaptation to best meet short-term indicators and generational goals. Feedback provides systems for evaluation and learning. Less about measuring success or failure, feedback offers a form of learning and an opportunity to test interventions to determine if they are having the impacts desired.

Feedback mechanisms have an important role in food security efforts, providing tools to assess the effectiveness of projects, programs, social enterprises, or initiatives in addressing larger issues. Feedback mechanisms might include network mapping, program evaluations, surveys, or agile planning tools. Feedback provides an important role in enabling groups to assess their impacts, review the effectiveness of their approaches, and adjust efforts as needed. Feedback should be constructive, encourage learning, and lead to the long-term evolution of best practices or novel approaches.

Often-times, feedback mechanisms are neglected in food security or other social change initiatives. They might not be adequately pursued due to concerns about keeping resources focused on program delivery. Many program evaluations are done as an after-thought, hastily put together toward the end of a project due to the requirements of funders.

It is important that feedback mechanisms be designed into all food security projects. Evaluation design should be carefully considered at the front-end of a process, as it will enable a group to think through the indicators and measurements that can be used to judge progress toward a larger goal. Many non-profit organizations are stretched with time and resources, so it is ideal if feedback mechanisms can be developed through network collaborations. Health care institutions, universities, or cooperative extension all have skills and capacities to conduct program evaluation and can be involved with projects to provide feedback throughout.

In Cleveland, the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (PRCHN) was formed in 2009 to address rising chronic health issues confronting low-income neighborhoods in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. Based at Case Western Reserve University, the PRCHN's mission is "to foster partnerships within urban neighborhoods to develop, test, and implement effective and sustainable strategies and interventions to prevent and reduce the burden of chronic disease." There is recognition that environmental and lifestyle issues in communities serve as barriers to good health. Interventions can be assessed on the basis of their ability to reduce barriers and lead to better health outcomes.

The PRCHN has developed a variety of evaluation tools that can be helpful to evaluation efforts around food security and health. Some of the evaluation tools include:

- **Store Audits**- A Food Retail Inventory provides a tool for assessing the availability of healthy foods in corner stores, grocers, or other neighborhood retail outlets.
- **Garden Audits**- This provides an assessment framework for inventorying community gardens in a community, what they grow, size of operations, participants, and neighborhood impacts.
- **Neighborhood Attribute Inventory**- This tool provides an overview of the attributes of a given neighborhoods and includes several measurements related to health and access to food.
- **Community Health Survey**- This survey includes a broad assessment to determine individual experiences and perspectives on neighborhood and community health.
- **School Food Environmental Audit**- This provides an assessment of the quality and health of school meals.

In addition to these tools, a partnership with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) of OSU Extension can provide useful evaluation tools. They offer a pre and post test evaluation to determine the impacts of nutrition education programs.

***Click here** to access sample surveys or more information about the Prevention Research Center.*

Progress Indicators

Based on input from the community forum, some of the following indicators might be developed to assess the impacts of projects:

VIABILITY TESTING
Key Question: *Is the initiative viable? Does it show the potential for long-term self-reliance?*
Viability Test: A project can be considered viable if it passes three key criteria:

- **Financial**: Does the project develop a source of long-term income that reduces dependency on grant revenues over time?
- **Social**: Is there a committed social network in place to support the project?
- **Ecological**: Does the project rely upon systems and processes that conserve and do not deplete natural resources or ecosystems?

HEALTH OUTCOMES
Key Question: *Does the overall health of participants improve over time?*

Some key indicators for health outcomes include:

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- daily consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and whole and unprocessed foods;
- changes in health measurements including body-mass index, blood pressure, and blood sugar testing;
- duration and frequency of physical exercise;
- changes in percent of residents that are considered overweight or obese over time;
- number of individuals completing classes, workshops, or trainings to improve awareness and skills around nutrition, healthy lifestyle, and food preparation; and
- change in behavior over time of individuals completing classes, workshops or training.

LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Key Question: *Does the project have a positive impact on the local economy?*

Some key indicators of economic impacts include:

- economic value of non-monetary benefits, including environmental services of urban gardens or estimated value of food produced for self-consumption;
- number of enterprises created;
- number of jobs created;
- percentage of food purchased locally by participating restaurants, grocers, or institutions;
- multiplier effect of food purchased locally;
- aggregate sales data for farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture programs, farmers, or market gardeners;
- tax base resulting from business growth in local food enterprises;
- square footage of available space for local food warehousing or processing; and
- dollar value of food donated to emergency food relief.

VITALITY OF NETWORKS:

Key Question: *Does the project involve a diverse base of stakeholders that bring multiple perspectives, assets, or backgrounds?*

Some key indicators include:

- number of collaborative projects successfully launched;
- number and level of participation in networking events or community forums;
- successive re-mapping of three sectors over time to track change of network connections and diversity over time;
- number of new people becoming active participants in a network over time;
- increase in number of people and density of connections for innovation or learning networks;
- improved network resilience through increase in number of who can serve as connectors, hubs or bridges to connect previously unconnected networks.

FOOD ACCESS

Key Question: *Does the project improve the ability of residents to access healthy foods in their immediate community?*

Some measures of food access include:

- participation level in local food system (shop at farmers markets, cook own food, raise food in home or community garden, entrepreneur, or workforce);
- combined acreage of urban land devoted to urban agricultural production (including break-down between community gardens and market gardens);
- environmental measures, including average distances of residents to sources o healthy foods (urban gardens, farmers' markets, corner stores, grocers or restaurants with healthy food options);
- change in number of outlets in food desert neighborhoods that offer affordable healthy food choices;
- percentage of sales data from local food sources taking place in food desert neighborhoods;
- percentage of farmers' markets that accept multiple forms of food assistance (Ohio Direction, Senior Vouchers, WIC coupons, etc.);
- aggregate value of food purchased through food assistance; and
- participation level in incentive programs, such as a Double-Up-For-Food-Bucks program.

FOOD ASSISTANCE

Key Question: *Does the project reduce long-term dependency of participants on food assistance?*

Some measures of food relief might include:

- number and frequency of visits for food pantry customers;
- reduction in number of people seeking food relief due to economic circumstances; and
- number of food pantries or emergency food programs that actively connect clients to tools for building self-reliance, including health and nutrition programs, cooking classes, gardening programs, social services, or job training

MULTIPLE FORMS OF CAPITAL

Key Question: *Do projects have access to or contribute to a diverse portfolio of community capitals?*

Some measurements that can be considered by form of capital are described in the lists below.

Natural:

- Health and productivity of soils
- Acreage of vacant land devoted to agriculture

Multiple Forms of Capital Leveraged by Stark County Food Security Initiatives

Organization	Individual	Social	Knowledge	Natural	Built	Financial	Political
Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank		Network of grassroots hunger organizations.	Food safety, logistics/ distribution		Refrigerated storage, trailer trucks, warehouse		Lobbying capacity for state legislature
Alliance Community Pantry		Consolidated volunteer networks across multiple organizations.	Collaboration process for hunger groups		Refrigerator, store-front building, box truck		
Blessing in a Backpack		Volunteer network					
Botanical Garden Association	Youth education	Volunteer network, teachers	Curriculum on gardening and nutrition	Land	Meeting facility		
Community Harvest		Business, hunger group, and volunteer networks	Distribution, food safety		Refrigerated truck, storage facility		
Meals on Wheels		Volunteer network	Distribution, food preparation, kitchen management	Land	Delivery trucks, cold storage, commercial kitchen		
Minerva Community Meals Association		Volunteer network	Meal preparation, micro-distribution		Refrigeration, commercial kithen		
OSU Extension Stark County	Nutrition education, evidence-based garden and farm education	Farmer networks, urban networks, master gardeners,	Gardening, farming, marketing, nutrition, community development, youth education				County commissioners, state legislature
Refuge of Hope	Life-skills, accessing social services	Volunteer network, network of hot meal providers	Network collaboration, food preparation, social services		Certified kitchen, dining room, storage, lodging		
Salvation Army-Massillon	Life-skills, food preparation, accessing social service	Network of volunteers, churches, social service agencies	Food preparation, distribution, social services, education	Land	Commercial kitchen, van, meeting spaces, classrooms		
Stark County Hunger Task Force		Network of hunger organizations	Networking collaboration, logistics, funding		Delivery truck	Funding available for partnering organizations	
Live-Well Stark County	Healthy lifestyle, outdoor education	Network of diverse community stakeholders, universities	Sustainability, environment, exercise, nutrition, gardening	Land		Funding available for garden initiatives	County government
Stark Fresh	Nutrition, cooking, gardening	Volunteer, urban gardener, and farmer networks	Urban gardening, farmers market, food assistance, community development	Land	Meeting facility, market outlet,	Development funds for Mahoning Corridor	Canton City government
Walsh University	Business skills, volunteerism	Student volunteer, hunger organization networks	Business school, nursing service learning	Land	Meeting , teaching, community gathering space, commercial kitchens		

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- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

Financial
- Increased sales of local farmers/processors
- Dollars retained through local spending
- Estimated multiplier effects (economic output/job growth)

Social
- Diversity and density of network connections
- Number of participating communities

Individual
- Change in consumption patterns
- Change in key health measurements
- Number of people growing food

Intellectual
- Number of partnering university programs or departments
- Sharing of evaluation results of interventions

Built
- Square footage available for storage and processing
- Acreage of constructed greenhouses

Political:
- Public investment in food security initiatives
- Number of municipalities adopting supportive legislation for urban agriculture

AGILE PLANNING

The first section addressed a number of indicators that can measure changes and impacts over time. These can provide important markers for progress toward the longer-term, generational changes being sought. This evaluation needs to be baked in at the front-end of projects. Institutions or partnering groups should be identified who can provide objective program evaluation support. Participating organizations can participate in data collection or outreach, but will most likely lack the time, skills, and resources to conduct effective evaluations on their own. Evaluation results can be shared in an open-source format to maximize learning and build a community of support around improving outcomes over time.

With these external evaluation processes in place, this section begins to identify internal calibration processes. This is another source of dynamic feedback and continuous adaptation of projects to changing circumstances, break-throughs, unexpected changes, reflection, or re-calibration of under-performing efforts. The Agile Canvas framework was presented to stakeholders in Stark County as a valuable tool for keeping complex, multi-partner projects operating efficiently and productively.

The Agile Canvas is a simple and powerful way to get and keep any group (literally!) on the same page continuously in their collaboration. In any collaboration, we want to make something happen, but we are not sure exactly how we are going to do it. We are also clear that it is going to take more than one person to accomplish.

Contributing to the complexity is the diversity of personalities and perspectives at the table, the uncertainties of an intrinsically unknowable future, usually less than optimal resources and conditions, people who change their mind, and reality that rewards the agile.

Typically, people do well together when they have the right process to support their success, keep projects on track, and reduce the chances for efforts to become bogged down by conflict, burdensome processes, or restrictive leadership. The Agile Canvas is a dynamic set of 5 on-going and simultaneous conversations that keeps groups continuously focused, realistic, aligned, inspired and productive. These conversations are based on five critical questions, listed below.

The Questions Conversation Keeps Us Focused:
What is not researched or decided?
Every collaboration features more uncertainties than certainties. Uncertainties emerge in the form of assumptions, unknowns and concerns. As soon as we identify any kind of uncertainty, we translate each into actionable questions to research and decide along the way. We sequence and time-stamp all new questions so that we are always working on them in the best order at the time. Questions keep us focused.

The Facts Conversation Keeps Us Realistic
What is already discovered and decided?
Everyone has opinions in collaborations. Some are assumptions, some are facts. Facts include anything we have already discovered and researched relative to our focus. Some of these are the results from our research and others are results from our decisions. Our speed and productivity in the process will always be equal to our ability to stay continuously realistic because we stay fact-based. Facts keep us realistic.

The Principles Conversation Keeps Us Aligned
What matters most to us and why?
People naturally show up to collaborations with diverse agendas. We move forward when we create alignment about what matters most to us. These are our principles. When we have shared principles, we move with rather than against each other. We achieve what can only be achieved with a culture of trust that comes from the power of shared principles. Principles keep us aligned.

The Stories Conversation Keeps Us Inspired
What would represent success and progress?

The significance of our achievements are equal to the level of our inspiration. Inspired groups act with courage, persistence and resilience because they continuously visualize the kinds of future stories they would love to see possible. We keep a sequenced and time-stamped list of success and progress stories that shape and energize everything we get done. Stories keep us inspired.

The Sprints Conversation Keeps Us Productive
What 2 week actions will achieve our stories?
Once we are aligned and inspired, what matters is getting things done. We get things done in sprints of 2 week work cycles. We engage whatever resources we have in each sprint to achieve the top incomplete stories on our stories list. We work on the stories that promise the quickest yield of impact, learning and new resources. Sprints keep us productive.

Agile Canvas Process

The agile process, when followed, provides a dynamic group planning tool that greatly improves the effectiveness of project meetings. Some of the below recommendations will insure that the process meets its best potential.

Begin and go anywhere
Expect that the process will naturally and unpredictably spark ideas for you in the four conversation areas other than the one the group might be working in at any point in the process. Feel free to voice what comes to mind any time you want before you forget it, or write it down and voice it when it makes sense later.

Record everything
Whether you voice an idea before writing it down or you write down an idea first, make sure everything you think gets written, one idea per note or card. It is vital that everyone writes their own contributions- no group recorder. Write everything as a full idea rather than an idea summarized into one or two words that no one would be able to figure out later.

Validate, then vary
If you have any contribution that disagrees or contrasts with another contribution, first validate the potential value or legitimacy of the initial contribution. Then offer anything you want that varies from it. Feel free to explain but not defend the value of any contribution you make. Just get it posted. This is called the practice of Yes/And.

Listen with questions
When someone says something that seems unclear or unlikely, use friendly questions to better understand what they're saying and where they're coming from in their perspective. Express questions in tones of curiosity. Saying why you ask what you ask can build trust.

Make new connections
When it would benefit the group's effort, offer to connect the group to any other people or resources outside the group. Offer to make other resources available. Offer to make new introductions and invitations to the group's efforts in upcoming Sprints. Be a catalyst for any personal storytelling that would strengthen connections in the group.

Details On The 5 Unique Conversations

The Agile Canvas keeps any group focused, realistic, aligned, inspired and productive throughout any collaboration. It's a canvas that captures our work in five unique conversations: questions, facts, principles, stories and sprints. The power of the canvas is how it links and leverages a diversity of perspectives and keeps everyone literally on the same page the whole time. Here are simple ways to best engage in the process.

Questions What is not researched or decided?

1. Post anything you think we need to research and decide in this effort
2. Write each item as a question, and label each with an R(esearch) and/or D(ecision)
3. To grow the list, translate any assumptions & concerns into new questions

Facts What is already discovered & decided?

1. Post anything we have already discovered and decided in this effort
2. Only post facts on the facts lists; post any new questions on the questions lists
3. On the shared document, add any attached links or documents for any posted facts

Principles What matters most to us and why?

1. Post whatever matters most to you to this effort and share any stories about why
2. Describe each principle in as positive (what you do want to see) language as possible
3. Expect and value diverse, even contradictory principles

Stories What would represent success and progress?

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1. Post events and indicators that you feel would represent success and progress here

2. Describe all stories as specifically and measurably as you can

3. Work with the group to establish completion date timestamps for each story posted

Sprints What 2 week actions will achieve our stories?

1. Post your total available time for each sprint you're working in

2. Work with the group to establish time estimates for each sprint item, especially yours

3. Take on any sprint item you can contribute the most to and post your status on each item

Turning Potential Time Wasters into Valuable Contributions

Following are 8 Common ways people waste time in collaborations and "listening response" alternatives to help to keep things on track and productive.

Ranting: Going on and on about anything without adding new additions to the conversation; also listening to ranting instead of posting new contributions. *Listening: Make sure any new additions to any conversations get posted; keep posting your own new additions; encourage listeners to get busy posting new items*

Complaining: Talking about what's wrong, what's lacking, what isn't working, why and who's to blame. *Listening: Turn any negative into a new posted question or fact*

Attacking: Initially responding to any contribution with why its unrealistic or wrong *Listening: Respond first with the possible merits, benefits or value of any continuation; talk first about what you might like about it, then offer alternatives*

Defending: Justifying problems, mistakes, setbacks, failures, bad decisions and things not done on time. *Listening: Get any new questions or facts from lessons learned posted; add new required items to future sprints; adjust story timestamps to reflect changes*

Dominating: Doing so much talking others can't talk; bullying others into conformity and compliance. *Listening: Get anything new posted; add and invite others to keep adding to any of the 5 Canvas conversations*

Acquiescing: Insincerely agreeing to anything to avoid the risk of disagreement. *Listening: Get any new and different ideas, facts, questions, perspectives posted; be honest and invite people to be honest about their differences and use them to grow the Canvas*

Time-wasting: Allowing the group to work on anything in a group conversation that could be worked on by individuals or pairs in sprints. *Listening: Decide as a group which sprint to put to work and get it assigned.*

Delays: People take on more in any sprint than they have time for and don't complete their assignments. *Listening: Get all sprint items time estimated by the group and make sure everyone declares their maximum time availability for any sprint in which they work.*

Agile Canvas in Practice in Stark County

As a follow-up to the July 9th Community Forum, two meetings were organized with some of the individuals who identified themselves as having a leadership interest in projects that came up during the forum. The group focused on two projects out of more than 50 that came up at the forum: developing a food hub and kitchen incubator and developing a model urban farm. These projects both had the highest level of interest among those present at the meetings and also represented more catalytic projects that had greater potential to involve stakeholders from multiple sectors.

We used the sessions as an opportunity to practice use of the Agile Canvas as a dynamic and flexible planning tool for complex projects. The accompanying diagrams show snapshots of the questions, facts, principles, stories, and sprints that were generated by the groups. This tool can be used as a way to support a dynamic project that invites innovation, flexibility, the inclusion of new voices, and the pursuit of new or unanticipated directions that can change the project for the better. These examples can serve as the springboard for getting these initiatives moving forward.

NEXT STEPS-
BUILDING CAPACITY FOR CALIBRATION AND FEEDBACK

Calibration and feedback includes development of external and internal feedback tools that can help to gauge progress and continue to evolve and adapt initiatives as circumstances change, objectives are accomplished, or blockages inhibit progress.

External Feedback Tools:

- Leverage a Community Food Network to identify institutions in Stark County that can play a role in program evaluation, beginning with cooperative extension, universities, or health care institutions.

- Design program evaluation at the front-end of the process for developing a food hub and an urban farm to gauge the longer-term impacts of these projects on key community indicators.

- Indicators that can be considered include viability testing, health outcomes, local economic impacts, food access, food assistance, and changes in community asset portfolios.

- Conduct a follow-up network mapping analysis 1-2 years forward to gauge changes in network connectivity and diversity and identify areas where connections could be strengthened, broadened, or diversified.

Internal Feedback Tools:

- Utilize the Agile Planning Canvas template as a tool to encourage dynamic and adaptable initiatives.

- Support mastery of the agile canvas template among stakeholders who can then teach the template to others in the network (train the trainer).

- Create an open-source virtual space to enable the agile canvas for food hub and urban farm projects to be viewed or changed over time and available to others in the community that may have an interest in joining or contributing.

THE AGILE CANVAS- Local Food Hub

QUESTIONS
What is not researched and decided?

- Is this space for growers/producers, processors, for-profit, hunger-relief?
- How do you divide the hub for food assistance and for profit?
- Will the food hub be close to people living in "food deserts"?
- Does the supplier designate restriction of food? (non-profit/for profit use)
- What is the most centralized location in Stark County (including transportation options like bus lines)?
- What farms in the area are actively looking to distribute food
- What restaurants in the area would be interested in joining?
- Who funds purchase of facility? Who owns?

FACTS
What is already discovered and decided?

- 40-50% of food harvested is wasted... anotehr 27% restaurants/grocers
- Over 57,000 Stark County residents are hungry
- Prospect for kitchen incubator exists in Deli Ohio
- There is a desire for a space like this regionally
- 2- 3 trips per week for 1 pantry to ACRFB

PRINCIPLES
What matters most to us and why?

- Creating a sustainable agriculture movement
- Supply-chain development (farmer capacity)
- Healthy food access
- Education
- Entrepreneurship

STORIES
What would represent success and progress?

- More farmers involved in supplying fresh produce to local food deserts
- Old warehouse turned into common space for food processing
- Hunger relief programs regularly have fresh produce
- Healthier children and seniors
- Less obesity among our Stark County Canton community
- Greater access to locally produced food

SPRINTS
What 2 week actions will achieve our stories?

- Begin to research: Can the food hub and kitchen incubator co-exist?
- Create baseline data
- Which model food hub works?
- Refine what food hub does and does not do
- Spot to process... commercial kitchen style- run it, offer to other groups, mainly used for processing foods that people... coudl serve both profit & non-profit organization...
- Rural development grant for the OSU center in Piketon to pilot food hub developments... a lot of interest in shadowing work here... Voice for Food...

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THE AGILE CANVAS- Urban Agriculture

QUESTIONS
What is not researched and decided?

- Where is interest in urban farming?
- What support networks exist?
- What costs are associated?
- How would products make it to customers?
- What type of farm?
- What crops are needed or wanted?
- Should production be specialized product?
- Where could it be located?
- Initially how funded?
- Has farm bureau created small farm guidelines?

FACTS
What is already discovered and decided?

- Foundations and banks are interested
- We have space and locations
- Education, outlets, and supports exist (Stark Fresh, Stark Parks, OSU)
- Multiple immature markets exist
- End users are wanting an easy way to access fresh food year round

PRINCIPLES
What matters most to us and why?

- Education
- Fresh wholesome food access to individuals/schools/businesses
- Employment... success for entrepreneurs
- Eco-sustainability and economic viability
- Food security and accessibility

STORIES
What would represent success and progress?

- Farm tour... stuff is growing
- 10 families more food secure
- 5 new urban farms in 3 years
- Farmers' market sells out of food
- Urban farmer waiting list

SPRINTS
What 2 week actions will achieve our stories?

- (Research, design, build, test, launch, communicate)
- Generate list of sites... evaluate pros/cons for each site location...
- Two parks in canton being considered as locations for urban farms...
- Non-profit entity to steer someone who is for-profit in that spot... (first farm site)... 8.6 acres
- Jackson Road farm... push back from the neighbors about urban farm... not all usable...

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Pattern #8
WORK GROUPS

The Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACENet) in Athens, Ohio offers a food incubator that provides facilities to support over 150 small farmers and local food entrepreneurs. The surrounding region has a 35% poverty rate, owing to the rise and fall of coal and timber extraction. ACENet formed its facility to leverage local food systems activity to create jobs and revitalize the local economy.

ACENet utilizes human-scale technology that improves productivity without creating a dehumanizing work environment. Facilities include support for thermal processing (canning and bottling), flash freezing, baking, pasta-making, flour milling, post-harvest handling of vegetables and grains, storage, and packaging.

Pattern 80- ***Self-governing Workshops and Offices- No one enjoys work if he or she is a cog in a machine.***
Mechanization, from a Buddhist point of view, can either enhance the skill and power of workers or it can have a de-humanizing effect as they become supplanted by machines. The majority of technological development since industrialization has created workers as inter-changeable cogs as opposed to individuals that are masters of a craft. The idea of self-governing workshops or offices is to create work environments where workers have more control and ownership over decision-making and economic rewards. Self-governing workshops acknowledge a place for appropriate technology that creates human-scale work environments. For local food systems, self-governing patterns of farms, locally-owned businesses, or cooperatives tend to favor smaller and more involved groups of people. Cooperatives have seen a recent surge in the past decade as a mechanism to maximize the productivity of small groups working together while utilizing technology that is scaled appropriately to a safe work environment. Larger-scale local food projects, such as food hubs, can include federations of smaller work groups that each specialize in a different aspect of the local food system (i.e. cheese-making, baking, drying herbs, etc.)

Click for tutorial
Password: Learn

FLAGSHIP PROJECT #1- LOCAL FOOD HUB

A local food hub is a business, cooperative or organization that supports the aggregation, storage, processing, and/or distribution of regionally produced foods. There are about 170 operating local food hubs in the United States serving a variety of purposes, including healthy food access, wholesale or retail distribution, or institutional demand. In Stark County, a local food hub can provide an important support for the growth of the local food economy, potential distribution and storage for emergency food relief, and job or enterprise training for low-income residents or aspiring entrepreneurs.

A Guiding Vision
(Drawn from the 2014 Community Forum)

A generation from now, Stark County retains 10% of annual food purchases made by businesses and residents, creating $96 million of activity in its local farm and food sector. This thriving economic sector includes a network of urban farms, entrepreneurial rural farms, commercial kitchens, and organized systems of storage and distribution. The Food Hub helps to facilitate stronger connections between area farmers and markets, including direct marketing venues, retail markets, and emergency food relief. Participating farmers diversify their operations to improve overall product mixes and extend the seasonal availability of local food. Partnerships with hunger relief organizations help to improve the mix of healthy local food available to clients.

Beginning in 2014, the community began to identify empty or under-utilized buildings that could support distribution, storage or commercial kitchen operations. By providing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to low-income residents, the number of people seeking food assistance for economic reasons drops over time. An abundance of locally produced foods improves access in food desert neighborhoods and surplus or unsold food is collected to improve the mix of healthy local foods in food pantries and meal programs. Commercial kitchens provide a mix of packaging and processing for both commercial opportunities and food bank provisions. The food hub also helps to coordinate waste collection and processing to feed bio-digestion or composting systems to reduce organic wastes going into the landfill.

Description/Overview

A sub-set of community stakeholders who expressed an interest in playing a leadership role after the 2014 food security forum identified the development of a local food hub as one of the first projects of interest for addressing long-term food security in Stark County. The leadership team envisioned the development of facilities to support both aggregation and food processing capacities.

The past five years have seen a rise in the number of communities across the country that are developing food hub facilities. Many of these food hubs have been specifically developed to increase the supply of local and healthy food for under-served urban markets or emergency food relief.

For Stark County, the development of a local food hub can:

- leverage the diverse agricultural base of Stark County and other surrounding counties with strong agricultural bases, such as Wayne or Holmes counties;
- increase the availability of local and healthy foods in food desert neighborhoods;
- increase the flow of healthy and local food either donated or purchased in the food bank network; and
- create opportunities for new enterprise or workforce development in the local food sector through the provision of food to commercial or institutional markets (farm-to-school, farm-to-college, farm-to-table businesses).

Background on Local Food Hubs

The National Food Hub Collaboration, a nation-wide network of food hub stakeholders, describes a food hub as "a business or organization that actively manages aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand".

A food hub can drive the development of a local food economy in two ways: first by facilitating network connections between farmers, local food entrepreneurs, and food outlets (restaurants, farmers' markets, institutional food services, grocers, food pantries) and second, by providing the physical infrastructure to enable local food systems to achieve greater scale and efficiency. The 170 local food hubs identified by the USDA in 2012 serve a variety of functions in communities, from serving for-profit businesses to increasing the accessibility of healthy local foods. Food hubs can also provide support for entrepreneurs and the development of a supporting work-force.

Food hubs sit at the intersection between supply and demand, facilitating more effective connections between farmers, businesses, and consumers. On the supply-side, food hubs coordinate diverse networks of local farmers, facilitate production planing and season extension, and help with certification, food safety, or liability. On the demand side, food hubs work with distributors, wholesale buyers, institutional or commercial markets, and consumers to increase the accessibility and desirability of locally grown foods.

***Click here** for more detailed information about food hub development options.*

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According to the *USDA Food Hub Guide*, a review of 168 identified food hubs across the country, some common services that food hubs provide include:

- managing the efficient distribution of food products from producers to food hubs and then to markets;
- aggregating food products from a number of different sources to enable higher-volume sales and to ease fluctuations in supply;
- providing dry, cold, or frozen storage facilities for inventorying local food products;
- brokering transactions between farmers, local food businesses and food outlets;
- providing a common label or brand-identity to package foods;
- value-added processing of locally grown foods into frozen, canned, fermented, or dehydrated products that have a longer shelf-life;
- linking producers who lack time to cultivate markets with potential buyers;
- encouraging food safety practices at participating farms;
- serving food deserts or other under-served markets;
- increasing the supply of healthy local food for food banks; and
- working with transportation planning to improve access to food.

Beyond these immediate services, many food hubs also provide support for farmers, including coordinating trainings or investing in the capacity for farmers to supply local markets through direct funding, loans for high tunnels, greenhouses, or storage facilities.

Relevant Case Studies

The following case studies contain features of food-hub efforts aimed at improving food security through healthy food in food banks, improved healthy food access, and workforce development for low-income communities. All of these models have potential relevance to the development of a food hub in Stark County.

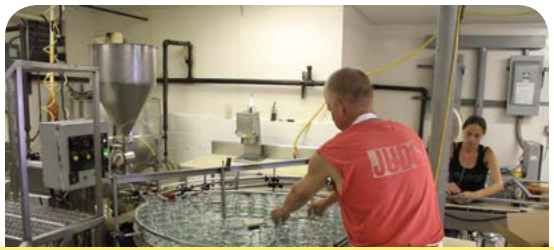
<u>ACE-Net in Athens, Ohio</u>:
The Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACENet) has one of the oldest operating kitchen incubators in the United States. Servicing the Appalachian region of Southeastern Ohio, ACENet was developed to encourage enterprise and job creation in the local food sector. In an area facing high levels of unemployment and one of the highest rates of poverty in the United States, ACENet leveraged diverse collaborative networks to organize its kitchen incubator.

A worker processes spelt grain into flour for the Shagbark Seed and Mill enterprise in Athens.

The ACEnet Food Ventures Center opened in 1996 and provides a 12,000 square-foot licensed commercial kitchen. The facility includes equipment for a variety of food preservation and value-added processing opportunities. The food service and warehouse infrastructure support approximately 100 food processors, food-service operators and area farmers annually. In the past five years the acceleration of local food sector growth has encouraged ACEnet to expand its facilities. An additional building on the ACEnet campus in Athens houses 3 larger food businesses in individualized spaces. A Business Center campus in the town of Nelsonville, just up the road from Athens, features a food-hub facility that ACEnet launched in 2013. This 15,000 square foot food hub serves produce, dairy and livestock farmers with climate controlled storage, large walk-in refrigeration, and multiple loading docks. The ACEnet Nelsonville Food Hub also currently provides food processors with packaging, labeling, batch coding and warehousing space for aggregation, distribution and long-term storage. The Nelsonville Food Hub allows produce farmers to pack and distribute root vegetables, produce, greens and dairy products. Larger freezer storage capacity will be installed to accommodate the growth of freshly frozen products distributed to schools, healthcare facilities, and food pantry networks for 2015. Recent support from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation and the Ohio Convergence Partnership is providing ACEnet and their partners with additional staff and facility upgrades to scale the distribution of fresh and healthy foods into the food bank network and Farm-to-School initiatives.

An overview of the purpose and activities of the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks presented by Leslie Schaller.

The "shared-use kitchen" at ACENet's main campus in Athens provides commercially licensed facilities to support thermal processing (glass and plastic bottling), freezing, baking, dehydration, and product storage and aggregation. These facilities enable local farmers or food entrepreneurs to access expensive kitchen equipment that would be difficult for them to acquire on their own. These food entrepreneurs lease the equipment for designated periods of time, often following the seasonal availability of local foods. By leasing its facilities, ACEnet is able to produce its own income to support the operation and maintenance of the facility. Some entrepreneurs utilize the facilities on a regular basis while others "outgrow" the facilities as incubator graduates and



A local food entrepreneur processes his own brand of premium pasta sauce using a bottling line.

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develop larger manufacturing facilities in other communities in southeastern Ohio. In addition to providing kitchen spaces, ACEnet also provides technical training and support, including product development, labeling and branding, food safety, and network cultivation.

***Click here** to learn more about ACENet.*

City Fresh in Oberlin, Ohio:
City Fresh formed as a social enterprise of the New Agrarian Center (NAC), a non-profit organization based in Oberlin, Ohio. Located on a 70 acre farm, the NAC was formed to promote the development of a more sustainable, equitable, and just food system in Northeast Ohio. City Fresh emerged from a collaborative partnership between the NAC, the City of Cleveland, Ohio State University Extension (Cuyahoga County), Innovative Farmers of Ohio, the Ohio Farmers Union, and Heifer International. City Fresh was formed to increase healthy food access in "food desert" neighborhoods in the greater Cleveland area. City Fresh did this through three primary activities: an urban market gardener training program to increase the capacity for urban farmers to supply local food to urban markets, a Community-Supported share program modified to accommodate low or moderate-income residents, and a farm-to-business initiative to support its food desert distribution activity.

In just the first three years of its existence, City Fresh trained 52 aspiring market gardeners, facilitated and funded the development of 15 urban market gardens in Cleveland, and operated 16 "Fresh Stop" share distribution centers serving about 800 weekly shareholders. A partnership with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) enabled these fresh stops to also teach cooking skills and nutrition education. Joint investments from Case Western Reserve University, Oberlin College, and the Bon Appetit Food Management Company enabled City Fresh to purchase a diesel-powered box truck. The truck was converted at an alternative fuel station in Oberlin, Full Circle Fuels, to run on waste-vegetable oil from these institutions and other area restaurants in its network. The truck increased the capacity of City Fresh to service neighborhood food centers that leveraged the social capital of partnering neighborhood-based organizations, including churches, public libraries, schools, hospitals, community centers, government buildings, community gardens, or businesses. City Fresh even operates a weekly Fresh Stop at Cleveland City Hall.




City Fresh brings healthy local food to food desert neighborhoods in Cleveland through a mix of youth involvement, nutrition education, and distribution for a network of 20 farms.

Today, the market garden training continues through Cuyahoga County extension. The City of Cleveland has a Gardening for Greenbacks initiative, a joint effort between the city's economic and public health departments, that provides start-up funding for qualifying urban market gardeners that complete OSU's market garden training. City Fresh has developed a sustainable model for delivering healthy and nutritious foods to mixed socio-economic groups through its Fresh Stop share program. About 30% of its shareholder base consists of low-income shareholders who receive a subsidy funded by full-paying moderate or higher income shareholders. City Fresh works in both higher and lower income neighborhoods, leveraging its mixed socio-economic base to build a more sustainable and equitable social enterprise. Its week-to-week share ordering process also enables participation of individuals with limited cash flow.

***Click here** to learn more about City Fresh.*

Cleveland Crops in Cleveland, Ohio:
Cleveland Crops is a social enterprise initiative of the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities (CCBDD). The CCBDD was traditionally set-up to provide training and workforce placement for adults with developmental disabilities. The economic downturn in 2008 led to a large number of developmentally disabled adults losing their manufacturing or service jobs. Cleveland Crops, in response, raised capital to support the development of a central food hub and shared-use kitchen facility. The food hub provides a location for sorting, cleaning, and packaging fresh fruits and vegetables raised on its 10 urban farms across Cuyahoga County (occupying 60 total acres of land). The commercial kitchen facility provides equipment and storage for value-added processing, including a blast chiller, baking, canning, and dehydration. The kitchen employs developmentally disabled adults to engage in value-added processing of food crops grown on farms. The facility is managed by professionals with extensive food manufacturing experience. In addition to its support of the Cleveland Crops farms, the facilities are leased by local food businesses or organizations interested in utilizing the kitchens to process foods. Clients range from a small business that produces granola to the Cleveland Food Bank, which is processing vegetables that otherwise would go to waste and also breaking bulk produce into family-sized, vacu-sealed containers.

***Click here** to learn more about Cleveland Crops.*

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Food Link in Rochester New York:
Covering 10 counties with 500 community partners in central New York, Food Link is an initiative of a regional food bank that is shifting to more of a food hub model. The 2008 recession strained the emergency food system through simultaneous increases in demand for hunger services and decreases in donated product (about a 30% decline in New York state). Food Link has shifted the model of their food banking to focus on utilizing their assets (a new building and distribution/logistics infrastructure) to work on the cause of food insecurity (poverty) and not the symptoms (hunger). They are experimenting with a move away from a strictly charity-based model to more of a "social enterprise model". They continue with their traditional food banking programs, donating emergency food to pantries. But they are also buying and processing food from local farmers for sale to under-served, lower-income neighborhoods. They realized that food banks are institutions with significant assets and resources, including warehouses, coolers, freezers, commercial kitchens, truck fleets as well as soft infrastructure like inventory systems, workforce, and extensive network relationships with communities and low-income residents. FoodLink helps to diversify the customer base of the food bank to include daycare, senior homes, and other small non-profit organizations struggling with rising food costs and shrinking budgets. Through cooperative purchasing and farm-to-institution linkages, they are mixing economic development and healthy food access as well as traditional hunger relief.

***Click here** to learn more about FoodLink.*

Core Capacities to Support a Food Hub in Stark County

The previous section identified three core capacities that will help to catalyze the ability of Stark County to address rising food security challenges: network cultivation, community investment, and project calibration. Below are descriptions of ways that these core capacities can be directed toward the food hub project.

Network Cultivation:
The development of a food hub does not begin with a physical facility, but with the cultivation of network relationships between diverse players in the local community that can contribute to or benefit from a food hub. Initially, the key relationships will be between food outlets (restaurants, institutions, grocers, farmers' markets, food pantries, meal programs) and producers (local farms, urban farms, local food businesses, potential entrepreneurs). Key to successful network cultivation will be the nurturing and support of "network weavers"- individuals who can connect farmer communities with potential buyers and grow the overall network.

A large part of growing this network involves implementing small projects or experiments that will build competencies and confidence. These small projects will help to build key network relationships and establish a community of practice around food hub activities. For example, building on the *Banquet on the Bricks* model in Athens, Stark County stakeholders can organize a fundraising event for local hunger organizations that could be hosted by a local university or health care institution. The food for the event can be sourced from a network of local farmers that will be organized to supply food for the event. Local restaurant owners, chefs, or culinary instructors can participate in the preparation of the meal. The event can be used to raise awareness of hunger issues while also introducing people to the bountiful resources in Stark County for a prosperous food system. An event like this can help to build trust and longer-term relationships that can then be leveraged for other future events or developed into on-going local procurement programs.

Leslie Schaller and June Holley are co-founders for the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks.

Community Investment:
Clearly, social capital will be the most critical first step toward the development of a successful food hub. The direction and programming of the food hub can be driven in response to the demands, needs, or opportunities of participating farmers, agencies, or businesses. Other forms of investment will include an inventory of potential existing facilities that could be utilized, including existing but under-utilized commercial kitchen facilities or vacant buildings that could be renovated. Financial capital can be leveraged to create a shared-use facility that includes equipment and storage facilities that meet the needs of participants. Pre-development funds from local foundations can set the stage for federal funding opportunities. Cultivating political support among municipal and county government can lead to potential funding support and enabling policies to support healthy food access and entrepreneurship in local food systems.

Calibration:
Some of the indicators that could be used to evaluate and assess the impacts of the food hub on the local community include:

- involvement of strategic market partners (i.e. larger institutional markets) that can create a volume of purchases to anchor a food hub operation;
- number of entrepreneurs working on starting-up a new local food business;
- number of workers employed by entrepreneurs or food hub training, management, or operations;
- percentage of spending among participating market outlets that supports local farmers or local food businesses;
- number of growers in Stark County selling food to outlets in Stark County;
- increase in the number of farmers participating in the Agriculture Clearance Program to provide local food to food bank networks;
- amount of food recovered for emergency food distribution through gleaning, agricultural clearance purchasing, or donation;
- improvements in the logistics of food relief through more efficient and cost-effective distribution and storage capacity;

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- volume of food distributed through mobile programs that improve access to under-served areas; and
- square footage devoted to food processing, sorting, and storage.

Brainstorm of Potential Projects

Listed below are some examples of projects that could support a local food hub development that stakeholders identified at the July 2014 Forum on the Future of Food Security in Stark County:

- partner with Farm Bureau, Extension, Farmers' Union, Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association, and other partners that can assist with outreach to Stark County farmers;
- create a short-list of participating businesses or institutions that already are or might be interested in connecting with local farmers;
- identify at least 5 to 10 new growers that have the capacity to supply local markets;
- organize local sourcing for events or meals at Walsh University;
- identify corner stores that can carry local foods;
- identify gardens or farms in the area that would be willing to participate in a gleaning program;
- organize farm-to-foodbank initiative between food security organizations, farmer organizations, and area farmers;
- form a committee for development of a food hub and kitchen incubator; and
- convene a meeting with Stark County hunger relief centers to get input on possibility and need for local hub to receive and distribute food donations from farmers.

Operationalizing a Food Hub

The development of a food hub follows a phased development process that includes front-end stakeholder engagement, value-chain development, feasibility assessment, business and financial planning, and launch and management stabilization. Key to the success of a food hub are steps that build network relationships and establish a community of practice.

A phased feasibility and business planning process will be needed that involves extensive stakeholder engagement. Food hubs have the best chance of viability if buyers and sellers are convened in the early phases of design and assessment. Stakeholders should cover all aspects of the food value chain, including producers, food entrepreneurs, institutional managers, restaurant owners, grocers, emergency food service providers, supporting organizations, and urban farm operations. Any food distributors, manufacturers, or aggregators can be invited into the process as well, including existing businesses with the capacity to serve local markets in addition to export markets that may already be serving.

Strong stakeholder engagement not only allows for value chain development between all nodes of demand and supply, but it can also encourage private investment by market partners and food and farm entrepreneurs. Each phase in the developmental sequence refines the market analysis, the financial assumptions, and the commitments from buyers and sellers. This can result in a business plan that tests its economic viability prior to significant financial investment. The definitive test determines whether the project managers, stakeholders and organizational champions have created a plan that can attract the start-up capital from funders, investors, or government funding opportunities.

<u>Step One: Stakeholder Identification and Value Chain Development</u>
This is a crucial first step in building a viable model. To function appropriately within their mission, food hubs that serve food access and the health gaps within low-wealth communities must identify and recruit buyers, sellers and social enterprise partners to build out a value chain. Value chains can fill the gaps that conventional food distribution are unable to address by creating a model scaled to the needs of farmers, producers and "values-based" buyers that respond to mutual benefits within regional food systems. Training for buyers and sellers on value-chain development and exposure to proven models from other communities are important steps in the analysis stage. If buyers and sellers cannot be successfully brought to the table for co-design in this phase, the prospects for feasibility and, ultimately, financial viability will be compromised. *See the accompanying diagram to learn more about value-chain development.*

<u>Step Two Feasibility Assessment</u>
Once the scaffolding of a value chain is identified, the business case can be researched through an initial environmental assessment. If the assessment is positive, the stakeholders should conduct a feasibility study to shape the business concept and test its viability. As a social enterprise, the feasibility analysis should demonstrate sufficient stakeholder buy-in to secure capital investment and the funds necessary for project management, implementation, and, ultimately, food hub management. In a for-profit context, the study needs to present a financial model that analyzes the potential for the business to earn a satisfactory profit for owners and investors based on a set of reasonable assumptions. These assumptions are derived from primary and secondary research, often making use of available data from analogous operations in the region or other similar national models.

Leslie Schaller explains the basics for how a food system value chain can be developed.

<u>Business Planning and Financial Assumptions</u>
Once the business case has been validated through a feasibility analysis, the project team can

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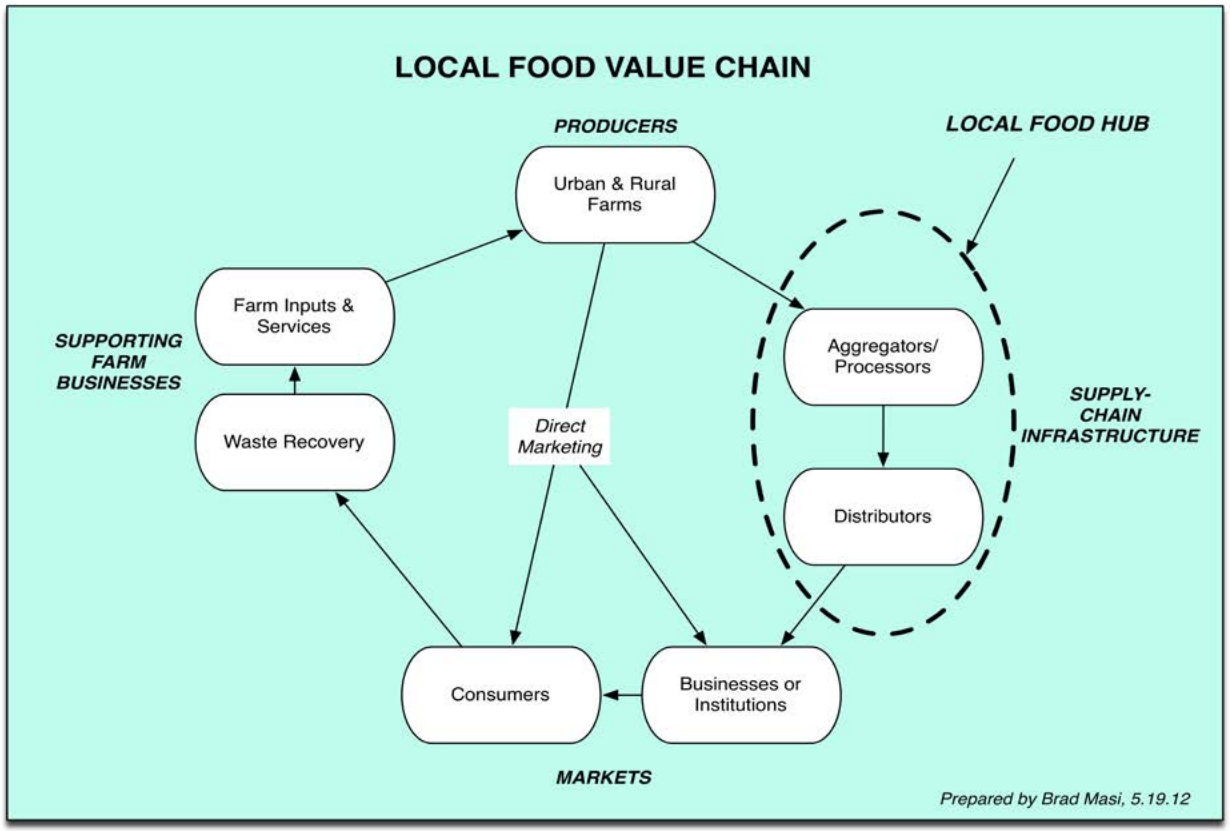

draft a formal business plan, identify public and private investment and prepare grant applications. The business plan will need to comprehensively outline the business model, including complete operations, marketing plan, management and governance structure, and 3 to 5 financial projections. The narrative will need to identify the funding strategies and time-lines needed from investors and lenders. Typically, during this phase, intensive site selection, location issues, and choosing between purchase and renovation or new construction of a facility, is solidified.

Project Implementation and Facility Development

At this phase of development a full-time project team will need to be tapped to design the implementation plan. Implementation will finalize site selection, architectural and engineering services, zoning and code permits, equipment selection, food licensing and regulatory steps, and all aspects of facility design. The governance and ownership of the food hub will need to be determined by the implementation phase and a clear oversight function should be activated either by a team of advisors or governing board.

Launch and Management Stabilization

Usually the first three years from launch are the most critical in the management developmental phase. Generally, staffing will need to be subsidized in the first 2 to 3 years before the food hub can achieve financial feasibility or profitability for investors. Other partners will need to stay connected to provide training and support to producers and market partners to stabilize and scale the value chain framework.

Short-Term Steps for Laying the Groundwork

The following steps can be taken to lay the groundwork for the development of a food hub in Stark County. Given food security challenges in the county (the desire for healthy food in food relief, improving food access in food desert neighborhoods, and growing the local economy), the food hub might be initially developed as a "Healthy Access Food Hub" concept.

Ultimately, a physical location and structure will be needed to operate a food hub. However, before a physical facility is considered, initial focus should be placed on strengthening core networks that will be needed for a food hub to successfully operate. Development of a food hub is a multi-year process that requires the acquisition of capital for building and facility development. Before brick and motor considerations, it is helpful to begin to build a community of practice that becomes comfortable with the dynamics of a successful food hub operation. The immediate steps that follow can focus on leveraging assets and resources that already exist within the community and building social, individual, and knowledge capital that will be needed for a successful launch.

1) Simulate Food Hub through Smaller Events- A fund-raising event for hunger initiatives in Stark County can be organized that includes several local farmers providing food, local chefs preparing it, and community residents or businesses participating as donors. This kind of event accomplishes several short-term tasks, including raising public awareness of food security issues in Stark County, organizing a network of farmers that can supply a mix of local foods, and supporting the capacity for local chefs or food managers to work with locally available foods. This event could be hosted by a local university or school that might be interested in starting a local food procurement effort. After the event, all participants can meet to evaluate other events or arrangements that might take place in the future, such as catering contracts, farm-to-table purchasing arrangements, or enhancement of culinary education around the use of local foods. The *Banquet on the Bricks* in Athens, Ohio provides a great template for this kind of an event. Other events that can create similar connections might include a film screening that includes locally grown popcorn and other locally produced snacks, a local food dinner at a local farm, or a "pop-up" event in a potential food hub site that involves local farmers, market partners, or other interested stakeholders. The event could include meals sourced

by potential farmer-partners and prepared by market-partners to simulate food hub functions.

2) Form Farmers' Market Network- Farm market managers and vendors might be convened in the off-season to identify ways that farmers markets can work together more effectively to promote themselves in the county. Farmers' markets will also have the best network of farmers in the county that may be interested in utilizing the services that a food hub might offer, especially if a shared-used kitchen incubator is available. Their input and involvement in shaping the design for the food hub will be critical. Farmers' markets can also form an informal learning network, sharing best practices for serving low-income patrons, collecting and donating surplus or unsold food for food pantry networks, or co-marketing all farmers' markets as a collaborative. The food-hub can provide facilities to safely store and distribute surplus foods before it is distributed.

3) Community Food Network Support- The Community Food Network for Stark County can help to build support for the food hub by inviting and involving key stakeholders that can contribute different assets and strengths to the effort. For example, Stark Fresh, OSU Extension, and Live-Well Stark County can be involved with network cultivation since all feature county-wide networks of diverse stakeholders. The Ohio Farm Bureau, Ohio Farmers Union, Innovative Farmers of Ohio, and the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association all have access to large farmer networks and can facilitate farmer involvement in shaping a food hub. It would also be helpful to work with downtown chambers of commerce or downtown merchants associations that have access to restaurants or grocers that might serve as market partners. Institutional partners (universities, hospitals, etc.) can be invited to participate as major market partners with the capacity to anchor food hub activities through larger volume purchasing. The role of emergency food distribution in a food hub can be facilitated through the Stark County Hunger Task Force, Community Harvest, the Akron-Canton Food Bank, and interested food pantries or meal programs. Partnering with County and City governments to identify potential properties will be needed to get a sense of what might be available to support a food hub and/or kitchen incubator and to build public support.

4) Hire a County Forager- Create a position for a "County Forager" who can focus on weaving networks between farmers and potential market outlets and food programs in Stark County. The forager can conduct interest surveys to get a better sense of the kinds of programming and facilities that would be the most useful. The forager can also begin to facilitate actual transactions between local farmers, institutions, businesses, and food pantries. Organizing this network is an important precursor to a physical building and helps to build relationships that will be crucial to the success of a food hub. The New Agrarian Center in Oberlin is creating a forager position who will help to build connections between farmers and markets in downtown Oberlin and at Oberlin College as a precursor to a food hub development there.

5) Assess Current Distribution for Stark County Hunger Agencies- Conduct an assessment of current distribution networks among food pantries and meal programs. Identify the costs of the logistics for multiple weekly trips to the Akron-Canton food bank and determine if a Stark County-based hub would create greater distribution efficiency and capacity for storage of fruits, vegetables, or other healthy food items. Determine costs for maintaining a facility for hunger distribution and how it would be financially supported. Determine if it might be more cost-effective to include this function into a larger food hub facility.

6) Develop an Inventory of Potential Facilities- Work with county and municipal economic development agencies to identify a list of potential facilities that might be utilized as a food hub, particularly vacant or under-utilized facilities that might be in close proximity to food desert areas concentrated in Canton, Alliance, or Massillon. Also, inventory existing locations that might have under-utilized kitchen or storage space that could be utilized for a food hub, or at least for starting one. Some examples might include community meal programs that have kitchens that are utilized for only part of the day, university or hospital kitchens with surplus capacity, or church kitchens that might be used to pilot a small food processing initiative among interested partners.

7) Arrange a Field Trip to Learn from Other Models- Organize key food hub stakeholders to travel to Athens, Ohio to tour their kitchen incubator and food hub facilities and interact with some of their partners.

8) Prepare a Pre-Development Proposal- Once some of the above steps are completed, prepare a pre-development proposal to the Ohio Finance Fund or other appropriate funding entity that will enable a more thorough assessment of organizational structure, markets, project phasing, facility requirements, and budgeting. A pre-development project can help to answer the following questions:

- Audience- Who would be the primary users of the facility?
- Ownership- What is the ownership structure (non-profit, for-profit, cooperative)?
- Purpose- What is the overall goal or mission of the food hub?
- Siting- Where would it be located?
- Design- What does a design schematic look like for the facility?
- Scale- What is the market catch-basin that it will serve (municipal, multiple municipalities, county, or regional)?

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Pattern #9
GARDENS IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

A 3 acre urban farm in Youngstown, Ohio provides a local food source and an educational site for neighborhood youth. Here, farm educator Maurice Small sits in the shade and shares gardening books with high school students responsible for maintaining the garden.

Pattern 177- ***Vegetable Garden***- Vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet and most Americans consume below the recommended 4-5 daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Vegetable gardens, if well maintained and connected to home food preservation, can provide a year-round supply of fruits and vegetables to a small family. It is estimated that about 1/10 of an acre is ideal for a typical family. The ability for every resident to have walkable access to gardening space in their yards, in common areas between buildings, or in urban gardens is one measure of a healthy local food system.

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FLAGSHIP PROJECT #2- URBAN FARMING INITIATIVE

Like many urban centers in Northeast Ohio, cities like Canton and Alliance have experienced population loss and a decline in manufacturing businesses. As a result, there are large tracts of vacant land and buildings. Rather than view these as a liability, they can be leveraged as an asset to grow the availability of fresh and healthy food in urban areas, especially food desert neighborhoods. Urban agriculture can help people develop important skills for self-reliance, whether growing food for themselves or to donate to others or producing food for sale to local markets. Creating a model urban farm in Stark County can be an important beginning step to a more productive utilization of open space or vacant lots.

A Guiding Vision
(Drawn from the 2014 Community Forum)

A generation from now, residents living in the urban centers of Stark County participate in a vibrant urban agricultural system. Beginning in 2014, abandoned spaces within cities like Canton, Massillon, and Alliance have been converted into highly productive urban farms, improving nutrition and offering new economic opportunities for urban residents. Backyards and community gardens yield significant harvests for the people tending them. A closed-loop recycling program returns yard and food waste into fertile topsoil which improves yields over time.

Overview of Urban Agriculture

In the past decade, urban agriculture has become an increasingly wide-spread practice in cities both large and small. For cities like Cleveland or Youngstown, urban agriculture has emerged as a productive utilization of large inventories of vacant land resulting from a 50% or greater loss of population since the 1950's. Even large cities like New York, Toronto, or Chicago, which lack such large vacant land inventories, still have vibrant urban agricultural systems. Stark County contains a number of small and mid-sized cities that have all experienced varying degrees of dis-investment and population loss. Urban agriculture presents an opportunity to re-purpose idle vacant land, impart skills for healthy lifestyle and entrepreneurship, increase urban food access, and create stronger and more inter-connected neighborhoods.

A number of community gardens have been established in and around downtown Canton.

Urban agriculture provides a first step toward improving the food self-reliance of a community. It should not be seen as the end, however. Urban agriculture needs to be complemented by broader efforts to connect with farmers in rural Stark County and surrounding counties. The development of a food hub can achieve this and will be an important parallel project to an urban farm development.

North of Stark County, Cleveland contains a number of examples of urban agriculture initiatives that partner with rural farmers. Experienced farmers have been hired to consult with or even manage urban farm enterprises. Urban market gardeners will often partner with rural farmers to increase the quality and mix of food at urban farmers' market. In fact, many Cleveland farmers' markets were initiated by urban farmers who had access to the social networks in cities that rural farmers lacked. Farmers are often hired to perform services, such as plowing urban lots with horse drawn plows or leasing goats or sheep to graze vacant lots. In some cases, urban areas can utilize their manufacturing capacity to start businesses that can support area farmers. Tunnel Vision Hoops in Cleveland is a small business initiated by three urban farmers who designed an optimal greenhouse for small-scale production. The greenhouses are fabricated in Cleveland and have been used in both urban and rural settings to increase small-farm production. Developing a food hub and supporting a vibrant urban agriculture effort can help to weave some of these important economic and social networks between urban and rural communities.

Urban agriculture can foster both informal and formal economic opportunities for residents, business, and institutions. The **informal economy** involves food grown for non-monetary purposes, including self-consumption, sharing, bartering, learning, or donating. Common features of the informal urban agriculture economy include backyard gardening, urban homesteading, and community gardening. There is a monetary value for food grown informally, as it enables individuals on tight incomes to reduce their food budget. OSU Extension estimates that the 180 community gardens in Cuyahoga County generate about $2.5 million worth of produce annually.

There are also opportunities for more **formal economic activities** involving the cultivation of urban land for sale to local markets. Urban market gardens or farms include for-profit farms operated by individuals, groups or cooperatives, or social enterprises that generate earned income to support programming for a non-profit organization. Social enterprises include farm programs that hire youth, education, refugees, adults with developmental disabilities, or individuals coming out of incarceration. Often, these

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social enterprises mix production with education, training, or social services.

Urban agriculture represents the lowest hanging fruit for food localization and the first point of entry for many residents to become active producers for the local food system. Initiatives that encourage backyard gardening, for example, allow residents to utilize assets already within their control to increase their own or their neighborhood's food supply. Active backyard gardening can expand the skill base of experienced growers, providing opportunities for backyard gardeners to transition to market gardening or initiate small businesses around local food processing.

Types of Urban Agriculture

Definitions for urban agriculture vary widely. For the purposes of this assessment, urban agriculture can be described as cultivation of food within city limits for consumption within the city. Forms of urban food production include some of the below examples.

- **Home Gardening/Urban Homesteading** involves individuals or families raising food on front yards, backyards, side yards, rooftops, window boxes, or indoors. Food in these situations is typically grown for self-consumption, to share, to donate, to sell, or some combination.

- **Community Gardens** provide common spaces where individuals, families, or groups operate an allotment of land to grow food for themselves to increase fresh food access, reduce monthly food budgets, spend time outdoors, engage in physical activity, and connect with neighbors. Community gardens are also commonly utilized to grow healthy food for donation to food pantries.

- **Market Gardens** produce food on urban land for sale to local markets, including farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture shares, restaurants and cafés, or corner grocers. Land for market gardening can be done on privately-owned property, leased parcels owned by others, institutional land (often as a part of a social or educational program), common land designated for agricultural purposes, or cultivation of vacant lots or land-bank properties.

- **Urban farms** are often used interchangeably with market gardens. Typically, the difference relates to scale. Urban farms tend to occupy greater acreage whereas market gardens tend to produce on one acre or less of land.

- **School or Learning Gardens** include school gardens connected to a formal curriculum, institutional gardens incorporated into a training or wellness program, or more informal learning spaces dedicated to demonstration and neighborhood education. Universities or colleges will often offer gardening space or even larger farmsteads (as is the case with Oberlin College and Case Western Reserve University). Food grown at learning gardens or farms can provide earned income to support the garden and its educational mission or it can be donated to community food pantries or meal programs. Institutional farms often grow food for use in campus dining services.

- **Aquaculture** represents one of the most efficient systems for producing protein in a limited amount of space. Aqua-ponic systems combine fish and hydroponic vegetable production, utilizing nutrient-rich fish emulsion as a fertilizer for plants. These systems are commonly developed in urban settings with limited space.

- **Rooftop Agriculture** supports intensive agricultural production on flat-roof spaces, often utilizing container gardens, hydroponic systems, greenhouse enclosures, or "stacked" or vertical systems of growing.

- **Urban Farm Districts** include clusters of multiple parcels of land to support more extensive farming, including livestock or commercial composting. Urban farm districts can include zoning more favorable to agricultural production and are often ideal in areas with extensive residential or commercial vacancy.

Benefits of Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture provides a number of amenities to city dwellers and also can help to add to the quality of life in a city. Increasingly, cities like Cleveland are moving to support urban agriculture through zoning, solidifying the long-term benefits of urban agriculture as an integral part of a "livable city". Earlier views of urban agriculture saw it as a productive temporary use of vacant land until "higher and better" uses could be identified. However, given the long time horizon for building a productive farm, having designated urban farming areas in cities can lead to some of the benefits listed below.

- **Bio-Diversity**- Unlike their rural counter-parts, urban farms frequently feature a diverse range of crops, often including a blend of annual and perennial fruits and vegetables and small livestock. This mix of plants supports greater diversity in diets and also provides additional habitat for a variety of birds, amphibians, reptiles, pollinating insects, and mammals.

- **Stormwater Mitigation**- Because of a large amount of impervious surfaces (such as asphalt or turf-lawn), most cities face challenges with stormwater run-off which contributes to flooding, erosion, and water pollution. A well-managed urban farm will have a higher percentage of organic matter in the soil which can absorb and store storm water, releasing it slowly into the environment. Stormwater can also be captured and stored to ease irrigation demands.

- **Public Health/Food Access**- Urban food production provides immediate access to healthy fruits and vegetables, especially in urban neighborhoods considered "food deserts" where residents lack convenient access to fruits and vegetables or

other whole foods.

- **Re-Use of Organic Waste**- Given their population density, cities generate a high volume of organic waste. Urban farms can convert organic waste streams into productive inputs to increase the urban food supply. A number of common organic wastes to boost fertility and soil organic matter content include: leaves, wood mulch, grass clippings, newspapers, cardboard, recycled paper, food waste, coffee grounds, or micro-brewery or distillery waste. These materials can be composted on urban farms or even layered into raised beds to quickly boost fertility on otherwise compacted and infertile urban land. In some applications, these wastes can be anaerobically digested to produce bio-gas which can be used for heating or cooking. They can also be processed at commercial composting facilities, although these are often located outside of cities or away from residential areas.

- **Social Fabric**- Urban agriculture creates stronger social networks between neighbors. Community gardens increase security, reduce litter, promote mixing between diverse age groups and ethnicities, and increase social activity within neighborhoods.

- **Local Economy**- Urban farms benefit the local economy by enabling individuals to save money by growing their own food, supplement income through food sales, or create employment opportunities. Urban agriculture can introduce skills of entrepreneurship that can lead people to starting their own businesses. Urban agriculture also reduces municipal expenditures on the maintenance of vacant properties, turning them from a liability that needs mowing and maintenance to an asset that generates value. Cleveland has even experimented with using goats or sheep to reduce weed pressure and graze vacant lots.

- **Rural Communities**- As described earlier, urban agriculture also benefits rural farmers. As urban agricultural activity increases, it improves markets for locally grown foods. City farmers have greater familiarity with neighborhoods and businesses and can collaborate with rural farmers to improve their ability to access markets. In Cleveland, a number of farmers markets that serve rural growers have been initiated by urban farmers who have the time and social connections in neighborhoods to get them going. Urban and rural farmers can also work together to create a larger mix of local food, with rural farmers able to produce certain products (like grazing livestock or squash) that require greater land area. Meanwhile, urban farms can specialize in greens, herbs, or small livestock more suitable to smaller and more intensive growing spaces.

The Gordon Square market in Cleveland was started by urban farmers.

Challenges of Urban Agriculture

Despite all of these benefits, urban agriculture still faces a number of barriers that are listed as a cautionary tale below.

- **Temporary Land-Use**- Many city planners or economic development offices look at agriculture as the lowest value land-use when compared to residential, commercial, or industrial uses. Urban farm sites fall victim to the "highest and best-use" mentality that simply evaluates properties on the basis of their potential tax base or employment impacts. This fails to account for the number of social and environmental amenities that urban farms provide. Urban agriculture should be considered a permanent land-use in appropriate areas that adds to the quality of life, health, and attractiveness of urban communities. In cities like Cleveland or Detroit, with a supply of commercial and residential land that presently exceeds demand, urban agriculture can be an effective response that meets a number of local needs.

- **Public Attitudes**- There is still a cultural perception that considers agriculture or farming as interfering with an orderly and efficient urban environment. For some urban residents, going back to farming seems almost uncivilized or impoverished. Fortunately, many of these perceptions are not founded and can be changed over time as urban agriculture adds to urban life in a number of positive ways.

- **Labor Intensity**- As a culture, we have relied on an increasingly large-scale, fossil-fuel intensive, mechanized system of agriculture. Urban agriculture requires continuous maintenance, physical labor, and time spent outdoors. Finding people willing to engage in physical labor and spend time outdoors can be a challenge, especially given that most urban activity takes place indoors. Encouraging urban agriculture as a part of fitness and healthy lifestyle can help to increase the time that people spend outdoors, connecting with nature and with each other.

- **Mis-Placed Expectations**- In a lot of cases, the idea of farming seems more appealing than actual act of farming. Farming requires a great deal of commitment and concentrated work. A number of urban farm sites have fallen into dis-repair or neglect as people have realized that they cannot commit to the amount of time required. Providing people with opportunities to learn more about urban farming or to have small spaces to gain practice can help to insure greater success. Cooperatives or collaboratives that include a larger number of individuals working together can also help to distribute labor and tasks, creating a mutual

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support system that works more efficiently than an individual working on their own. This also insures that these operations can continue, even if individuals drop out of them.

Overall, urban agriculture should be considered an essential component of sustainable urban design. A sustainable city will be walkable, safe, healthy, energy and resource efficient, and supportive of entrepreneurship, whether for individuals or groups. Incorporating urban agriculture into the long-term fabric of an urban center can provide a number of important amenities for the quality of life of a community. Neighborhoods with a vibrant urban agricultural system tend to be more visually pleasing, safer, and more socially connected. A vibrant local food scene can also make cities more enticing destinations for tourists, job-seekers, or for people looking for a place to settle.

Case Studies of Urban Agriculture Initiatives in Cleveland and Northeast Ohio

Stark County has an exciting opportunity to develop new directions for urban agriculture that build on such local assets as vacant land inventories, land-bank properties, and a county park system interested in exploring new approaches to green space utilization. Stark County can draw from aspects of the below models from Cleveland and other northeast Ohio communities.

Conservancy (Countryside Conservancy in Summit County): The Countryside Conservancy is an initiative of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. While not located within a municipal boundary, the Countryside Conservancy provides a good model for urban-edge agriculture. Over the past 10 years, the conservancy has renovated and made available 10 historic farmsteads within the Cuyahoga Valley. A highly selective application process matches individuals or families committed to an agricultural life with homes, land, and, in some cases, out buildings. Monthly rental rates are affordable (making it easier to establish a farm enterprise) and include both a house and surrounding land. Sites vary in acreage and support a variety of enterprises, including vegetable CSA's, fruit or berry operations, poultry, lamb, goats, vineyards, draft horses, and a restaurant market garden. Leases are offered for 50 years, providing the long-term commitment needed for someone to invest the time into building up a farm operation. All lease-holders are also required to participate in the educational mission of the park, offering tours, workshops, or family-oriented events. The conservancy provides a good model for utilizing public land (state/county/city parks) to reduce barriers to land access for entrepreneurial farmers. Clustering multiple small farm enterprises in a common area creates additional opportunities for mutual support, including co-marketing, equipment sharing, or serving as a destination for tourists that can help to drive business.

