



Creating

MARYLAND'S

Food Charter

A SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT



Institute for
Public Health
Innovation

PROJECT TEAM AND CONSULTANTS

Evelyn Kelly, MPH, Senior Program Manager, IPHI

Kate McGrail, MPH, CPA, Program Associate, IPHI

Marisa Jones, MPP, Program Manager, IPHI

Susan DeFranseco, JD, MPH, MAT, Program Manager

Josh Jennings, Wildflower Consulting, LLC

David Harrington, Senior Policy Advisor

The Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI) would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of the 2015 Advisory Committee as well as contributions from Brooke McCauley from Maryland Hunger Solutions and Holly Freishtat from the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative. We also express our sincere appreciation to the innumerable food policy stakeholders—including public and private health entities, leaders of community-based organizations and programs, and community members—that engaged in the process and contributed to the development of this document. Special thanks to the Horizon Foundation for the use of their conference room throughout the project period. Finally, the project could not have been made possible without the financial support of the Town Creek Foundation.



BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

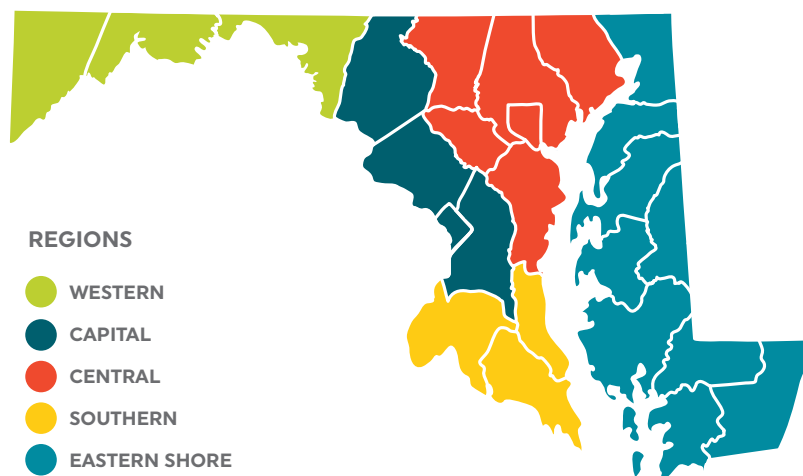
The food system affects nearly every part of our daily lives. From the economy to the environment, the way in which communities grow, process, and access food intersects multiple arenas of policy and practice. As a result of this, Marylanders approach the food system from various angles and interests.

Across the state of Maryland, many organizations are working on food issues. Although their work may interconnect, they are often working in isolation from each other, simply because much work is done at the local level without a state-wide vantage.

Moreover, while there are numerous local and regional food policy councils across the state, there is currently no coordinating entity to organize, mobilize, inform, and influence how food system policy is made at the state-level.

With this backdrop, IPHI hosted a meeting with local Maryland Food Policy Councils (FPC) during the Chesapeake Food Policy Leadership Institute in October 2014 to gather input regarding the need to bring together stakeholders to address State level food policy. Participants confirmed the need to convene diverse stakeholders to address State level policy and that it should build upon previous efforts to produce a tangible outcome that could be used to leverage resources.

Based on these observations, in December 2014 the Town Creek Foundation awarded IPHI a grant to foster collaboration and collective action at the state level for a healthy, just, and sustainable food system in Maryland. Throughout 2015, IPHI engaged Maryland's local food policy councils and other similar multi-sector food coalitions across the state's five main regions (see map to the right) to identify goals and policy priorities at the state level. Resoundingly, 73% of those polled endorsed a state-wide Maryland Food Charter to provide a framework under which many people can come together to set priorities for a better food system. The Food Charter will be a living, evolving resource to spark critical dialogue around food policy change across the state. This document summarizes the input collected during the first year of creating Maryland's Food Charter.



Resoundingly, 73% of those surveyed endorsed a state-wide Maryland Food Charter.



THE PROCESS

IPHI formed an Advisory Committee composed of representatives from multiple food system sectors and interests provide input and guidance on the initiative, leverage partners, avoid duplication, and facilitate collaboration among food system sectors.

2015 ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kelly Dudeck
Grow & Fortify

Michele Levy
Maryland Farmers Market Association

Christy Gabbard
Chesapeake Foodshed Network

Anne Palmer
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future

Alice Huang
Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

Michael J. Wilson
Maryland Hunger Solutions

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

IPHI conducted a national environmental scan reviewing statewide blueprints and food charters, in addition to reviewing local food policy reports developed by state agencies in Maryland.



18 reports and blueprints reviewed

ONLINE SURVEY

IPHI designed a survey to better understand the interest-level and needs to take collective action at the state level, and to identify ways to increase collaboration to strengthen the Maryland food system. Results indicated a strong interest in taking collective action at the state level.



167 respondents to online survey

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

In order to leverage promising practices, avoid duplications, assess the feasibility of food systems collaboration, and obtain recommendations on potential policies, IPHI conducted key informant interviews.



50+ key informant interviews

70+ stakeholders in four regions



REGIONAL CONVENINGS

Throughout 2015, IPHI engaged Maryland's food policy councils and other similar food coalitions to identify policy priorities at the state level through four (4) regional convenings.



MARYLAND FOOD SUMMIT

All stakeholders and partners engaged through the convening were invited to participate in a state-wide summit held during October 2015. The aim of the summit was to bring together the food policy councils and multi-sector coalitions from across the state to:

- provide an overview of the outcomes of regional convenings
- select a vision statement for the Maryland Food Charter
- further develop Charter priorities
- provide an update on the current status of Charter priorities

During the Maryland Food Summit, expert panelists highlighted innovations and promising systems-level change happening within food system domains in Maryland. Summit organizers built in ample time for the multi-regional participants to network and share success stories, challenges and potential opportunities for collaboration. Finally, stakeholders worked in small groups to provide input in order to further develop goals and strategies created in previous regional convenings.



