

Strategic Plan 2.0

# WESTERN MARYLAND FOOD COUNCIL



Sustaining and enhancing the  
environmental, economic, social and  
nutritional health of Western Maryland



# Western Maryland Food Council

## Project Background

In 2015, a team from Western Maryland was awarded a grant from the Town Creek Foundation to form the Western Maryland Food Council (WMFC). This project is an effort to develop the local food system in Western Maryland, and it follows on several years of work by people in Garrett County, University of Maryland Extension, Garrett County Economic Development, Frostburg Grows, Frostburg State University, Western Maryland RC&D and others. Town Creek Foundation (TCF) supports the development of food councils in Maryland to help achieve goals of systemic change for sustainability, improved quality of the Chesapeake Bay, and efforts to address climate change. TCF supports sustainable agriculture and local food as a means to contribute in positive ways to all of these goals. This strategic plan will guide the formation of the Western Maryland Food Council. Grant funds for the WMFC are administered by Western Maryland RC&D.



### Mission

*The mission of the Western Maryland Food Council is to bring together diverse stakeholders to integrate the aspects of the food system to sustain and enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of Western Maryland.*

## Goals

Broad goals of the WMFC were developed by the steering committee. Next, community meetings were held in each of the three western Maryland counties during the winter of 2015-16. A cross section of agriculture and community leaders were asked to help further define these goals and identify relevant local issues in each of the goal areas. The group ranked the issues by using a weighted voting system. A summary of the issues ranked by the community groups is available in Appendix A of this document.

- 1. Increase local food production and the number of growers*
- 2. Develop markets and distribution channels for local food*
- 3. Provide a clearinghouse for information and help coordinate efforts by networking*
- 4. Address food policy and help inform food policy via the statewide network of all food councils*
- 5. Address hunger and help improve food security and affordability*
- 6. Promote sustainable agriculture and permaculture*
- 7. Increase agriculture and environmental efforts*
- 8. Promote civic engagement and ethics in the food system*
- 9. Increase education and awareness of western Maryland residents regarding the benefits of locally produced fresh foods.*

# Steering Committee

The steering committee for the WMFC is headed by Dan Fiscus and Corey Armstrong. Dan is serving as the Development Director of the WMFC grant from TCF and is director of Frostburg Grows. Corey is serving as the Project Coordinator of the TCF WMFC grant and Frostburg Grows. The remaining steering committee members work with local government, economic development and the University of Maryland Extension in each of the three counties. For a listing of the Steering Committee Members, see Appendix B.

# Founding Members

To provide input into the development of the WMFC, the Steering Committee has created an interim group called the WMFC Founding Council. The Founding Council members were selected by the steering committee. A list of the Founding Council members is found in Appendix C. The function of the Founding Council is to:

1. Establish the structure of the WMFC including the development of bylaws
2. Establish workgroups in each of the counties
3. Revise and adapt the Strategic Plan
4. Develop a Food System Plan

Members of the Founding Council will benefit by:

1. Having a focused and collective voice in state policy related to food;
2. Information sharing from the diverse stakeholders and leaders on the Council;
3. Learning of and collaboration toward funding opportunities;
4. Increased impact and effectiveness via interdisciplinary and multi-sector communication and coordination;
5. Community and mutual support working together for healthy change.