Farmer Incubator (Kinsman Neighborhood in Cleveland): The Urban Agriculture Innovation Zone in Cleveland's forgotten triangle features 26 acres of mostly contiguous land that was formerly residential. The zone features a Growing Power training farm that teaches composting, aquaculture (fish) production, and intensive urban agriculture production. A market gardener incubator space provides land and shared infrastructure for 13 urban farmers, each working with about 1/4 acre. The farmers have their own committee and operate as an informal cooperative. There are collaborations between farmers in co-marketing or complementary resources (i.e. chicken farms providing manure for compost). This kind of option is ideal for farmers that maybe lack experience or capital and want to build a farming practice on a small scale with lower risk. The Kinsman Farm provides the opportunity for farmers to stay long-term if they choose, graduate to larger operations, or move on if they decide urban farming is not for them. The Kinsman Farm also works with the Burten, Bell, and Carr Community Development Corporation to provide food to the Bridgeport cafe and mobile market. These food enterprises were developed by the CDC to make healthy food available in a major Cleveland food desert.

***Click here** for an article that explores the potential for urban agriculture in Great Lakes cities.*

Cooperative Model (Green City Growers, Kinsman neighborhood in Cleveland): The Green City Growers is an intensive, hydro-ponic greenhouse operation. With about 3.5 acres under greenhouse production, Green City Growers specializes in lettuce, herbs, and greens for sale to area institutions and restaurants, mostly in the University Circle area. The heated greenhouses are projected to provide year-round, full-time employment for up to 35 worker-owners, who are hired from low-income neighborhoods in the greater University Circle area. Green City Growers is a part of the Evergreen Cooperative, a cooperative development fund that also includes a solar installation company and a green laundry. Evergreen Cooperative was established to leverage the $1 billion+ annual spending by University Circle institutions to create opportunities for the low-income residents surrounding these institutions. Workers will build equity in the company over time and are able to participate in decision-making for the operation.

Entrepreneurial Training Model (Ohio State University Extension in Cleveland): The Cuyahoga County Market Garden training program began through a 2 year pilot program in 2006-07 developed by City Fresh and Ohio State University Cooperative Extension. Today, the program is housed at Ohio State University Extension and provides a 12 week series of courses that teach growing skills, marketing, and business management to encourage entrepreneurial urban farming initiatives. The workshop provides direct training to about 30 participants per year and dozens of urban farm operations have resulted from the class. Participants range from small-acreage backyard gardeners to large non-profit organizations or county agencies using urban agriculture as a part of a social service program. The City of Cleveland Department of Economic Development offers start-up funds up to $5,000 for individuals that have completed the class and wish to initiate an urban agriculture enterprise.

Shared-Use (Ohio City Farm in Cleveland): The Ohio City Farm was established in 2010 on a six acre parcel owned by the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA). Located to the east of the Lakeview Towers senior housing complex, the Ohio City Farm is leased to the Ohio City Near West Community Development Corporation. OCNW leveraged funds to initially develop the property, including fencing, initial

The Ohio City Farm overlooks downtown Cleveland and hosts five autonomous urban agriculture enterprises.

plowing and land preparation, irrigation, drainage, and limited structures. The Ohio City Farm is a model of a shared-use farm, utilized by five enterprises that each reflect a different aspect of urban agriculture. Refugee Response trains refugees to market garden. The nearby Great Lakes Brewery purchases a "business share" in a 1.5 acre site that grows food and hops for the brewery. The Cleveland Crops operates a 1 acre site that hires adults with developmental disabilities. A market garden is operated by Todd Alexander, a recent college graduate and sole proprietor of Central Roots market garden. The CMHA utilizes about 1 acre for a community garden site which provides nutritious food to residents and is also used for nutrition education. While there is some cooperation around marketing, events, or the distribution of brewery waste from Great Lakes, each entity operates as its own independent enterprise.

Vertically Integrated Social Enterprise (Cleveland Crops in Cuyahoga County): Cleveland Crops is an initiative of the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities (CCBDD). Cleveland Crops was established as an enterprise to provide employment and work-force training to adults with developmental disabilities. Operating 10 sites that comprise over 60 total acres of land, Cleveland Crops has also developed a commercial kitchen and food hub. The food hub provides a central collection point for all of the produce grown on its 10 farms. The produce is sorted, washed, sent to market, or processed. A licensed kitchen includes a blast chiller, baking facilities, a dehydrator, and co-packing facilities. This provides an opportunity for value-added processing. The kitchen is utilized by Cleveland Crops, but also available to other small food enterprises in the county. An agreement is being worked out with the Cleveland Food Bank to process and vacu-seal surplus produce for emergency food distribution. The kitchen, along with greenhouses on the farm, will make it possible to support year-round employment for upward of 100 adults with developmental disabilities and a staff of about 15-20 farm managers and coordinators. Cleveland Crops is an example of a vertically integrated urban enterprise because they maintain ownership and control over many aspects of the food value chain: production, processing, storage, distribution, and marketing. They also operate at a scale where the social enterprise can eventually cover much of its own operating expenses through the generation of its own revenue.

The Stanard Farm began as an abandoned school yard on Cleveland's east-side.

The Stanard Farm hires adults with developmental disabilities in Cuyahoga County.

Learning Enterprise (Jones Farm in Oberlin): Like the Countryside Conservancy, the George Jones Farm in Oberlin is an example of an urban-edge farm. Located almost entirely within the boundaries of the City of Oberlin, the Jones Farm is owned by Oberlin College and leased to the New Agrarian Center (NAC), a non-profit organization. The farm provides a 70 acre green buffer on the eastern edge of town. The NAC manages a learning farm that includes restored natural habitat, permaculture food forests, straw bale buildings, and renewable energy. The farm provides education and applied internships for high school students, Oberlin College and Lorain Community College students, and local residents. The farm's primary mission is education and it includes a mix of experimental systems, research, and teaching. The farm also generates much of its own revenue. In addition to farm operations, the property also provides a central hub for the City Fresh social enterprise which provides regional distribution of food shares from 20 participating farms to food deserts and urban neighborhoods in Cuyahoga and Lorain Counties.

Best Practices for Urban Agriculture

Based on a review of the above urban agriculture models, below are some best-practices that can be considered for urban farm development in Stark County.

- **Land-Tenure:** There is a lot of upfront cost associated with establishing a productive urban farm, including soil improvement, water lines, and facilities such as greenhouses, high tunnels, or produce storage. A clear understanding of land tenure will be needed before costly infrastructure investments for a working farm can be made. Ideally, access will be for at least 10 years. Additionally, a land trust or easement can be helpful in keeping the land preserved as agriculture and green space long-term. If possible, having land zoned as urban agriculture can be helpful, if such a designation is permitted in the municipality. If not, it is a designation that can be created if there is sufficient public support.

- **Water**: Water access is one of the most tricky details of urban agriculture. Municipal or rural water tap-ins can be costly and metering at residential rates can add up quickly. Additionally, some municipal restrictions make storm water collection difficult. Working with a water department to get preferential terms for ur-

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ban agriculture can include waiving tap fees, waiving metering costs for 5 years, or working out a flat fee or reduced rate for urban farm irrigation. Maximizing storm water collection and storage can help to reduce costs, mitigate storm water run-off, and prevent chlorinated water from affecting the soil. This can be done through rain barrels, water storage tanks, or retention ponds. Some greenhouses integrate water collection systems as well to capture roof run-off. Conserving water can also be accomplished by increasing soil organic matter content and porosity and utilizing drip irrigation systems incorporated with mulch.

- **Networks**: Strong and healthy collaborative networks are key to the successful development of an urban farm. The success of an urban farm as an enterprise requires a supportive market of individuals, businesses, or institutions; committed growers; and a leveraging of assets in the community (land, equipment, used greenhouses, etc.). Networks can be enhanced through regular networking events that create a welcoming space for interested individuals and a connecting space for people to learn or collaborate on projects. Urban centers are particularly well-suited for rapid urban agricultural development, given the density of community networks that exist. Linking urban agriculture to the social missions of area non-profits can also enhance their missions while increasing the available supply of local food.

Cleveland's market garden training program participants traveled to the Jones Farm in Oberlin for on-farm learning.

- **Market Garden Training**: A training program dedicated to growing skills and entrepreneurial development can help to cultivate anyone interested in farming: individuals, groups, social enterprises of non-profits, or businesses interested in growing their own food. A successful market garden training program will include both hands-on training in basic growing techniques in combination with the nuts and bolts of running a successful business: marketing, business planning, budgeting, and branding. The most effective market garden trainings will provide opportunities to apply for micro-enterprise funds. This enables people to more effectively bridge the skills they gain in the training with the capital needed to start their enterprise. Trainings can also be structured to encourage collaboration on projects (i.e. co-marketing, taking turns picking up food waste from restaurants, or creating an urban farmers' market space or multi-farm CSA).

The Jones Farm in Oberlin is on the edge of city limits and provides an ideal green buffer and learning farm for the community.

- **Food Security**: It is a challenge often times to match prices that farmers need to be viable with what low-income consumers can afford. Food security can be facilitated by improving market access for low-income customers, such as a graduated scale CSA payment option, acceptance of food stamps or Ohio Direction cards, or double-up bucks that provide subsidies for people using food assistance to afford more food. Also, focusing recruitment and market garden training in areas accessible to low-income residents can enable them to earn supplemental income through market gardening while developing skills and confidence useful for becoming future entrepreneurs or food industry workers.

- **Cultivate Social Enterprises**: Market farms can provide a great way to complement a variety of social programs, including youth, adults with developmental disabilities, drug/alcohol treatment, refugees, or mental health. These initiatives can generate income for non-profit organizations or for people working on the projects. It is not reasonable to expect these kinds of programs to cover all of the costs of running a non-profit organization, but they can provide an important source of "earned income" to complement other forms of non-profit fundraising. The skills developed through market gardening can also serve to build confidence and life-skills for their participants.

- **Collective Impact:** Urban farming tends to attract a diverse array of spirited individuals coming from many different backgrounds and points of view. While everyone will not agree, urban farmers can coordinate their efforts to secure larger funding pools or influence municipal or county policies to support entre-

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preneurial urban agriculture. The best initiatives will be those in which people "check their egos at the door" and work cooperatively with others, whether it involves learning, bulk purchasing of inputs (to save money), or appearing at policy discussions at City Hall.

- **Ancillary Business Impacts:** The growth of urban agriculture can help to spur the development of supporting businesses, including greenhouse design and installation, building construction, distribution, or food processing. Some of these businesses can be conducted by urban farmers themselves to provide more diversified sources of income. The development of a Local Food Hub in Stark County can also provide an opportunity for urban farmers to engage in value-added processing opportunities.

Potential Urban Farm Projects in Stark County:

At the July 9th forum on the Future of Food Security in Stark County, urban agriculture projects were one of the most popular areas of future work identified by participants. Some of the projects that could support urban agriculture include:

- identifying wasted space in the community that could be utilized for urban farming;
- inventorying community gardens to determine which support food pantries, which need volunteers, and which have the capacity to teach others;
- researching existing urban/suburban farm programs in Stark County or other parts of Ohio;
- finding avenues for urban growers to partner with agencies in urban areas;
- developing a business model to launch an urban farm in a food desert in Stark County;
- creating a network and forum to support people who are interested in starting a garden and need knowledge and/or resources to get started;
- formation of a conglomerate of urban farm producers- a clearing house from which to exchange ideas/opportunities customers, etc.;
- starting a master urban farmer or market garden training course;
- getting community gardens established in Massillon and working with city leaders to get land set-aside for agriculture; and
- trying to match gardens to food pantries in the county

Core Capacities for Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture in Stark County can be cultivated through development of the three core capacities identified earlier in this report: networking, community investment, and evaluation.

Network Cultivation: The most important network to cultivate is potential urban farm entrepreneurs who are interested in utilizing urban land to generate income. These entrepreneurs might be drawn from backyard gardeners, community gardeners, social service agencies, recipients of food assistance, restaurant owners or chefs, youth programs, schools, or churches. Income can be generated to support an individual or family, a group, a business, or earned income for a non-profit organization. Perhaps the most important network to begin with is community gardeners- people that have expertise growing food on city lots. Community gardeners need to be more connected to each other for sharing knowledge and supporting broader urban agriculture initiatives in the county. These community gardeners might likely be some of the first potential entrepreneurs too, as they already have the needed growing skills.

The other network to organize would include potential outlets for food grown on urban farms. This includes farmers' markets, restaurants, cafes, corner stores, or social groups. Outreach to restaurants can begin with a collection of food waste for composting to improve soils and then proceed to local purchasing.

An urban agriculture learning network can be developed to include people that might have skills or abilities that they would be willing to teach to others. Expertise might be drawn from extension services, local universities, established backyard or community gardeners, farmers, or food entrepreneurs. A market garden training can consist of a series of presentations by different individuals that provide a mix of growing skills, marketing, and business planning. Having a mix of extension education and hands-on learning from successful practitioners can provide a good blend of evidence-based knowledge and hands-on expertise.

As networks strengthen with urban farmers, educators, and supporting individuals or businesses, there will be more capacity to work with municipal or county government leaders. This will be helpful for developing an enabling environment that includes access to vacant or land-bank land, water access, urban agriculture zoning, permissions for urban livestock, and provisions for operation of road stands or farmers' markets in neighborhoods.

Community Investment: As networks for urban farming grow, they will create fertile ground for community investment. Some financial investments that will be important to support urban farming efforts include grant funds to support network coordinators, education and training programs for urban market gardeners, and funds to support the development of an urban learning farm. The learning farm can generate some of its own income and be used as a connecting node for people that want to learn how to farm successfully in the city.

Creating a micro-enterprise fund to support urban farming will be a useful tool for giving people a leg-up in starting their farm enterprise. This could be something developed through economic development or public health (eating healthy) initiatives. Initially, this fund might be supported through philanthropic investment or municipal support. Individuals or organizations can access these funds after completing market garden training. Recipients of funds should commit to sharing their knowledge with others through tours, workshops, or multi-media.

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Other forms of capital that need to be cultivated to support a vibrant urban agriculture system include: natural capital (food waste collection for composting, vacant land, park land, under-utilized farms, local seed stock), built capital (greenhouses, water irrigation systems, water collection tanks, produce sorting and storage, and equipment), social capital (volunteerism, mutual aid support, time banks), intellectual capital (research or experimentation to improve urban farm techniques), individual capital (more skilled urban growers, peer-to-peer mentoring), and political capital (public funding, policies to support urban agriculture).

The development of a food hub and commercial kitchen can also be an important asset to support urban agriculture. As food safety regulations require more strict practices for food handling and storage, a food hub can provide offer safe post-harvest handling of food.

Calibration: Some of the following indicators can be utilized to track progress in urban agriculture:

- acreage of land under cultivation,
- total yield and monetary value of yield,
- number of urban farm enterprises in Stark County,
- amount of recovered food waste used to improve topsoil,
- square footage of greenhouse production space,
- number of heated greenhouse facilities,
- number of local sources of seed stock,
- number of workshops and networking events,
- number of urban agriculture operations in identified food deserts, and
- volume of food donated for emergency food relief.

Laying the Groundwork for Urban Agriculture:

The following next steps listed below can be considered to lay the ground work for improving and expanding urban agriculture in Stark County.

1) Organize an Urban Agriculture Network- There are a number of community garden initiatives, many concentrated in Canton. However, there does not exist a network that brings these initiatives together for sharing resources or knowledge or for initiating collaborative projects. The first step in moving toward more widespread urban agriculture activity in Stark County and the development of an urban farm can begin by reaching out and forming an active network among those already engaged in urban food production. These individuals will likely be among the first to sign-up for a market garden or urban farming training. They can also provide a good resource for teaching hands-on lessons as a part of an urban farm training. Other groups that can be invited to join an urban agriculture network might include master gardeners or area farmers.

2) Develop Urban Market Farming Curriculum- Using the urban market garden training curriculum in Cuyahoga County as a springboard, an urban farming curriculum can be developed to meet unique needs and opportunities in Stark County. The curriculum should be organized in a series of weeks and include modules that cover horticulture, education, marketing, and business planning and development. The market garden training needs a coordinator, but the actual lessons can be taught by different individuals each week. Teachers can be drawn from content experts with extension or local universities, experienced urban gardeners with strong growing skills, local farmers in rural areas that can also host tours, and individuals that represent potential markets, including farmers' markets, restaurants, or grocers. It is important that participants hear directly from those that might be purchasing the food that they plan to grow.

3) Organize Public Events that Raise Interest and Enthusiasm about Urban Agriculture- These events might include tours of successful urban or rural farms, film screenings, book clubs and discussion groups, or guest speakers from other cities in Northeast Ohio. It would also be helpful to organize highly visible workshops that can bring advanced urban growing skills to Stark County, including workshops on SPIN (Small Plot Intensive), bio-intensive agriculture, permaculture, or Growing Power out of Milwaukee. These public events can provide a space to recruit individuals or groups to participate in trainings and initiate market farming enterprises.

4) Create Mutual Aid Working Groups- This can grow out of the urban gardener network and involves the formation of a volunteer network where people help each other with farm projects while gaining skills and forming relationships in the process. Some examples might include establishing a vermi-compost system, building a greenhouse, or installing raised beds. The idea is build and leverage social capital. A group of people can accomplish in a few hours what it might take one individual several days to do on their own. There can be a reciprocal aspect to this as well. For example, in order to host an event at your garden site, you have to first participate in two other events at other sites. Skill shares can also be organized as a part of this process. These involve hands-on learning activities where people teach other people a skill that they have mastered or a technique that they have innovated.

5) Create a Micro-Enterprise Fund to Support Entrepreneurial Agriculture- Making small amounts of capital available to aspiring urban market gardeners can help to jump-start a variety of urban farm enterprises. The funding pool provides an important complement to a market garden training program. Participants can develop business plans as a part of the market garden training and then submit those plans to a group, agency, or non-profit organization that administers the fund. Funds can then be allocated on a competitive basis. Recipients of funds have to agree to participate in learning events that might include case-studies, videos, hands-on workshops, or mentoring. The fund can make resources available to individuals, groups, small businesses, or non-profit organizations.

6) Create an Urban Land Inventory- Work with the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation (Land Bank) and Stark Parks to inventory potential vacant properties with-

in or near urban centers that might be utilized for urban or urban-edge farming. These sites can be matched with urban market gardeners looking for land or can be actively developed as urban farming sites through partnering groups, organizations, or agencies.

7) Create an Urban Farm Incubator- Some of the challenges that entrepreneurial urban farmers face include access to land, equipment, productive soil, water, and skills. An urban farm incubator helps to reduce these barriers to entry while reducing the risk for people wanting to start in agriculture. The incubator can be designed as a system of inter-locking farm enterprises or as an extension of a community gardening concept where individuals receive small plots of land for an annual fee to establish a market farm enterprise.

8) Develop Favorable Land-Use Planning and Zoning- The development of an urban farm zoning category can help to preserve urban farmland as permanent amenities in cities. Because farming involves long-term investments of time, resources, and energy, providing zoning protection helps to insure that plots can remain agricultural. This also acknowledges that urban farming provides a number of benefits to urban life, including green space, stormwater absorption, food access, and community connections. Another zoning category that can be developed is an Urban Agriculture District. This can make sense in situations where there are multiple parcels or larger parcels that are not surrounded by dense commercial or residential use. These districts can allow for livestock, composting operations, and concentrate infrastructure development supportive of urban farming. Working with rural land conservancies or land trusts can also be helpful for preserving urban edge farmland that can provide a green buffer for urban centers and an accessible source of local food for urban populations.

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APPENDICES

Stark County Food Security Pre-Assessment

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Network Maps and Survey Responses

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PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY

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STARK COUNTY FOOD SECURITY PRE-ASSESEMENT

Draft
April 11, 2014

Prepared by Brad Masi
with Jack Ricchiutto, June Holley, and Leslie Schaller

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FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY
Executive Summary:

The US Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as a "measure of a lack of regular access to enough food for an active healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods". In Stark County, 15.3% of the population (about 57,730 people) and 23.8% of children (20,650) are considered "food insecure".

Interviews with individuals active in food security efforts in Stark County indicate a significant increase in clients seeking services at food security agencies, including food pantries, hot meal programs, backpack programs, or homeless shelters. Many note a rise in "situational poverty"- poverty brought on by sudden changes in life circumstances, including loss of a job, health challenges, or familial changes. They describe a "new face of poverty" that has emerged over the past 5 years as the working poor or low-wage workers who are working, but not able to make ends meet.

Growing a culture of stronger collaboration emerged as the most commonly sited need for improving the capacity for addressing food security. Stark County possesses a diverse range of cultures and landscapes, from the manufacturing legacy of urban Canton to the Amish farm-fields in the southwestern part of the county. Yet, collaboration remains under-utilized as a strategy for improving food security outcomes. Several interviewees noted a chronic lack of collaboration, particularly around:

- GEOGRAPHY: an unwillingness to bridge across or between communities;
- RESOURCES: a sense of competition over limited resources sometimes creates a territorial landscape; and
- NETWORK KNOWLEDGE: a lack of awareness of what others in the hunger and food space are doing limits potential collaborations or productive "niche" development.

The ability for individuals and organizations to collaborate more effectively was listed as both the greatest worry and strongest area of hope for future food security efforts among interviewees.

Based on interviews and a review of larger challenges, some of the on-going threats to food security include:

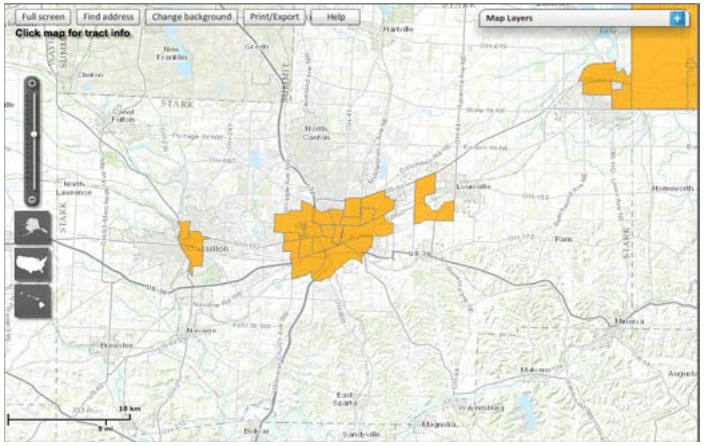
- Collaboration: need to find better ways to share resources, best-practices, common efforts;
- Economic Development: need for jobs, local economy as precursor for addressing long-term food security;
- Seasonal Challenges: limited growing season effects local food supply, ability for people to access services in winter;
- Public Benefits: pending cuts and tenuous future for public benefits, such as food stamps, will exacerbate hunger challenges;
- Urban/Rural Divide: strong urban and rural resources, but lack of social or economic linking;
- Rural Food Insecurity: food insecurity also affects rural population where transportation or access to services can be even more challenged; and
- Climate Change: climate change will have an increasing affect on agricultural production and food prices

FOOD DESERTS AND STARK COUNTY:

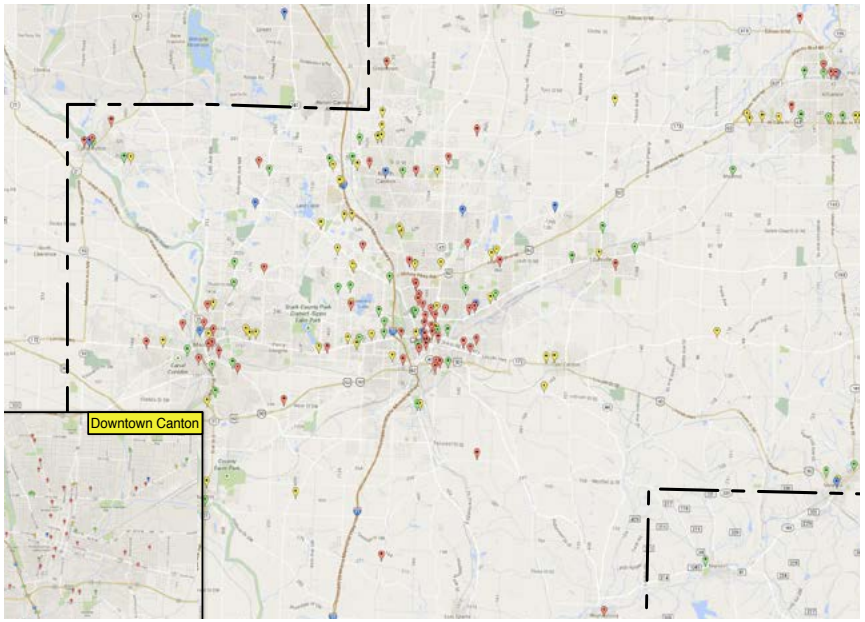
Hunger represents the first and most immediate threat to food security. An array of organizations have developed capacities for emergency food relief- insuring that individuals can access food in situations where they might otherwise face hunger. The next level of food security concerns the ability to reliably and affordably access healthy foods within a community outside of emergency food relief. The US Department of Agriculture developed a "food desert" inventory which indicates areas in the country where residents have "limited access to supermarkets, super stores, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food" needed for a healthy diet. Their analysis includes an assessment of distance to

grocery store outlets, overall poverty, and access to vehicles.

The map below includes an analysis of Stark County, focusing on households that are either .5 miles (urban) or 10 miles (rural) to a supermarket or large grocery store. According to this map, eastern Massillon, a significant portion of Canton, and most of Alliance are all considered “food deserts” where residents will face a more difficult time accessing healthy foods.



It is demonstrated that low-income neighborhoods with access to a supermarket or larger grocery store tend to have healthier diets due to a greater selection of produce or whole foods. However, the food desert analysis by the USDA does not include smaller grocers or corner stores that might offer more healthy foods nor does it include farmers’ markets. The following map below shows a mapping of retail food outlets in Stark County. For the most part, the distribution of food outlets corroborates with the food desert mapping.



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Based on USDA food desert maps and an assessment of retail food outlets, areas that were noted as particularly at-risk for poor diets related to a lack of healthy food access include:

a) Northern Alliance;
b) Canton (including the Cleveland avenue corridor north of downtown, the Mahoning corridor toward Louisville, and the southern part of the city);
c) Canal Fulton;
d) North Canton corridor going south from Maple Street to 55th Street NW; and
e) East Sparta and other incorporated rural areas lacking accessible food outlets.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD IN STARK COUNTY:

Stark County possesses a diverse geography that supports a wide-range of agricultural operations, from larger-scale commodity farm operations to smaller-scale vegetable farms, vineyards, or orchards. Despite being significantly urbanized, Stark is listed as the 10th most productive agricultural county in Ohio, based on the total value of products sold. It ranks in the top 10 counties for vegetables, fruits, milk/dairy, other animal products, and poultry and eggs.

Despite this overall productivity, the stability of agriculture in Stark County has been mixed over the past 20 years (1987-2007):

- Farmland Acreage Declining: Stark County has lost about 10% of its farmland acreage over the past 20 years, compared to a loss of 7% for the state of Ohio as a whole. This indicates overall pressure on the acreage devoted to agricultural production in the county, most likely due to urbanization, sprawl, and instability of mid-sized farms.
- Stability in Number of Farmers: Stark County lost only 0.5% of its farmers over the past twenty years, compared to a loss of 4.3% of farmers statewide. Following 10 years of decline, there has been a recent overall trend of growth in the number of farmers. Stark County shows higher than normal stability in its base of farmers.
- Average Farm Size Shrinking: The average size of farms in Stark County is about 60% smaller than the average farm in the state of Ohio. The average farm size has declined over the past decade, indicating a trend toward smaller acreage farms.
- Vegetable Acres in Decline: Over the past 10 years, Stark has declined from a peak of 4% of vegetable production in Ohio to 2.5%. Vegetable production still remains a significant part of Stark County's agricultural portfolio.
- Growth Only in Smallest and Largest Farms: Stark County farms indicate an overall growth of smaller acreage farms (below 50 acres) and large farms (1,000+ acres) with overall decline of farms in the middle (50-999 acres).
- Farm as Primary Occupation Higher in Stark County: Stark County has more farmers claiming agriculture as their primary occupation (47%) than in Ohio (43%), Only 40% of Stark county farmers work more than 200 days off-the farm compared to 57% of farmers statewide. This shows higher than normal stability in the number of farmers that farm as their primary livelihood.

MARKET FOR FOOD PRODUCTS:

In terms of food spending, Stark County residents annually purchased about $925 million in food. Of this, $531 million is spent on food at home and $394 million on food eaten out. Canton represents the highest concentration of spending on food, spending $79 million annually. The combined spending impact of Stark County's major urban centers is $414 million overall. Fruits and vegetables alone represent a potential market of $94 million annually in Stark County and dairy is $54 million. This corresponds to two sectors where Stark County is highly productive.

Overall, we can conclude that agriculture in Stark County demonstrates more stability than agriculture in Ohio as a whole in terms of its overall growth in the number of farmers and the number of farmers who claim agriculture as their primary occupation. Stark County mirrors national trends showing high growth in smaller and larger acreage farms with decline of mid-acreage farms. Stark County has a good base for vegetable crops, but has shown a notable decline in the acreage devoted to such production. With an overall annual output of $134 million in agricultural production, there are opportunities to expand markets for farmers by connecting to urban centers.

FOOD SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS IN STARK COUNTY:

An analysis of the 10 organizations involved with food security in Stark County reveals a diverse and complementary range of services, including regional emergency food distribution, coordination of county food agencies, food shelters, hot meal programs, perishable food recovery, nutrition education, and urban gardening.

When considering a broader effort to address the long-term sources of food insecurity, we saw a need for development in improving healthy food access thru retail outlets, community education and empowerment around food security, and community economic development in the local food economy. Food security organizations work mostly within the hunger/emergency food space today, with a couple of organizations working more broadly in community education and community economic development. We saw little activity in the healthy food access space.

Rather than expecting hunger organizations themselves to develop these additional capacities, we recommend stronger and more lateral network collaborations with organizations or businesses that have capacities to address healthy food access, community education, and economic development in the local food system. We also saw opportunities for food relief organizations to “bundle services” within their own locations, providing clients with an opportunity to access both food and the tools for improvement (health care, economic opportunity, social linking, etc.).

The Alliance Community Pantry demonstrated one example of this level of collaboration, where four churches combined smaller shelters to create a combined shelter that has longer operating hours and connects with more services in the surrounding community. OSU Extension has the most capacity for both community education and community development, given its ability to reach both urban and rural audiences. The Salvation Army facility in Massillon shows an important bundling of services where clients can access hot meals, food for home, and services such as medical care. There is a need overall for greater coordination between more regionally based organizations (such as the Akron-Canton Food Bank) and county or municipal-based organizations.

SYSTEM INTERVENTIONS:

Based on interviews with individuals involved with food security, the following key challenges and interventions were identified. In some areas, organizations have demonstrated innovation and in other areas, organizations identified interventions that could take place given existing resources:

a) **Cultivating a Culture of Collaboration** will be key to overcoming territoriality and mis-trust among food and hunger organizations. Key interventions include an orientation to relationship building and treatment of the whole person in food relief and collaboration around service provision.
b) The need to **improve access to healthy food** remains a key challenge in Stark County in both the emergency food relief and retail territory. Key interventions include healthier foods in emergency food relief, increase in local food or healthy food outlets, expanded nutrition education,

and transportation for improved access to food (public transit, mobile markets, distribution, etc.).

c) The **integration of rural and urban solutions** to hunger is needed with key interventions focused on assessing overall rural access to food security efforts and increased connections between area farmers and hunger relief efforts.
d) Raising **public awareness of food and hunger issues** involves both increasing general community knowledge of the challenges and providing skills or resources to keep people from experiencing hunger. Key interventions include leveraging university resources, collaboration around outreach on hunger awareness, working with health care providers, and targeting outreach to youth and schools.
e) Increasing the **local food production capacity** was identified as something that could both increase the availability of healthy foods for emergency food relief while also providing opportunities for potential job or enterprise creation through local food systems development. Interventions include improving the capacity for urban garden production, encouraging entrepreneurial urban market gardens, supporting the growth of local farms in rural areas, and developing shared infrastructure to expand local food distribution, storage, and processing.

FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING FUTURE FOOD SECURITY:

Based on the system interventions, we can identified the following key areas of action:

a) improving capacity for collaboration,
b) Improving efficiency of food distribution,
c) bridging the urban-rural divide,
d) increasing capacity for local food systems growth, and
e) addressing the economic roots of food insecurity.

We see the above five interventions as a part of an inter-connected series of activities that will enable the community to better address the food security challenges it faces through long-term and more durable solutions.

We recommend development of a comprehensive approach that leverages local and healthy foods in Stark County that has the long-term goal of everybody being able to eat an adequate, affordable, accessible, and healthy diet. We see three broader areas of activity to grow the overall capacity for the county to mitigate food insecurity, including:

a) EATING- insuring that people who choose to do so can access healthy foods regardless of social or economic status;
b) LEARNING- people have access to the tools to improve their self-reliance for food and nutrition; and
c) GROWING- the county improves its capacity to grow, process, distribute, prepare, and re-purpose food within county boundaries.

The five clusters of action that we recommend (based on preliminary data) to achieve this goal include:

a) improving the mix of healthy food in emergency food distribution,
b) reducing urban and rural food deserts through improved retail access or urban food production,
c) education around self reliance in food (including cooking, growing, sharing, and selling),
d) expanding linkages between local growers and mostly urban consumers and businesses, and
e) Targeting workforce and enterprise development in local food systems.

NEXT STEPS:

We recommend the following activities to begin the process of implementing a more comprehensive framework for food security in Stark County:

1) Network Collaboration 101: organize at least two community networking events around a screening and discussion of the film “Network Theory” which demonstrates the power of collaborative network development for the impoverished region of southeastern Ohio.
2) Network Mapping: a mapping and analysis of network connections in Stark County among food and hunger organizations or businesses to determine the current shape of network collaborations and avenues for its improvement.
3) Community Forum: share the results of a community survey and network mapping process to inform the development of a strategic vision for growth in capacity
4) Investment Framework: looking at a social investment framework that bridges emergency food relief and community development while encouraging collaborations between funding agencies.

FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY:

Food insecurity "refers to the USDA's measure of a lack of regular access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods."[1] The most common expression of food insecurity involves individuals or families who simply would face hunger if there were no food pantries or hot meals providing meals. However, food insecurity goes beyond immediate hunger and can describe neighborhoods where grocery stores have shuttered options and a dearth of healthy food confront residents. When considering food insecurity, we want to consider the overall ability to access nutritionally adequate food, whether through a food pantry or at a retail operation. Either way, communities that face high rates of poverty tend to also face the greatest levels of food insecurity.

In Northeast Ohio, about 1 in 6 people live in poverty and 1 in 7 depend upon SNAP benefits (food stamps) to supplement their income. The Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank (AC-RFB) estimates that about 14.6% of the population in their 8 county service area is considered "food insecure", including about 223,020 individuals. For children, these impacts are even more intense. The child food insecurity rate is estimated to be around 22.1% or 80,040 insecure children. For Stark County, 15.3% of the county population (57,730 people) and 23.8% (20,650 children) are considered food insecure.

According to the AC-RFB, "in Stark County, 34% of the food insecure individuals live above 185% of the federal poverty level, meaning that they are not eligible for assistance through most federal programs. These individuals must rely on emergency food assistance from the Foodbank and its network."[2] According to their statistics, 17% of the food insecure population receives reduced price school meals or WIC (130%-185% of poverty level) and 49% rely on SNAP, Free school meals, CSFP (Seniors).[3] The federal poverty guideline for a family or household with 4 persons is $23,050 in 2012 dollars.

Can Stark County End Hunger?

This question was posed to several individuals active in food security efforts in Stark County. There seemed to be a general consensus that it is not realistic to think that hunger could be ended at all. For example, in Canton, about 1 in every 3 people live at or below the poverty level, a condition that affects children in even greater proportions. Over the past five years, there has been a significant increase in "situational poverty"- poverty that affects people due to unexpected circumstances in their lives, including diverse, the death of a spouse, health challenges, or job loss. In the past, "generational poverty" was the more significant challenge, mostly concerning individuals born into poverty who have a low likelihood of escaping poverty. Increasingly today, the "new faces of poverty" include working class Americans or low-wage workers that cannot make ends meet without additional assistance.

According to JoAnn Carpenter with Refuge for Hope, "While the newspapers seem to report that the economy is getting better, many people in the community are not experiencing improvements. Unless something dramatic happens, homelessness, hunger, and poverty will only continue to get worse."

Hunger in Stark County, like many communities across America, will continue to be exacerbated by such factors as unemployment, under-employment, decreases in federal assistance for food stamps, and poor economic conditions. Thomas Perks with the Salvation Army in Massillon notes "we are bracing for a huge increase in need. We expect to see a major problem as more people have to evaluate their situation and explore options for meeting immediate short-falls in their lives." Perks also noted an increase in the number of low-income, transient families who have come to the area. "Many of these individuals are young parents out on their own, some are homeless. Some are there without the support of

1 Fact Sheet provided by the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank for 2012.

2 Fact Sheet on Stark County provided by the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank for 2012.

3 Fact Sheet on Stark County provided by the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank for 2012.

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their families, not only financially, but emotionally. Others are moving back in with their parents and living in multi-generational homes."

Rather than framing efforts as "ending hunger", it might make sense to focus on "alleviating hunger". Hunger organizations provide an important infrastructure that enables individuals to stretch their limited incomes in cases when they might have to choose between health care, housing, or utilities. Given current economic circumstances, it is unrealistic to expect hunger to go away any time soon. But it's impacts can be reduced.

Amy Weisbrod with the Stark County Hunger Task Force echoes these concerns: "The bigger issue in fighting hunger of having an impact would be finding well-paying jobs and more jobs available for clients that tend to seek food assistance." While the unemployment numbers in Stark County have gone down, Weisbrod notes that "the number of people coming into the pantry has only continued to increase". Many new jobs are lower paying jobs than what was previously available and minimum wage does not enable people to cover their most basic living expenses. While the unemployment rate has dropped to about 7.1% (down from 13.2% in 2010), 15% of the residents of Stark County confront hunger challenges.

The whole food and hunger system seems to be struggling with how to keep up with how rapidly needs seem to be escalating. For Ted Watko, who directs Meals on Wheels for Stark and Wayne counties, the solution to the increasing need facing all organizations working in the food security space "is going to require much tighter collaboration between organizations."

Stark County and Growing a Culture of Collaboration:

Stark County features a diverse range of landscapes, including some of the most productive agricultural land in the State of Ohio along with a number of mid-sized urban centers. About 42% of the Stark County population resides in larger urban centers such as Canton, Massilon, Canal Fulton, and Alliance. Around these cities, there has been significant growth of more dispersed suburban populations over the past 30 years. In spite of a nearly balanced mix of intensive agricultural production and urban populations, there are few economic or social connections between urban and rural communities.

Overall, one person interviewed observed that while Stark County has a number of larger cities, a "village mentality" still pervades much of the county. Instead of working more systemically, people tend to not look far beyond their own immediate communities. Several people noted that there has been a history of cultural divides, mostly based on geography. An invisible line tends to keep residents from Massilon and Canton in mutual dis-regard of each other. Others noted that a territorial mentality also tends to affect many organizations as well. Organizations focused on their own survival often look at other organizations working in the food and hunger space as a threat to their survival. Much of this mentality is driven by a sense of competition for an increasingly shrinking pie of resources.

For many of the individuals interviewed, the biggest worry that they have for the future of food and hunger efforts in Stark County is whether or not people will be able to collaborate. One individual noted that "getting people to realize the advantages of collaborating is difficult due to turf wars and territorial survival. The best hope will come from the extent to which people can master collaboration".

One of the first steps in fostering greater collaboration is for all organizations involved in hunger work to realize that hunger is a community issue and one that must be faced together. One person noted that "there are negative perceptions and judgements about people that struggle with hunger. Some people end up there as a result of bad choices, but many others are there due to circumstances largely out of their control. It must be visible in the community and the community has an obligation to address it."

Another person noted their general concern about people making decisions and operating without a strong sense of connection to others. "There is a lot of struggle with finances and a sense of competition between different organizations engaged in hunger relief efforts that may limit collaboration."

Despite these challenges, there are increasing moves toward tightening community collaboration. For example, JoAnn Carpenter with the Refuge of Hope played a major role in pulling together a hot meal collaborative to coordinate scheduling and share ideas. For Carpenter, "Networking helps to overcome barriers between organizations, which can often be closed and tight. Our hot meal collaborative helped to find ways to partner and blend with the efforts of others to create shared space." For Carpenter, faith plays an important part of this collaborative work, as she notes, "it is not about kingdom building, but building 'God's kingdom'… we need to get competitiveness out of the whole process and figure out ways to collaborate. There is a lot of need and people need to figure out ways that everyone can chip in to do the things that need to be done."

Individuals interviewed from Ohio State University Extension noted the importance of not just fostering collaboration among hunger organizations, but encouraging new collaborations with organizations not directly involved with hunger efforts. For example, Heather Neikirk with extension noted that there are "several partnerships focusing on local universities. In the fall, Walsh University is hosting a 'hunger dialogues' event and they are also working on promoting local food systems development through a regional farm-to-school conference." Nutrition educators involved with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), a federal program housed at OSU Extension, noted their increasing involvement with urban gardening initiatives. For example, the Live Well initiative of Stark County has focused on developing community gardens on vacant lots in "urban food deserts" in places like Canton. EFNEP educators provide classes in nutrition that utilize vegetables grown in the garden, OSU Master Gardeners provide training and technical assistance, and the gardens overall become a leverage point for strengthening low-income neighborhoods. David Crawford, Director of OSU Extension in Stark County, noted the importance of creating these urban spaces "that serve multiple audiences. We seem to be missing those community hubs where people can go to get resources and connect with others."

Faith Barbato with Community Harvest shares the sense of urgency around creating tighter collaboration. She notes that "hope means that things seem to come together when they really need to due to a very strong network of foundations, organizations, and caring community members. For Ted Watko, "all of the pieces are there to make it work. It is just a matter of figuring out how to network more effectively." Looking ahead to the future, it is clear that there are significant assets to work with in Stark County. The challenge will be finding new ways to bridge those assets. Creating a stronger culture of collaboration between organizations involved with food and hunger presents an important step.

GAINING LEVERAGE ON FOOD SECURITY:

Based on interviews, a review of hunger work in Stark County, and a consideration of broader changes, we can make some of the following conclusions about the challenges that food security efforts will be facing:

1) Economic Development- It is clear that jobs and a stagnant local economy is the most significant factor affecting food security today. Even people that have jobs are struggling to make ends meet. Living wages and positive economic development will be important long-term factors in the reduction in food insecurity.

2) Seasonal Challenges- Winter tends to be a particularly difficult challenge for people to get food assistance. Most food shelters note a significant drop in January and February for services and the winter of 2013-14 was particularly brutal. Consideration must be given to insuring that people do not fall through the cracks in the winter.

3) Public Benefits- There are a number of signs that public benefits are declining. The reduction in SNAP (food stamp) benefits and the reduction of unemployment insurance are increasing the vulnerability of many individuals and placing increasing pressure on food and hunger organizations.

4) Urban and Rural Divide- Stark County has a rich and productive agricultural base, but there seem to be few connections between rural and urban communities. A more engaged agricultural community can provide opportunities for increasing the available of healthy local foods in

emergency food distribution. They can also help to create new economic opportunities in the growth, processing, and distribution of local foods.

5) Rural Food Insecurity- Consideration must be given also to discrepancies between urban and rural communities in terms of access to food pantries. Most food pantries and hot meal programs are concentrated in urban centers. People are often drawn to urban centers from rural areas where the services are. There is a risk that rural food insecurity might go unnoticed.

6) Climate Change- Climate change is a complex scientific phenomenon, but we do know that the probabilities of areas experiencing more severe climate events is increasing, whether it is prolonged drought, flooding, or more extreme storms. Climate can have a local effect, potentially reducing the productivity of local farms. Conversely, increasing the local capacity for food production can be an important hedge against extreme events elsewhere, such as the prolonged drought in California.

7) Fostering Collaboration- It is clear that the greatest potential for improving the capacity to address food insecurity in Stark County lies in growing a greater attitude for collaboration among people involved with food hunger work. Additionally, a more thorough inventory needs to be conducted to determine other assets in the community that can play an important supporting role in food and hunger efforts, including health care organizations (5 in Stark County), colleges and universities (5 in Stark County), local farms and businesses, and community development agencies.

FOOD DESERT ANALYSIS OF STARK COUNTY

According to the USDA, "limited access to supermarkets, super centers, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food may make it harder for some Americans to eat a healthy diet." The USDA developed a national food desert inventory that considers a variety of factors that measure food store access for individuals and neighborhoods. Measures of access include:

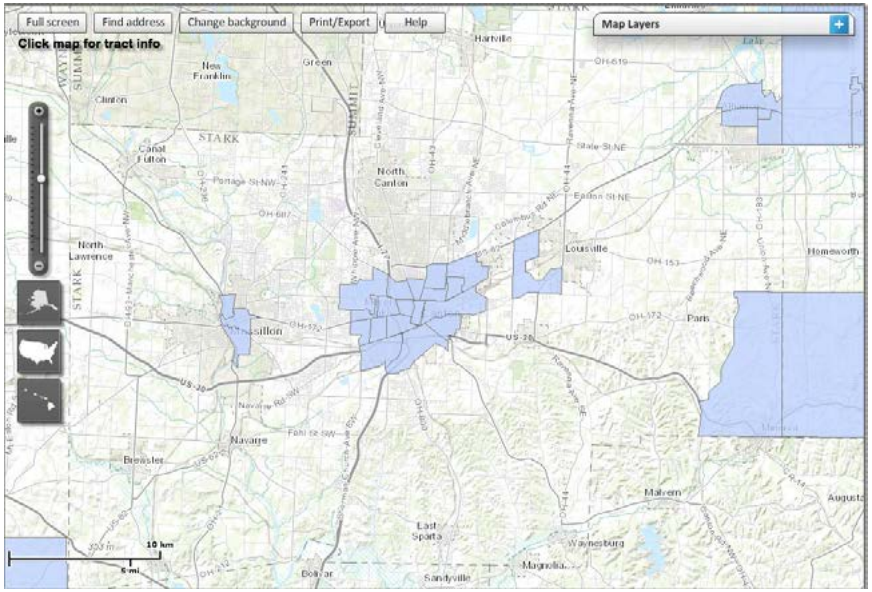
A) how accessible are sources of healthy food, indicated by the distance to stores and the number of stores in a given area. The Food Access Research Atlas defines low access as "being far from a supermarket, super center, or large grocery store. A census tract is considered to have ow access if a significant number or share of individuals in the tract is far from a supermarket.

B) how do individual or family resources affect overall accessibility, including household income or vehicle access.

C) what are neighborhood-level resources that can affect access, including average income or access to public transportation. The Department of Treasury defines a low-income neighborhood as an area where the tract's poverty rate is 20% or greater.

With this information, the accompanying maps show the areas of Stark County that can be considered "food deserts" where residents will have a difficult time achieving a healthy diet, even if they desire to do so.

The first map shows areas in light blue that are considered low-income census tracts. This includes tracts with a poverty rate of 20% or more or a median family income that is less than 80% of the State-wide or metropolitan area median family income. According to this map most of Canton, Massillon, and Alliance are considered low-income.



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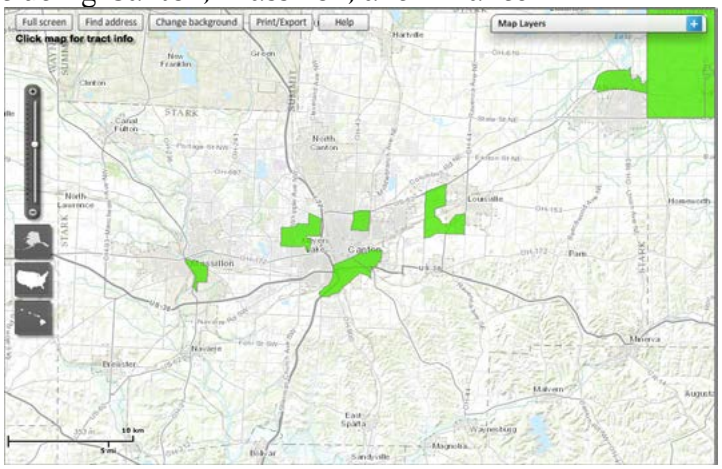
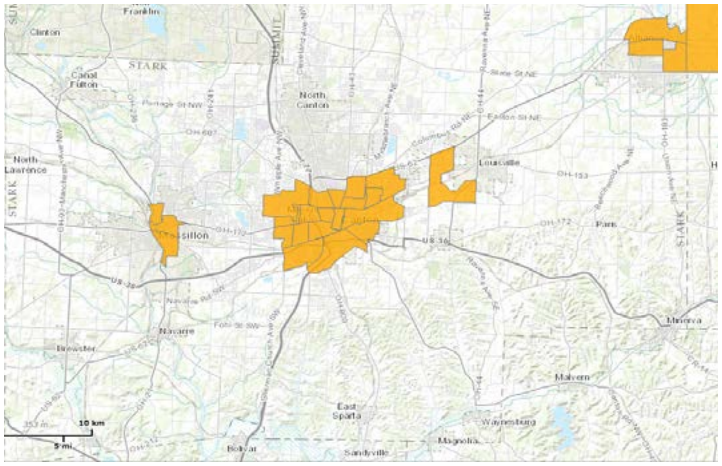
The second map shows areas in green that are considered food deserts. This measurement is based on the original food desert measure that identifies low-income census tracts with at least 500 people or 33% of the population living more than 1 mile (in urban areas) or more than 10 miles (in rural areas) from the nearest supermarket, super center or large grocery store. Stores meet the definition of a supermarket or large grocery store if they report $2 million or more in annual sales. These stores also the major food departments typically encountered in supermarkets: fresh produce, fresh meats, fresh dairy, dried goods, and frozen foods. Based on this map, the food deserts encountered in Stark County are located in most of the major urban centers, including Canton, Massillon, and Alliance.



The third map places a more rigorous standard of measurement by identifying census tracts in orange with at least 500 people or 33% of the population living more than .5 miles (for urban areas) or 10 miles (for rural areas) from the nearest supermarket or large grocery store. The shorter measurement more effectively takes into account the walkability to food outlets, particularly for households or individuals that do not own or have limited access to a vehicle. In urban design terms, an outlet would be considered optimal at a .25 mile distance, but still walkable within .5 miles of a residence. Given this standard, all of Canton, Massillon, and Massillon would be considered food deserts.



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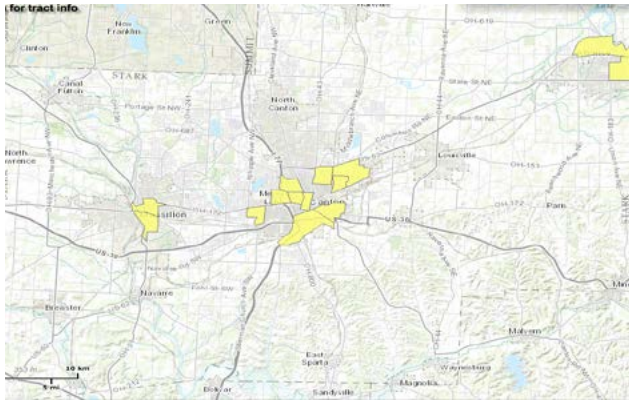
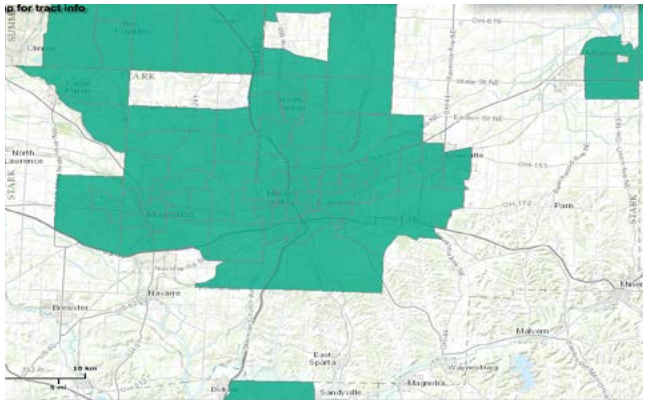
The fourth map incorporates vehicle access into the food desert calculation. This map shows areas in yellow where at least 100 households are located more than .5 miles from a supermarket or large grocery store AND do not own a vehicle. These are the areas that show the most significant potential for low access to healthy foods. For Stark County, this includes most of Canton, parts of Massillon, and Alliance.



The fifth map identifies areas in dark green that have low access to supermarkets or large grocery stores with at least 500 people or 33% of the population living further than .5 miles from a supermarket or large grocery store. By this measure, most of the north-central part of Stark County and all of Alliance are considered low-access areas. This map looks at overall access regardless of levels of income or vehicle ownership.



The combined map layers census tracts at three levels. In light green appear the tracts where a significant number of residents live further than 1 mile from a supermarket, the orange shows areas where residents live further than .5 miles from a supermarket, the dark green shows areas where access and vehicle are low, and the light green areas show where access is low. This map shows that a significant percentage of the population cannot easily access a supermarket or a large grocery store.

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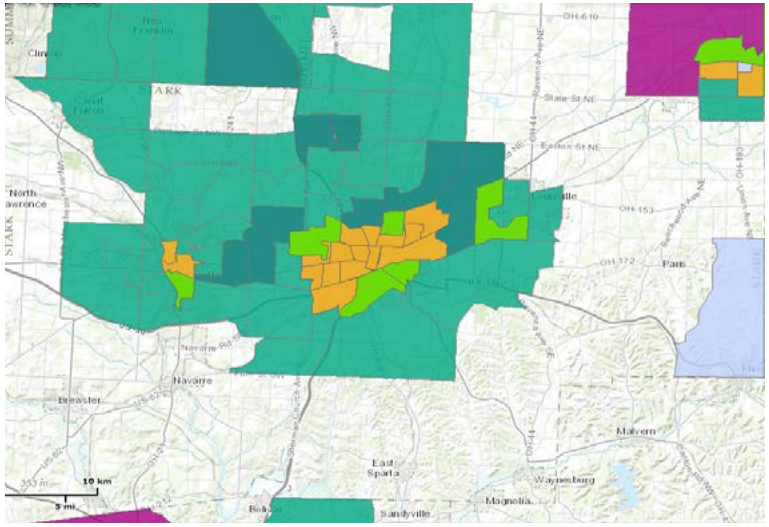

Caveats about Food Desert Mapping:

The food desert maps provide a base-line understanding of food access challenges in Stark County. However, there are a few limitations to this approach, including the lack of inclusion for smaller grocers that might carry healthier food options or the unique challenges of food access in rural areas.

Exclusion of Small Grocers:

First, the maps only include supermarkets or larger grocery stores that have a volume of at least $2 million in sales each year. The maps do not include smaller grocery stores, corner stores, convenience stores, farmers' markets, or other food outlets. Neighborhood assessments would need to be conducted to determine whether or not smaller grocers, corner stores, or convenience stores carry an adequate supply of healthy, nutritiously dense foods. In general, smaller grocers and corner stores in urban neighborhoods tend to feature mostly highly processed foods. Supermarkets or grocers exceeding 40,000 square feet have more shelf space and a greater likelihood of carrying a selection of healthier food options.

From the stand-point of improving healthy food access in Stark County, the focus on super markets or Super Centers assumes that the only solution to improving healthy food access is to develop more larger super markets throughout the county. Another set of solutions can focus on shifting consumer demand through nutrition education and encouraging corner stores or smaller grocers to carry a mix of healthier foods and for more farmers' markets to be located in urban neighborhoods.

Mix of Fast Food Outlets:

Another important factor to consider is the "food balance" ratio. This considers the relative distance that residents have to travel to get to a supermarket versus a fast food outlet. For the City of Cleveland, residents have to travel 4.5 times further distance to reach a supermarket or larger grocer than a fast-food establishment. As a result, inner-city and low-income residents are at particular risk of diet-related health challenges. A GIS inventory of supermarkets and fast food outlets in Stark County could provide additional information about the vulnerabilities of different populations to health conditions related to the over-consumption of fast-foods.

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Rural Food Access**:**

Second, the maps reveal that most of the food deserts are located in the main urban centers of Stark County (Canton, Massillon, and Alliance). However, this does not account for rural areas where access might remain a challenge. A study conducted by the O.S.U.'S College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Studies titled "Food Access Gaps in Rural Ohio" explores some of the unique challenges to accessing healthy foods in rural areas.

The report identifies three common barriers to food access:

A) **Physical Barriers-** 24% of rural Ohio households live outside of a 10 minute drive to any retail grocer;

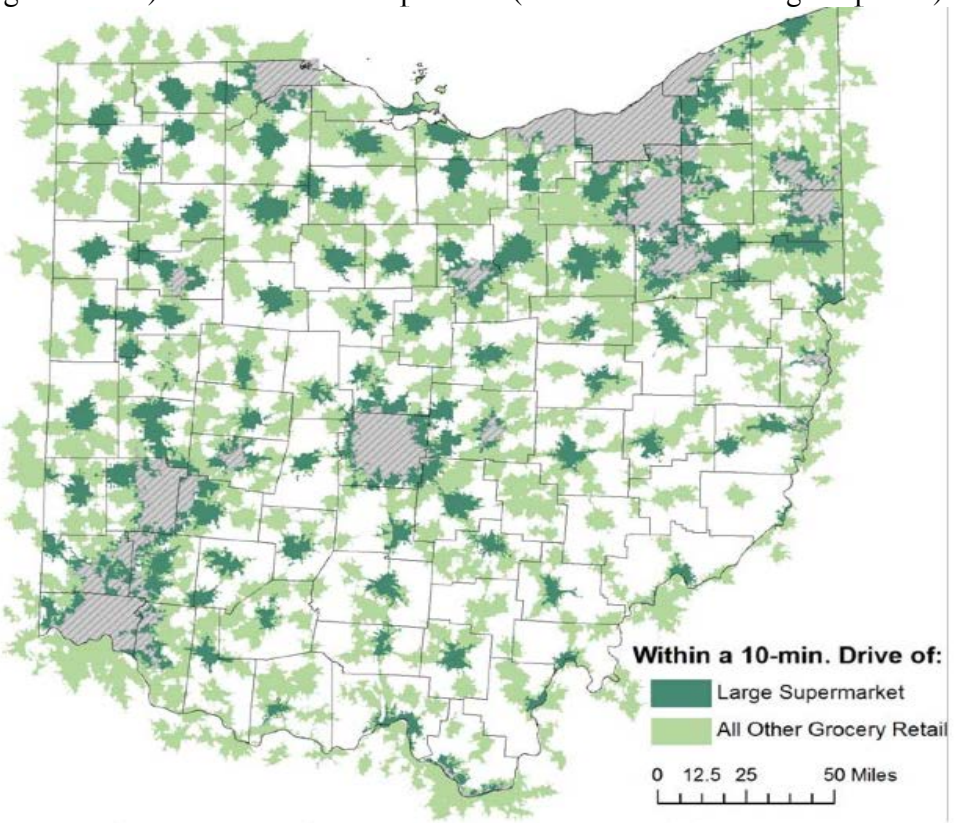
B) **Economic Barriers-** rural areas living outside of a 10 minute drive to a retail grocer tend to have lower incomes than those living within a 10 minute drive;

C) **Health Barriers-** 25% of rural Ohio households live within a 10 minute drive to a fast food establishment and not a larger supermarket. Consequently, these households face the same nutritional challenges as urban centers with high concentrations of fast food outlets.

The report concludes that the lack of supermarkets (with a larger range of foods) and a lack of competition (which can lead to higher prices) are two issues confronting many rural areas. Consequently, the report estimates that about 24% (or 475,095 rural Ohio households) do not live within a 10 minute drive of a retail grocery store of any size. Of these households, an estimated 5% (or 75,223 rural Ohio households) do not own a car. That leaves about 3.8% of rural Ohioans not living within driving distance of a food outlet in addition to not having access to a vehicle.

The accompanying map shows the distribution of large supermarkets and all other grocery stores located within 1 mile of rural households throughout Ohio. Urban areas are excluded from the study area. The areas in white are what could be considered "rural food deserts" where there is not close access to either supermarkets or other grocery retail. Stark County is circled on the map. There are stretches in northeastern Stark County (north of Alliance), southern Stark County (around East Sparta), and northwest Stark County that should be looked at as areas where healthy food access may be a challenge.

While the bulk of healthy food access challenges in Stark County affect urban populations, rural areas should not be overlooked for their own unique vulnerabilities.



Map 6. Geography of Large Supermarket Competition

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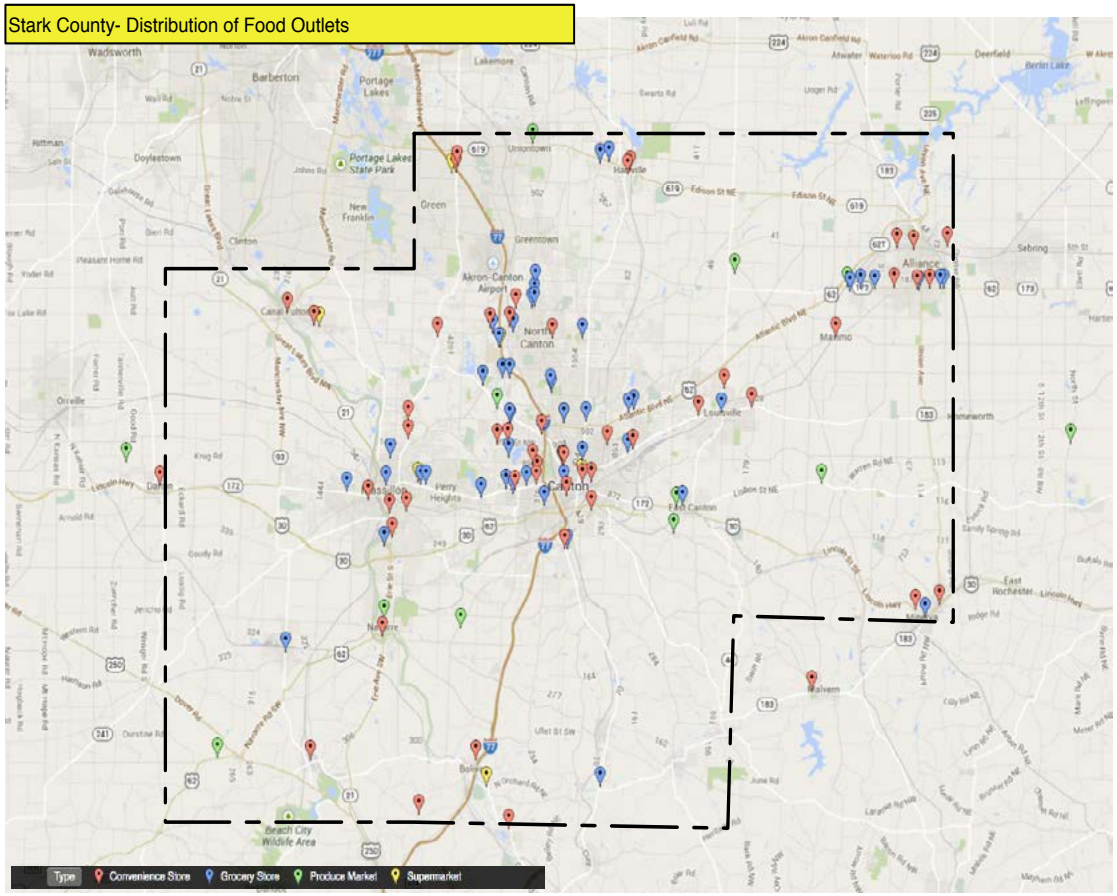
Grocery Store Mapping:

The accompanying map shows the distribution of retail food outlets throughout Stark County. The orange markers indicate convenience stores, the blue markers represent smaller grocery stores, the green markets represent produce markets or road-side stands, and the yellow markets show supermarkets or super-centers.

This more granular distribution of retail food outlets provides more detail than the food desert analysis in the earlier section. Overall, it does corroborate with the results of the food desert mapping with areas around north Canton, southern Canton, and east of Canton toward Louisville. The area around central downtown Alliance shows a high concentration of convenience stores. The area north of Alliance indicates an area with few retail food outlets, other than convenience stores. The portion of eastern Massillon (east of State Route 21) was also identified as a food desert. The grocery store map indicates that there is a concentration of convenience stores, but no grocers or supermarkets in this area.

Overall, there seems to be correspondence between the food desert maps and the more granular distribution of retail food outlets in Stark County. In addressing long-term food security, it will be important to use this information to assess a) the accessibility of food pantries or hot meal programs in these areas and b) the improvement of healthy food access in these areas. Strategies of improvement can be developed at the neighborhood scale and can include a range of options, such as low-income farmers' markets, food-share programs, connecting corner stores or small grocers with healthy food sources, or development of urban gardens.



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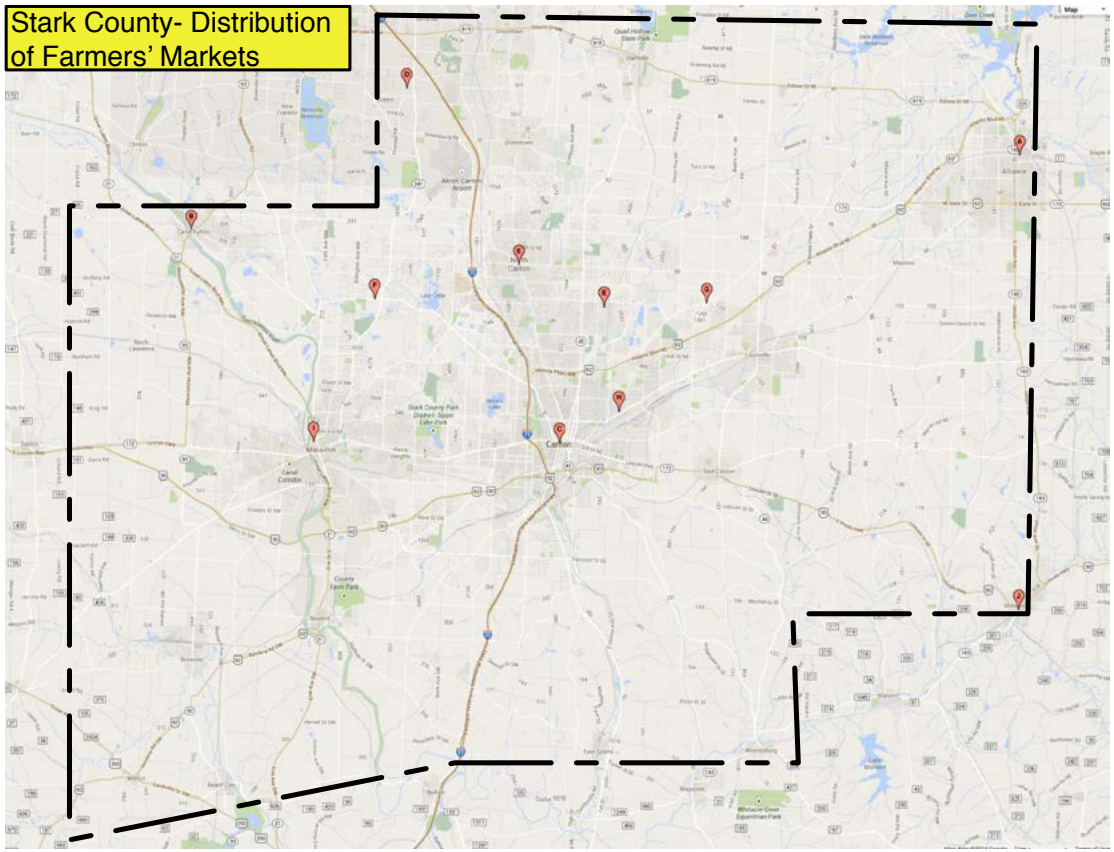
Farmers' Market Distribution:

At present, Stark County has 11 operating farmers' markets. Most of these markets have formed within the last 5 years, representing a high degree of growth in retail access to locally grown foods across the county.

