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# Food council development

A toolkit for  
communities from seed to start-up

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Community Food Strategies  
April 2017



# Authors

This toolkit was developed by Community Food Strategies, a multi-organizational team that provides leadership and technical support for food policy council development throughout North Carolina. We partner with councils in all phases of development, with the goal of building more resilient and equitable food systems.

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To learn more information about  
Community Food Strategies, please visit:  
[communityfoodstrategies.org](https://communityfoodstrategies.org).

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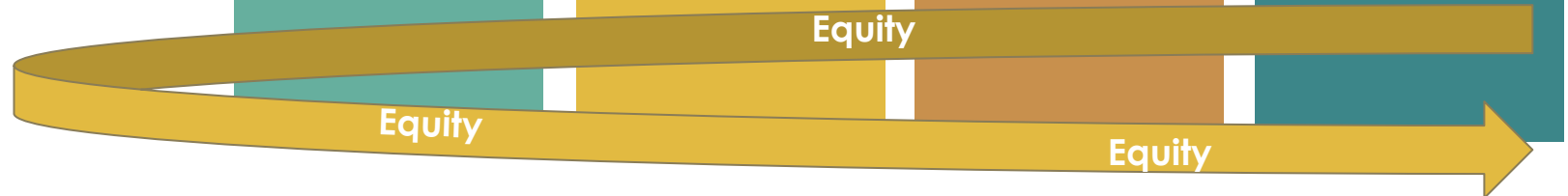
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## overview

# About this toolkit

This toolkit is intended for community members interested in developing a cross-sector group organized to positively impact food systems change in their whole community.

We distilled our project team's work in leading over 30 community groups through food council development into this toolkit. Our 'best practices' and example activities are outlined here, including tools for outreach, organizing, and decision making to create an active and engaged food council that has impact and staying power in your community.

Communities can use this toolkit as a starting place or a tool to come back to for re-organizing or re-energizing an existing council effort.

Start with the wisdom that *it's hard to create something out of nothing.*

## PHASES OF COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT

This toolkit was designed for groups who are in the **'Start-up' Phase of food council development**. However, we have seen the tools and activities applied at each stage of development. Consider how this process might re-energize your council..



SEED

During the **SEED Phase**, a community considers whether a food council might be worthwhile.



START-UP

During the **START-UP Phase**, a task force begins to design the council while engaging the community.



GROWTH

During the **GROWTH Phase**, new council members finalize their structure and prioritize issues.



MATURE

During the **MATURE Phase**, the council develops strategic plans and collaborates with other councils.

## overview

# Why are food councils important?

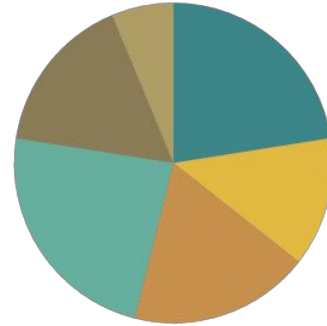
Food councils are community organizations that help create the conditions needed for a resilient community-based food system to emerge.



Many people in different sectors work to address issues that intersect with food.

Usually not one group tells the story of the food system as a whole. That's what food councils can do.

Councils provide a shared way of thinking about the *whole* food system by including voices from many different sectors.



Food councils put the pieces together and tell the story of the whole food system.

They are effective in fostering unlikely conversations and connections, such as linking various county agencies or government officials to their citizens.

As a collective, they can educate the community and amplify the community voice.

## overview



# Who's involved in a food council?

Food councils are intentionally cross-sector and work to continually expand the network and engage diverse and strategic players.

- Local government officials
- Planning departments
- Food pantry staff
- Soil and Water District staff
- Teachers
- Faith leaders
- University staff and researchers
- Cooperative Extension
- Restaurant owners
- Farmers
- Public health professionals
- Economic developers
- Non-profit organizations



Vibrant Farms  
& Gardens



Equity



Healthy  
People



Strong  
Communities



Thriving  
Economies



Sustainable  
Ecosystems

We use the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems framework to ensure broad representation for key sectors. Whole measures are values that describe a vision for a vibrant community with healthy people, food, and land.

Consider using this [spreadsheet of stakeholders by whole measure](#) to start.

## overview

# What do food councils do?

They convene diverse, cross-sector community groups to:



### **Assess** the current food system

By engaging expert practitioners and seeking community input to better understand a community's food environment.

Seven counties created baseline community food assessments of their food system.



### **Connect** stakeholders to align efforts

By working with decision makers and program leaders to encourage collaboration, build connections, and better align programs.

The Char-Meck Food Policy Council collaborates with Friendship Gardens to support two FoodCorps members in three local schools.



### **Educate** leaders and the community

By creating fact sheets, supporting community outreach efforts, and hosting educational events.

Guilford Food Council helped sponsor a Local Foods Week with several partners to raise awareness of local food and farms.



### **Recommend** policy\* change

By working with their networks to inform local governments and institutions on policies and laws that affect the local food system.

Forsyth Community Food Consortium gave significant input into the County's comprehensive plan.

\* For more information about food policy and strategic advocacy, view <https://toolkit.communityfoodstrategies.com/about/>.

## overview

# How are food councils organized?

There are many ways to create an effective structure for these organizations. Consider the options and decide what is best of your community. Review the Center for Livable Future's blog post ["Structuring your food policy council"](#).

### Coalition with a fiscal sponsor

Most councils consist of an elected group that channels any funds through a fiscal sponsor.

Asheville-Buncombe Food Policy Council

Greater High Point Food Alliance

### County-sanctioned committee

Some groups are formed as official local government advisory committees.

Pitt County Farm & Food Council

### 501(c)3 non-profit organization

Many established councils, often with staff, eventually become a tax-exempt non-profit organization.

Char-Meck Food Policy Council

Catawba Farm & Food Coalition (SC)

### Create your own

Other opportunities and collaborations exist and depend on the partnerships available.

Brunswick County Food Council - Cooperative Extension group



## overview

# What kind of support would you have?

A growing network of local food councils exist across North Carolina.

This work cannot be done alone.  
Participate in regional networking  
opportunities and learn from your  
neighboring food councils.

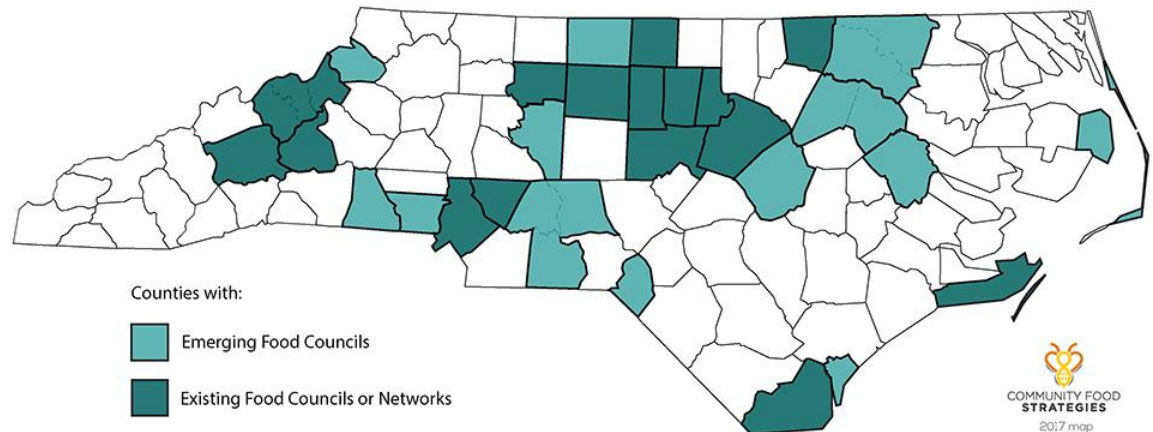
Available resources or networks in:

North Carolina:

- Your neighboring food councils
- Community Food Strategies - [communityfoodstrategies.org](http://communityfoodstrategies.org)
- Local Food Council of NC (LFCNC)

Nationally

- Food Policy Networks, [foodpolicynetworks.org](http://foodpolicynetworks.org)



This map of local food councils in North Carolina created in January 2017..

