The Governance Committee of the Ohio Food Policy Network (OFPN) is proud to present this summary report developed by working with stakeholders across Ohio.

The report documents findings from nearly 18 months of data and information gathering to understand who we are and what we can accomplish together, a process that began with the 2016 Ohio Food Policy Summit. The purpose of this “Map” is to describe the OFPN, the people in the network, and our shared goals to drive network activities in the future.

The Mapping the Vision for the Future of Ohio’s Food System project was funded through The Ohio State University’s Initiative for Food and AgriCultural Transformation (InFACT), an Ohio State University Discovery Theme program. InFACT’s mission is to transform the way we grow, process, and distribute our food by promoting vibrant, sustainable, and resilient agricultural landscapes that place food at the center of just and vital communities in Ohio and beyond. The project team consisted of Amy Baskes of Amy Baskes Consulting as project manager; Jill Clark, Assistant Professor, John Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University; Amalie Lipstreu, Policy Program Coordinator at the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association; and Andrew Wapner, Director, Center for Public Health Practice at The Ohio State University College of Public Health. An ad hoc Governance Committee was formed to guide the project and provide subject matter expertise.

How to Use This Report

This report brings together a visual representation of our network (Network Map) and common language and needs we identified together (Roadmap). The Network Map demonstrates who we are, where we are, and how we connect with each other. The Roadmap defines what we believe in and what we can accomplish by working together. Both result from listening to stakeholders from across the state and receiving input from people throughout the food system. The goal of both maps is to develop and strengthen lasting partnerships within the OFPN and establish an infrastructure to support food system development.

The report is organized the following way: The OFPN is briefly described, along with the methods used to collect the information, the findings from that effort, and a definition of the food system. It has two primary data sections. The first describes the network map developed to assess and quantify the connections between people and organizations within the Ohio food system. The second presents the shared values of the OFPN, a vision that describes the ideal Ohio food system, and key opportunities for the network.
The project consisted of six listening sessions held around the state in early 2017 by the project team. An additional web-based survey was used to capture additional voices from those unable to attend a listening session. In all, more than 500 people participated in either the in-person stakeholder sessions or the online survey. Each in-person session was open to all interested Ohioans and consisted of two parts. The first part included each session participant completing a set of network mapping (described more later) and motivations questions.

The motivations presented to the participants were developed from information collected at the May 2016 Ohio Local Food Policy Summit, hosted by OSU. More than 150 Summit participants from across the state were asked about their motivations in working with the food system. This information was distilled into eight statements. OFPN stakeholder session participants were asked to rank the three statements that best answered the question, “We are here because we believe in...”

These statements were:

- Strong Communities
- Vibrant Family Farms
- Justice and Equity
- Healthy People
- Sustainable Ecosystems
- Thriving Local Economies
- Celebration of Culture and Tradition
- Informed and Engaged Consumers.

Participants could enter additional motivations, if needed. Each participant’s three choices were aggregated with the responses from all six listening sessions and the online survey to determine the highest-ranking statements. These became the value statements for the OFPN.

The second part of the in-person session was completed in small groups. Each group was first asked to answer the question, “What is an ideal food system?” Groups were prompted with a list of 12 words, again developed from input from the 2016 Local Food Council Summit. Groups were instructed to discuss the prompt words, add any others they felt necessary, and choose five words that best answered the question for their group. Each group’s responses were collected, combined with the online survey responses, and used to determine the five words selected most often.

Groups were then asked to answer a final question, “What work can we do together to create that ideal food system?” Groups were not prompted but instead asked to discuss the question and list existing opportunities that the OFPN could use to create an ideal food system. Once groups recorded their lists, they were asked to choose only one opportunity as a priority for the OFPN. All opportunities were collected, and those submitted as priority opportunities were noted as such. These opportunities (more than 200 from the in-person sessions) were then analyzed to create themes that help define the OFPN’s function and goals.
The OFPN represents interested people and organizations that share values and a common vision for the food system in Ohio.

The Network is a social scaffolding that connects people across sectors and provides a foundation for developing the skills and expertise needed to grow and develop a food system that supports and serves all Ohioans. Through groundwork laid by previous groups, the OPFN is dedicated to strengthening collaboration and participation in the food system.

**Some of these groups include:**

- Ohio Local Food Policy Summit participants from 2012 – 2016
- The Health Food Financing Task Force
- The Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council
- The Ohio Chronic Disease Collaborative
- The Ohio Nutrition Incentive Network

The Governance Committee developed to support the project consisted of leaders of existing statewide groups and coalitions, subject matter experts from different sectors of the food system, and faculty and staff at Ohio State University from all regions of the state.