During interviews with stakeholders, several indicated that while the growth of farmers' markets is encouraging, most of them tend to be frequented by higher income customers. Only two of the 11 (18%) farmers' markets were listed in the directory of markets participating in Ohio's Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program. This enables clients to purchase locally grown foods with their food stamp benefits, increasing the accessibility of these markets to limited-income residents.

The two markets accepting EBT's are the Alliance Farmers' Market and the Mahoning Corridor farmers' market in Canton. The Mahoning Corridor farmers' market is a part of a larger revitalization effort in the northeastern part of Canton, occurring along a 3 mile stretch of Mahoning Road. Led by the J.R. Coleman Community Renovation Corporation, the project focuses on a "gateway corridor" to downtown Canton's Main Street. An area that has struggled with poverty and business retention, the condition of properties along the corridor has experienced deterioration. The project focuses on comprehensive capital improvements, including pedestrian access, business development, street-scape improvements, and improved job availability.

Farmers' markets present an ideal way to facilitate the availability of healthy, locally grown foods throughout Stark County. They cultivate op-



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portunities for rural farmers, provide an outlet for enterprising urban gardens, offer a space for education, and create an important community gathering spot. As "pop-up" retail spaces, they require a low investment in physical capital and can be organized in ways that stimulate businesses surrounding them.

One of the challenges with farmers' markets in Stark County is the limited window of their operations. Most markets operate about 15 weeks and some 20 weeks throughout the year. This means that the markets are only open less than 50% of the entire year. To the north of Stark County, a number of markets in Cuyahoga County and Summit County offer year-round operations. While food options are more limited in the winter, year-round markets provide opportunities for farmers to support themselves throughout the year. The development of high-tunnels or processing foods at peak harvest through canning, freezing, dehydration, or fermentation can provide opportunities for more year-round local food provision. These activities also expand entrepreneurial opportunities in the local food space.

For farmers' markets to become an effective tool for improving local food access, particularly among low-income residents, four things need to happen:

A) Farmers' markets or other local food distribution efforts (I.e. Community-supported agriculture share programs) should be located in food desert areas.

B) Supporting food, cooking, and nutrition education workshops or training should be developed in conjunction with existing or future farmers' markets.

C) An expansion of markets that are equipped to accept EBT will be necessary to insuring wide access to healthy, locally grown foods.

D) The markets can serve as a retail outlet for urban market gardens. These small enterprises can ideally be developed in areas with high inventories of vacant land.

E) Steps need to be taken to identify options for extending the operational season of farmers' markets, with the end-goal of developing year-round markets.

Composite Map:

The accompanying map shows the distribution of all food outlets in Stark County, including Food Pantry or Meal programs, farmers' markets, convenience stores, and grocery stores. A review of clustering of food outlets by type reveals areas where there is a particularly high need for healthy food access. The types of outlets can provide some guide as to how to increase the availability of healthy foods, whether through emergency food relief, urban farm development, retail food outlet development, or the placement of farmers' markets. Ideally food development in these areas will provide opportunities for low-income residents to be employed.

The following areas show a particular need for attention:

A) Northern Alliance- There is a high concentration of convenience stores and food shelters in this area. The presence of the Alliance Farmers' Market in this neighborhood and its capacity to accept EBT for food purchases is a positive sign.

B) Canton- There are a number of pockets in Canton that lack outlets for healthy foods. The Cleveland Avenue corridor in north of downtown Canton (from 5th Street NW to 30th Street NW) consists entirely of food pantries with a small cluster of convenience stores on there western part of West 12th Avenue. Attention should also be devoted along the Mahoning Corridor east of Harrisburg Road and West of Lousiville. The area south of State Route 30 and west of Chernshaw Park has lacks food outlets of any kind. .

C) Canal Fulton- Downtown Canal Fulton has a concentration of food shelters and a convenience store. The presence of the farmers' market in this area offers a potential outlet, but records indicate that they do not accept EBT payments.

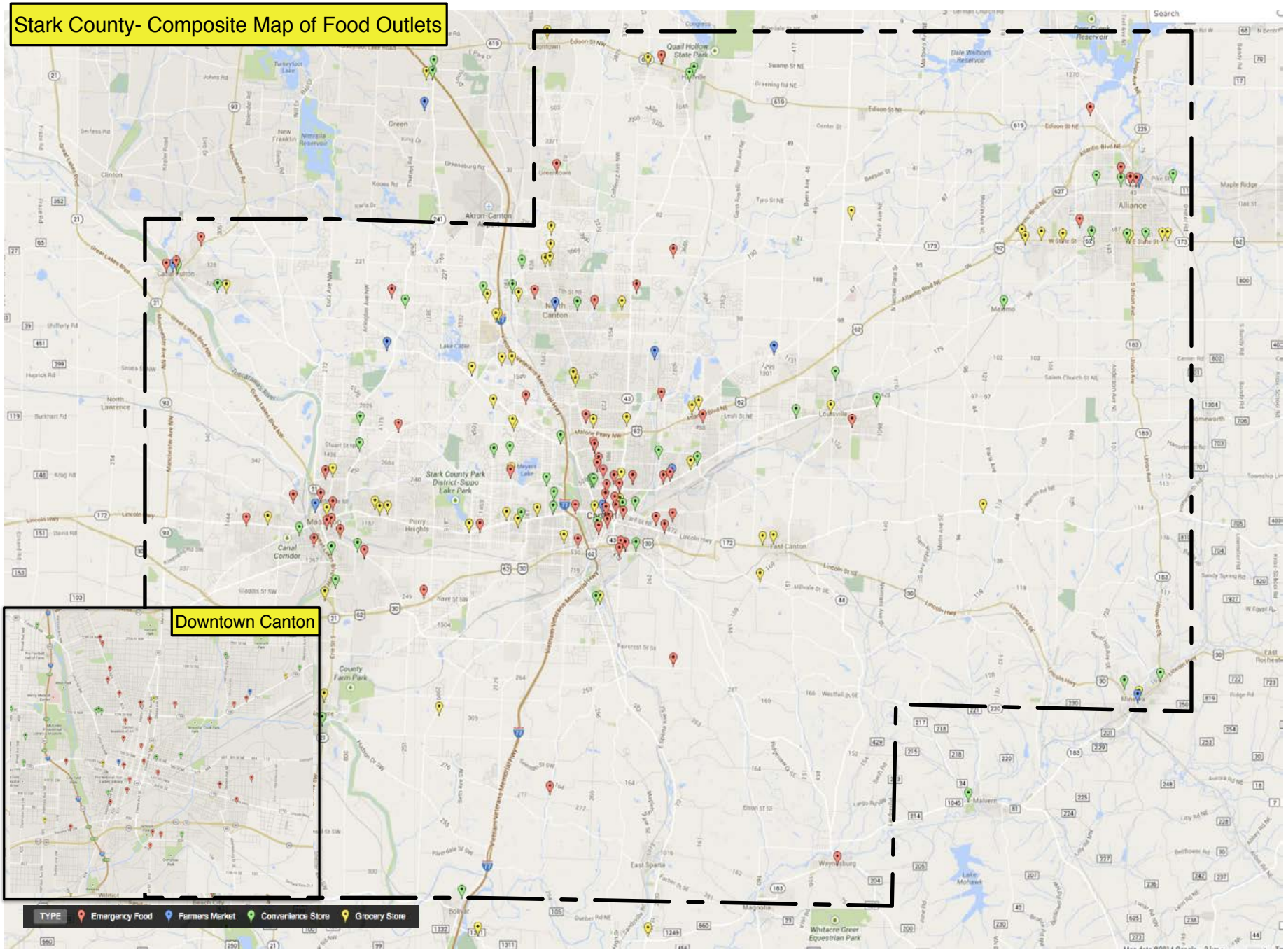
D) Massillon- the southwest part of Massillon (west of the Tuscarawas River) also has a concentration of food pantries and convenience

stores. There Farmers' Market in downtown Massillon also is located around a concentration of food pantries, but records do not indicate that they accept EBT payments.

E) North Canton- The Main Street corridor going south from Maple Street to 55th Street Northwest also has a dearth of food outlets of any kind.

F) East Sparta- The area around East Sparta lacks food outlets of any kind.

H) Unincorporated Areas- A lack of food outlets of any type are noticeable in the southern, southeastern (outside of Minerva), and northeastern (outside of Alliance) areas as well as the stretch between Massillon and Canal Fulton. It is unlikely that population densities would support food outlets. Consideration should be given to areas within these rural stretches, particularly where poverty occurs at higher rates.



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Agriculture in Stark County:

Overview:

According to Heather Neikirk with Ohio State University Extension, Stark County includes a diverse landscape driven almost equally between geography and cultural history. The Eastern Part of Stark County is geographically and culturally considered a part of northern Appalachia and mostly rural. The northeastern part of the county is endowed with muck soils along former swamps. These soils have high percentages of organic matter and support a number of orchards and vegetable crops. Given the labor intensive nature of fruit and vegetable production, the Marlboro-Lexington area has larger migrant populations which provide critical farm labor support. The southeastern portion of the county (including Manerva, Paris, and Washington) is the least densely developed portion of the county. In addition to a large presence of larger-scale commodity agriculture, this part of the county is also seeing significant oil and gas development activity. The south western part of Stark County around Sugar Creek features a predominantly Amish population. Dairy and beef cattle production is spread throughout the county, making up a substantial part of Stark County's agricultural production. There is also growing interest in the expansion of dairy goat milk production as well.

A lot of multi-generational agribusiness operations are still in place in Stark County too, including Case Farms, Sugardale Meats, Bruster Dairy, Manerva Dairy, and Beery Cheese. While traditional agriculture remains strong, Stark County is also witnessing growth in a number of new local food enterprises. For example, the number of wineries and vineyards have grown to about 7 in recent years. There is also a growth of interest in "local food systems" within some of the traditional urban cores. Urban gardening on vacant lots is on the rise as are a number of restaurants or small businesses specializing in artisan foods. In North Canton, the recently formed "Locavore Project" is researching the potential re-purposing of the recently abandoned Hoover Plant as a site for urban agriculture and local food production.

STARK COUNTY OVERALL STATE RANKINGS				
ITEM	QUANTITY ($1K)	STATE RANK	%	Tier
Vegetables, melons, sweet/potatoes	6,222	3	3%	Top 10%
Poultry and eggs	57,126	3	3%	Top 10%
Other crops and hay	2,828	3	3%	Top 10%
Milk and other dairy products from cows	32,137	5	6%	Top 10%
Other animals/products	1,024	9	10%	Top 10%
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	1,386	10	11%	Top 20%
Cut Christmas Tree, woody crops	136	14	16%	Top 20%
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	4,935	18	20%	Top 20%
Aquaculture	38	25	28%	Top 30%
Cattle and Calves	5,560	31	35%	Top 40%
Horse, ponies, mules, burrow, donkeys	268	33	38%	Top 40%
Sheep, goats, and their products	127	38	43%	Top 50%
Hogs and pigs	2,119	43	49%	Top 50%
Grains, Oil Seeds, Dry beans, peas	21,762	49	56%	Top 60%
TOTAL VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SOLD	**135,668**	**33**	**38%**	**Top 40%**

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Overall Agricultural Production in Stark County:

Despite being a fairly urbanized county, Stark County has some of the most productive agricultural land in the state of Ohio. The total value of agricultural crops sold in 2007 (2012 agriculture census figures were incomplete as of this printing) was $135,671,000. This puts Stark County as #10 out of 88 counties in Ohio for overall agricultural crop sales. With the exception of grains, oil seeds, dry beans and peas, Stark County is in the top 50th percentile of agricultural production categories measured in Ohio.

As the accompanying chart shows, Stark County is in the top 10th percentile in five categories of production. Stark County ranks #3 in Ohio for "other crops and hay" and poultry and egg production. It ranks #5 in vegetables, melons, and potatoes and milk and other dairy products from cows. It ranks #9 for "other animals and animal products".

Stark County is in the top 20th percentile in three categories of agricultural production. It ranks #10 in the production of fruits, tree nuts, and berries. It ranks #14 for cut Christmas trees and woody crops. It is #18 for nursery, greenhouse, and floriculture/sod production.

It ranks #25 for aquaculture production, #31 for cattle and calves, #33 for horse, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys, and it ranks #38 for sheep goats, and related products. It is ranked #43 for hogs and pigs.

There is no reported production of tobacco or cotton/cottonseed crops in Stark County.

These state rankings indicate a diversified base of agriculture. The presence of several urban centers in Stark County indicate that there are a number of opportunities to better connect rural farm enterprises with urban residents. In the area of emergency food relief, there are a number of opportunities to increase the presence of produce and meats from farmers in the county. More farmers can be encouraged to participate in gleaning programs, donations, or sales of seconds at discounted rates through Ohio's Agriculture Clearance program.

It should be noted that Stark County showed some significant changes from 2007 to 2012. While data was not complete for all categories, Stark County jumped from #38 to #14 in the production of sheep and goats and their products. It rose from #3 to #2 in Ohio for "Other animals/products" (including rabbits, honey, animal products like manure, etc.), from #10 to #9 in the production of fruits, tree nuts, and berries. It also rose from #18 to #17 in Nursery, greenhouse, and floriculture. Stark county dropped from #5 to #10 in milk and other dairy products and dropped from #3 to #9 in poultry and eggs. Other data was not available to make a full comparison, so only 2007 figures are complete.

Trends in Agriculture in Stark County:

The census of agriculture takes place every five years, providing an opportunity to track trends over time. A review of these trends provide a snapshot of the state of agricultural production in Stark County. For the purposes of this study, we consider the following indicators:

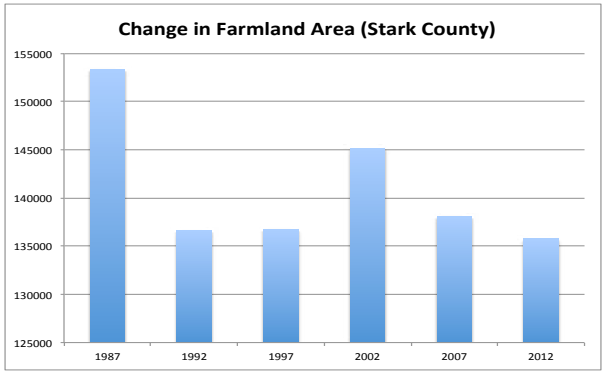
- change in the number of farms and farmland acreage
- Change in the average size of farms
- Change in acres devoted to agricultural production
- Distribution of farms by scale of operation
- Distribution of farms by volume of sales
- Proportions of farmers with off-farm income

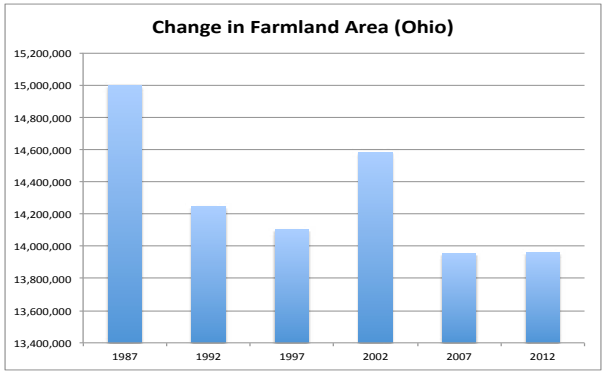
These figures were normalized to enable a comparison between Stark County and the overall trends in agriculture for the state of Ohio.

Change in Farms and Farmland:

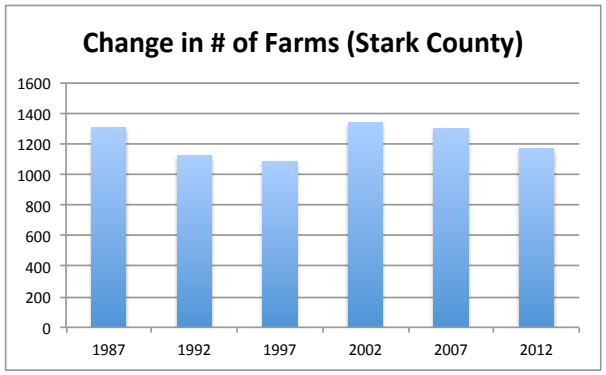
Stark County mostly mirrored the trends for the state of Ohio regarding changes in farmland acreage and the number of farms. From 1987

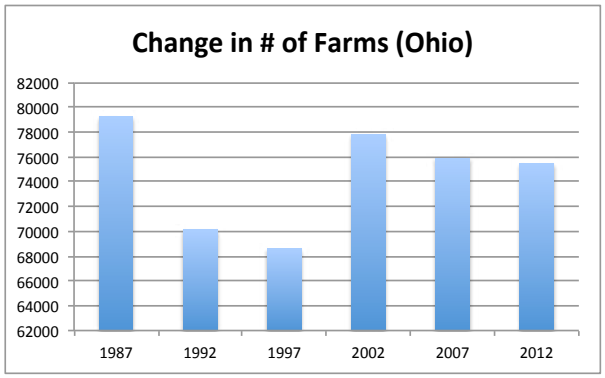
to 1992, the acreage of land in farming dropped from 153,302 acres to 136,612 acres, representing an 11% drop in the acreage of farmland. By comparison, the state of Ohio experienced a 5% drop in land area during the same time period. The heavy urban presence and sprawling patterns of land-use during this time likely contributed to an overall loss in farmland acreage that was higher than the state as a whole. From 1992 to 1997, the amount of farmland acreage rose slightly in Stark County whereas it dropped by an additional 1% in the state of Ohio. From 1997 to 2002, both Stark County and the state of Ohio experienced a significant increase in the land area devoted to agriculture, rising by 6% in Stark County and by 3% in Ohio. The period of 2002 to 2007 saw another drop in land area- a loss of 5% for Stark County and a loss of 2% for Ohio. It is not clear what led to a spike in acreage for agriculture from 1997 to 2002. In 2012, Stark County showed a continuing decline in the acreage of land devoted to agriculture whereas farmland acreage in the state of Ohio increased slightly.





The number of farmers changes at different rates than changes in farmland acreage. For example, from 1987 to 1992, Stark County dropped from 1,306 farmers to 1,120 farmers, representing a 14% drop in the number of farmers (a loss of 186 farmers). For the State of Ohio, there was a net loss of 9,166 farms in the same time period, or a 12% drop. The loss of farm enterprises outpaced the loss of farmland acreage, indicating that farmers tended to increase acreage of production. The loss in the number of farmers slowed from 1992-1997 with Stark County losing 3% and the state of Ohio 2% during this time. From 1997 to 2002, there was a significant increase in the number of farms, rising by 23% in Stark County and 13% in the state of Ohio as a whole. The period of 2002 to 2007 saw another period of loss with Stark County losing 3% of its farmers and the state of Ohio 2% during this time period. Stark County continued to lose farmers from 2007-2012, following a similar trend for the state of Ohio.





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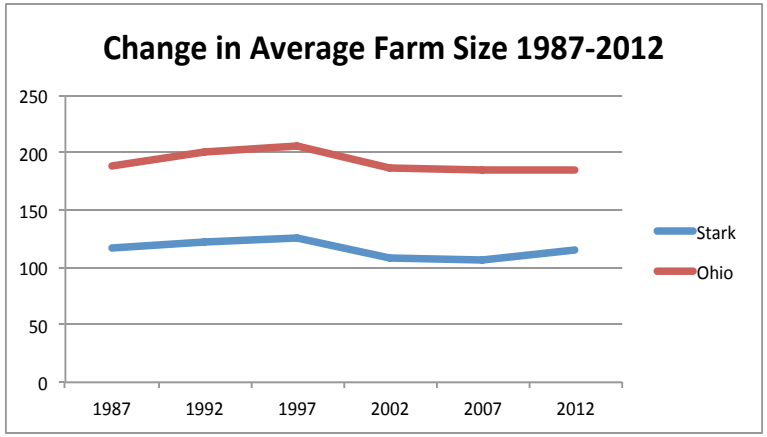
Overall, the twenty year period from 1987 to 2012 showed decline in the number of farms in Stark County, with only an 11% loss over 25 years. While the rate fluctuated over the 25 years, overall growth in the number of farms from 1997 to 2007 canceled out the loss of farms from 1987 to 1997. But the number of farms declined again from 2007 to 2012. For the state of Ohio, there was an overall loss of 5% in the number of farms during the same 25 year time period. This demonstrates that Stark County has exhibited less stability in its base of farms than the state of Ohio as a whole.

The picture of farmland acreage paints a similar picture. The acreage of land devoted to agriculture in Stark County has dropped by 11% in 25 years, compared to a loss of 7% for the state of Ohio during the same time period. This likely demonstrates the greater development pressures on a more urbanized county compared to mostly non-urbanized counties in Ohio.

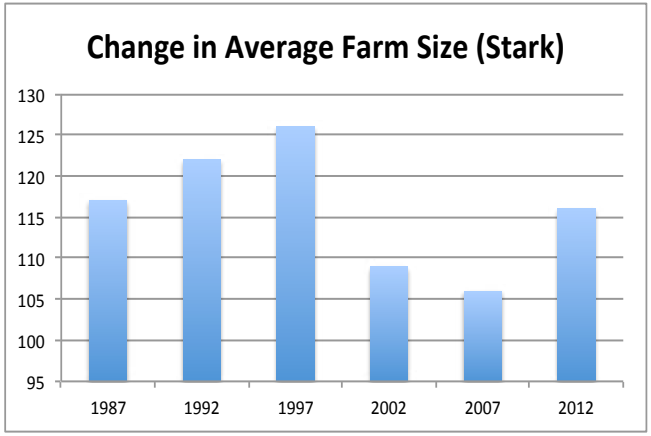


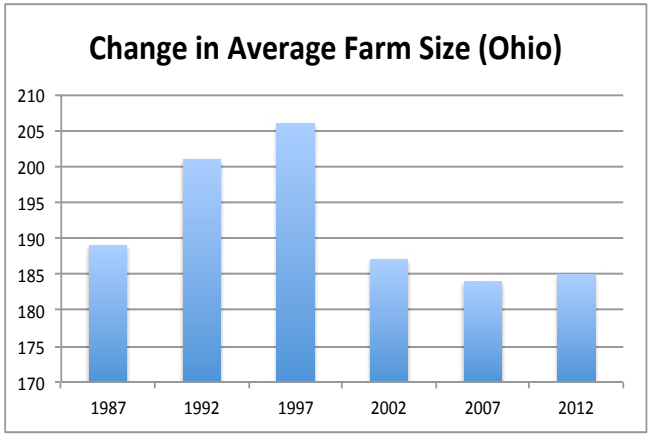
Average Farm Size:

The average farm size offers an indicator for the scale of agriculture in a county. Counties with higher average farm sizes will tend to be more dominated by "extensive agriculture", mostly focused on commodity grain production such as corn, soybeans, or hay. Counties with a lower average farm size will tend to feature more "intensive agriculture"- farms that produce more value per acre on smaller acreage farms. Areas with higher production of fruits and vegetables, for example, will tend to feature a more intensive agricultural base.

The average farm size in Stark County in 2007 is 106 acres, compared to 184 acres for the State of Ohio as a whole. From 1987 to 1997, Stark County experienced an increase in average acreage, going from 117 acres in 1987 to 126 acres in 1997. A reverse trend occurred from 1997 to 2007, when the average farm size dropped from 109 acres in 2002 to 106 acres in 2007. The state of Ohio exhibited a similar overall trend, with average farm size rising from 189 acres in 1987 to 206 acres in 1997. From 1997 to 2007, the average farm size dropped to 184 acres for Ohio as a whole. From 2007-2012, Stark County experienced an increase in the average size of its farms, rising from 106 to 116 average acres, a greater rate of increase than the state of Ohio which increased form 184 to 185 average acres per farm.

Over the 25 year period from 1987 to 2012, the average acreage of farms in Stark County dropped by 1%, compared to a drop of 2% for the state of Ohio as a whole. This indicates a slight trend toward increasing intensification of farmland acreage in Stark County over time. The state of Ohio exhibited overall intensification during the same period that was higher than that of Stark County. A couple of factors likely contribute to this trend of intensification for Stark County. First, as a county that has





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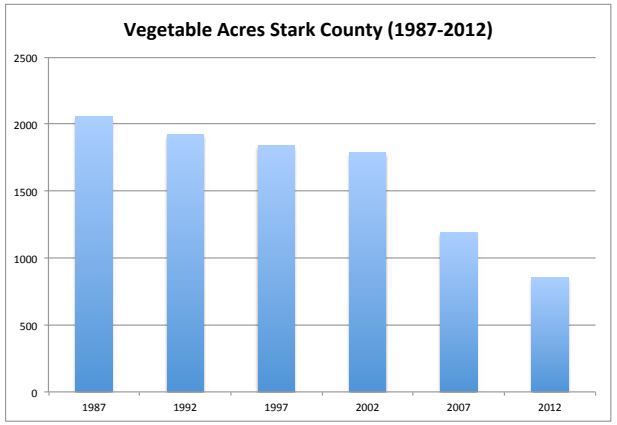
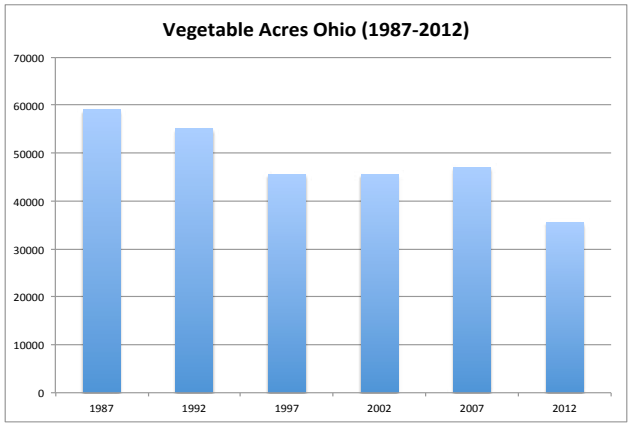
experienced more pressure from urban development, intensive farms are more viable given a shrinking base of agricultural land. Second, being a top producers for fruits and vegetables means that average acreage will be lower. Vegetable and fruit production is more labor intensive. The cost of labor keeps the overall acreage lower compared to commodity grains which are more capital intensive.



Vegetable Acres:

Overall, Stark County remains an area of significant vegetable production for the State of Ohio. However, the acreage of land devoted to vegetable production has shown a greater level of decline than vegetable acreage for the state of Ohio as a whole. In 1987 and 1992, Stark County contained 3.5% of the vegetable production acreage in Ohio. In 1997 and 2002, this acreage rose to about 4%. However, by 2007, Stark County contained only 2.5% of the vegetable acreage in the state of Ohio. This number continued to drop in 2012, mirroring a similar drop in vegetable acreage for the state of Ohio as a whole.



Stark County has shown a steady decline in vegetable acreage over the past 25 years, dropping from 2,057 in 1987 to 853 acres in 2012. This represents an overall loss of 58% in acreage devoted to vegetable production compared to a loss of 40% for the state of Ohio as a whole. Stark County is losing vegetable acreage at a greater rate than the state of Ohio, although the rate of decrease was roughly similar for the two from 2007-2012. Overall, the share of the state's vegetable production remains mostly unchanged since 2007, but has declined from a high of 4% in 1997.

Change in Farms by Size, Value of Sales, and Primary Occupations:

The USDA agricultural census also includes details about the distribution of farms based on the reported acreage of operations. The majority of farms in Stark County are between 10 to 179 acres, indicating a large collection of small to mid-sized farming operations. In terms of overall growth, from 1987 to 2007 growth occurred at both ends of the scale-spectrum. There was significant growth over twenty years of farms between 1 to 9 acres and 10 to 49 acres. There was also growth in the number of farms at 1,000 acres or more. The farms in the middle, between 50 to 499 acres showed decline over the same period of time. There was also less significant decline among larger farms between 500 to 999 acres in size. The growth in smaller acreage farms follows national trends over the past 20 years. This can be attributed to the growth of smaller farm operations supplying farmers' markets or other direct marketing outlets, the growth in "hobby farms". The growth in larger farms (1,000+ acres) also follows national trends, where there has been a continuing trend toward fewer and larger farm operations.

These trends are similarly mirrored in the change based on the volume of sales. For Stark County, the majority of farms produced less than $2,500 in annual sales volume in 2007. There has been substantial growth in the number of these operations over the past 5 years. The volume of sales has decreased for farms operating from $2,500 to $99,000 annually, with farms generating between $25,000 to $50,000 showing the slightest decline. There has also been growth in farms producing a volume of sales of $100,000 or more. This follows the trends described earlier where growth has been concentrated on the very small-scale and very large-scale ends of the production spectrum, with overall decline for farms in the middle. In 2012, there was a sizable drop in the number of farms producing $2,500 or less. Only farmers generating between $25,000-49,000 or $100,000 or more showed an increase.

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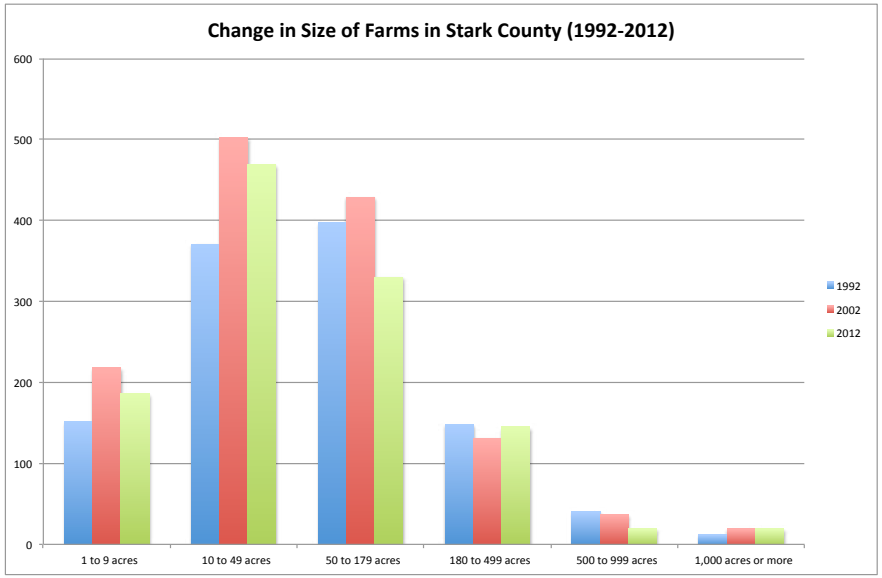
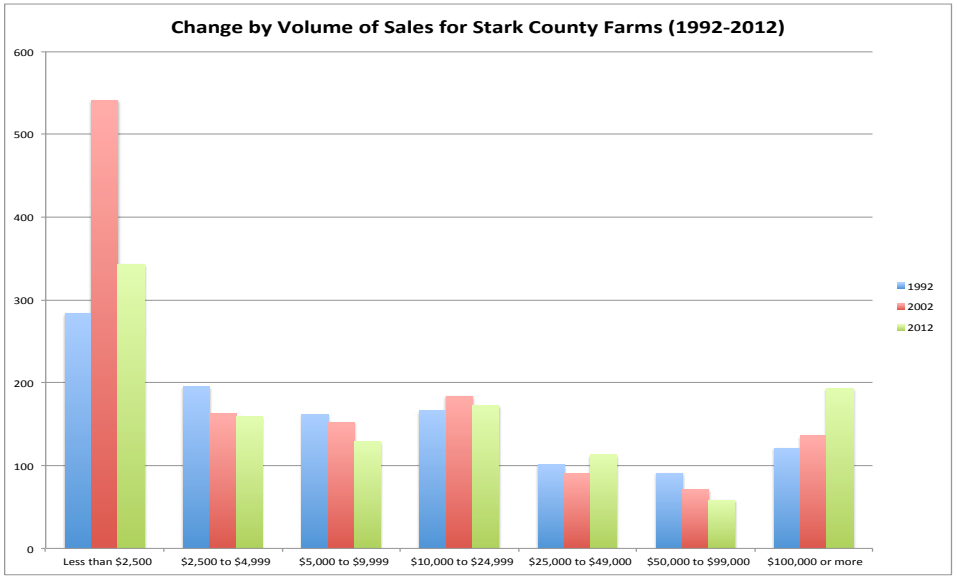
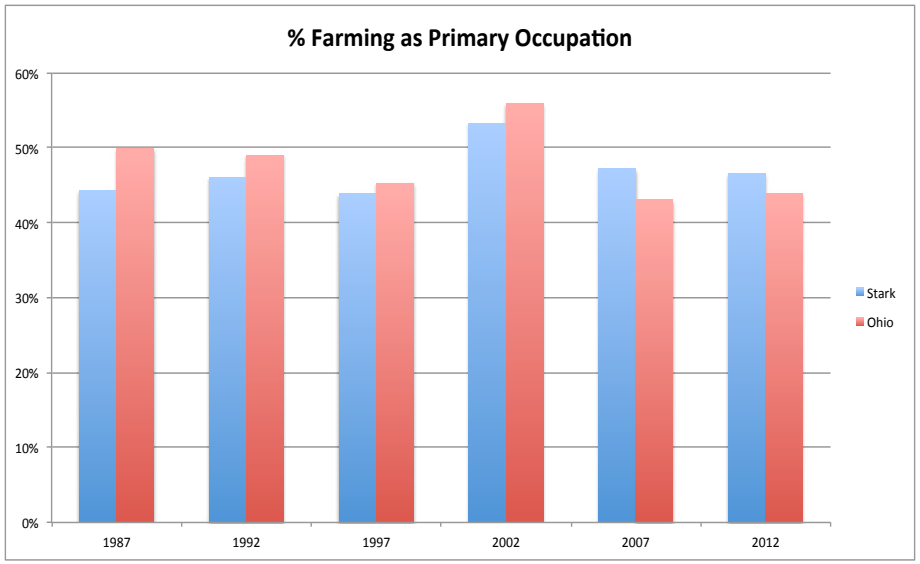
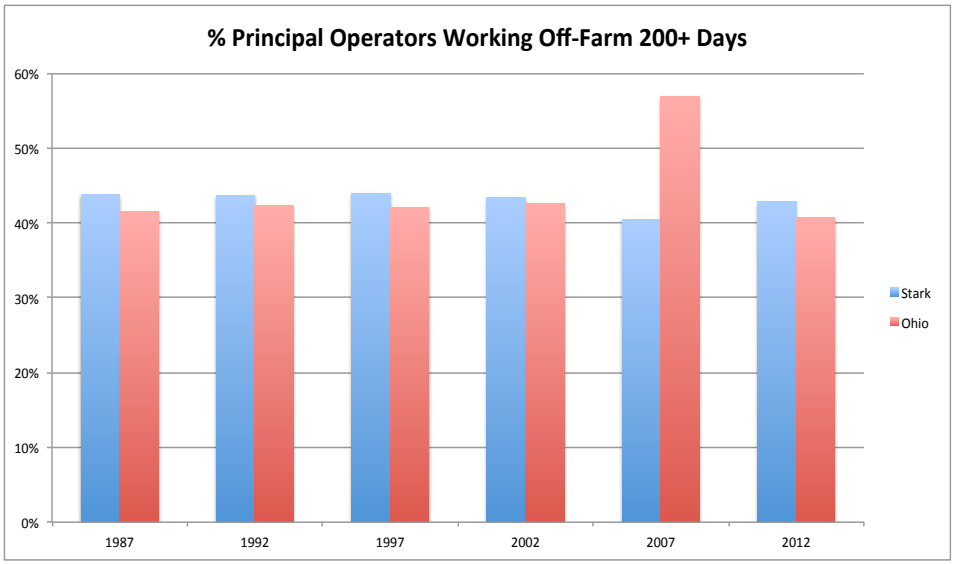




Another indicator of the relative stability of agriculture lies in looking at the percentage of farmers that can claim farming as their primary occupation. About 44% of farmers were engaged in farming as a primary occupation in Stark County in 1987 (compared to 50% in Ohio).From 1987 to 2002, Stark County has trailed farmers in the state of Ohio as a whole in terms of the number of its farmers engaged in farming as a primary occupation. In 2007, 47% of farmers in Stark County considered farming a primary occupation, compared to 43% for the State of Ohio. This indicates a bit more stability for farmers relying on farming as their sole source of income in Stark County, compared to Ohio. In 2012, the number of farmers declaing farming as a sole occupation declined slightly, but still remained above the Ohio average.





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There has also been a drop in the number of farmers who spend more than 200 days per year working off of the farm. In Stark County, 40% of farmers worked 200+ days off of the farm, compared with 57% for the state of Ohio as a whole. In 2012, the percent of farmers working off-farm 200+ days increased slightly whereas for the state of Ohio, there was a significant drop in the number of farmers working 200+ days per year.

Overall, these trends indicate a continuation of two growth trajectories observed in other recent census years: an increase in the number of large-scale, mostly commodity farm operations and the growth in small, mostly direct market operations. The "farms in the middle", representing the majority of farm operations, have showed a continuous decline.

Nationally, 2007 represents the first census year in 50 years in which the total number of farms grew. 2007 reported about 2.2 million operating farms in the United States, representing a 4% increase from 2002. The census defines a farm as any place that produces $1,000 or more of agricultural products in a given year. The majority of this growth comes from smaller farm operations where more than 50% of the production value could not be attributed to one commodity.

Since the 2002 census, 291,329 new farms have begun operation. According to the USDA, these farms tend to be smaller and have lower than average sales compared to farms nationwide. About 13% of all farms are "new farms" initiated since 2002. The average acreage of these new farms is 201 acres, compared to 418 acres nation wide. The average value of products sold is $71,000 compared to $135,000 nationwide. The average age of the new farmer is 48, compared to 57 nation-wide. Many of these farms are not able to support themselves. Only 33% of the new farms can claim farming as a primary occupation, compared to 45% of farmers nation-wide.

Food Spending in Stark County:

Stark County is the 10th most productive agricultural county in Ohio with over $134 million in annual sales reported in 2007. The majority of these earnings come from sales of products to markets outside of Stark County.

Understanding the aggregate demand for annual food purchasing in Stark County presents an opportunity to look at the opportunities for leveraging the large urban population centers that occupy the county.

As the accompanying graph shows, the residents of Stark County spend an estimated $925 million on food annually. Of this, $531 million is spent on food at home and $394 million is spent on meals eaten out.

Residents of the City of Canton represent the largest demand center in Stark County for food purchasing, spending $180 million on food annually. Residents in Massillon come in second, spending $79 million annually, followed by Alliance which spends about $55 million annually. The residents of North Canton spend $43 million on food, Louisville spends $23 million, and Canal Fulton spends $13 million annually. Combined, the larger urban centers of Stark County spend $414 million slightly less than half of the overall food spending for the county.

The overall distribution of food spending by household for Stark County is shown in the accompanying graph. About 43% of all spending goes toward meals eaten out at restaurants or institutional dining. The remaining 57% of food spending goes toward food from grocers or other retail food outlets. About 10% of overall spending goes to fruits and vegetables, 11% to meats, 8% to cereals and breads, 6% to dairy, and 22% to other foods (mostly processed or prepared foods).

NEO CANDO Data Export

City/Village	Total population (100 percent count), number, 2010	Consumer Units	Food	Food at Home	Cereals & Bakery Products	Meats, poultry, fish, eggs'	Dairy products	Fruit and vegetables	Other food at home	Food away from home
Alliance city	22,282	9,687.83	54,881,535	31,514,498	4,514,527	5,812,696	3,206,670	5,599,563	12,381,042	23,367,037
Balance of county	181,240	78,800.00	446,402,000	256,336,400	36,720,800	47,280,000	26,082,800	45,546,400	100,706,400	190,065,600
Beach City village	1,033	449.13	2,544,324	1,461,021	209,295	269,478	148,662	259,597	573,989	1,083,303
Brewster village	2,112	918.26	5,201,948	2,987,103	427,910	550,957	303,944	530,755	1,173,537	2,214,845
Canal Fulton city	5,479	2,382.17	13,495,015	7,749,212	1,110,093	1,429,304	788,500	1,376,897	3,044,418	5,745,803
Canton city	73,007	31,742.17	179,819,415	103,257,292	14,791,853	19,045,304	10,506,660	18,346,977	40,566,498	76,562,123
East Canton village	1,591	691.74	3,918,702	2,250,227	322,350	415,043	228,966	399,825	884,043	1,668,475
East Sparta village	819	356.09	2,017,233	1,158,351	165,937	213,652	117,865	205,818	455,079	858,882
Greentown CDP	3,804	1,653.91	9,369,417	5,380,179	770,723	992,348	547,445	955,962	2,113,701	3,989,238
Hartville village	2,944	1,280.00	7,251,200	4,163,840	596,480	768,000	423,680	739,840	1,635,840	3,087,360
Hills and Dales village	221	96.09	544,333	312,571	44,777	57,652	31,805	55,538	122,799	231,762
Limaville village	151	65.65	371,920	213,567	30,594	39,391	21,731	37,947	83,903	158,353
Louisville city	9,186	3,993.91	22,625,517	12,992,199	1,861,163	2,396,348	1,321,985	2,308,482	5,104,221	9,633,318
Magnolia village	712	309.57	1,753,687	1,007,016	144,257	185,739	102,466	178,929	395,624	746,671
Massillon city	32,149	13,977.83	79,184,385	45,469,868	6,513,667	8,386,696	4,626,660	8,079,183	17,863,662	33,714,517
Meyers Lake village	569	247.39	1,401,472	804,764	115,284	148,435	81,887	142,992	316,166	596,708
Minerva village	1,942	844.35	4,783,230	2,746,663	393,466	506,609	279,479	488,033	1,079,077	2,036,567
Navarre village	1,957	850.87	4,820,176	2,767,879	396,505	510,522	281,638	491,803	1,087,411	2,052,297
North Canton city	17,488	7,603.48	43,073,704	24,734,115	3,543,221	4,562,087	2,516,751	4,394,810	9,717,245	18,339,590
North Lawrence CDP	268	116.52	660,096	379,045	54,299	69,913	38,569	67,350	148,915	281,050
Perry Heights CDP	8,441	3,670.00	20,790,550	11,938,510	1,710,220	2,202,000	1,214,770	2,121,260	4,690,260	8,852,040
Richville CDP	3,324	1,445.22	8,187,157	4,701,292	673,471	867,130	478,367	835,336	1,846,988	3,485,864
Robertsville CDP	331	143.91	815,267	468,149	67,063	86,348	47,635	83,182	183,921	347,118
Uniontown CDP	3,309	1,438.70	8,150,211	4,680,077	670,432	863,217	476,208	831,566	1,838,653	3,470,134
Waynesburg village	923	401.30	2,273,389	1,305,443	187,008	240,783	132,832	231,954	512,867	967,946
Wilmot village	304	132.17	748,765	429,962	61,593	79,304	43,750	76,397	168,918	318,803
TOTAL	**375,586**	**163,298.26**	**925,084,648**	**531,209,243**	**76,096,990**	**97,978,957**	**54,051,724**	**94,386,395**	**208,695,177**	**393,875,405**

CONSUMER UNIT=2.3
Cleveland-Akron MSA

Population Distribution	
Population of Cities	159,591
Population of Villages	15,278
Population of CDP's*	19,477
Balance of County	181,240
TOTAL	**375,586**
*Census Designated Place	

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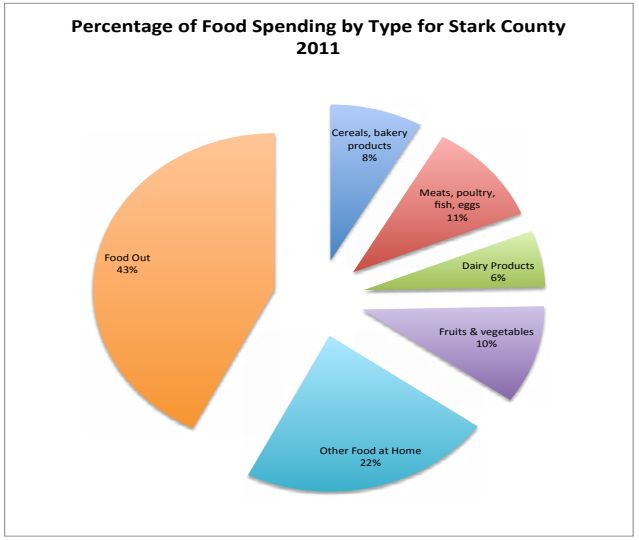
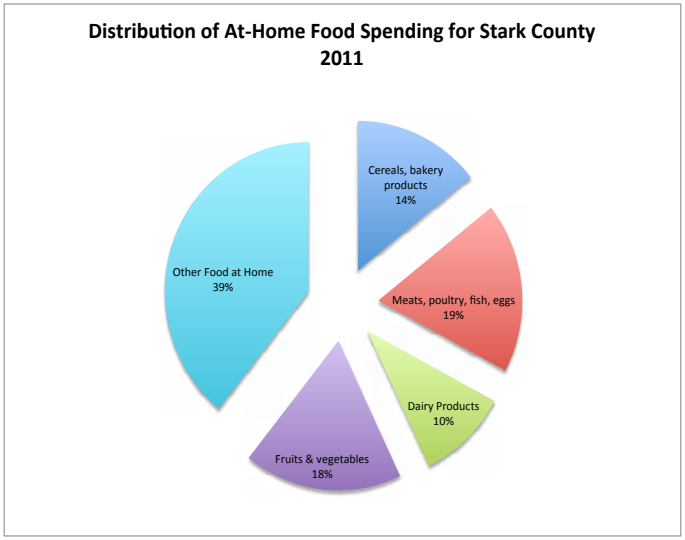
The breakdown of spending for food prepared and eaten at home is depicted in the second chart. The aggregate spending for each category indicates the size of potential market demand that can guide future agricultural development in the county:

Meats, poultry, fish, eggs	$98 million
Fruits and vegetables	$94 million
Cereals, bakery products	$76 million
Dairy products	$54 million
Other food at home	$209 million





<u>Conclusions about Agriculture and Food in Stark County</u>:

This section reviewed both the capacity for food spending and food production in Stark County. While not connected directly to food security, it does begin to provide us with a picture for what the capacity might be for food security challenges to be addressed by accessing the agricultural capacity of the county. It also demonstrates the potential for the residents of Stark County to stimulate new food and farm businesses through local spending. Some of the observations include:

1) Stark County has some of the most productive agricultural land in Ohio. More efforts to connect seconds or food gleaning can increase the supply of some food for emergency food relief.

2) Only three Stark County farms presently participate in the Agricultural Clearance program of the State of Ohio in which state funds are used to purchase seconds from farms for distribution in emergency food relief. Are there other farms that might participate?

3) The 375,000 residents of Stark County, through their purchasing, create a $925 million annual market for food. If more food were grown, processed, distributed, and consumed locally, economic multipliers would produce much greater than $925 million in annual activity. Increased local spending does not just benefit local farms directly, but it benefits other businesses that provide services for farm inputs, machinery mainte-

nance, construction, distribution, warehousing, processing, and food preparation. It is estimated that a 25% shift in spending on food in Northeast Ohio could lead to an additional $4.5 billion in economic input and upward of 27,000 new jobs. There are some important linkages between raising the capacity for food production in Stark County and increasing opportunities in the local economy.

4) Stark County, like most of America, shows strong growth for very small scale and very large scale farms with overall decline of mid-sized farms. Mid-size farms tend to be too large to participate in direct marketing opportunities, but are too small to participate in large commodity programs. Increasing commercial and institutional purchasing of foods from these farms can help to stabilize their income base.

5) Stark County has exhibited a significant decrease in the acreage devoted to vegetable production. This could indicate reduced capacity to connect fresh produce from Stark County to emergency food relief or retail outlets. Consideration should be given to making up for the decline in vegetable production by increasing production on city lots or supporting growth of vegetable producers marketing direclty to consumers.

Overview of Organizations Involved with Food Security

Food insecurity "refers to the USDA's measure of a lack of regular access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods."[4] Effective food security efforts will balance the more immediate needs of reducing hunger through emergency food distribution with longer-term initiatives that provide tools for self-reliance.

We have identified four components that provide a comprehensive approach to addressing food insecurity, including:

1) Emergency Food Relief: Providing immediate food assistance to vulnerable families or individuals who would otherwise be at risk of hunger or malnutrition.

2) Healthy Food Access: Providing a diverse range of nutritious foods that are needed to support a healthy diet, including whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and protein sources. Healthy foods include nutrient-dense foods that are not overly processed and do not contain excessive amounts of refined sugar, saturated fat, or sodium.

3) Community Education: Pursuit of a healthy life-style requires more than just the distribution of food. Education and training is needed to address food production (gardening), preparation, storage, and safe-handling of food while also emphasizing healthy lifestyle (exercise, proper diet, social relationships). This empowers people with the tools needed to insure long-term health and longevity.

4) Community Development: Community development encompasses a larger effort to raise the capacity for the local provision of healthy and nutritious foods, including farmer networks, urban food production, food storage and processing, enterprise creation, workforce development, and productive utilization of food waste.

Effective efforts to address long-term food security will involve investment in all four of the above areas. For individual organizations, this means a more effective "bundling" of services that address the broader needs of individuals and families to include connections to education, training, social services, and job or enterprise creation. The majority of organizations involved with food security operate with limited financial resources and volunteer time and will likely be unable to provide this level of service on their own. In these cases, achieving more effective bundling of services can be done through strategic collaborative partnerships with other businesses, agencies, or organizations that have capacities that can complement immediate food relief.

We analyzed 10 organizations receiving support from the Stark Community Foundation for food security work over the past decade. The accompanying diagram maps the distribution of these organization's activities across the four components of food security: emergency food relief, healthy food access, community education, and community development. The primary focus of activities for these organizations is concentrated in the Emergency Food/Safety Net quadrant.

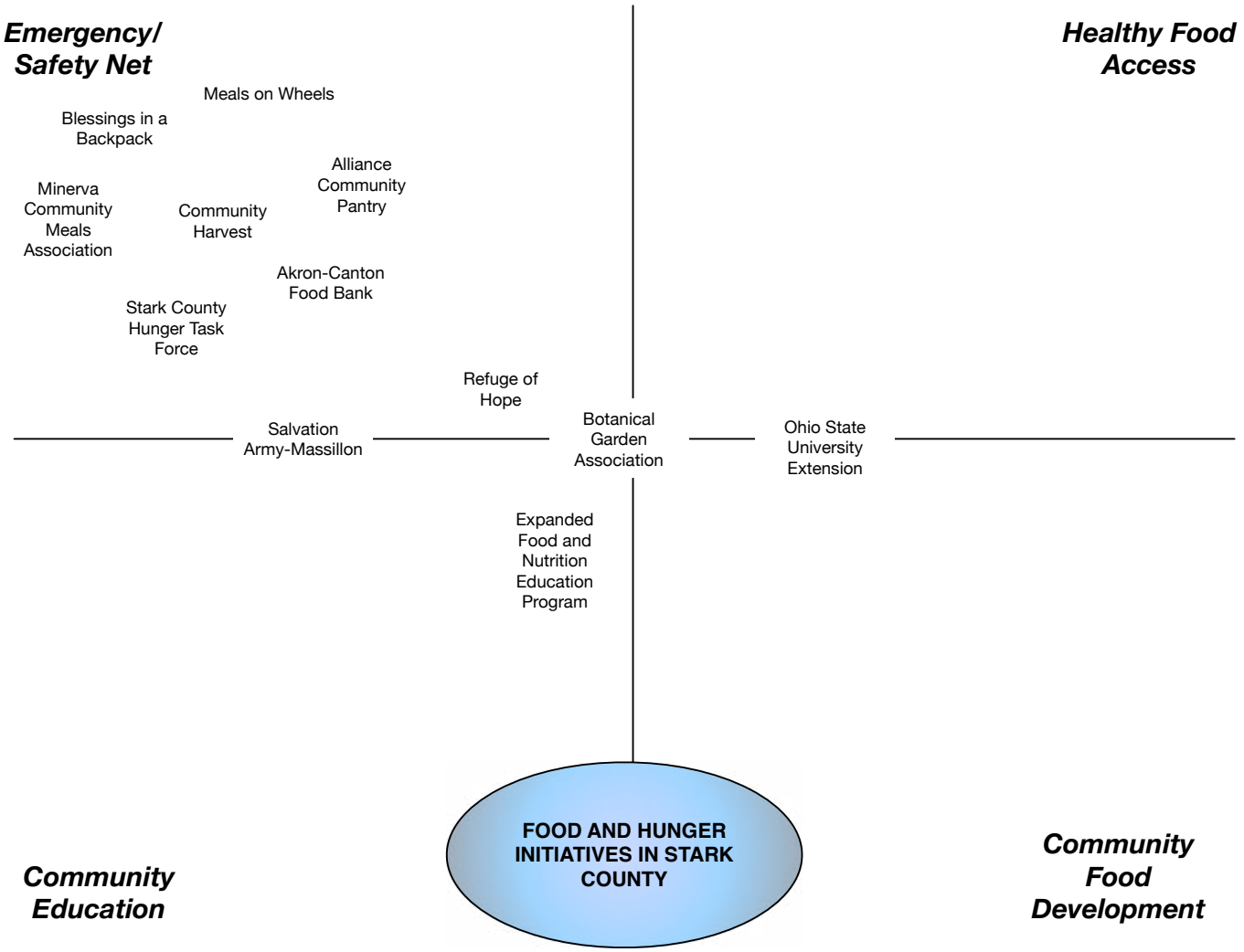
This assembly of organizations provide essential services to Stark County residents that might otherwise face hunger or malnutrition. As need continues to grow, the role of these organizations will continue to grow in importance. However, achieving more food-secure communities in Stark County will require greater emphasis on the other three quadrants of activity.

Traditionally, emergency food relief has been approached as a "safety net", providing temporary relief for individuals facing disruption in

4 Fact Sheet provided by the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank for 2012.

their lives as a result of such challenges as unemployment, health challenges, mental health issues, or familial instability. Most of these organizations identified an alarming rise in need over the past three years, particularly among the working poor and low-wage workers. The emergency food relief system will continue to be taxed by meeting increasing needs for food relief while in the midst of rising food costs, declining donations, and increasingly chronic needs for food assistance. There is a need to balance increasingly immediate food needs with efforts to reduce long-term dependency on these services through individual education and community improvement.

Within the emergency food space, organizations offer a wide-range of necessary capacities, including aggregation/distribution, community distribution, and prepared meals.



Aggregation/Distribution:
The Akron-Canton Food Bank and the Stark County Hunger Task Force both provide essential support services to a network of about 80 food pantries and hot meal programs. The Akron Canton Regional Food Bank (AC-RFB) aggregates large volumes of food from multiple streams, including federal commodity foods, commercial donations, Ohio farmers, and the Feeding America national network. They also provide training and capacity building services for participating food pantries. The Stark County Hunger Task Force (SCHTF) facilitates distribution of food from the AC-RFB and other sources to 31 pantries in addition to providing a wide-range of support services, including fundraising, administrative support, and networking. Much of the food distributed by the AC-RFB and the SCHTF is focused on non-perishable foods that are shelf-stable. Community Harvest specializes on the handling and distribution of "perishable foods", including mostly prepared foods and, in some cases, fresh produce or meats. The three organizations together have a strong capacity for the distribution of both perishable and non-perishable foods. Some organizations specialize in more "community distribution", focused on getting food to more immediate communities. For example,

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Community Distribution: These organizations tend to be focused on distributing food to immediate communities, including Blessings in a Backpack which provides backpacks of food to school children receiving Free and Reduced Lunch. The Salvation Army of Massillon offers a "choice food pantry" to residents in the surrounding city. A choice food pantry means that individuals can choose individual food items representing different food categories (vegetables, fruits, meats, beans, grains, etc.)

Prepared Meals: These organizations mostly focus on the provision of prepared meals to individuals in need. There are two primary types of prepared meals: those that are delivered to residences and those that are provided in a central dining facility. Refuge for Hope provides prepared meals throughout the week in their community dining hall in downtown Canton. The Salvation Army of Massillon provides prepared meals at their dining facility in downtown Massillon. Meals on Wheels and the Minerva Community Meals Association each deliver meals to homebound individuals, mostly the elderly or disabled. Meal deliveries focus on people that want to maintain independent living who might also lack the transportation or mobility to get to community meal facilities.

Several organizations working on food security issues are less involved with the direct delivery of services and more involved with community education or development. Ohio State University Extension (OSUE) offers a broad range of programs that support community education, including technical assistance for Stark County farmers, youth education through the 4-H program, and a Master Gardener program. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is a federally-funded program that specifically targets low-income individuals. The program is based around an 8 week curriculum that emphasizes nutrition, cooking, and healthy life-style. Through the collaboration with the Live Well initiative of Stark County, OSUE is connecting its Master Gardeners and nutrition educators to support urban garden development as a way to both increase food access and improve healthy eating. The Botanical Garden Association offers a program that encompasses aspects of all four quadrants. They have developed a garden where they hire at-risk youth to grow food for distribution to a local food pantry. Their educational curriculum includes coverage of nutrition, health, environmental sustainability, and job readiness.

Several initiatives include bundled services as a part of their operation. For example, in addition to providing meals to individuals at risk of hunger, the Refuge of Hope provides a variety of connections to social services, including addiction, mental health, and job development. Through their shelter, they help transition homeless men to self-sufficient living in their own apartments. The Salvation Army of Massillon provides a food pantry, hot meal programs and a variety of connections to social services including medical, tax preparation, and Jobs and Family Services. The Salvation Army also offers workshops to expand the ability of individuals to achieve self-sufficiency.

LEVERAGING COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Several initiatives also show promise for their leveraging of collaborative community partnerships to expand the reach of their services. For example, the Alliance Food Pantry (AFP) represents a multi-denominational food pantry. The AFP represents of collaborative of faith-based organizations that previously operated several smaller and independent food pantries. By combining their resources, they operate a centralized facility as a multi-denominational collaborative. This expands the efficiency of volunteer operations, enabling them to service more individuals more consistently than if they were working on their own.

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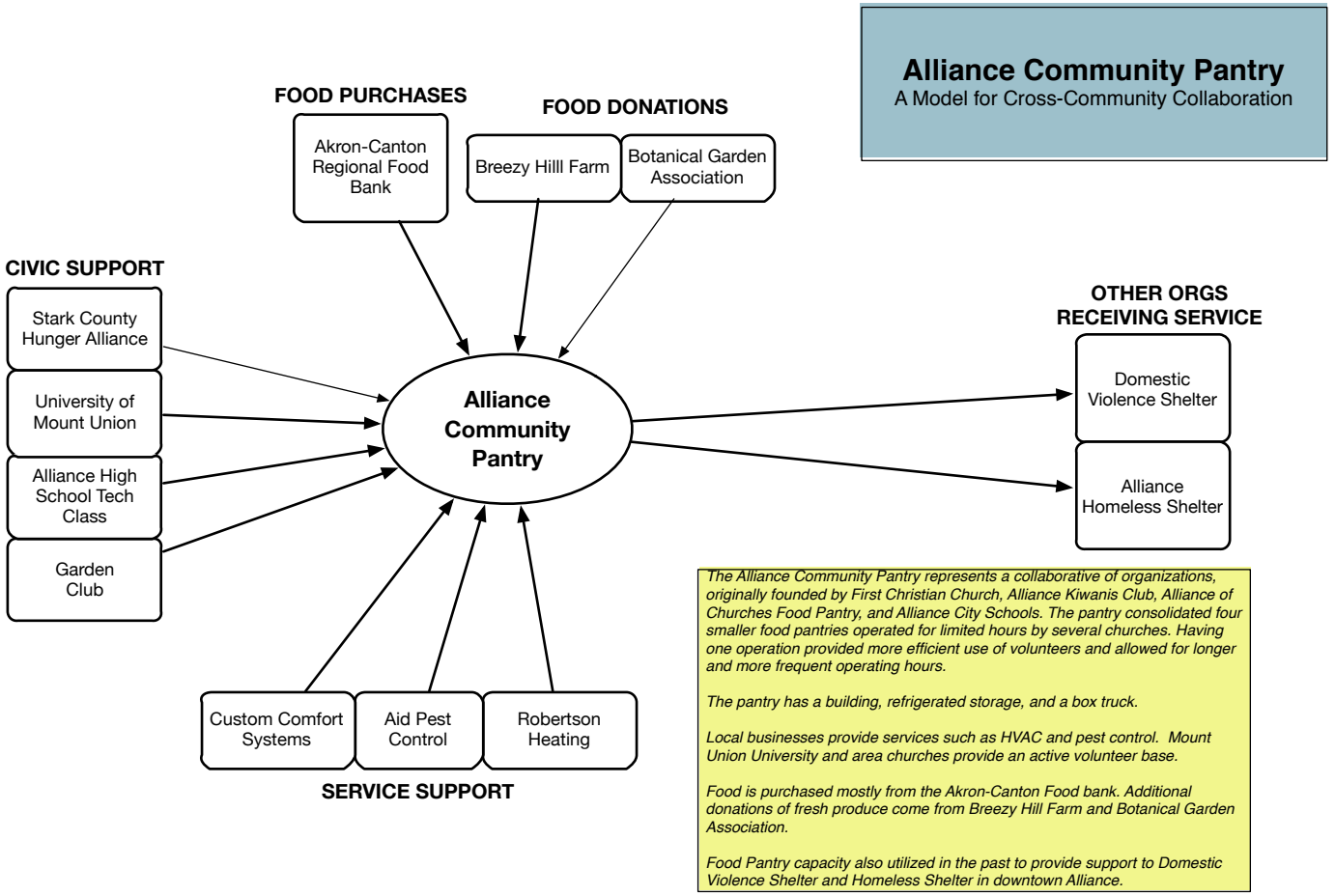
As the accompanying diagram shows, the AFP has leveraged a variety of community partnerships to enhance the effectiveness of their operation. They receive Civic Support from the Stark County Hunger Alliance, the University of Mount Union, the Alliance High School Tech class, and a local garden club to provide volunteer support. Service support was provided by local businesses who assist with pest control and the installation and maintenance of HVAC and refrigeration systems. Food donations come from local sources, including the Botanical Garden Association youth garden and Breezy Hill Farm. They also share their truck and volunteer services to bring food to the Domestic Violence shelter and a homeless shelter.



Another important aspect of collaboration involves organizations with similar interests working together to coordinate services and share best practices. For example, Refuge of Hope has organized a Hot Meals Forum, which includes a regular meeting of organizations providing Hot Meals. The organizations work together to coordinate schedules to insure that services are available throughout the week between their respective programs. They also work on sharing best practices or working through common challenges confronting hot meal preparation. The Stark County Hunger Task Force has regular monthly meetings with its 31 participating food pantries. This also enables coordination, combined outreach and marketing efforts, common fundraising, and sharing of best practices.

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Summary of Organizations funded by Stark Community Foundation

AKRON-CANTON FOOD BANK:

Summary: The food bank provides a safety net for the most vulnerable members of the population, including the working poor, people with disabilities, and children experiencing poverty and hunger. The Akron-Canton food bank provides emergency food relief to Summit, Stark, Medina, Wayne, Tuscarawas, Portage, Holmes, and Carroll counties. In 2012, 21 million pounds of food and 17 million meals were served. Stark County is second to Summit County as the area receiving the highest amount of food assistance from the food bank. The food bank has a central facility based in Akron. They aggregate food from several streams (food donations, federal food support, agriculture surplus, etc.) but agencies and pantries are responsible for picking up the food from their central facility.

Key Indicators:
Reach- Multi-county
Volume- 5.18 million pounds of food distributed in Stark County
Assets- trailer trucks, refrigerated storage, freezer storage, warehousing
Skills- logistics, training,
Needs- operating support

ALLIANCE COMMUNITY PANTRY:

Summary: The Alliance Community Pantry is a multi-denominational collaboration that provides emergency food distribution through a combined pantry. Their client base includes 7,000 individuals in the Alliance area. They have created an important model for community collaboration with several churches working together to operate the shelter and a large network of supporting community partners. They have a large box truck and storage capacity to reduce trips to the food bank and the recent addition of a large refrigerator has increased distribution of produce and meat.

Reach- Alliance City
Volume- 30,000-45,000/month
Clients- 7,000 individuals
Client Base- working poor

Assets- Refrigerator, walk-in color, box truck
Skills- community collaboration, food distribution
Needs- Refrigeration

BLESSING IN A BACKPACK:

Blessings in a backpack is a part of a national network of volunteers who distribute backpacks full of food to school children on free and reduced meal plans. The focus of this program is on Dueber Elementary School in Canton where 96% of school children qualify for federal assistance. A volunteer picks-up food on Fridays and meets a group of volunteers who unload food and fill up backpacks for teachers to distribute at the end of the school day. An endowment covers administrative costs, leaving 100% of contributions to go directly toward the purchase of food.

Reach- Canton neighborhood
Volume- n/a
Clients- school children
Client Base- low-income children/families
Assets- volunteer network
Skills- micro-distribution, volunteer organization
Needs- food purchases

BOTANICAL GARDEN ASSOCIATION/BEECH CREEK BOTANICAL GARDEN AND NATURE PRESERVE

The Beech Creek Botanical Gardens is a nature preserve based in Alliance that provides nature education for the broader community, including a youth gardening initiative. The gardening program includes 67 at-risk teenagers, 5 at-risk employees, and 18 adult volunteers. The garden utilizes a curriculum that covers health, job readiness, and environmental sustainability. The garden provides a place where youth, adults, and adjacent neighbors can create positive social interactions and produce food for local distribution.

Key Indicators:

Reach- Alliance City
Volume- 1200 pounds of produce (500 to food pantry)
Clients- 67 youth
Client Base- at-risk teenagers
Assets- land, garden supplies, volunteer network

Skills- garden education, micro-distribution
Needs- education programming

COMMUNITY HARVEST:

Summary: Community Harvest provides collection and distribution of surplus food from commercial sources, mostly restaurants, institutional food service, and grocery stores. They collection and distribute food donations in mostly urban centers in Stark County. Community Harvest influenced Ohio state laws on the collection of perishable foods and have operated for 25 years, rescuing $578,000 worth of food that provides an estimated 419,000 meals per year. Their operations include a refrigerated truck, a tight network of 16 community volunteers, and a facilities for refrigerated food storage.

Key Indicators:
Reach- Stark County
Volume- 419,000 meals
Clients- hot meal programs
Client Base- local residents, local businesses
Assets- refrigerated truck, storage facility, volunteer network
Skills- volunteer organizing, distribution, safe-food handling
Needs- operational

MEALS ON WHEELS:

Summary: Meals on Wheels started in 1973 and they provide nutritious, home-delivered meals to home-bound clients, regardless of age. The program operates nationally and the regional affiliate supports distribution in Wayne and Stark counties. The program serves about 1,300 meals per day with most clients over the age of 60 with a total delivery of 295,000 meals in 2013. The program provides both a source of nutrition and daily human contact. Their operations include a certified commercial facility outside of Massillon and 3 delivery trucks that have 60 delivery routes.