In 2016, thirty local food councils existed or were emerging in North Carolina. More than 320 food councils exist at statewide and local levels across the United States.\*

\*Food Policy Network, 2016 data.

## overview

# What do we need to get started?

Begin by having conversations with community members or colleagues that may already be interested in this work.



People

Gather at least 7-10 people from multiple sectors invested in food systems change, who will show up for at least three consecutive monthly meetings to discuss this idea.

\*Consider how this initial group reflects the larger community. Start with as diverse and cross-sector a group as you can.



Place

Coordinate a convenient and inclusive place to meet.

Location impacts who will show up. Consider meeting space that is accessible for parking and public transportation. Consider meeting in different locations, possibly in a rotation, to accommodate members who live in different parts of the town/county. Faith community buildings and cultural centers are often good choices.



Leaders

Find someone willing 1) to lead the facilitation process and 2) coordinate meeting logistics. Consider an outside facilitator or someone within the group.

This toolkit is intended to support groups in self-facilitation through this process. See our facilitation resources in the Appendix.

## overview

# Snapshot of North Carolina's food system

Many food councils have created baseline community food assessments using data to better understand their community's food system.



### Direct-to-Consumer Sales

In 2015, North Carolina ranked 6th in direct-to-consumer sales by farms, which totalled \$134 million.

USDA National Agriculture Statistic Service



### Principal Operators

Only 4% of principal farm operators are non-white in the US and only 5% are non-white in North Carolina.

USDA Census of Agriculture



### Number of farms

North Carolina lost 2,695 farms between 2008 and 2012, and the US lost nearly 100,000 farms in that time.

USDA Census of Agriculture



### Food Insecurity

In 2015, 13.7% of households in the US, 15.9% in households in North Carolina experienced food insecurity.

USDA Economic Research Service



### Obesity Rates

In 2014, nearly 30% of adults and 13% of adolescents in North Carolina were obese, similar to national rates.

Center for Disease Control



### Food Waste

In the US, 40% of all food is wasted, which is equivalent to 20 pounds of food per person, per month.

Natural Resources Defense Council

## overview

# Process for developing a food council

We present 17 meetings that may take a group up to 18-24 months to go from an initial interested group to a seated food council with structure, membership guidelines, and an initial action and continued outreach plan.

The process for developing a broad stakeholder group that can work together takes time.

There are always unexpected delays, new folks to fold in, canceled meetings due to weather-related events, and conversations that turn out to be worth 1 and ½ meetings. We have outlined agendas for a series of meetings, which will likely take more months than the number of meetings due to these unforeseen delays.

Some groups move faster than others. Sometimes one discussion may take up an entire meeting (this is where a skilled facilitator can be very helpful!), but do not be discouraged, it's a process.

Use your discretion and find a balance between moving slow enough to be inclusive and to make lasting decisions and moving fast enough to keep folks engaged and at the table.

## Balancing Action & Process

Consider low-hanging fruit tasks that some community members can take on to establish small successes while the organizational structure is being developed.

Read [“Ten Low-hanging fruit actions for food councils” blog post](#) suggesting some actions food councils can consider.

## overview

# Steps in council start-up

The following pages outline a process of starting a council in three broad steps. Each of the sections provides sample meeting topics to cover in a series of two-hour, monthly meetings. We suggest groups proceed in the general order proposed. This toolkit walks through the steps that a ‘task force’ would take to create a food council.

1. Clarifying intentions	2. Developing a charter	3. Transitioning to a council
<i>Meetings 1 - 4</i>	<i>Meetings 5 - 12</i>	<i>Meetings 13 - 17</i>
Focus on group dynamics	Define an organizational structure	Host a public forum
Create shared values	Explore decision-making processes	Create a new membership application process
Establish working committees	Clarify member roles and responsibilities	Plan and conduct the first meeting of the council

## overview

# Meeting template components:

## Overview

This section provides the general overview of the topics covered at the meeting.

## Desired Outcomes

Desired outcomes are specific goals to be accomplished at the meeting. They should be clarified first and used to shape the agenda and conversation. These outcomes may shift with your community's specific needs at that time.

## Sample Agenda

This section provides an agenda template that will accomplish the desired outcomes and continue building relationships, learn the specific needs of the community, and develop shared leadership.

## Resources

The next page after the sample meeting agenda will offer a list of websites, toolkits, activities, and other resources that will help accomplish the goals at that specific meeting. Many of these activities include movement and/or creativity, which we recommend in all meetings as a way to keep the energy high and engage different learning and communication styles.

### Tips:

*Each meeting will have tips as suggestions to consider for effective progress.*

Overall - encourage co-facilitators to lead the Welcome, Evaluation, and Next Steps sections of each agenda.

This practice helps develop shared leadership and facilitation practice, particularly if the group is being led by an outside facilitator.

# Step 1: Clarifying intentions (meetings 1-4)

In the beginning, it is important to understand the history of work in the community. Based in an awareness of similar and aligned work that has already taken place and appreciating the people that have done work already, take time to get clear about your common purpose, create rules and shared values on how this group will work together, and identify and engage stakeholders who may not be in the room yet.

- Focus on group dynamics
- Clarify difference between task force and food council
- Create shared values
- Establish working committees

To begin the task force meetings, establish the role and purpose of the taskforce and how it is different than the role and purpose of the food council. This is a key component to help the group stay focused and understand the upcoming processes.

Understanding group dynamics is critical. Establish ground rules and values on how you will work together as a task force and how you will work with your community. Identify working committees will help continue the work outside of monthly meetings.

## Food Council Experience

*The food council development process has been energizing and eye-opening for me. I have had to overcome my internal fears about wanting to hammer out all the details and trust the process. Over these several months of meetings I have seen that this council is not going to be about my personal desire to bring good food to the table, but about creating something that is best for all of our community.*

- Duane Truscott, Cape Fear Food Council

## 1. Clarifying intentions

# Meeting 1

## Group Agreements, Food Councils Overview, Task force vs. Council

### Overview

This meeting works to develop a shared understanding of what food councils are and what one might look like in this community. It invites participants to ask questions and to consider the potential impacts of a food council. This meeting gives the group a sense of monthly meeting structure.