**The Committee was Made Up of the Following People:**

- Amy Baskes  
  Franklin County Local Food Council
- Bryn Bird  
  Canal Market District
- Jill Clark  
  OSU John Glenn College of Public Affairs
- Tevis Foreman  
  Produce Perks Midwest
- Valerie Heiby  
  The Ohio Finance Fund
- Casey Hoy  
  OSU Initiative for Food and Agricultural Transformation
- Michelle Kaiser  
  OSU College of Social Work
- Nick Kawa  
  OSU Department of Anthropology
- Beth Knorr  
  Summit Food Coalition
- Meredith Krueger  
  OFPN Local Food Policy Council Coordinator
- Katie LeBlanc  
  OSU Real Food Challenge
- Amalie Lipstreu  
  Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
- Michelle Moskowitz Brown  
  Local Matters
- Amanda Osborne  
  OSU Extension-Cuyahoga County
- Leslie Schaller  
  ACEnet
- Hannah Scott  
  OSU South Centers, Ohio Cooperative Development
- Carol Smathers  
  OSU Extension Farm to School Program
- Ashley Sweeney Davis  
  Ohio Department of Aging (formerly Ohio Department of Health)
- Andrew Wapner  
  OSU Center for Public Health Practice
Like any ecosystem, food systems are complex.

The figure below, adapted from the CS Mott Group at Michigan State University, represents the richness of actors and issues involved in community-based food systems. It is meant to be illustrative and not definitive. At the center, the diagram shows the seven key stages of the life cycle of food – from production, to processing, to waste disposal. The middle ring identifies some of the themes that are expressed in food work. The outer ring lists a selection of the types of people involved in different food-related projects and organizations, each bringing different skills, perspectives, and priorities to their work. Different from a single program or issue, food system work recognizes and embraces the strength of this diversity.

Figure 1: The Community-Based Food System
This graphic was adopted from the CS Mott Group at MSU.
An Abbreviated History of Food Policy Collaboration in Ohio

The current formation of the Ohio Food Policy Network evolved from collaboration at the county and state level for well over a decade. The first local Food Policy Council (FPC) was formed in Knox County in 2003. In August 2007, Governor Ted Strickland created the Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council to maximize the economic benefit of the food industry by localizing a portion of the food system and increasing access to fresh and healthy food for all Ohioans. The council was a public-private partnership that developed four task forces, conducted listening sessions, and developed 9 policy goals along with a report on the opportunities for local food system development in Ohio.

At the time, additional local Councils existed at the County level in Athens and Cuyahoga County. When it was disbanded in 2012, many of the leaders the Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council turned their attention to local work, forming county-based FPCs. Since that time, stakeholders throughout Ohio convened annually to connect and collaborate at a statewide Food Policy Summit held on the Columbus campus of the Ohio State University. Today, there are 22 established FPCs across Ohio operating at the County level, with 13 more in the early stages of development. For more information about the status and location of current FPCs, visit www.ohiofpn.org. The timeline below shows the progression of state-level activity on the top and some of the organizing that happened at the local level over the last fifteen years on the bottom.
RESULTS

NETWORK MAP

A little over 300 Ohioans, from 50 counties, participated in mapping our current network. Participants represent all aspects of the food system (e.g., producers and consumers) and all sectors (public, nonprofit, and for-profit). We asked participants to identify up to ten people with whom they most frequently discuss Ohio food policy and issues. In addition to the participants, an additional 674 people were identified in the network. These additional people come from a wide array of organizations and institutions as well as being neighbors and friends. Nearly 1,500 network relationships were identified, with a third of those relationships occurring directly between survey respondents while the remaining two-thirds consisted of additional individuals identified by survey respondents.

Figure 3 illustrates the network as of March 2017. The dots or “nodes” represent individual people. Survey respondents are represented with green nodes while additional individuals (who did not directly participate in the surveys) are represented as orange nodes. The lines or “ties” between people are food policy relationships. The network members with a greater number of ties are located towards the center of the figure. The thickness of each line represents frequency of interaction, with thicker lines corresponding to more frequent contacts among individuals.

Figure 3: Network Map of the Ohio Food Policy Network

- Network Survey Participants
- Additional Network Members Identified
RESULTS

Figure 4 includes a close-up of an active part of the network. Participants were also asked to describe their primary roles or positions in the food system, including public sector (e.g., planning and public health professionals, elected officials), education and extension, nonprofits (e.g., working in economic development or with farmers or the food insecure), the private, for-profit sector (e.g., distributors, retailers), farmers, and Ohio citizens. Figure 5 illustrates the same part of the network as Figure 4, with participants identified by their primary motivation for work in the system.1

This initial snapshot of our network illustrates the connectedness of Ohio food citizens, providing a basis by which members can promote dialogue and exchanges, shape agendas, facilitate action, and mobilize resources. The form of the OFPN is flat and distributed with regional hubs, suggesting an opportunity to create more linkages between regions. Functional flat and distributed networks are resilient to changes in single organizations or members and provide adaptive capacity by allowing members to nimbly respond to new opportunities and challenges.2 OFPN is diverse in the roles that people play and the values that they bring; these roles and values are connected with one another toward a common vision, providing strength to the network. Overall, the work of the OFPN can continue to grow members and fortify connections aimed at transforming the food system to best serve Ohioans.