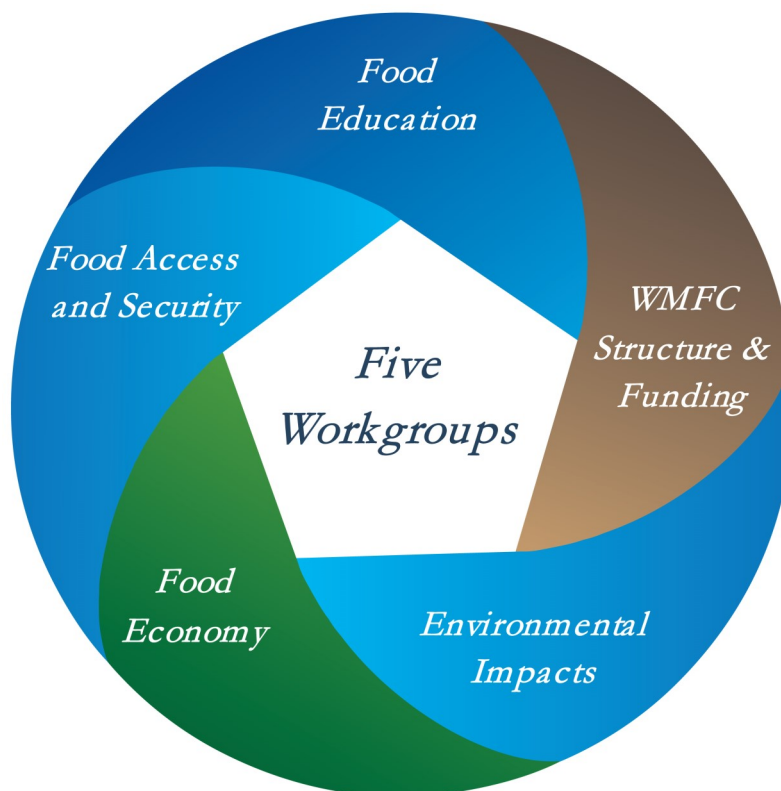
# Structure of the Founding WMFC

The founding members of the WMFC met in June of 2016 and agreed to a structure for the Founding WMFC.

The WMFC Founding Council members will be divided into five workgroups (see graphic at right). Founding members will join at least one of these workgroups based on the experience and interest.

The founding members will also work within their county to establish local workgroups based on the five WMFC work groups.

See the organization chart found in Appendix D.



# Work Groups

The Founding members from each of the counties will meet and determine which local workgroups will be established within each county. Counties may choose to focus on from one or more of the workgroups. Each established local workgroup will select a committee chair and report from the founding members. Each local workgroup will identify and discuss the issues with the food system for their particular topic. The workgroup should schedule one or more initial public meetings in the county to assist with the identification of issues. These issues will be used to help develop the Food System Plan (see below).

Note: the fifth committee is a special WMFC Structure and Funding Committee of the Founding Council to be organized to work on the organizational structure, bylaws and funding plan for the WMFC.

# WMFC Food System Plan

The WMFC Food System Plan will direct the work of the WMFC. The Food System Plan is to be developed with input from community members. Local workgroups in each county will discuss issues related to their workgroup and hold community level meetings to ensure input from all areas of western Maryland. The Food System Plan will identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the food system.

# Strategic Plan Priorities

The steering committee proposed these major phases for the work of the WMFC and at the Nov. 17, 2016 meeting sought input and revisions from the Founding Council.

## *1. Council Formation*

- ⇒ Through June of 2017, finalize and formalize the structure, mission, by-laws, funding and membership structure for the WMFC. Develop and adopt the Strategic Plan and the Food System Plan. Share these plans widely with community members in Western Maryland seeking comments, input and participation. Founding Council, Steering Committee and Workgroups will collaborate to identify and describe the major initiatives for WMFC action. This will include a policy audit of important policy that affects the food system.

## *2. Council Initiates Major Initiatives*

- ⇒ Through 2020, the WMFC will initiate and implement projects, programs and policy efforts to achieve the major initiatives identified in 2017. The WMFC expects to make progress and be able to show significant successful outcomes on several major fronts of food system change.

## *3. Growth, Development and Continuation*

- ⇒ Through 2025, the WMFC will continue project, programs and policy efforts to improve the food system in Western Maryland. The WMFC expects to be able to document improvements on key outcomes such as increased local food production, increased food security, better human health indicators and more.

# Appendix A

## Allegany Co meeting of Western Maryland Food Council 12/10/15

Goals and Tasks voting and tallies

	total points
7b Ag. education in county schools	29
7 Education – values, culture, mindset, health	28
4a Address institutional barriers (ex. liability)	27
5a Local farms sell to food banks – how?	25
2a Increase sales and profitability	23
1b Develop food hub/co-ops	21
6b Educate and make the case why important	18
5b Address taboos and mindset barriers	16
2d Processing food and value added	14
4b Link to Allegany County Economic Development	14
1a Frostburg Grows training/workshops and grower support	10
3a Public presentations to local government	9
2b Build relationships with produce managers at grocery stores	8
2c Show the demand (\$4500 per person per year)	8
7a Agriculture in Allegany County	7
4c. Show the demand (as linked to Allegany Co. Economic Development)	4
5c Process local food to soup, longer shelf life, more convenient	4
1c More meat producers	2
6a Hugelkulture	1

