Institutionalizing Food Systems Planning: The Role of Food Policy Councils

by

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Abstract

States are increasingly considering and creating food policy councils (FPCs) as a way to examine, create, and evaluate food policy. State level food policy councils remain a relatively new and untested approach to addressing issues within the food system. Given the proposition that food policy councils offer a forum for diverse organizations and individuals to examine the conditions of a state’s food system and recommend policy improvements, this research aims to explore how food policy councils work, what benefits they might create, and what states could expect from food policy councils. Based on the experiences of eight state level FPCs, this research shows that councils can increase awareness about food system issues; guide food policy to address the root of food-related problems and concerns; and increase communication and coordination between government agencies and a variety of organizations and individuals. Taken together, these initial effects indicate that FPCs play a role in addressing problems within the food system while laying the groundwork for integrated food systems planning at the state level. In addition, this paper argues for the inclusion of planners as stakeholders in food policy councils as well as the inclusion of food systems in the planner’s agenda.
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CHAPTER 1: Background

Introduction

Recent trends and events have increased public awareness of food-related issues and have caused consumers and media to question previous assumptions about the food that we eat. Outbreaks of salmonella and E. coli, as well as food scares from tainted imported products have made consumers wary about food safety and traceability. In this country we are both overfed and hungry; obesity related illnesses are shortening our life span and raising our health care costs and approximately 11 percent of American households are food insecure (Center on Hunger and Poverty, 2003; Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2008; Pollan, 2008). Food prices are rising with the growing cost of fossil fuels, and increases in biofuel production further complicate food costs and production (Martin, 2008a). Moreover, food shortages globally and food deserts domestically raise serious concerns about food supply and access. Growth pressure and development patterns continue to absorb valuable farmland; the American Farmland Trust (AFT) calculates that we currently lose two acres of farmland per minute. Demand for local and organic produce has grown over the last several years, as evidenced by increased media coverage and a growth in farmers markets nationally – over 60 percent since 2000 (USDA AMS, 2008). We have come to romanticize local food, but we have lost the capacity to sustain a local food economy (Anderson, 2007).

With growing acknowledgment that our food system is at some level broken, communities and states around the country have begun thinking about how we might begin to repair it. Academics, activists and advocates, government agencies, and elected officials across the country have suggested creating state and local food policy councils as part of the solution. A food policy council (FPC) is “an officially sanctioned body of representatives from various segments of a state or local food system, and selected public officials, asked to examine the operation of a local food system, and provide ideas or recommendations for how it can be improved” (Hamilton, 2002). FPCs have opportunities to affect the direction of local food policy within the context of federal legislation, meaning that states can tailor food policy to better fit their own concerns and context. Moreover, by engaging a variety of stakeholders with a range of food-related interests food policy councils can address issues holistically, finding solutions for multiple concerns. Based on the experience of existing state food policy councils, this research seeks to address the question, what are the effects of state food policy councils, and what should their role be in food systems planning?
Food Policy: A Brief Summary

Though food is one of the most basic human needs, we have managed to completely complicate the act of eating. Through our national food policy and the globalization of the food economy, we have complicated food’s journey from the farm on which it was produced to the fork from which it might be eaten. Food policy refers to legislative and programmatic decisions made at various levels of government – federal, state, and local – that affect what farmers produce and their costs of production and, consequently, what consumers eat and the costs of consumption. Food policy also determines where and how food is produced, distributed and sold, how emergency food assistance is administered, and how food safety is regulated.

Food policy is complicated by its opacity. While there are assumptions that food is market-driven – meaning that it is somehow beyond the scope government intervention – this is something of a fallacy. Our food economy is significantly affected by decisions made in the private and public sector. In his book, The End of Food, Paul Roberts describes the extreme measures that the federal policymakers took at the end of the 19th century to increase food productivity: “so integral was government in the buildup of the modern food economy that years later, Harvard economist Ray Goldberg described the food system as ‘the largest quasi-public utility in the world.’” We have continued this tradition by keeping a heavy hand regulating the food system, with the Farm Bill serving as the primary body of agriculture and food legislation. While this national level food policy affects all citizens, it is a complex, inaccessible, and rarely understood piece of legislation.

National Policy
First adopted as part of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, the Farm Bill, known then as the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, intended to resolve the “present acute economic emergency” that was in part attributable to the overproduction of commodity grains, and was confounded by the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. As Roberts describes in The End of Food, “in the view of the White House and Congress, and a great many consumers and commentators, food was simply too important to national security and human welfare to be left to the vagaries of an unfettered market” (p. 118). Though it was intended as temporary legislation, the Farm Bill has become a comprehensive act that Congress revisits every 5 to 7 years.

The current Farm Bill, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, derives from the early farm programs. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 created permanent national agricultural legislation, which provides the legal and substantive basis of all subsequent Farm Bills (Congressional Research Service, 2002). This act purported to “provide for the conservation of national soil resources and to provide an adequate and balanced flow of agricultural commodities in interstate and foreign commerce and for other purposes” (1938). Though the legal basis of the Farm Bill appears sound, it is highly contentious politically. Since the original farm program of 1933, we have had 17 subsequent Farm Bills. Politics,
interest groups, and market shifts have shaped federal farm policy embodied in these bills, and have had (and continue to have) significant impacts on the character of our agricultural systems as well as the health and vitality of our economy, land, and people.

Despite its evolution and expansion, the Farm Bill remains, at its core, national security legislation, with its ultimate goal being the ability to feed our troops during wartime (Marlow, 2007). The purpose of our more recent Farm Bills is to ensure “a plentiful, safe and affordable supply of food and fiber” (Congressional Research Service, 2001). The 2008 legislation has been heralded as “a historic moment in American agricultural policy” (American Farmland Trust, 2008) and decried as a “harvest of disgrace” (Economist, 2008). Some feel that the current Bill provides “significant farm policy reforms, protects the safety net for all of America’s food producers, addresses important infrastructure needs for specialty crops, increases funding to feed our nation’s poor, and enhances support for important conservation initiatives” (Letter to Congress, 2008) while others feel it signifies yet another delay in true policy reform and that many lawmakers were “bought off” with small concessions (Economist, 2008). Though we seem to be moving towards a more balanced Farm Bill, history shows that this legislation is at once a tool and a crutch.

State and Local Policy

The Farm Bill is not the only national level legislation affecting food policy, but it is the most comprehensive. This provides the context within which state and local food policy must be placed. Through the creation of state and local food policy, states and cities have the ability to address gaps in the Farm Bill or tailor federal opportunities to meet local needs. Moreover, policy at the state and local level offers more opportunity for public participation during the process of policy creation – an element that benefits both the public, who can have a voice in crafting the policy that will affect it, and the quality of the policy, which be better customized with the public’s involvement (Hamilton, 2002).

National level food policy addresses a range of issues. Some of the largest allocations in that Bill support the Nutrition and Commodity titles, which provide food assistance programs like food stamps and WIC (a supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children) and direct and counter cyclical payments to commodity farmers, respectively. Other titles in the Farm Bill include Conservation, Rural Development, Crop Insurance and Disaster Assistance Programs, Energy, and Livestock. State and local food policy is not packaged in omnibus legislation, like the Farm Bill, nor is it typically administered by one government agency, like the U.S. Department of Agriculture. However, like national legislation, it significantly affects a wide range and food and farm issues. Examples of food policy at these levels of government include streamlining food assistance program applications and administration, creating Farm-to-School programs, initiating a branding campaign to advertise state or locally grown food, administering farmland preservation programs, or creating incentives for food retailers to locate in underserved communities.
While there are many benefits and rationales for creating state level food policy, there exists little framework for doing so. As a consequence, food policy at these levels is spread across many different agencies and is frequently inconsistent or contradictory (Biehler, Fisher, Siedenburg, Winne, & Zachary, 1999). This can present challenges for enacting, implementing, and understanding policy. For example, food-related legislation and programs might be administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Corrections, the Office of Economic Development, the Department of Agriculture, or the Department of Public Works, to name a few. This dispersion indicates the breadth of food-related policy issues. As previously indicated, food policy encompasses more than just agriculture, processing, and distribution. It also includes the environmental and economic effects of the food production and consumption, hunger and food security, obesity and related illnesses, and the landscape of food retail – grocery stores, farmers’ markets, restaurants, and street vendors (Biehler et al., 1999).

**Planners and the Food System**

Historically, planners have not attempted to participate in (not to mention lead) the process of food systems planning. Kami Pothukuchi and Jerome Kaufman, both planning professors and leaders in the movement to incorporate food issues into the planning agenda, documented and explained planners’ lack of involvement in their article, “The food system: A stranger to the planning field.” This article marks a break from tradition, and perhaps the beginning of end for planners’ neglect of food systems. In the article, Pothukuchi and Kaufman highlight the necessity of addressing food in the planning process. The authors indicate that, despite our historic oversight, food is probably the most logical basic need (out of water, air, food, and shelter) that planners could address: “food is unique among human needs in its basic connections, among others, to land; in the centrality of its wholesomeness and nutrition to health; and in the social, economic, ecological, and political implications of the locations of its sources” (2000). Despite the relevance of the food system to planners, Pothukuchi and Kaufman find it glaringly absent from professional activities as well as from most planning curricula.

With this article Pothukuchi and Kaufman’s initiated a discussion in planning literature about the planners’ role within the food system. In 2004, *The Journal of Planning Education and Research* dedicated a special issue to the subject called “Planning for Community Food Systems.” Articles in this issue reflected the breadth of food issues that might merit planners’ attention. These ranged from planners’ contribution to community food assessments (Pothukuchi, 2004) and the ways in which planning and policy can affect food justice movements (Wekerle, 2004) to describing and refining the role that planners can and should adopt in the process of community food systems planning (Clancy, 2004; Caton Campbell, 2004). Due to increasing interest (both within and outside of the planning community) in the food
system, the American Planning Association created a Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning, which it adopted in 2007.

Planners’ oversight of food systems in planning practice has been flagged in planning literature and is beginning to be addressed by our national professional association. To better understand why and how planners should address community food planning, it is helpful to explore why planners have overlooked it in the past. Based on a survey of 22 planning agencies, Pothukuchi and Kaufman describe some of the reasons planners had traditionally not incorporated food issues into their practice. Planners surveyed expressed the following opinions about food systems planning: it is only relevant as it pertains land use; it is a rural, not an urban, issue; it is market driven; there is no funding for this type of work; there is no clear and immediate problem; it is unclear who is already working on food systems and difficult to create relationships with them; institutional knowledge is lacking due to limited attention to food systems in planning curricula (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000). In contrast to these opinions, other sources have asserted quite the contrary – that planners are in a unique position to facilitate food systems planning. In a report entitled, The Way to a City’s Heart is Through its Stomach: Putting Food Security on the Urban Planning Menu, the author asserts that planners should address food issues in the same way they address other market failures arising from the problem of public goods: “planners exist because the best of all possible worlds don’t just happen...There need to be incentives and regulations to tend the garden of public interest. Planners need to find or invent tools to do this” (Roberts, 2001).

Planners already have many tools and skills that lend themselves to community food systems planning. Significantly, due to the interdisciplinary nature of their work, planners already communicate with many different public agencies, as well as citizens, community groups, and private and non-profit organizations. Therefore, planners might best be suited to playing the role of facilitator, coordinator, or mediator (Caton Campbell, 2004). The traditional planner assesses the current and future supply and demand for transportation, housing, and water. In addition, planners evaluate the potential effects of development on air and water quality. Planners could apply these types of assessments to food systems as well. In addition, planning is inherently system-based, interdisciplinary, and spatial. There is a very logical nexus between the type of work planners currently do and what is required of food systems planning.

The growing body of work addressing food systems in planning journals seems to be getting translated into practice. For instance, the upcoming American Planning Association Conference lists at least 10 sessions devoted to food and farming issues. The APA recently featured a food systems planner as a presenter in its series Tuesdays at the APA and has also issued a white paper on food systems planning.