Figure 4: Network Map Close-up by Primary Role in the Food System

Figure 5: Network Map Close-up with Primary Motivations

1 For a full set of network images, visit www.ofpn.org.
The primary components of the Roadmap are the values, vision, and opportunities that help define the OFPN’s purpose and goals and set the direction for participants in the network to work collaboratively in developing and strengthening Ohio’s food system.

In this context, the Roadmap can be visualized as a tree, as shown in Figure 6.

The following values were the highest ranked by stakeholders and act as nutrients that allow the tree to thrive:

- Justice and Equity
- Strong Communities
- Healthy People
- Sustainable Ecosystems

The priority opportunities offered in the listening sessions are the goals of the OFPN. To communicate, connect, and support collaboration is the primary purpose, the roots and strength, of the OFPN; educating and advocating is the tree’s trunk and result of strong a strong foundation; that in turn supports the branches and leaves—the key strategies and activities that strengthen Ohio’s food system. The roots, trunk, and branches of the tree represent both the goals of the OFPN and the opportunities submitted by participants in the listening sessions, grouped into the three themes.

Finally, stakeholders responded that the ideal food system in Ohio is resilient, healthful, sustainable, accessible and equitable. This vision is the result, the fruit, of this collaborative effort.

Communicate, connect and support collaboration

Stakeholders responded that OFPN’s first and foremost goal should be facilitating communications between participants within the network and engaging stakeholders to partner and learn together. State and local participants can share each other’s successes and support
new collaborations at local and regional levels. This connected network can develop research agendas and policy recommendations to support network goals and assist in data collection. This should be the grounding function of the network from which all other activities stem.

Rooted within this function are the priority opportunities submitted in stakeholder sessions. The OFPN should engage stakeholders across the food system to connect with the network while fostering and maintaining strong and connected partnerships. Collaboration should support and develop regional and local partnerships and co-learning opportunities, guide research opportunities, and establish statewide policy and practice guidelines.

Expanding beyond its roots of collaboration and communication, OFPN can utilize its extensive subject matter expertise and on-the-ground experience to provide evidence-based information for stakeholders within the food system, community members across the state, and decision makers at every level. As both food and food systems play a vital role in our individual health, community sustainability, and the future of local and state economies, the OFPN can serve as a statewide resource to inform, empower, and influence people in all sector and of all ages.

OFPN can focus on influencing decision makers and policy-makers on food policy that supports all stakeholders within the food system. All members of the public can be engaged and activated to contribute to the development of healthy and sustainable food systems and support their community food systems by purchasing locally grown, healthful foods. Finally, OFPN participants can develop and disseminate opportunities for co-learning by food system workers to strengthen their efforts locally.

**Support and develop the food system**

Strengthened by an effective network and supported by educated and activated partners, the OFPN can then comprehensively sustain the components of the food system to reach our vision. These strong foundations will allow the network to leverage collective impact to build, sustain, and improve everything from the farm-to-table to waste processes for Ohio-grown food.

**The goals of these activities are defined by the priority opportunities submitted in the stakeholder sessions, including:**

- Support the growth and production of farms of all sizes in all areas of the state
- Increase access for locally grown and healthy food for all Ohioans
- Develop distribution/processing networks to connect producers with processors and utilizers within the system
- Increase institutional utilization and participation in the Ohio food system
EDUCATE AND ADVANCE

The OFPN is a network of people committed to building food system change in Ohio. Get involved with and stay connected to this work by visiting www.Ohiofpn.org. There you can monitor opportunities for ongoing communication and collaboration.

The website includes the following:

- Information and access to a new OFPN listserv
- Information about past and upcoming OFPN events
- Archived monthly virtual meetings
- Policy resources
- Food Policy Council information, including an interactive map and directory of Ohio’s local councils
- More information from the Mapping the Vision for Ohio’s Food System project, including additional Network Map and Roadmap data
- General facts about Ohio’s food system
- Information on how to become more involved
- Additional contact information for OFPN members

To further our opportunities to connect, the OFPN has started a new listserv. Any member of the listserv is encouraged to share relevant content and engage in discussion. This platform allows participating individuals to ask or respond to questions and share information and experiences. To subscribe to the listserv, visit the OFPN website.

OFPN will also facilitate monthly virtual convenings (informal meetings) with presenters engaged in both local and national food policy work to provide connection and activity throughout the year. These webinars will be recorded and archived on the OFPN website for future reference and will also provide individuals and councils with the opportunity to connect and provide updates. All network participants are welcome to join.

Photo by: InFACT
THE OFPN ORGANIZING TEAM

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