Key Indicators:
Reach- Multi-county
Volume- 295,000 meals
Clients- mostly elderly
Client Base- homebound residents
Assets- commercial kitchen, 3 delivery trucks, refrigerated and frozen storage, land
Skills- logistics, meal preparation, distribution, volunteer coordination
Needs- subsidize meal costs

MINERVA COMMUNITY MEALS ASSOCIATION:

Summary: The Minerva Community Meals Association has operated for 36 years, providing home-delivered meals daily to elderly, disabled, or convalescent residents maintaining independent living arrangements. They serve residents within a five-mile radius of the village of Minerva. They supply about 40-60 meals daily for a $2 fee. They have a base of volunteers who coordinate shopping, cooking, and delivery of meals.

Key Indicators:

Reach- Minerva Village
Volume- 40-60 meals daily
Clients- 67 youth
Client Base- elderly, disabled
Assets- volunteer network, refrigeration, kitchen
Skills- meal preparation, volunteer organization, micro-distribution
Needs- food purchasing

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION- STARK COUNTY

Summary: OSUE provides extension services for Stark County residents, including work in value-added commodities, youth education, technical skill development, business development, and community and neighborhood development. They involve an estimated 7,500 residents in their programs, including a mix of urban, suburban, and rural populations. In terms of food security, OSUE combines nutrition educators through its Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) with extension educators and volunteer master gardeners to combine urban gardening with healthy lifestyle. They are based in a central office and have an extensive and diverse range of community partners collaborating on their work.

Key Indictors:

Reach- Stark County
Volume- n/a
Clients- 7,500 residents
Client Base- residents, farmers
Assets- nutrition eduction, training, expertise, organizing
Skills- nutrition, urban gardening, local food systems, economic development
Needs- garden development, educational programming, community outreach

REFUGE OF HOPE:

Summary: The Refuge of Hope is a faith-based ministry in that offers a hot meal program and a shelter for homeless men and a program that focuses on helping individuals achieve greater self-sufficiency. The program is based in downtown Canton, but they receive clients from across Stark County. Their program has grown from 14,500 meals in 2008 to 68,686 in 2013 and their shelter offers 34 beds. Their community benefits include free nutritious meals for the unary, opportunities for social interaction, spiritual guidance, and a conduit to other social services. Their facility includes a certified commercial kitchen for meal preparation and overnight sleeping quarters. They also facilitate collaboration with other hot-meal programs to find ways for groups to more effectively serve the community.

Key Indicators:

Reach- Canton
Volume- 68,686 meals
Clients-
Client Base- homeless, substance abuse, mental health
Assets- certified kitchen, dining room, storage, lodging
Skills- network collaboration, food preparation, social services, spiritual guidance
Needs- meal program, food purchasing

SALVATION ARMY- MASSILLON:

Summary: With a 100 year history in Stark County, the Salvation Army is a part of a national organization which supplies basic needs to individuals who are struggling. The operation in Massillon serves residents in the surrounding neighborhood. Their programs include a "Choice Food Pantry" that is open 5 days per week, a hot meal program, holiday distribution and a variety of basic needs services (rent, fuel assistance, medical access, and education). Their operation is based at a facility that provides classrooms, offices, a food pantry, refrigerated storage, a commercial kitchen, and worship space.

Key Indicators:

Reach- Massillon
Volume-
Clients- Residents
Client Base- families, children, individuals
Assets- commercial kitchen, van, classrooms, pantry, cold storage
Skills- training, education, social services, food distribution, food preparation

Needs- operating support

STARK COUNTY HUNGER TASK FORCE

Summary: The Stark County Hunger Task Force is a "support organization" for a coalition of 31 pantries, providing fundraising, logistical, operational, and financial support. The Task Force works with organizations at the county-level. The task force plays an important role in facilitating the logistics of food distribution from the food bank, building the capacity of member organizations to serve their communities, and an important networking hub that encourages collaboration between members. They operate their own food pantry and offer a truck that can pick-up food from Akron for distribution in Stark County.

Key Indictors:

Reach- Stark County
Volume- 3.5 million pounds of food
Clients- 293,000 visits (not unique)
Client Base- working poor, mentally ill
Assets- truck
Skills- networking collaboration, logistics, funding,
Needs- storage space, additional truck

OTHER FOOD-RELATED INITIATIVES IN STARK COUNTY:

LIVE-WELL STARK COUNTY:

Summary: Live-Well Stark County is a county-wide intiaitive housed at the "Stark Parks"- the Stark County Park District. Live-Well emerged from a regional public health study that looked at healthy workforce development in former manufacturing communities. The study looked at obesity, mental health, and nutrition. Live Well formed to promote healthy lifestyles in Stark County, including healthy living, nutrition, and physical activity. A program supported by the Sisters of Charity Foundation focused on addressing childhood obesity through community gardens and nutrition education. Live-well also dispensed funds for community garden start-ups around the county. Live Well features a variety of community stakeholders who work through several committees: a marketing committee, a nutirion committee (garden projects), a physical activity committee, and a core leadership team. Live Well also has a second initiative focused on coordinating sustainability intiatives among the five universities in Stark County. Live Well sees itself as a community convener that can help to

build and maintain cooperative networks around health and sustainability.

Key Indicators:

Reach- Stark County

Client Base- health and community development organizations

Assets- broad networks, knowledge of health and sustainabilty

Skills- networking, convening, integrative projects, nutrition, community gardening, health

Needs- support for convening and project develpoment

STARK FRESH

Summary: Stark Fresh is an initiative of the JRC, a recently formed Community Development organization based in Canton. An outgrowth of the outreach efforts of Reverand John Robert Coleman from St Paul's Catholic Church, JRC serves the Canton and broader Stark County communities through work on home repair, economic development, early education, and senior services. A major initiative of JRC is the re-development of the Mahoning Corridor, a stretch covering northeast Canton that has high rates of poverty and a history of economic dis-investment. Stark Fresh is an outgrowth of the Mahoning Corridor project and is focused on promoting healthy food access through education, community gardening, and operation of a farmers' market, one of only two markets in Stark County to accept Ohio Direction, WIC, and Senior Vouchers. The long-term vision of Stark Fresh is to facilitate a county-wide initaitive that facilitates growth of the local food system with emphasis on improving healthy food access. Projects to achieve this include: expansion of backyard and community gardening, urban market farming, rural farmer networks, nutrition education, and food hub/kitchen incubator development.

Reach- Stark County

Client Base- low-income residents, farmers, urban gardeners

Assets- facility, development funds, farmers' market, land for gardening

Skills- food access, grassroots education, community develpoment, community gardening, farmer organizing

Needs- additional land for market farming, facilities for food aggregation/distribution

WALSH UNIVERSITY:

Summary: Walsh University is an independent, Catholic University that educates 3,000 students from 27 states and 37 countries. Walsh University has a school of nursing and a well-known business school, both of which could provide useful linkages for health or local food systems enterprise development. Students also actively volunteer for a number of hunger programs in the county. In the fall of 2014, Walsh University is planning a national event called the "Hunger Dialogues" which will bring together constituents from Stark County and the state of Ohio to engage in topics around hunger and food

security. There is also potential for the university to be involved with local procurement of foods through its event catering and dining service programs.

Reach- Stark County

Client Base- college students

Assets- volunteer/service networks, knowledge/research, dining budget

Skills- community education, service learning, academic research

Needs- farmer networks for local food procurement

System Interventions-
An Inventory of Existing or Potential Best Practices to
Improve the Capacity for Food Self-Reliance in Stark County

System Challenge: Although there is a high degree of activity and innovation around food and hunger efforts in Stark County, territoriality, competition, and mis-trust reduces the level of potential cooperation. Cultivating a culture of collaboration will be important to raising the capacity to address food and hunger challenges.

Interventions:

1) Relationship Building:

Many clients at *Refuge for Hope* struggle with generational poverty, addiction, or felony convictions that make obtaining jobs or housing difficult. They approach clients as whole individuals who often do not just need access to food, but connections to other people or resources to achieve self-sufficiency. Treat the whole individual, providing physical needs (hunger, food, clothing), emotional needs (connection, fellowship), and spiritual needs (sense of hope). Some best practices include:

-Programs that provide additional tools for self-sufficiency (such as assistance with obtaining housing or jobs to enable clients to get their own footing).

-Treat each person as an individual and work with them on an individual basis.

-Much of their volunteer base consists of former clients who have benefited from their services and have a desire to give back.

-Leveraging their donor network to supply broader needs. During the cold snap, they organized blanket and clothing drives

-They worked with a 3rd Grade school where a class worked on collecting and distributing blankets, exposing school children to the challenges of hunger and homelessness and poverty and learn what is needed to give back.

2) Collaborate around Services

There has been some disagreement among stakeholders about whether or not it would be advantageous to have fewer, more centrally located facilities for emergency food access. On the one hand, a more centralized center can allow for more cost-effective storage, distribution, and volunteer activity. However, in a mid-sized city like Canton, it can be difficult for people to get to services and transportation can be a barrier. A lot of smaller churches are opening up smaller pantries to get food closer to where people are. There is concern about the long-term success of these operations, as there can be inconsistency in provision, record-keeping, or professional support. Regardless of how centrally located facilities become, there is enormous advantage to greater collaboration around service provision.

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Interventions:

-The Alliance Community Pantry has laid the ground work for effective collaboration. They combined several smaller pantries run out of churches into a more central facility with better infrastructure and longer operating hours.

-The Salvation Army facility in Massillon has what might be considered a more "networked pantry"- a place where multiple services are bundled. They offer a food pantry, hot meals, a cooking facility, workshop space, and connections to other services, such as medical. Can these kinds of "community hubs" be developed in other neighborhoods that serve multiple audiences and people can go to access multiple services.

-The Refuge of Hope organized a hot meals collaborative forum to bring together coordinators of hot meal programs across Stark County. This can be helpful for everything from scheduling services to clarifying roles and niches among organizations. There is a need for this kind of role clarification. For example, Stark County has a diverse base of organizations such as the Stark County Hunger Task Force and Community Harvest that have a long history of addressing hunger issues. There has been a lack of clarity on boundaries for the regional food bank and some of the county or neighborhood-based organizations, especially when it comes to soliciting food donations, outreach, or fundraising. Is there an organization or location that can play a convening role, such as a foundation or a university?

B) IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

5) Healthy Food Access

System Challenge: Access to healthy food remains a significant challenge in Stark County, whether it involves emergency food pantries or retail outlets in neighborhoods. People still buy food from gas station and convenient marts. People need to see the long-term benefits of healthier foods. For food pantries, the availability of healthy foods, such as produce, can fluctuate in availability and individual pantries have little control over the nutritional quality of what comes in.

Interventions:

1) Increase Local Food Outlets:

Stark County has a growing base of farmers' markets, with 11 operating in 2013. These locations provide an effective tool for residents to access healthy, locally grown produce and other foods. Some best practices include:

-The Alliance Farmers' Market and Mahoning Corridor farmers' market accept Electronic Benefit Transfers (EBT) for food purchases. There needs to be a more organized effort to provide training and support for other markets to carry EBT and other forms of public assistance, such as Senior Vouchers or WIC coupons. Future markets can be encouraged in "food desert" areas not adequately served by existing retail establishments.

- Although not present in Stark County, incentive programs can be developed to increase consumption of nutritious foods among low-income residents. For example Produce Perks (Cuyahoga County) or Carrot Cash (Summit County) provide a 1:1 match for local food purchases for users of the Ohio Direction Card. There are also "produce prescriptions" that some health care clinics offer where doctors can write a $20 prescription for healthy food that can be re-deemed at participating farmers' markets.

2) Nutrition Education:

It is not enough to increase the supply of local food available. Individuals need to be given the tools for how to use that food, including balanced nutrition, proper storage and cooking. Some best practices include:

-The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) has an 8 week curriculum that teaches basic nutrition and cooking methods. The program can be adapted to emphasize seasonal foods available locally. Given the large number of certified kitchens in communities (churches, schools, etc.) more cooking classes can be offered to increase the capacity for people to utilize healthier foods.

-EFNEP has a program that focuses on providing a crock pot to participating families. Crock pots provide a low-cost, low-time intensive way for people to improve cooking at home. Other programs like the Salvation Army in Massillon are considering offering programs where crock-pots are given out along with cooking lessons.

-Consistency of supply of items such as produce can make it more difficult to include nutritious foods in emergency food distribution. Much of this connects to a lack of facilities for food storage or preservation. The Alliance Community Pantry received funding to purchase a larger refrigerator. This doubled their capacity for produce handling. Similar investments in cold storage or even food preservation facilities (baking, dehydrating, freezing, fermenting, canning) can further the capacity for the storage and handling of more nutritious, less shelf-stable foods.

3) Transportation:

Transportation remains a significant barrier for people to access food outlets. The rate of vehicle ownership is low for some low-income communities and if there is not adequate public transit, getting to areas to access food can be challenged.

-Programs such as Meals on Wheels and the Minerva Community Meals Association have mastered the logistics of distributing food to clients who are homebound, disabled, or interested in maintaining independent living arrangements. Meals on Wheels often has neighborhood hubs where larger deliveries are made to a neighborhood facility and then distributed by volunteers to individual households.

-The Aultman Hospital has developed a "Wellness on Wheels" program in which they travel to partnering businesses or community centers to provide mobile health screenings, patient follow-up, and preventative care. They have partnered in the past with local farmers to hand out fresh produce on the van as a part of teaching about healthy diet and diabetes prevention.

Could a mobile program like this combine local food distribution with nutrition education and basic health screenings?

C) INTEGRATE RURAL AND URBAN SOLUTIONS TO HUNGER

System Challenge: The area north of Alliance and some pockets in southern Stark County have higher rates of rural poverty. Most food access is done through churches or informal support networks. But often, people in need will migrate to the city where there are more resources available.

1) Rural Food Security

Rural areas tend to feature smaller and closer-knit communities where there is perhaps more of a tendency for people to take care of their own. Alternately, there can be a stigma in rural communities about being judged or ashamed of needing support. When Waynesburg and East Sparta were impacted by the decline in the brick business, rural populations migrated out and went to where the services are needed. In this case, Canton became a favored location with a density of supporting services.

Interventions:

- The Salvation Army has "service units" where volunteers provide basic needs on a more distributed basis (food vouchers, clothing vouchers), etc. Larger services can be referred to Canton, Alliance, etc. where there are more resources.

-There are more urban pantries and fewer in rural areas. Rural areas depend mostly on word-of-mouth and are typically based in a church. Churches are key to getting services out to people in rural areas, particularly through community dinners, free meals, etc.

-Arrowhead Orchard, KW Zellers and Sons, and Vogley Enterprises are farms based in Stark County that provide seconds produce for distribution through the food bank system. This provides an important connection between urban centers and the farmers in Stark County. More effort needs to be directed toward working with farmers to think of what to do with excess produce, including gleaning or connections with outlets to utilize seconds.

D) RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS & SUPPORT OF FOOD AND ISSUES

System Challenge: There are two challenges to addressing food and hunger issues. The first involves a more educated populace that acknowledges that food and hunger issues affect many people in Stark County. The second challenge lies in providing people with the skills and resources needed to take more control over their own health. Some best practices include:

-Walsh University is working on a food guide that might include places that would accept free produce. There is a need for something published (both virtual and real time) that includes local resources.

-There is a need to get the word out more about available programs in the community, both for people requiring services and for people that could contribute to these programs through financial contributions or volunteer time. The more they are known, the more people will provide food and support for the program. As one agency noted, "these are not issues confined to an individual organization, but are vital economic and societal issues that effect us all and, as such, must be dealt with by the community as a whole for any chance at resolution."

-There could be more tight collaborations with health care providers to let patients know about available services, especially for operations like Meals on Wheels, that can provide useful follow-up to get food to patients at home following hospital treatment.

-Clients often have difficulty knowing about or accessing services. They do not know how to navigate the process. It would be helpful to have more support for this. The Good Will Campus in Canton provides one location where multiple agencies with complementary services are located under one roof.

-Connection with local food starts with kids. Getting healthy foods into the school system and getting education into urban and rural schools about growing food and nutrition and cooking will also help to provide long-term skills for increasing self-reliance in meeting food needs.

-Community food drives can be more important than cash contributions because it raises community awareness and direct involvement in hunger issues confronting the community.

E) INCREASE LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION CAPACITY

System Challenge: Despite having some of the most productive land in Ohio, there is a dis-connect between rural and urban communities. While reliance on food imported from outside of the county will remain essential to emergency food relief, more efforts can be made to increase self-reliance in local food production and distribution, both within cities and through connections with rural farmers.

7) Urban Garden Infrastructure:

One step toward improving the supply of healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, involves an increase in utilization of vacant urban land. Cities like Canton and Massillon have seen a steady population decline and an increase in the number of vacant properties. These properties can be utilized to improve the food supply in the city. Backyard gardening can also be a part of the solution. At present, the supply of food from these operations can be limited by a short growing season, fluctuations in supply, or limits in volunteers. But efforts can be made to address these limitations to increase the capacity for urban

agriculture to improve food access in cities.

Interventions:

-Refuge of Hope has noted that they cannot rely on the small and unpredictable volumes of food from gardens for their hot meal program. However, smaller volumes of food can be given out to clients to take with them. Long-term, there needs to be more stability with people who can oversee the gardens and insure their continuous care. Volunteer networks can be leveraged to supply labor, but day-to-day management is needed first.

-Several groups noted an interest in establishing a Community Gardening Cooperative. Linking Mt Pleasant Church, Project ReBuild, and Stark County Jail for example is something that the Stark County Hunger Task Force has been working on.

-There are at least 12 known community gardens in the county, but there is not an organized network system to collect data on what's going on. Gardens often don't have the support that they need. There is a need for some kind of map and more organized system to network, share, and provide resources to raise the productive capacity of urban gardens.

-The Botanical Garden Association at the Beach Creek Nature Preserve developed a program where youth work on gardens and donate food to the Alliance Community Pantry. While the overall volume of food is low, it demonstrates an important step that communities can take to link gardens, youth, and the supply of fresh food for emergency food distribution.

There has been a partnership with the Stark County district library in Canton to start an heirloom seed program. In this program, the library makes available heirloom seeds that can be planted. After harvest, a portion of seeds can be saved from vegetables and returned to the library for others to access. There is an opportunity especially for low-income people to get seeds at the library. Master gardeners through OSU Extension provide education for how to grow and save the seeds. 1,500 seed packets were distributed through one library branch.

-There has been an increase in community gardening in Stark County. OSU Extension has been working to introduce Start education around entrepreneurial gardening to this effort. This enables urban gardeners to be trained as volunteers, providing food for sale at local markets.

8) Local Food Infrastructure

Improving the overall capacity for food to be grown, distributed, and consumed in Stark County can both help with the supply of healthy foods for emergency food distribution in addition to creating future opportunities to create small enterprises around the production of processing of local food.

Interventions:

-Refuge of hope worked with a local farmer who brought in 90 dozen surplus ears of sweet corn. Using their certified

kitchen, volunteers cooked, blanched and froze the sweet corn. This provided a supply of sweet corn that was utilized during the off-season when fresh food would not be available locally.

-Several organizations recognized the potential benefit of developing a shared infrastructure for food storage, processing, and distribution as a way to potentially create jobs. There are a number of successful initiatives in Cleveland, Athens, Youngstown, Wooster, and elsewhere in Ohio to provide these facilities for people to start small enterprises through processing (including canning, freezing, dehydrating, baking, or fermenting). Athens works with mostly low-income individuals to encourage them to start their own businesses or hire local workers for food processing. This could provide unemployed or underemployed individuals to find new jobs. It will take a lot of energy and resources to get started, but down right, it can help to make for a more self-reliant community.

-There are capacities at Walsh and Malone Univerities to support enterprise development and entrepreneurial training. A program at Kent University in collaboration with the Kent Development Association involves university students in programs to prepare their own food. The program also has a service learning component in which food is gleaned for processing and distribution. It was noted that this could be potentially replicated at the KSU branch in Stark County.

-A local food hub provides a location where local food can be aggregated, warehoused, and distributed. There are a number of federal resources now available for food hub development. Several food hubs around the country include a focus on the distribution of healthy foods for emergency food relief.

-The Alliance Community Pantry demonstrates what an investment in refrigerated storage can do to improve their ability to more effectively distribute perishable foods such as fresh produce or meats. Better refrigerated storage tripled the amount of produce they were able to offer.

-Community Harvest operates two refrigerated trucks that raise the capacity for perishable foods, including restaurant left-overs or fresh produce to be distributed through the emergency food system.

FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING FUTURE FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY

As noted in the "System Interventions" section of the report, some of the following challenges were noted as impacting food security efforts in Stark County:

A) **Limited Capacity for Collaboration**: There is an overall lack of a culture of collaboration. Organizations feel threatened and competitive. Geographic barriers are difficult to cross, such as the dividing wall between Canton and Massillon. Efforts need to be placed on improving collaboration between organizations within and between communities.

B) Need for More Efficiencies in Distribution: A focus for collaboration might be on the development of infrastructure and capacities to improve storage capacity and distribution efficiency. Too many smaller loads are transported back and forth between the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank and food pantries and hot meal sites. A balance needs to be struck between distributed services that are easily accessible and more centralized facilities that might allow for greater bundling of services, capacities for storage, and longer operating hours.

C) Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide: Services tend to be clustered around urban centers. It is not clear if rural populations are more at risk to hunger due to difficulties in accessing services. Many rural residents migrate to cities to access services. Overall, there could be better efforts to improve connections between urban and rural areas in Stark County.

D) Increasing Capacity for the Growth of the Local Food System: Farmer's markets have increased significantly in the county over the past several years, but they tend to serve a more affluent clientele. There is also a rise in urban agriculture and community gardening, but there is concern about the consistency and scale of output at this point. Growth of the capacity for local food production and processing can help to create more positive economic and social connections between rural and urban populations.

E) The Need to Address the Economic Roots of Food Insecurity: There is clearly a "new face of hunger"- the working poor and people with low-wage jobs are increasingly unable to provide for all of their basic needs. While newspapers report progress in the drop in unemployment, the economy is not improving for the working poor. This contributes to a situation in which food insecurity is out-pacing the ability of organizations to meet needs. Investments in local food systems and bridging the urban-rural divide holds some promise for leveraging almost $1 billion in annual food spending in Stark County to create new local economic opportunities.

TAXONOMY OF PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS:

There is common tendency for social problems to be approached as singular or isolated problems. For example, environmental organizations focus on land conservation, health care organizations focus on addressing health problems, and schools or universities focus on education. Food security is a multi-dimensional problem and effective solutions lie at the intersection between a variety of different community challenges. Taking the three above examples, a comprehensive approach to food security might combine an effort to utilize vacant urban land to increase the local food supply, incorporate health and nutrition education, and service-learning volunteers from a local university.

Reviewing the challenges of addressing food security in Stark County, we identified a taxonomy of 12 food system issues around which strategies need to be developed. The accompanying diagram shows an overall long-term outcome that everyone in Stark County who chooses to do so can eat adequate, affordable, accessible healthy foods. Addressing this goal requires inter-linking strategies between 12 issues:

1) Not Enough Food- Unpredictable food supplies for emergency food relief and increasing demand.

2) Not Enough Healthy Food- Healthy or nutritious foods are not always available in emergency food relief.

3) Not Enough Access to Food- Healthy foods are often difficult to find with limited retail options in some neighborhoods.

4) Not Enough Gardens- More urban land could be productively utilized to increase the local food supply.

5) Not Enough Income- The working poor often have trouble meeting their own or family's needs and need to rely on emergency food services.

6) Not enough Food Storage- Local facilities for storing or preserving food are not available.

7) Not enough consumer waste handling- Consumers waste large amounts of food that could be better utilized or com-

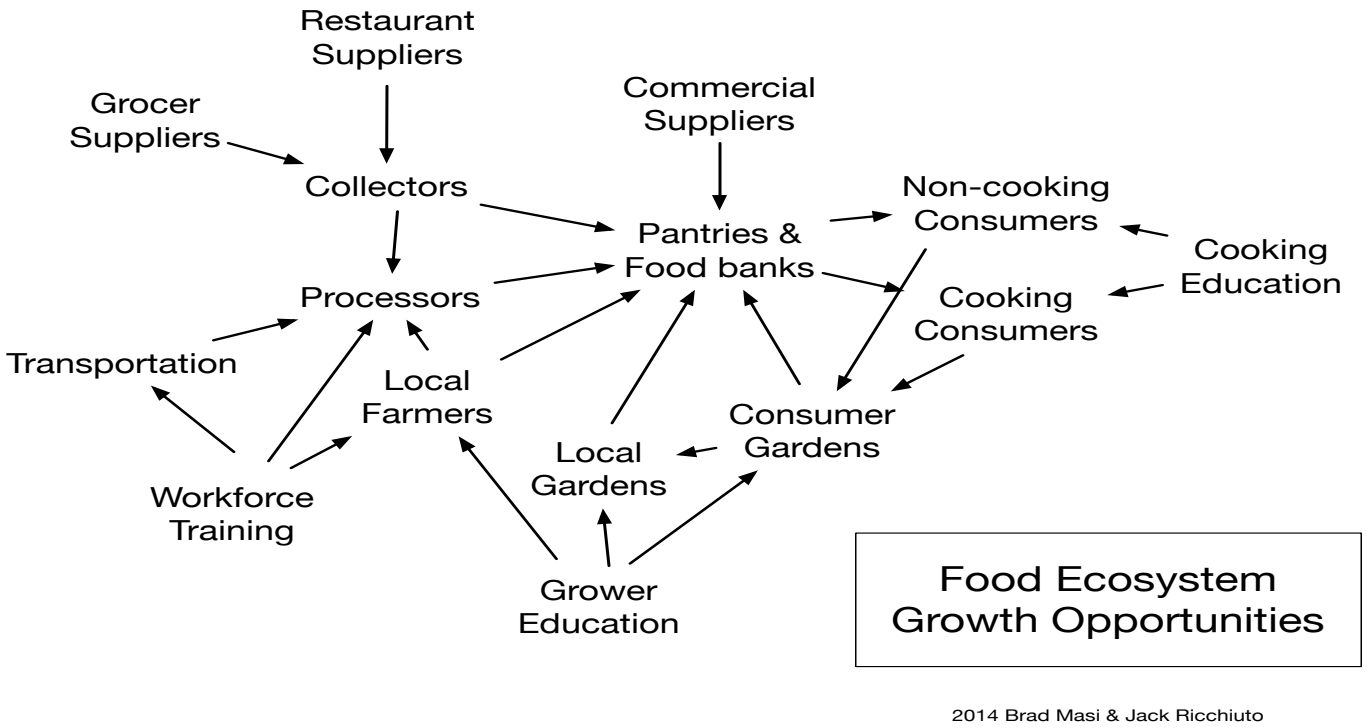
posted.

8) Not enough local food jobs- Existing or new local enterprises can leverage food spending to create new jobs.

9) Not enough producer waste handling- Larger food manufacturers could provide waste for food distribution or for composting or bio-digestion.

10) Not enough food transportation- Better transportation infrastructure is needed to connect people with sources of healthy food.

11) Not enough cooking education- Cooking your own food can serve as a tool for empowerment, better nutrition, and stretching of limited budgets.



12) Not enough funding- Are there resources within and outside of Stark County that can be leveraged to improve capacities for the previous 11 topics?

The next step will be to identify which organizations might have capacities to address some of these issues and how greater collaborative network connections between organizations can lead to the desired long-term outcome.

The expansion of the local food system might present some new growth opportunities that can increase the supply of local healthy foods and potential jobs or enterprises to support it.

The accompanying diagram shows the web of connections within Stark County that can lead to the growth of local food system opportunities. This growth can be facilitated through a tighter web of connections between the following key sectors:

Retail/Commercial Partners: market for local food and distribution of waste for re-purposing (emergency food or composting/bio-digestion)

Click here to return to table of contents.

Transportation: Distribution of food, access to food outlets.

Collectors: Connecting sources with outlets through networking or distribution.

Grower Education: local farms, urban market gardens, self-production through backyard gardening or community gardening

Precessing: Connecting local sources of food to manufacture or preserve local food products that can be utilized by commercial partners or sold to the public.

Consumers: Cooking consumers can utilize more locally grown foods and non-cooking consumers can access locally processed foods.

Pantries and Food Banks: provide an outlet for food waste in the system as well as a connecting point for food access, education, or programs around enterprise or workforce training.

Workforce Training: Providing educational and entrepreneurial support to grow the next generation of farmers or local food businesses.

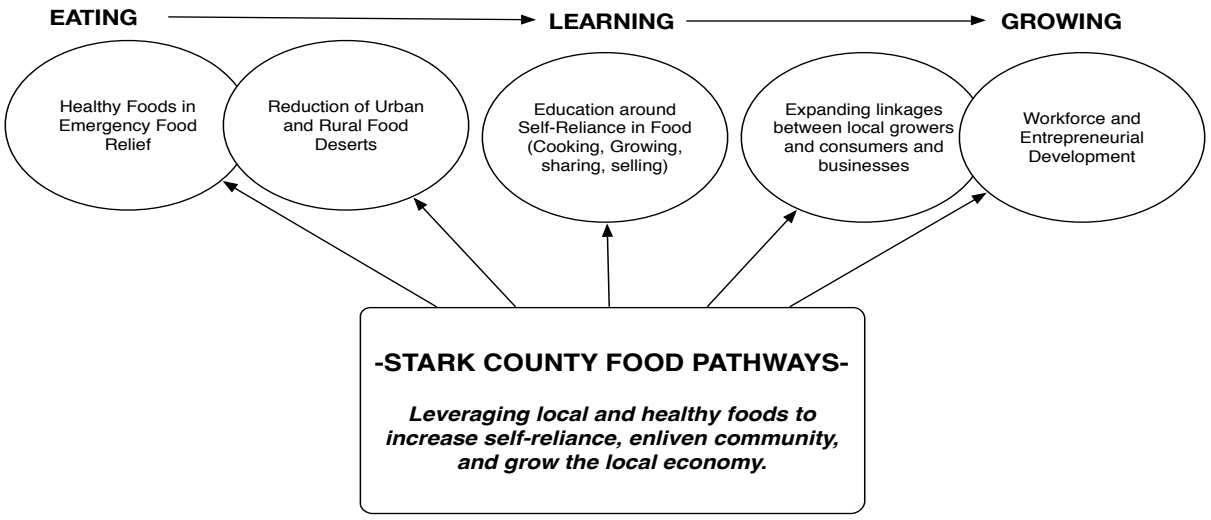
NEXT STEPS FOR STARK COUNTY:

This pre-assessment report provides the baseline knowledge necessary to take the next steps in growing a comprehensive local response to food security in Stark County.

The accompanying flow chart provides a framework for addressing long-term food security in Stark County.

At the center of the effort is an effort to leverage local and healthy foods to increase self-reliance, enliven community, and grow the local economy.

Surrounding this effort are three key ways that individuals, organizations, businesses and others can create this system: through eating, learning, and growing. For eating, can we insure that healthy and/or locally grown foods are available to all residents regardless of location, income, or life situation? For learning, what tools can be developed to improve self-reliance in food, whether through growing, cooking, sharing, or selling? For growing, how does Stark County increase its capacity to grow, process, distribute, prepare, and re-purpose food?



Prepared by Brad Masi February 13, 2014

We have identified five primary clusters of activity that can move Stark County toward a goal of reducing food insecurity. These clusters re-enforce or address one of the three key activities of eating, learning or growing.

EATING:

Healthy Foods in Emergency Food Relief- Emergency food relief centers can play an active role in improving long-term food security through the provision of healthy and nutritious foods (locally grown when possible) in combination with education on nutrition and healthy lifestyle.

Reduction of Urban and Rural Food Deserts- Addressing the supply of healthy and locally grown foods in retail outlets will be needed to insure that rural and urban populations can access healthy foods within their own locale. This can come in the form of working with existing businesses to source healthier foods, cultivating new products with rural farmers, encouraging the development of open-air farmers' markets or CSA distribution programs, supporting home gardening or community gardening, and utilizing vacant land for urban market gardening.

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LEARNING:

Education around self-reliance in food (cooking, growing, sharing, selling)- Educational programs can be developed both formally and informally to improve the capacity for food self-reliance in Stark County. Formal education programs include schools, universities, or extension services that have organized curricula. Informal education includes mentoring, peer-to-peer learning, or neighborhood information exchanges. Self-reliance will occur through increasing capacities for cooking (home-cooking, culinary businesses), growing (raising food for self-consumption or sale), sharing (donating food, sharing food with neighbors or friends), and selling (growing food for markets, processing food for sale, selling of local food commercially through restaurants or grocers).

GROWING:

Expanding linkages between local growers, consumers, and businesses- There is not a shortage of productive agricultural land in Stark County, but there is a deficiency of social and economic linkages between rural and urban areas. The growth of farmers' markets in Stark County over the past five years is one indicator that this is beginning to change. More initiatives to connect the efforts of local farmers, local businesses, and consumers of food (whether through food pantries or high end restaurants) need to be fostered. Networking events and network connectors can help to create some of these connections.

Workforce and Entrepreneurial Development- There are increasing resources through the USDA and other resources to support the development of "local or regional food infrastructure". Shared-used kitchens, warehousing facilities, or cooperative distribution all provide "enabling infrastructure" for enterprising farmers or urban residents to find new opportunities in the growth, processing, and provision of local foods.

Over the course of the next three months, we will look to utilize this framework for understanding how a more comprehensive and collaborative effort to address food security can be encouraged throughout Stark County.

The following next steps are planned for the project:

Network Mapping- A detailed survey and network mapping questionnaire has been distributed to 200 individuals in Stark County that work with hunger relief organizations, organizations or businesses that support hunger relief efforts, or local farm or local food contacts. *The survey will conclude on April 18th.*

Core Stakeholders- We will meet with core stakeholders (representing hunger-relief organizations supported by the Stark Community Foundatino) to review the results of the surveys and go over the network maps. Based on this discus-

sion, stakeholders will help to prioritize which maps to share at the community engagement forum. They will also be asked to refine the five clusters presented earlier as the basis for strategic visioning. *This meeting will take place the week of May 7th. This meeting will be facilitated by June Holley, Jack Ricchuitto, and Brad Masi.*

Networks 101- We will offer at least two screenings of the film "Network Theory", a feature documentary that details how collaborative networks have been leveraged in and around Athens, Ohio to grow their local food system. The film is 45 minutes in length and will be accompanied with a discussion and network activities. All people that have completed surveys will be invited to attend either screening. *These will be presented the week of May 14th by Brad Masi and Jack Ricchiutto.*

Community Engagement Forum- This forum will consist of a half-day event that will feature two parts. June Holley will lead a two hour short workshop where network maps will be presented for discussion. June will also share some techniques for accelerating the growth of collaborative connections around food and hunger challenges. In the afternoon, Jack Ricchuitto will facilitate a two hour strategic visioning exercise to begin to translate longer-term goals into short term action steps. The event will help move from connections to collaborations. *The forum will take place during the week of June 9th. Jack Ricchuitto and June Holley will facilitate the event.*

Community Investment Framework- This will include a public talk and meeting with Stark County funders, facilitated by Leslie Schaller. Leslie will share their recent efforts to merge emergency food relief throughout the Southeast Ohio Regional Food Bank and broader local food system growth efforts. Her meeting with area funders will provide her with an opportunity to share experiences from her work organizing a collaborative funders network among Appalachian-based funders in Southeast Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky. *This will take place the week of June 16th.*

Final Report- An interactive report will include information from the pre-assessment with the narratives of the above five activities. The report will enable navigation between different sections and will include case-studies and other resources. *The final report will be completed by July 15th.*

SURVEYS USED FOR STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES AND NETWORK MAPPING

STARK COUNTY FOOD AND HUNGER SURVEY
Food and Hunger Organizations
March 2014

FOOD AND HUNGER SURVEY

Food Hunger Work

1. Choose ONE of the following categories that best describes the organization with which you are affiliated (as employee, contractor, volunteer, etc.)
__ Food pantry
__ Hot meal site
__ Community or Kitchen incubator facility
__ Regional food bank
__ Coordinating/administrative food access agency
__ Education/training agency/Extension
__ For profit business
__ Funding entity/donor
__ Homebound food delivery
__ Other/Additional (please specify)

2. In what capacity do you work with food security issues?
__ Full-time employee in food security organization
__ Part-time employee in food security organization
__ Staff from non-food security organization (i.e. foundation, social services)
__ Sub-Contractor/Temporary employee in food security organization
__ Volunteer
__ Consultant
__ Other (please specify)

3. Number of paid staff in the organization with which you are affiliated (work at or volunteer for). Indicate for overall organization (if food is just one part of a broader organization).
__ Do not have information to answer this
__ 0 staff (all volunteer)
__ 1-2 staff
__ 2 to 10 staff
__ 11-20 staff
__ 21-35 staff
__ 36+ staff
__ I'm independent and not in a formal organization

4. Type of organization
__ Faith-based organization
__ Non-faith-based non-profit or grassroots organization
__ Social service agency
__ Government agency, other than social service agency
__ Private business/for-profit
__ Educational institution/Extension
__ other (define here)

5. What ONE category best describes YOUR work with food security?
__ Hot meal program
__ Distribution of food to pantries/agencies
__ Distribution of food to clients at food pantry
__ Administrative support
__ Education/Training (i.e. providing nutrition classes or cooking classes)
__ Businesses, institutions or restaurants providing or donating food
__ Grow food at a community garden or farm that is donated to food relief organizations
__ Outreach/Communications related to hunger or food security
__ Organizing special projects related to food security (for example, setting up community gardens or service projects, etc.)
__ Advocacy and/or policy work
__ Other

6. What SECOND category best describes YOUR work with food security?
__ Hot meal program
__ Distribution/transport of food to pantries/agencies
__ Distribution/transport of food to clients at food pantry
__ Administrative support
__ Education/Training (i.e. providing nutrition classes or cooking classes)
__ Businesses, institutions or restaurants providing or donating food
__ Grow food at a community garden or farm that is donated to food relief organizations
__ Outreach/Communications related to hunger or food security
__ Organizing special projects related to food security (for example, setting up community gardens or service projects, etc.)
__ Advocacy and/or policy work
__ Other

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7. At what level do you primarily work?
__ National
__ Regional (multiple counties)
__ County-wide
___Municipal
__ Neighborhood/grassroots

8. What best describes the area where you do most of your work:
__ Urban
__ Suburban
__ Rural
__ Mixed (includes 2 or 3 of the above)

Food Security in Stark County

9. Which best describes what you have observed or experienced with hunger in Stark County over the past three years?
__ Major increase in need for emergency food assistance
__ Minor increase in need for emergency food assistance
__ No change in need for emergency food assistance
__ Somewhat less need for emergency food assistance
__ Much less need for emergency food assistance

10. Food insecurity is caused by a number of issues, but, based on clients that you see, which issue on the list do you feel is a **primary contributing factor:**
__ Unemployment
__ Underemployment (working but not sufficiently to afford all living expenses)
__ Mental Health challenges
__ Other health/medical challenges (not including mental health)
__ Homelessness
__ Lack of transportation to access food
__ Unable to get foods that are appropriate for dietary issues (diabetics, etc)
__ Familial instability (divorce, single-mother, death of family member, etc.)
__ I have no basis for determining this information

11. Food insecurity is caused by a number of issues, but, based on clients that you see, which issue on the list do you feel is the **second most critical contributing factor:**
__ Unemployment
__ Underemployment (working but not sufficiently to afford all living expenses)
__ Mental Health challenges
__ Other health/medical challenges (not including mental health)
__ Homelessness
__ Lack of transportation to access food
__ Unable to get foods that are appropriate for dietary issues (diabetics, etc)
__ Familial instability (divorce, single-mother, death of family member, etc.)
__ I have no basis for determining this information

12. Are there any other factors that you feel are critical that are not listed above? Other please specify

13. Do you see any evidence that people in Stark County are at severe medical or malnutrition risks due to inadequate diet?
__ Yes, I see clear evidence of this
__ I see a little evidence of this
__ Not sure about this
__ I do not see any signs of this
__ No basis for knowing

14. What is your assessment of the capacity of services available to **urban residents (i.e. Canton, Massillon, Alliance, Canal Fulton)** experiencing food insecurity?
__ Services are adequately meeting needs
__ Services are meeting most needs with a few gaps
__ Services are meeting some needs with many gaps
__ Services are not meeting any needs adequately
__ Not sure that I can assess this

15. What is your assessment of the capacity of services available to **rural residents** experiencing food insecurity?
__ Services are adequately meeting needs
__ Services are meeting most needs with a few gaps
__ Services are meeting some needs with many gaps
__ Services are not meeting any needs adequately
__ Not sure that I can assess this

Healthy Food Access in Stark County:

16. If you are involved in a food pantry, hot meal program, or food bank, is it involved in working to improve healthy food choices?
___Yes
___Not at this time but I am interested
___Not a priority at this time
__ Not applicable

17. If so, describe some ways that healthy foods are made more available to the clients that you serve.

18. What is your assessment of the nutritional quality of food available for food distribution in food pantries and other feeding centers (i.e. availability of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, non-processed foods, etc.)?
__ A strong mix of nutritional food options for clients regularly available
__ A small number of nutritional food options for clients regularly available
__ Some nutritional food options, but sporadically available
__ Virtually no nutritional food options available (i.e. all highly processed foods)
__ No basis for being able to determine this

19. What is your observation or experience with the general availability of healthy and locally grown foods in retail (non-farmers' markets) in Stark county?
__ It is widely available throughout the county
__ It is available in a few areas in the county
__ It is very difficult to find in the county

20. What is your observation or experience with the accessibility of local food through farmers' markets in Stark county?
__ They are widely available throughout the county
__ They are available in a few areas in the county
__ They are very difficult to access in the county

21. What do you think is the **primary** barrier for people to access or utilize healthy/ nutritious food in Stark County?
__ Price/affordability
__ Physical availability (stores or pantries in low-income neighborhoods don't offer many healthy food choices)
__ Low vehicle ownership prevents people from accessing food at longer distances
__ Lack of public transit to access outlets where healthy food is available
__ Knowing how to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Having time to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Lack of exposure to healthy food options and/or non-convenience foods
__ Other not listed above

22. What do you think is the **secondary** barrier for people to access or utilize healthy food in Stark County?
__ Price/affordability
__ Physical availability (stores or pantries in low-income neighborhoods don't offer many healthy food choices)
__ Low vehicle ownership prevents people from accessing food at longer distances
__ Lack of public transit to access outlets where healthy food is available
__ Knowing how to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Having time to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Lack of exposure to healthy food options and/or non-convenience foods
__ Other not listed above

23. Which of the following do you think would do the most to improve food access and healthy diets in Stark county?
__ Improving capacity for emergency food relief to offer healthy food choices
__ Improving access to healthy/affordable foods throughout county (more retail, farmers' markets, etc.)
__ Developing new enterprises/workforce around local food systems in Stark County (i.e. increasing the supply of local food by having more food grown/produced/processed/ consumed in Stark County)
___ Other (describe here)

24. If you could identify one area, which of the following activities would you **most** be interested in being involved with in the coming year?
__ Improving availability of nutritious, fresh, locally grown foods in emergency food relief
__ Improving healthy food access/local food outlets throughout county
__ Increasing the availability of local foods through urban gardens or farms
__ Increasing participation among local farms and food businesses to connect with food outlets in Stark County
__ Organizing community economic development activities in the local food sector that focus on increasing the amount of food grown/processed in Stark County (i.e. entrepreneurship, workforce development, kitchen incubator, etc.)

25. Are there other activities that you would suggest that are not included above?
__ Other--- list here

26. How willing would you be to convene and/or coordinate a group working on the above activity?
__ Very willing
__ Somewhat willing
__ Not sure
__ Not willing at this time
__ Already active in a group concerning this topic

27. How interested are you in working with other organizations, farmers, or businesses on food security activities?
__ Very willing
__ Somewhat willing
__ Not sure
__ Not willing at this time

Involvement in Special Projects

28. The next several questions include examples of special initiatives relating to local security. Please indicate if you or your organization are involved in programs providing food to schools (backpacks for kids, after-school or summer feeding sites, edible schoolyard projects)?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

29. Are you or your organization involved in a farm to school program which seeks to connect school cafeterias with healthy/local foods?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

30. Are or your organization you involved in community gardens and/or a community garden network?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

31. Are you or your organization involved in fresh food/produce distribution to pantries or hot meal sites?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

32. Are you or your organization involved in providing training or education around health and nutrition?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

33. Are you or your organization involved in teaching how to cook healthy foods?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

34. Are you or your organization involved in working with EBT, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and/or WIC at Farmers Markets or retail food outlets?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

Perspectives on Food and Hunger:

35. For the next several questions, state how much you dis/agree with the following assumptions about food security. If an individual is facing hunger or food security challenges, they have likely made bad choices in their life.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

36. Individuals should ultimately be responsible for meeting their own food needs and the most effective programs are those that provide tools for self-sufficiency so that people only need to rely on food aid for a short period of time.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral

__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

37. Hunger is a community issue and community members need to be vigilant to ensure that no one in their community is at risk of going hungry from lack of access to food.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

38. There will always be individuals that will need some level of emergency food relief and it does not make sense to expect all clients to achieve self-sufficiency.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

39. Food insecurity results from a a lack of adequate economic opportunity (i.e. stable jobs, living wage, growth in local economy) and positive economic development will ease long-term food insecurity challenges.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:

37. Gender
__ Male
__ Female
__ Do not wish to answer

38. Age
__ Under 18
__ 18 to 25
__ 26 to 35
__ 36-50
__ 50-65
__ Over 65
__ Do not wish to answer

39. What is your racial or ethnic background?
__ African-American
__ First Nation/Native American
__ Asian/Pacific
__ Caucasian
__ Hispanic/Latino
__ Other, please specify
__ Do not wish to answer

40. Would you be interested in participating in a community learning and networking event later this spring to review the results of this survey and identify new collaborations in local food an hunger?
__ Yes
__ No

41. Is there a day in the week that you would prefer to participate in such an event?
__ Saturday Preferred
__ Any Weekday
__ Monday
__ Tuesday
__ Wednesday
__ Thursday
__ Friday
__ Will not be able to participate at this time

Network Relationship Questions

1.Which individuals have you worked with on collaborative project(s) related to food access or hunger (not just know the person but have worked with them on an activity such as organizing a workshop, joint planning, coordinating food distribution, etc.)?

2.Who would you like to work with (that you haven't worked with before) on a project that would make a positive difference for food access or ending hunger in our

community in the next year?

3.From whom do you get new ideas, help or practices that increase the effectiveness of your food access or ending hunger efforts? (include individuals and organizations from outside your community as well as those in Stark County)

4. Please list names (and organizational affiliation if possible) of people who would add diversity, new perspectives, and energy to food access or ending hunger projects in our community.

STARK COUNTY FOOD AND HUNGER SURVEY
LOCAL FARMS AND BUSINESSES
March 2014

1. What kind of enterprise do you operate:
___ Farming enterprise (rural)
___ Market gardening (urban)
___ Retail food operation (grocer, convenience store, etc.)
___ Farmers' Market
___ Local Food Business Enterprise (I.e. Food processing/manufacturing, distribution, etc.)
___ Restaurant
___ Other, please specify

2. How long has your farm or enterprise been in operation?
___ One year
___ 2-4 years
___ 5-10 years
___ 10-15 years
___ 15+ years

3. If you are involved with farming, approximately what size is your operation?
___ Not involved directly with farming
___ 1 acre or less
___ 2 to 5 acres
___ 6-10 acres
___ 11-25 acres
___ 25-100 acres
___ 101+ acres

4. If you are involved with farming, what primary products do you produce?
__ Not involved with farming
__ Produce (fruits/vegetables/herbs)
__ Meats
__ Cheese/Dairy/Eggs
__ Grains
__ Cut flowers/landscaping
__ Other, please specify

5. How would you describe your farm or enterprise?
__ Sole proprietorship
__ Limited Liability Partnership
__ Corporation
__ Cooperative
__ Not-for-profit

6. How would you describe your market reach?
__ Service primarily an urban center (I.e. Canton, Alliance, Massillon)
__ Service multiple urban centers
__ Service primarily a rural area
__ Serve a mix of clients from urban and rural areas

7. Is your farm or enterprise equipped to accept EBT (Food Stamps), WIC Coupons, or Senior Vouchers?
__ Yes
__ No, but I would like to
__ No, not a priority at this time

FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY:

8. How interested are you in working on food security or hunger initiatives in Stark County?
__ Very interested
__ Somewhat interested
__ Neutral
__ Not interested/no time

9. Do you see any evidence that people in Stark County are at severe medical or malnutrition risks due to inadequate diet?
__ Yes, I see clear evidence of this
__ I see a little evidence of this
__ Not sure about this
__ I do not see any signs of this
__ No basis for knowing

10. What is your observation or experience with the general availability of healthy or locally grown foods Stark county at retail markets (non-farmers' markets)?
__ It is widely available throughout the county
__ It is available in a few areas in the county
__ It is very difficult to find in the county

11. What is your observation or experience with the accessibility of local food through farmers' markets in Stark county?
__ They are widely available throughout the county
__ They are available in a few areas in the county
__ They are very difficult to access in the county

12. What do you think is the **primary** barrier for people to access healthy/nutritious food in Stark County?
__ Price/affordability
__ Physical availability (stores or pantries in low-income neighborhoods don't offer many healthy food choices)
__ Low vehicle ownership prevents people from accessing food at longer distances

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__ Lack of public transit to access outlets where healthy food is available
__ Knowing how to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Having time to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Lack of exposure to healthy food options and/or non-convenience foods
__ Other not listed above

13. What do you think is the **secondary** barrier for people to access healthy food in Stark County?
__ Price/affordability
__ Physical availability (stores or pantries in low-income neighborhoods don't offer many healthy food choices)
__ Low vehicle ownership prevents people from accessing food at longer distances
__ Lack of public transit to access outlets where healthy food is available
__ Knowing how to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Having time to prepare healthy fresh food
Lack of exposure to healthy food options and/or non-convenience foods
__ Other not listed above

14. Which of the following do you think would do the most to improve food access and healthy diets in Stark county?
__ Improving capacity for emergency food relief to offer healthy food choices
__ Improving access to healthy/affordable foods throughout county (more retail, farmers' markets, etc.)
__ Developing new enterprises/workforce around local food systems in Stark County (i.e. increasing the supply of local food by having more food grown/produced/processed/consumed in Stark County)
__ OTHER (Define)_____

Connection to food access

15. Do you donate surplus or secondary produce or other foods to pantries or hot meal or community food programs?
__ Yes
__ No but would interested in exploring this
__ No this is not a priority at this time

16. Do you sell surplus or secondary produce or other foods at discounted rates (through Ohio's Agricultural Clearance Program or directly to food banks/shelters)?
__ Yes
__ No but would interested in exploring this
__ No this is not a priority at this time
__ Does not apply to me

16. If you could pick **ONE** area that you think could best support the growth of local farmers or local food businesses in Stark County, which would it be:
__ Providing investment capital to help start-up or expand local food or farm enterprises
__ Mentorship program for emerging food and farm entrepreneurs
__ Teaching workshops for food or farm entrepreneurs
__ Network of farms or businesses open for tours or information sharing
__ Development of a "local food hub" which would provide support for aggregation, warehousing, and distribution of locally produced products
__ Development of a kitchen incubator or shared-use facility that would support value-added production of local food products (I.e. canning, freezing, baking, dehydrating, fermentation, etc.)
__ Youth education (I.e. class field trips, internships, etc.)
__ Other

17. If you could pick a **SECOND** area that you think could best support the growth of local farmers or local food businesses in Stark County, which would it be:
__ I do not have any other areas other than what I identified in the prior question
__ Providing investment capital to help start-up or expand local food or farm enterprises
__ Mentorship program for emerging food and farm entrepreneurs
__ Teaching workshops for food or farm entrepreneurs
__ Network of farms or businesses open for tours or information sharing
__ Development of a "local food hub" which would provide support for aggregation, warehousing, and distribution of locally produced products
__ Development of a kitchen incubator or shared-use facility that would support value-added production of local food products (I.e. canning, freezing, baking, dehydrating, fermentation, etc.)
__ Youth education (I.e. class field trips, internships, etc.)
__ Other

18. If you could identify one area, which of the following activities would you **most** be interested in being involved with in the coming year?
__ Improving availability of nutritious, fresh, locally grown foods in emergency food relief/ food pantries
__ Improving healthy food access/local food outlets throughout county
__ Increasing the availability of local foods through urban gardens/farms
__ Increasing participation among local farms and food businesses to connect with food outlets in Stark County
__ Organizing community economic development activities in the local food sector that focus on increasing the amount of food grown/processed in Stark County (i.e. entrepreneurship, workforce development, kitchen incubators, etc.)

19. Are there other activities that you would suggest that are not included above?
__ Other--- list here

20. How willing would you be to convene and/or coordinate a group working on the above activity?
__ Very willing
__ Somewhat willing
__ Not sure
__ Not a priority at this time

__ Already active in a group concerning this topic

21. How interested are you in working with other organizations, farmers, or businesses on food access and hunger activities?
__ Very willing
__ Somewhat willing
__ Not sure
__ Not a priority at this time

Involvement in Special Projects

22. Are you involved in programs providing food to children (backpacks for kids, after-school and summer feeding sites, edible schoolyard projects)?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ No not a priority at this time

23. Are you involved in programs providing healthy food to schools (farm to school programs, edible schoolyards)?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ No not a priority at this time

24. Are you involved in community gardens and/or a garden network?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ No not a priority at this time

25. Are you involved in fresh food/produce distribution to pantries or hot meal sites?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ No not a priority at this time

26. Are you involved in health and nutrition education?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ No not a priority at this time

27. Are you involved in teaching how to cook healthy foods?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ No not a priority at this time

28. Are you involved in working with EBT at Farmers Markets, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and/or WIC at Farmers Markets or other local food outlets?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ No not a priority at this time

PERSPECTIVES ON FOOD & HUNGER:

35. The next several questions address different perspectives on addressing food security. State how much you dis/agree with the following statements. If an individual is facing hunger or food security challenges, they have likely made bad choices in their life.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

36. Individuals should ultimately be responsible for meeting their own food needs and the most effective programs are those that provide tools for self-sufficiency so that people only need to rely on food aid for a short period of time.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

37. Hunger is a community issue and community members need to be vigilant to ensure that no one in their community is at risk of going hungry from lack of access to food.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

38. There will always be individuals that will need some level of food relief and it does not make sense to expect all clients to achieve self-sufficiency.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

39. Food insecurity results from a a lack of adequate economic opportunity (i.e. stable jobs, living wage, growth in local economy) and economic development will ease long-term food insecurity challenges
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree

__ Strongly Disagree

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:

34. Gender
__ Male
__ Female
__ Do not wish to answer

35. Age
__ Under 18
__ 18 to 25
__ 26 to 35
__ 36-50
__ 50-65
__ Over 65
__ Do not wish to answer

36.What is your racial or ethnic background?
__ African-American
__ First Nation/Native American
__ Asian/Pacific
__ Caucasian
__ Hispanic/Latino
__ Other, please specify
__ Do not wish to answer

40. Would you be interested in participating in a community learning and networking event later this spring to review the results of this survey and identify new collaborations in local food an hunger?
__ Yes
__ No

41. Is there a day in the week that you would prefer to participate in such an event?
__ Saturday Preferred
__ Any Weekday
__ Monday
__ Tuesday
__ Wednesday
__ Thursday
__ Friday
__ Will not be able to participate at this time

Network Relationship Questions

1.Which individuals have you worked with on a collaborative project(s) related to food access or hunger (not just know the person but have worked with them on an activity such as organizing a workshop, joint planning, coordinating food distribution, etc.)?

2.Who would you like to work with (that you haven't worked with before) on a project that would make a positive difference for food access or ending hunger in our community in the next year?

3.From whom do you get new ideas, help or practices that increase the effectiveness of your food access or ending hunger efforts? (include individuals and organizations from outside your community as well as those in Stark County)

4. Please list names (and organizational affiliation if possible) of people who would add diversity, new perspectives, and energy to food access or ending hunger projects in our community.

MENTION/PROVIDE DEFINITIONS FOR FOOD SECURITY

STARK COUNTY FOOD AND HUNGER SURVEY
March 2014
Supporting Organizations Survey

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION:

1. Describe the primary focus of your organization/agency:
__ Municipal government
__ County government
__ State or Federal government
__ Extension services
__ University/College
__ Private/public foundation
__ Health care institution
__ Association such as Chamber of Commerce
__ For-profit corporation/business
__ Other

2. Number of paid staff in the organization with which you are affiliated.
__ Do not have information to answer this
__ 0 Staff (all volunteer)
__ 1-2 staff
__ 2 to 10 staff
__ 11-20 staff
__ 21-35 staff
__ 36+ staff
__ I'm independent and not in a formal organization

WORK IN STARK COUNTY:

3. What **ONE** activity do you contribute most to support food security efforts in Stark County
__ grant funding
__ donations
__ volunteers (employees, adults)
__ service learning (students/youth)
__ entrepreneurship support/training
__ research/evaluation services
__ Public policy/advocacy
__ Teaching/training activities
__ Health screenings/healthy living/nutrition
__ Other please specify

4. What **SECONDARY** activity do you contribute most to support food security efforts in Stark County
__ Do not participate in additional activity other than what is listed in preceding question
__ grant funding
__ donations
__ volunteers (employees)
__ service learning (students)
__ entrepreneurship support/training
__ research/evaluation services
__ Public policy/advocacy
__ Teaching/training activities
__ Health screenings/healthy living/nutrition
__ Other please specify

Describe specific programs or initiatives that your organization provides for addressing hunger or local food system issues.

FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY:

5. How interested are you in working on food security or hunger initiatives in Stark County?
__ Very interested
__ Somewhat interested
__ Neutral
__ Not interested

6. Do you see any evidence that people in Stark County are at severe medical or malnutrition risks due to inadequate diet?
__ Yes, I see clear evidence of this
__ I see a little evidence of this
__ Not sure about this
__ I do not see any signs of this
__ No basis for knowing

7. What is your observation or experience with the general availability of healthy and locally grown foods Stark county at retail markets (non-farmers' markets)?
__ It is widely available throughout the county
__ It is available in a few areas in the county
__ It is very difficult to find in the county

8. What do you think is the **primary** barrier for people to access or utilize healthy/ nutritious food in Stark County?
__ Price/affordability
__ Physical availability (stores or pantries in low-income neighborhoods don't offer many healthy food choices)

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__ Low vehicle ownership prevents people from accessing food at longer distances
__ Lack of public transit to access to outlets where healthy food is available
__ Knowing how to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Having time to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Lack of exposure to healthy food options and/or non-convenience foods
__ Other not listed above

9. What do you think is the **secondary** barrier for people to access healthy food in Stark County?
__ Price/affordability
__ Physical availability (stores or pantries in low-income neighborhoods don't offer many healthy food choices)
__ Low vehicle ownership prevents people from accessing food at longer distances
__ Lack of public transit to access to outlets where healthy food is available
__ Knowing how to prepare healthy fresh food
__ Having time to prepare healthy fresh food
Lack of exposure to healthy food options and/or non-convenience foods
__ Other not listed above

10. Which of the following do you think would do the most to improve food access and healthy diets in Stark county?
__ Improving capacity for emergency food relief to offer healthy food choices
__ Improving access to healthy/affordable foods throughout county (more retail, farmers' markets, etc.)
__ Developing new enterprises/workforce around local food systems in Stark County (i.e. increasing the supply of local food by having more food grown/produced/processed/consumed in Stark County)
__ OTHER (Define)_____

FOOD HUNGER INVOLVEMENT/ACTIVITY:

11. Which of the following activities would you most be interested in being involved with in the coming year?
__ Improving availability of nutritious, fresh, locally grown foods in emergency food relief/ food pantries
__ Improving healthy food access/local food outlets throughout county
__ Increasing the availability of local foods through urban gardens or local farms
__ Increasing participation among local farms and food businesses to connect with food outlets in Stark County
__ Organizing community economic development activities in the local food sector that focus on increasing the amount of food grown/processed in Stark County (i.e. entrepreneurship, workforce development, kitchen incubators, etc.)

12. Are there other activities that you would suggest that are not included above?
__ Other--- list here

13. How willing would you be to convene and/or coordinate a group working on the above activity?
__ Very willing
__ Somewhat willing
__ Not sure
__ Not willing at this time
__ Already active in a group concerning this topic

14. How interested are you in working with other organizations, farmers, or businesses on food security?
__ Very willing
__ Somewhat willing
__ Not sure
__ Not willing at this time

PERSPECTIVES ON FOOD & HUNGER:

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

15. The next several questions address different perspectives on addressing food security. State how much you dis/agree with the following statements. If an individual is facing hunger or food security challenges, they have likely made bad choices in their life.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

16. Individuals should ultimately be responsible for meeting their own food needs and the most effective programs are those that provide tools for self-sufficiency so that people only need to rely on food aid for a short period of time.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

17. Hunger is a community issue and community members need to be vigilant to ensure that no one in their community is at risk of going hungry from lack of access to food.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral

__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

18. There will always be individuals that will need some level of emergency food relief and it does not make sense to expect all clients to achieve self-sufficiency.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

19. Food insecurity results from a a lack of adequate economic opportunity (i.e. stable jobs, living wage, growth in local economy) and positive economic development will ease long-term food insecurity challenges.
__ Strongly Agree
__ Somewhat Agree
__ Neutral
__ Somewhat Disagree
__ Strongly Disagree

Involvement in Special Projects

20. The next several questions include examples of special initiatives around food security. Please indicate if you or your organization are involved in programs providing food to schools (backpacks for kids, after-school and summer feeding sites, edible schoolyard projects)?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

21. Are you involved in a farm to school program which seeks to connect schools with healthy/ local foods?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

22. Are you involved in community gardens and/or a community garden network?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

23. Are you involved in fresh food/produce distribution to pantries or hot meal sites?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

24. Are you involved in providing training or education around health and nutrition?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

25. Are you involved in teaching how to cook healthy foods?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

26. Are you involved in working with EBT at Farmers Markets, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and/or WIC at Farmers Markets or retail food outlets?
__ Yes
__ No but would like to be
__ Not within the scope of my organization's work

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:
27. Gender
__ Male
__ Female
__ Do not wish to answer

28. Age
__ Under 18
__ 18 to 25
__ 26 to 35
__ 36-50
__ 50-65
__ Over 65
__ Do not wish to answer

29.What is your racial or ethnic background?
__ African-American
__ First Nation/Native American
__ Asian/Pacific
__ Caucasian
__ Hispanic/Latino
__ Other, please specify
__ Do not wish to answer

40. Would you be interested in participating in a community learning and networking event later this spring to review the results of this survey and identify new collaborations in local food an hunger?
__ Yes

__ No

41. Is there a day in the week that you would prefer to participate in such an event?
__ Saturday Preferred
__ Any Weekday
__ Monday
__ Tuesday
__ Wednesday
__ Thursday
__ Friday
__ Will not be able to participate at this time

Network Relationship Questions

1.Which individuals have you worked with on a collaborative project(s) related to food access or hunger (not just know the person but have worked with them on an activity such as organizing a workshop, joint planning, coordinating food distribution, etc.)?

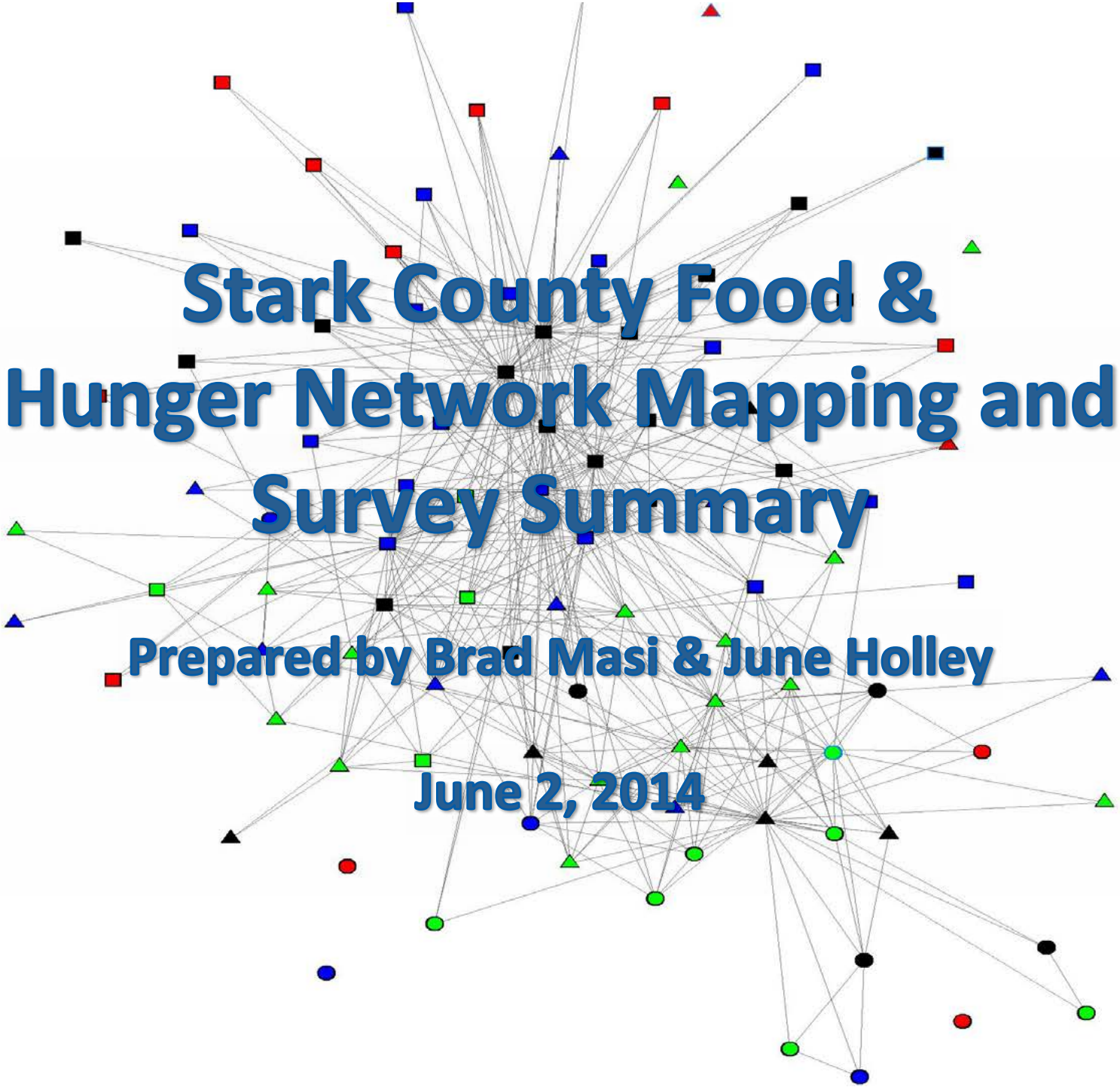
2.Who would you like to work with (that you haven't worked with before) on a project that would make a positive difference for food access or ending hunger in our community in the next year?

3.From whom do you get new ideas, help or practices that increase the effectiveness of your food access or ending hunger efforts? (include individuals and organizations from outside your community as well as those in Stark County)

4. Please list names (and organizational affiliation if possible) of people who would add diversity, new perspectives, and energy to food access or ending hunger projects in our community.