That planners should be expressly involved in food systems planning has been officially accepted; the nature of this involvement, however, is still somewhat
uncertain. Planners could collect data, analyze, and map the capacity and location of local food production and demand (Caton Campbell, 2004; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000). Comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and land use policies should encourage and support the preservation of working farmland and the creation and sustainability of urban gardens (AFT, 2007; APA, 2007; Biehler et al., 1999; Caton Campbell, 2004; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000; Roberts, W., 2001). Transportation planners could consider food access while planning transit routes. Farmers' markets, Buy Local campaigns, agrotourism, food processing, and food service can be incorporated into economic development strategies when appropriate. Because they provide a key link between the community and government officials and policymakers, planners could advocate for food and farm policy that supports local needs and goals. To this end, planners could participate in the creation and development of state food policy councils (APA, 2007; Caton Campbell, 2004; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000).
CHAPTER 2: Food Policy Councils

Introduction

Food policy councils enable diverse organizations and individuals with a range of interests to discuss a variety of food issues in a way that will broaden awareness and enable creative solutions. As an organizing body, FPCs can also coordinate and guide food related activity. Perhaps most significantly, FPCs support a systems approach to food that reflects the complexity, breadth, and interdependence of different sectors and players within the food economy (Hamilton, 2002). In addition, food policy councils offer other opportunities for policy development that simply do not exist in their absence. They connect government officials who implement food policy within state agencies with one another and with the public. This opens important communication channels and may improve the implementation of food-related policy. FPCs also provide a forum for addressing new issues and exploring food policy through unconventional approaches (Hamilton, 2002b).

Food policy councils vary in genesis, structure, membership composition, activity level, breadth and nature of goals and objectives, funding sources, activities, and achievements (Biehler et al, 1999; Dahlberg, 1994; Hamilton, 2002). These variations will affect the outcomes and longevity of an FPC. Challenges that councils may face include conflicting stakeholder interests, lack of leadership, lack of autonomy, inadequate staff support, extent and nature of government support, lack of visibility, and uncertainty of priorities and work plan (Biehler et al, 1999).

Food policy councils can be created at the city, county, regional, state, or even national level (an iteration of such a council exists in Norway (Barling, Lang, & Caraher, 2002)). Councils may be formed through action in legislative or executive branches of government, by initiation from a government agency, such as the Department of Agriculture, or by grassroots organizing efforts. Some draw a distinction between councils that are officially sanctioned and those that are grassroots or advocacy organizations (Clancy, Hammer, & Lippoldt, 2007). Though the latter may be a very different type of organization, they do exist. However, they frequently behave quite differently than councils that are recognized as official government advisory bodies. Councils vary in size and composition, but members typically represent a range of food-related sectors, businesses, and organizations. Membership may be dictated by the document or act that creates the council, or it may be left to the discretion of the council itself. Many councils also form task forces or subcommittees to concentrate on specific policy or issue areas. Though part of the council, these task forces usually meet separately and sometimes have separate membership structures. Financial and staff support for councils will depend in part
on how it is created and to what extent it is embedded in a particular agency or organization. Councils may also subsist on grant funding.

There are many ways in which policy (both explicitly and indirectly food systems-related) can affect the viability of a region’s or state’s food system. Policy measures can help enable programs that support working farmland (farmland preservation), farmer training (workforce development), institutional purchasing (farm-to-school programs), and waste reduction (municipal composting), to name a few. Food policy councils may provide a means by which states can formalize a commitment to a food systems planning approach. Moreover, FPCs embody a local or state government’s recognition that it is at least partly responsible for ensuring a safe and secure food supply (Becker, 1982).

**Brief History of Food Policy Councils**

In 1981, the Knoxville City Council passed resolution R-202-81, a motion that created the first officially sanctioned food policy council in the country. Two groups were instrumental in bringing the need for food policy reform to the attention of the Mayor and city officials – the Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee, an organization that addressed, among other things, problems of food supply for low-income people, and the University of Tennessee Graduate School of Planning, which, in 1977, conducted an assessment of the local food system entitled, “Food distribution and Consumption in Knoxville” (Becker, 1982). In this study, a planning professor, Robert Wilson, and a group of students noted that the lack of a coordinating body addressing the range of food issues complicated the City’s attempt to address food production and distribution problems. With its resolution, the City acknowledged, “local government has a proper role to play in ensuring that all citizens have access to an adequate and nutritious food supply” (Knoxville City Council, 1981).

Knoxville’s early recognition of the need for a food policy council paved the way for other cities and regions. In 1984, the U.S. Conference of Mayors supported a pilot project to examine the use of food policy councils as a means to address hunger issues in five cities around the country (Dahlberg, 1994). A full decade and a half after the Knoxville Food Policy Council was created, Connecticut began exploring the possibility of creating a state-level council. In 1997, by an act of legislation, the Connecticut Food Policy Council was created. Prior to Connecticut’s state-level FPC, there was some precedent for addressing food-related issues at the state level, and several states created nutrition-focused state level councils (Clancy et al., 2007).

In 2001, the United States Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency partnered with the Drake Agricultural Law Center to provide financial and technical assistance to developing state food policy councils. This partnership signified the USDA’s recognition of food policy councils as a possible risk management tool (Drake University, 2001). It also solidified the Drake Agricultural Law Center’s
position as a leader in the field of state and local food policy. Through this partnership, at least 11 state food policy councils received support between 2001 and 2004 (Drake University Agricultural Law Center, 2004). Though the USDA funding for this program no longer exists, the Drake Agricultural Law Center continues to provide information and progressive thinking on food policy reform and remains a valuable resource for states and communities in the process of creating FPCs.

**Research and Evaluation of Food Policy Councils**

Previous research on food policy councils has described elements associated with the success of councils (Biehler et al., 1999; Clancy, 1988; Clancy et al., 2007; Dahlberg, 1994). Elements that have been identified as contributing to the success of a council include: official sanction; staff and financial resources; external legitimacy; knowledge base and membership composition; power-sharing; vision; and leadership (Clancy, 1988; Dahlberg, 1994). Other factors identified as significantly impacting the outcome of a council include: regional values and the political climate; the size and demographics of the council’s jurisdiction (this is in reference to city and county councils and may not apply to state-level councils); the role or powers given to the council; and the involvement of consultants and advisers (Dahlberg, 1994). In addition to many of the aforementioned factors, council members asserted that the following features may be determinants of success: member commitment; persistence on the part of the council; diversity in membership; involvement and engagement with both the government and the community; and media relations – either using media exposure to the advantage of the council or keeping a low profile (Clancy et al., 2007).

In the process of identifying factors that influence a council’s success, researchers have both explicitly and implicitly defined what that success may entail. Success may be measured by the degree to which a council achieves its own stated goals; the amount of policy on which the council exerts some influence; the council’s contribution to increased education about food systems in a region; and the effect of the council on creating and enhancing healthy regions (Dahlberg, 1994). Opening new channels of communication amongst council members and government agencies may also be a successful outcome of a food policy council (Clancy et al, 2007). However, given the intangible nature of these types of accomplishments, it is likely difficult to effectively or definitively measure success unless councils set measurable benchmarks for themselves.

**Other Frameworks for Examining Food Policy Councils**

Two theoretical approaches lend themselves as potential frameworks for studying food policy councils: participatory policy analysis (PPA) and knowledge
management (KM). Participatory policy analysis is proposed as a type of discursive democracy that “requires the inclusion of a greater representation of those who effect, and are affected by, a given policy or...program” (deLeon, 2009). Knowledge management refers to the strategies involved in facilitating the transfer of knowledge within an organization (Osborne, 2004). Included below is a description of how these processes may be relevant to food policy councils.

Though each food policy council is unique, FPCs in general purport to provide an open forum for deliberation amongst diverse stakeholders that may result in policy creation and/or evaluation. In this sense, FPCs may provide a useful example of a trend towards discursive democracy or participatory policy analysis (PPA). This trend can be loosely defined as “the shift away from independent bureaucratic agencies responding individually to public policy needs to the collective action of multiple agencies working together to solve complex public problems” (deLeon, 2009). In participatory policy creation, deLeon notes several structural tendencies or that characterize what he calls “collaborative policy networks.” As diverse, deliberative organizations, food policy councils may exhibit some of the following structural tendencies: heterogeneity among stakeholders; reciprocity of ties (the idea that “each actor in a network must see that he or she will not only benefit by collaboration but also that the overarching goal will be better achieved by working with other stakeholders”); low centralization of ties (lack of hierarchy); multiplexity (existence of many different types of relationships); high levels of trust; and transparent relationships (deLeon, 2009).

Trust and understanding may play a particularly important role in setting the stage for PPA (Haight & Ginger, 2000). In fact, the realization of any sort of discursive democracy or collaborative policy networks may rest on a community’s ability to foster and bread social capital. Robert Putnam, author of Bowling Alone, describes social capital as the “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1995). In some cases, a knowledge management strategy may be, in effect, an effort to enhance an organization’s social capital. Food policy council members are often appointed because of their expertise or experience in a particular aspect of the food system. A food policy council, therefore, is a means by which members can share and communicate knowledge to one another, as well as to the public and government officials. As government advisory councils are inherently knowledge systems or organizations of embodied knowledge, treating them as such may enhance a council’s ability to transform individuals’ wisdom and experience into innovative, collaborative thinking (Osborne, 2004).
CHAPTER 3: Research and Findings

Purpose

As states are increasingly considering and pursuing food policy councils to address food- and farming- related concerns and opportunities, and the current Secretary of Agriculture has indicated his support for FPCs (Black, 2009), this research looks at existing and past state level councils to glean some indication of how the growth of FPCs might affect food policy. Despite the growing prevalence of state level food policy councils, there remains limited study and evaluation of the experiences of state level councils. It is my hope that this research may serve as 1) an introduction to food policy councils for those who are not familiar with them 2) a description of the experiences, challenges, and accomplishments of existing councils that may be useful to council members or those interested in starting a council and 3) an exploration of where planners fit in the creation, evaluation, and implementation of food policy in general and with regards to food policy councils specifically. In addition, this research aims to add to the small but growing body of literature on food policy councils by exploring how state level FPCs work, what effect they have, and what implications they have for food systems planning. Based on these objectives, this research has been structured as an exploratory, multiple case study.

Methodology

The background research for this case study required determining which states had some iteration of a state level food policy council and confirming the current status of each council. The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), a non-profit organization focused on rebuilding regional food systems and ensuring food security, maintains a database of state and local food policy councils. The CFSC’s FPC listing served as my starting point and offered some initial contacts. CFSC staff verified that this listing was up-to-date (M. Winne, personal communication, January 5, 2009). I also identified state level FPCs using the Drake Agricultural Law Center’s website. In addition, two emerging councils were identified through email updates from the American Farmland Trust and three through personal communication.

Using publically available contact information, I communicated by email and telephone with current and former council members to verify the current status of that council if there was some question as to whether or not that council was still active. Based on this preliminary research I identified 17 states that have had, currently have, or are developing food policy councils. For the purposes of this study, I am referring only to food policy councils that use the broadest definition of food policy. Therefore, organizations whose policy focus is more directed (for
example, the Washington State Food and Nutrition Policy Council) are not included in this research.

Using press releases and media coverage, websites, council-produced annual reports and publications, meeting minutes, legislative text and executive orders, and relevant academic and non-academic publications, I gathered information about councils’ genesis, mission and purpose, structure, activities and operations, and accomplishments. These resources and documents, in addition to interview and email communication with council members or staff, inform the case studies presented in this paper.

Of the 17 state level councils initially identified, one is no longer active, four are in various stages of development, eight are still active, and four states in which the council had effectively dissolved are currently in the process of revitalizing or creating a new council. From these 17 states, eight were selected for a more in-depth case study. Case study selections were made based on two criteria: that the range of cases represented the diversity of council characteristics, including geographic diversity, and that there existed sufficient available sources of information to inform the case study. (The extent of information available about a council was also correlated with the level of activity of that council; therefore, this research focuses on councils that have had or continue to have a high level of momentum and engagement.)

Once identified, a council member or staff person from each of the councils included in the case studies was contacted by email to request an interview. The contact person was usually the Chairperson or Executive Coordinator of the Council. After follow-up emails, the interview recruitments had an 88 percent response rate.

I conducted seven telephone interviews, which lasted from 30 minutes to one hour each. The interviews were guided by a basic set of questions (Appendix 1), which were amended before each interview. Interview preparation entailed eliminating questions that could be answered based on prior research and adding questions that had arisen while completing this background research. Most frequently, these additional questions aimed to gage the reaction or result of recommendations the council had issued. Though the interviews used a skeleton script, they were free flowing. The intent of each interview was to learn more about the councils, particularly those whose website was not frequently updated, and to glean qualitative information about council members’ experience and their perception of the purpose the council serves and the challenges and opportunities the council faces. Upon completion of the case study drafts, each interviewee was asked to review and verify the information contained therein.