### Desired Outcomes

A shared understanding of Group Agreements

A shared understanding of food councils and their history

A shared understanding of the difference between a Task force vs. Food Council

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Introduce Group Agreements & invite additions
- Overview of food councils in North Carolina and United States
- Task force vs. food council presentation & activity
- Next Steps
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)
- Closing

### Tips

*It's key to clarify the difference between a task force and the elected food council.*

*We recommend a brief evaluation at the end of the meeting for feedback to incorporate.*

*See page 18 for +/Δ activity.*



## 1. Clarifying Intentions | Meeting 1

# Resources

### Ground Rules or Group Agreements

These agreements help attendees feel comfortable in this space to participate fully. [Example opening statement](#).

These agreements should be developed at the first meeting, and referred to at several consecutive meetings. For two or three meetings invite people to make edits or additions.

Example group agreements are as follows:

#### **Sample Group Agreements**

- ✓ Begin and adjourn on time.
- ✓ One speaker at a time.
- ✓ Stick to the tasks and topics on the agreed-upon agenda.
- ✓ Listen attentively.
- ✓ Share the floor.
- ✓ Honor our agreements about confidentiality.
- ✓ It is OK to disagree... please do so respectfully.
- ✓ Decide together.

### Overview of food councils

This topic should be a mixture of a mini-lecturette, visuals like handouts and/or a video and an open discussion to help everyone develop a more clear understanding of food councils and their potential impact. Consider covering these topics:

- History of this group specifically, what got us here?
- What is a food council and their history?
- Examples of food councils and their impacts
- Review of Community Food Strategies

### Links

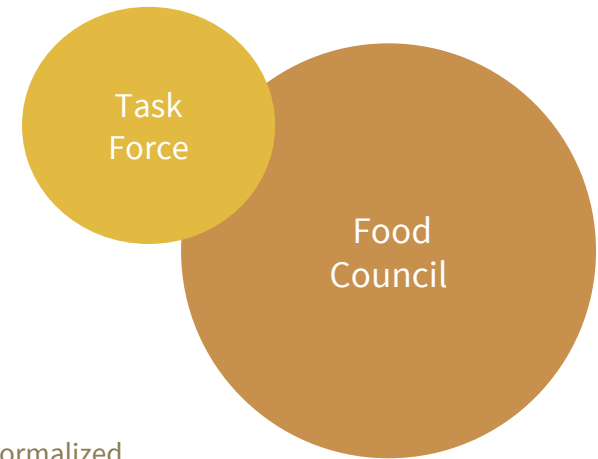
- [Los Angeles Food Council video](#), begin at minute 1:25
- [Sample food council presentation](#)
- [Task Force vs. Council overview](#)
- [Let's Talk About It: What do we mean by racial equity?](#)

## 1. Clarifying intentions

# Meeting 2: Purpose, Development Timeline

### Overview

This meeting helps attendees understand the difference between a task force and a formalized food council. The facilitator will outline a draft timeline and present opportunities for the group to support the process through planning, note taking, and support with facilitation.



### Desired Outcomes

A shared understanding of a general timeline for council development

An agreement on how the task force will make decisions

A shared understanding of the food council purpose

A list of 4-6 people to help plan meetings

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Review Group Agreements & invite additions<sup>R</sup>
- Timeline overview of council development<sup>R</sup>
- Agree on task force decision making<sup>R</sup>
- Visioning Exercise – *Now, Future, Never*<sup>R</sup>
- Identify coordinating team members
- Next Steps
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)<sup>R</sup>
- Closing

### Tips

*A coordinating team helps move the work forward and fosters a culture of shared leadership and responsibilities.*

*All of these team traits are important to implement on your team to avoid burn out.*

## 1. Clarifying Intentions | Meeting 2

# Resources

### Example Timeline of Task Force to Food Council



### + / Δ Evaluation Activity

A quick evaluation at the end of meetings is a very effective way to gather feedback from the group and allows participants to give input in how the group will be run. Participants value seeing their suggestions actually implemented in the next meeting.

On a whiteboard or flip chart paper create a grid, one side for the things that went well in the meeting (+), and the other side for things that could be changed (Δ) in the next meeting. Ask everyone to share their thoughts in a 'popcorn' format for each of these categories. The coordinating team and facilitator should review the list and make adjustments to the next meeting as needed.

### Links

- [Now, Future, Never visioning activity](#)
- [Coordinating team responsibilities](#)
- [PLAIDS documentation for tracking progress](#)
- [Decision making options](#)
- Attention to equity in framing your purpose

+	Δ
What went well?	What could we change?

## 1. Clarifying intentions

# Meeting 3: Values, Stakeholders, Talking Points



### Overview

This meeting engages participants in crafting the values of a food council, describing how they will work together. Task force members begin to discuss stakeholders and talking points.

### Desired Outcomes

A list of 5-7 values for the food council

A list of 7-10 new people to contact to engage as stakeholders in the food council

A list of talking points to be used when talking with stakeholders and the community about the food council.

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Review Group Agreements & invite additions
- Best team experience activity<sup>R</sup>
- Values of a food council<sup>R</sup>
- Developing Talking Points<sup>R</sup>
- Engaging Stakeholders<sup>R</sup>
  - Circle of Influence small group activity<sup>R</sup>
- Next Steps
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)
- Closing

### Tip

*Use the 'best team' activity as a starting place for creating values of a food council.*

*Suggested pre-reading for meeting about engaging stakeholders: [Food Policy for All](#) article.*

## 1. Clarifying Intentions | Meeting 3

# Resources

### Exploring Values

*Values are beliefs or judgments about what is worthy, important or desirable that are reflected in individual and organization behavior.*

Have the group define each concept using concrete words:

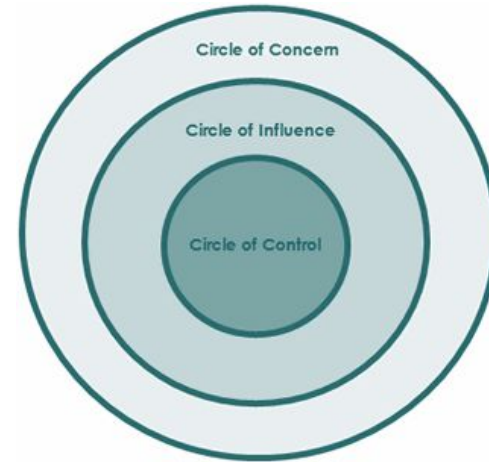
- Describe how you will work together
- Your commitment to each other
- Your commitment to \*\*\* County

### **Considering Equity/Racial Equity in your values statements**

### Talking Points

*Talking points are key pieces of information about your Task Force and future food council that you can use to engage more community stakeholders and supporters.*

### **Example Talking Points**



### Expanding the Circle of Influence

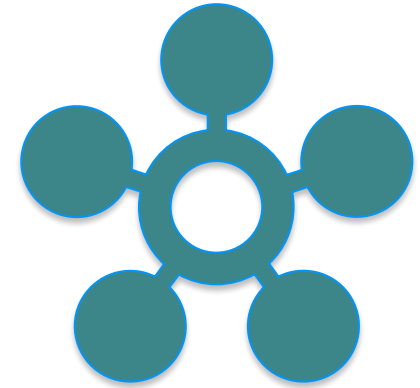
*In Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, he writes about two circles which contain our lives, the Circle of Concern and the Circle of Influence. The Circle of Influence encompasses those concerns that we can do something about or concerns that we have some control over.*

### Links

- [Best team experience activity](#)
- [Expanding circle of influence ACTIVITY instructions](#)
- [Engaging stakeholders spreadsheet](#)
- What do we mean by racial equity?