### The goals

**1 Increase sustainable local food production**

**2 Develop markets for local food**

**3 Clearinghouse, info and networking**

**4 Inform food policy, statewide policy work**

**5 Fight hunger, improve food security and affordability**

**6 Promote *environmentally* sustainable agric. and permaculture**

**7 Education – values, culture, mindset, health**



**Garrett Co meeting of Western Maryland Food Council 12/17/15**

Goals and Tasks voting and tallies

	total points
2a Find supplemental funds for schools to buy local	45
1b Assessment of supply	38
7d Integrate with school curriculum	31
1c Identify gaps to be filled to promote growth	29
1e Processing capacity is needed – Co./shared/etc. Gleaned items, too.	29
7f How to shop local	28
2 Develop markets for local food	20
4b Cross-border exemptions (meat processing on-farm state certification) Reciprocity	19
5a Create list of all access points (food banks, etc. And who uses fresh stuff from the farm)	19
5c Help mod/low income (not WIC eligible) people with local food costs (coupons, etc.?)	19
2b Match current/potential supply with bigger markets	17
2h Develop local food promotion (certification?) for restaurants, apps, window clings, etc.	17
7a Cultural food heritage – preserving (pre-jello), wild foods	17
7b Free cooking and preservation classes using local foods	17
7c School and youth service projects with local food	16
5b Gleaning opportunities	12
6d Gleaning/composting/reducing waste	10
1 Increase sustainable local food production	8
2c Assessment of opportunities	7
2f Assess regional infrastructure (food hubs, local coops, other distribution opportunities)	7
3c Assessment info gets put here (see assessments in goals 1, 2)	7
7e Educating buyers/consumers – growing/timing	5
2e Link to entrepreneurs, new food businesses	4
3a Identify certified farmers, farm stands for WIC	4
2g Develop relationships with existing regional distributors (Coastal Sunbelt, Keany, etc.)	3
3b Document warehouse in PDF format for easy access, multiple programs	3
7 Education – values, culture, mindset, health	3
2i Farm fan – app to send text to customers	2
1a Training/workshops	0
1d Expand high tunnel use; ID opportunities for obtaining	0
2d Make PDF of email/newsletters for those without internet (copy and distribute)	0
4a Track potential legislation during session	0
6a Encourage high tunnel production and other season extension techniques	0
6b Coordination with conservations groups/agencies	0
6c Tell the stories of farmers who do this	0
3 Clearinghouse, info and networking	0
4 Inform food policy, statewide policy work	0
5 Fight hunger, improve food security and affordability	0
6 Promote environmentally sustainable agric. and permaculture	0

## Washington Co meeting of Western Maryland Food Council 2/29/16

### Goals and Tasks voting and tallies

	total points
2b Address growers issues - enough supply, seasonal issues, public misconceptions	22
5c Local fresh food that is fast, convenient	22
6b Policy to reward farmers who conserve soil, water, etc.	22
2c ID barriers to getting to markets, i.e. people to produce	19
5a Address transport from farms to food banks	19
5d ID barriers, funds, to uptake of "good" food	19
7c ID places with captive audience (schools, healthcare settings, group homes, etc.)	19
2a Market creation - need consumers to support	16
7b Help people learn what to do with fresh fruits/vegetables	14
5b Surveys and discussions to learn from those in need	12
7d Local food = good health	12
6a ID barriers to sustainability	11
2d Promote sale of "ugly food" at low cost	10
3a Social media - Food Council, promote through other groups too	10
4a Farm Bill - change name!	9
4c Funds	7
5e Coordinate local food banks	7
4b Statewide network of more than food councils; let Farm Bureau know goals/wishes	6
2e Develop incentives to make this happen	5
2f Farmers market close to grocery stores	5
7e ID barriers and values that block uptake	5
1c ID barriers to production, new farmers; funds	4
3c Funds	4
7g Funds	4
1a Frostburg Grows training program - new growers	3
1b Need more local land for existing farmer expansion	3
3b Info website	2
7a Billboard marketing and other media to change mindset	2
7f Food tastings of simply prepared fresh veggies	1
2g Farmers markets greater than 1 day per week per location	0
2h Funds	0
5f Address fuel, electricity, etc. for those in need	0
6c True prices/costs of sustainably produced food vs unsustainable food	0
7h cooking demo at farmers markets	0
7i Partner with HEAL of Washington County	0
8a Re-establish good American work ethics, culture and respect	0
8b Bring back draft for all 18 year olds	0

### **New Goal added – 8 ethics and civics**



# Appendix B

## Steering Committee Members:

**Dan Fiscus**

Development Director, TCF Grant  
Project Director, Frostburg Grows

**Corey Armstrong**

Project Coordinator  
WMFC & Frostburg Grows

**Sherry Frick**

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# Appendix C

## Founding Committee Members

### *Allegany County*

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# Appendix D

## Western Maryland Food Council