The findings presented below include a brief description of the nine state level councils not featured in the case studies in addition to those eight case studies. In combination, these descriptions and case studies are intended to provide a broad - though superficial - look at the current landscape of state level food policy councils.
Each case study presents the council’s “story,” describing the creation, structure, general operations, and a sample of the activities and accomplishment of that council. The subsequent chapter, Discussion and Analysis, highlights major themes that arose from this case study exploration.

Findings

An Overview of State Food Policy Councils
This section describes the current status of state-level food policy councils in the United States. The purpose of this section is to provide an up-to-date snapshot of state level councils – which states have created FPCs, which are still active and in what capacity, which have dissolved and the reason for that dissolution. Councils that have designated themselves as food policy councils, whether or not they are officially sanctioned, are included here. Councils that are not food system-focused, such as food and nutrition councils, are not included here as they have a different approach than FPCs.

Arizona
The Arizona Food Policy Coalition is a program of Community Food Connections, a nonprofit organization whose mission is “working to alleviate hunger and create food sufficiency for low-income households through community and economic development.” The Council was created in 2002 and maintains a core group of members who communicate about local, state, and national policy issues. Though the Council is still active, it is limited by the lack of a point person or coordinator (C. Gentry, personal communication, February 15, 2009).

Arkansas
The Arkansas Food Policy Council is currently in development. There is a steering committee meeting monthly to determine the council’s missions, goals, and objectives (D. Uptagrafft, personal communication, October 15, 2008).

Colorado
Colorado is in the process of reviving its food policy council. Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a group composed of former council members and newly identified stakeholders has developed a strategic plan for the creation of a new council. During the planning process, the group has faced several challenges including some pushback from the Colorado Ag Commission. The Council has also struggled to create the level of trust necessary to facilitate honest deliberation and discussion, which may be affecting the group’s overall momentum and commitment (C. Torres, personal communication, March 18, 2009).
Illinois
In 2005, the Illinois Legislature created the Illinois Food Systems Policy Council. The Council, which was very much focused on food safety and security, was housed in the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. The Council was also affiliated with Richland Community College. More recently, the Illinois Legislature has passed the Food, Farms, and Jobs Act of 2007. The Task Force created by that Act recommended the creation of a Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council to coordinate statewide farm and food system development. Legislation that would create this council was submitted in March of 2009.

Maine
In 2005, the Maine Food Policy Council was created as an officially recognized government advisory board. Both the creation of the Council and the description of its membership and duties are included in the Maine Statutes (Title 7, Section 12004 and Title 8, Section 216, respectively). Though it recently took a hiatus while appointing new members, the Council is now actively meeting again (C. Morrill, personal communication, April 10, 2009).

Maryland
In February of 2009, Senate Bill 816, an Act Concerning the Creation of Maryland Food and Hunger Policy Council, was introduced and has since undergone a first reading in the Senate.

Massachusetts
At the time of this writing, legislation establishing a Massachusetts Food Policy Council had been traveling through the State Legislature in various forms. The latest Bill, HB 718, was initially filed in January 2009.

North Carolina
The North Carolina Food Policy Council was established in 2001 by Agricultural Commissioner Meg Scott Phipps. The creation of the Council was funded by the USDA Risk Management Agency, through its partnership with Drake University. The Council held several regional conferences and worked actively to alleviate hunger and promote small farm producers in the State until its dissolution in 2003 (D. Beth, personal communication, October 16, 2008). The Council was housed in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, but disbanded after Phipps was required to step down from her position as Agricultural Commissioner after pleading guilty to accepting illegal campaign contributions (Christensen, 2003).

In March 2009, a Bill was submitted to the North Carolina State Legislature that would establish the North Carolina Sustainable Local Food Policy Council in the North Carolina Department of Commerce. This Bill followed discussions regarding food policy that have taken place as part of the Farm to Fork Initiative, a statewide effort to build a sustainable, local food economy.
Utah
The Utah Food Policy Council was established in 2002 with assistance from the USDA and Drake University partnership. The Council’s initial focus was developing connections between Utah food producers and consumers. The Council addressed this issue by Utah’s Own, a branding and marketing program. Eventually, the Utah Department of Agriculture assumed responsibility for the program, but alienated many council members by its approach. By 2006, many members left the Council and it was effectively dissolved (J. Ure, personal communication, March 17, 2009).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State: Council Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Year created</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Funding or staff resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona: Arizona Food Policy Coalition</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Farm to Table (nonprofit)</td>
<td>None specifically allocated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>In development</td>
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<td>N/a</td>
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<td>Colorado</td>
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<td>N/a</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>Startup funding from W.K. Kellogg Foundation</td>
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<td>Illinois: Illinois Food Systems Policy Council; Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council (proposed)</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>Legislation: Public Act 094-0077</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and Richland Community College</td>
<td>Startup funding from the State</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In development</td>
<td>In Legislature: HB 3990, House Amendment 1</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA)</td>
<td>N/a</td>
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<td>Iowa: Iowa Food Policy Council</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>Executive Order 16</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Drake University</td>
<td>USDA RMA; Drake University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In development</td>
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<td>N/a</td>
<td>N/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas: Kansas Food Policy Council</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Executive fiat</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Kansas Rural Center (nonprofit)</td>
<td>KRC; USDA (Community Food Projects Grant)</td>
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<td>Active</td>
<td>Legislation: Maine Statutes: Title 5, sec 12004 1B</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Maine Department of Agriculture (MDA)</td>
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<td>Maryland: Maryland Food and Hunger Policy Council (proposed)</td>
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<td>In legislature: HB 1185, SB 816</td>
<td>N/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Legislative</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Lead Agency</td>
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<td><strong>Massachusetts</strong></td>
<td>Massachusetts Food Policy Council (proposed)</td>
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<td>In Legislature: <a href="#">HR 5182</a></td>
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<td><strong>Michigan</strong></td>
<td>Michigan Food Policy Council</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Executive Order 13</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA)</td>
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<td><strong>New Mexico</strong></td>
<td>New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Grassroots, later recognized by House Joint Memorial 45</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Farm to Table (nonprofit)</td>
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<td><strong>New York</strong></td>
<td>New York State Council on Food Policy</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Executive Order 13</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM)</td>
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<td><strong>North Carolina</strong></td>
<td>North Carolina Food Policy Council; North Carolina Sustainable Local Food Policy Council (proposed)</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>Administrative action (Department of Agriculture)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>North Carolina Department of Agriculture (NCDA)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In development</td>
<td>In Legislature: <a href="#">SB 1067</a></td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>North Carolina Department of Commerce (proposed)</td>
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<td><strong>Ohio</strong></td>
<td>Ohio Food Policy Council</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Executive Order 275</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)</td>
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<td><strong>Oklahoma</strong></td>
<td>Oklahoma Food Policy Council</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Administrative action (Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Utah</strong></td>
<td>Utah Food Policy Council</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Utah Department of Agriculture (UDA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Studies

Connecticut

History and Structure
Officially created in 1997, the Connecticut Food Policy Council (CFPC) is the oldest state-level food policy council in the country. The Connecticut State Legislature formalized the Council in Public Act 97-11, Section 21 based on the successful experiences of an earlier, informal sub-committee of the Legislative Planning and Development Committee and a subsequent task force, which eventually recommended the creation of a formal food policy council. The legislation creating the Council determined that it would be housed in the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. This Act tasks the Council with the following duties:

- Develop, coordinate and implement a food system policy linking local economic development, environmental protection and preservation with farming and urban issues
- Review and comment on any proposed state legislation and regulations that would affect the food policy system of the state
- Advise and provide information to the Governor on the state’s food policy
- Prepare and submit to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly...an annual report concerning its activities with any appropriate recommendations concerning food policy

The Act also describes the composition of the membership, the process of appointing members, and member duties. Representatives (the Commissioner or designee) from the following state agencies will serve as council members:

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Administrative Services
- Department of Education
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Public Health
- Department of Social Services

In addition, members representing agriculture or an agricultural organization; an anti-hunger organization; the Cooperative Extension System; food retail; and produce wholesale will be appointed by leaders in the Senate and the House of Representatives to serve on the Council. The Council typically has between 10 and 12 members in total. The Council occasionally presents recommendations regarding appointments to legislators if it has identified representatives who may contribute significantly to the efforts of the Council (L. Drake, personal communication, February 20, 2009). There is no term limit for members, and the length of service will depend on each member’s personal decision.

Council Activities
The Council meets regularly on the second Thursday of the month, during the workday. Meetings are open to the public, though they are not regularly advertised
in advance. Public turnout varies from meeting to meeting, depending on the subjects that will be addressed. Typically, individuals and organizations hear about the Council meetings through word of mouth, and, as Connecticut is a small state, word travels quickly and easily.

The chairperson, Linda Drake, coordinates much of the Council’s activities. Drake runs meetings, sends out meeting agendas, posts meeting minutes online, and works with other members of the council to write letters to the Governor and legislators about issues that the Council is following. Though Drake devotes a significant and consistent amount of time to administrative work for the Council, other members’ time commitment varies depending on the Council’s focus at any particular moment and is at the discretion of each member. The Council forms sub-committees as needed to address particular concerns, such as food safety or nutrition education. For the most part, the Council’s work and mission overlaps with that of the organizations and agencies that members represent. Therefore, there is little to no conflict with Council members devoting work time to Council activities. However, each council member determines his or her level of commitment. While most council members are enthusiastic and engaged, some members have been much less involved (L. Drake, personal communication, February 20, 2009).

Though the Council is housed in the Department of Agriculture, the Department does not provide staff for the Council apart from the in-kind support of the representative of that agency. However, the Department is supportive of the Council’s work and the Council operates as a part of the Department. Therefore, the Council uses the Department’s letterhead, it posts its meeting minutes on the Department’s website, and the Department prints documents and communications for the Council. Though the Council is not always funded, it has secured $25,000 for fiscal year 2008-2009. $20,000 of that allocation pays for a consultant’s services. The consultant writes and formats reports and letters; updates the website; helps coordinate some meetings and conferences; and assists with other issues as needed. The Department of Agriculture receives the remaining $5,000 to cover overhead costs (L. Drake, personal communication, February 20, 2009). In the past, the Council has received some funding from the Department of Agriculture and in-kind support from partner organizations like the Hartford Food System (Annual Report, 2001). The Council’s operating expenses ranged from approximately $30,000 to $50,000.

Each year, the Council identifies a set of legislative priorities on which it will focus its attention. It is what Drake calls “an evolutionary process” (2007). Usually, members will relate issues and concerns they have based on experience at their respective agencies and organizations. The Council will then deliberate and come to consensus over which issues might provide win-win scenarios – those that all members feel are worthwhile initiatives that they can support. Though this process can be contentious, the Council is always able to identify several solid priorities.
Once the Council has determined its priorities, it will post them on its website and send letters to legislators as well as the governor. Sometimes individual council members send letters or visit their representatives. Significantly, membership in the Council enables state employees to advocate for particular issues, which they could not do in the name of a state agency. The interest level and involvement of Assembly members varies. The Council has had consistent success working with the Environment Committee.

**Accomplishments and Challenges**

In general, the Council has devoted much of its attention to issues of food security and food access, as well as the preservation of farmland. Most of its recommendations describe how state agencies can affect these areas and what collaborations need to be made to do so. The Council documents its priorities, recommendations, and accomplishments in the annual report created for the Governor and the legislative Environment Committee, which oversees agriculture issues. In addition, that report includes indicators of food security in Connecticut, such as farmland preservation (and farmland loss); the economic contribution of agriculture in the state; the amount of food produced in Connecticut; citizen’s ability to access food; poverty rates; and participation in food assistance programs. This section helps to highlight trends and concerns related to food security in the state and they show the context in which the Council makes its recommendations and priorities.

Much of the Council’s work thus far has focused on administering and facilitating federal food programs. In this way, the Council acts very much like a bridge between federal policy and the communities and individuals it affects. In this role, the Council can have a significant effect on the impact of federal policy. For instance, the Council combined the application process for different food assistance programs (like Food Stamps and free school lunch) in order to increase participation in those programs.

Other accomplishments have involved inter-agency collaboration. For instance, collaboration between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Transportation resulted in a Connecticut Farm Map, which provides a guide to farms and farm-related businesses throughout the state. Another example of meaningful collaboration resulted from networking between farmland preservationists and environmental groups at a Council-sponsored conference. Working together, these groups formed the Working Lands Alliance.