## 1. Clarifying intentions

# Meeting 4: Committees, Vision/Mission Primer



## Overview

This meeting builds in some time to catch up on the process so far or to move forward with establishing committees and establishing the mission and vision. You also may have to refine talking points.

## Desired Outcomes

A decision on committees for the task force

A list of volunteers for Outreach & Assessment Committees

A shared understanding of vision and mission

## Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Review Group Agreements & invite additions\*
- Discuss and choose committees<sup>R</sup>
- Committee group planning time
  - Questions to consider<sup>R</sup>
- Mission/Vision Primer
  - Examples and small group activity<sup>R</sup>
- Next Steps\*
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)
- Closing

## Tips

*Brown Bag lunches have been a low-cost, effective way of educating and engaging the community.*

\*Group agreements will not be listed as an agenda item after this meeting. The facilitator can refer to them when needed.

## 1. Clarifying Intentions | Meeting 4

# Resources

### Developing Committees

To expedite the process and facilitate member involvement, task force members often develop committees to work on projects with small groups outside of monthly meetings.

To encourage people to participate in a committee, they need to have an understanding of the committees work and process. Start by discussing the work you hope to do and offer examples of what other councils have done in the past.

Here are some questions to consider in the committee breakout groups:

- What are the goals of this committee?
- Who has skills, resources, or time to accomplish these goals?
- What would a timeline look like for accomplishing these goals?
- Who is willing to lead or coordinate this committee?

### Mission & Vision Primer Activity

If time allows in this meeting, see activity in Meeting 5 - Resources.

### Example Task Force Committees:

#### Coordinating (already created)

This group organizes meeting logistics, plans the agendas, sends out reminders, and takes notes. It is important to have a clear method of documenting decisions and keeping everyone aware of progress.

#### Outreach

Some councils immediately start offering regular outreach and education events to build awareness of the food system, like Brown Bag lunches, farm visits, volunteer opportunities at the soup kitchen, or tabling at events.

#### Baseline Community Food Assessment

A baseline assessment is a process that examines food related issues in order to improve the local food system. A baseline assessment can show inequities, opportunities, and assets within a community and can serve as a success of the task force and build momentum.

There are many ways to gather new data or use existing data to create an assessment.

### Transition Committees:

These will be formed and active during the transition to a food council.

#### Public Forum

A public forum is an event where a group presents their work to the broader community, gathers feedback, and encourages more community involvement. Food Councils can announce open member applications.

#### Membership

This small group works through the logistics of announcing, collecting, and recommending council applications. They will also be in charge of communication with all candidates.

## Step 2. Drafting a charter (meetings 5-12)

Once the group has worked together to develop shared values, working committees, a timeline and goals, the process shifts to creating a suggested structure for the inaugural food council.

- Define an organizational structure
- Explore decision-making processes
- Clarify food council member roles and responsibilities

We use a basic '[charter template](#)' to frame the discussion and decision points for this process. The conversations related to the draft charter can be very detailed and may take longer than expected. That is ok.

It can be challenging for a participant to miss a meeting and therefore miss the details of the conversation that drive the group towards decisions.

It is useful to have an administrator skilled at taking annotated notes that give a sense of *why* each decision point was made. It is also useful to have those who miss a meeting review the notes before the next meeting they attend.

Before embarking on this next series, make sure your administrator and communications systems are in place. See resources on slide 19 for thoughts on communications tools and committee.

### Council Experience

*"For our Task Force, It was essential to have a skilled facilitator to help us work through the consensus process of developing our charter. The process can be a bit frustrating, but in the end, everyone was satisfied with the charter and really excited to move forward!"*

- Ann Rafferty, Pitt County Farm and Food Council Task Force

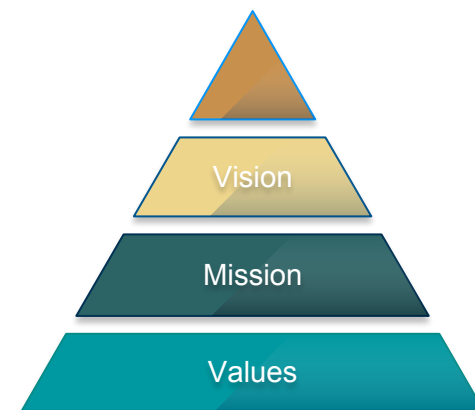


## 2. Drafting a charter

# Meeting 5: Mission and Vision

### Overview

First tackle the mission and vision of this new council to determine what type of work the council will engage in. Remember that form follows function, so structure should flow out of a shared understanding of the intended function of this food council. Build from the original Now, Future, Never activity from Meeting 2.



### Desired Outcomes

A shared understanding of mission and vision statements from other councils

A draft mission statement

A draft vision statement

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Draft Charter Overview<sup>R</sup>
- Vision & Mission development
  - Activity<sup>R</sup>
- Next Steps<sup>\*</sup>
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)
- Closing

### Tips

*Keep the group agreements on the wall for reference.*

*Don't set the expectation that you will complete the mission and vision at this meeting.*

*\*Holding a place for next steps is a useful way to capture the decisions and progress made, as well as the next meeting agenda items.*

## 2. Drafting a Charter | Meeting 5

# Resources

### Mission & Vision Primer

This activity will depend on the time available and whether you will be meeting the following month. This primer activity is good to do back-to-back with the actual activity. For example, if this is the November meeting, you may wait until January to do the primer activity.

Activity – Have attendees answer the questions below on their own in silence. Then have them discuss their answers in small groups. The small groups should report back what phrases or images resonated with them.

1. What does success look like to you for this food council?  
Brainstorm a list of images of success.
2. In five years, what would a newspaper article say about the food council?

### Refining the Mission and Vision

At the next meeting or if there is time to do both, use the morning detailed activity in the link below to help craft a mission and vision statements.

*Vision - An image of the mission accomplished, the ideal future state*

*Mission - A task, purpose, and calling of an individual, team, organization or network.*

A mission answers the questions:

- What do we do?
- With and for whom do we do it?
- What is our particular approach to the work.

Use the activity below to further grasp

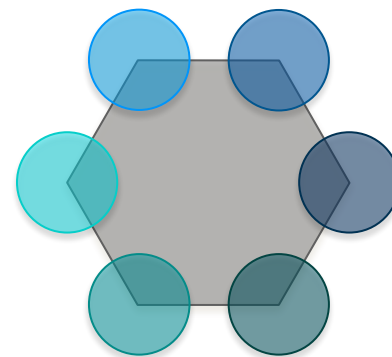
### Links

- [Food Council Charter Template](#)
- [Vision/Mission Prep Flash Talk Activity](#)

## 2. Drafting a charter

# Meeting 6:

## Food council name, Food council structure



### Overview

At this meeting, the council can come back with fresh eyes to decide the mission and vision. Agreeing on these statements helps define the work of the council and the right name for the council. The group can then decide on what structure will best facilitate what they want to accomplish.