NETWORK MAPPING AND SURVEY RESULTS

Stark County Food Security Stakeholders



Stark County Food & Hunger Network Mapping and Survey Summary

Prepared by Brad Masi & June Holley

June 2, 2014

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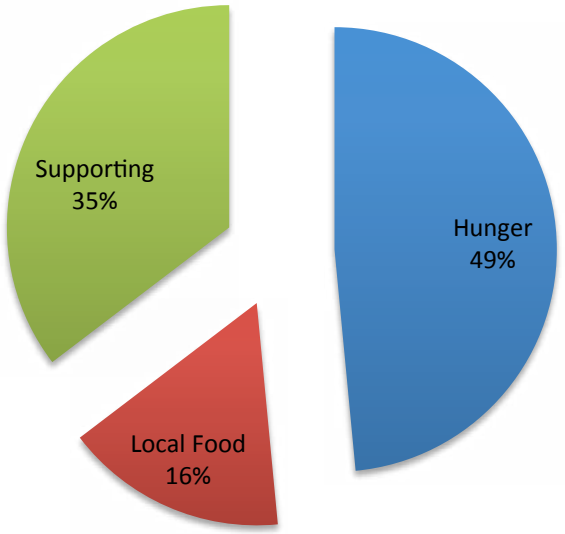
Survey Response Rate

The survey was sent survey to 195 individuals with 101 individuals responding for a 52% response rate. People added 20 new unique names of other individuals that they felt should be included in the network. Typically, a higher response rate would be desirable, but this mapping process provides a good start for a less well-developed network.

Sectors of Survey Respondents



Sectors of Respondents: About 49% or half of the respondents came from the "Hunger Sector" which includes food pantries, hot meal programs, community gardens, food banks, or pick-up/distribution of food for food relief. Another 35% of respondents came from the "Supporting Sector" which includes organizations that support hunger relief efforts beyond the direct provision of food, including private or public foundations, universities or colleges, government, health care institutions, cooperative extension, or non-food businesses. The remaining 16% of respondents came from the "Local Food Sector" which includes food or farm enterprises that sell products to local markets, including rural farmers, urban market gardeners, locavore restaurants, or farmer's markets.

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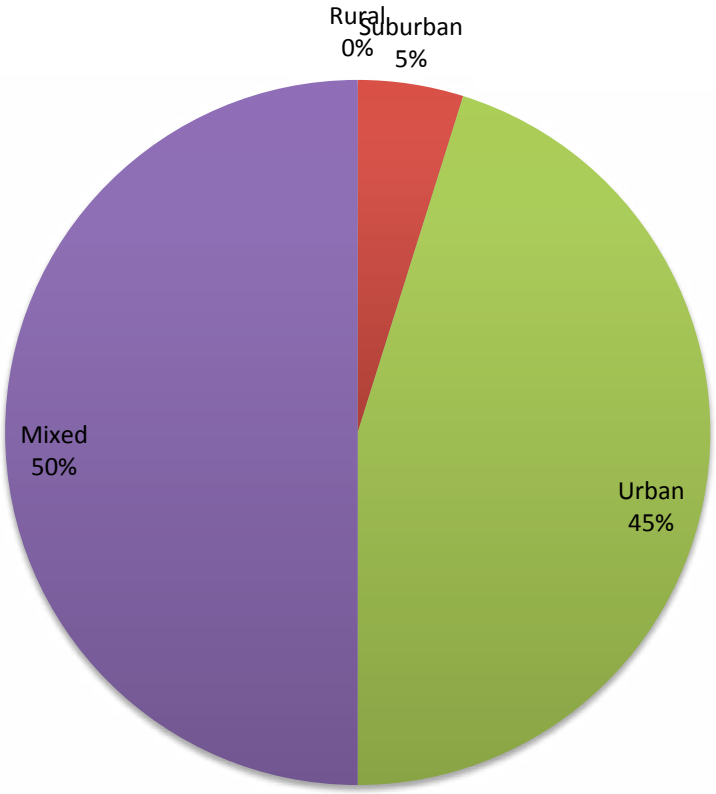
Where do you do most of your work?



In terms of the origins of their client base, 45% of respondents served urban-based clients, 5% focused on sub-urban clients, and 50% reported a “mixed” clientele which includes urban, suburban, or rural. None of the respondents indicated a focus on an exclusively rural clientele. This raises questions about the capacity for addressing rural food access issues. Almost all food relief agencies are based in the urban centers of Stark County in areas where densities of people requiring services are based, with Canton being the primary center. Several emergency food providers indicated that they serve clients that have migrated from rural areas to seek services.

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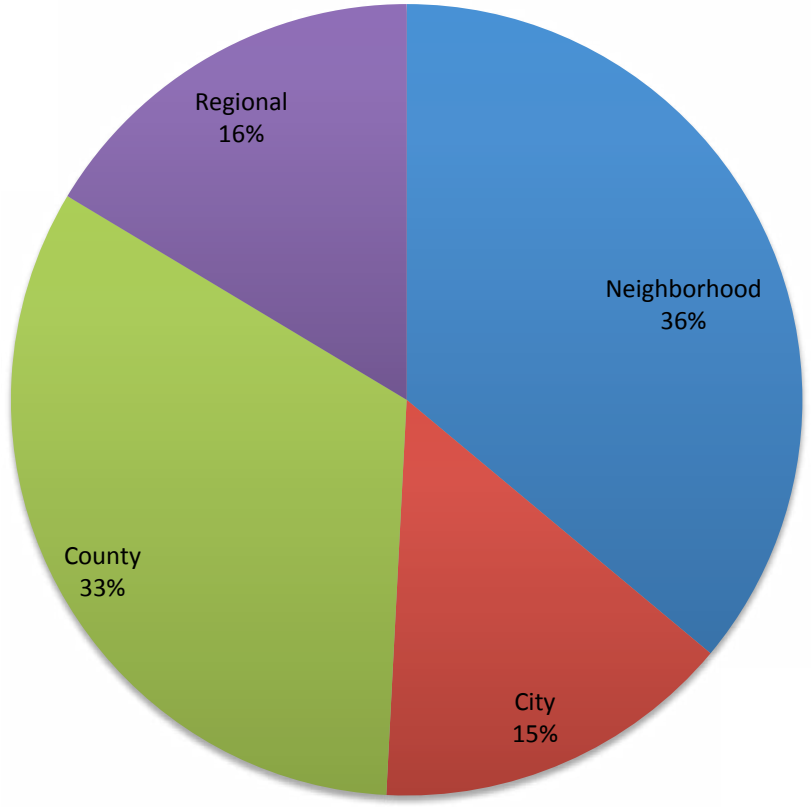
At what scale do you primarily work?



This question covered the extent of each organization's reach. Of respondents, about 49% worked on either the regional or the county scale. The remaining 51% worked within municipal boundaries with 15% describing themselves as city-wide and the remaining 36% focusing on a specific neighborhood.

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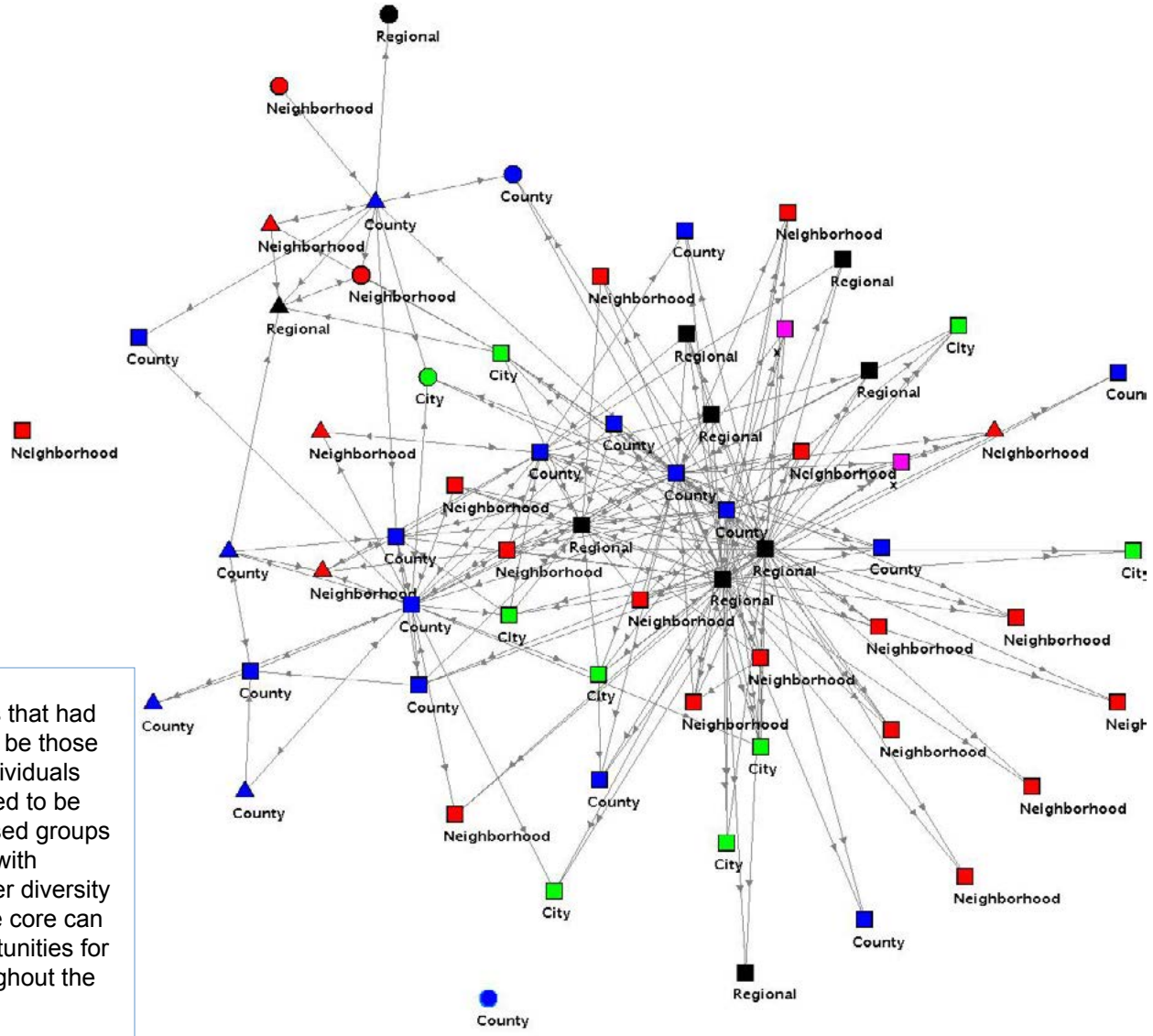
Scale of Organizational Work

Legend

- Neighborhood
- City
- County
- Regional

- ◯ Local Food
- △ Supporting
- □ Hunger



In terms of network connectivity, the individuals that had the most dense network connections tended to be those that worked at the regional or county scale. Individuals working at the city or neighborhood-scale tended to be more on the periphery of networks. County-based groups tend to be more connected to each other than with groups working at other scales. Creating greater diversity between different scales of organizations at the core can strengthen the network and provide new opportunities for innovations and learning to spread wider throughout the network.

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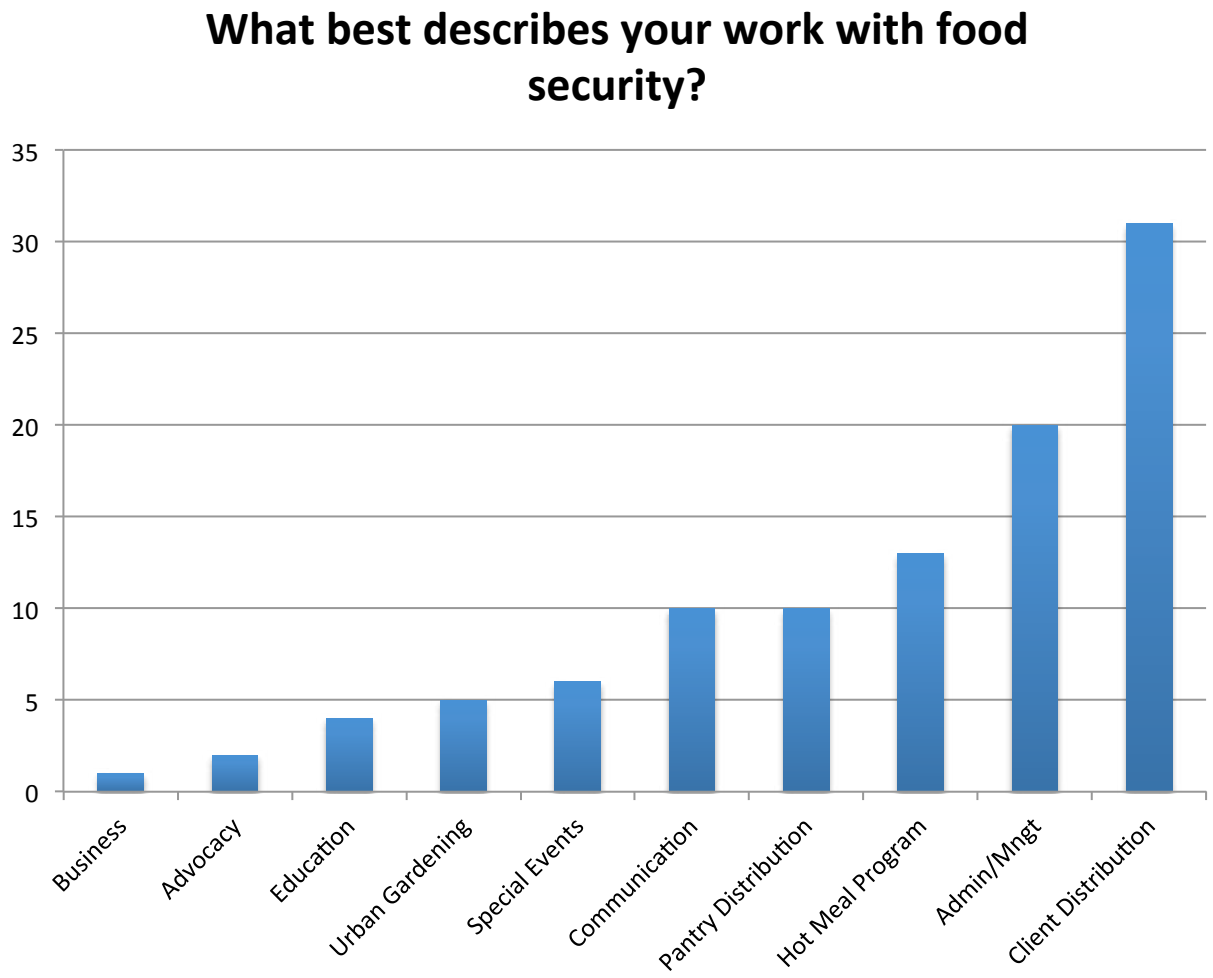

Among the respondents in the hunger sector, the majority of individuals worked with “client distribution” where they directly provide food to clients seeking food assistance. The second area most common focused on individuals engaged in administration or management. The third area of individuals focused on communication, hot meal programs, or distributing food to food pantries (not serving clients directly). Fewer respondents were involved with organizing special events, urban gardening, education, advocacy, or business management.

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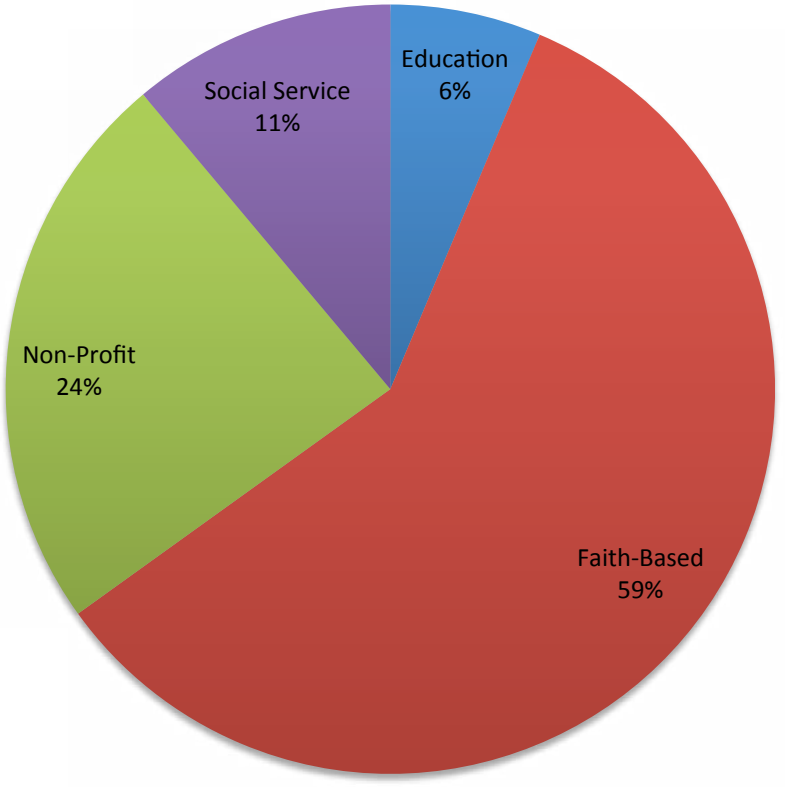
How would you charecterize your organization?



Faith-based organizations and churches play an essential role in the provision of hunger services in Stark County communities, with 59% of respondents characterizing their organization as “faith-based”. Another 24% were identified as non-profit organizations. Social service organizations comprised 11% of the respondents followed by 6% for education.

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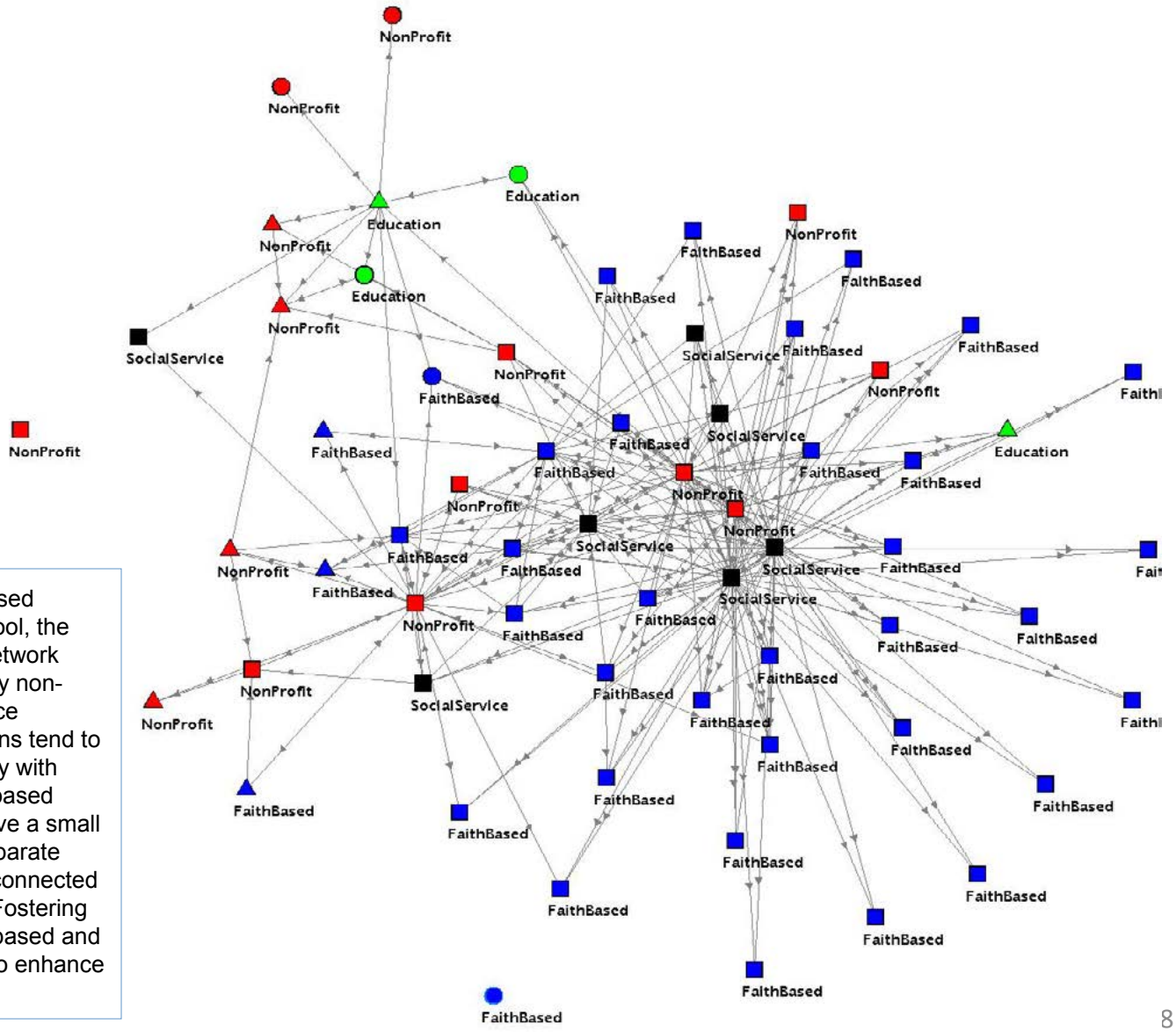
Organizations by Type

Legend

- Non-Profit
- Faith-Based
- Social Service
- Education

- ◯ Local Food
- △ Supporting
- □ Hunger



Despite the dominance of faith-based organizations in the respondent pool, the individuals with the most dense network connections tend to be from mostly non-profit organizations or social service agencies. Faith-based organizations tend to be distributed around the periphery with connections mostly to other faith-based groups. Education groups also have a small network with each other that is separate from the core of the network and connected to other non-profit organizations. Fostering activities that bring together faith-based and non-faith-based groups can help to enhance the network.

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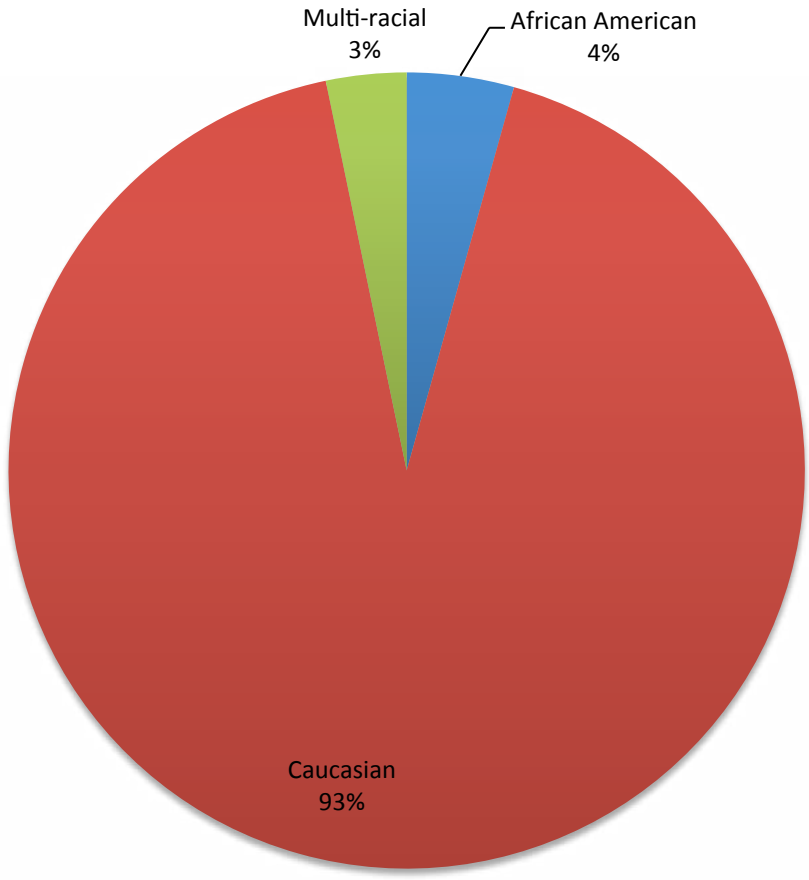
Ethnicity of Respondents



Among respondents, there is a lack of overall diversity. 93% of respondents were reported as Caucasian, 3% as multi-racial, and 4% as African-Americans. Stark County demographics as a whole are 89% white, African-Americans are 7.7%, hispanic/latino 1.7%, and mixed race are 2.2%. In Canton, which has a high concentration of emergency food programs, about 69% of the population is white, 24.2% African-American, 4.8% are mixed race, and 2.6% are hispanic or Latino.

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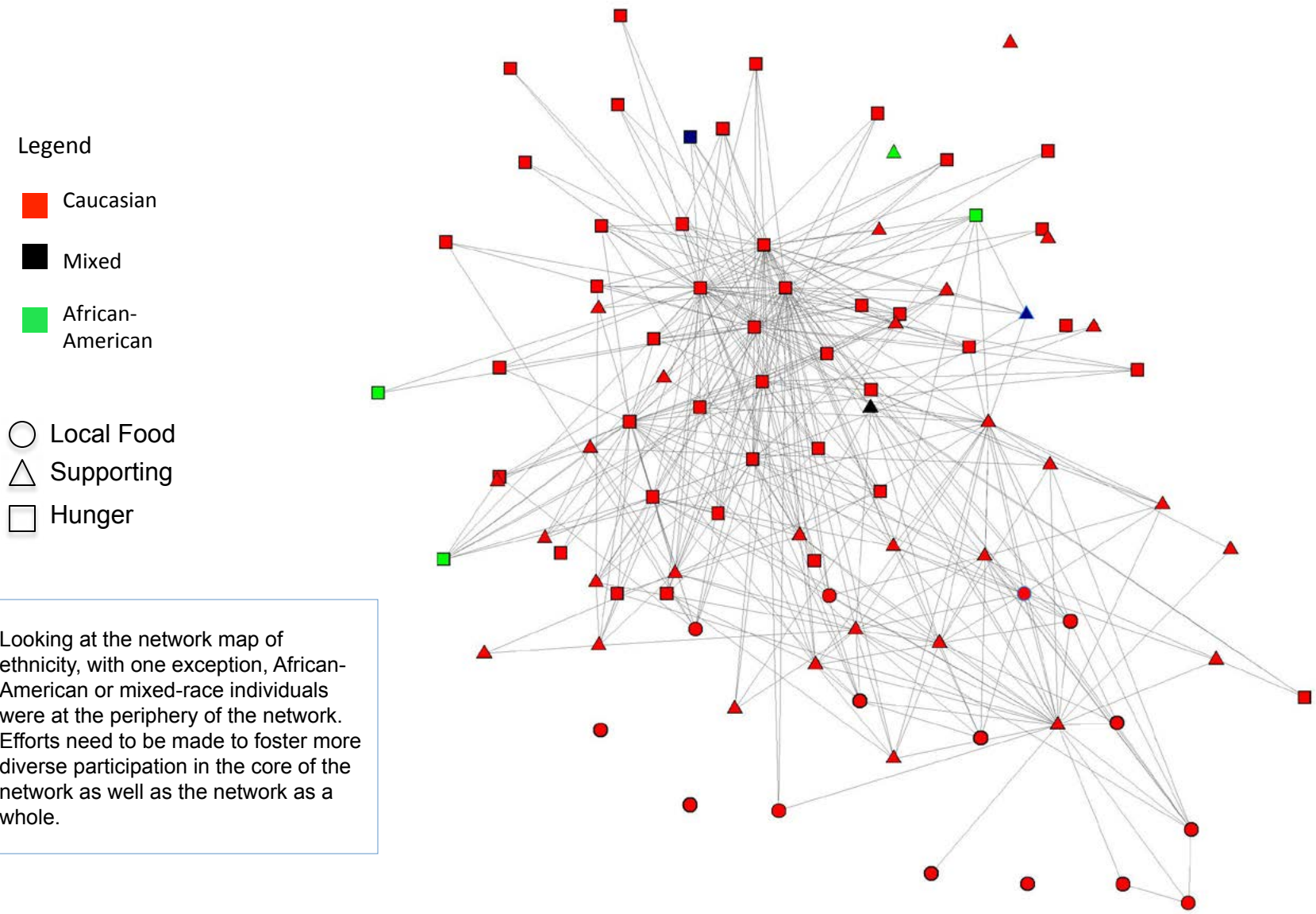
Ethnicity of Network Mapping Respondents



Looking at the network map of ethnicity, with one exception, African-American or mixed-race individuals were at the periphery of the network. Efforts need to be made to foster more diverse participation in the core of the network as well as the network as a whole.

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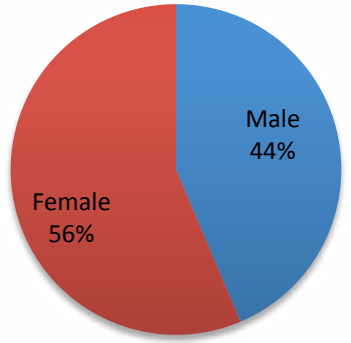
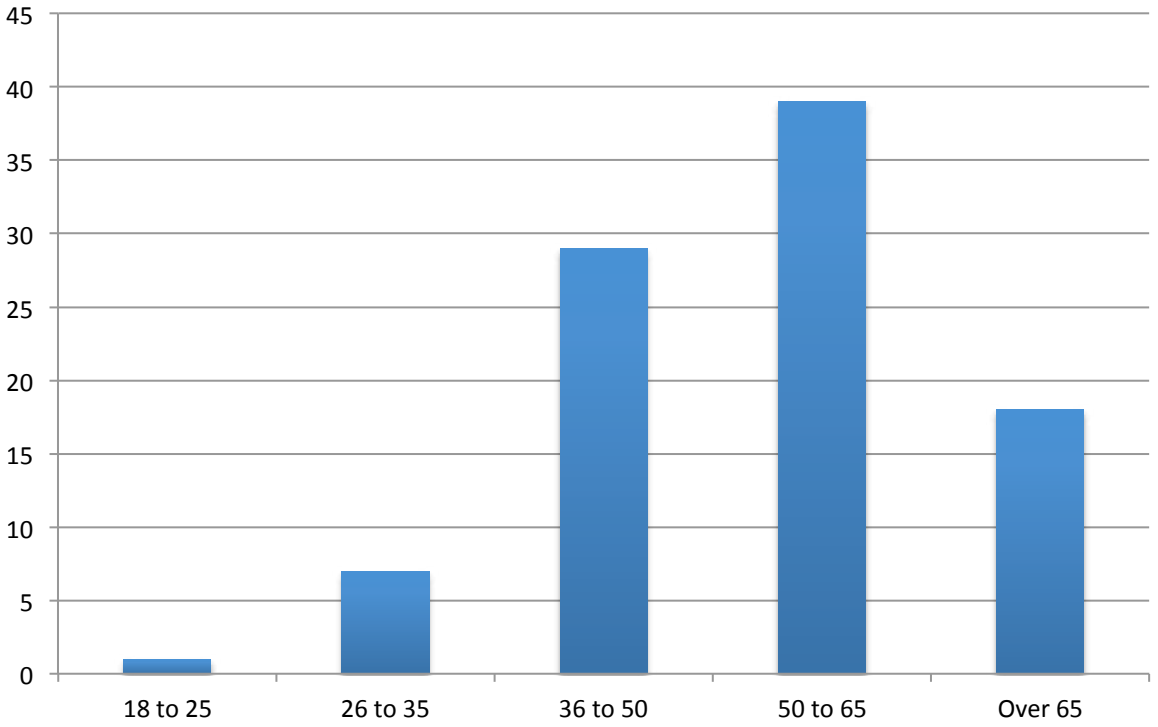
Gender of Respondents



Age of Respondents



The hunger and food network has a fairly even mix of male and female participation, with 56% female and 44% male. In terms of age, the majority of respondents are either 36 to 50 or 50 to 65. There is less, but still strong participation for individuals over the age of 65 and relatively little participation among individuals under 35 years of age.

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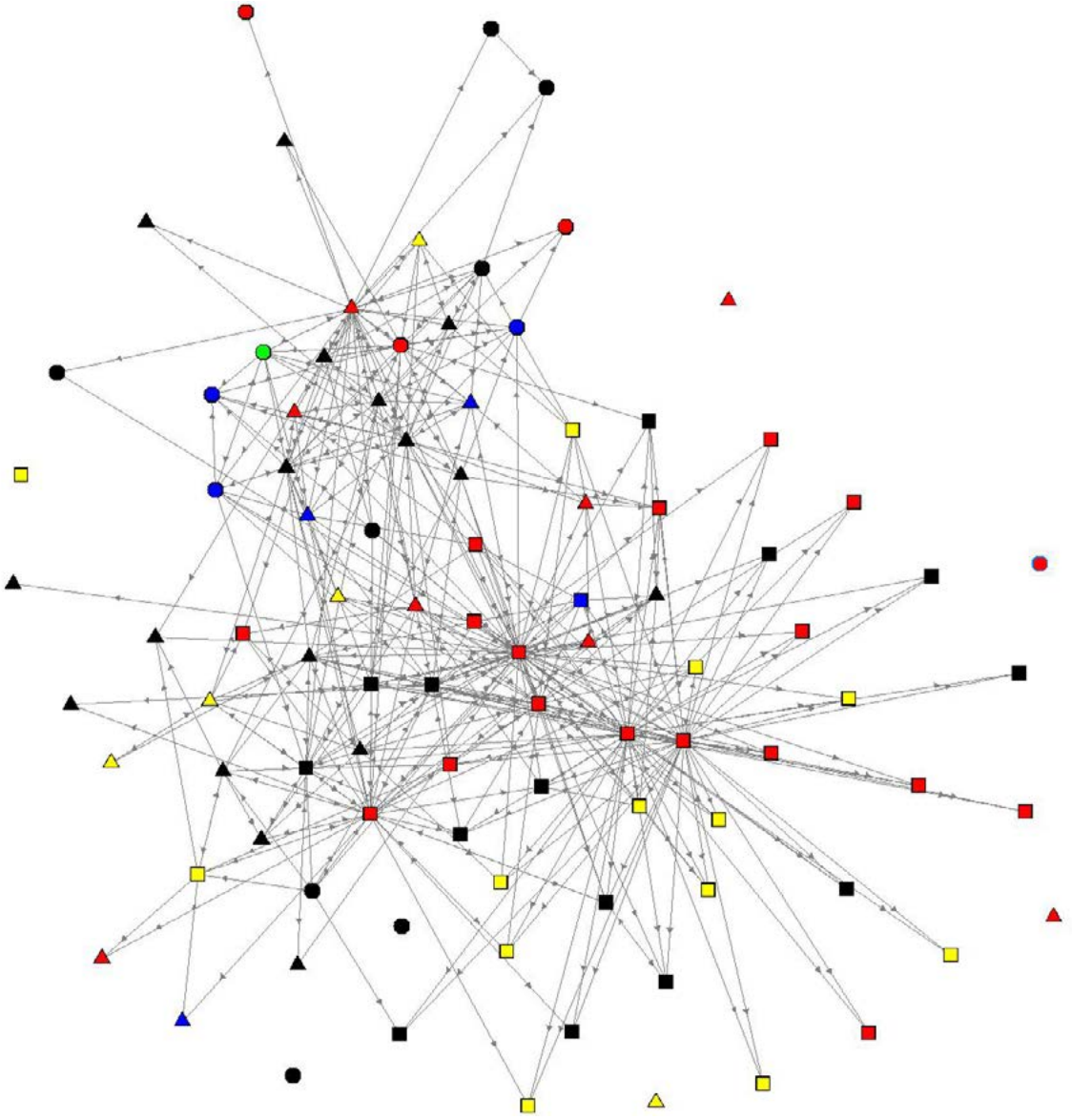
Distribution Across Age

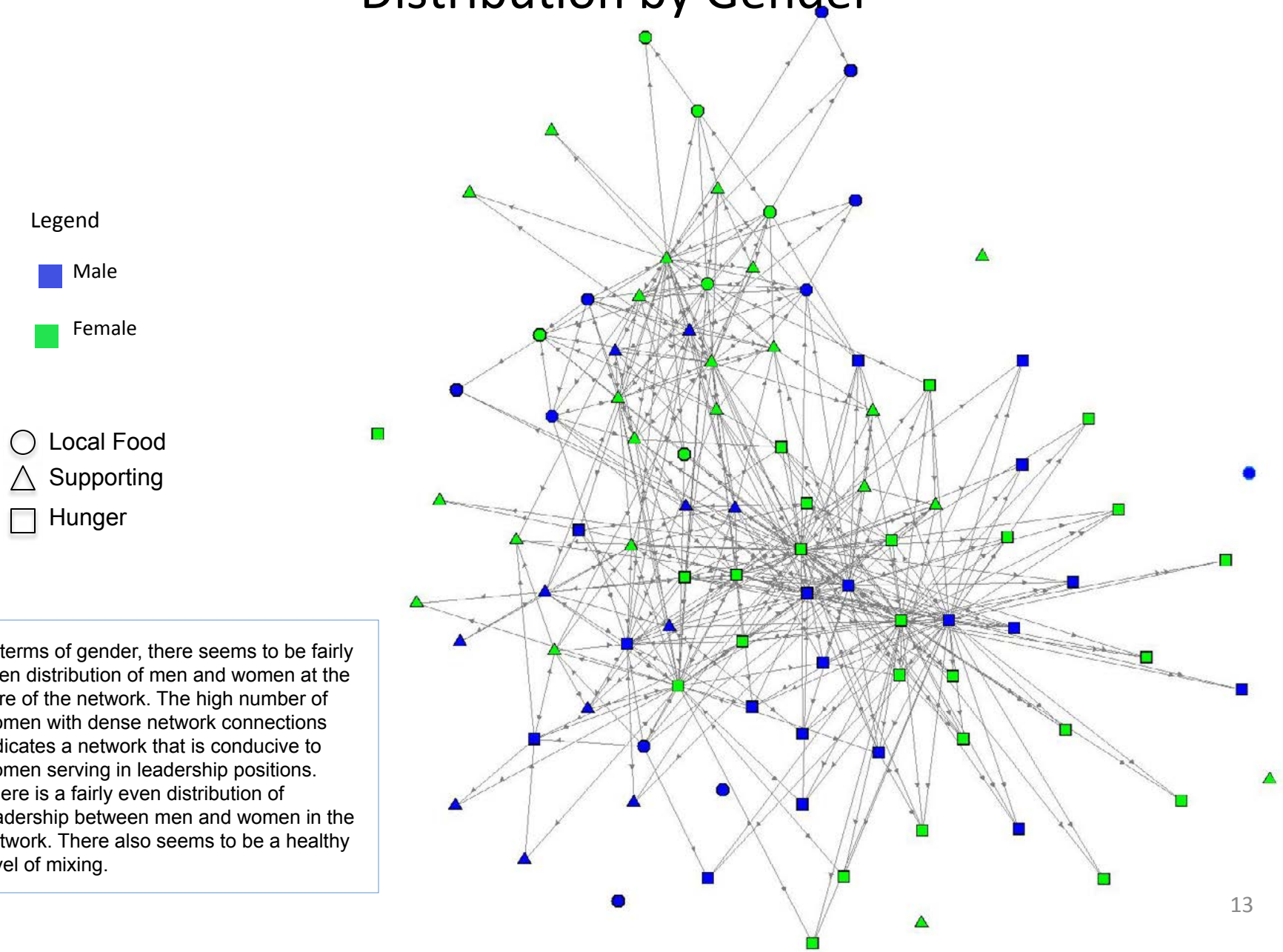
Legend

- 18 to 25 years
- 26 to 35 years
- 36 to 50 years
- 50 to 65 years
- Over 65 years



The most connected individuals in the network tend to be between 36 to 50 years of age. Within the hunger space, there does seem to be some siloing in terms of age, with one cluster of 50 to 65 year old respondents and a second cluster that has a mix of 36 to 50 year old individuals mixed with 65 and over participants. Overall, individuals age 65 and over tend to be further on the periphery.

Distribution by Gender



In terms of gender, there seems to be fairly even distribution of men and women at the core of the network. The high number of women with dense network connections indicates a network that is conducive to women serving in leadership positions. There is a fairly even distribution of leadership between men and women in the network. There also seems to be a healthy level of mixing.

Overall Networks

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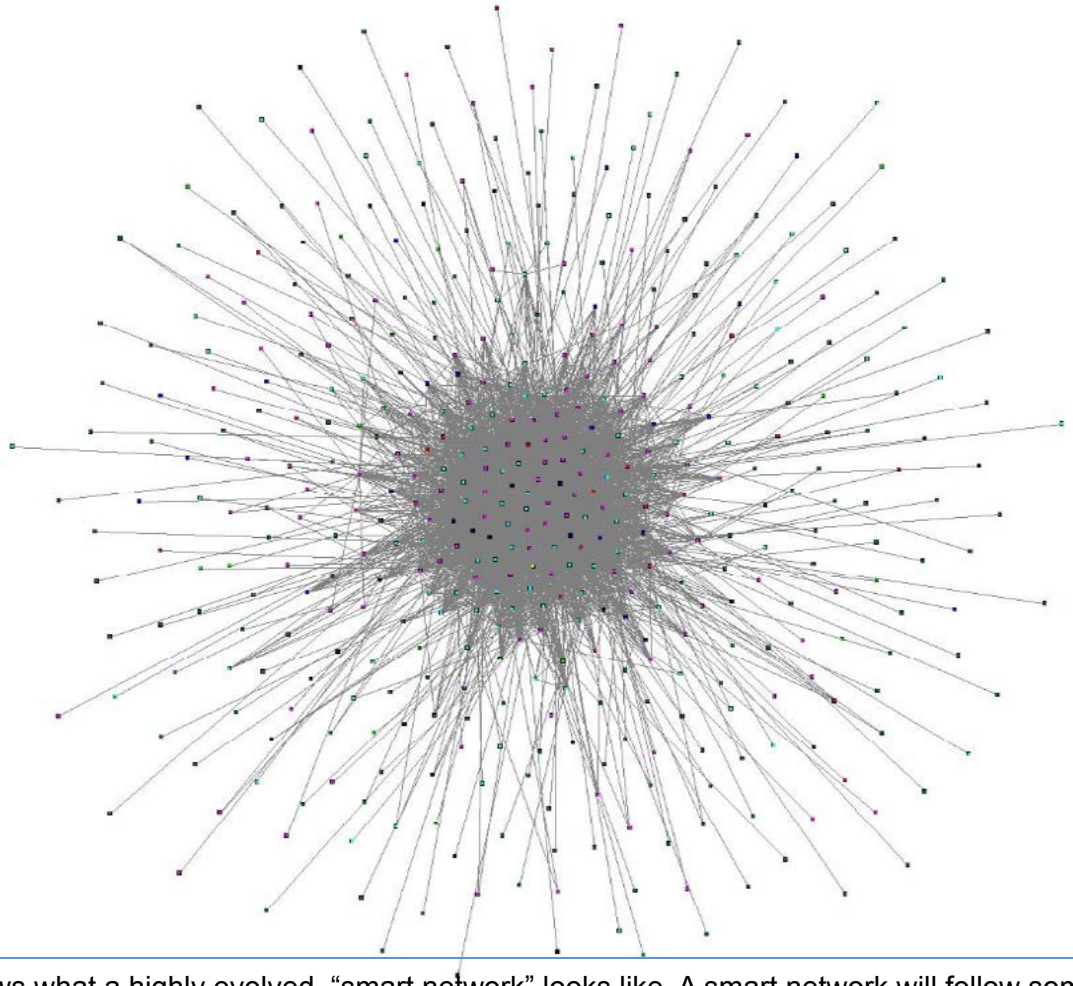
An Example of a Smart Network



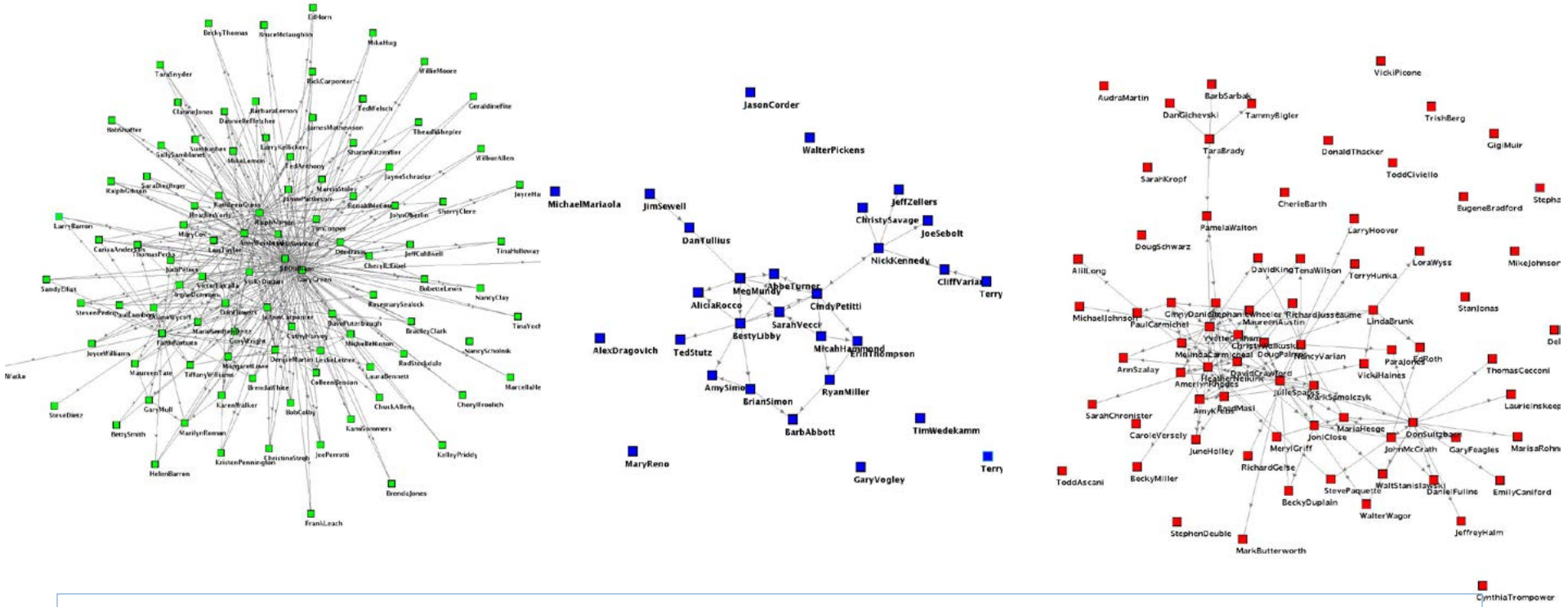
This map shows what a highly evolved, “smart network” looks like. A smart network will follow some of the following patterns: a) dense core with considerable overlap between different sectors or types of individuals, b) evidence of many successful collaborative projects across clusters, c) systems of communications and reflection allow for high awareness of the network and a higher degree of breakthroughs and innovations, and d) a connected periphery that is a source of new ideas or connections to further out communities or new networks.

Network Comparisons- Current Networks

Hunger

Local Food

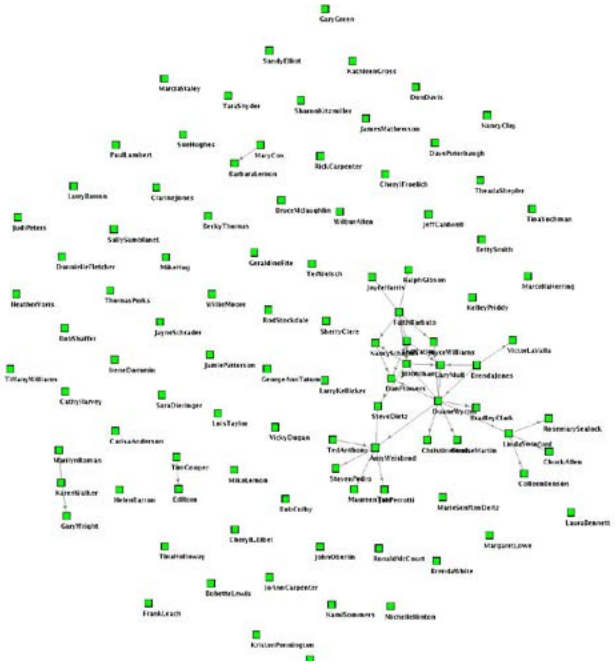
Supporting



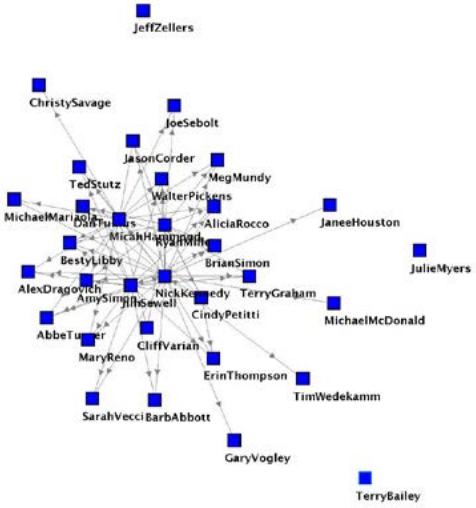
This map provides a side-by-side comparison of the three sectors that have been mapped as a part of this survey. Of the three, the Hunger Network demonstrates the greatest degree of connectivity with a fairly established core. The Local Food network depicts a much smaller sample with limited connectivity. The Supporting Network has some scattered connectivity found in smaller nodes and a lack of overall connectivity between these nodes. The nodes not over-lapping and there is a large, dis-connected periphery.

Network Comparisons- Future Collaboration Networks

Hunger



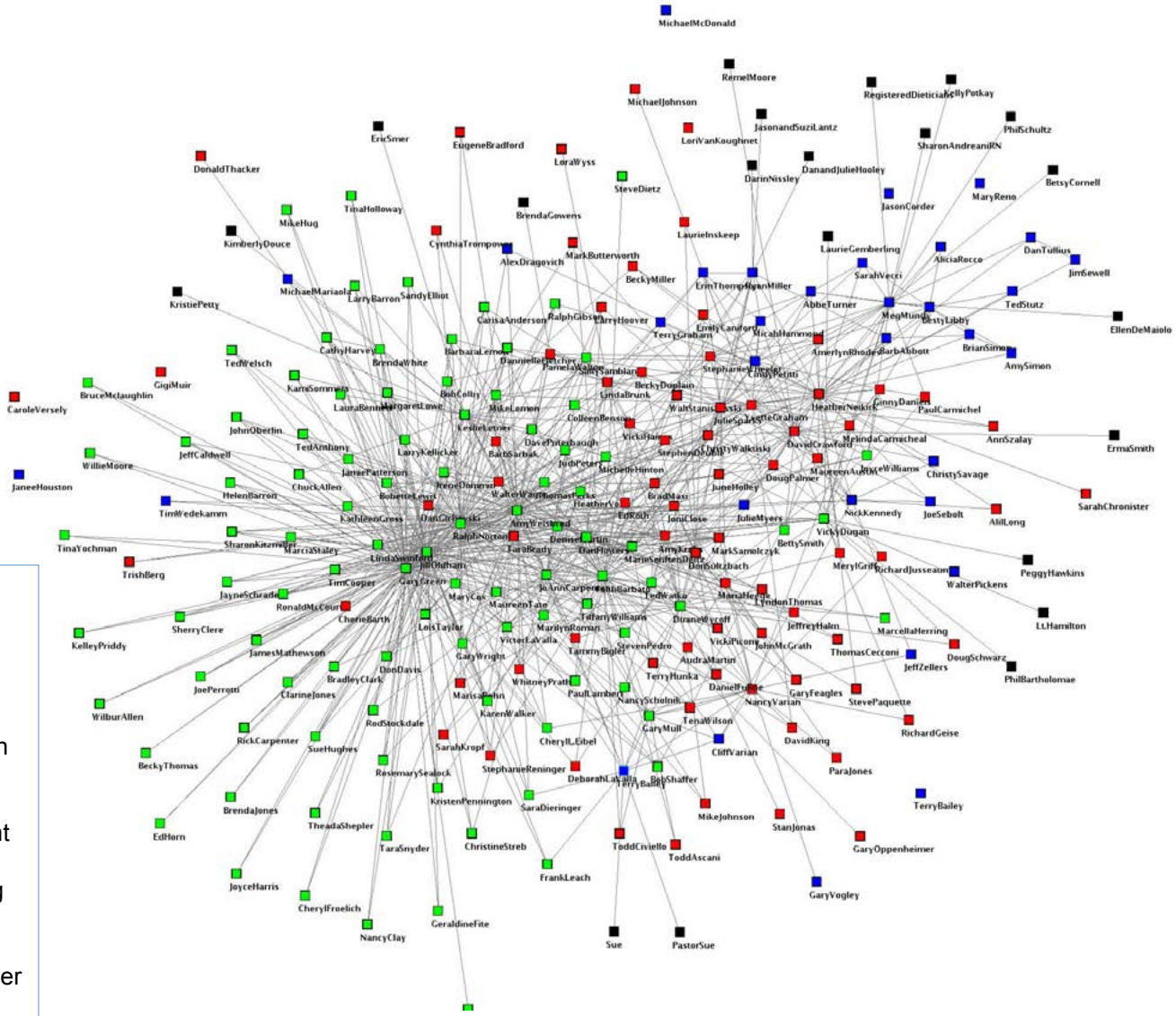
Local Food



Supporting

This map shows the interest in who people wish to connect with in the future. Both the Local Food and the Supporting networks show a high degree of interest in collaboration and network development. The Hunger Sector by itself shows little interest in individuals furthering connections with others in the Hunger Sector. There is one small area where future connections were identified. The rest of the network, particularly in the periphery, demonstrates little interest in further connecting with others in the sector.

Current Overall Network

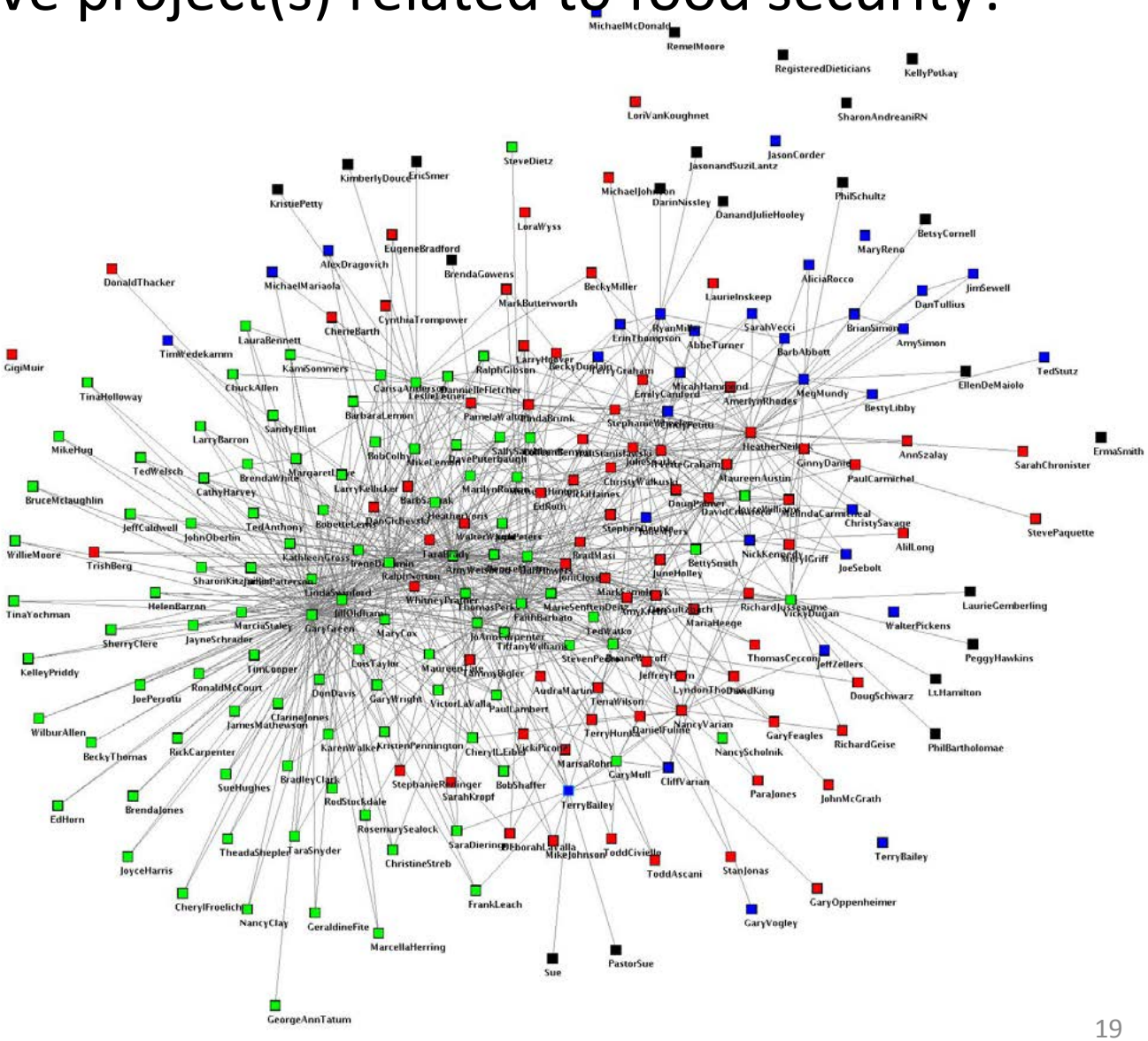


This map combines current collaboration, learning connections, and potential future connections. There is a particularly dense core of the hunger network, but it remains separate from the other sectors, even when including potential future collaborations or connections. The Supporting sector seems to represent an important bridge with local food system communities. The Supporting organizations will play an important role in fostering greater connections between local food sectors and hunger sectors.

Which individuals have you worked with on collaborative project(s) related to food security?

Legend

- Hunger
- Local Food
- Supporting
- Added



Overall, the map shows decent connectivity within the hunger sector and more limited connectivity in the local foods sector. Organizations in the Supporting sector are more scattered. Overall, the network shows that there is relatively little overlap between the three sectors. For the most part, the Local Food Sector is completely removed from the Hunger Sector, although the map reveals that several Supporting Sector individuals have network ties that can bridge hunger and local food systems.

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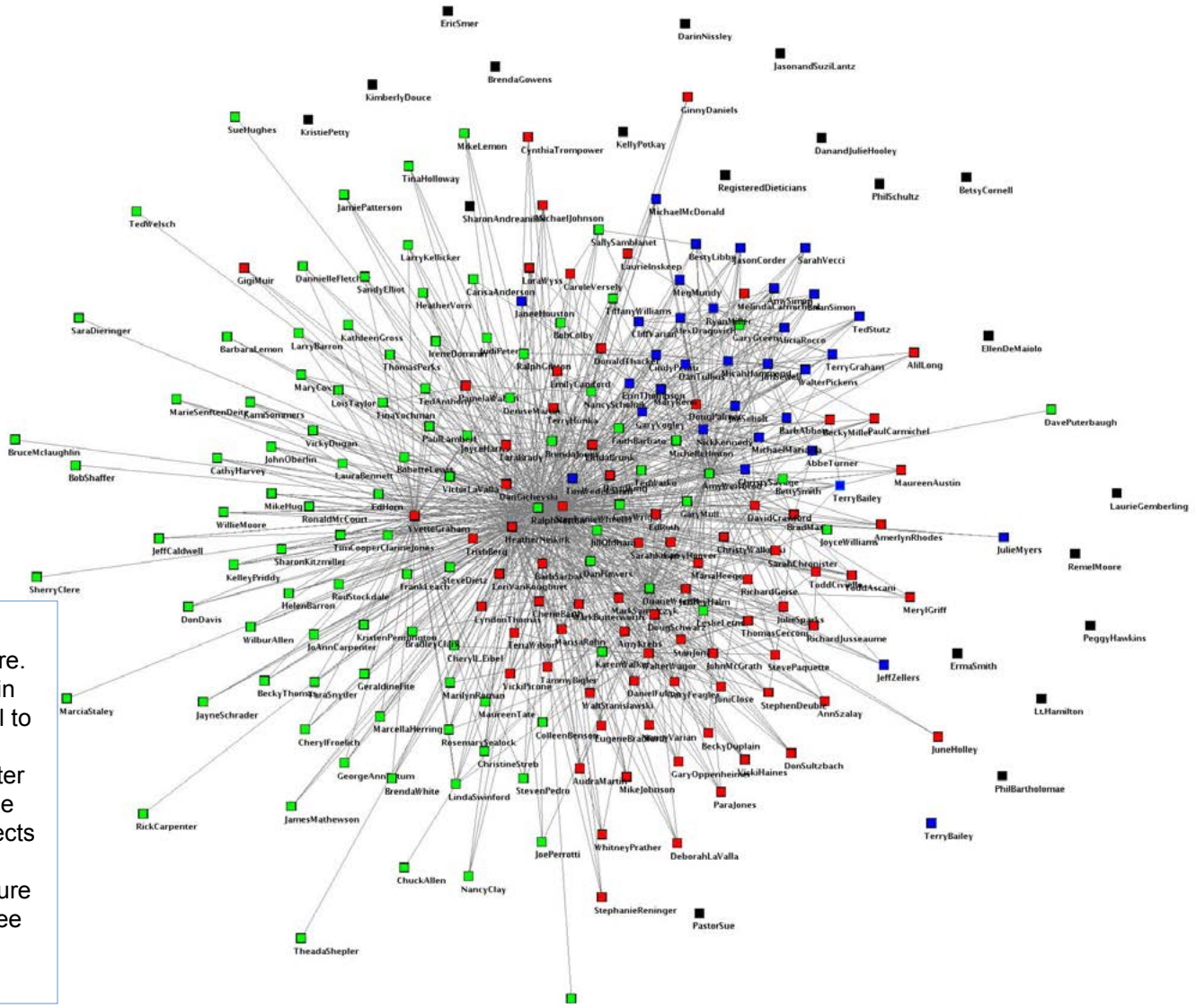
Who would you like to work with (that you haven't worked with before) on projects?

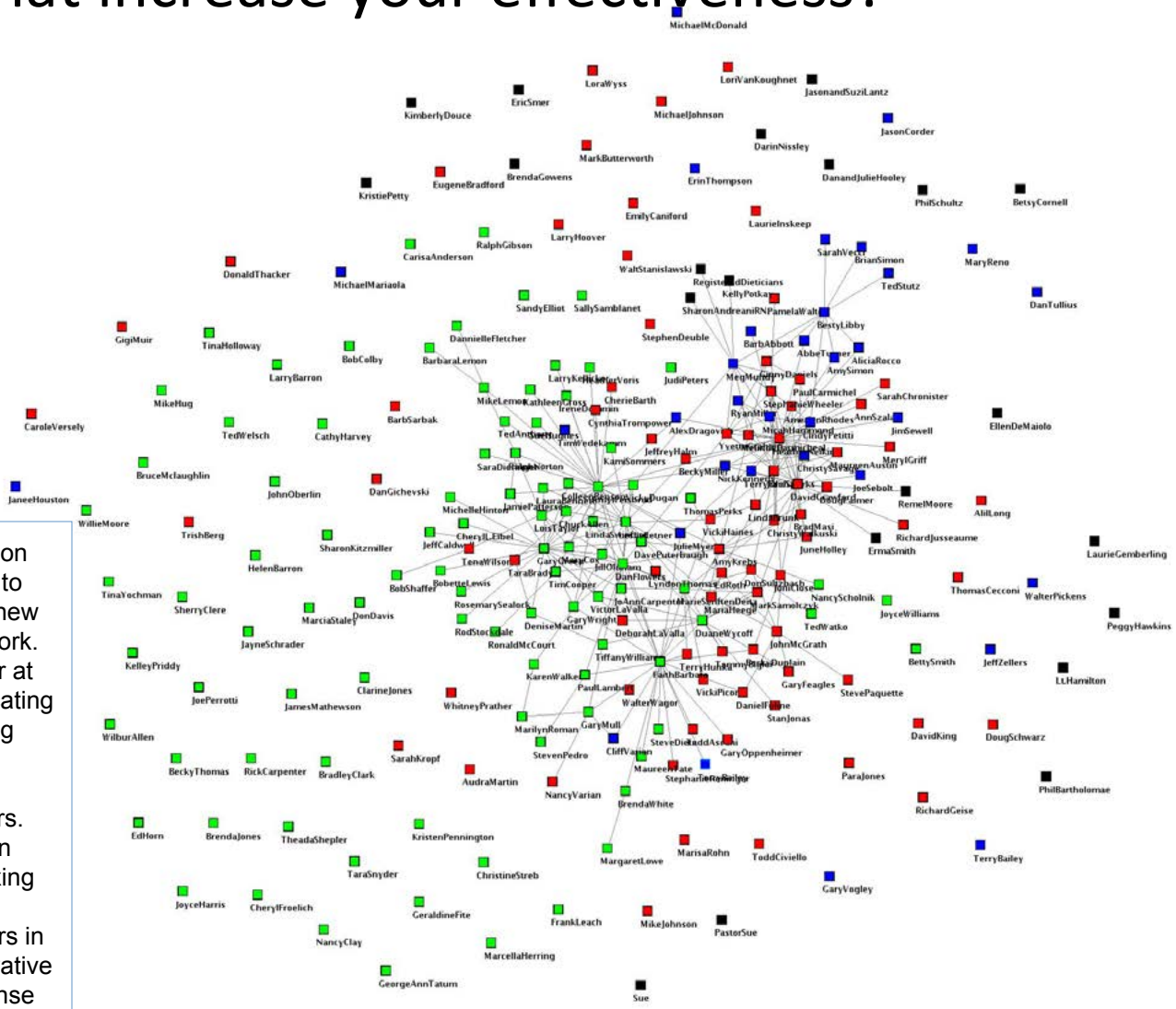


This map shows that people really want to work with others in the future. However, those people are mostly in the same sector. It would be helpful to facilitate moves toward a "smart network core" which features greater degree of overlap between the three sectors. Also, future events or projects should foster greater connection across the three sectors, as the future collaborations still show a fair degree of separation between the three sectors.

From whom do you get new ideas, help or practices that increase your effectiveness?