Successful legislation that the Council has supported includes:

- Increased bonding authorization for farmland preservation
- Funding for a state veterinary laboratory
- Changes to food stamp eligibility and food assistance application process
- A school nutrition bill that incentivizes schools to provide healthy food
The Council also organizes regular conferences that focus on a variety of food issues. In 2001, the Council held a “Food Safety Policy Forum.” The Council also organized a conference in 2005, which gathered over 150 participants interested in improving nutrition education in the state. After this meeting, the Council created a website dedicated to collecting nutrition-related information and resources. In 2006, it sponsored “Home Plate – Putting Local Food on the Menu” – a conference focused on increasing institutional purchasing of Connecticut grown food. This conference resulted in identifying a need for slaughter and processing facilities; this is a barrier the state will need to address to help create a regional food system. The Council also hosted a visit from legislators and other parties interested in food policy in 2006. This visit was a coordinated effort of the Council, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the Community Food Security Coalition.

Part of any food policy council’s work will involve addressing challenges and barriers. Some of the biggest challenges that the Connecticut Food Policy Council has identified and prioritizes its efforts around include: the lack of access to food; the complexity of receiving food assistance; farmland loss; and, more recently, the lack of infrastructure in place to realize a local food system.

In addition to these systemic concerns, the Council also faces bureaucratic challenges to its own existence. For example, the Council’s funding is never guaranteed. This can significantly limit how much the Council can do in any given year. In the current economic climate, this problem is manifesting itself more severely, as there is a bill proposed in the Legislature that would effectively dissolve a large number of official councils and commissions in the name of budget constraints. The economic crisis has also shaped the Council’s legislative priorities for the year. Instead of proposing many new recommendations, the Council is working hard to ensure that the State doesn’t take steps backward while trying to reconcile budget shortfalls. For instance, the Council is trying to prevent the State from reallocating development fees that are earmarked for farmland preservation into the general treasury.

Drake asserts that some of the Council’s greatest accomplishments less obvious than its reports and successful legislation. Some successes tend to go unsung. Getting departments to work together is one of the most important things to come out of the council. As the Council writes in its latest annual report, “the Connecticut Food Policy Council’s work is about good government. We work across departmental boundaries to identify opportunities for collaboration and action, breaking down bureaucratic barriers to accomplish the goal of food security for all of Connecticut’s residents” (2007). The Council suggests that “insight, involvement, and willingness” can go a long way in progressing the discussion and implementation of solutions that will create food security. In Connecticut, the Council has had members who are devoted to the issues and willing to work to affect food policy. This has benefited the CFPC tremendously. The Council also works to ensure that members see where they fit and how they will benefit from the Council’s activities. Councils need to be inclusive and engaging without being a burden to members. Through experience,
the Connecticut Food Policy Council has been able to achieve this balance, a success that has likely contributed to the Council’s longevity.

Iowa

History and Structure
The Iowa Food Policy Council (IFPC) was created in 2000 through Executive Order 16, which was issued by Governor Thomas Vilsack. Three subsequent executive orders continued the Council’s activities, each one providing more specific tasks for the Council to complete. The purpose of the Council, as expressed in the Executive Order, was to advise the executive office on “all aspects of food production systems in Iowa.” Though the Council was never officially disbanded, it slowly dissolved after a loss of momentum in about 2007 (M. Russell, personal communication, February 20, 2009). That same year, Governor Vilsack stepped down as Governor and the current governor, Chet Culver, took office. Governor Culver has not expressed the same interest in the Council as Governor Vilsack had, and this lack of executive support is likely a factor in the Council’s cessation. There have been recent efforts to revive the Council, spearheaded in part by former IFPC members (M. Russell, personal communication, February 20, 2009). Though the Council no longer formally meets, the Drake Agricultural Law Center continues to work on implementing many of the recommendations that the Council made.

As dictated by executive order, the Council was made up of 21 Governor-appointed citizen members and seven representatives serving as ex officio members from the following states agencies:

• Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
• Department of Economic Development
• Department of Inspections and Appeals
• Department of Elder Affairs
• Department of Public Health
• Department of Education
• Department of Human Services

The citizen members represent a range of food sectors including production, processing, distribution, and retail, as well as experts in urban agriculture, agricultural law and policy, food security, and cooperative extension research. In addition, staff at the Drake University Agricultural Law Center, which housed the Council, provided support to the Council’s activities.

Council Activities
In order to complete the tasks required of it through the Executive Order, the IFPC created six subcommittees: food security; consumer awareness; environmental sustainability; economic development and diversity; production; and marketing (Executive Order 19, 2001). The Council identified three main areas of focus:

1. Increasing institutional purchasing of Iowa grown food;
2. Pursuing food processing to
support rural economic development; improve and facilitate the implementation of food assistance programs in the state (Annual Report, 2004).

The Council received in-kind support from state agencies as well as funding from the USDA Risk Management Agency, which partnered with the Drake Agricultural Law Center to research and promote the creation of food policy councils. The Agricultural Law Center funded the startup of the Council using $20,000 of its own money. The Council’s later work was supported through $65,000 in federal monies coming from the partnership between USDA and Drake (Drake University, 2001). When this money was spent, the Agricultural Law Center continued to support the Council’s activities for some time, as it acknowledged that the goals of the Council were very much aligned with those of the Center (M. Russell, personal communication, February 20, 2009). However, since the neither Council itself nor its funding were formally institutionalized, the IFPC and its work were ultimately not able to survive the gubernatorial transition.

**Accomplishments and Challenges**
The Iowa Food Policy Council had a number of significant accomplishments. In fact, the Governor’s Executive Orders cited the continued successes of the Council as part of the reasons for continuing its work. Recommendations from the Council that the Governor implemented included, among others:
- Provision of state support for the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program
- An executive directive to the Department of Economic Development regarding its implementation of Iowa’s branding program, “A Taste of Iowa”
- A letter of support from Governor Vilsack for the reauthorization of the Federal Child Nutrition Program sent to Iowa representatives and senators

Other changes in food policy to which the Council contributed included:
- A Congressional amendment to food assistance eligibility that increased the number of cars eligible individuals could possess
- Implementation of the greater Des Moines area Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign

Additionally, the Council, in coordination with the Drake University Agricultural Law Center, hosted regular conferences that focused on state and local food policy. The topics of these conferences ranged from “The Role of Farmers’ Markets in America’s Food System” to “Rural Lands Rural Livelihoods.” These conferences continue to take place annually and are organized by Drake University.

The Council had other impressive victories. For instance, the Congressional Hunger Center, a national non-profit, recognized the Council’s Food Security Task Force by awarding it a Victory Against Hunger Award. Also, council members indicate that one of the most significant outcomes and a “compelling reason to continue the Council” was increased coordination and communication between different organizations, particularly state departments (IFPC, 2004). For instance, due to the Council’s activities, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Public
Health began working together to increase the number of eligible citizens who received food stamps (M. Russell, personal communication, February 20, 2009).

During its existence, the Iowa Food Policy Council had a close relationship with the Governor’s office. The reciprocity between the two is evident in the memorandums exchanged between the Governor and the Council, as well as the Council’s reports and the Governor’s Executive Orders. Communication between the Governor and the Council often included point-by-point responses to prior communiqués. Additionally, the Drake Agricultural Law Center staffs a government liaison, who spent time working directly with the Governor’s office.

The focus and tasks of the Council evolved based on recommendations by the Council and responses by the Governor, which were expressed, ultimately, in the content of the Executive Orders. The Council also had a unique relationship with the Drake Agricultural Law Center. Though other councils receive financial and in-kind support from non-profit organizations, academic institutions, or state agencies, the Iowa Council was housed in an institution that was already engaged in progressive thinking about food policy in general and FPCs in particular. There was little precedent for state level FPCs when Iowa’s was created, the Council likely benefitted from the knowledge of some of the supportive staff at the Center.

Though the Iowa Food Policy Council is no longer active, the legacy of its work is significant – both in Iowa and throughout the United States. The Council’s work and its leadership at the Drake University Agricultural Law Center provided an early example of what food policy councils can accomplish. Through its partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency the Center technically and financially supported the creation of several state level councils. Neil Hamilton, the director of the Agricultural Law Center and former Chairperson of the IFPC, has made significant contributions to the advancement of state level food policy councils through his writing and promotion of their benefits. Also, Hamilton initiated the creation of the Iowa Food Policy Council through communication with Governor Vilsack. In so doing, he may have paved the way for an untold number of councils throughout the country. In his recently assumed role as Secretary of Agriculture, Vilsack has publically promoted the creation of food policy councils (Black, 2009).

Recent discussion regarding the revitalization of the Iowa Food Policy Council has involved wrestling with the question, “what makes a food policy council?” (M. Russell, personal communication, February 20, 2009). Questions arise regarding who really has ownership over the council. Food policy councils typically develop as advisory councils. However, a council’s role may be obsolete if there is no one soliciting the advice that it offers. Iowa’s experience may indicate some lessons for other councils. Russell asserts that this is decidedly not an issue of semantics. An official advisory council can expect to accomplish different things in different ways than a citizen’s council. Though both types of organizations exist, they are technically and substantially different and should be organized accordingly.
According to Russell, a council’s form should follow its function. Food policy councils can benefit from determining what their purpose is from the beginning; this, in turn, will affect who comes to the table and what will happen then. If the point of the council is to influence public policy, state agents and government officials who can implement recommendations need to be involved. If the council’s main objective is advocating for certain issues, the council may look very different. By including specific state employees or elected officials, or by being housed in a state department, a council has a certain amount of guaranteed support. The genesis, purpose, and ownership of any particular council will bring particular people to the table. Though councils who advocate and councils who advise have something to offer, there is some evidence that councils that have government buy in from the beginning stand a better chance in affecting public policy.

Kansas

History and Structure
The Kansas Food Policy Council (KFPC) was created in 2005, with funding support provided by a USDA Community Foods Project Program grant and in-kind support guaranteed by Governor Kathleen Sebelius. Governor Sebelius announced the creation of the Council in conjunction with the formal commencement of the Healthy Kansas Initiative. Prior to this announcement, Daniel Nagengast, Executive Director of the Kansas Rural Center and current Coordinator of the Council, had secured the USDA grant of $120,000 to support the development of the Kansas Food Policy Council. He approached Governor Sebelius about starting a food policy council. The Governor was very supportive; she created the Council and allocated matching funds in the form of state resources and staff support (D. Nagengast, personal communication, March 20, 2009).

Governor Sebelius specified which state agencies would support the Council. These include the Department of Aging; Department of Agriculture; Department of Commerce; Department of Education; Department of Health & Environment; Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services; and the Kansas Rural Life Task Force. Nagengast asserts that bringing these state agencies and other organizations together was unprecedented but not unwelcome. In fact, from the beginning members have understood the need for inter-organization communication and partnership. Consequently, the Kansas Food Policy Council has not had to devote much time or effort to get “buy-in” from its members.

The KFPC identified several goals that broadly aim to increase the amount of food produced and sold within the state and enhance the state’s food economy; improve programs providing food assistance; use food policy to improve public health; and advance environmentally sustainable food production methods. Initially, the Council created three sub-committees to address these goals: Regional Food Systems; Food Security; and Human Health and the Environment. Though these Task Forces were all operational at one point, the Regional Food Systems and Food
Security sub-committees were the most active. Currently, only the Food Security sub-committee still meets regularly and has maintained a consistent and substantial amount of momentum initiating and completing projects. Although the Regional Food Systems Task Force no longer meets regularly, it has left a lasting legacy of inter-organizational partnerships and communication that had not existed prior to the Council (D. Nagengast, personal communication, March 20, 2009).

**Council Activities**
While it was active, the Regional Food Systems Task Force addressed obstacles and capitalized on opportunities to help enhance the state’s food economy by creating connections between growers and consumers. Much of this work focused creating and expanding direct marketing opportunities and encouraging increased agricultural production in the state. This included organizing a series of direct marketing workshops; administering pilot projects that enabled EBT use at farmers’ markets; and the development of an online matching and distribution system that connects institutional purchasers (like schools) to local growers. This website, Kansas River Valley Local Foods, streamlines the process for institutional purchasers who wish to procure local food while providing an opportunity for farmers to sell to larger buyers.

Members on the Regional Food Systems Task Force included farmers and representatives from food wholesale and retail operations, farmers’ markets, the Kansas Department of Commerce and Department of Agriculture, Kansas State University and Cooperative Extension Researchers, consumer organizations, and other agricultural groups. Though this Task Force has somewhat dissolved, these organizations continue to partner for various projects. For instance, a number of Kansas State Horticultural groups are focusing on increasing agricultural production in the state. Assessments of food production and consumption capacity have indicated that Kansas does not grow nearly enough food to meet its own demand. As Nagengast asserts, it doesn’t really matter how many marketing tools you build if you don’t have enough producers to supply the market (personal communication, March 20, 2009).