### Desired Outcomes

A finalized mission and vision statement

A shared understanding of structures of councils across the state in order to better develop this council structure

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Review of charter sections & progress to date
- Refine mission and vision statements
- Draft a name for the food council
- Discuss possible Council Structures<sup>R</sup>
- Next Steps
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)
- Closing

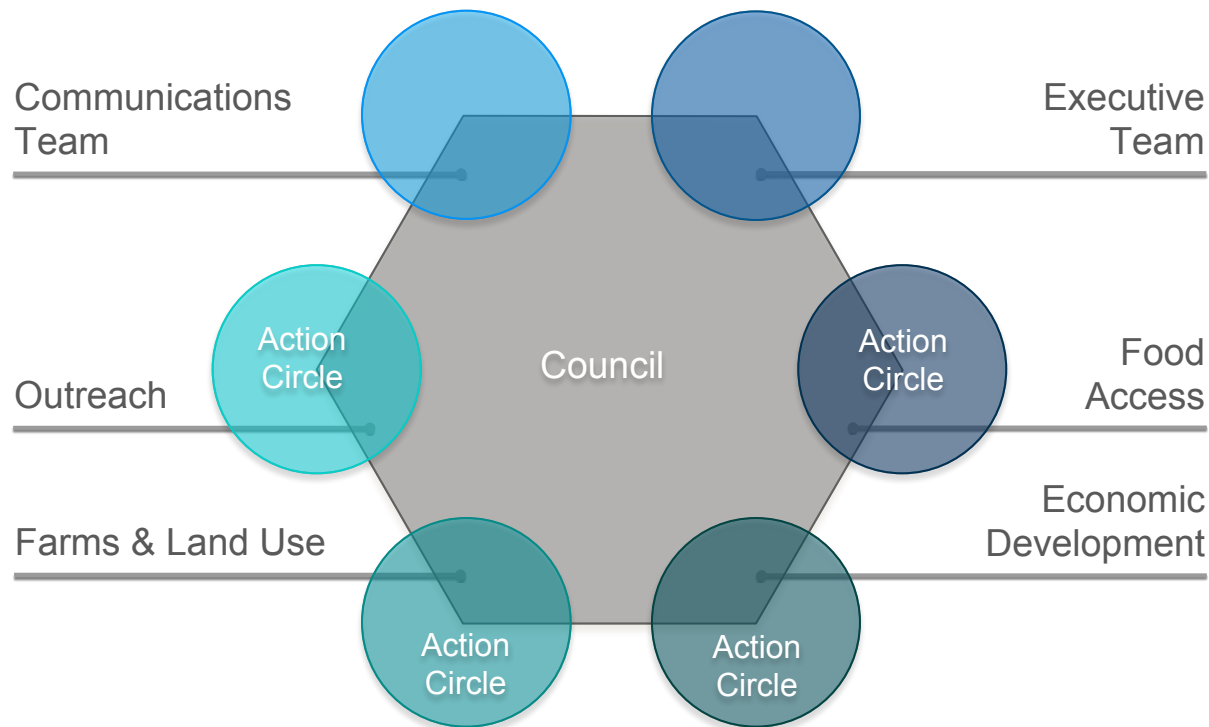
### Tips :

*Communities may call themselves something other than a 'food council', such as a network, coalition, or alliance.*

*Regardless of the name, these collective efforts involve a cross sector group, working together on a common goal of food sovereignty.*

*Review Food Policy Networks blog post.<sup>R</sup>*

# Resources: Council Structure



## Links

- [Visuals for council structure](#)
- [Food Policy Network's blog post: Structuring your food council](#)

## 2. Drafting a charter

# Meeting 7

## Food Council Structure, Member Responsibilities

### Overview

At this meeting, the group is further refining the organization structure and beginning to articulate the roles and responsibilities of the council members, committees, and network.

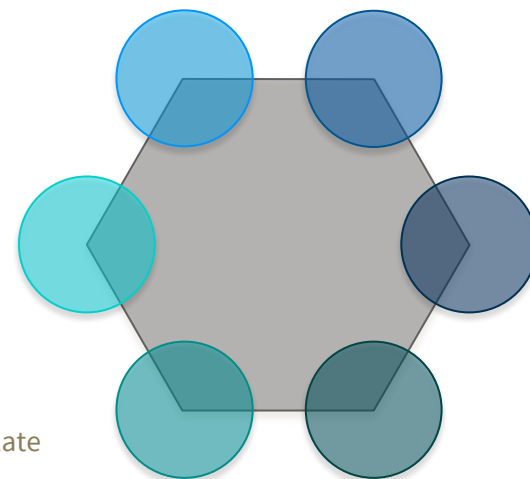
### Desired Outcomes

A draft structure for the council

A shared understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and tasks of the Network

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Council structure
  - Activity
- Network & Council description
- Next Steps
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)
- Closing



### Tip

*Be clear about the definition of each level of structure or engagement in the food council network.<sup>R</sup>*

*It may feel like you're talking in circles.*

*Seek out a good editor to wordsmith the language.*

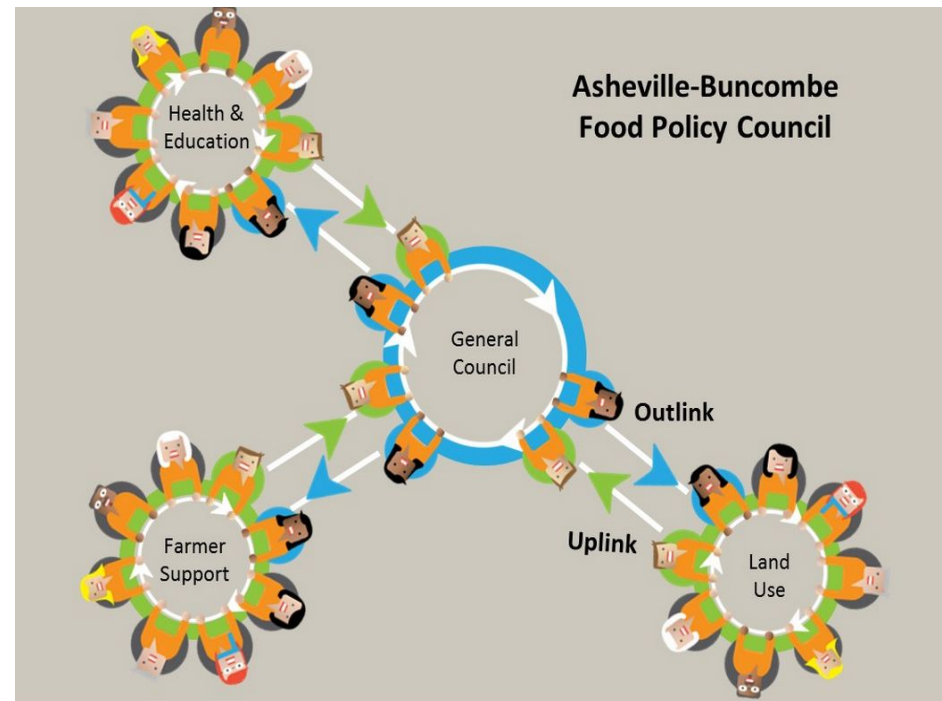
## 2. Drafting a Charter | Meeting 7

# Resources

The structure of your council is essential to form a baseline of operating as a group. It is important that food system stakeholders and community members can easily understand your structure and understand how they can fit into the work.