DRAFTING A VISION STATEMENT

In order to create a Food Charter that speaks to the multitude of goals and priorities identified by stakeholders across the state, IPHI developed a process for creating a vision statement that describes Maryland's optimal food system. IPHI used the *Whole Measures for Community Food Systems* tool to generate dialogue and build a shared values-based vision for Maryland's food system. Using *Whole Measures*, stakeholders looked beyond their specific mission and thought in terms of the broadest possible picture for a healthy food system, considering the following core values:



Equity



Inclusiveness



Resiliency



Diversity



Community



Economy



Environment



Well-nourished

Stakeholders discussed these shared values during the regional convenings, which provided an opportunity to establish common ground and common goals across seemingly disparate work and food system domains. Each of the four regional convening vision statement exercises exposed common themes within the shared vision. The Advisory Committee (along with IPHI project team and consultants) identified and assessed the commonalities in order to draft a vision statement, which was then voted on by participants during the Maryland Food Summit.

VISION STATEMENT

“Maryland's food system is equitable, inclusive, and resilient and supports a diverse community, economy, and environment where eaters, farmers, and producers work together to ensure every Marylander is healthy and well-nourished.”



RECOMMENDED GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The year-long public input process led to multiple recommendations for each of the five food system domains. The following goals and strategies were developed by community food system stakeholders from all major regions across the state. It should be noted that these goals and strategies are not a comprehensive list of food policy priorities for all food system stakeholders and organizations in Maryland. However, these recommendations do demonstrate great potential for moving towards an optimal food system.



1. PRODUCING FOOD

Goal: *Support food producers in both physical infrastructure and streamlined regulations.*

Strategies:

- Research and map market demand for local food
- Increase access to production assets for farmable land and equipment
- Increase efficiency of sustainable agriculture production through applied research and development
- Provide sustainable agricultural training and technical assistance to new and beginning farmers
- Encourage statewide food production entrepreneurship and growth by streamlining county and state permits, regulations and zoning so they are flexible for a thriving local food economy



2. DISTRIBUTING FOOD

Goal: *Maryland has a thriving and sustainable infrastructure for delivering food from farm to table.*

Strategies:

- Encourage partnerships between government (local and state) and food and agriculture entrepreneurs to develop the land, financing, and support necessary for regional aggregation and distribution centers (e.g. food hubs)
- Identify geographic areas around the state that lack access to healthy food retail and encourage public and private policies that attract retail to those areas of need





3. ACCESSING FOOD

Goal: Maryland has policies and an economic climate that supports diverse, flexible food retail models to provide healthy, culturally-relevant and sustainable food in every community.

Strategies:

- Reinstate Governor's budget for Maryland Out of School Opportunity Fund to enable more locations to serve as summer and afterschool feeding sites
- Implement the recommendations in the Maryland 2012 Fresh Foods Task Force report [Stimulating Supermarket Development in Maryland](#)
- Eliminate the MD Department of Human Resources' administrative barriers to reimbursement (i.e. expedite reimbursement turnaround time, improve procurement policies for small organizations) to make it easier for small organizations to participate in SNAP Outreach
- Adopt statewide legislation to require a universal/alternative breakfast program for schools with Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) rates over 70%
- Subsidize MD Department of Transportation fares to food venues with a healthy food availability index ranking of at least 24 for customers who use federal benefits such as Special Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) and WIC and senior
- Identify and enable transit pick up and drop off stops that correlate with healthy food venues (i.e. availability index) with Maryland's regional transit authorities



4. EATING FOOD

Goal: Make the healthy choice the easy choice, and celebrate of fresh and delicious foods.

Strategies:

- Encourage transparency about menu and a la carte options, nutrition information and ingredients of foods served in public institutions in Maryland
- Reduce added sugar in all state meal programs (i.e. senior, summer youth camps, government worksites)
- Include food systems education in K-12 curriculum to excite children and address issues such as sustainability, health impacts, environmental health and media literacy
- Develop partnerships between the nonprofit, for-profit, and government sectors to create and disseminate effective, evidence-based nutrition education and engagement programs





5. RECOVERING FOOD

Goal: Reduce food waste and provide food for hunger communities.

Strategies:

- Expand existing local processing facilities to recover edible food for distribution and inedible food for composting
- Create a State Food Recovery Commission (a collaboration/network of stakeholders including food donors, distributors, coordinators, government agencies, foundations, and recipient organizations and individuals) to find funding for distribution models for bringing recovered food to hunger communities and inedible food to composting facilities
- Create a food recovery jobs program in partnership between members of the new State Food Recovery Commission and existing job training programs (including those for veterans)
- Encourage elected officials to support the proposed “Maryland Farm Food Donation Tax Credit” to provide local farmers a tax credit for donating their produce to eligible organizations

NEXT STEPS

As the process for creating a Food Charter is evolving and participatory by nature, engaging additional stakeholders and policy makers is essential for this project. Over the next few months, IPHI will:

- raise awareness and gather additional input from State legislators and State officials
- continue to partner with the Advisory Committee
- incorporate quantitative data into the Food Charter
- refine the goals and strategies
- publish the Food Charter in Spring 2017

IPHI is currently accepting feedback on the Maryland Food Charter. Submit your thoughts, comments, and/or questions to mdfoodcharter@institutephi.org. Visit institutephi.org/mdfoodcharter for more information.





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