The Food Security Task Force, which has become the de facto KFPC, focuses on reducing hunger and food insecurity in Kansas by increasing participation in federal food assistance programs, supporting local and community initiatives to combat hunger and food security, and examining the extent and causes of food insecurity in the state. In order to achieve these goals, the Task Force has done a substantial amount of work to increase the effectiveness of federal food assistance programs like the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (EBT). It has also supported Farm to School efforts in the state.

Members on the Food Security Task Force represent the following organizations:
- The Kansas Rural Center
- Kansas State University
- Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
The Task Force continues to meet on a quarterly basis and produces an annual report for the Governor, which includes a selection of recommendations to improve food security through state level action. These annual reports also provide updates on the latest figures on hunger, food insecurity, and enrollment in food assistance programs. While the Council has a very strong relationship with the Governor, these recommendations are typically not communicated to the Kansas State Legislature. In fact, due to the political climate in Kansas, the Council is much more productive by flying under the radar of the Legislature altogether. This affects the Council in several ways. First, it depends significantly on the support of the Governor to implement its recommendations. Similarly, the council must tailor its recommendations to actions that can be accomplished by executive fiat rather than those that require legislative deliberation or approval. These circumstances also limit the resources available to the Council. As a consequence, the majority of the Council’s activities have been funded with federal monies or through in-kind support from state agencies (granted at the Governor’s behest) and private organizations.

**Accomplishments and Challenges**

Though it is sanctioned by the Governor, the Council was never officially created through an Executive Order. The Governor and the founding members of the Council deliberately avoided creation by Executive Order to avoid the political complexities that may have been created by pitting a progressive Governor against an historically conservative Legislature (D. Nagengast, personal communication, March 20, 2009). While the Council welcomes diverse perspectives and thoughtful deliberation, it recognizes that the scrutiny the Legislature might bring to its activities would be oppressive rather than productive.

Currently, the Food Security Task Force has momentum as it moves forward on writing a grant proposal to increase the involvement of small town grocers in food security and local food systems efforts. This project is an economic development strategy based in part on the idea that by increasing enrollment of eligible participants in federal food assistance programs, local food retailers could see substantial increases in profit.

The Task Force has also recently been contacted by several public health agencies in the state that had not previously indicated any interest in local foods. The United Methodist Foundation and the Kansas Health Foundation have both expressed interest in partnering with the Council in some capacity. Though the Council has reached out to these groups in the past, this is the first time these health agencies have reciprocated the interest.
As new issues emerge and work continues to address more systemic issues, the Kansas Food Policy Council leverages partnerships that it has created to gather information, conduct research, and engage new stakeholders. The Council has evolved since its creation and it is now building on its past efforts and accomplishments as well as its relationships with a wide range of agencies and organizations.

**Michigan**

**History and Structure**
The Michigan Food Policy Council was created by Executive Order No 13 in 2005 by Governor Jennifer Granholm. In 2007, the Governor reestablished the Council as an advisory body in Executive Order 44. In this order the Governor increased the number of council members from 21 to 25 in order to include newly identified stakeholders. In addition, the new Executive Order named additional goals and responsibilities for the Council that reflected new or emerging areas of concern and opportunities for achieving some of the Council’s purposes. The goals address a range of issues, but focus mainly on supporting agriculture-based economic development strategies; increasing direct marketing and institutional purchasing activities; supporting small- and mid-size farms and encouraging sustainable agriculture practices; and providing nutritious food to children, seniors, and low-income and inner-city people.

The Council’s mission is to “cultivate a safe, healthy and available food supply for all of Michigan’s residents while building on the state’s agricultural diversity to enhance economic growth” (MFPC, 2009). The Council’s main focus areas are apparent in this mission as well as the Task Forces that the Council created: A) Expanding Food-Related Businesses and Jobs B) Improving Access to Fresh and Healthy Foods C) Promoting Michigan Foods and D) Enhancing Agricultural Viability.

The Council is a nonpartisan organization and represents the range of parties involved in the food system. Consequently, council members come from a variety of backgrounds and bring a variety of views and interests to the table. The 25-member council includes representatives (usually the Director or his/her designee) from the following state agencies as ex officio members:

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Community Health
- Department of Environmental Quality
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Labor and Economic Growth
- Department of Education
- Department of Management and Budget*
- Department of Corrections*
• Michigan Strategic Fund*

In addition, the representatives from the following organizations are appointed by the Governor, who will often receive recommendations from the Council Chairperson, the Executive Coordinator of the Council, and the Legislative Director of the Department of Agriculture.
• Michigan agricultural organizations
• Sustainable agricultural organizations
• Institutions of higher education
• K-12 schools
• Community-based urban development activities
• Rural development activities
• Anti-hunger organizations
• Public health or healthcare organizations
• Food processors
• Food system organizations*
• Non-food manufacturers
• Food retailers
• Restaurants
• Organized labor
*indicates new position as of EO 2007 – 44

Council members are appointed for varying term lengths and are eligible for reappointment, at which time they will serve four-year terms. Members may or may not be reappointed depending on whether or not they have the time to commit to the Council (K. Simmons, personal communication, March 6, 2009).

Council members chair the four Task Forces and serve as members; members select the Task Force that best suits their area of interest or expertise. Task Force membership is open to the public. Council members or the Executive Coordinator will sometimes solicit membership from individuals who have experience that could lend itself to the Task Force. Occasionally, people will contact the Council to ask if they can serve on a Task Force. Task Forces have separate meetings from the Council, which affords them the opportunities to explore particular issue areas in more depth.

Council Activities
The diversity of perspectives and interests reflected in the Council’s composition affects both the operations and outcomes of the Council. Since all of the council members have expertise in their own field and will naturally advocate in their own interest, there can be a significant amount of conflict and debate in the Council’s proceedings. However, this is, in part, the purpose of the Council; it acts as a forum for discussion that includes many perspectives. By bringing so many perspectives to the table, the Council can create stronger policy in a deliberative and democratic process. Despite the possibility that conflict may slow down the Council’s progress, the MFPC has had significant success finding areas for collaboration. In order to create fundamentally strong and tested policy or recommendations, all ideas are
subject to the careful and comprehensive deliberation of the Council. There is some assurance that once it survives the battery of debate and discussion that occurs within the council, the resulting policy or product will be something that can gain broad support, the so-called win-win scenario.

The creation and ongoing operations of the Council are funded in part by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The first round of funding was secured in 2005 and the second round in 2007. The conditions of the second round of funding dictated that Governor’s office needed to secure matching funds. The Council has requested that each state department represented on the Council contribute $7,000 a year to match the annual $50,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (K. Simmons, personal communication, March 6, 2009). This round of funding will run until 2010. While representatives from the state departments would like to contribute to the Council, the process of securing these matching funds has been more difficult than anticipated mostly due to the current economic crisis. On the whole, representatives support the Council and acknowledge that its work will ultimately benefit their agencies and the people they serve. Therefore, it is not for lack of will that the matching grants have been slow coming (K. Simmons, personal communication, March 6, 2009). Moreover, council members all donate a significant amount of time and effort to making sure that the Council is moving forward with its mission.

In addition to written reports, the Council communicates regularly with the Governor’s office. Last August, the Executive Coordinator of the Council gave a presentation to the Governor and her staff. The presentation described what the council had accomplished and how the council’s activities were helping to realize many of the Governor’s own goals for the State. Both the Executive Coordinator and council members meet regularly with staff from the Governor’s office to offer updates on recent activities and discuss ways that the office and Council can work together. The strong relationship with and support of the Governor’s office has been one of the greatest strengths of the Michigan FPC (K. Simmons, personal communication, March 6, 2009).

The Council also communicates with legislators. Sometimes legislators will request that Council members provide testimony at subcommittee hearings. Other times, council members will contact legislators about a particular issue being discussed in the Legislature. Particular legislative issues that have garnered the Council’s attention include farm-to-school legislation and a recent bill proposing a tax abatement for property owners who develop or maintain grocery stores in underserved areas.

**Accomplishments and Challenges**

In 2006, the Council created a report of recommendations to the Governor. The report included both short- and long-term recommendations. Since creating this report, the Council has made significant progress on a couple of the topics addressed therein. The MFPC has progressed with efforts to increase the number of
farmer’s markets that accept food stamps. Michigan went from having only a handful of markets that accepted food stamps to about 18-20 markets. The Council has also had success in changing institutional procurement practices. For instance, the Department of Corrections now makes bulk purchases from a local potato producer, processes the potatoes at a centralized facility, and sends the processed product along to other facilities within the system.

The Council will likely be focused on a couple of issues in the near future. Significant efforts have recently been focused on promoting agritourism in the State. There is a lot of support for encouraging opportunities like on-the-farm markets. Michigan has requests coming in from people who would like to experience the agricultural landscape the state has to offer by visiting farms and vineyards. They are starting to work together with the Michigan Farm Marketing and Agri-Tourism Association. Together, these groups aim to create legislation that will define agritourism and clarify what it entails in order develop some consistency at the state level. Additionally, the FPC is talking to counties that have adopted a model ordinance on agritourism to see how well it is working and it may pursue and expanding the number of counties using this ordinance. This project typifies the cross-sector work that the Council does; it supports economic development, farmland and open space preservation, and the local economy simultaneously.

For each Task Force, some of the recommendations it makes will be easier to get implemented than others. There will also be some recommendations that are particularly challenging and will take more time and effort. For example, creating distribution models for Farm-to-School programs has proven quite difficult. There are some people have started more local distribution businesses, but this is a constant struggle for many of the Council’s Task Forces. They are frequently examining how to retrofit food production and distribution to a smaller, more regional scale – a significant challenge since trends in agriculture and food industry have made local and regional food infrastructure almost obsolete. New demand for regional food creates new (though not unwelcome) challenges in restructuring the food system.

New Mexico

*History and Structure*

The New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council (NMFAPC) arose from grassroots efforts in 2003. That same year, Governor Bill Richardson approved the House Joint Memorial 45, legislation that formally recognized the Council and the government’s commitment to working with the Council (New Mexico Food and Agricultural Policy Council, 2003). Since then, the Council has been actively pursuing its goals, which are numerous and varied, but have a particular focus on creating food system policy that provides economic, social, and environmental benefits for New Mexico. The Council acknowledges three primary roles for itself: to identify significant food and farm issues for which the Council will advocate using a
comprehensive, engaged, and open review process; to advocate for the selected issues in appropriate venues; to educate Council members and the public about the food system and relevant policy issues.

Perhaps an indication of its grassroots origins, the New Mexico Farm and Agriculture Policy Council emphasizes democracy, diversity, collaboration, transparency, and consensus in its activities and decision-making processes (NMFAPC, n.d.). The Council aims to “bring forward to the public eye a discussion of [food policy] issues for more comprehensive examination” (NMFAPC, n.d.). The Council’s purpose, vision, and goals reflect these values.

In its vision statement, the Council asserts that it will aim to “build the capacity of agencies, organizations, individuals and communities to advocate for local, state and national food and agriculture policies that most benefit all New Mexicans” (NMFAPC website, 2009). Additionally, the Council’s listed purposes indicate its approach to capacity building. Broadly summarized, the goals of the Council are to broaden the discussion of food and farm issues and to approach these issues systematically and comprehensively; to create an open discussion and facilitate connection between those who can affect food policy and those effected by it; to advocate for food policy reform; to support and create a food system that provides healthy, safe, culturally appropriate and affordable food while supporting just and sustainable farming practices.

The structure of the NMFAPC is unique, as membership is open and somewhat informal. Like other councils, the NMFAPC includes representatives from a broad range of sectors within the food system. In general, the Council welcomes diversity and encourages participation from many different groups and individuals. The Council does not explicitly specify representatives in its governing document, nor does it specify an appointment process for members. Rather, members who wish to serve on the Council sign an authorization form agreeing to participate actively with the Council and work towards achieving its goals while respecting its vision and principles.

Individuals, government officials, and representatives of private and nonprofit organizations participate as members on the Council. Unlike the Council itself, the Governing Board’s membership is explicitly described in the NMFAPC bylaws. The Council elects members to the Governing Board during its annual meeting each spring. Elected members serve one-year terms, but can be re-elected indefinitely. Members will include nine elected voting members, and up to seven nonvoting ex officio representatives from government agencies who are asked to serve on the Board by the elected members. At present, the government officials on the Governing Board include representatives from:

- New Mexico State University
- City of Albuquerque
- Cooperative Extension
- New Mexico Department of Agriculture

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• New Mexico Food and Nutrition Bureau
• New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department

In addition to the Governing Board, the Council also has several standing committees, including the policy and legislative teams. These teams include members who have expertise in policy creation and the legislative process. They will craft the Council’s legislative priorities and eventually advocate for them during the legislative session. The Council also forms issue committees to look at identified legislative priority areas in more depth.