Legend

- Hunger
- Local Food
- Supporting
- Added

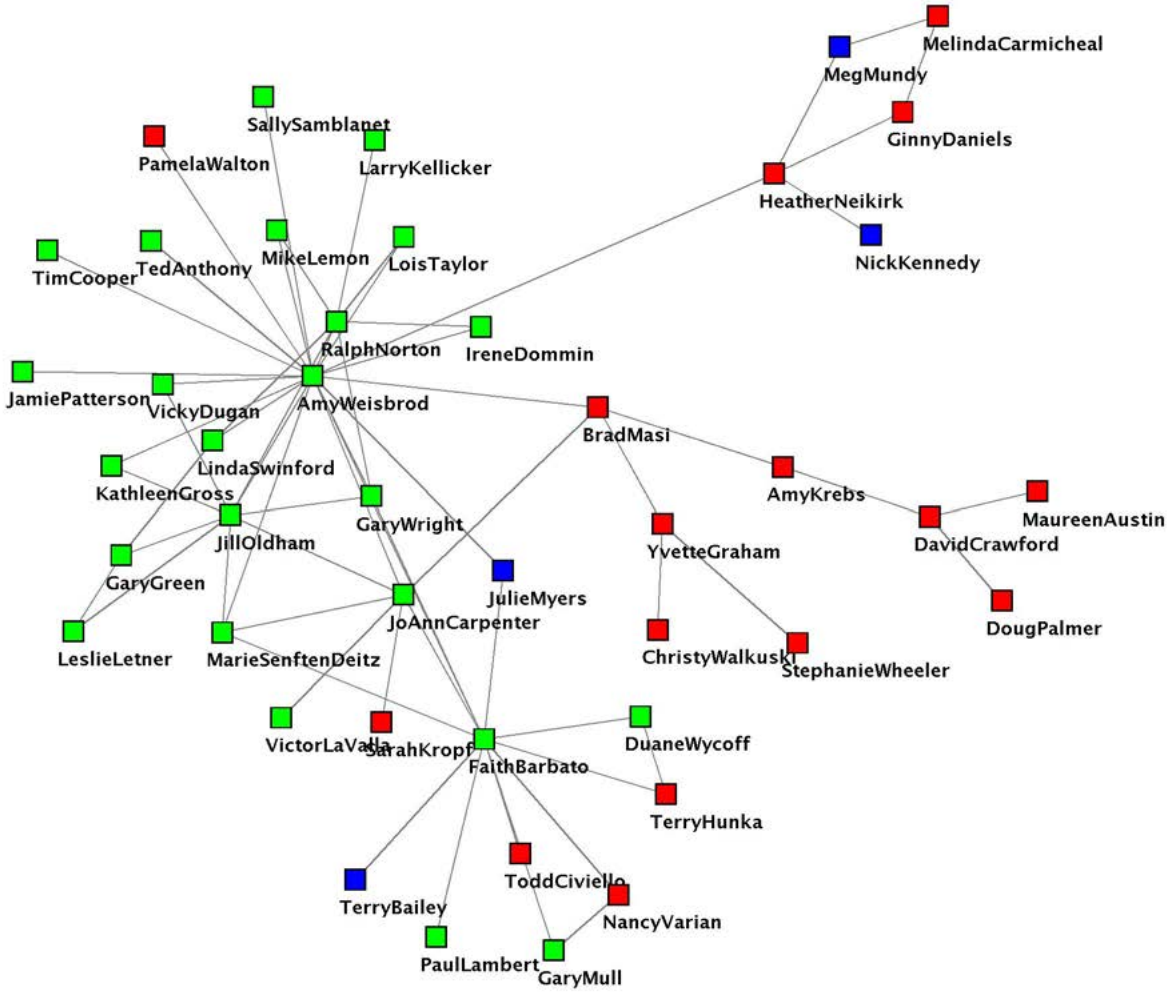


This map demonstrates the "innovation network" which indicates the degree to which individuals learn from or gain new perspectives from others in the network. There is a fairly good learning cluster at the core of the hunger network, indicating that there is some information sharing between people closer to the core. However, there is little connection between hunger and the other sectors. The Supporting Sector splits between two groups- one group has good mixing with local food groups and the other features more connections with others in the Supporting sector. In really innovative communities, this would be more dense with more mixing between sectors and a better connected periphery.

Network of Reciprocal Ties

Legend

- Supporting
- Local Food
- Hunger

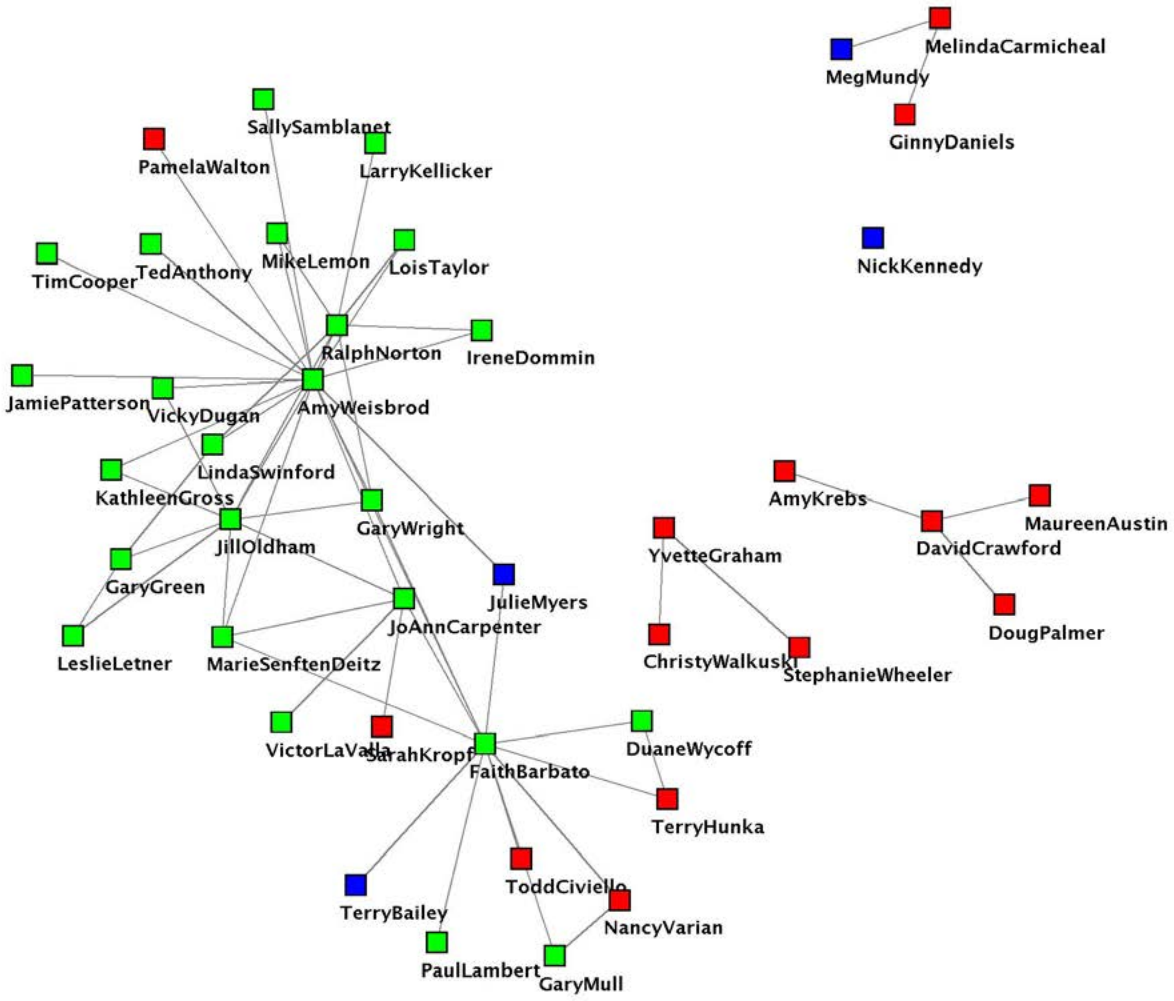


This map shows people who selected each other. This is more of the "core network". This is the network that we can be sure that exists because people chose each other. This map shows that local food is not connected. Hunger people are better connected and there are a number of sub-sets among supporting organizations, with extension services providing an important bridging role. There could be stronger connections between supporting people. Local food people are not connected to each other. Overall, a healthy network is going to need to have a denser core of reciprocal relationships.

What Happens if Brad and Heather Leave the Network?

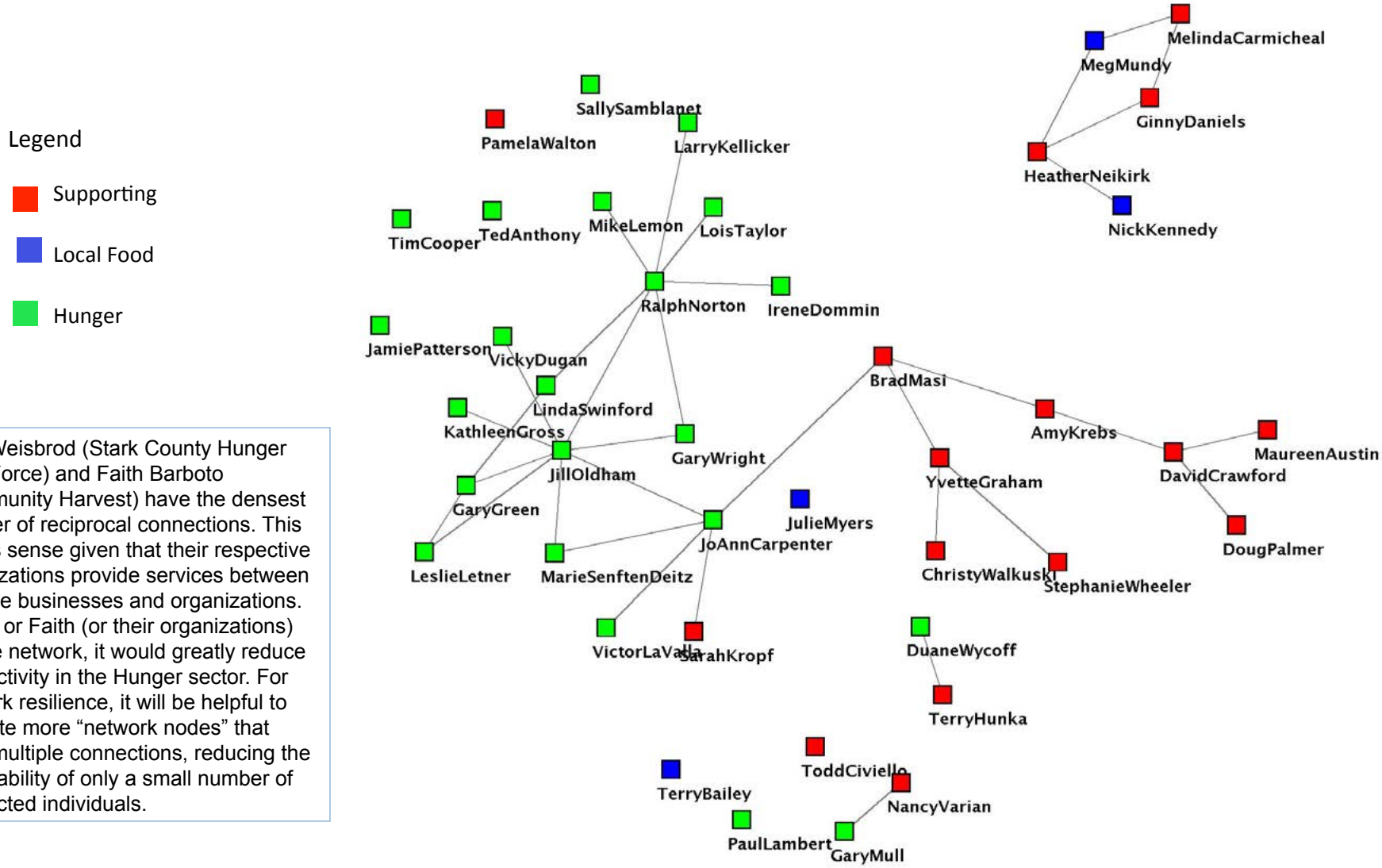
Legend

- Supporting
- Local Food
- Hunger



Beginning with the prior map on Reciprocal relationships, the two most important bridge people in the network are Brad Masi and Heather Neikirk. If both Heather and Brad leave the network, it loses key connections between sectors. Both Heather and Brad represent "network weavers" who already have reciprocal relationships that bridge the three sectors. Heather's role through extension is a natural fit for network weaving. However, it is revealing to note that Brad, who has just become introduced to the network through his consulting work, is already one of the key bridge people. Ultimately, more "network weavers" need to be cultivated between the three sectors in insure a more resilient, effective, and innovative network.

What happens if Amy and Faith leave the network?



Amy Weisbrod (Stark County Hunger Task Force) and Faith Barboto (Community Harvest) have the densest number of reciprocal connections. This makes sense given that their respective organizations provide services between multiple businesses and organizations. If Amy or Faith (or their organizations) left the network, it would greatly reduce connectivity in the Hunger sector. For network resilience, it will be helpful to cultivate more “network nodes” that have multiple connections, reducing the vulnerability of only a small number of connected individuals.

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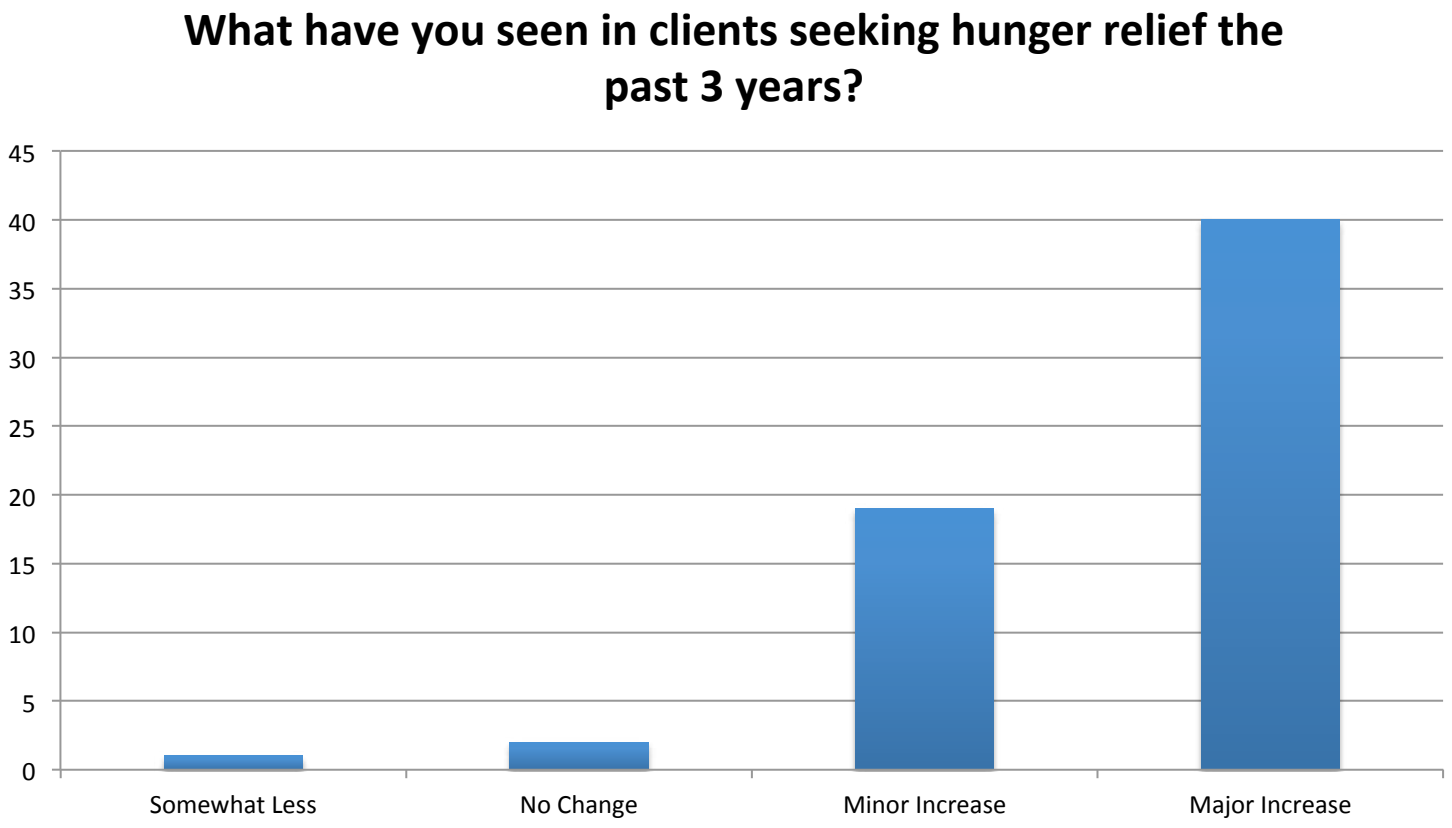
Perspectives on Hunger



Almost all individuals involved with hunger work (95%) noted an increase in the demand for their services over the past year, with 65% observing a major increase in demand and 31% noting a minor increase. 3% saw no change and 2% saw a drop in demand for services. Given that overall economic circumstances have improved over the past three years, the increase in demand for services is cause for concern.

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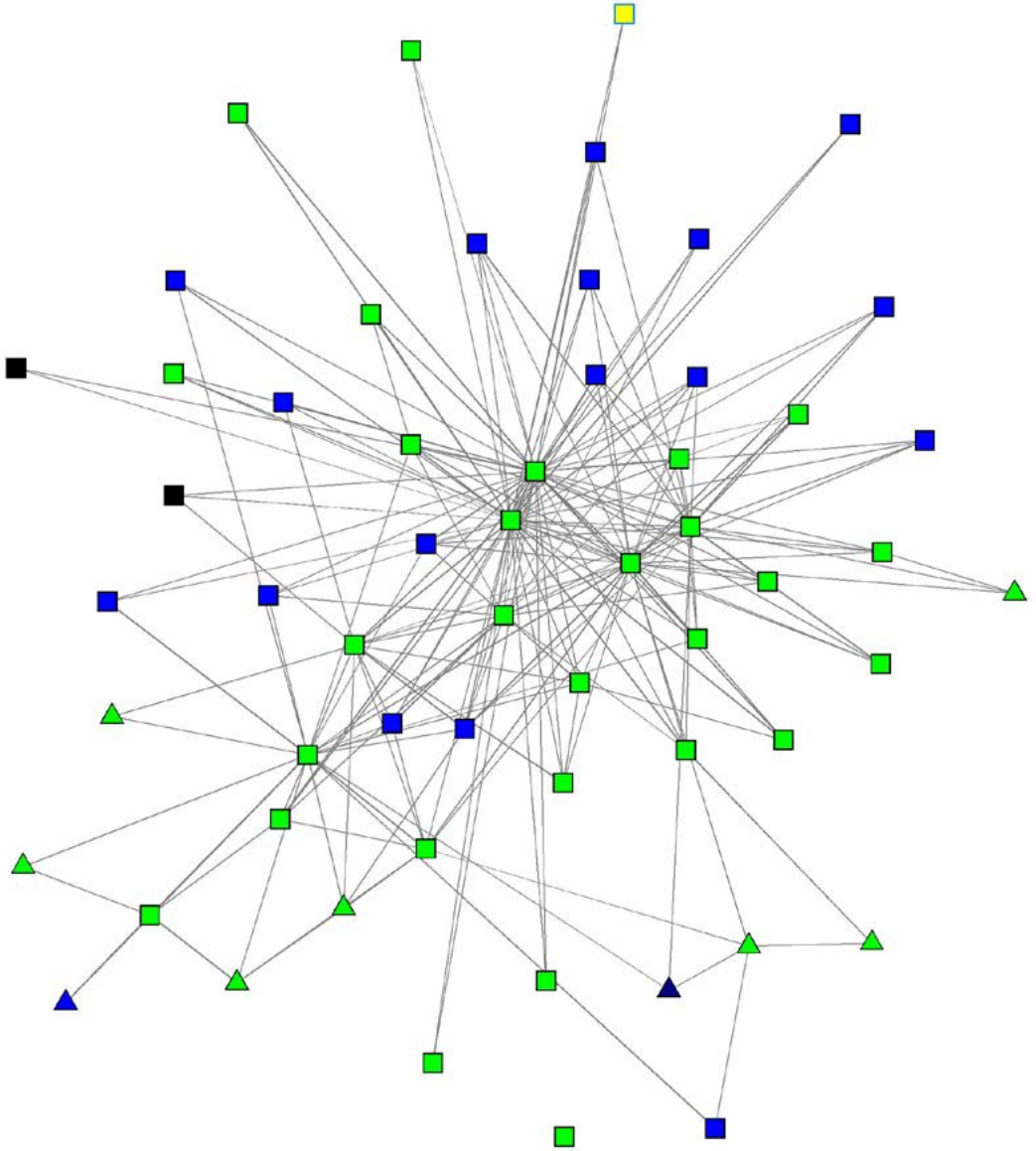
Have you seen an increase in the need for food relief services over the past three years?

Legend

- Major Increase
- Minor Increase
- No change
- Less Need

- ◯ Local Food
- △ Supporting
- □ Hunger

When we mapped this question, people with the highest number of network connections mostly reporting seeing a "major increase" in demand for emergency food relief. Along the periphery, there is a greater divide among people seeing a major increase and a minor increase in services. Do people at the core of the network have a bigger picture perspective since they are in contact with more individuals?



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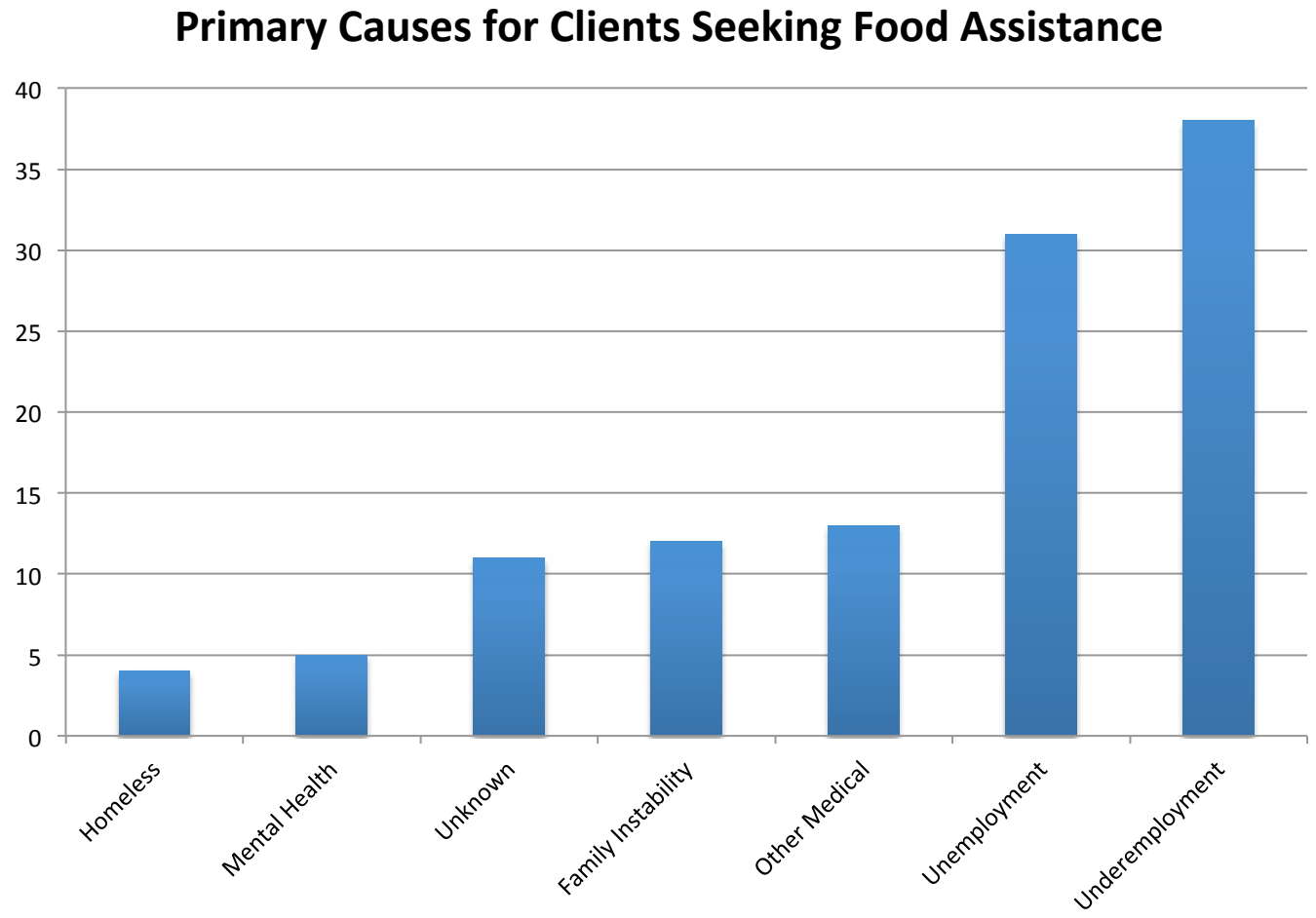

As a whole, 60% of respondents indicated that economic reasons were the primary factors causing people to seek hunger relief services, with 33% siting “underemployment” and 27% siting “unemployment”. About 15% sited medical reasons, with 4% noting mental health issues and 11% noting non-mental health medical issues. Familial instability (divorce, domestic abuse, etc.) was sited as a primary reason by 11% of respondents. Only 4% sited homelessness as a primary cause. About 10% of the respondents indicated that they did not have enough information to make an informed judgment.

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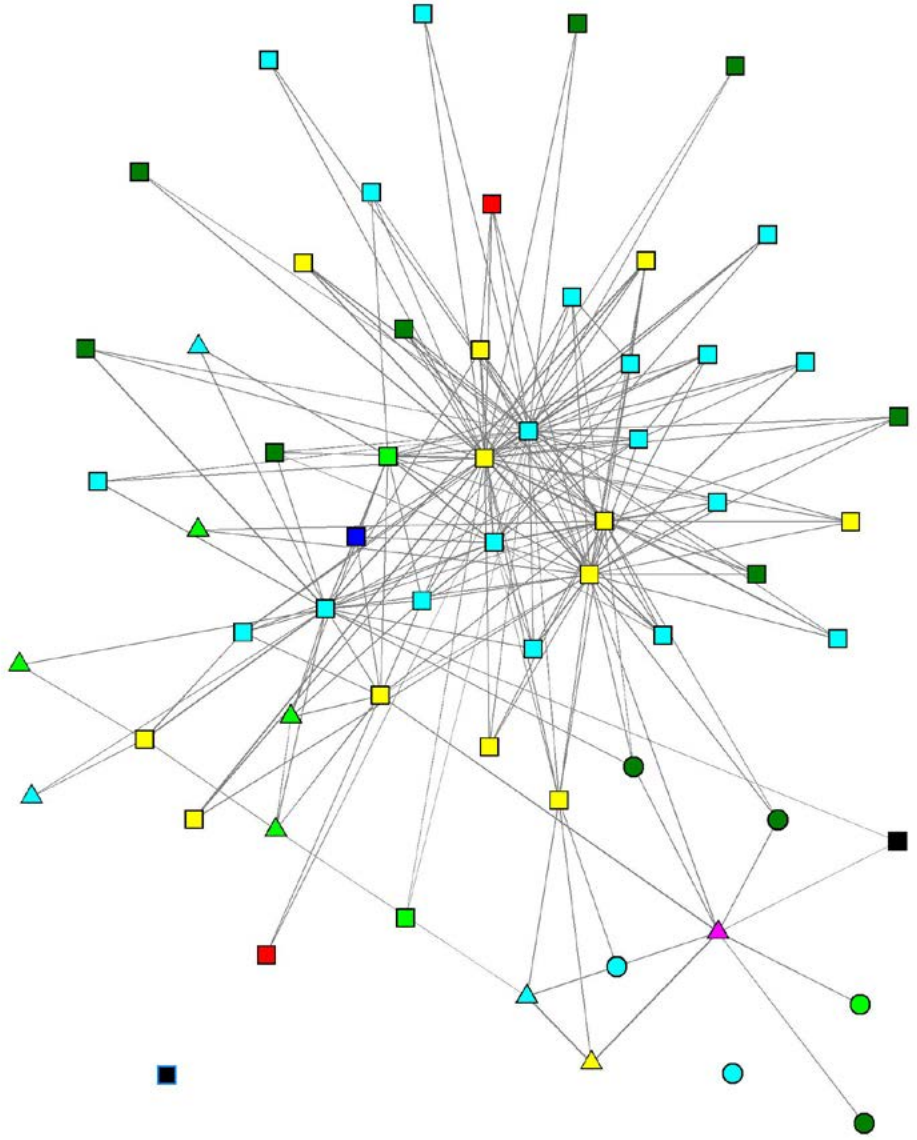
What seems to be the primary reason that your clients face hunger?

Legend

- Transportation
- Under-employment
- Mental Health
- Other Medical
- Unknown
- Family Instability
- Unemployment



The network map shows a degree of uncertainty in the network about the causes of hunger in the periphery. There is general agreement throughout the network that unemployment and underemployment are key factors, particularly in the core of the network. Familial instability is seen as a concern mostly along the periphery. It might be expected that people at the core might see more economic challenges whereas people on the periphery might be more connected to more private family challenges that people face.

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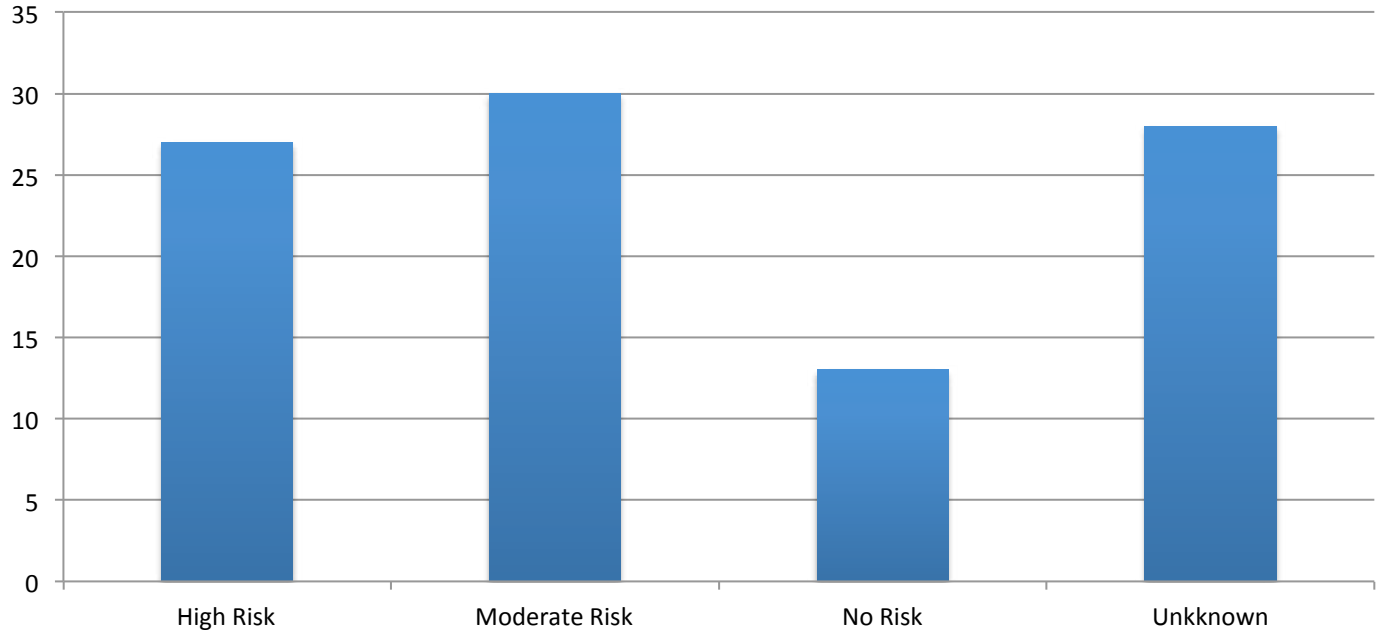
Do you see evidence of severe medical risk due to hunger?



As a whole, respondents saw potential for severe medical risk in Stark County due to hunger, with 28% siting a “high risk” and 31% siting “moderate risk”. Only 13% of respondents saw “no risk”. Almost 30% of respondents did not feel that they had adequate information to make a judgment.

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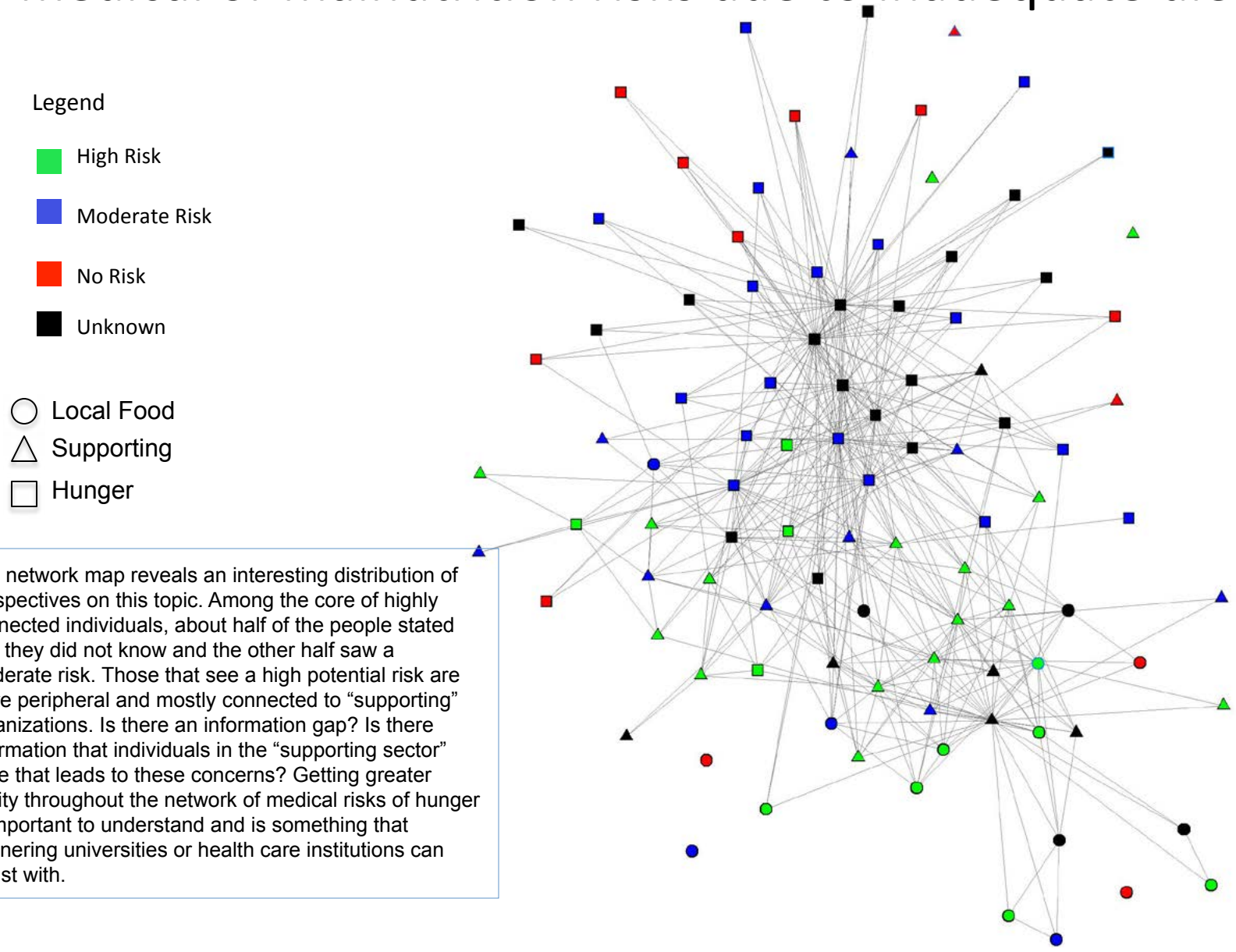
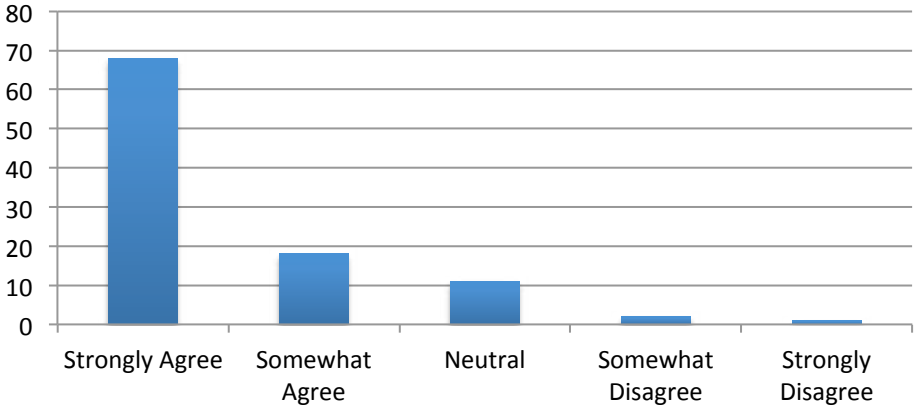
Do you see evidence that residents are at severe medical or malnutrition risks due to inadequate diet?



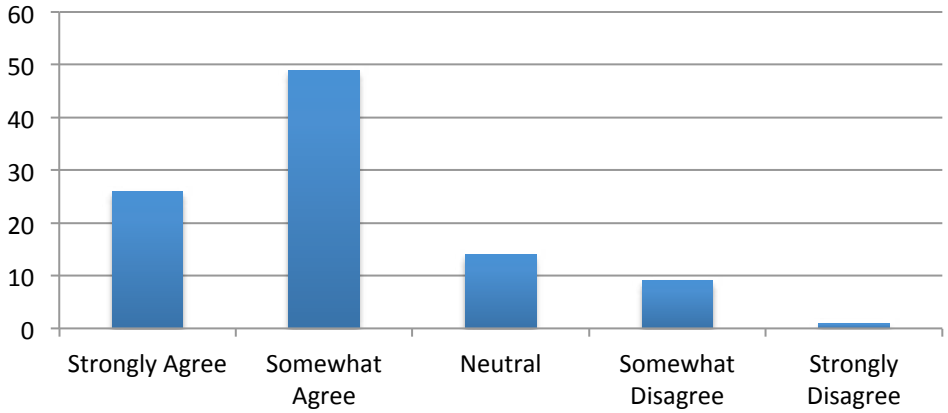
The network map reveals an interesting distribution of perspectives on this topic. Among the core of highly connected individuals, about half of the people stated that they did not know and the other half saw a moderate risk. Those that see a high potential risk are more peripheral and mostly connected to "supporting" organizations. Is there an information gap? Is there information that individuals in the "supporting sector" have that leads to these concerns? Getting greater clarity throughout the network of medical risks of hunger is important to understand and is something that partnering universities or health care institutions can assist with.

Hunger is a community issue and community members need to be vigilant to ensure that no one in their community is at risk of going hungry from lack of access to food.



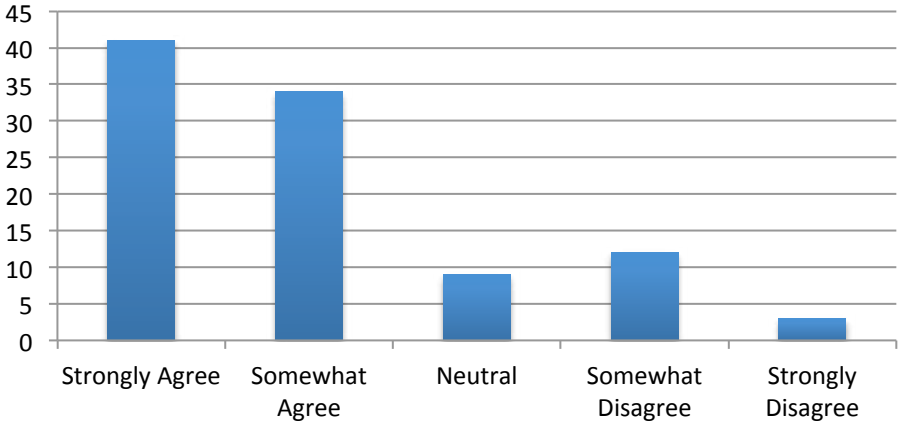
Agree: 86%

Food insecurity results from a a lack of adequate economic opportunity (i.e. stable jobs, living wage, growth in local economy) and positive economic development will ease long-term food insecurity challenges.



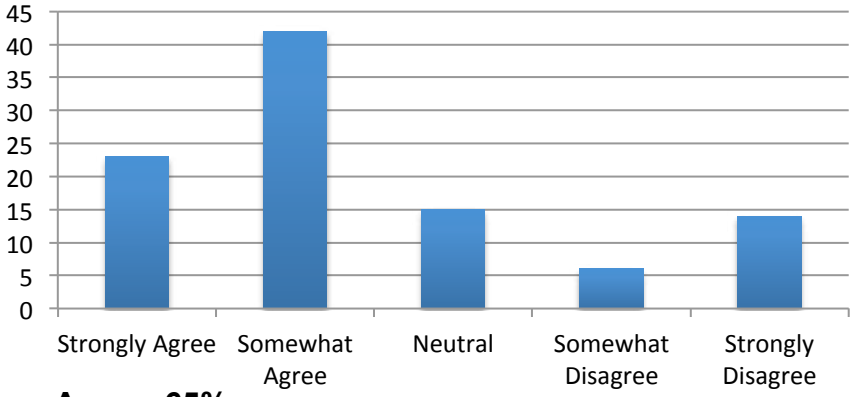
Agree: 76%

There will always be individuals that will need some level of emergency food relief and it does not make sense to expect all clients to achieve self-sufficiency.



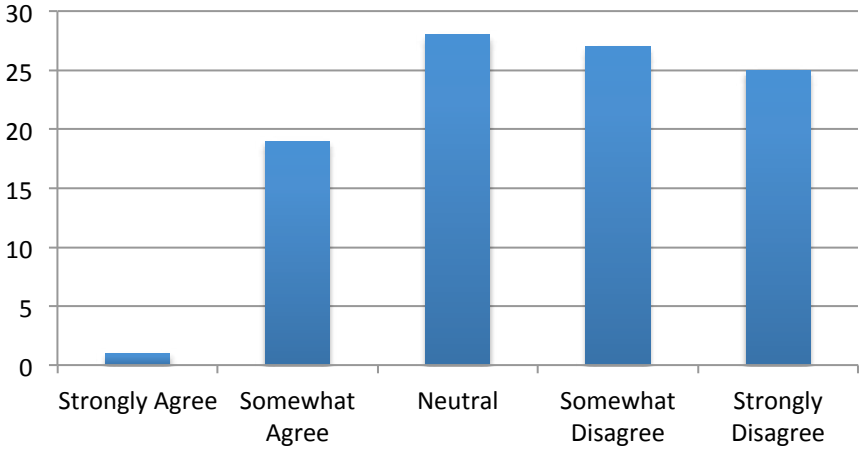
Agree: 76%

the most effective programs are those that provide tools for self-sufficiency so that people only need to rely on food aid for a short period of time.



Agree: 65%

If an individual is facing hunger or food security challenges, they have likely made bad choices in their life.



Agree: 20%

We asked a series of questions to get a sense of the degree to which individuals involved with hunger or local food work felt that hunger is more of an issue of individual or community responsibility.

On the whole, respondents seemed to lean toward more community or external factors as being drivers for the causes and solutions to hunger issues. 86% of respondents agreed that “hunger is a community issue and community members need to insure that no one is at risk of going hungry from lack of food”.

76% of respondents agreed that “food insecurity results from the lack of adequate economic opportunities”.

76% also agreed that “there will always be some individuals that will need some level of food relief and not everyone should be expected to achieve self-sufficiency”.

About 65% of respondents agree that “programs are best that provide tools for self-sufficiency”.

Only 20% of respondents agreed that “individuals face hunger as a result of bad choices made in their lives”.

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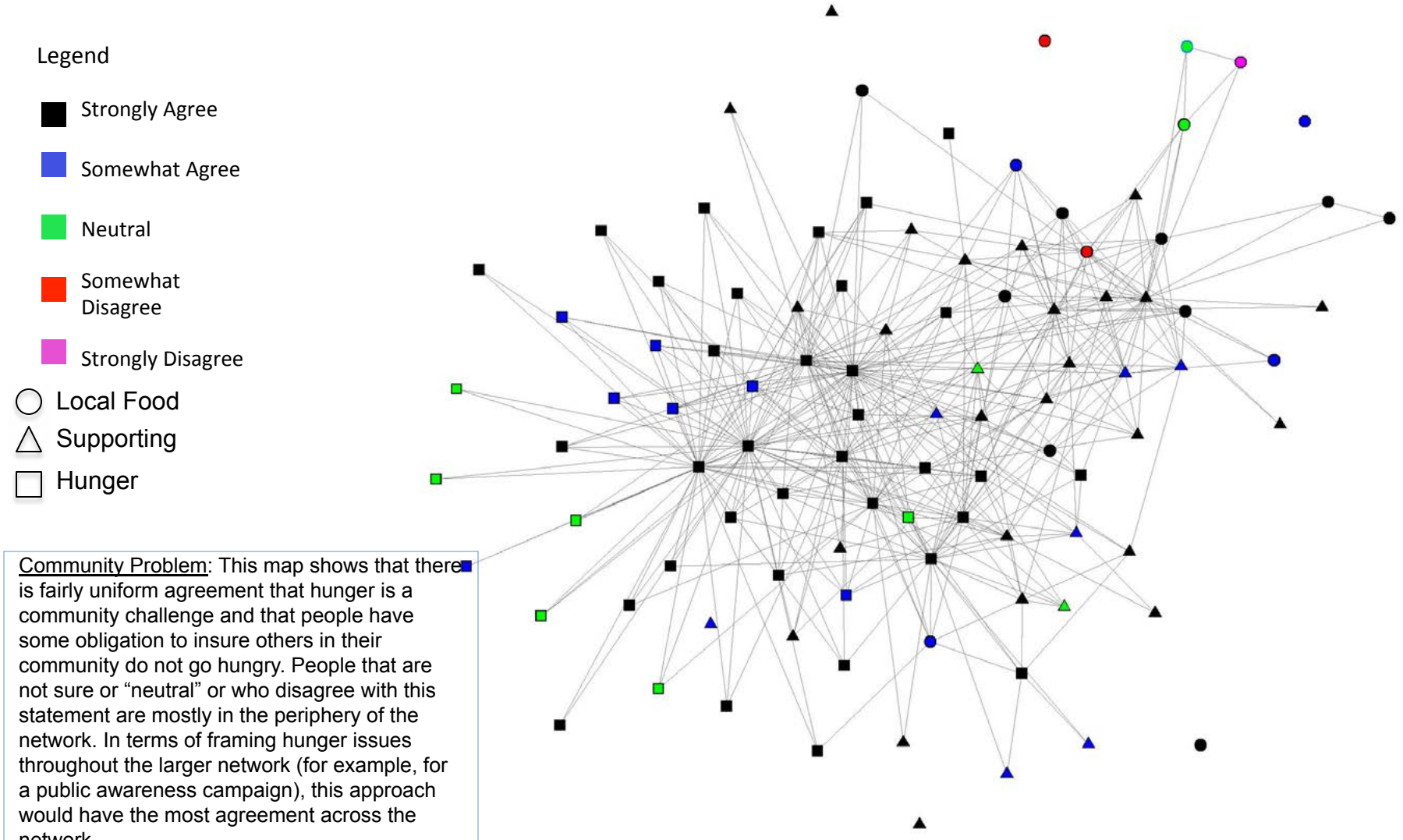
Community members need to be vigilant to ensure that no one in their community is at risk of going hungry.

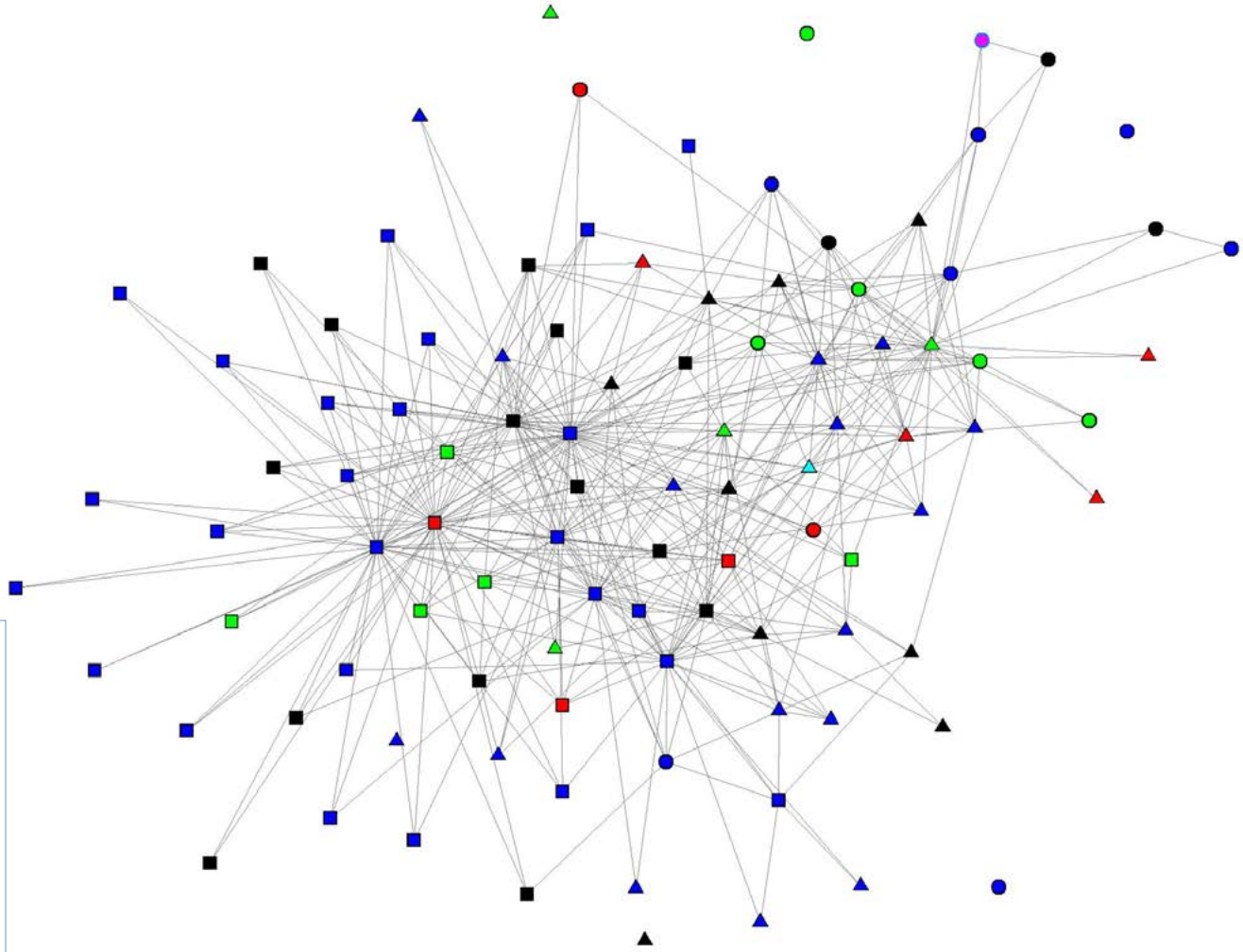


Community Problem: This map shows that there is fairly uniform agreement that hunger is a community challenge and that people have some obligation to insure others in their community do not go hungry. People that are not sure or "neutral" or who disagree with this statement are mostly in the periphery of the network. In terms of framing hunger issues throughout the larger network (for example, for a public awareness campaign), this approach would have the most agreement across the network.

Food insecurity results from a a lack of adequate economic opportunity, only reduced by economic development.

Legend

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- ◯ Local Food
- △ Supporting
- □ Hunger



Economic Problem: On this topic, there is greater variation in the core, with many agreeing that economic development needs to be tied in someway to hunger and others being neutral or disagreeing with this statement. This would present an ideal topic of discussion, especially among individuals in the core of the network as to any avenues to join hunger and economic development efforts in Stark County.

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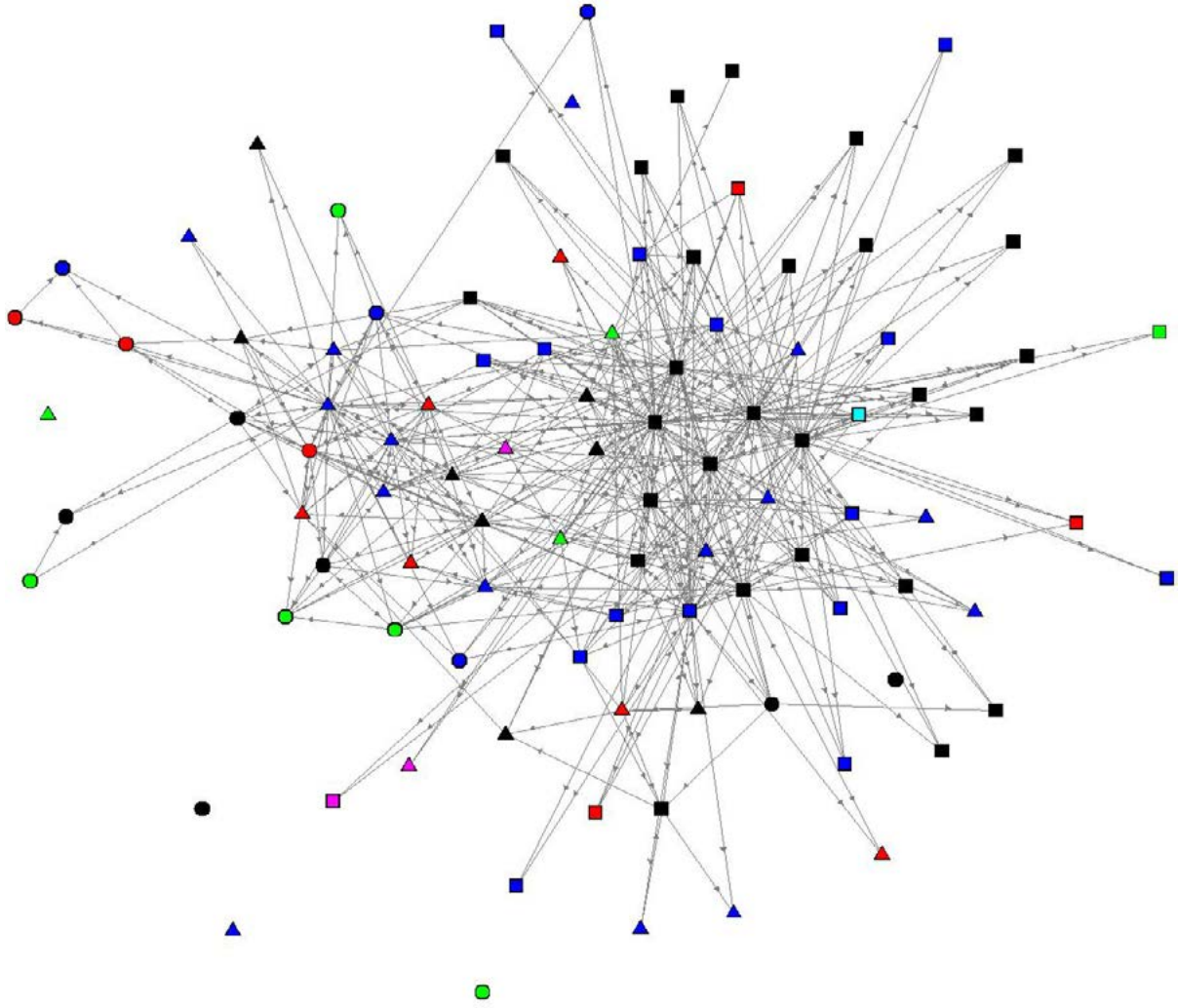
Some individuals will always need emergency food relief; not all clients can achieve self-sufficiency.

Legend

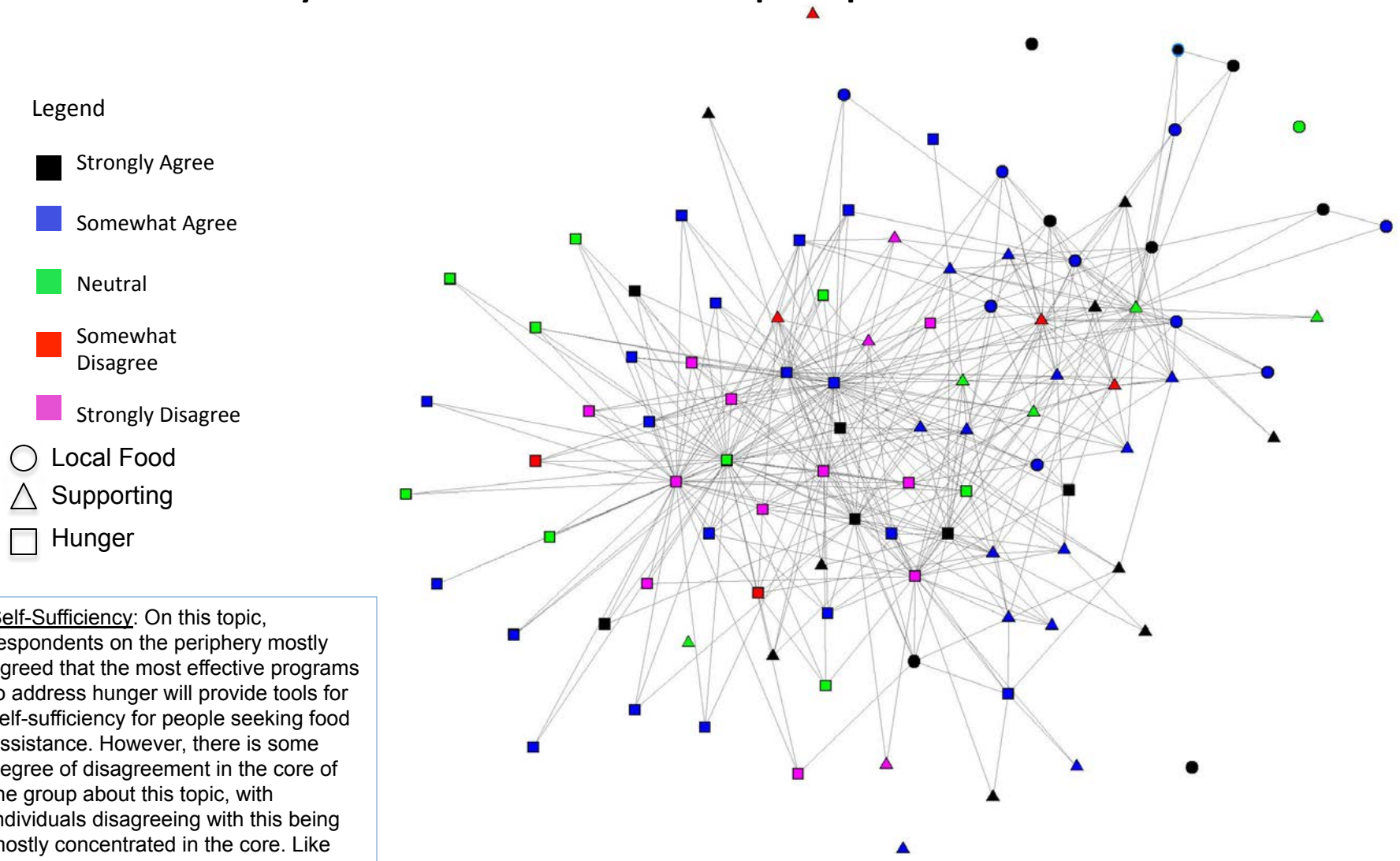
- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

- ◯ Local Food
- △ Supporting
- □ Hunger



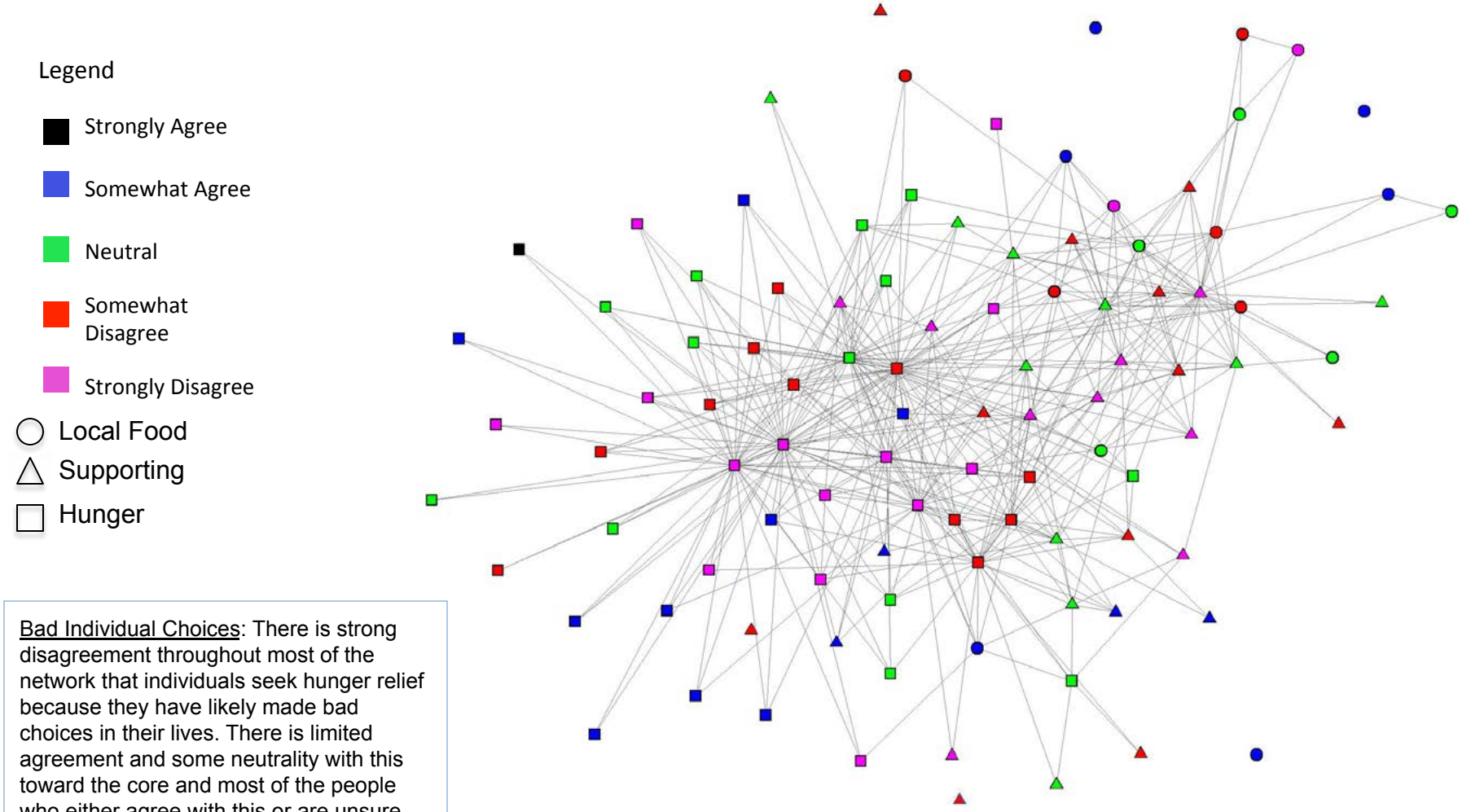
Continuous Need: On this topic, there is fairly general agreement throughout the network that there will always be some individuals that will have challenges achieving self-sufficiency, most likely due to chronic mental or physical health challenges. Those that are unsure or disagree with this statement are mostly along the periphery of the network.

The most effective programs provide tools for self-sufficiency to minimize time people seek food aid.



Self-Sufficiency: On this topic, respondents on the periphery mostly agreed that the most effective programs to address hunger will provide tools for self-sufficiency for people seeking food assistance. However, there is some degree of disagreement in the core of the group about this topic, with individuals disagreeing with this being mostly concentrated in the core. Like the economy, this also would make for a productive topic of discussion. …

If an individual is facing food security challenges, they have likely made bad choices in their life.



Bad Individual Choices: There is strong disagreement throughout most of the network that individuals seek hunger relief because they have likely made bad choices in their lives. There is limited agreement and some neutrality with this toward the core and most of the people who either agree with this or are unsure about it are in the periphery.

Healthy Food Access in Stark County

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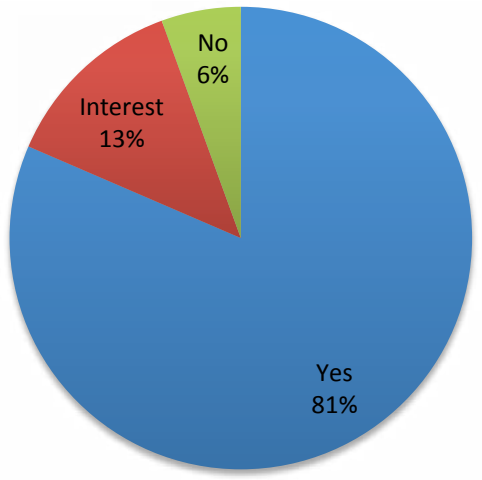
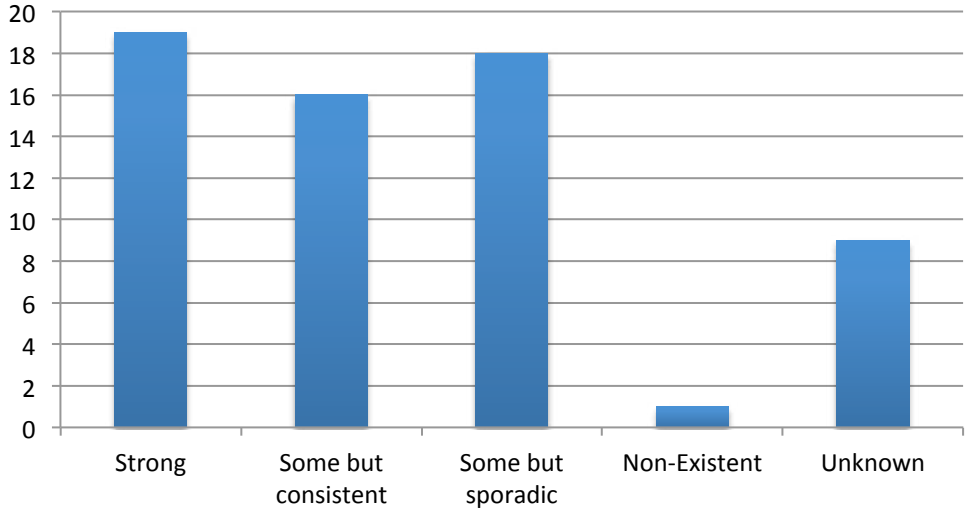
Is your food pantry or meal program working to improve healthy food choices?



What is your assessment of the nutritional quality of food at pantries or hot meal sites?



Overall, providing “healthy food choices” is an interest among food pantries, with 81% reporting that they actively work to improve healthy food choices and 13% stating an interest in improving nutritious options. In terms of assessing nutritional quality, about 30% of respondents reported that they felt their food pantry had a regular presence of multiple healthy food options. 25% felt that there were some consistent nutritious food options. 29% observed having sporadic or inconsistent nutritious options week-to-week. Only 2% described nutritious food as “nonexistent”. Overall, this reveals that only 30% of food pantries feel that nutritious options are adequate. Increasing the consistency and variety of nutritious options remains an important goal for food relief.

