

How We Work Together: Supporting Local/Regional Food Systems through Collaboration

Across the country, statewide food system plans or charters bring together cross-sector stakeholders to collaborate on complex issues in food and agriculture. This session will offer a chance to hear from several food system plan coordinators in the North Central region on how they cultivate "collaboration infrastructure" to advance goals around local food and farm business, food access, and rural development.

WEBINAR

AUGUST 30, 2022 2:00PM - 3:30PM ET



**NORTH CENTRAL
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FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Federal Programs for Rural Entrepreneurs in the North Central Region

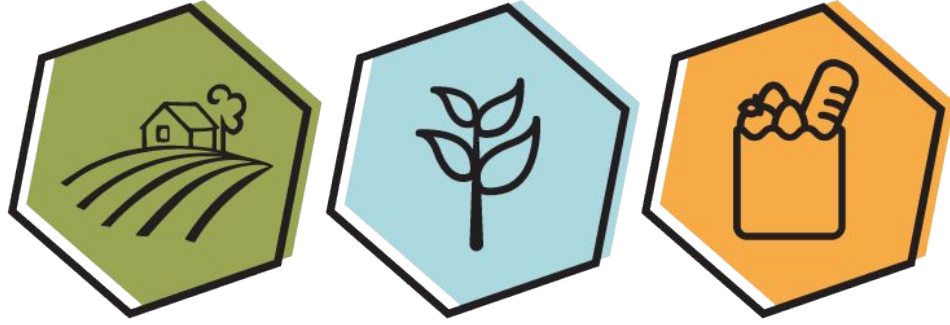
In partnership with the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, representatives from the Small Business Administration and USDA-Rural Development agencies will present their current programs for small businesses and entrepreneurs and share best practices for reaching rural entrepreneurs in the North Central Region. Following the presentation by each agency, a panel discussion will take place covering topics such as communication methods utilized to reach rural entrepreneurs, partnerships in rural settings, and opportunities with the new Infrastructure Law. The webinar will also leave time for attendee questions to be answered.

WEBINAR

SEPTEMBER 22, 2022 2:00PM - 3:30PM ET



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Lindsey Scalera

Community Food Systems
Collaboration Specialist

MSU Center for Regional Food Systems
ScaleraL@msu.edu

On the Menu

Goals for this Session

- Story: Idea to Action
- Background Food Systems Plans & Our Approach
- Challenges & Takeaways
- Questions & Discussion

Idea to Action with a Food Systems Plan



HISTORY

Initially published in 2010, the Michigan Good Food Charter helped build momentum for efforts across Michigan to advance **a food system that promotes equity, health, sustainability, and thriving economies.**



Michigan Good Food

CHARTER

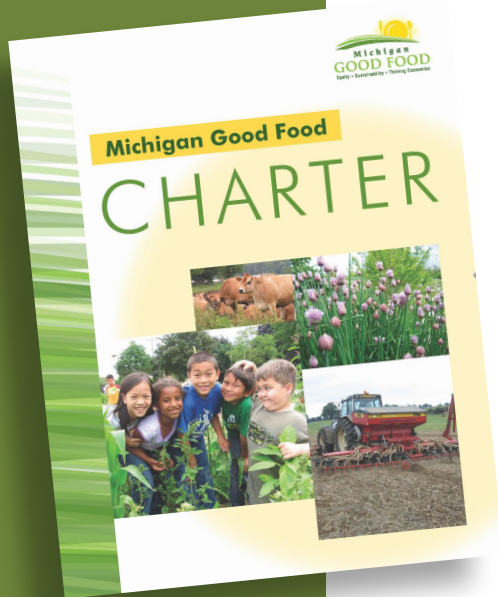




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Michigan Good Food Charter, 2010

12. Implement a reimbursement program to provide an additional 10 cents per school meal, as a supplement to existing school meal funds, in order to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables.