**Council Activities**
The Council operates as one of three main programs of Farm to Table, a nonprofit that supports and promotes local agriculture. The Council and Farm to Table’s work is quite integrated and the Council receives staff and financial support from Farm to Table. As such, the Council’s work and Farm to Table’s work can sometimes be hard to distinguish. In fact, much of each organization’s work overlaps, as do some of their members and food-systems champions, like Pamela Roy, Director of Farm to Table, and Mark Winne, a longtime advocate of better food policy. Many publications and presentations are authored conjointly by the two organizations. For instance, Farm to Table created a New Mexico Food and Fitness Policy Scan, which documents the existing policy work being done by organizations across the state. While this project was completed by Farm to Table, the ultimate goal of the project is very much in line with the NMFAPC’s mission to foster engagement in policy making that affects the food system.

Each year, the Council gathers in the spring to elect the governing board and begin discussion about potential legislative priorities. This initial discussion is purposefully open and deliberative, and it offers opportunities for debate. The ultimate goal of this meeting is to hone in on specific, significant issues on which the Council will focus its energy. Throughout the year, issue committees will conduct research and continue discussion in order to formulate specific policy agendas for the legislative session. Once policies have been more fully crafted, the Governing Board and then the policy committee will consider the policy issue and determine whether or not the Council will advocate for it.

Including this larger, annual meeting, the Council typically gathers four times a year. These meetings are open to the public. Subcommittees may meet on a different schedule, as needed. The full council meetings are scheduled to align with the New Mexico Legislature’s session, which begins in January each year. The Legislative Session Team actively advocates for the Council’s policy issues while the General Assembly is meeting, and the Council encourages citizens to advocate for those issues as well by creating fact sheets about the issues.

Council activities, legislative priorities and action, and new publications are all posted in frequent updates on the NMFAPC’s website. The resources on the website include a calendar of relevant upcoming events, links to articles on food policy or on
the NMFAPC, briefing sheets for legislative issues, and downloadable presentations about food systems issues within New Mexico. In addition, there are publications describing federal funding opportunities for food and agriculture projects and other opportunities included in the 2008 Farm Bill.

**Accomplishments and Challenges**

The NMFAPC has identified many ways in which the food system is not working effectively. The Council has noted, among others, the following failures of the current food system in New Mexico (NMFAPC, 2008):

- New Mexico has the second highest rate of food insecurity in the country
- Rural New Mexicans typically pay more for their food and frequently have fewer convenient food retail options than those living in urban settings
- New Mexico exports 97% of its agricultural products and imports $4 billion in food products, meaning that State could see significant economic benefits with an increase in spending on locally grown products

These and other challenges and opportunities drive the NMFPC, which takes a food systems approach to improving the health, wealth, and well-being of New Mexicans and the land.

The Council has had many successes in advocating for policy change at the legislative level. In the past, the Council has helped advocate for the following adopted policies:

- Expansion of the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Enhancement Program, which helps provide low-income and elderly populations with coupons to buy fresh produce
- Expansion of a Cooperative Extension Service that provides technical assistance and extension agents for five Tribal Centers
- Continued funding for the Land, Wildlife, and Clean Energy Act
- Creation of a Food Gap Task Force

The NMFAPC played a large role in providing the evidence indicating the need for the Food Gap Task Force. Once it was created, council members also served as representatives on the Task Force, which was charged with determining ways to improve access to healthy and affordable foods for rural and underserved New Mexicans. In December 2008, the Task Force produced a report describing the extent, impacts, and causes of the food gap, as well as examples of successful initiatives closing the gap and recommendations about further addressing this issue.

The Council writes that one of the benefits of membership is that “by working together there is a greater likelihood that food and agriculture issues that are important to Policy Council members will get the needed recognition, support and reform from relevant decision makers and institutions” (NMFAPC, n.d.). Indeed, this also appears to be one of the benefits of the Council’s existence. The Council’s focus on education, awareness, and engagement is serving to re-democratize policy in a realm that affects us all: food. The Council’s process and focus appears to be connecting organizations and agencies in new ways, while raising awareness.
amongst citizens and lawmakers that food systems policy should be a significant item on the legislative agenda.

**New York**

**History and Structure**

A relatively new council, the New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP), was created in 2007 by Governor Eliot Spitzer’s issuance of Executive Order 13. After Spitzer’s resignation, Governor Paterson formalized the continuation of the Council through Executive Order 9. In 2006, prior to the Council’s creation by Executive Order, Assemblyman Felix Ortiz and Senator Cathy Young sponsored a bill in the New York State Assembly to create a food policy council. The New York State Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy also supported the bill and had previously solicited testimony regarding the need for a Food Policy Council (Rivera, 2008). Though these efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, they paved the way for the creation of the Council in 2007.

The Council was created to comprehensively address the myriad food issues facing the State – food insecurity, food related health problems, concerns about agricultural viability, and a growing desire to realize the environmental and economic benefits of promoting local and organic foods. Notably, this was not New York State’s first attempt to address food issues using an advisory council. In 1984, Governor Mario Cuomo created the New York State Council on Food and Nutrition Policy. Both the Assembly Task Force and the existing Council used the five-year Strategic Plan that this early Council produced as a starting point for their exploration of the need for a food policy council and the existing landscape of food policy in New York. Though there is some precedent for an advisory council on food issues in the state, the current iteration takes a more comprehensive approach, focusing on the food system, which includes improved nutrition as one of many goals that the Council will seek to address.

In the Executive Order, the Governor tasks the Council with developing and recommending a food policy that increases food security and access to affordable healthy food while also increasing the agricultural production capacity within the state, with a particular focus on local and organic food. In addition, the Executive Order requests of the Council a strategic food policy plan that describes how the food policy will be implemented and evaluated for success. The Council is also charged with reviewing and commenting on other state-level food related legislation, regulations, and budget allocations. One of the main goals of convening a diversity of members on the Council is “to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive inter-agency approach to state food policy issues.”

The Council includes 21 members in total, including the Dean of New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; a nutritionist; 2 representatives from groups providing food assistance; three representatives from the food industry
(producers, distributors, processors, or retailers) – one of which must be focused on organic food; four representatives with expertise in agriculture, nutrition, or food policy to be appointed by high-ranking members in the New York State Senate and Assembly; one representative from each of the following groups or organizations:

- a farm organization
- school food administrators
- consumers
- anti-hunger advocacy groups

Except where otherwise noted, the Council members will be appointed by the Governor. In addition, the Commissioner or his/her designee from the following state agencies, who will serve on the Council as ex officio members:

- Department of Agriculture and Markets
- Department of Health
- Office of Temporary and Disabled Assistance
- Department of Economic Development
- Office for the Aging
- State Education Department
- Consumer Protection Board

**Council Activities**

The full Council meets at least twice a year (as specified in the Executive Order) – once in the summer and once in the fall. The Council's first meeting was in October 2007. In addition to Council members, the meeting was well attended by the public (NYS CFP, 2007). At this meeting, council members presented a snapshot of the state’s food system, including baseline figures on demographics, the use of food assistance programs, and existing food policies and programs. Based on the discussion at this meeting, the Council outlined four key issue areas for focus, prioritizing issues based on a concern for food-related health issues an emphasis on maximizing collaboration between state agencies and between public and private sectors:

- Maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs;
- Strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers;
- Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure and;
- Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating, and improving access to safe and nutritious food

In the summer of 2008, the Council assembled into workgroups based on these focus areas upon the suggestion of Commissioner Hooker. Council members participate with the workgroup that best fits their area of interest and expertise. In addition, each workgroup has designated a state agency that will provide leadership and guidance for implementing the group’s recommendations.

When the Council meets as a group, it makes decision by consensus. This is how the Council determines its focus areas and recommendations. At meetings, council members have an opportunity to present important food system-related issues that
have arisen within the agencies and organizations that members represent. For instance, at the summer 2008 meeting, many members presented ways in which the 2008 Farm Bill would affect program delivery or offer new opportunities. These “hot topic” presentations are vital in ensuring that council members are aware of each other’s work. Also, these presentations and updates may provide a catalyst for a broader discussion and for forming partnerships.

In order to solicit input from citizens around the state, the Council conducted a seven-city listening tour. During the tour, the Council received public comments in Albany, Binghamton, Harlem, New York City, Riverhead, Rochester, and Syracuse. Several issues were frequently brought up across the state. First, the production and distribution of New York-grown products is limited by the existing infrastructure and a growing farmer and farm labor shortage. Second, existing policies and bureaucratic procedures do at times present challenges to fully realizing goals of hunger relief and increasing agricultural opportunities within the state. Last, there is much to be gained from education and collaboration: inter-organizational partnerships can promote local and regional food systems while also achieving goals like nutrition education, economic development, and land stewardship.

The Council draws from public input as well as the experience and knowledge of its members to identify focus areas and inform its recommendations. In addition, the Council communicates regularly with the Governor’s office, usually through Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Judith Enck and creates annual reports to relay advice to the Governor and his staff.

**Accomplishments and Challenges**

In December 2008, the Council made 17 recommendations, organized by the four Key Issue Areas that help progress the development of a state food policy for New York. Each recommendation lists action items and lead agencies. By designating these lead agencies, the Council has formally distributed its work and responsibilities across many departments. The Council is currently in the processing of prioritizing its recommendations. In addition to identifying priorities, the Council also recognizes the need to collect and aggregate baseline data regarding food security, agricultural production, and existing food related policies so that it may have a snapshot of the current food landscape in the state. The collection of this information will serve several purposes: it will help the Council set benchmarks and measurable goals; it can help highlight priority areas and opportunities; and it can help the Council open channels of communication between agencies and organizations. The Council plans to use contact information collected at the listening sessions to begin compiling a clearinghouse of information and resources on food issues and food policy (A. McMahon, personal communication, March 24, 2009).

Much of the Council’s work includes outreach and education. Council members frequently present at conferences and meetings, to help spread the word about the
Council’s work and engage other organizations. The Council also maintains a website, which is updated regularly with news and updates. The website also serves as an important portal by soliciting input and inquiries from interested citizens.

Increasing communication between agencies and organizations is both a goal and a challenge for the Council. Of course, this dilemma is not unique to New York. The inefficiency inherent in having food policy administered by so many organizations and state agencies is precisely what makes collecting information about existing conditions such an onerous task; it is also what makes it a necessary one.

As stated in one of its annual reports, the Council successfully fills its role as a forum for discussion and the convening of diverse but related groups: “the council has been designed so that advocates and representatives from all areas of food system are embedded in the structure of the Council proper. This structure is significant in that it affords uninterrupted opportunities for not just comprehensive inter-agency collaborative efforts but for system wide collaboration efforts” (NYS CFP, 2007). Though the Council is still young, it has made significant headway beginning to connect these dots to create a new food policy for New York State.

Ohio

History and Structure

Though the Ohio Food Policy Council (OFPC) was created by Executive Order, much of the legwork and preparation for the Council was completed by a statewide environmental coalition. In 2006, this coalition developed a series of policy briefs for gubernatorial candidates. One of these issue briefs presented research on state level food policy councils and described what benefits Ohio may expect from creating a FPC. During his campaign, gubernatorial candidate Ted Strickland was supportive of the issues presented in this brief. When he was elected, Governor Strickland worked with staff at the Ohio Department of Agriculture to conduct research and develop a strategy for a FPC in Ohio (A. Lipstreu, personal communication, February 26, 2009).

In 2007, Governor Ted Strickland signed Executive Order 27S, a measure meant to “ensure that Ohio is taking full advantage of its agricultural industry” through the creation of the Ohio Food Policy Council. As defined in this Executive Order, the Council’s role is to collect and analyze information related to Ohio’s food system; increase the amount of food produced in Ohio; improve access to food for those in need; provide marketing support to farmers and food-related businesses in the State; and develop strategies to support and build the local food system. In his executive order, Governor Strickland recognized the importance of the food and agricultural sector as an economic development opportunity for the state.