Many councils establish an initial structure and learn within a year or two what might need to be tweaked in their structure and systems to improve their outcomes.

So, while structure is important, it is equally important to be flexible and know that your council can adjust the structure as needed.



## Links

- Charter examples
  - [Pitt County Farm and Food Council](#)
  - [Johnston Farm and Food Council](#)
- By laws example
  - [Cabarrus Farm and Food Council](#)
- Structure examples
  - [Char-Meck Food Policy Council](#)
  - [Durham Farm and Food Network](#)

## 2. Drafting a charter

# Meeting 8

## Responsibilities of Food Council Members



### Overview

This meeting starts to define the roles and responsibilities of the council members and any other committees as defined by the structure. The group will decide on terms, attendance policies, and the responsibilities of various working groups.

### Desired Outcomes

An agreement of the “Council” roles, responsibilities, and tasks

A draft of roles, responsibilities, and tasks for Executive Committee & action circles

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Roles and responsibilities discussion/decision
  - Council
  - Executive Committee
  - Action circles
- Next Steps
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)
- Closing

### Tip

*Start with the draft language from the template charter.*

*Encourage the group to adapt the language from the draft to fit their needs.*

## 2. Drafting a Charter | Meeting 8

# Resources

### Example Duties of Executive Committee

Co-Chairs (Two council leads sharing responsibilities)

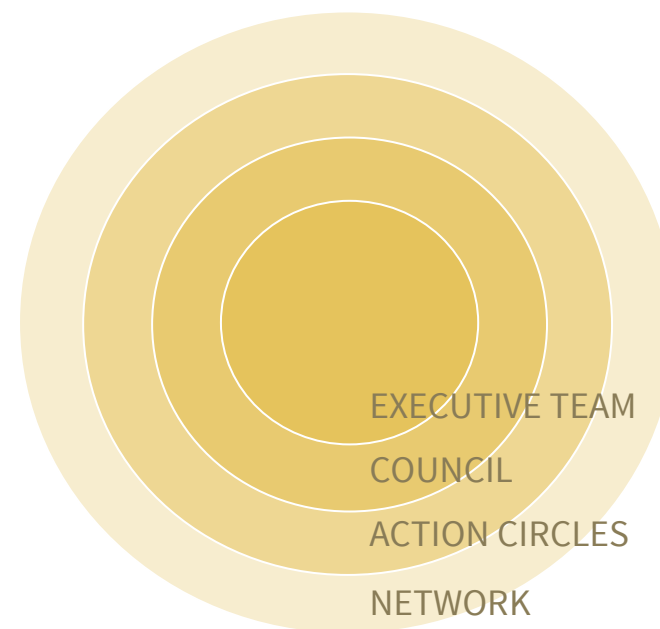
- Develop meeting agendas and facilitate meetings
- Serve as liaison between the Council and the community
- Ensure the Council acts in accordance with its policies
- Facilitate voting procedure and decision-making process
- Commit to keeping the work going between meetings

Secretary or Administrator

- Record and distribute minutes
- Assist in producing periodic reports and updates
- Maintain and record network membership list

Treasurer

- Monitor and maintain the fiduciary responsibilities
- Keep Council regularly up to date on financial matters



### Layers of Involvement

**Network** - Anyone interested in staying involved through broad communication channels

**Action Circles** - Anyone interested in participating and doing work on specific issues

**Council** - Elected members onto the Council body

**Executive Team/Committee** - A select number of Council members taking on extra responsibilities

### Links

- [Draft language for council member roles and responsibilities \(see pages 2-5\)](#)



## 2. Drafting a charter

# Meeting 9:

## Decision Making Process for Food Council



### Overview

This meeting provides time to refine the membership responsibilities. It also provides a time for more in-depth committee reports and learning about decision-making processes.

### Desired Outcomes

A shared understanding of various decision-making processes

A recommended decision making process for the full food council

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Decision-making processes recommendation<sup>R</sup>
  - consent; quorum; simple majority, etc
- Next Steps
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)
- Closing

### Tip

*Task force members who continue on to the full council will hold a responsibility to share and model this decision making tool in the first year of the food council.*

# Resources

Check out this compilation of Decision Making Processes that we often use, including information and links for:

- **Circle Forward** - a style of governance and decision making that is consent based, transparent, responsive, equitable and inclusive of all voices
- **The Interaction Institute for Social Change** - offers training on facilitative leadership and guidelines on who should be involved in decision making
- **Consent-based Decisions** - a consent method allows all voices to be heard and incorporates everyone's ideas and concerns as part of the discussion to shape the decision
- **Decision making as power and power as privilege** - tips for supporting community ownership in the food system



## 2. Drafting a charter

# Meeting 10:

## Finalized Charter, Celebrate!



### Overview

At this meeting, the group will review the full draft charter as a whole and confirm the details. Review the intent of this document as a suggested starting point and outline for the new food council. The council may choose to make changes, and eventually may choose to draft more detailed by-laws.

### Desired Outcomes

Finalized charter

Shared recognition of the work that the group has done to create a framework to support a lasting council.

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Review Full Charter
- Celebrate!
- Next Steps
- Meeting evaluation (+/Δ)
- Closing

### Tip

*Celebration is an important step in the process, and well deserved.*

*Consider honoring the completion of the charter with photos to mark the occasion.*

\*This is the last time the evaluation activity is included in the agenda. Incorporate the evaluation when the facilitator is trying new things or the group is incorporating new members.

# Step 3. Transitioning to a council (meetings 11-17)

Strong communication and a plan for bridging the knowledge of the task force to the new council members is crucial. In this Step the task force will:

- Host a public forum
- Create a new member application process
- Conduct the first council meeting

This phase starts with organizing a public forum to share the work and recommendations of the task force with the wider community and to announce the invitation to apply to the food council.

A separate committee can be really useful to plan this event. With committee meetings or multiple meetings per month, these next seven meetings may occur in just two or three months.

Once the call for members to the food council has been promoted, the task

force will collect applications and select council members with the pre-determined criteria (see Meetings 11-13).

While this is occurring, the task force will be deciding how the members of the task force will be associated and supportive of the newly elected council.

The first council meeting may include all or some of the members of the task force for a smooth transition.