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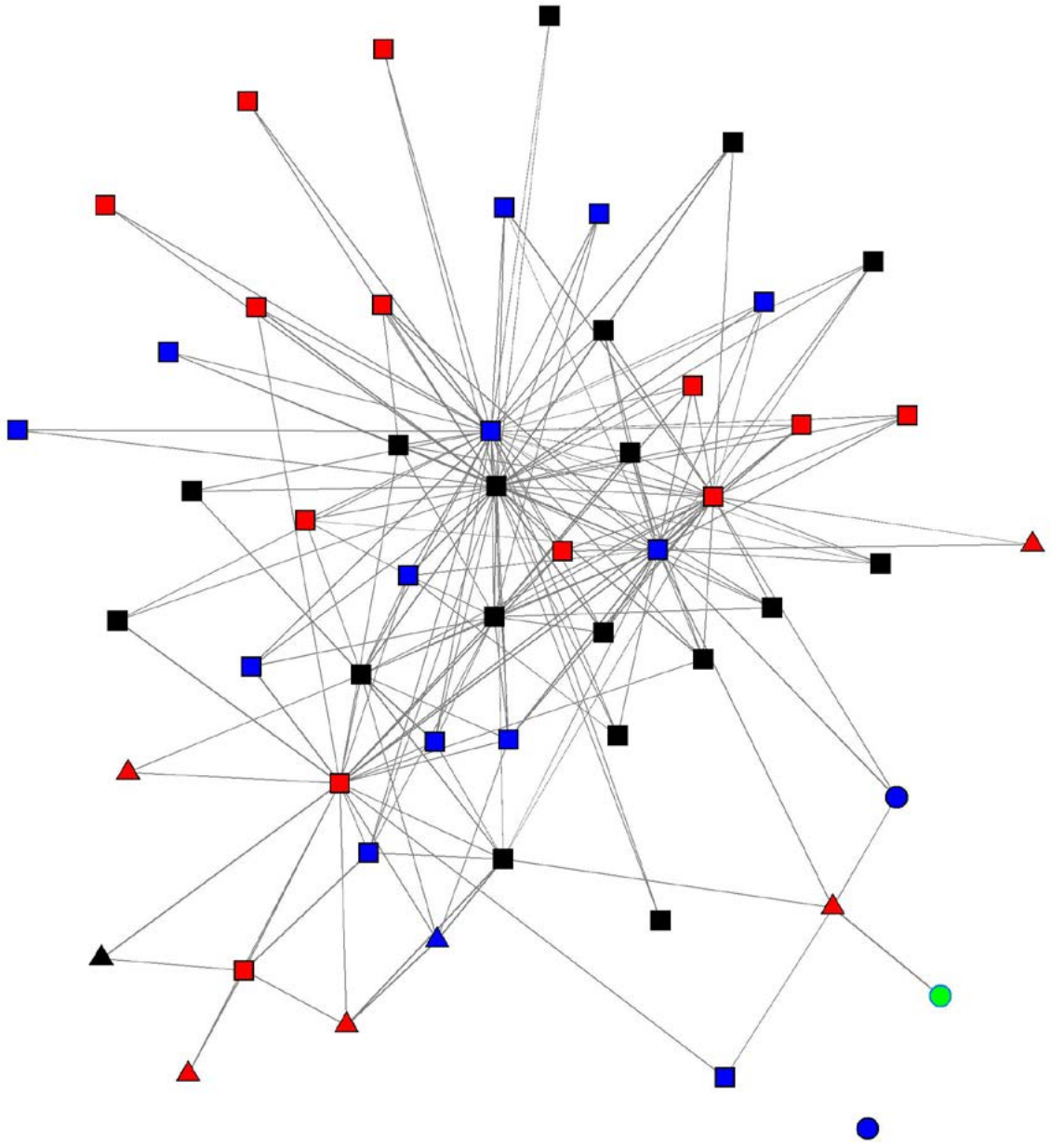
Do you have a good mix of healthy food options in pantries or hot meals?

Legend

- Strong
- Some
- Some, but Sporadic
- None



The network map reveals that respondents generally felt stronger about available nutritious options closer to the core. Along the periphery, there is a small group that feels they have good options, but most report only occasional inventories of nutritious foods. This topic would benefit from further research, as there is likely variability in the network about what people consider healthy or nutritious food options.

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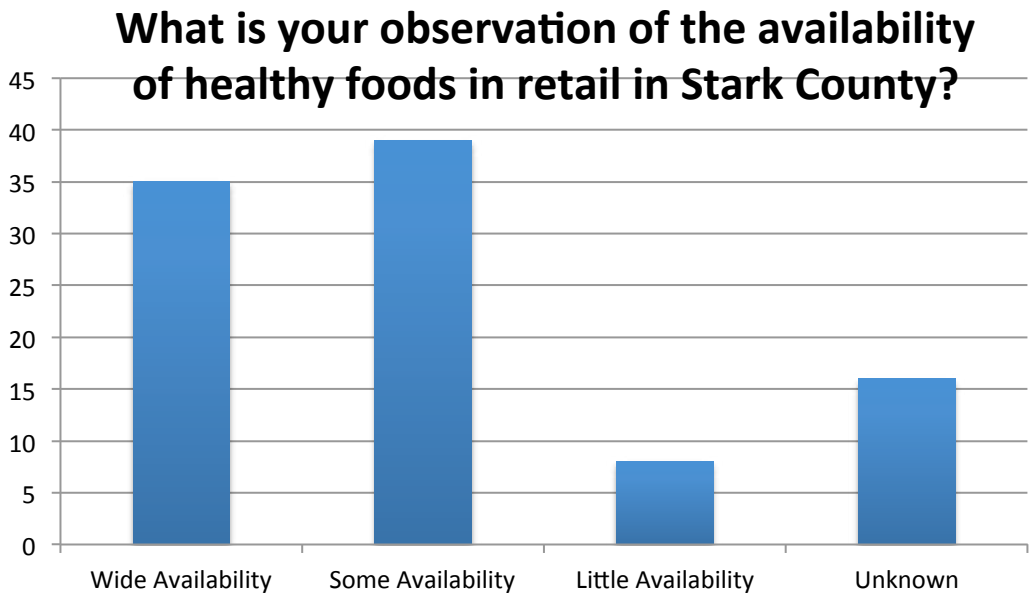

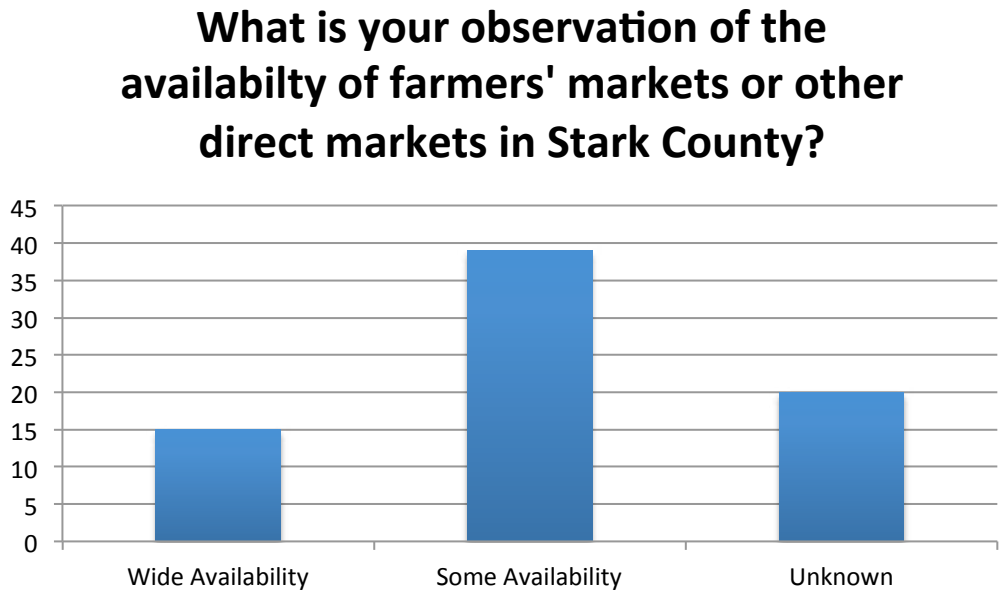

While the first question looked at the availability of healthy food options in food pantries, the second set of questions investigates the availability of healthy food retail options throughout Stark County. About 36% saw wide availability and 48% saw some to little availability (with 40% seeing some availability and 8% seeing limited availability).

In terms of farmers' markets, only 20% reported wide availability throughout the county and 53% reported some availability. About 27% of respondents did not have enough information to respond to this question.

Here again, respondents felt overall that there was wide to moderate availability of healthy foods and less overall availability of farmers' markets. Given food desert data for the county, it seems likely that the availability of healthy food options could be somewhat of a function of where one lives or if a vehicle is available to reach healthier options. Either way, it speaks to the need to improve the availability of healthy food options both through the expansion of healthy retail options and the growth of farmers' markets or other venues that provide a direct link between farmers and consumers.

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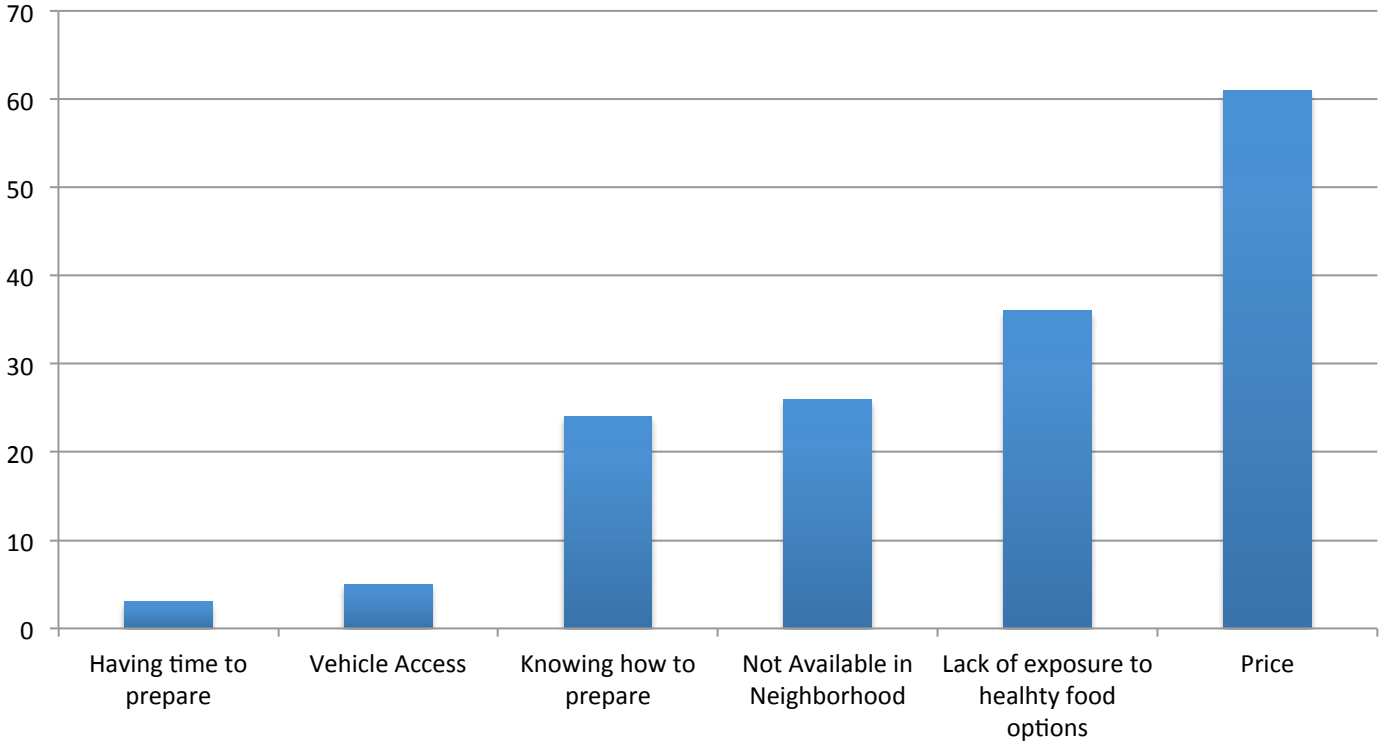
What is a primary barrier to healthy food access in Stark County?



In terms of barriers to healthy food access, respondents felt that the number one barrier for people to have access to healthy foods is the price for healthy food options (39%). Next was “exposure” to healthy foods (23%), meaning that people did not have information on how to find or utilize healthier food options. The difficulty in accessing healthy food in neighborhoods was sited by 17% of respondents and having the knowledge or capability to prepare healthier foods was sited by 15%. A small percentage of people sited time to prepare or access to a vehicle as key barriers.

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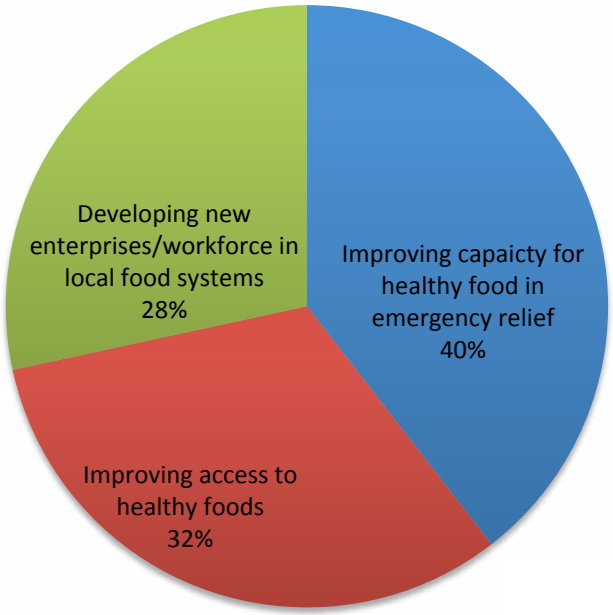
Future Activity

Which of the following would most improve healthy food access in Stark County?



Respondents were asked to identify one of three sectors that they felt would be most critical to improving healthy food access in Stark County. Of the respondents, 40% felt that improving the capacity for healthy foods in in emergency food relief would be the most important. 32% felt that improving retail access to healthy foods in neighborhoods would be the most important and 28% identified the development of new enterprises or workforce in local food systems as the most important. Overall, this demonstrates a somewhat even distribution of interest between these three goals, with most of the interest geared toward leveraging food relief to improve diets.

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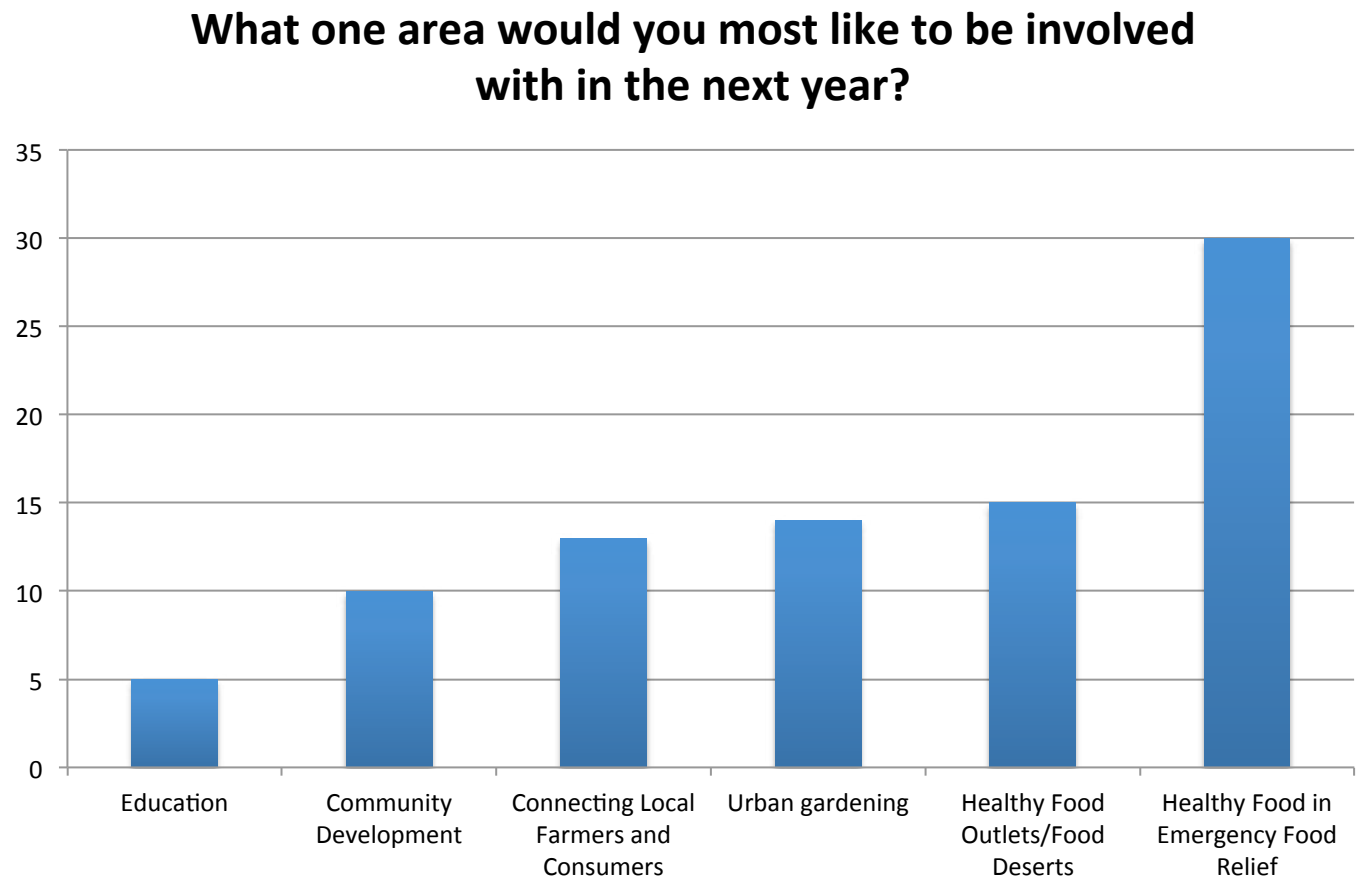


Next, respondents were asked where they would most like to devote their own time and effort in the next year. The area of greatest interest among respondents was “healthy food in emergency food relief”, stated as an interest among 34% of respondents. Improving healthy food outlets in food deserts, urban gardening, and connecting local farmers and consumers all had about 15-17% interest. Community development in local food systems was identified by 11% of respondents and public education by 6%. It should be noted that public education was an option that numerous people added, so there could be even more interest. Here, it is helpful to look at how these initiatives can all be connected. For example, how can urban gardening and connecting local farmers with consumers improve the availability of healthy, local food in food deserts or emergency food relief? Can people receive work-force training in food processing or distribution that benefits food pantry networks?

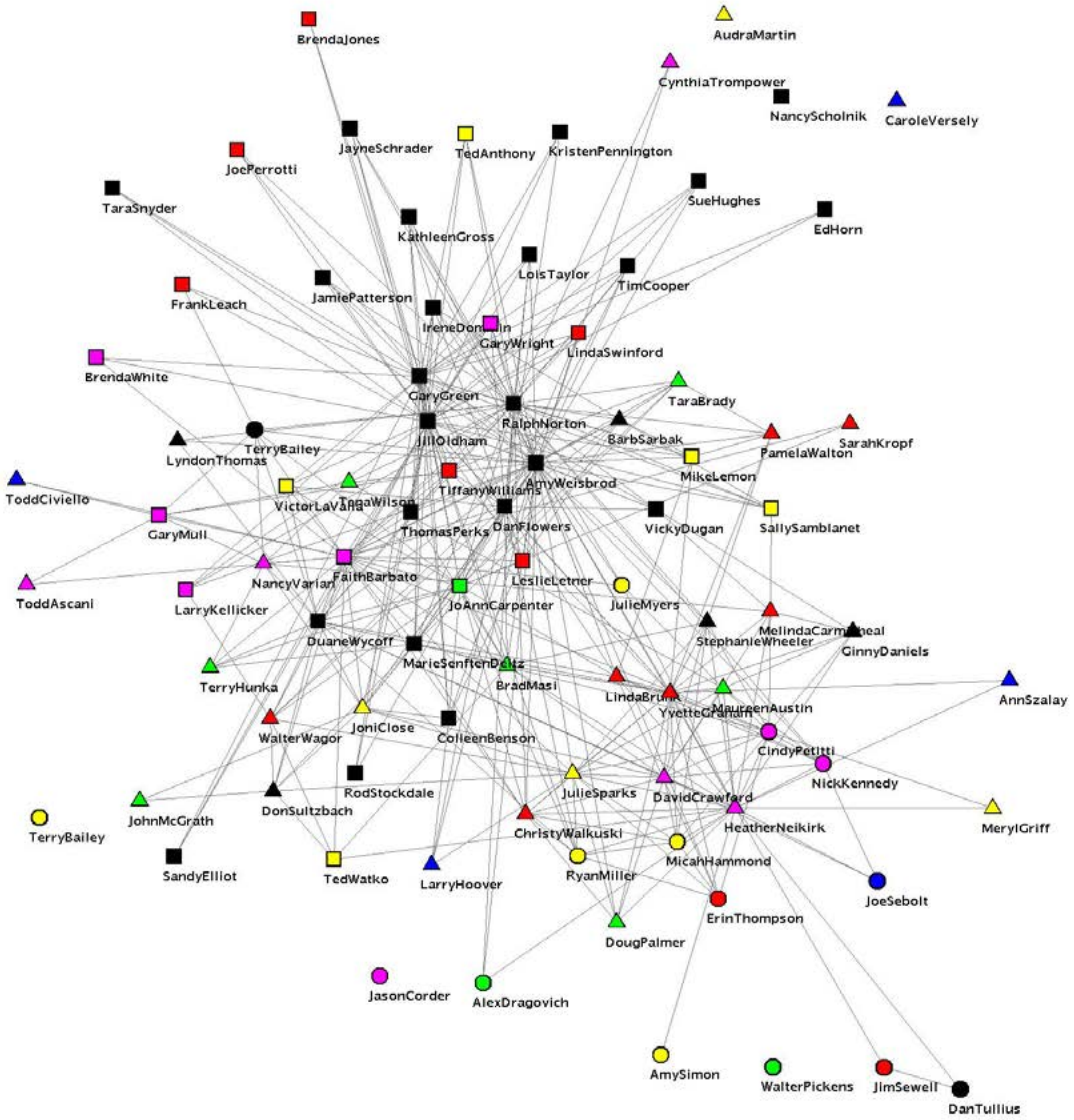
Click here to return to table of contents.

Which of the following activities would you most be interested in being involved with in the coming year?

Legend

- Linking Farms to Consumers
- Improve Healthy Food Outlets
- Public Education
- Healthy Food in Food Relief
- Local Food Development
- Urban Gardening

- ◯ Local Food
- △ Supporting
- □ Hunger



Looking at the overall network, improving "healthy food in food relief" is clearly a priority among the core individuals, who mostly represent the "Hunger Sector". There is a strong cluster of interest in "linking consumers and farms" and "urban gardening" in the Local Food Sector. A lot of hunger organizations expressed interest in also providing healthy food in food desert neighborhoods. Local food development remains a more peripheral interest and there is a lack of network connection on this topic.

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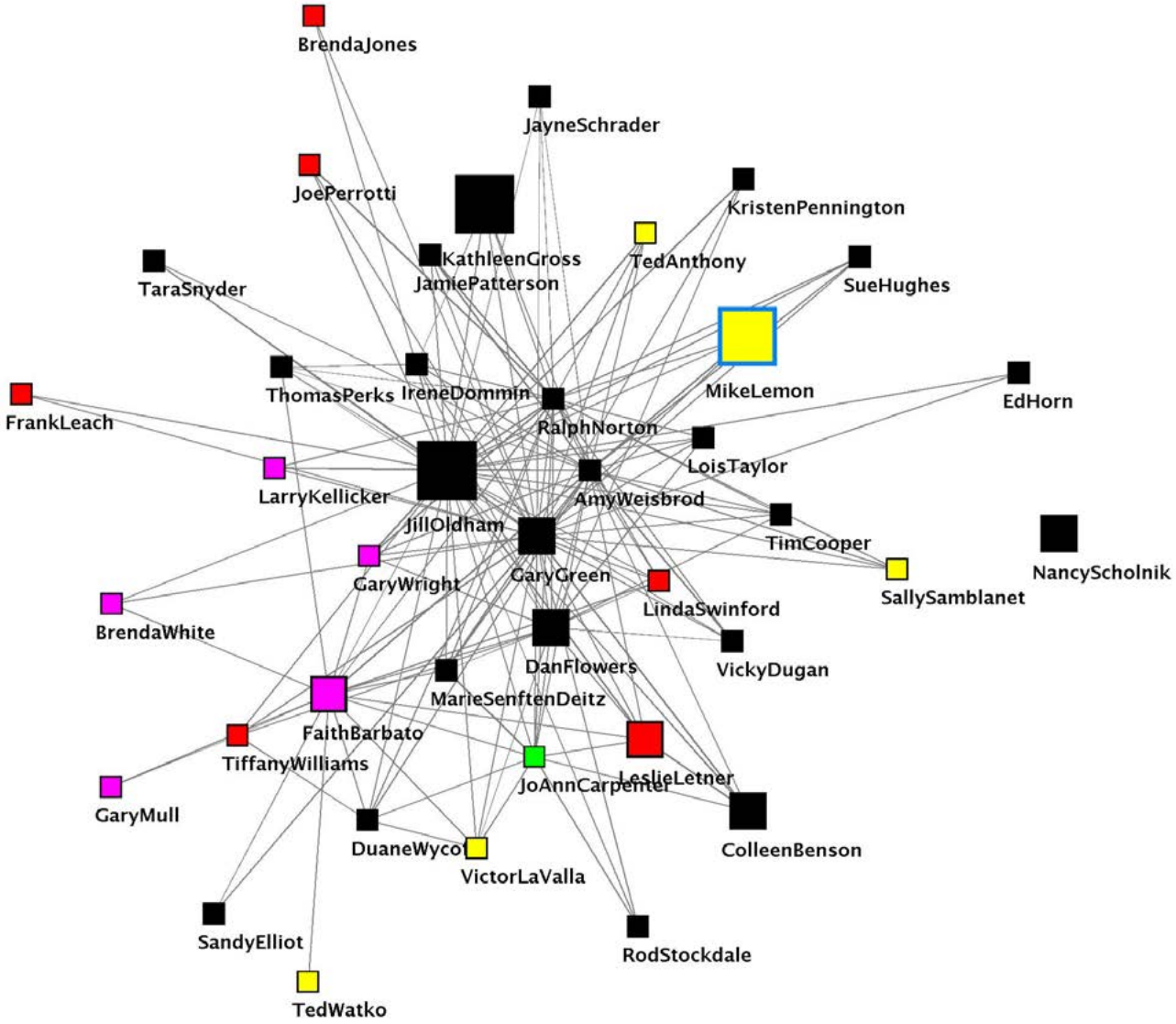
Which of the following activities would you most be interested in being involved with (Hunger Sector)?

Legend

- Linking Farms to Consumers
- Improve Healthy Food Outlets
- Public Education
- Healthy Food in Food Relief
- Local Food Development
- Urban Gardening



This map shows broad interests in the hunger sector to link with other farmers and promote urban gardening.

There is little interest in local food systems development.

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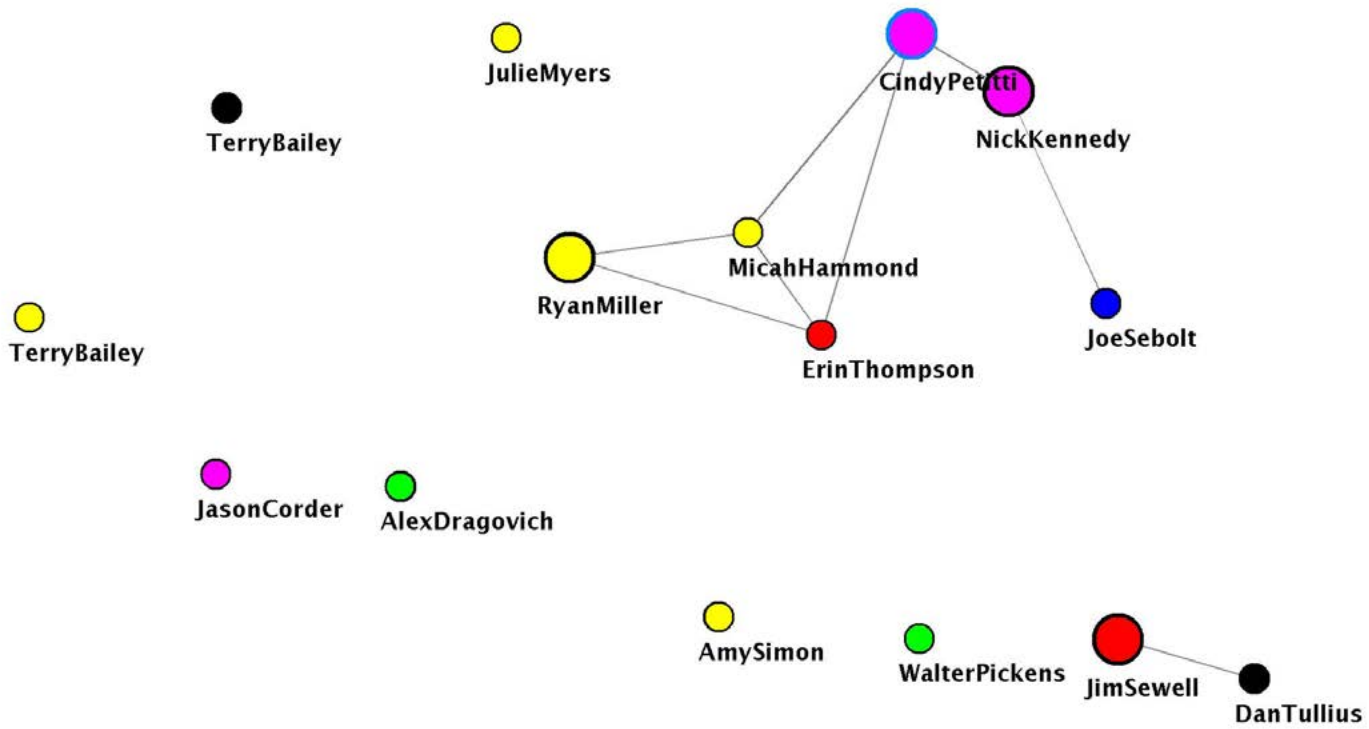
Which of the following activities would you most be interested in being involved with (Local Food Sector)?

Legend

- Linking Farms to Consumers
- Improve Healthy Food Outlets
- Public Education
- Healthy Food in Food Relief
- Local Food Development
- Urban Gardening

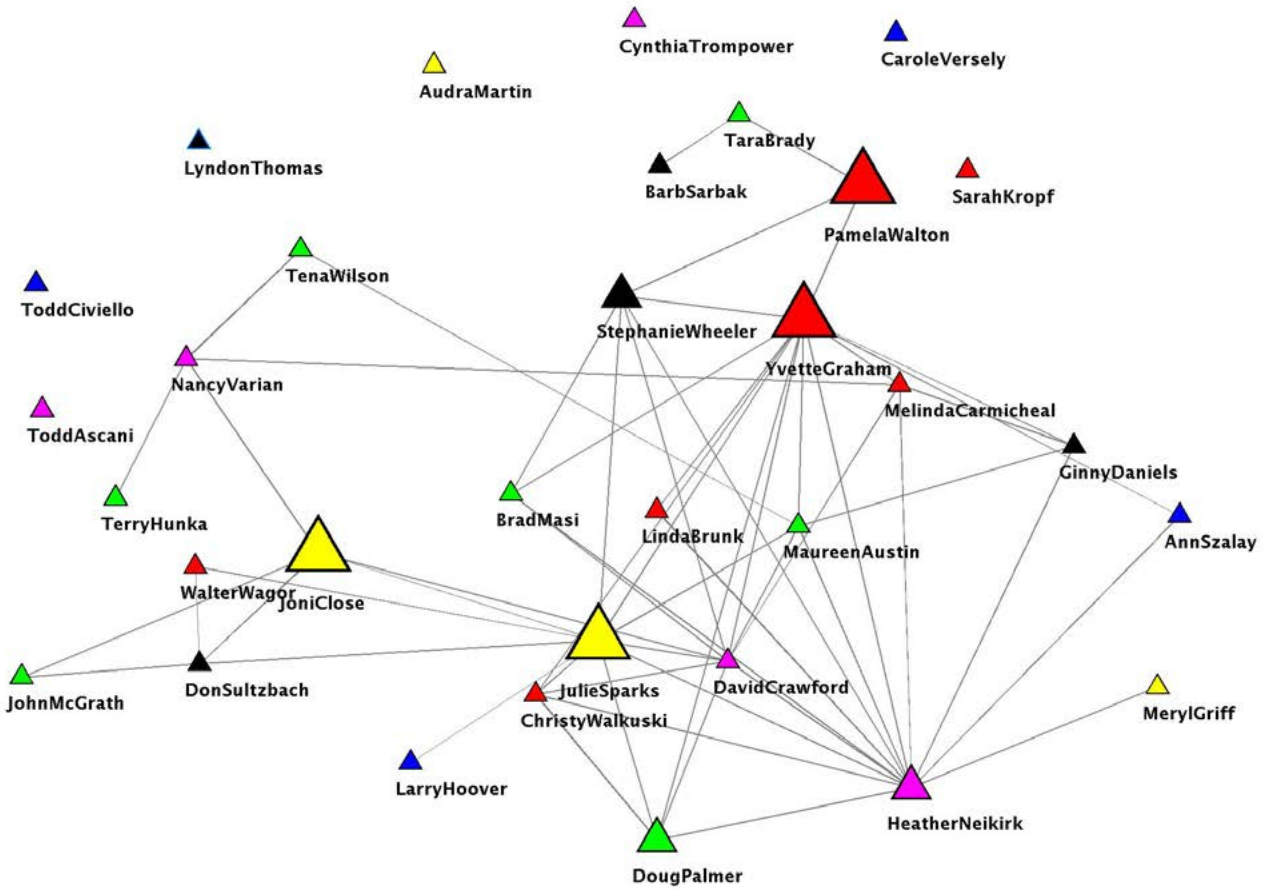


This map shows a mix of interests in the local food sector, with a high degree of interest in urban gardening and some interest in connecting farmers and consumers. There is also some interest in local food systems development and improving healthy food outlets.

Which of the following activities would you most be interested in being involved with (Supporting Sector)?

Legend

- Linking Farms to Consumers
- Improve Healthy Food Outlets
- Public Education
- Healthy Food in Food Relief
- Local Food Development
- Urban Gardening



This map shows the Supporting Sector as the one with the greatest diversity of interests, with strong interest in local food systems development, healthy foods in hunger relief, and improving healthy food outlets. There is also some interest in urban gardening and linking farmers and consumers, and public education.

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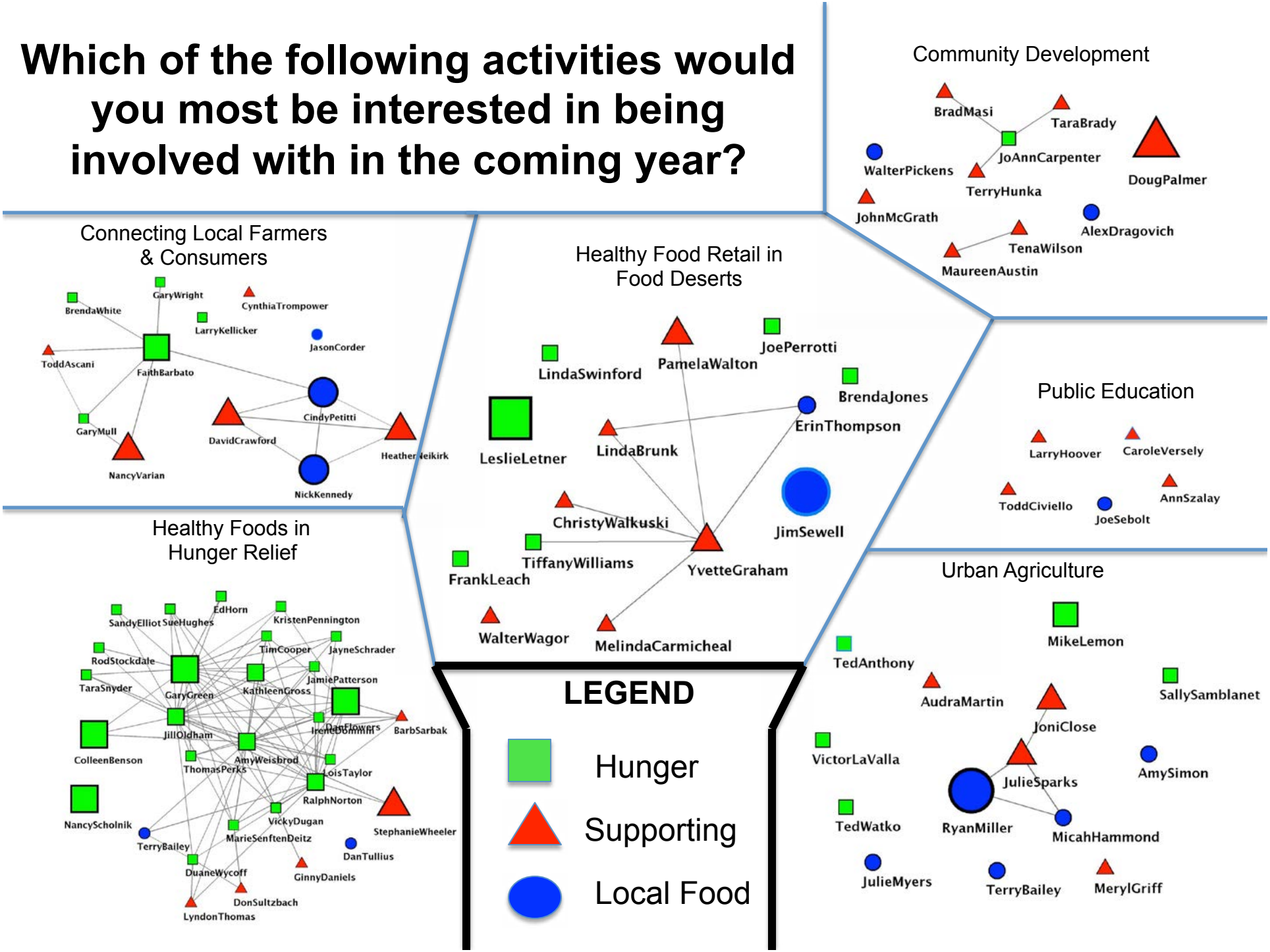
Which of the following activities would you most be interested in being involved with in the coming year?



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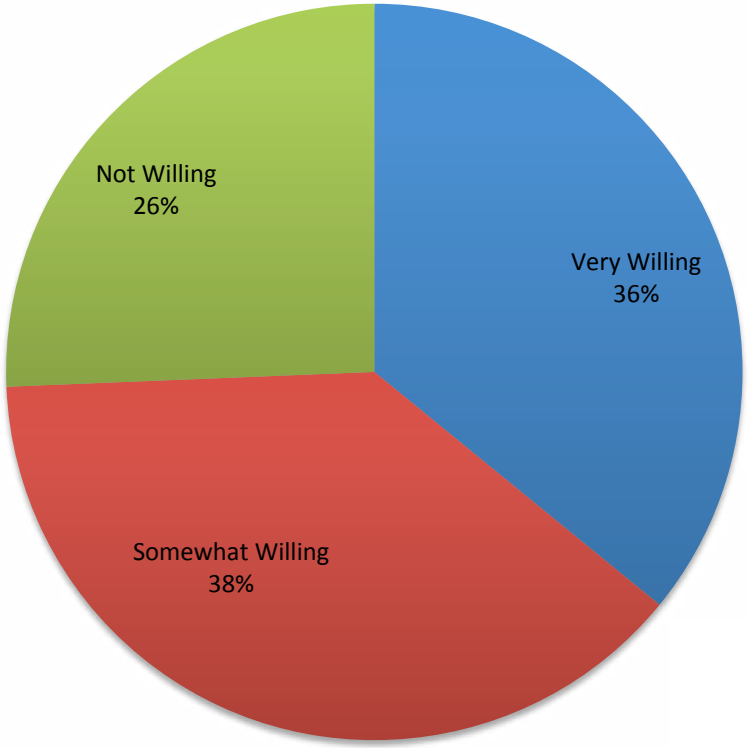
Core Activity Areas

The previous set of six maps that show the activity-area interests reveals the overall readiness among respondents to move each area forward. Each node has been scaled to identify individuals preference for playing an active leadership or "convening" role in their project area. The largest nodes represent people that stated they were "Very Willing" to convene a group, and the medium sized nodes identify individuals who are "Already Active" as conveners. The smaller nodes include individuals who were either "Somewhat Interested" or "Not Interested" in playing a convening role. Looking at each activity cluster separately reveals the following initial conclusions:

- Healthy Foods in Hunger Relief: This project area drew the most interested individuals. The map includes a large number of individuals that are either active or willing to play a convening role. However, this represents the least diverse activity area that almost exclusively includes individuals in the Hunger Relief sector. Local food and supporting organizations are on the periphery and do not demonstrate significant interest in playing a convening role.
- Connecting Local Farmers and Consumers: This project area includes a more even distribution of interest among the three sectors with a number of people that stated an interest in convening. There is already some connectivity between individuals in this area. Investing time and attention to this area can be helpful in building a more diverse, cross-sectoral initiative that will be important in diversifying the core leadership.
- Healthy Food in Retail Food Deserts: This project area shows a somewhat diverse collection of interested individuals, but there is presently low connectivity between them. However, there is some leadership interest in the periphery which can help to draw more new perspectives or potential "hidden networks"- networks that are connected to individuals in the periphery, but not revealed in the current network maps. This project would need to begin with networking activities that foster new connections between people.
- Urban Agriculture: This project area also shows an even mix between the three sectors, showing potential for this effort to build diversity between the three sectors. There is a small network cluster with leadership interest, but most individuals are dis-connected and peripheral. Networking events will be important for this cluster, but leadership may require some new individuals or some encouragement.
- Community Development: This cluster seems to be mostly of interest in the Supporting Sector. There are some network connections between individuals in this project area and potential leadership in the periphery. Emphasis on this area will not initially include a lot of diversity between sectors and will likely be driven by leadership in the Supporting sector. Also, it should be noted that community development is not something that exists within the missions of hunger relief organizations. Community development efforts should take place in parallel to hunger-relief efforts, acknowledging that long-term hunger solutions will need to address underlying economic issues that are driving food insecurity today.
- Public Education: This is the least developed interest area, with mostly Supporting organizations and no connections between people. This project area would likely require the highest amount of active cultivation and may not immediately be the most effective leverage point for the network at this point.

How interested are you in collaborating with others on food security efforts?



This graph demonstrates that there is a high interest in collaboration among individuals involved with food security work, with 36% stating that they would be “Very Willing” to collaborate and 38% saying that they would be “Somewhat Willing”. About 26% of respondents did not have interest in collaborating. Not everybody has the time or propensity to collaborate with others and that is fine in a network. However, the fact that more than 1 in 3 people are Very Willing shows that there is a lot of benefit and willingness to explore collaborative opportunities in the network.

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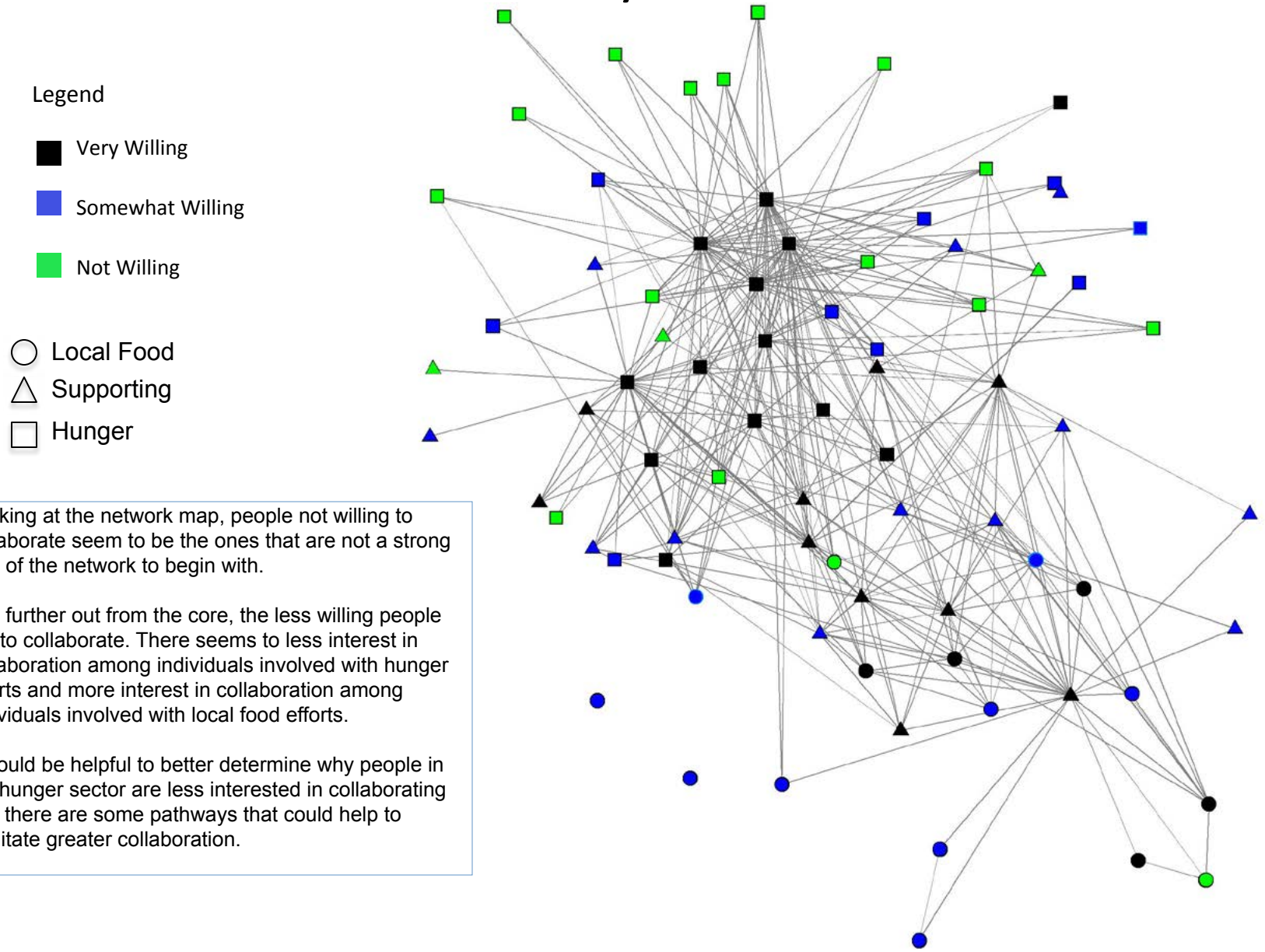
Are you interested in collaborating with others on food security efforts?



Looking at the network map, people not willing to collaborate seem to be the ones that are not a strong part of the network to begin with.

The further out from the core, the less willing people are to collaborate. There seems to less interest in collaboration among individuals involved with hunger efforts and more interest in collaboration among individuals involved with local food efforts.

It would be helpful to better determine why people in the hunger sector are less interested in collaborating or if there are some pathways that could help to facilitate greater collaboration.

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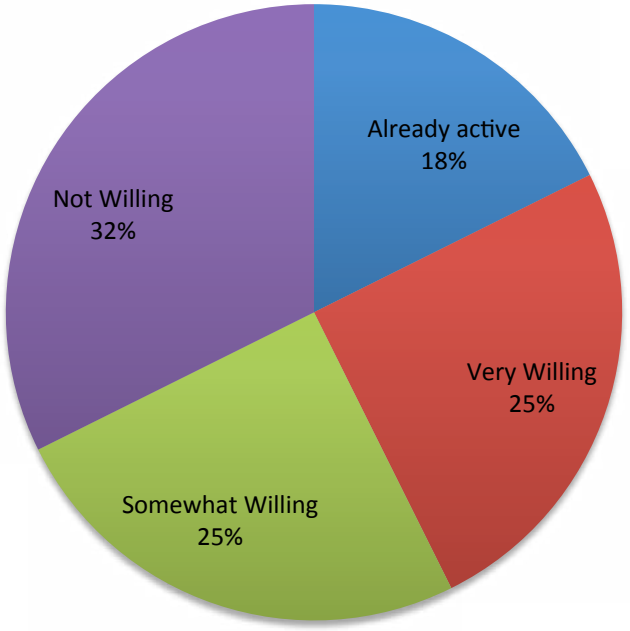
How willing would you be to convene a group around an action area in the next year?



This graph shows a high leadership interest within the broader food security network, with 43% of individuals either actively convening or very interested in convening groups. Another 25% stated some interest in convening and could perhaps be encouraged through some additional training or exposure to networking activities. Only 32% stated that they are not willing to convene a group.

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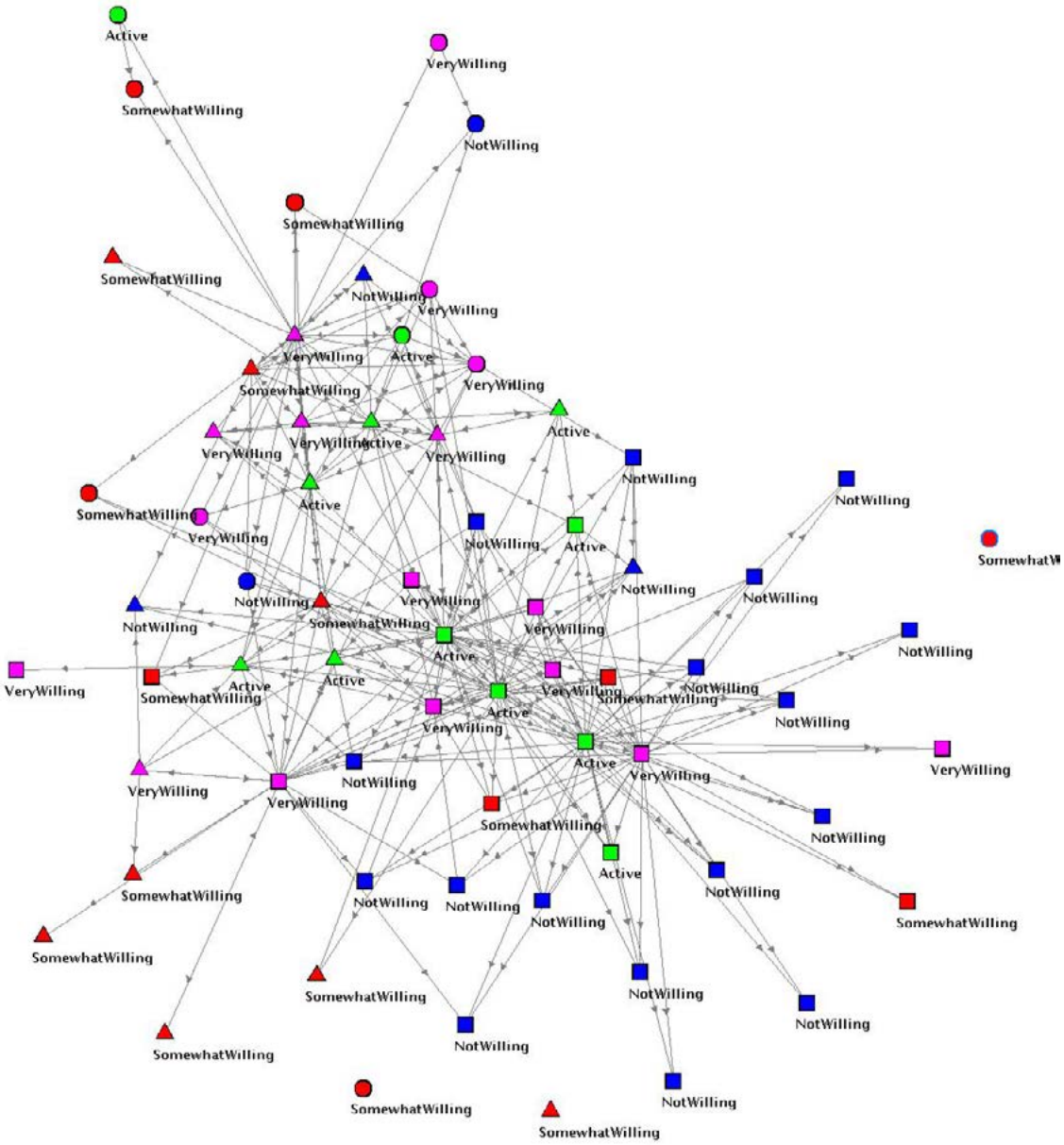
Interest in Convening

Legend

- Very Willing
- Somewhat Willing
- Not Willing
- Neutral

- ◯ Local Food
- △ Supporting
- □ Hunger



The network map shows that there is a high interest or current activity in convening in the core with an even mix of Supporting and Hunger organizations showing potential for convening roles.

There are a number of individuals in the local food sector interested in convening, but they are mostly on the periphery of the network. Bringing them into more of the core of the overall network will be important to cultivating their leadership. Supporting organizations can play an important bridging role between the Hunger and Local Food sectors.

There is a large block of mostly individuals involved with the Hunger Sector on the periphery that are not interested in playing a convening role.

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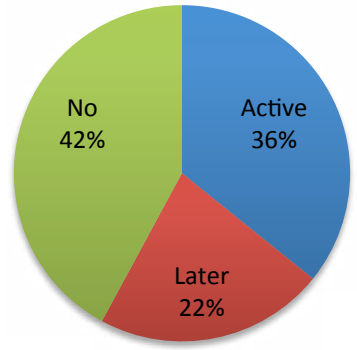
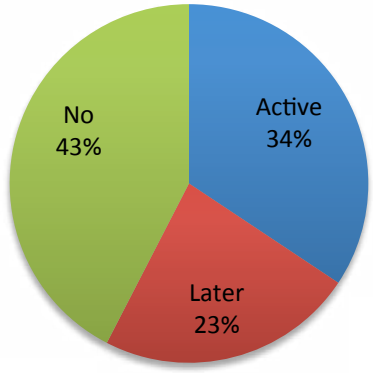
Projects

Are you interested in…

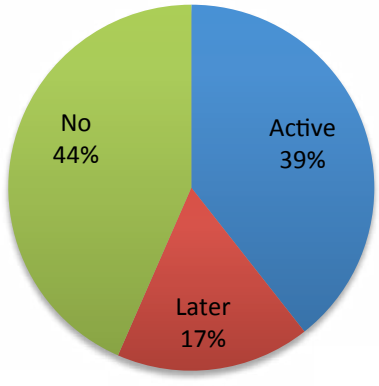
Nutrition Education Programming



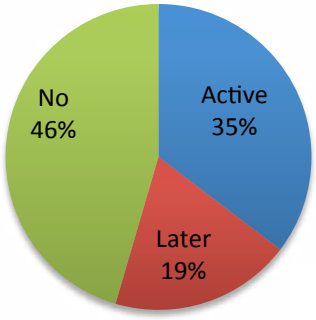
Urban Gardening Programs



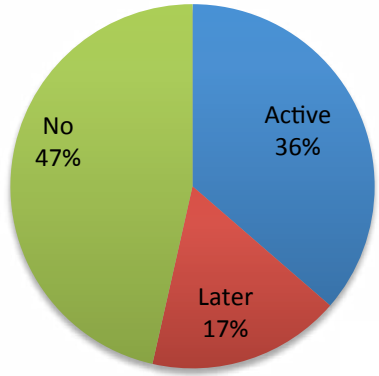
Backpack Program



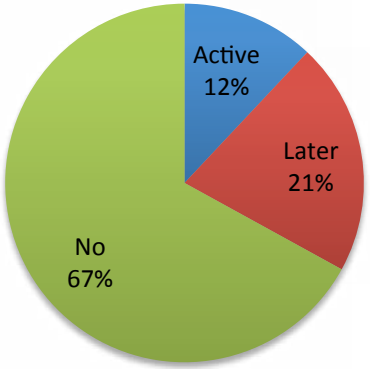
Cooking Programs



Fresh Produce in Emergency Food Distribution



Farm to School



Respondents were asked which project areas they might be interested in getting involved with in the future. They showed pretty even interest in being involved with Urban Gardening (57%), Nutrition Education (58%), Backpack Programs (56%) and Cooking Programs (54%). About 53% were interested in fresh produce distribution, but only 33% were interested in Farm to School initiatives.

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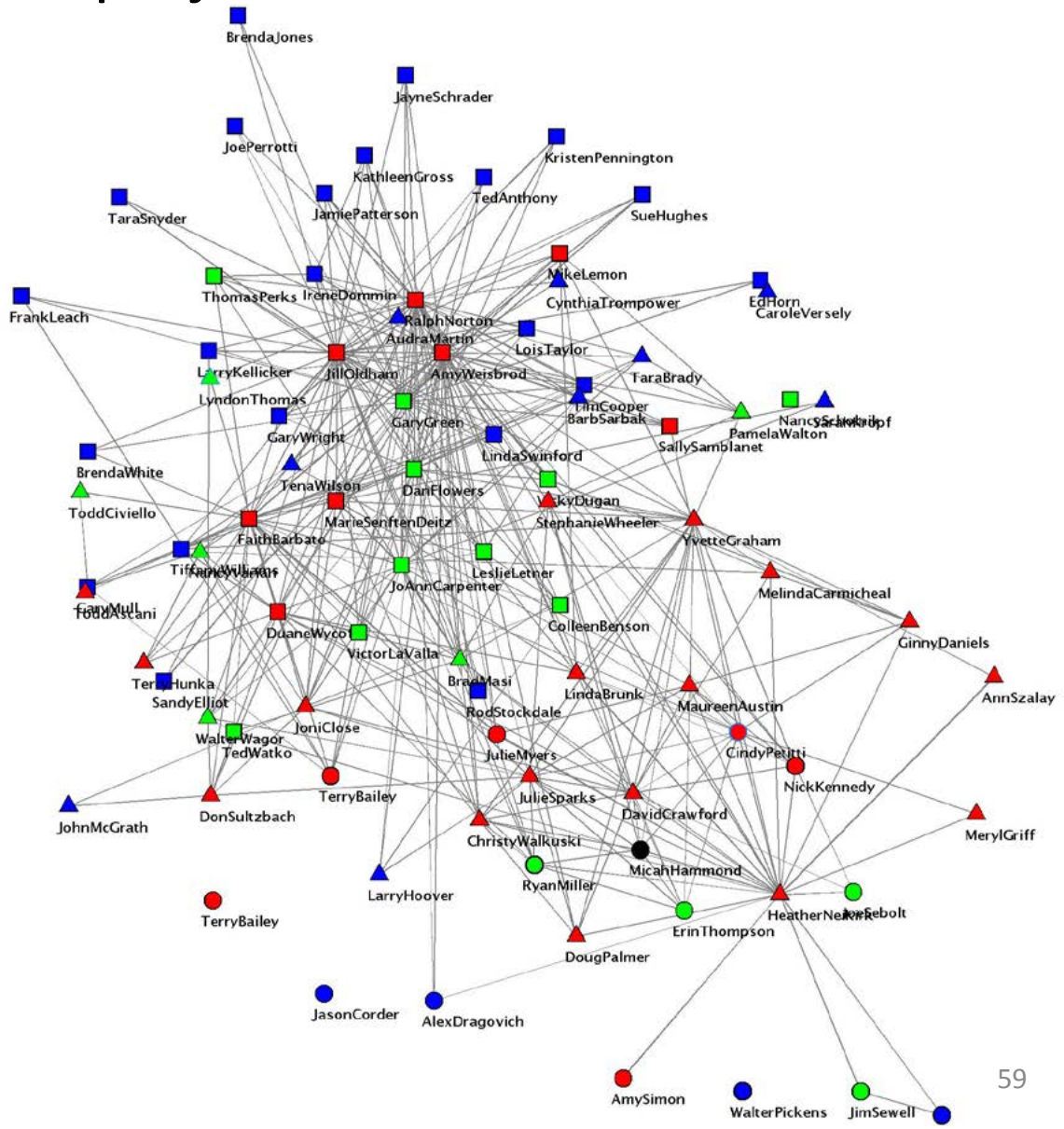
Are you active or interested in urban gardening projects?

Legend

- Already Doing
- Would like to Do in future
- Not a priority

- ◯ Local Food
- △ Supporting
- □ Hunger

The interest in urban gardening demonstrated an activity that is somewhat wide-spread throughout the network. There are strong connections between people that are already active with urban gardening efforts and individuals that are interested in developing gardening programs in the future. There would be a good opportunity for a learning network that would connect those that are active with those that are interested to build on the activity already out there.



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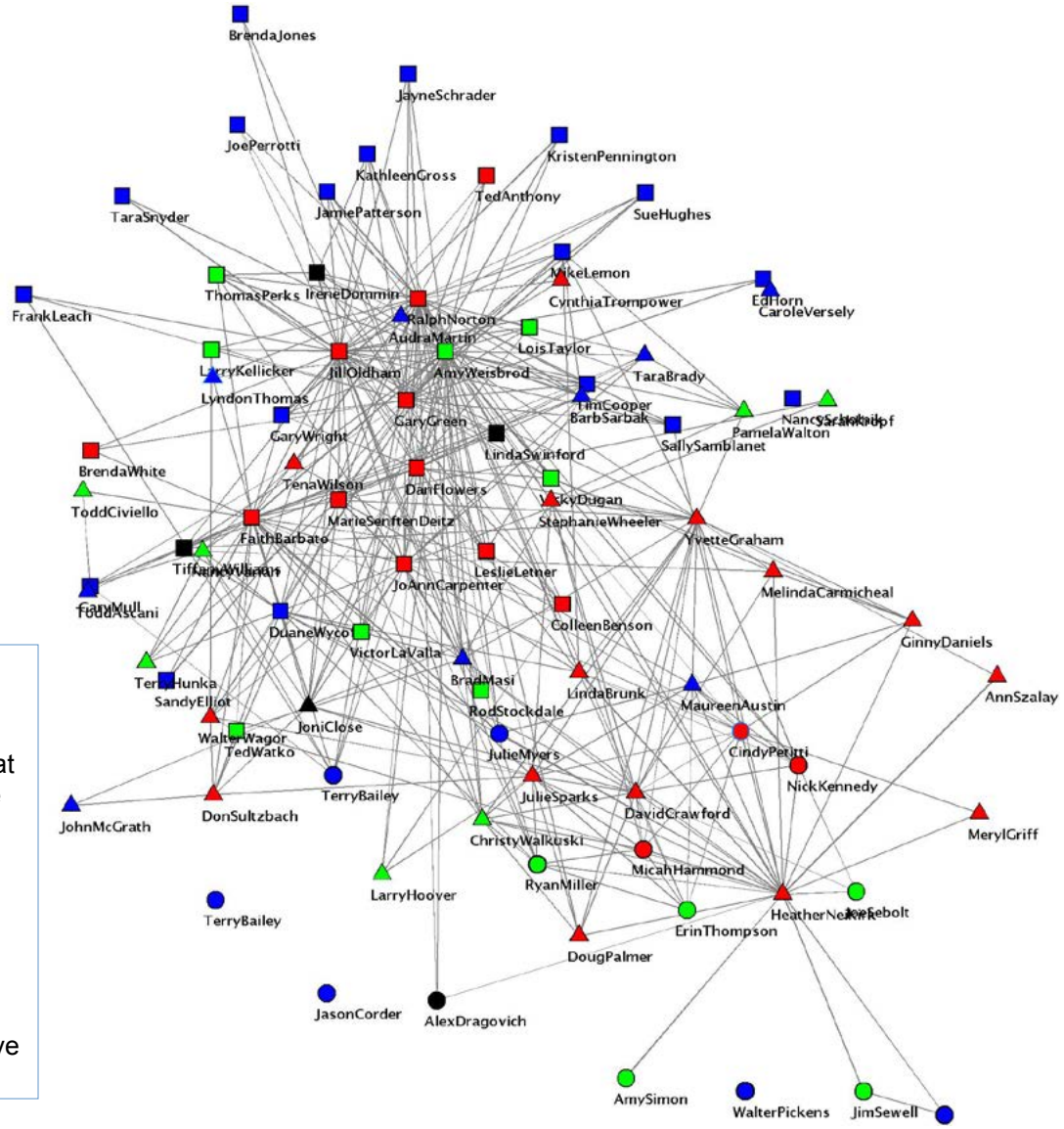
Are you active with or interested in nutrition education programming?

Legend

- Already Doing
- Would like to Do in future
- Not interested

- ◯ Local Food
- △ Supporting
- □ Hunger



Similar to urban gardening, the network map of individuals interested in nutrition education is pretty wide-spread throughout the network. Like urban gardening, there is an opportunity to create learning events that connect those that are already active with those that are interested to facilitate the development and improvement of nutrition education programs. There are a number of individuals involved with hunger efforts on the periphery that are not interested in gardening or nutrition. Many of these represent food pantries that might have limited times of operation and less capacity to carry out programs like this. In these cases, finding potential partnering individuals or organizations in the community might be helpful. The food pantries can serve as a connecting point for these efforts.

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COMMUNITY FORUM ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD SECURITY IN STARK COUNTY

Composite Results of July 9, 2014 Community Forum at Walsh University

20 YEAR VISION

What would you love to see possible in the next 2 Decades?

COLLABORATIVE CULTURE:

- Form strong collaborative partnerships between farmers and food banks
- Strong collaborative food system for the county
- Create a visioning board to serve as a driver to make sure strategic plan for region gets created and stays on track

POLICY

- More support from state/federal funding
- Stronger focus by government/elected officials in ending causes of food insecurity
- Return emphasis and government support of farming for food production
- Legislation that allows us to reduce wasting viable food

HEALTH:

- Reduction in obesity with better nutrition for all. Obesity trend levels off or decreases. Stark County equal to or less than Ohio average moving toward best practice communities.