Membership is not strictly dictated in the Executive Order, which only specifies that members should represent geographic and industry or sector diversity, that leaders
in the House and Senate will appoint some members, and that state cabinet officials will serve on the Council. The process of determining the composition of the Council required a great deal of discussion and deliberation. These serious considerations are necessary, as it is important to ensure that a Council has representation from critical stakeholders while also including members who have the power and knowledge to advance the issues and lend the Council some validity. This is a balancing act that will significantly impact the work and outcomes of any Council. Diversity in the Council will bring different perspectives to the table, ensuring that most groups have a voice in the discussion. The inclusion of ex officio members, however, offer invaluable insight and assistance that will help ensure the implementation of the Council’s directives (A. Lipstreu, personal communication, February 26, 2009).

The Council’s membership reflects these considerations. Stakeholders represented include, among others:

- Trade organizations
- The Farm Bureau
- The Farmland Trust
- Food retailers, processors, and distributors
- Faith-based organizations
- Healthcare organizations
- Environmental organizations

State agencies represented by ex officio members include:

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Education
- Department on Aging
- Department of Development
- Department of Administrative Services
- Department of Health
- Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation

Members do not have specific term limits. The Council does not operate as a time-limited effort. It will continue to meet as long as there is willingness at the state level and among members to continue.

The Council is considered a promotional program in the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). The ODA provides support staff and is committed to the Council and its efforts. In particular, the Council shares many goals with the recently established Office of Sustainable Agriculture within the ODA. The Council’s close connection with ODA enables communication with division chiefs that benefits the Council.

**Council Activities**

Soon after the Council was created, the members met to brainstorm about the needs and issues the Executive Order addressed in its mandates. Based on this discussion, the Council created four Task Forces: Food Systems Assessment, Agricultural Viability, Healthy Food Access, and Market Connections. The Task Forces meet once
a month separately from the Council. Much of the Council’s work is completed in these smaller groups, where members are allowed the opportunity to further examine particular issues. One Task Force, the Food Systems Assessment, has scaled back its meetings as it convenes a research committee that will be gathering relevant research, identifying gaps, and proceeding accordingly.

One challenge the Council faced was determining whether it should concentrate on collecting information and conduct an in-depth food assessment first, or if it should focus on developing recommendations. As Amalie Lipstreu, a council member and Senior Program Manager for Office of Sustainable Agriculture, notes, this is something of a chicken and egg scenario. It is important to know the existing conditions before making recommendations and it helps to have this baseline information in order to set benchmarks. However, comprehensive food assessments require substantial time and resources. Though the Council did not conduct a formal, stand-alone community food assessment, it has been dedicated to collecting information from various state agencies. The Council is also working with Ohio State University and Franklin University to conduct some of this resource.

The Council originally met on a monthly basis, but has recently moved to a quarterly meeting schedule. The Council decided to amend its meeting schedule in an effort to make meetings as convenient as possible for members. Meetings occur during the workday. For most council members, their participation on the council is an integral part of their work. As such, employers are supportive of the time and energy Council participation might require.

In August of 2008, after a year of meeting and gathering information, the Council issued a short set of recommendations. These recommendations focused on creating a database of food production, processing, and consumption information; coordinating and improving the delivery of food assistance and nutrition education programs; increasing agriculture-based economic development efforts; and increasing the amount of Ohio-grown produced and consumed in the state through programs like the Federal Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and the Ohio Food and Agricultural Clearance Program.

In addition to a written set of recommendations, the Council has been communicating its findings with the public as it conducts listening sessions around the state. These listening sessions have also afforded the Council an opportunity to hear about barriers and opportunities facing food-related professionals and consumers across Ohio. Council members also represent the group at various conferences and workshops. In addition, the state-level council coordinates with local food policy councils. The Council recognizes that the potential effects each type of council may have is different, that different types of policy changes can and should happen at different levels of government (A. Lipstreu, personal communication, February 26, 2009).
In an effort to share and collect information, the Council uses the Local Food Systems Collaborative website, a wiki set up as a collection of food-related activities, programs, organizations, and resources. Each Task Force has its own group on the wiki. The website, which was initially Ohio-based, has expanded to include other states as well. The wiki approach provides an innovative way to communicate and store information.

**Accomplishments and Challenges**

Thus far, council members have brought support and enthusiasm to the Council. Despite limited economic resources, people have still been committed to offering what they can. While an obvious benefit of FPCs is their ability to affect policy, the intangible effects and benefits may be just as important.

Though the current economic crisis will certainly affect the Council and its recommendations, it may also present an opportunity for truly innovative approaches to food-related issues in the State. The Council has already started reacting to fiscal constraints. As one of its recommendations, the Council advised the State to allocate $2 million to develop a public education and marketing campaign. Since then, the Market Connections Task Force has revised this recommendation to include short- and long-term actions that can be implemented with various amounts of funding. The Task Force has also been identifying compelling local food systems stories that may be disseminated with lower cost, new media like podcasts and viral marketing (A. Lipstreu, personal communication, February 26, 2009).

As the Council pursues economic development, institutional purchasing, farmland protection, and producer-consumer connections, it seeks to identify specific, measurable, and obtainable goals. This adds a level of accountability to its work and provides benchmarks against which the Council can measure its effects on the food economy within the State.

**Oklahoma**

**History and Structure**

Created in 2001, the Oklahoma Food Policy Council was initiated by just a few individuals. In July, while at a conference hosted by the Organization for Competitive Markets, Jim Horne and Anita Poole, both of the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and Denis Howard, the Oklahoma Commissioner of Agriculture at the time, attended a presentation about the Iowa Food Policy Council given by Neil Hamilton. Inspired by the presentation, Howard suggested that Oklahoma should consider creating a food policy council. Horne, the Director of the Kerr Center, welcomed the suggestion and offered $25,000 in seed funding if Howard created a council. Upon their return from conference, individuals at the Kerr Center and the Department of Agriculture began the early stages of planning by identifying Council’s goals, listing all stakeholder groups and discussing which
individuals might represent those groups. By October 2001, the Oklahoma Food Policy Council began meeting formally.

More recently, Poole, who is now the Chairperson of the Council, and Jim Horne, appointed a new Council. This iteration of the Council includes newly identified stakeholders, who Poole contacted to explain the Council’s activities and gage interest. Everyone Poole contacted expressed enthusiasm about being involved, and the current Commissioner of Agriculture, Terry Peach, sent out official letters of appointment to the new members. The new Council now includes 25 members (up from 15 members) and met for the first time in February of 2009.

Like other FPCs, the Oklahoma Food Policy Council includes representatives from a variety of sectors and interests in the food system. Organizations and groups represented include:

- Department of Education
- Higher Education Institutions
- Cherokee Nation
- Department of Human Services
- Faith based organizations
- Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry
- Department of Health
- Farmers’ Market Alliance
- Farmers and ranchers

In addition to the 25 appointed members, the Council includes 24 ad hoc members, also representing a variety of food-related or otherwise relevant organizations. Ad hoc members are non-voting and many do not attend Council meetings. Rather, these members serve as a resource for the Council. Ad hoc members include a state senator, a public policy attorney, and a columnist from the Daily Oklahoman, as well as representatives from the USDA, area food banks, and the Kerr Center, among others. In addition, former council members essentially become ad hoc members as they have valuable experience to bring to the Council, despite the fact that they are no longer serving as official members (A. Poole, personal communication, February 27, 2009).

**Council Activities**

In the past, the Council met as needed, usually every couple of months. Meetings are open, but generally not very well attended by the public. The Council also used listening sessions to solicit public comment. Subcommittees formed organically to address particular priority areas as they arose. When this would happen, the subcommittees would meet more frequently than the full Council and Anita would send out monthly (or more frequent) reports describing what the committees were doing. The Council’s actions tend to be guided by previous work it has done. As one of its earlier projects, the Council conducted a benchmark study on institutional purchasing in the State entitled *The Oklahoma Food Connection: A Directory of Agricultural Producers, Crops, and Institutional Buyers*. The findings from that study led to a pilot Farm-to-School program, which, in turn, led to advocating for a
statewide Farm-to-School program. As this program has expanded, the State has begun to realize that it needs to increase food production capacity to supply these new institutional purchasers. Rather than approaching food policy with a grand plan, the OFPC is constantly evaluating what it has learned and using it to inform its next steps.

As it is currently structured, council members do not have set term limits. Council members serve as long as they maintain a commitment to the Council. In general, the Council has opted to keep most of its processes informal. The membership terms reflect this as the Council has more flexibility to remove members who are not actively involved without the need for a formal dismissal process. Similarly, the Council has discussed the possibility of pushing for legislation that would officially recognize it as a state sponsored organization, but is uncertain whether it will pursue this option. There are tradeoffs involved with becoming a formally sanctioned organization. Thus far, the Council has valued its ability to fly under the radar and make progress on its goals to support local and sustainable agriculture without the pushback of commodity groups. If the Council pushed for more state recognition, it would likely take on a process that is much more politically charged and decidedly more bureaucratic. While official state recognition may provide the Council with more resources, it would require the Kerr Center to give up some of its discretion, particularly with regard to member appointments (A. Poole, personal communication, February 27, 2009).

As it stands, the Council functions as a partnership between the Kerr Center and the Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry. The two organizations maintain a symbiotic relationship, and the Council allows them opportunities for collaboration and mutual gain. While the Council’s work aligns very well with the Kerr Center’s mission, the support and recognition from the Department of Agriculture lends the Council’s activities more validity.

The Council makes recommendations directly to the Commissioner of Agriculture. The Commissioner also attends Council meetings on occasion. Though the Commissioner supports the Council’s work, he has thus far not had a very strong presence in the Council. This may change as the Commissioner has recently identified several priorities he would like to pursue. For instance, his agenda includes increasing the number of small produce farmers in the state to meet the rising demand for locally grown food. Additionally, the commissioner would like to see Oklahoma products in every school in the state. At this point there are 538 schools, about half of which currently participate in the statewide Farm-to-School initiative (A. Poole, personal communication, February 27, 2009).

**Accomplishments and Challenges**

Since the Council’s activities and goals do overlap with those of the Kerr Center, the distinction between the two organizations can sometimes be unclear. A lot of the Kerr Center’s work is done in partnership with the Council, but is not done exclusively by the Council. Frequently, the Kerr Center will work on a particular
project while relying heavily on council members as resources. For instance, the Kerr Center recently obtained a grant to conduct a statewide community food assessment. In addition to describing the existing conditions of food and farming in the state, the final document, *Closer to Home*, includes public policy priorities on issues ranging from food labeling to children’s nutrition education to farmland preservation. Though the work was done at the Center, it drew upon the Council members for advice and input.

The Council also partners with other organizations to advocate for particular issues that arise in the Legislature. The Council communicates with legislators using fact sheets and letters as well as visits to the Capital to answer any questions regarding particular issues. In one successful example, the Council made recommendations to legislators regarding Farm-to-School legislation, which ultimately passed and created a statewide program. Other legislative issues for which the Council has advocated include support of a resolution for country of origin labeling and a proposal to eliminate the grocery and farmers’ market tax.

As the new Council gets going, there will be plenty of opportunities and challenges awaiting it. The Council will be working on developing food safety guidelines for producers who would like to sell to schools. It will also be researching produce distribution patterns throughout the state in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry. Very strong immigration policy in Oklahoma has presented a pressing challenge for agriculture in the state. A requirement that employers verify the validity of all their employees work papers has strained the labor pool in general and for farmers in particular.
CHAPTER 4: Discussion and Analysis

Cross-Council Summary

Due to the difficulty of deeming a council “successful” or not, this analysis aims to describe the similarities and differences between the councils while highlighting common experiences, challenges, and benefits.

Genesis
Of the eight councils studied, five were created by executive order or executive action; two were created through legislative action; and one was created by an administrative act in the Department of Agriculture.

Membership
Of the councils whose membership size is static (n=6), the average size is 22 members. All councils value diversity and are designed to bring a variety of stakeholders to the table. Council members are typically appointed by the Governor, leaders in the House and Senate, or by the Commissioner of Agriculture. However, existing council members or Department of Agriculture staff frequently comment on and suggest appropriate appointments. One council had term limits for members and one had term limits for its governing board; in both cases members can be reappointed at the end of their term. At least two interviewees mentioned increasing membership to include newly identified stakeholder groups. One council has an open membership and allows members to self-select on the condition that they make a commitment to the council.

All councils form task forces or subcommittees to focus on particular issue areas. In some councils, these subgroups are created and dissolved informally to address specific, current issues. In four of the councils, these subcommittees are standing bodies meant to address ongoing issues. One council has subcommittees organized by theme (i.e., Health and Food Security) and responsibility (i.e., Legislative Issues Team).