MI Farm to School Network

2010

A Michigan Good Food Charter priority

2013

Regional pilot under a non-profit partner in northwest Lower Michigan

MI Farm to Institution Network

MI Local Food Council Network

Group GAP Pilot

MI Food Hub Network

2016

Regional pilot funded by Michigan Legislature, \$250 K

2020

Statewide program funded by Michigan Legislature

2021

Statewide funding increased from \$2 to \$5 Million, expands to Early Care & Education sites

2022

Statewide funding increased from \$5 Million to \$9.3

Other funding → National scan of local food purchasing incentives



10 CENTS
A MEAL
FOR MICHIGAN'S KIDS & FARMS

www.tencentsmichigan.org

Support for Good Food grew from the Charter...

Cultivating Collaboration Infrastructure

- Ecosystem of networks
- Policymaker relationships & education

Building demand for Farm to Institution, growing supply, cultivating connections

- Michigan Farm to Institution Network & Cultivate Michigan
- 10 Cents A Meal

Growing Capacity for Good Food Advocacy

- MI Local Food Council Network
- Local & national ecosystem of networks and organizations with shared agendas

Supporting food and farm businesses to start and scale up

- MI Group Gap Network
- MI Food Hub Network
- MI Kitchen Incubator Network
- Michigan Good Food Fund





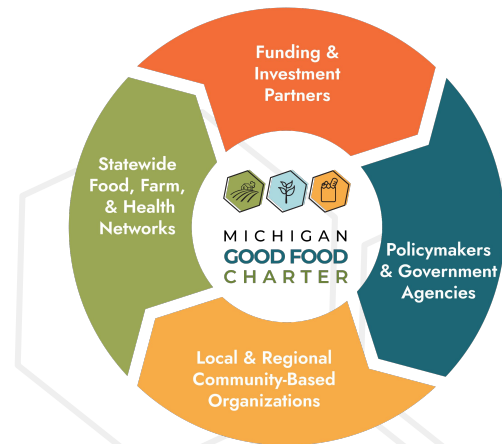
Background: Charters & Food System Plans

We asked our community & network leaders:

What role is the Charter playing in food systems change? What role could it play?

A few highlights:

- “Guiding funding decisions”
- “Providing a framework for Michigan organizations to work more collectively toward food system goals”
- “Guiding organizations and businesses on creating a more equitable food system”
- “The Charter is a tool for economic development and promoting public health in our state.”
- **“Connecting Policy, Programs & People”**



How We Use the Charter



Explore
ideas,
illuminate gaps
and **systemic**
inequity



Identify
common
ground within
and across
sectors



Build **action**
coalitions
around food
systems policy
change



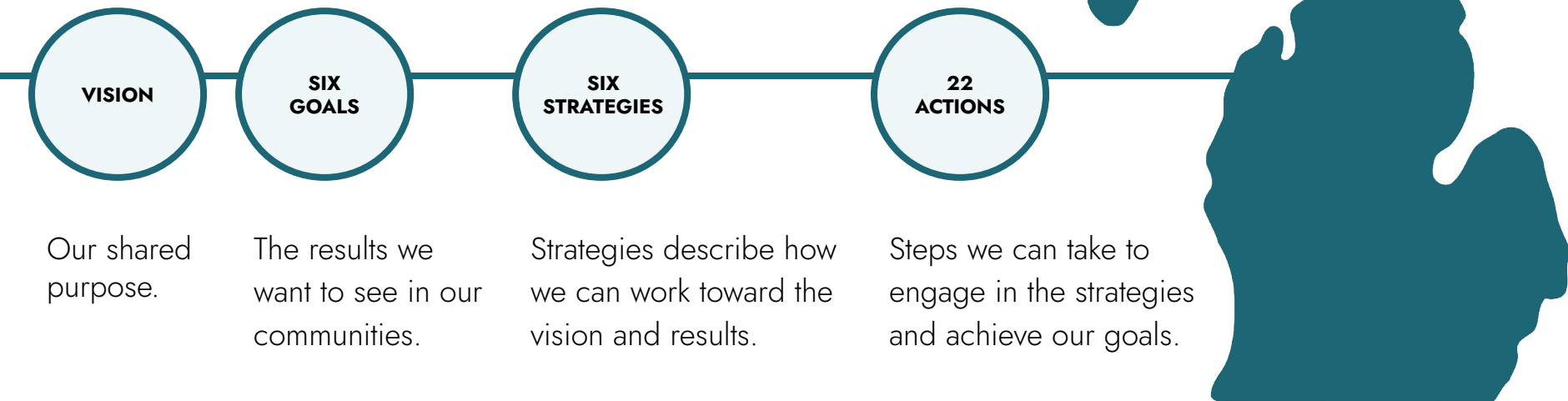
Inform
policymakers
of statewide
and local
priorities