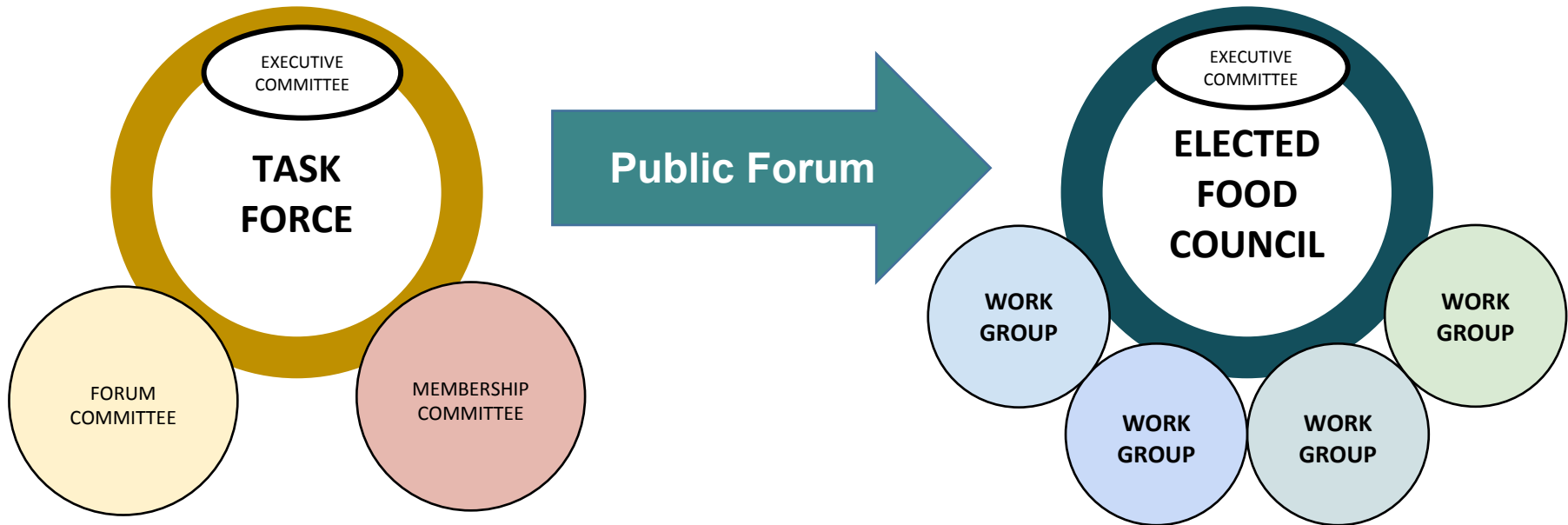
## Council Experience

*"During the transition to a Food Council, the Task Force group helped explain to new Council members what the Task Force had done and why. Clear communication, along with a plan to transfer the institutional memory from the Task Force to the Food Council, helped new members lead the first meetings. We found a Food Policy Council 101 seminar was a necessary part of that transition."*

- Rochelle Sparko, Durham Farm and Food Network

# 3. Transitioning to an elected council

A Public Forum is often the transition point between the Task Force and the Food Council. Some members of the Task Force remain on the new Council and some leave this leadership role. New council members are recruited to fill seats on the council.



### 3. Transitioning to a council

# Meeting 11

## Membership Application, Public Forum, & Transition Committees

### Overview

The goals of this meeting are to create an application form and a process for applying to be a member of the new council and to start the public forum planning process.

### Desired Outcomes

A draft of council member application

List of desired outcomes for public forum

A list of three to five people for a Public Forum & Membership committee

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Council member application
- Desired outcomes for public forum
- Selection of Public Forum & Membership Committee members
- Next Steps
- Closing

### Tips

Use *this* [Public Forum toolkit](#)

*Work together as a full group to create the membership application and criteria for consideration. Use the committee to assess applications and propose members based on criteria.*

*These two committees will likely be meeting outside of main meetings in the transition process.*

### 3. Transitioning to a Council | Meeting 11

# Resources

## Membership Committee Tasks

- Refine membership application if needed.
- Work with full task force to identify member selection criteria.
- Review applications and make recommendations based on the criteria to task force about council membership.
- Write letters to all candidates with acceptance decision. For those that were not selected to be on the council, offer other opportunities for them to stay engaged.

## Links

Public Forum & Membership Committee descriptions  
(See Meeting 4 Resources)

- [Examples of membership selection criteria](#)
- [Example of membership applications 1](#)
- [Example of membership application 2](#)
- [Encouraging someone to apply for the council \[template\]](#)
- [Welcome! email](#)
- [Can you participate in other ways? email](#)

## Member Application or Invitation

Councils have selected members in different ways. Some councils use a full application and selection process. The steps for that process are outlined in the following meetings.

Councils that become government appointed advisory groups work with their local government to appoint organizational and community member representatives.

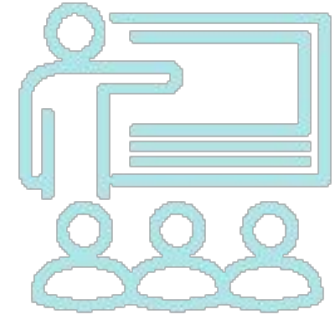
Other task forces choose to invite members to an inaugural council rather than through an application process for membership. This is a faster approach. It may or may not include an application process. Some councils also have used a hybrid of these processes.

*Contact us for an introduction to councils that have used these methods for council membership.*

### 3. Transitioning to a council

# Meeting 12

## Public Forum: logistics, outreach, messaging



### Overview

The public forum is intended to present the work of the task force to the larger community; to energize community members and leaders to join the food council, and to coalesce them around food systems change. The goal is to attract a diverse audience and share clear ways for them to get involved.

### Desired Outcomes

A draft logistics plan of date, time, and location with point people for follow up

A draft outreach plan

Draft messaging for the ‘ask’

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Public Forum
  - Logistics – date, time, location, agenda
  - Outreach and promotion
  - Messaging – preparing the invitation to the community members to join the council
  - Volunteer coordination
- Next Steps
- Closing

### Tips

*Use your talking points to inform your messaging to the community.*

*Your messaging may become the first page of your membership application.*



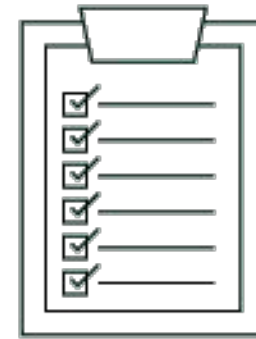
### 3. Transitioning to a Council | Meeting 12

# Resources

## Public Forum Toolkit Checklist:

This is an abbreviated checklist below, see [toolkit](#) for more details.

- ☐ Set a date (or dates)  
*May - October are difficult times for farmers to attend.*
- ☐ Confirm location availability  
*Find a location that is welcoming to the whole community, like churches and public libraries, places where bi-lingual and marginalized community members feel comfortable.*
- ☐ Develop an outreach plan and invite local media
- ☐ Consider childcare and translation services
- ☐ Prepare the 'invitation' to the community to be involved  
*Apply to be a Council member or attend our next meeting.*
- ☐ Prepare materials necessary for attendees to respond
- ☐ Assign volunteer roles
- ☐ Follow up with all attendees



## Council Experience

*"Hosting a focus group followed by three public forums gave us the opportunity to listen to what the community was thinking about farm and food issues. We were often surprised by the stories we heard. At the same time, we effectively explained the food system to them and discussed the place of a farm and food council in our county. The meetings led to more connection with the communities, volunteers, and resources."*

- Leigh Guth, Pitt County Farm and Food Council

### 3. Transitioning to a council

# Meeting 13

## Outreach for applicants, Selection of members

### Overview

The goal of this meeting is to define a system and criteria for electing members to the food council.