- Eliminate sugar beverages in Stark County
- People/kids enjoying eating healthy foods
- Network with others in the county
- Prescribe fresh food diets to cure ailments

EDUCATION:

- Canton South High School has culinary program using locally sourced foods and growing own gardens with interdisciplinary departments
- Clearer understanding of community food access/education... do people know where to go and can they get there? Do people know how to prepare food? Do producers know what the community wants or needs? Is the food priced according to the market secured? Meet people where they are
- Teach cooking in schools
- Education in schools on budgeting and food preparation
- The perception/view of those in need will shift... a more supportive, less negative stero-type emerges
- Nutrition education in every school at every grade level
- Expand vegetarian options and educate health benefits
- Schools grow their own food

- All children know how to grow their own food
- To have everyone have access to a garden to learn how to produce the food that families need. Education is key to learn to garden, prepare, cook
- Education on how to procure and prepare land
- Local schools using gardens as learning centers and food production

FOOD SECURITY:

- All homebound clients could have food delivered
- Mobile pantries for high rises, schools, or under-served neighborhoods
- Food education access, affordable food
- Network of integrated delivery among providers
- Elimination of food deserts
- Organizations and producers working together to assist those who need food help
- Central locations for hot meal sites and good pantries with transportation available
- No barriers to accessing healthy food
- All pantries have access to fresh produce and the means to can/package

- All schools offer a back-pack program
- Corner stores feature local food
- Healthy snacks in schools

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM:

- A thriving food hub where local farmers and individuals can donate healthy items and huger relief center can pick up donations for distribution
- 10% of food purchased is local
- Community kitchen
- Farmers need more access to local markets. Farmers need to be asked to be involved. Farmers can be seen as educators.
- More entrepreneurial farmers
- Consumers who demand healthy food can shift what is surplus in food industry and what comes to food banks
- Many smaller regional food storage and processing hubs
- Personal and community gardens are everywhere
- Dead spaces turned into nutrition and economic power-houses
- Local and organic meats

- Better utilization of cosmetically challenged produce
- Economic development that spurs better paying jobs with higher standard of living and buying power
- Increase the amount/variety of food grown/produce consumed locally
- Elimination of wasted food that ends up in landfills or plowed under by farmers
- Community composting initiative
- Develop local grower cooperative
- Canton/Stark to become a tourist destination for farm-to-table cuisine
- Closed-loop recycled/compost to gardeners program
- Increase percentage of locally sourced food at Walsh dining service
- Re-occupy abandoned spaces for food
- Mobile farmers' market
- Commodity to community foods
- More backyard gardens
- Make Stark County a carbon-neutral food county

2 YEAR INDICATORS:
What Could Tell Us that We Are Making Progress in the Next Two Years?

Indicators for Increase Collaboration:

- Bring together and identify local farms/food organizations that can potentially donate
- Continuing dialogue between stakeholders
- Conduct community conversations with other social service agencies a minimum of twice per year
- Further define the overall system and identify areas of expertise and duplication
- Complete hunger relief system comprised of centers of excellence/expertise that minimizes duplication and enhances overall efficiency
- 20% increase in community partnerships to address hunger issue

Indicators for Capital:

- Grants that support small organizations or growers that have ideas that can be replicated
- 20% increase in individual donations

Indicators for Urban Agriculture

- Community garden support network created for people interested in starting a garden
- At least three dead/wasted spaces turned into a higher and healthier usage

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- 50 master urban farmers graduate
- Develop 10 urban or suburban farms
- Launch an urban farm in one of the food desert locations within Stark County
- Massillon now has 0 community gardens... 4 gardens developed in 2 years to have Boys and Girld Club, Salvation Army... work on finding someone for training in cooking or food preparation
- 10 urban farms in Canton, Massillon, Alliance

Indicators for Farmer Connections:

- Two local and organic meat farms established
- Bring together and identify local farms/food organizations that can potentially donate
- 10% of all produce/meat at FP(?) is local
- Increase the number of producers involved
- Meet with local retailer to increase locally grown foods for sale by 20%
- Create resource materials for local farmers with contacts for local hunger relief agencies
- Have a group of growers with products and outlets for produce
- Resources and web-site with information on how producers can get to markets
- Local food in mid-low income restaurants

Indicators for Public Education:

- Identify appropriate content standards to be addressed
- 20 companies/organizations go through Bridges out of Poverty training
- Have a farm-to-table cuisine/restaurant guide on-line linked to Stark Tourism/Chamber/Pro football Hall of Fame festival (if it doesn't exist)
- Clearer visibility of services for those who need services... common booklet of services available (not everyone on the web)...

Indicators for School Education:

- Identify community programs to be introduced that can provide supplemental cooking education in the classroom
- Identify programs that can be offered to provide extracurricular programs
- Collaborating with local schools and neighborhood gardens as well as OSU Extension on growing a successful garden
- Plans to include gardens/composting connected to cafeteria/café/culinary program in new school design at Canton South High School
- Establish urban farming camp/after school program to encourage healthier eating with children

Indicators for Hunger Relief:

- One mobile food bank vehicle

- 10% of local farms contribute to Food Bank
- All mobile meals on wheels organizations are members of the foodbank network and dlievering groceries to homebound clients who are 200% poverty level
- Acquisition of vehicle for mobile market/mobile food pantry
- Add a minimum of 5 new hunger-relief agencies in targeted areas
- Establish Stark County branch of Akron-Canton Food Bank
- Create a volunteer "gleaners" organization
- Foodbank collaboration with Community Harvest
- Every pantry has a community garden attached/assigned/committed to it
- Services and pantry booklet for school, parish, and social service distribution
- Mobile pantry/market (2 in county)
- Study to show who has "excess food" and whether or not it can be used

Indicators for Health:

- Reduce sugar beverages in Stark County
- 10% increase in consumption of nutrition-dense foods coupled with 10% decline in obesity

Indicators for Local Food Infrastructure for Storage, Processing, Distribution

- Central food hub
- Food Pantry Network- cold storage
- Establish a strategic plan with Stark County collaborators to open a local food hub
- 1-2 regional food storage and processing hubs accessible to growers and hunger relief programs
- Old Hercules plant features a local food hub

Indicators for Advocacy:

- Identify interest groups to lobby or petition for change
- Gather support from constituents to present to legislators
- Organize public efforts to draw attention to cause
- Create advocacy network from 10 existing hunger organizations

2 QUARTER- SMALL PROJECTS

What Will We All Do Together in the Next Two Quarters to Make Progress Happen?

Small Projects that Support Urban Farming (12/16 with supporters):

- **Identify wasted space in the community** *Amy Weisbrod (C), Tom Phillips (C)*

- **Identify all community gardens and if they support specific pantries, which need volunteers, which have the capacity to support more** *Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (C)*

- **Research existing urban/suburban farm programs in Stark County… research established programs in Ohio to generate best practices and develop 5 to 10 urban/suburban farms** *Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L)*

- **Secure urban farm sites** *Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C), Doug Palmer (C)*

- **Local growers collaborating with local agencies to strengthen community** *Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C), Amy Weisbrod (C), Scott Sandbrink (C)*

- **Develop recommendations and a proposed business model to launch an urban farm within a food desert in Stark County** *Tom Phillip (L)*

- **A community garden support forum/network created for people who are interested in starting a garden and need knowledge and/or resources** *Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L), Scott Sandbrink (L)*

- **Formation of a conglomerate of urban farm producers- a clearing house from which to exchange ideas/opportunities customers, etc.** *Scott Sandbrink (L), Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **One functioning urban farm** *Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (C)*

- **Add gardens to vacant properties, church land, etc**. *Tom Phillips (L), Erma Smith (C), Amy Weisbrod (C), Scott Sandbrink (C)*

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- **Organize community garden network** *Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L)*
- **Start master urban farmer course** *Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L)*
- Help to get community gardens in Massillon
- Find land for 2 commercial (urban) gardens in Massillon and talk to city leaders about how to get designated for urban gardens
- Identify all gardens and who they currently support, which have additional capacity, which need volunteers, and approach them on pantry collaboration
- Try to match a garden to each pantry in the county

Small Projects that Build Collaboration (4/16 with supporters):

- **Start Stark County community food network (Food Council)** *Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (L)*
- **Connect with Stark Regional Planning CBD, and Stark Land Trust about food planning and land-use planning and zoning** *Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L)*
- **Begin planning of a summit that would focus on strengthening the hunger- relief network across the county** *Amy Weisbrod (L)*
- **Connect local food conversations in Stark and Summit counties** *(Doug Palmer (L), Tom Phillips (C))*
- Partner with one new agency to increase food security in Stark County
- Have an interest meeting with local food stakeholders and develop a local farm to table brand on social media

- Community partners to facilitate flow of food affordably

- Convene a forum/meeting to share organization missions and basic data (education, common understanding) and identify if collaboration is possible or what expertise teach organization has and what duplication can be eliminated Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (C), Heather Neikirk (C), Nick Morris (C)

- Conduct survey of Stark agencies to generate list of "weakness" in government support

- Partner/collaborate with 1 new agency or producer to help increase food security in Stark County

- Expand Hot Meal focus group, include pantries in Canton to participate in collaboration

- Set-up meetings with SARTA- (holidays and Sunday)... get other agencies involved to encourage additional transportation to pantries and hot meal sites in the city

- Set a follow-up meeting of the participants at the Food Security forum

- Plan to discuss education class for cooking produce and table about nutrition

- More support from state/federal funding... identify interest groups to help lobby

- Create "buddy-system" for how one organization can help another organization

Small Projects to Support Education in Schools/Universities (8/14 with supporters):

- **Design 1-2 new courses related to local food/hunger at Walsh** *Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **Begin educating the underfed and use Stark State College students to provide the education** *Ann Szalay (L), Heather*

Neikirk (C)

- **Teach cooking in schools... research how to tie into curriculum (common core/content standards** *Tom Phillips (L), Phil Shultz (L), Scott Sandbrink (C), Karen Abel Jepsen (I)*

- **Design/research youth driven projects that focus on growing and eating healthy foods** *Nick Kennedy (L), Heather Neikirk (C), David Crawford (C)*

- **Stark County farm to school program** *Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (C), Scott Sandbrink (C)*

- **Follow-up with Canton South/SU regarding Farm to School grant** *Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **Social media campaign designed and implemented by high school/college students to commit residents to make monthly contributions to hunger efforts** *Amy Weisbrod (L)*

- **Integration of after-school and in-school gardening/healthy food curriculum in schools/day care centers** (Erma Smith (L), Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C), Karen Abel Jepsen (I))

- Develop program for 3rd graders

- Meet with Canton South Super-intendant about new school plans and gardens and find support for initiative in Canton local district

- National health standards with local options to be instituted in our Ohio schools Erma Smith (L), Heather Neikirk (C)

- Target urban elementary schools in Canton School District that lack backpack programs... target neighborhood/community business to sponsor it

- Design 1-2 new courses at Walsh for hunger/local foods

- Pilot healthy snacks in schools program in one school district

Small Projects that raise public awareness (7/12 with supporters):

- **Campaign to raise grater awareness in community about food issues** *Amy Weisbrod (C)*

- **Identify a Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)/Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to pilot local food program, including nutrition education, food to take home, cooking classes, and gardening... task local college students to create curriculum and teach program** *Tom Phillips (C), Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **Educational information on resources available in various communities** *Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **Food services and pantry guidebook... engage a graphic designer and local organizations/pantries on services offered, locations and hours, to create a book for distribution at churches/schools/social service offices** *Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **Host a community training focused on changing the perception/view of those struggling with—Bridges out of Poverty** *Leslie Letner (L), Colleen Benson (L)*

- **Host public viewing for "Growing Cities" film** *Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (C)*

- **Teaching how to enjoy eating healthy foods... identify volunteers, teachers, and funding or volunteer contributions** *(Scott Sandbrink (C))*

- Create a vision statement for farm-to-table dining gudie for social media web- site

- Teaching kids/people to enjoy eating healthy foods

- Local growers collaborating with local agencies to strengthen community awareness

- Plan to discuss education class for cooking produce and table about nutrition

- Engage designer and utilize contact information from today's event to develop content on various organizations and pantry locations

Small projects that build farmer connections (6/8 with supporters):

- **Publicity/awareness of existing organic meat farmers** *Tom Phillips (C)*

- **Create resource materials for local farmers with information for local hunger agencies... contact Ohio Farm Bureau, determine what materials may be beneficial to farmers, establish "shared vision" with Ohio Farm Bureau** *Tom Phillips (C), Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **Have framework developed for farmer to restaurant/institution/foodbank** *Tom Phillips (L)*

- **Identify stakeholders in farm-to-table with tourism and economic development and convene a meeting. Create a vision statement for farm-to-table dining guide for social media/web** *Doug Palmer (L), Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **Find and organize 5-10 growers and their produce** *Tom Phillips (L), Scott Sandbrink (L)*

- **Have locally sourced menu items for events catering and in the dining hall at Walsh University** *Heather Neikirk (C)*

- Begin locally sourcing events or specific meals at Walsh University

- Two corner stores distribute local foods

Small projects to improve food pantry distribution (6/6 with supporters):

- **Conduct research on existing mobile markets and food pantries to include: how they operate, how funded, how staffed, what is offered, how locations determined** *Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **Gleaning program framework in place and locations mapped** *Tom Phillips (L)*

- **Gleaning project web-site** *Tom Phillips (L)*

- **Identify contact/convene mobile meals/meals on wheels and have discussion aobut deliveries of free groceries** *Tom Phillips (C)*

- **Expand backpack programs... target urban schools in Stark County that don't currently have a program and find neighborhood businesses to sponsor at the closest school** *Tom Phillips (C), Amy Weisbrod (C)*

- **Start farm to foodbank program** *Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (C), Scott Sandbrink (C)*

Small projects that support health outcomes (1/6 with supporters):

- **Identify possible community areas where programs that each healthy food prep with tastings can be offered (SMHA, libraries, schools, after-school programs)** *Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (L), Scott Sandbrink (C)*

- Approach Salvation Army and Boys & Girls Club about cooking with fresh produce

- Develop simple recipes for locally available produce

- Feature health benefits of nutrition-dense foods in food bank and feature nutrition dense foods with 5 minute preparation recipes

- Develop nutrition-dense food recipes in food banks

- Ten families reduce their obesity/over-weight

Projects to support development of infrastructure for storage, processing, or distribution (4/4 with supporters):

- **Committee formed for kitchen incubator** *Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (L)*

- **Stark County food hub committee identified** *Doug Palmer (C), Heather Neikirk (C)*

- **Kitchen incubator in place** *Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (L), Heather Neikirk (C)*

Hold a meeting with Stark County hunger relief centers to discuss the possibility and need for a local hub to receive food donations and distribute the surplus of local individuals and farmers *(Amy Weisbrod (L), Heather Neikirk (L), Leslie Letner (C))*

Projects that support utilization of waste (1/1 with supporters):

- **City-wide composting program framework completed** *Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C), Karen Abel Jepsen (I)*

STARK COUNTY- Follow-up Projects from July 9th Forum

TOPIC	PROJECT	LEADERS
1) Support Urban Farming (12/16)	a) Identify wasted space in the community	Tom Phillips (L) Amy Weisbrod (C)
	b) Research existing urban/suburban farm programs in Stark County... research established programs in Ohio to generate best practices and develop 5 to 10 urban/suburban farms	Heather Neikirk (L) Tom Phillips (L)
	c) Research existing urban/suburban farm programs in Stark County... research established programs in Ohio to generate best practices and develop 5 to 10 urban/suburban farms	Heather Neikirk (L) Tom Phillips (L)
	d) Secure urban farm sites	Tom Phillips (L) Heather Neikirk (C) Doug Palmer (C)
	e) Local growers collaborating with local agencies to strengthen community	Tom Phillips (L) Heather Neikirk (C) Amy Weisbrod (C) Scott Sandbrink (C)
	f) Develop recommendations and a proposed business model to launch an urban farm within a food desert in Stark County	Tom Phillips (L)
	g) A community garden support forum/network created for people who are interested in starting a garden and need knowledge and/or resources	
	h) Formation of a conglomerate of urban farm producers- a clearing house from which to exchange ideas/opportunities customers, etc.	*Scott Sandbrink (L), Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C)*
	i) One functioning urban farm	*Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (C)*
	j) Add gardens to vacant properties, church land, etc.	*Tom Phillips (L), Erma Smith (C), Amy Weisbrod (C), Scott Sandbrink (C)*
	k) Organize community garden network	*Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L)*
	l) Start master urban farmer course	*Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L)*
	m) Help to get community gardens in Massillon, find land for 2 commercial (urban) gardens in Massilon and talk to city leaders about how to get designated for urban gardens,	
	n) Identify all gardens and who they currently support (which have additional capacity, which need volunteers) and approach them on pantry collaboration,	
	o) Try to match a garden to each pantry in the county.	

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2) Build Collaboration (4/16)	a) Convene a forum/meeting to share organizational missions and basic data (education, common understanding) and identify if collaboration is possible or what expertise each organization has and what duplication can be eliminated	Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (C), Heather Neikirk (C), Nick Morris (C)
	b) Connect with Stark Regional Planning CBD, and Stark Land Trust about food planning and land-use planning and zoning	*Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L)*
	c) Begin planning of a summit that would focus on strengthening the hunger- relief network across the county	*Amy Weisbrod (L)*
	d) Connect local food conversations in Stark and Summit counties	*Doug Palmer (L), Tom Phillips (C)*
	e) Start Stark County community food network (Food Council)	*Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (L)*
	f) Partner with one new agency to increase food security in Stark County	
	g) Have an interest meeting with local food stakeholders and develop a local farm to table brand on social media	
	h) Community partners to facilitate flow of food affordably	
	i) Conduct survey of Stark agencies to generate list of "weakness" in government support	
	j) Partner/collaborate with 1 new agency or producer to increase food security in Stark County	
	k) Expand Hot Meal focus group, include pantries in Canton to participate in collaboration	
	l) Set-up meetings with SARTA (holidays and Sunday)… get other agencies involved to encourage additional transportation to pantries and hot meal sites in the city	
	m) Set a follow-up meeting of the participants at the Food Security forum	
	n) Plan to discuss education class for cooking produce and table about nutrition	
	o) Plan to discuss education class for cooking produce and table about nutrition	
	p) More support from state/federal funding... identify interest groups to help lobby	
	q) Create "buddy-system" for how one organization can help another organization	
3) Promote Education in Schools/ Universities (8/14)	a) Design 1-2 new courses related to food/hunger at Walsh University	Heather Neikirk (C)
	b) Begin educating the underfed and use Stark State College students to provide the education	*Ann Szalay (L), Heather Neikirk (C)*
	c) Teach cooking in schools... research how to tie into curriculum (common core/content standards	*Tom Phillips (L), Phil Shultz (L), Scott Sandbrink (C), Karen Abel Jepsen (I)*
	d) Design/research youth driven projects that focus on growing and eating healthy foods	*Nick Kennedy (L), Heather Neikirk (C), David Crawford (C)*
	e) Stark County farm to school program	*Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (C), Scott Sandbrink (C)*
	f) Follow-up with Canton South/SU regarding Farm to School grant	*Heather Neikirk (C)*

	g) Social media campaign designed and implemented by high school/college students to commit residents to make monthly contributions to hunger efforts	*Amy Weisbrod (L)*
	h) Integration of after-school and in-school gardening/healthy food curriculum in schools/day care centers	Erma Smith (L), Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C), Karen Abel Jepsen (I)
	i) National health standards with local options to be instituted in our Ohio schools	Erma Smith (L), Heather Neikirk (C)
	j) Develop program for 3rd graders	
	k) Meet with Canton South Superintendent about new school plans and gardens and find support for initiative in Canton local school district	
	l) Target urban elementary schools in Canton School District that lack backpack programs… target neighborhood/community business to sponsor it	
	m) Pilot healthy snacks in schools program in one district	
4) Raise Public Awareness (7/12)	a) Identify a Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)/Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to pilot local food program, including nutrition education, food to take home, cooking classes, and gardening... task local college students to create curriculum and teach program	*Tom Phillips (C), Heather Neikirk (C)*
	b) Campaign to raise grater awareness in community about food issues	*Amy Weisbrod (C)*
	c) Educational information on resources available in various communities	*Heather Neikirk (C)*
	d) Host a community training focused on changing the perception/view of those struggling with—Bridges out of Poverty	*Leslie Letner (L), Colleen Benson (L)*
	e) Host public viewing for "Growing Cities" film	*Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (C)*
	f) Teaching how to enjoy eating healthy foods... identify volunteers, teachers, and funding or volunteer contributions	*Scott Sandbrink (C)*
	g) Create a vision statement for farm-to-table dining guide for social media site	
	h) Teaching kids/people to enjoy healthy foods	
	i) Local growers collaborating with local agencies to strengthen community awareness	
	j) Plan to discuss education class for cooking produce and table about nutrition	
	k) Engage designer and utilize contact information from forum event to develop content on various organizations and pantry locations	
5) Build Farmer Connections (6/8)	a) Publicity/awareness of existing organic meat farmers	*Tom Phillips (C)*
	b) Create resource materials for local farmers with information for local hunger agencies... contact Ohio Farm Bureau, determine what materials may be beneficial to farmers, establish "shared vision" with Ohio Farm Bureau	*Tom Phillips (C), Heather Neikirk (C)*
	c) Have framework developed for farmer to restaurant/institution/foodbank	*Tom Phillips (L)*
	d) Identify stakeholders in farm-to-table with tourism and economic development and convene a	*Doug Palmer (L), Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C)*

	meeting. Create a vision statement for farm-to-table dining guide for social media/web	
	e) Find and organize 5-10 growers and their produce	*Tom Phillips (L), Scott Sandbrink (L)*
	f) Have locally sourced menu items for events catering and in the dining hall at Walsh University	*Heather Neikirk (C)*
	g) Begin locally sourcing events or specific meals at Walsh University	
	h) Two corner stores distribute local foods	
6) Improve Food Pantry Distribution (6/6)	a) Conduct research on existing mobile markets and food pantries to include: how they operate, how funded, how staffed, what is offered, how locations determined	*Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C)*
	b) Gleaning program framework in place and locations mapped	*Tom Phillips (L)*
	c) Gleaning project web-site	*Tom Phillips (L)*
	d) Identify contact/convene mobile meals/meals on wheels and have discussion aobut deliveries of free groceries	*Tom Phillips (C)*
	e) Expand backpack programs... target urban schools in Stark County that don't currently have a program and find neighborhood businesses to sponsor at the closest school	*Tom Phillips (C), Amy Weisbrod (C)*
	f) Start farm to foodbank program	*Heather Neikirk (L), Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (C), Scott Sandbrink*
7) Improve Health Outcomes (1/6)	a) Identify possible community areas where programs that each healthy food prep with tastings can be offered (SMHA, libraries, schools, after-school programs)	*Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (L), Scott Sandbrink (C)*
	b) Approach Salvation Army and Boys & Girls Club about cooking with fresh produce	
	c) Develop simple recipes for locally available produce	
	d) Feature health benefits of nutrition-dense foods in food bank and feature nutrition dense foods with 5 minute preparation recipes	
	e) Develop nutrition-dense food recipes in food banks	
	f) Ten families reduce their obesity/over-weight	
8)Develop Infrastructure for Storage, Processing, Distribution (4/4)	a) Committee formed for kitchen incubator	*Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (L)*
	b) Stark County food hub committee identified	*Doug Palmer (C), Heather Neikirk (C)*
	c) Kitchen incubator in place	*Tom Phillips (L), Amy Weisbrod (L), Heather Neikirk (C)*
	d) Hold a meeting with Stark County hunger relief centers to discuss the possibility and need for a local hub to receive food donations and distribute the surplus of local individuals and farmers	*Amy Weisbrod (L), Heather Neikirk (L), Leslie Letner (C)*
9) Utilize Waste (1/1)	a) City-wide composting framework completed	*Tom Phillips (L), Heather Neikirk (C), Karen Abel Jepsen (I)*

LOCAL INVESTMENT TOOLS TO SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

LOCAL INVESTMENT TOOLS

LOCAL BANKS AND CREDIT UNIONS

In this section of his book Local Dollars, Local Sense, Shuman includes local investment options that can be supported by community banks or credit unions. These institutions have the capacity to manage these programs which can be initiated by individuals or groups of account-holders.

Purchase Targeted CD's-
Specialty CD's offer one tool that community banks can utilize to generate capital for local investing. A specialty CD can be targeted for investment into local businesses with banks providing administrative resources to manage the resources. This enables unaccredited investors an opportunity to invest savings in long-term CD's. The banks utilize capital raised through the CD's to collateralize loans to local businesses. Investors gain the same rates of interest that they would with a normal CD, although they (instead of the bank) do assume risk if the investment fails. This tool enables individuals to do double duty with investments, earning a comparable interest rate while investing in businesses that match their social criteria. As one example, Equal Exchange, a worker-owned company that specializes in fair trade products that meet strict environmental and social criteria, leveraged a specialized CD program that raised $1 million in credit from individuals supportive of their mission. Working with a community bank or credit union, a group of residents could set-up specialty CD's that could raise collateral capital that could support development of local food enterprises within the community.

Micro-Loan Fund-
The Self-Help Association for a Regional Economy (SHARE) provides another example of working with community banks to provide capital to collateralize loans to local small businesses. Initiated by the New Economics Institute (formerly the E.F. Schumacher Society) in Great Barrington, Massachusettes, the program targeted mostly rural, home-based businesses that could utilize small amounts of capital to expand small rural enterprises and local food initiatives. Many of these enterprises needed small loans of $2,500 to $3,000 to introduce or expand small enterprises, such as cheese-making. Micro-loans of this scale are difficult for banks to administer and often carry interest rates that make them prohibitive to small, rural enterprises. SHARE organized as a non-profit organization that partnered with the Berkshire Bank to organize the micro-lending program. A Berkshire resident could open up a savings account at the bank as a joint account with SHARE. The account remained in the ownership of the depositor, but could be pooled with others to form collateral for small loans that were facilitated by the SHARE non-profit. In its early formation, the program had 70 depositors and made 14 loans that included some investments in a small milking parlor and cheese room for a small farm, a loan to a home knitter to purchase a new knitting machine, or an appliance repair man that was able to expand his inventory of spare parts. In all, the program reportedly created forty new jobs without any loss of loans. The depositors received a quarterly newsletter to update them on which businesses received loans through SHARE. Many of the depositors included small, relatively low-income residents who saw the benefits to the loan pool to support businesses in the local community like theirs. The introduction of new Community Reinvestment Act regulations, lower interest rates, and changes in community banking reduced the need for the program which ceased operations in the 1990's. Susan Witt, the co-founder of the SHARE program, observed in retrospect that they were able to nurture more capital, but needed a program that provided more business planning support for residents interested in loans. The legal documents for SHARE can be downloaded at www.neweconomicsinstitute.org for replication.

COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives provide one option for accessing local capital without the need for accredited investors. Members of a cooperative can purchase shares in the cooperative, providing capital as well as a voice in the decision-making of the enterprise. Cooperatives have seen a recent growth in the past 5 years, particularly as capital from traditional sources has become less available. Cooperatives, such as Local Roots in Wooster, Ohio leveraged both the financial and time resources of their farmer and consumer member-owners to establish a local foods retail store in an empty downtown building. The Evergreen Cooperative in Cleveland is a cooperative fund that is investing in a number of worker-owned cooperative enterprises, including a green launder, a solar installation company, and a hydroponic greenhouse operation. The Evergreen Project in Cleveland was initially capitalized by the Cleveland Foundation, the largest community foundation in the United States. It demonstrates a novel way for foundations to invest their financial assets in the start-up of social enterprises that provide employment, build local wealth, retain capital, and provide services that have a social benefit (improved local food supply, green laundry, solar energy, etc.)

According to Shuman, economically, cooperatives provide a number of benefits as described in the list below.

• **Investing in Fields that Others Won't Touch**- The Rural Electric Cooperatives provide one example of investing in rural infrastructure in an area that traditional financiers would not touch.

• **Consumers Drive Down Price**- When consumers have a share in the business, it helps to keep prices low and reduces the flight of profits from outside of the community.

• **Higher Worker Productivity**- A number of studies indicate that worker-owners of cooperatives tend to have higher rates of productivity, due to their co-ownership of the company and place in the decision-making affairs of the enterprise.

• **Bulk Purchasing**- Bulk purchasing provides another advantage where local businesses can team up to do bulk purchasing of supplies or inputs.

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of cooperatives is local ownership. The owners of a cooperative enterprise usually include members of the same community that the coop serves. In terms of developing local food systems or sustainable energy initiatives, coops invest in local infrastructure with a long-term interest in the well-being of the community. Traditional investment routes often seek capital from investors that are often not members of the targeted community whose sole interest is return on investment. In a globalized economy, this facilitates a downward spiral where highly mobile capital travels the globe in search of the most favorable investment returns, often to the detriment of local communities.

Some of the models of cooperative investment identified by Shuman are summarized in the list below.

• Member Capital- Coops raise initial capital through their membership. Becoming a member of a cooperative requires an equity investment or share. Share rates can be prorated or extended over longer time-periods to accommodate a more mixed socio-economic base of supporters. Capital raised by membership can be used to invest in facilities, equipment, inventory, or other needs for the cooperative. Membership often yields dividends, in which a share of profits are distributed to members, keeping profits anchored in a local community.

• Member Lending- Coops can also leverage their membership base to pool together loans to support expansions, upgrades or moves within a community. The Willy Street Coop in Madison Wisconsin, for example, raised $600,000 in 34 days from its 21,000 membership base. Members were allowed to select an interest-return rate, with many favoring lower interest rates to support the cooperative.

• Coop Loan Funds- One of the Rochdale Principles guiding cooperative enterprises includes "Coops Helping Other Coops". Coops will often leverage their own capital resources to support the growth of coops, whether in their own community or in other communities. The Oberlin Student Cooperative Association (OSCA) has a history of making loans to other cooperatives across the United States, from starting local CSA's in Oberlin to investing in university-based coops or small coops in low-wealth communities as far abroad as Nicaragua. Coops can often charge a more favorable rate of interest than traditional financiers.

• Investing Coops- Some coops can be organized to invest in community assets to foster broader local economic impact. For example, Coop Power, with 390 members and 7,000 supporters in New England, leverages its membership capital to invest in the community assets necessary to transition away from fossil-fuel-based energy systems. The coop invested in businesses to support energy efficiency services, bio-fuel plants, and renewable energy. Individuals joining the cooperative included thought-leaders and energy experts from throughout the region. In addition to leveraging about $300,000 in membership capital, the knowledge resources of its members are tapped to advise the development of new energy businesses. With $300,000 in member equity and another $200,000 in member loans, the coop has assembled three energy-efficiency crews, launched a solar hot water installation program, and supported other energy businesses that collectively employ 100 people.

• Cooperative Loan Funds- Cooperatives can also create special loan funds that can direct resources toward supplying businesses. For example, the La Montanita Food Coop, based in New Mexico operates five stores, has 17,000 members, and about $30 million in annual sales. The coop has a large network of small to mid-size farms that utilize sustainable production methods. The coop developed resources to invest in distribution, storage, and wholesale market development to support the 700 regional farmers in its network. The coop introduced a program to pre-pay farmers or food processors in exchange for later reductions in invoices, generating another small pool of capital to support capital investments in these enterprises.

• Worker-Owned Coops- Workers in a worker-owned cooperative can also be a source of capital. While less common in the United States, perhaps the best-known example of worker-ownership is the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation in Spain, a network of 256 cooperative and non-cooperative businesses which fold a portion of their profits back into the cooperative association to support new businesses or business expansions. The Evergreen Cooperative in Cleveland is replicating the Mondragon model to invest in a number of green cooperative businesses focused on leveraging the spending power of University Circle institutions, such as Case Western Reserve University, University Hospitals, and the Cleveland Clinic. The development of these cooperatives is supported by the Evergreen Cooperative fund. All cooperative businesses are owned by the workers. A typical worker-owner is projected to build up a $65,000 equity stake from profit distributions in 8 to 9 years. The Evergreen Cooperative Development Fund provides the capital for the worker cooperatives. Over time, the work cooperatives pay back into the fund through a share of profits, supporting the expansion of coops in the fund or the development of new cooperative enterprises.

ACCREDITED INVESTORS

Accredited investors include wealthy organizations, or individuals (banks, insurance companies, large charities, endowments, etc.) that are permitted to invest in higher risk projects. Types of investments might include provision of seed money or venture capital, limited partnerships, hedge funds, or angel investor networks.

• Community Development Finance Institutions - State and local government can

provide a source of capital investment through the formation of revolving loan funds. These loans have to be self-financing, meaning that the interest from early loans have to cover the expenses of the fund, although they can be initiated or periodically infused with public money from local, state, or federal entities. The State of Vermont, for example, created state a Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to support development of a green economy. The fund receives about $250,000 from the state which covers a portion of operating expenses and enables them to further leverage $1 million of capital each year from a mix of federal agencies, foundations, or individual donors to provide grants and technical support. The Vermont Economic Development Authority has a bond market to under-write low-interest loans to family farms. Growing out of these initiatives, the state has created a new designation for a low-profit limited liability company (L3C). This new business structure enables a mission-oriented business to form with the objective of not maximizing profit. The Flexible Capital Fund is an example of a L3C created. With about $2 million in capital, the Flex Fund draws accredited investors who are interested in investing in mission-oriented businesses in the state. Its investments target value-added agriculture, green technology, waste management, and renewable energy project. The fund invests strategically to fill gaps in local food supply chains, investing in businesses that have a product or service that another business needs. The State of Vermont has experienced job growth in the local food economy when many sectors were mostly losing jobs. As one example, the town of Hardwick Vermont, with a population of 3,000 residents, organized a group of private investors and local food businesses to create about 100 new jobs in the local food economy through targeted investing in a collection of businesses providing goods and services to each other.

• Program Related Investments- Another source of capital for mission-oriented business investment comes from private foundations. Many foundations are set-up to make program-related investments, low-interest loans that often favor higher-risk businesses with a social mission that have difficulty attracting funding from traditional financing sources.

• New Market Tax Credits- New Market Tax Credits provide equity investments, loans, and technical assistance to low-wealth communities. These funds are available to accredited investors who put money into the fund for seven years and receive a 39% credit on federal taxes. About $30 billion has been authorized for this program which can be used to particularly target initiatives in low-income communities.

NON SECURITIES

The greatest barrier to local food businesses is access to capital. Since most local food businesses are small, including home-based businesses, sole proprietorships, or small co-operatives, it is difficult for them to attract investment capital, even if they are approaching accredited investors. However, there are a number of investment tools available to small businesses which should be leveraged in Stark County. They include:

• Crowdfunding- Crowdfunding has been bolstered through the internet and the development of some on-line crowd-sourcing tools like KickStarter or RocketHub. These on-line tools provide new support for artists, artisan producers, and others that have trouble accessing credit through traditional channels. A project is placed on a crowdsourcing web-site, with a target amount of capital being sought. Individuals can sponsor the project by pledging funds on-line. The target amount must be achieved within a certain window of time, typically 60 days. This income is not treated as an investment, as the money will not be returned to the sponsor, nor will it earn them interest. These projects are most successful for projects that have strong support among a network of people likely to be affected by the project. For example, a number of micro-breweries have utilized crowd-sourcing to generate capital. The people that provide funding support are also likely to be the same people that might patronize the micro-brewery. To the extent that a project has wide visibility and support within a community, crowdsourcing can be an effective source of start-up capital or capital for expansions.

• Microloans- Another common source of capital comes from micro-loans intended to assist mostly small entrepreneurs that require low amounts of capital to get started. Kiva provides a common platform for micro-loans and has been successful in third world countries where residents might have a difficult time finding access to capital. A micro-loan is a form of interest-free lending. Capital is provided and then paid back, but at 0% interest, which enables it to avoid security laws. While Kiva mostly transfers capital from networks of supporters from wealthier nations, a community-based variation of this could be developed for Stark County's local food system.

• Pre-selling Goods and Services- Pre-selling goods and services can offer another avenue for a small business to generate capital. This works particularly well for already existing businesses that have a loyal clientele. Café Gratitude in San Franciso issued discount gift cards to their clientele to open-up another restaurant location. The gift cards could be purchased for $1,000 and provided $1,200 to spend at either of their restaurants. Café Awakening, a new café being developed in Oakland, California as a gathering space for area artists and social entrepreneurs, the café is financing its development by pre-selling goods and services from the café.

• Time Bank- A time bank allows people in a community to more effectively leverage their time resources. Within a time bank, one hour of work holds the same value, regardless of the type of work that it is. For example, a plumber might install an irrigation line for an urban market garden and the market garden will provide produce back to the plumber. A time bank allows for a more reciprocal form of volunteerism where people can receive credit for time contributed and exchange that credit for other services from within the community.

• Local Currency- Local currencies are a variation on time banks. In a local currency, an actual local scrip is issued that can be exchanged for goods and services within a community. In the example above, a plumber might purchase food from a local market garden using a local currency. The urban gardener might then pay for massage therapy services to take care of a sore back with the local currency. In the late 1990's, the Oberlin

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Sustainable Agriculture Project (OSAP), a Community Supported Agriculture farm, issued its CSA shares in the form of "Oberlin Dollars". Shareholders then exchanged these dollars (in any amount) at the farmers market to re-deem their produce. A discount was built in, so that a $100 share would yield $120 Oberlin dollars. These Oberlin dollars could be shared with friends or also used to purchase meals at the Black River Café or food at the Oberlin Market whole food store who in turn used the local currency to purchase food from the CSA. The program lasted for about three years, but never reached the community scale achieved by Ithica Hours or other successful local currencies.

• Slow Munis- Another tool that can be developed would the issuance of "slow municipal bonds". This plays off of the Slow Food movement which seeks to encourage a return to more healthy and sustainable local food systems that honor regional culinary traditions. Slow municipal bonds provide a mechanism for investing in local soils, land, and infrastructure for local food systems. A bonding agency (could be a port authority, a municipal government, or other recognized authority) would issue municipal bonds that could be purchased by the residents or businesses within their geographic area. The bonds could generate capital to invest in local food systems. In the 25% Shift regional food assessment of Northeast Ohio, the formation of a Local Food Authority was recommended as a body that could issue Slow Muni bonds and then mobilize local enterprises and infrastructure investments that would have the greatest catalytic potential for localizing the food system. An initiative such as this has yet to be established in Northeast Ohio, but could enable greater public investment in local food systems which in turn could create increased jobs, enterprises, tax earnings, and retained wealth.

LOCAL INVESTMENT POOLS

Shuman identifies local investment pools as mechanisms that enable larger groups of investors to pool their resources in larger investment funds that can be administered by the investors themselves, a partnering non-profit organization, or more formal investment structures like mutual funds or pension funds.

• Non-profit Revolving Loan Fund- Non-profit revolving loan funds can be formed to support investment in mission-oriented for-profit businesses. In these, cases, a non-profit organization administers the loan fund and directs investments into companies that meet criteria for social or ecological responsibility. For example, the Rudolf Steiner Foundation (RSF) supports a network of private schools organized around Rudolf Steiner's philosophy of learning and living. RSF loans to businesses that fall within its core missions of food and agriculture, education, the arts, and ecological stewardship. They also assess a business's supply chain as well, to insure that high standards of social and environmental responsibility are practiced across the entire value-chain. The RSF's Social Investment Fund has about 1,000 investors, 80% of whom are unaccredited, although the majority of the Fund is supported by the 20% of investors that are accredited. Loan rates are not determined by market rates, but rather through a negotiation between the borrower and representative investors. While the network is national, many projects focus on connecting investors and businesses within the same region.

• Investment Club- An investment club can be organized by a group of individuals interested in pooling small amounts of capital to invest in local food businesses in their region. According to SEC rules, every member must participate in the decision-making process for every loan and one person cannot contribute more than 25% of the total pot. Investment clubs work well in communities with strong social networks where groups of investors know and perhaps even patronize the farms or small food businesses that they want to support. One example of an investment club is No Small Potatoes in Maine. The investment club has about 14 members, each of whom chip in at least $5,000. The club issues micro-loans that support small local food businesses, including a loan for a produce delivery van for a growing farm and loans to a goat cheese maker, a butcher, a farmer developing a composting business, and a farmer interested in improving his software for on-line marketing. In all cases, the small loans went a long-distance in growing the bottom line of the farms and businesses being supported. The loans are issued at 5% interest. About 2-3% is distributed back to club members and the remaining is accrued to cover administrative fees and a loan loss reserve. Investment Clubs provide a powerful tool for voluntary associations of small, unaccredited investors to form within a community and support investments in its local food system.

• Local Mutual or Pension Funds- According to the 25% Shift Report, there is an estimated $56 billion in mutual funds and $172 billion in pension funds invested among individuals and non-profit organizations in Northeast Ohio alone. All of these long-term savings are tied up in large funds in Wall Street, with no capital available for direct local investing. There is increased interest in developing mutual or pension funds that can enable funds to be directed to the development of small local businesses. While there is significant potential, the development of mutual or pension funds that can be invested in local businesses in the region would take a significant amount of infrastructure. A community would have to have a critical mass of local securities. Then the securities would need to be traded through a local exchange to maintain liquidity. When local stocks are tradable, a community can look at creating a local mutual fund. While these steps are not insurmountable, they would require a much wider regional infrastructure necessary to spread out risk across a large pool of food or farm related businesses.

SELF-GENERATED

Shuman identifies a final option for local investing which involves individuals setting up their own retirement funds which they can either direct themselves or through special administered funds.

• Self-Directed IRA's- Self-directed IRA's include a largely overlooked opportunity for directing retirement savings toward local investing. A self-directed IRA requires a custodian, but can otherwise be directed at the investor's discretion. Self-directed IRA's can help to raise local capital that can be invested in new business innovation or the growth of local food businesses. A group of neighbors could even set-up a self-directed IRA in

which they could invest in each other's houses, avoiding higher interest charges from banks. Self-directed IRA's also enable greater diversification in an individual's portfolio, compared to traditional IRA's which usually have one main asset class- stocks or mutual funds. While appealing, self-directed IRA's require a good deal of financial acumen, requiring that people be more involved with determining projects that might make for good investments. They can be a good option for individuals with investment experience and enough savings to invest a portion into local businesses.

LOCAL FOOD HUB DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS:

Food Hub Options, Development, and Funding Opportunities

LOCAL FOOD HUB DETAILS

Food hubs can have a number of positive impacts on farmers, businesses, local communities, and broader regional economies. This section will look at how food hubs can be operationalized.

Services Typical of Food Hubs

Food hubs present a new form of social enterprise, combining elements of economic development, education, and network cultivation. The USDA guide to food hubs lists the types of services and activities typically conducted in local food hubs combine business operations, producer services, and community or environmental services:

Business Operations:

Food hubs can combine any of the below activities as a part of their business operation:

- **Distribution**- managing transportation of food products from food hubs to local or regional market outlets or partnering with distribution businesses to facilitate transportation.
- **Aggregation**- combining food products from a number of different sources to create capacity for higher-volume sales and to ease fluctuations in supply.
- **Product Storage**- providing dry, cold, or frozen storage facilities for inventorying local food products, including long-term storage of local foods for sale in the off-season.
- **Brokering**- Helping to facilitate transactions between farmers and market outlets. Some food hubs just play a coordinating role, but allow farmers and market outlets to coordinate their own physical distribution.
- **Branding and Market Promotion**- Food hubs can create product differentiation by coming up with region-specific brands and promoting the consumption of locally grown foods to grow market demand.
- **Packaging and Repackaging**- Food hubs can package foods under a common label while reducing the time and expense for farmers to package foods for market.
- **Light Processing**- Some food hubs offer more intensive food processing (such as canning or thermal processing). Others support more limited processing such as trimming, cutting, or freezing foods, which meets the needs of some institutional buyers for limited processing of raw food products.

Producer Services:

Food hubs offer the following services to support local farmers or businesses.

- **Linking Producers and Buyers**- Food hubs often have more time and resources to cultivate market outlets than farmers might have if they were doing it on their own.
- **On-farm Pick-up**- In some cases, food hubs provide trucks that can pick-up foods from farms, creating greater distribution efficiencies and permitting market access to farmers that might lack resources for transportation.
- **Post-Harvest handling** - Providing training for farmers in harvesting and washing techniques to better prepare food for market.
- **Business Management** - Providing business planning and financial management training or mentorship to improve farm business operations.
- **Value-added Product Development**- Working with farmers to identify opportunities to add more value to products through packaging or combining ingredients to make a processed product.
- **Food Safety and Good Agricultural Practices**- As food safety becomes a greater area of concern, food hubs can provide training for safe food handling and best practices for field production.
- **Liability insurance**- Offering liability coverage for food and providing facilities for safe handling reduces costs and barriers to entry for some farmers.

Community/Environmental Services:

Food hubs can offer the following services to local communities:

- **Community Awareness** - Supporting buy-local campaigns and consumer education about the benefits of local and healthy food consumption.
- **Food Deserts**- Intervening in the market place to foster distribution to under-served urban or rural markets.
- **Food Bank** - Increasing the supply of healthy local foods for food banks or purchasing seconds from area farmers for emergency food relief.
- **Youth and Community Employment**- Providing employment opportunities for youth, adults with developmental disabilities, or other groups that might otherwise struggle with employment.
- **SNAP Redemption**- Taking Food Stamps or Senior vouchers to improve the accessibility of local food for any retail components of a food hub or training participating market partners to accept food stamps.
- **Health and Cooking Education**- Strengthening market demand by raising

awareness of health and teaching consumers how to prepare local foods in a healthy manner.

- **Transportation for Consumers**- Working with transportation planning to improve access to food for individuals relying on public transit or pedestrian movement.

- **Recycling or Composting** - Facilitating recovery and re-use of wastes, including packaging, or composting programs or biodigesters that return energy, organic matter, or nutrients back to participating farms.

Food Hub Market Models

The first step in establishing a local food hub is clarity on the type of markets that will be served. Most food hubs follow one of the following three market models:

- **Farm-to-Business/Institutional Model**- this favors more of a wholesale marketing model in which commercial or institutional buyers seek lower prices for higher volume purchasing. Typical markets in this category might include colleges, public schools, hospitals, grocery stores, or restaurants.

- **Farm-to-Consumer Model**- Other food hubs focus on marketing directly to the consumer, typically charging closer to retail prices for food. The food hub helps to aggregate, package, and distribute products directly to consumers. Typical markets in this category might include large-scale CSA's, food cooperatives, on-line buying clubs, mobile markets, or direct food delivery companies.

- **Hybrid Model**- Many food hubs are hybrid models, featuring a mix of wholesale and direct sales to consumers. For example, a food hub might operate a 400 member CSA while selling wholesale to a network of restaurants and institutions.

The National Food Hub Collaboration, based on its survey of 168 food hubs, identified the following national break down of market models among food hubs across the country:

Market Model	Number	Percentage
Farm-to-business/institution	70	42%
Farm to consumer	60	36%
Hybrid	38	22%

Legal Structure

The next step in establishing a food hub is to determine an appropriate legal structure for the operation. This will be driven by such factors as:

a) **Where does investment capital originate?** Non-profit organizations will have more access to philanthropic, government, or program-related investment support. If capital is originating from one individual or a small group of individuals, then a privately held structure would make more sense. If capital might be generated by a larger group of founding members, then a cooperative might make more sense.

b) **What is the ownership structure?** Are individual investors looking for a return on their own investment or will profits be cycled back into the operation itself?

c) **What will be the primary functions of the local food hub?** Will the food hub be focused more exclusively on logistics and operations of food warehousing and distribution or will it play more of a coordinating, supporting, and training role? Will there be a mix? A more traditional business might function better as a privately held operation. Cooperatives and non-profit organizations tend to feature more education and training in their efforts.

d) **Decision Making Authority-** Privately held companies have a more simple decision-making process, with primary authority residing with owners. Cooperatives tend to have boards and leadership elected by the membership itself, lending to a more participatory decision-making process. Non-profit organizations have a board of directors comprised of stakeholders, experts, and supporters in the community. Both coops and non-profit organizations have more complex decision-making processes which often take more time, but allow for more input and community ownership.

The following list indicates the types of legal structures that food hubs report:

- **Privately Held**- a legal organization owned by an individual or small group of partners. Includes private corporation, limited liability company, business trust, or sole proprietorship

- **Non-profit**- a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization which distributes surplus back into the organization and has a mission involving education, charity, research, or religion.

- **Cooperative**- a structure that distributes surplus to member-owners or back into the cooperative. Examples might include farmer cooperatives, business or consumer cooperatives, or a hybrid that includes both farmers and consumers as member-owners.

- **Publicly Held**- Companies that offer securities for sale to the general public in the form of stocks/shares, bonds/loans.

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EXAMPLES OF FOOD HUBS RELEVANT TO STARK COUNTY

The following list includes local food hubs in other communities in the United States that might present potential models for Stark County:

Common Market, Philadelphia Pennsylvania- Common Market works with 15 producers in a 90 mile radius around Philadelphia who supply fresh produce, meat, poultry, and eggs. Common Market follows a farm-to-institution model, supplying food to 60-75 customers that include colleges, universities, hospitals, food cooperatives, and restaurants. With $580,000 in sales in 2010, they focus on market partners that serve low-income residents. www.commonmarketphila.org

Eastern Carolina Organics, North Carolina- Founded and run by Oberlin graduate Sandi Kronick, Eastern Carolina Organics has more than 40 producers selling to 150 customers in the southeast, including restaurants, grocers, food service, and cooperatives. They offer producer services, including planning, safe food handling, and liability coverage. www.easterncarolinaorganics.com

Eastern Market, Detroit- One of the nation's oldest public markets, Eastern market includes both retail (customers) and wholesale (grocers, restaurants, distributors). The market supports 250 vendors and they coordinate aggregation, distribution, and processing for many small to mid-sized farmers. www.detroiteasternmarket.com

Intervale Food Hub, Burlington Vermont- A non-profit organization that includes an Oberlin graduate, Intervale works with 22 farmers to aggregate, distribute, and market a wide-range of products. They operate a year-round CSA and supply products to restaurants, schools, and hospitals. The site includes an incubator farm that leases land, equipment, greenhouses, storage, and irrigation to small farmers. www.intervalefoodhub.com/home

Local Food Hub, Charlottesville Virginia- This non-profit food hub distributes produce, frozen meat, and value added products from a network of 70 small producers to over 120 businesses and institutions. Growers receive technical and business planning support as well as liability coverage. The hub includes a 3,500 square foot warehouse and a 60 acre educational farm that provides training and internships for beginning farmers. www.localfoodhub.org

Town of Hardwick, Vermont- This town of 3,200 residents includes a diverse base of "agrepreneurs" that offer several complementary businesses that support a local food economy, including a community-owned food coop, a local food restaurant, an organic seed company, a compost producer, mobile butchers, a distillery, and a number of organic farms. This working-class town emerged from the collapse of the granite industry to embrace local foods as an economic renewal strategy, supporting a vibrant downtown businesses and shipping products to markets across the Northeast. http://www.hardwickagriculture.org/index.html

- **Informal**- A handful of food hubs do not have formal legal status and are comprised of loose associations of partners or informal networks. An example might include an individual farmer offering a facility on their farm to support aggregation for neighboring farms.

According to National Food Hub Coalition, the break-down of ownership among food hubs in its network is:

Legal Structure	Number	Percentage
Privately held	67	40%
Non-profit	54	32%
Cooperative	36	21%
Publicly Held	8	5%
Informal	3	2%

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Economic Viability of Local Food Hubs

Whether for-profit or non-profit, food hubs need to achieve long-term economic viability. Subsidies or grants may help to build capacity for the development of a food hub and supporting networks, but should not be relied upon for long-term operations. Grants can help to build capacity, grow networks, or provide training and education. These activities, if done well, can contribute to the long-term viability for the food hub and its participating partners.

Regardless of legal structure, the long-term viability of food hubs will depend upon attention to the following challenges common to most food-hub operations:

- **Balancing Supply and Demand**- This is the core challenge facing food-hub enterprises. Often, regional demand for local foods exceeds what the region can produce. Seasonality of many foods, particularly produce, present another challenge. As demand for locally grown foods grows, local supply needs to increase. Many food hubs will work with farmers to increase their capacity to grow food through season extension, training, and capital investment.

- **Price Sensitivity**- Food can be subject to significant price volatility. As a result, there can be some buyer resistance to purchasing regional food when non-local products can be acquired for less cost. This price variability limits the willingness of many businesses to make long-term purchasing commitments. Businesses, like specialty food stores or locavore restaurants, often have clients willing to pay a premium for locally-grown foods. Other businesses, particularly in the retail grocery sector, have thin margins, face stiff competition, and often will go with the lowest cost options at any given time.

- **Managing Growth**- Given the high demand for local food, many food hub operators noted rapid growth that exceeded the capacity of their physical infrastructure or business management systems. Food hubs need to system-

ed support to grow the stability of their operations:

- Financial Support
- Innovative and flexible business strategies
- Business development services
- Technical assistance on facility design and operations
- Community support and stakeholder engagement
- Building stronger networks between food hubs and supporting peer-to-peer learning

Food Hub Development Pathways

Having gained significant traction in the past five years, there is now more support available for the development of local food hubs. A number of government funding programs focus on local food infrastructure development or addressing public health challenges through improved healthy food access.

Regardless of the type of support being sought, a critical factor for securing development resources will be the strength of collaborative partnerships with community stakeholders, farmers, local organizations, businesses, and local government. More than creating something new in a community, a food hub adds value to assets, networks, and skills already present in most communities. Food hubs will be successful to the extent that collaborative networks can come together and consolidate their assets. More funders will want to see strong evidence of healthy collaborative part-

INTERACTIVE FILM CLIPS

Jim Converse from Youngstown describes conversion of a vacant restaurant and bar to a local food hub and processing center.

Leslie Schaller from ACENet explains a food value chain and how it can maximize opportunity in local food systems.

Leslie Schaller describes how ACENet supports a warehouse and processing kitchen and network cultivation.

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economic development. Some creative ways to raise local capital through food hubs include:

- Community banks or credit unions (targeted CD's)
- Cooperatives and member capital
- Local investment by churches or large businesses
- Crowdsourcing through kickstarter or IndieGoGo
- Micro-loans
- Pre-selling of goods or services
- Non-profit revolving loan funds
- Investment clubs
- Self-directed IRA's

A more complete list of foundations and government programs that can support local food hub development is included in the pages that follow.

APPENDIX I-A
FOOD HUB DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK:

- **Audience**- Who would be the primary users?
- **Ownership**- What is the ownership structure?
- **Purpose**- What is the overall goal or mission of the food hub?
- **Design and Siting**- Where would it be located?
- **Scale**- What is the foodshed or market catch-basin that it will serve?

CRITERIA	County Food Hub
Audience	Businesses, institutions, food desert neighborhoods, hunger relief services
Ownership	Multi-stakeholder owned facility as either cooperative of non-profit social enterprise
Purpose	Centralization of food aggregation, warehousing, processing, and training in facility based centrally (Canton) to facilitate access to local foods by Stark-County based businesses, institutions, food pantries and networks of small businesses. Includes capacity for warehousing, frozen or refrigerated storage, and processing.
Design and Siting	Site in central location with adequate truck access to and close-proximity to neighborhood for walkable employment opportunities. Close proximity to highways and transit corridors as well.
Scale	Connecting farmers and businesses in Stark and surrounding counties (i.e. Wayne, Holmes)

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GRANT OR LOAN PROGRAMS SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD HUB DEVELOPMENTS

PROGRAM NAME	FUNDER	ELIGIBLE APPS	SUPPORT TYPES	RANGE	CONTACT
Rural Business Enterprise Grants	USDA- Rural Development	Rural public entities, rural non profits	Feasibility Studies, business planning, construction, land-lease, equipment, working capital, T&TA	$10,000-$500,000	www.rurdev.usda.gov
Rural Business Opportunity Grant	USDA- Rural Development	Public bodies, non-profit, rural coops	Research, feasibility studies, business planning, T&TA	$50,000	www.rurdev.usda.gov
Value-Added Producer Grants	USDA- Rural Development	Producers, funders, farmers, coops	Research, feasibility studies, business planning, working capital		www.rurdev.usda.gov
Business & Industry Guarenteed Loan Program	USDA- Rural Development	Coops, corporations, partnerships, non-profits	Construction, land-lease or purchase, equipment, working capital	$10 million max	www.rurdev.usda.gov
Community Facilities Grants and Loans Programs	USDA- Rural Development	Public bodies, non-profits	Construction, enlargement, or extension of community facilities	$1.1 million avg loan	www.rurdev.usda.gov
Rural Development Loan and Grant Program	USDA- Rural Development	Local utilities	Research, feasibility, business planning, construction, T&TA	$300K grant, $740K loan	www.rurdev.usda.gov
Intermediary Relending Program	USDA- Rural Development	Local governments, non-profits	Research & feasibility, business planning, construction, land-lesae/purchase, equipment, T&TA	$2 million loan max	www.rurdev.usda.gov
Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program	USDA- Rural Development	Non profits, public universities	Research, feasibility studies, business planning, construction, land lease/purchase, equipment, T&TA	$50K to $500K loans	www.rurdev.usda.gov
Rural Energy for America Program Grants/Renewable Energy/ Energy Efficiency	USDA- Rural Development	Farmers, ranchers, small rural businesses	Research & feasibility, business planning, construction, land, equipment, T&TA	$500K renew. En, $250K er. Eff	www.rurdev.usda.gov

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Farmers Market Promiton Program	USDA- Agricultural Marketing Service	Coops, producer, networks, government, nono-profits	Research & feasibility, business planning, equipment purchase, and T&TA	$100K max	www.ams.usda.gov
Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program	USDA-National Institute of Food & Agriculture	Non-profits	Research & Feasbility, business planning, construction, working capial, marketing/promotion	$10K to $300K	www.nifa.usda.gov
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education	USDA-National Institute of Food & Agriculture	Non profits, universities, producers	Research, feasibility, T&TA	$10K to $200K	www.nifa.usda.gov
Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program	USDA-National Institute of Food & Agriculture	Public, coop extension, universities, non-profits	T&TA, equipment	$250 max	www.nifa.usda.gov
Agriculture & Food Rsearch Initiative	USDA- National Institute of Food & Agriculture	Universities	Research, education, extension, conferences	$1 million max	www.nifa.usda.gov
Farm Storage Facility Loan Program	USDA- Farm Service Agency	Farmers	Research, feasibility, business planning, construction, equipment	$500K max	www.fsa.usda.gov
Conservation Innovation Grants	USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service	Nonp-profits, local governments	Feasibility studies, marketing & promotion, T&TA	$75K max	www.nrcs.usda.gov
Community Economic Development Block Grants	Health & Human Services	CDC,'s	Construction, marketing & promotion, working capital, T&TA, equipment, land lease	$800K Max	www.hhs.gov
Communities Putting Prevention to Work	Health & Human Services	State & local health depts	T&TA	$1 to 16 million	www.hhs.gov

Community Transformation Grants	Health & Human Services	Local government, non-profits	T&TA, evaluation	$500K to $10 million	www.hhs.gov
Rural Housing & Economic Development Program	Housing and Urban Development	Rural non-profits, CDC's, government	Constructio, land, equipmnet, working capital T&TA	Funding in question	www.hud.gov
Public Works and Economic Development Program	Economic Development Administration	Government, universities, non-profits	Construction and Equipment	$1.7 million avg	www.commerce.gov
Ben & Jerry's	National Grassroots Grant Program	Non-profits	Programming in sustianable food systems	$15K max	www.benandjerrysfoundation.org
Cedar Tree Foundation	Sustainable Agricutlure Education	Non-profits	Programming on conservation, envir. Justice, urban agriculture emphasis	$10K to $100K	www.cedartreefoundorg
Claneil Foundation	Special Project Fund	Non-profits	Hunger, nutrition food systems programming	$30K to $100K	www.claneilfoundation.org
Kresge Foundation	Community Development	Non-profits	Replicable models for equitable re-investment	$700K to $3 million	www.kresge.org/programs/community-development
Kresge Foundation	Environment	Non-profits	Place based initiatives on uncertain climate future	$60K to $1.2 million	www.kresge.org/programs/community-development
Kresge Foundation	Health	Non-profits	Reducing health disparitie	$250K to $750K	www.kresge.org/programs/community-development
Schmidt Family Foundation	Environment	Non-profits	Transform environmental & energy practices	$15K to $1.25 mill	www.theschmidt.org

Surdna Foundation	Sustainable local economies	Non-profits	Reducing greenhouse gases, jobs & training in sustainable business	n/a	www.surdna.org
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Healthy Kids	Non-profits	Improve food systems for healthy access for children	$5K to $3 million	www.wkkf.org/what-we-support/healthy-kids.aspx
Wholesome Wave Foundation	Healtlhy Food Commerce Initiative	Non-profits	Food Hub business consulting support	Expertise	www.wholesomewave.org/hfci

CASE STUDY-
Leveraging the Power of Networks in Athens, Ohio

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LEVERAGING THE POWER OF NETWORKS- CASE STUDY ON ATHENS, OHIO

One of the best examples of leveraging the power of networks to cultivate stronger local food economies is right here in Ohio. Located in the Athens, the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACENet) has been cultivating the development of a sustainable local food system since its formation in the mid-1980's. Based in Southeastern Ohio, ACENet works with the 18 Ohio counties that are part of an extended Appalachian region that spans 11 states. While rich in natural resources, Appalachia has struggled with high rates of economic poverty, mostly related to the collapse of the coal and timber companies that brought a large number of short-term jobs to the region, but not long-term economic stability. This largely rural region of Ohio has among the highest poverty rates in the country, with about 35% of its residents at or below the poverty level.

In this context, a group of small-scale farmers approached ACENet director June Holley in 1992 looking for support for an effort to make value-added products. They were not able to make enough money just selling vegetables, but were overwhelmed with the high cost of building a licensed facility for food processing. A few months later, Holley was attending a National Business Incubation Association conference n Washington where she met Verona LaMunyon who had gotten access to a kitchen space at an abandoned army base and converted it to what she referred to as a "kitchen incubator"- a licensed facility where start-up entrepreneurs could access food processors, ovens, or bottling equipment to make and label their own creative food products.

For Holley, learning about this story immediately made her think of the farmers back at home. Instead of raising large amounts of capital to support each individual farmer, she realized that a shared-use facility could be developed and shared by a group of area farmers, distributing the capital costs over a much larger network.

Over the following three years, Holley helped to convene a number of "joint design sessions", gatherings of local farmers, grocery store managers, restaurant owners, university extension staff, and others to develop the different aspects of the facility, from equipment lists to warehouse design. Each design session met only a few times and each were composed of a different set of people.

Holley realized that this approach to organization not only addressed some of the practical design considerations for a shared-use kitchen facility, but it also served what she termed a "network weaving" function. Each of those design sessions encouraged connections between people in the community. She noticed that farmers would start talking to grocers or food service managers during breaks and started to form new market connections for their products.

Holley summed up the work of ACENet as building upon opportunities identified by existing farmers or entrepreneurs who wanted to do more for their livelihoods, learning from other communities in the United States that came up with a unique solution to that challenge, and engaging people in "self-organizing" design teams where they were able to reveal individual assets and explore common projects. While she did not recognize it at the time, Holley had stumbled upon some of the core aspects of building robust and healthy networks: open communication and information sharing, diverse community stakeholders working together to identify common assets, and finding ways to value-add to existing businesses or farmers seeking more stability for their own operations and families.

In the late 1990's, ACENet built their Food Ventures center which enabled hundreds of individuals, many of whom were low-wealth residents from surrounding communities, to utilize ACENet's kitchen and micro-enterprise training program to start a whole range of manufactured food products. Many have outgrown the ACENet kitchen space to form their own manufacturing facilities. Building on its early successes, ACENet always utilized a network weaving approach, seeing its staff less as managers or trainers than as facilitators of connections between people and the resources that they need to be successful.

This network culture pervaded much of the entire region, leading to a number of other successful local food ventures. For example, Casa Nueva formed in 1985 as a worker-owned business. Suddenly facing unemployment, the former workers of a restaurant that went out of business formed

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a small group to take over the restaurant space as a worker-owned cooperative. They pooled together their own small resources along with capital from friends or former clientele that wanted to see a restaurant continue in that space. Because Casa Nueva was a worker-owned business, all of the worker-owners had to make informed decisions about the restaurant's operations. They had to learn how to read financial statements, and took turns operating or managing different aspects of the business. Today, Casa Nueva is a successful business that generates more than $2.5 million in annual revenues, supporting a restaurant, canteena, and a range of manufactured products. Additionally, about 3 dozen former worker-owners went on to start businesses of their own, many of which, like Casa, rely heavily on local farmers and businesses for their products. Thus Casa not only became a successful business, but a successful incubator of other local businesses.

Casa Nueva also produces and sells a number of value-added products, including salsas and barbecue sauces that are featured in its restaurant. They utilize the shared kitchen facilities at ACENet to acquire, store, and process locally grown foods into products that appear on the shelves of grocers across southern Ohio. Holley likes to describe ACENet as a facility that turns "farmers into food processors" and "restaurants into food manufacturers".

Holley emphasizes that, more important than the brick-and-mortar supporting the kitchen incubator facility was the cultivation of networks of farmers, businesses, and consumers that together built the local food system that defines the Athens area today. In that sense, the kitchen facility emerged out of that network process, meeting the needs and opportunities identified by the users themselves. A number of kitchen incubators in other communities have failed due to too much emphasis on raising capital to build facilities and too little investment in forming robust local networks that are essential to the successful functioning of a facility like this. The old adage "build it and they will come" certainly does not work here.

The ACENet kitchens provided a "network hub", bringing together a variety of stakeholders in the community who were able to mingle, form new collaborations, and create or grow a variety of new projects.

The Athens Farmers' Market, with more than 100 weekly vendors, has grown to be the largest and most financially successful farmers' market in Ohio. In addition to an incredible mix of produce, meats, roasted coffees, value-added items, cheeses, and other products, the farmers' market was one of the first in Ohio to actively attract low-income residents through its honoring of SNAP benefits. They also have a Community Food Initiative table where farmers can donate surplus produce at the end of the market, market-shoppers can purchase and donate produce, or they can give money to the volunteers to purchase food themselves. This food gets donated to local food pantries to improve local food security.

One of the most successful events in southeastern Ohio is the annual pawpaw festival. The pawpaw festival was spawned by Chris Chmiel a food entrepreneur who started to harvest pawpaw fruits through access agreements with landowners that had forested properties. Pawpaws are a fruit native to Ohio that produce a green fleshy fruit that tastes like a cross between a banana and a mango. The pawpaw festival annually brings together people from across the mid-west that cultivate or grow these fruits. The event has utilized an annual contest to reward the best and most creative recipes for use of pawpaws. These contests have led to the introduction of a variety of new products produced by Chmiel or other pawpaw producers, including pawpaw chutney, pawpaw ice cream, and a pawpaw micro-brew. The festival also helps to boost the local economy of Albany, Ohio, a struggling village outside of Athens. The festival both celebrates and engages people with the unique food culture surrounding this part of Appalachia. At the same time, it has helped to incubate new businesses and product lines, demonstrating the festival as another network hub in Athen's local food scene.

Presently, ACENet is working with the Athens County Tourism Board to develop the "30 Mile Meal" brand. This is used as a brand to market Athens unique local food culture as both an engagement tool for residents to support local farms and food businesses and as a draw for tourists seeking a variety of locally-based culinary adventures in the midst of beautiful natural surroundings.

Matt Ripinni, former food entrepreneur and current manager of Ohio University's dining system, describes the importance of collaboration to the vibrant local food systems when he recalled, "I worked for a German chef years ago. He was in a location that had a beautiful, very successful restaurant. He was always going to other restaurants, his competitors, and encouraged those restaurants to locate shops near his restaurant. So he ended up with all of these restaurants around him that were his direct competitors. He said it was a win-win situation for all of the businesses. It concentrates businesses and gets everybody together. From that experience, I realized ACENet promotes the same idea. We're all vying for the same dollars in some fashion, but everyone's found their unique niche, so that while people are in competition with each other, they are also in collaboration with each other. When you travel places, people have heard of Athens food culture. It is because if everybody looked at it as a purely competitive thing and there wasn't this collaboration, there wouldn't be the overall success locally. So collaboration is a big plus for creating that strong food culture that draws people."

Leslie Shaller, worker-owner for Casa Nueva and Food Ventures director for ACENet also notes the importance of collaborative network culture, "Having folks who get that culture of deep reciprocity who understand the relationship based step. It's not like we all love each other and aren't sometimes competitors, but there's a real interesting collaborative, cooperative spirit that has come out of the work over the past 20 years, whether it's the Athens Farmers Market or the Food Ventures Center, people have learned the win-win of strong relationships."

The impacts of 20 years of relationship building and network cultivation have had a noticeable impact on one of the most chronically impoverished regions of the United States. Today, the work of ACENet and the hundreds of farmers and entrepreneurs have woven together a local economic tapestry that includes:

- Over $3 million in annual sales at the Athen's Farmers Market;
- The start-up of seven additional farmers markets in Trimble, Nelsonville, McConnelsville, Chesterhill, Shawnee, Somerset, and New Lexington;
- Over 200 unique farm and local food businesses utilizing the ACENet shared-use kitchen facility each year;
- Tenants and clients of the ACENet kitchen had an aggregate of over $28 million in annual sales in 2011, supporting over 220 self-employment, full-time, and part-time jobs; and
- Their 30 Mile Meal brand has over 130 collaborating partners working to leverage their local food work to make Athens a destination for tourists and improve quality of life for residents.

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