Organize
shared
measurement
to understand
impacts

Michigan Good Food Charter

A Framework for Action





A Shared Vision

Michigan has a thriving food economy distinguished by equity, health, and sustainability.



The Charter calls for systemic change by supporting food systems that:

- ensure food is **accessible** to everyone,
- promote **healthy** communities,
- use **fair** and **sustainable** production methods, and
- support a **diverse** and **equitable** society.

Background

Statewide Food System Plans/Charters

Statewide, participatory efforts to develop, document, and advance a set of goals and action priorities to address challenges in the food system.

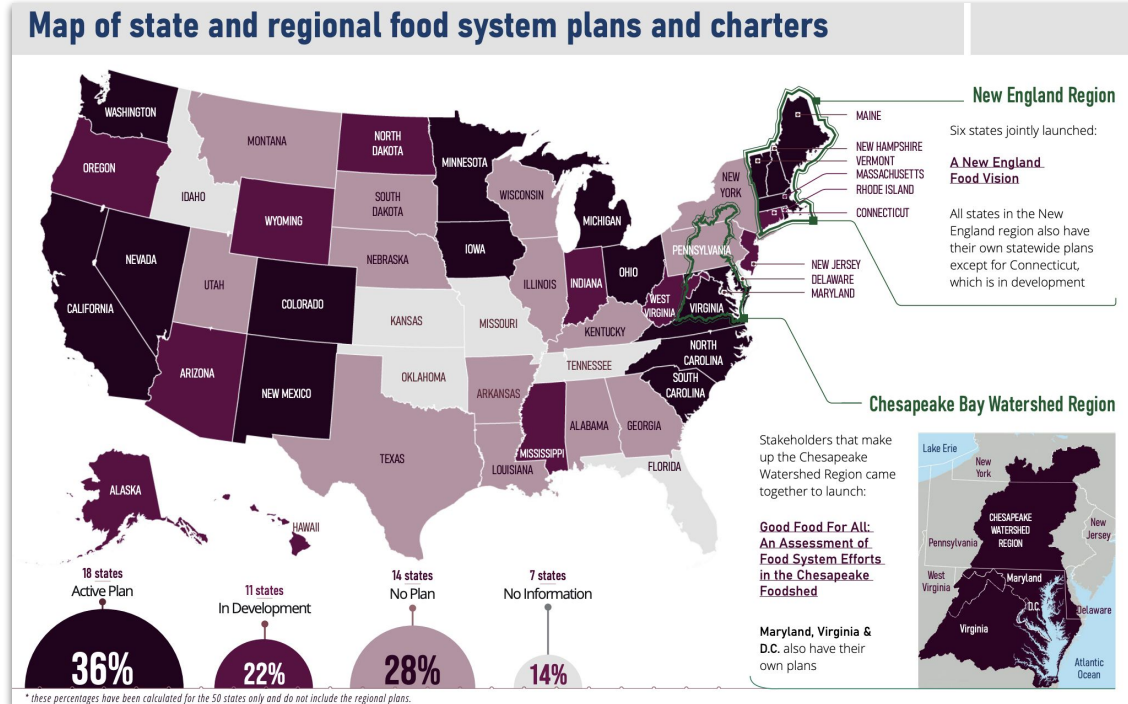
NCR Examples

- Iowa Local Food & Farm Plan (2011, update process)
- Minnesota Food Charter (2013)
- Ohio “Mapping The Vision For The Future Of Ohio’s Food System” (2017)
- Michigan Good Food Charter (2010, 2022)
- A few others in development!