Ownership
Five of the Councils are housed in or partnerships of a state’s Department of Agriculture. Three councils are housed in or partnerships of a nonprofit organization, all of which were focused on food and farming. One council was housed in an agriculturally oriented academic institution.

Two councils maintain a dedicated full-time staff person who acts as a coordinator of the council’s activities (both employees of the Department of Agriculture). One council is supported by Department of Agriculture staff, but did not have a position dedicated to the Council. For most other councils these duties fall to the
Chairperson of the Council or the Director of the organization in which the Council is housed.

Most interviewees mentioned that members are very generous in dedicating their time, and that member willingness amounted to in-kind support that is essential in keeping council activities sustained. One council, which has no dedicated funding, spreads these in-kind donations across state agencies by identifying a lead agency responsible for organizing each work group.

In addition to staffing support, many councils also receive some funding to cover operations and overhead. Two councils were funded in part by grant support that they had individually obtained, both of which required a matching contribution from the state. At least three councils received technical and financial assistance from the USDA RMA and Drake University partnership. One council receives allocations from the state budget, though not on a consistent basis. For three of the councils, some, if not all, of the overhead and operating costs are absorbed by the nonprofit or academic institution in which the council is housed.

**Mission and Focus**

Most, if not all, food policy councils examine food- and agriculture-related issues comprehensively. That is, they aim to depart from the traditional, disjointed manner of food policy creation and administration. Instead, by using a food systems approach, FPCs acknowledge the interconnectivity of issues such as economic development, food security, public health, and agricultural viability. FPCs aim to get at the root of various concerns, rather than continue the convention of addressing problems more superficially as they arise. Though FPCs typically share this desire to recombine and coordinate food policy, each council will focus more on issues and concerns specific to its geographic area. For instance, some councils may focus more on addressing hunger alleviation in urban areas, and others may concentrate more on increasing agriculturally-based rural economic development opportunities.

**Operations**

*Meetings*

Of the seven councils still actively meeting, one council maintains a standing monthly meeting; four meet four times a year – three on a quarterly schedule and one dictated by legislative sessions; one meets twice annually; and one meets on an as needed basis.

For the most part, interviewees asserted that councils made decisions by consensus. For many councils it is essential to create products that represent win-win scenarios or decisions that all members of the council can support. Sometimes this process can be contentious and it may mean that the council avoids certain topics, this decision making process is integral to the mission and outcome of the council.
*Activities*

Though councils are involved in many different types of activities, there are several that command a significant amount of a council’s time and energy. Most councils issue sets of recommendations. For councils created by executive action, these are usually communicated in the form of an annual report for the Governor. For all councils, the issuance of these recommendations requires conducting or collecting baseline research, discussing and prioritizing issues, and packaging the information, usually in the form of a written report.

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All councils mentioned conducting some research on the existing conditions of the food system. This might entail gathering information about food production, farmland loss, participation in food assistance programs, or the location of food retailers in the community. One council partnered with its parent organization to complete a comprehensive community food assessment and another council conducted an in-depth food assessment in conjunction with an academic institution and nonprofit association. Several councils had discussed the possibility of conducting a food assessment in conjunction with the researchers and academic institutions. At least two councils report on key food and farm indicators as part of their annual report.

Half of the councils reported communicating with legislators through letter writing, testimony at subcommittee hearings, or informal question and answer sessions. One council expects to begin pursuing a more active relationship with lawmakers in the near future. One council indicated that the political climate deterred the council from communicating with lawmakers.
In an effort to gauge the extent and nature of food policy and programming in their states, at least three councils have made efforts to create a central database, clearinghouse, or report that documents existing food policies, organizations, and resources.

Other activities that interviewees mentioned include attending workshops and conferences as a representative of the council and coordinating with local food policy councils.

Communication
Interviewees stressed the importance of communication between members outside of meetings. Typically, communication efforts between members are coordinated by the council Chairperson or Executive Coordinator. At least three councils post meeting minutes or summaries online.

Four interviewees mentioned the importance of the council’s communication with and support from the Governor’s office.

Most councils conducted a series of listening sessions, usually early in their existence, to solicit input from citizens. Additionally, most councils hold meetings that are open to the public, though public attendance at these meetings varied considerably.

Involvement of Planners
No council had planners serving as official members, though some interviewees mentioned that planners serve on task forces and attend meetings. Though planners might not be readily identified as a stakeholder for councils, interviewees described many roles that planners could (and should) take if they worked with FPCs. Most of these suggestions were focused on land use planning. Members asserted that planners could help plan and zone for community gardens; ensure that public transit routes consider food access; implement smart growth and farmland preservation plans; and facilitate food retail opportunities by planning for farmers’ markets and incentivizing grocery stores to locate in underserved areas. Interviewees also suggested a role for planners in creating viable food infrastructure, such as processing and distribution facilities. One interviewee also mentioned the importance of planners in facilitating local food systems. Urban areas located close to farmland are both a boon and a threat to food production – this proximity presents a large market for farmers, but development pressure often subsumes valuable farmland. What all of these suggestions have in common is the underlying recognition that planning for food systems is very similar to planning for other necessities.

Council Status
Of the eight councils, seven are still active. In one case, the council has narrowed its scope and effectively downsized to include one of its three original subcommittees. Two councils underwent a brief restructuring hiatus. The council that dissolved lost
momentum after a gubernatorial transition and eventually stopped meeting as
council.

Analysis

This multiple case study revealed several challenges, benefits, and experienced
shared by food policy councils. Some of the challenges are organizational and
administrative in nature, some are political, and some derive from the complexity of
so many food system issues – that is, they are inherent in the nature of the council’s
work. The benefits and successes of a council are frequently entwined in these
challenges. For instance, the upfront effort required in determining the composition
of the council will ultimately bring together a group of individuals with the expertise
and discretion to reform food policy. A description of lessons learned from this
research is included below.

Sustainability: Councils are vulnerable to their own genesis. Even with officially
sanctioned councils, there is always the possibility that support for the council will
disappear. Councils that are not officially sanctioned may face more resource
constraints. Given the vulnerability of each type of council and the pressing issues
that the councils address, many councils find their time is better used improving the
local food system while the support is there, rather than planning for their own
continued existence. That said, careful consideration of the purpose of the council
should precede and guide the council’s creation and the composition of its
membership.

Politics: Though all of the councils in this study are technically nonpartisan, they are
not immune to politics. Implementation of a council’s recommendations is at least
somewhat dependent on receptivity to the proposals. Though councils can affect
the food system through other means, there are some issues that require support
from the legislative or executive branches of government. The political climate may
affect both a council’s approach to policy reform and the content of that policy.
Learning to navigate the existing political landscape will likely affect a council’s
ability to affect policy decisions.

Ownership: On a related note, most councils tailor their work to fit expectations of
their role. As Matthew Russell of the Drake University Agricultural Law Center
asserts, “form follows function” (personal communication, February 20, 2009).
Advocacy and advise are two different products, and councils need to know which
they are producing and for whom. Councils need to realize what they can affect so
that they will know what might be feasibly implemented.

Information management: As many have noted, we do not have a “Department of
Food” – neither at the national nor the state level (Dahlberg, 1994; Kristof; 2008). In
the absence of such a department, policy affecting the food system has been divided
among numerous state agencies. This dispersal of food policy creates inefficiency and complexity. Just as food programs and policy are distributed across many agencies, so are databases and information that can inform a thorough assessment of existing conditions related to farming and food. Food policy councils may provide some semblance of an organizing body for the food system in the absence of an official Department of Food.

Engagement: Councils have varying levels of engagement from members. For the most part, members welcome the connections and communication that councils create. Though there is typically no immediate incentive for organizations to collaborate, most members recognize the benefits that they may reap from participating in the council. However, some council members may not offer the level of commitment that a council requires. Council membership can also provide an educational opportunity for individuals who have not necessarily bought in to the food systems approach. Efforts made to foster engagement and make participation in the council an easy choice can significantly benefit the council in the long run. Moreover, the food policy councils in this study exhibited most, if not all, of the structural signatures of collaborative policy networks described by deLeon. Most significantly, these FPCs displayed high levels of heterogeneity and reciprocity. These characteristics, combined with the councils’ receptivity to public input, indicate that FPCs do engage in a highly democratic form of policy creation and evaluation.

Collaboration and communication: One of the most frequently mentioned benefits of food policy councils is the opportunity for coordination and communication between agencies and organizations where it had previously been lacking. By bringing groups and individuals together in a new context, food policy councils may stimulate innovative solutions and opportunities for council members to learn more about elements of the food system unfamiliar to them. In this sense, FPCs do provide a means for the transfer of knowledge and they may be appropriately approached through knowledge management strategies. This means that by emphasizing and fostering education, FPCs can create innovative policy solutions by way of cross-pollination or recombination. New partnerships often form based on these new channels of communication. Examples include partnerships between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Transportation; the Department of Corrections and local farmers; and the Consumer Protection Board and a regional grocery chain.

Productivity: Interviewees expressed excitement and frustration about the breadth of issues that their respective councils would like to address. There are opportunities to capitalize on a growing demand for local and organic foods. Additionally, issues like farmland loss, rising obesity, and food safety present immediate concerns. Though food policy councils are addressing numerous pressing food-related issues, there are limits to their productivity. Council members serve as volunteers and have a limited amount of time to dedicate to the council. Moreover, state budget constraints can also affect a council’s ability to achieve its
goals. In addition, policy change is typically a slow process. The juxtaposition of the
immediacy and significance of a council’s purpose with the limitations of a council’s
process may cause some ambivalence for members and observers. Notably, this
seems to be a problem based in the continued devaluation of food policy in the
political agenda. This may explain the greater effectiveness of officially sanctioned
councils. Councils with ex officio representatives from state agencies will likely
benefit from knowing what is feasible to implement. Ex officio members are often in
the position to catalyze policy implementation as well.

**Significance and Implications**

As previous research has suggested, food policy councils have historically been “an
underutilized tool for reshaping the food system” (Clancy et al, 2007). Councils do
play an important role as advisory bodies. In this capacity, state level councils have
affected funding allocations, program administration, and regulatory legislation that
aim to build and support a healthy food system. Most councils indicate that their
other accomplishments are somewhat less tangible. These include increased
communication and coordination among food-focused organizations and state
agencies; increased education about the food system; and rising awareness of the
need for better food policy. Food policy councils embody an actual as well as a
symbolic step towards improved food policy. States should continue to create food
policy councils, recognizing that FPCs can affect the health and vitality of the state’s
people, economy, and land. Council creation, though significant, is just the first step.
By the nature of their approach, food policy councils examine and address the
causes of food systems issues and problems. Such a thorough approach requires
thorough investment. States and FPCs can help guide the process of restructuring
food policy by setting measurable goals and evaluating a state’s progress towards a
better functioning food system.

By beginning to institutionalize a food systems approach to food and farm policy,
FPCs represent a significant step towards rebuilding our local and national food
economies in sustainable and sound ways. Though the connection may not be
obvious at first, the benefits of involving planners in food policy councils could be
significant. Planners can assist councils by supporting interagency connections;
contributing to the implementation of council recommendations; and including food
systems in long range planning efforts. By adopting food systems planning into
their professional responsibilities and playing their part in food policy creation and
administration, planners can further institutionalize the food systems planning
approach.
Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview script

FPC participation (specific to interviewee):
How long have/did you participate with (blank) food policy council?
In what role did you participate with (blank) food policy council?

FPC structure and organization (general):
How is (blank) food policy council organized?
How are members chosen?
How long do members serve?
Are there separate task forces? What is their focus?
Does (blank) food policy council partner with any other organizations either for funding or collaboration purposes?
Does (blank) food policy council advise legislators on food related policy? If so, how does this process work? Has it been effective?
Does (blank) food policy council advise the Governor on food related policy? If so, how does this process work? Has it been effective?
Does (blank) food policy council work or communicate with city or regional planners or any other municipal departments?

FPC meetings:
How often does (blank) food policy council meet?
How are these meetings run? (Optional prompt: Do you have specific meeting goals? Do you have a specific meeting structure? Are meetings open to the public?)
How much time do members generally devote to the FPC outside of meetings? How is that time spent?

FPC mission and goals:
Have (blank) food policy council’s missions or goals changed since its inception? In what way?
Do you feel that the food policy council’s activities have helped to meet these goals?
What challenges have you faced trying to meet these goals? What challenges do you expect to face in the future?

Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding your experience with (blank) food policy council?
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