Background

By the Numbers (as of 2021)

- **18 states** and **2** multi-state collaborations have developed charters/plans, launching as early as 2005
- **11 Plans** in development
- **33 statewide food councils** or food council networks (some overlap with Charters/Plans)



Addressing Challenges with Collaboration



Collaboration Infrastructure

How do formal or informal partnerships support the work?

Starts with...

- Identifying clear, cross-sector partnerships
- Looking for common goals

Leads to...

- Building trust over the years
- Growing interconnected networks
- Culture/atmosphere of collaboration





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People + Policy + Programs

What opportunities or challenges do you see in your state/region that could (or already do) benefit from cross-sector collaboration?



<https://www.menti.com/a8rta2v8z1>

We've made great progress...

- + Fresh, locally-sourced food in schools & early care settings
- + Market opportunities for small farm and food businesses
- + More farmers markets & accepting food assistance benefits
- + Federal & state programs investing in small & mid-sized farm/food businesses, Training & TA
- + Resources dedicated to increasing access to healthy food

Understanding Food Systems

Food systems are part of ecosystems.

- We depend on air, water, land, and soil to produce food.
- Our food systems decisions influence the health of the ecosystems we rely on.
- We must prioritize the wellbeing of both people and the environment.



Food passes through many hands.

- Most of our food moves through a process to get from the field to our plates.
- Many people are involved in each step.
- The process adds value but the price of food does not always reflect the true cost of production

We still have challenges...

- Δ Infrastructure for local/regional food production, processing & distribution
- Δ Commodity markets incentivize selling at the lowest prices
- Δ Restrictive budgets for institutions and families
- Δ Higher burdens and barriers to entry for BIPOC, beginning, and smaller scale producers
- Δ Aging farm population, land consolidation
- Δ Agriculture contributes to and is affected by climate change



Growing the Impact: Building Capacity for Statewide & Regional Food System Plans

2021-2023

Professional Development Program

State/Regional Food System Coordinators Perspectives - High Priority Topics:

- Integrating racial equity into food system plans & implementation
- Networks as a strategy to advance collaboration & set goals
- Data gathering and communication strategies
- Advocacy strategies & policy priorities



Growing the Impact: Building Capacity for Statewide & Regional Food System Plans

2021-2023

Professional Development Program

Farmer Perspectives

Issues/Strengths for Education, policy, and programs:

- Funding/Finance and Competing priorities in Land Use (e.g. real estate vs. agriculture)
- Policies & programs like cottage food, zoning, licensing, food safety education
- Improve markets & food access through programs benefiting consumers such as SNAP and WIC, School-food purchasing
- Consider scale of farm operations; “Both & And”

Takeaways: Lessons & Challenges Moving Forward

Real Partnership

Collaboration must be founded in authentic, meaningful partnership.

All hands needed

Use the plan as an excuse to seek common ground and build bridges.

Complexity to Relevance

Facilitate finding relevance for your audiences. Messaging & storytelling help ground complex ideas.

Participation can be slow, but important

Creating intentional space for voices to be heard and participatory, democratic process to take place

Coordinated Action

Coalition-building around coordinated policy action to raise the volume on key issues

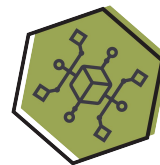
Champions to Change

We need to improve our capacity to move from individual “champions” to embedded systems-change.



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Next Up for Michigan



Communication

- Coalition-building, networking, & feedback opportunities
- Events and activities highlighting MI leadership
- Training, education, & technical assistance
- Document & share what we learn

Advocacy

- Build capacity of Local Food Councils & Networks to engage in policy action
- “Charter Council”
Establishing a “statewide food policy voice” to advance the recommendations & goals of the Charter

Evaluation & Tracking Progress

Shared Measurement Committee helps lead this effort

Tracking progress with:

- Data gathering/reporting
- “Ground Truthing”
- Storytelling



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Questions & Discussion

- Something you're excited about
- Something challenging you
- A question you still have
- Emerging ideas
- Opportunities others should know