### Desired Outcomes

A system for selecting council members

A plan for promoting or soliciting application for the council

Agreement on timeline and responsibilities for disseminating, collecting, and reviewing membership applications

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Membership Committee presents recommendation of membership selection criteria for approval
- Review outreach plan for council applicants
- Create timeline of council application and selection
- Next Steps
- Closing

### Tips

*Remember, when you're doing outreach for the public forum you're also doing outreach for potential members.*

*The location you choose for your public forum will have an impact on who attends and how many.*

*Some councils choose to host multiple forums in different parts of the community/county.*

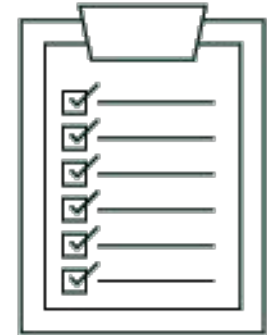
*The Membership Committee may suggest that task force members who are re-applying to the council do not vote.*

*Use this [Outreach Tracking example](#).*

### 3. Transitioning to a council

# Meeting 14

## Final Public Forum Planning



### Overview

This meeting is used to follow up on the planning progress for the public forum, and secure any additional help needed to prepare for the event.

### Desired Outcomes

An update on Public Forum progress

A plan for remaining Public Forum tasks and who will be responsible for them

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Committee Updates
- Finalize details of Public Forum
  - See [Public Forum Toolkit](#)
- Council membership selection
- Review timeline
- Next Steps
- Closing

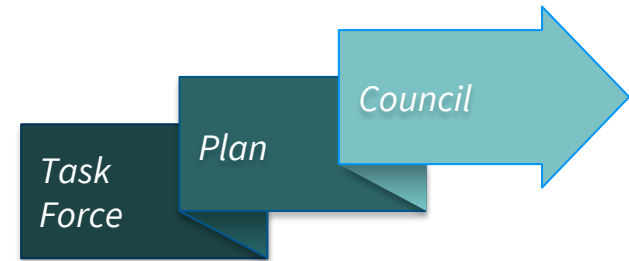
### Tips

*Have fun with the public forum!*

*Don't forget to reach out to media, even multiple times.*

*Don't consider the Forum over until follow-up is complete. Plan now for follow up.*

### 3. Transitioning to a council



# Meeting 15

## Transition plan from task force to food council

### Overview

This meeting is designed to take place after the Public Forum has occurred and while the applications for the council are being accepted. The task force could use this time to finalize any remaining charter work and clarify the roles of the task force in the transition to the new council.

### Desired Outcomes

A shared understanding of a road map for the transition from task force to council

Shared understanding of membership application progress

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome
- Public Forum debrief
- Council membership update
- Create a shared transition plan from task force to council
  - Communications, Task Force member continued involvement
- Next Steps
- Closing

### Tip

*A task force member should continue the communications responsibilities for at least three meetings and train the new council member on communication procedure.*

### 3. Transitioning to a Council | Meeting 15

# Resources

## Council Experience

*In this council, the task force was extremely dedicated to developing a process for task force members that chose not to apply as council members to support new council members throughout their first year.*

*However, there was not a clear system for communication or a set of contact names or emails for the new council and the dedicated task force members. Without this system of communication, the dedicated task force members were left off of invitations to the first six months of food council meetings. They lost a pool of committed and knowledgeable network members.*

*Take some time to review your communication plan before the first council meeting. Have a way to stay in touch with task force members that is aligned with, but different than, the way that you communicate with council members.*

## Transition Plan considerations (track decisions here)

- ❑ Outreach to get application opportunity across county and to a wide set of potentially interested folks.
- ❑ Are there county officials or other decision makers you need to make sure to have been in touch with/who know about our process? Do you need to direct-invite any of these people to apply?
- ❑ What happens to the task force members after council is seated?  
*We suggest having the task force serve as a liaison to the council for the first year.*
- ❑ Finalize membership agreement (How long do you serve as a member? Are there alternating terms of membership?)
- ❑ Formalize communications plan and make sure you have someone from the task force who is familiar with communication processes who is willing to continue that responsibility on the council and/or train someone on the new council to take it over.
- ❑ Could you give a presentation on the new food council to the Board of County Commissioners or others?
- ❑ Have a plan for how to invite those people, who applied but were not accepted, to engage in the network in another way.  
*Consider inviting them to be leads of working groups or other similar roles.*
- ❑ If you have not already, answer the question: Will council meetings be open to the public?



### 3. Transitioning to a council

# Meeting 16:

## Member selection and inaugural meeting planning

### Overview

At this meeting, the task force members will hear the recommendations of the Membership Committee and vote on the members of the Council.

### Desired Outcomes

A list of approved members to the Council

A plan for organizing the first Food Council meeting and who will be leading the meeting

### Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Updates
- Vote on Council membership
- Plan the first Council Meeting
  - Establish goals & planning committee
- Next Steps
- Closing

### Tips

*All Task Force members should attend the first Council meeting.*

*See Meeting 17 for example first Food Council meeting agenda.*

### 3. Transitioning to a council

# Meeting 17:

First meeting of the new food council



## Overview

Congratulations – it's the first meeting of the new food council! Since not everyone will know each other, nor be very familiar with what a food council is, this meeting will start to build relationships and a shared understanding of the work ahead. Finding ways to help people share their passions and reasons for being there will be useful to build energy.

## Desired Outcomes

An opportunity for everyone to meet each other and share their food and farming interests

A shared understanding of a food council and the history of the Task Force

A shared understanding of co-chair responsibilities and the election process

## Sample Agenda

- Welcome / Introductions
- Food & Drinks Meet & Greet between Task Force and new Council members
- What is a 'Food Council' presentation
- Round - Why are you here? What excites you about tonight?
- Review Charter
- Criteria for co-chairs
  - Select co-chairs at the next meeting after council members have met each other
- Next Steps – schedule next meeting times
- Closing

## Tip

*If a baseline assessment has been completed, share highlights at a future meeting.*

## Resources

[Food council overview presentation](#)

# 4. Appendix

The following provides the links to additional resources in each section.

## Overview:

- [Spreadsheet of stakeholders by whole measure](#)
- [Strategic Advocacy Toolkit \(working with policy change\)](#)
- [CLF's "Structuring your food policy council"](#)
- ["Ten Low-hanging fruit actions for food councils"](#)

## Step 1: Clarifying Intentions

- [Los Angeles Food Council video](#) - gives a helpful summary of what a food council is/does
- [Sample food council presentation](#)
- [Task Force vs. Council overview](#)
- [Let's Talk About It: What do we mean by racial equity?](#)
- [Now, Future, Never visioning activity](#)
- [Coordinating team responsibilities](#)
- [PLAIDS documentation for tracking progress](#)
- [Decision making options](#)
- [Example Talking Points](#)
- [Best team experience activity](#)
- [Expanding circle of influence ACTIVITY instructions](#)
- [Engaging stakeholders spreadsheet](#)



# 4. Appendix

## Step 2: Drafting a charter

- [Food Council Charter Template](#)
- [Vision/Mission Prep - Flash Talk Activity](#)
- [Visuals for council structure](#)
- [Food Policy Network's blog post: Structuring your food council](#)
- **Charter examples**
  - [Pitt County Farm and Food Council](#)
  - [Johnston Farm and Food Council](#)
- **Structure examples**
  - [Char-Meck Food Policy Council](#)
  - [Durham Farm and Food Network](#)
- **Bylaws example**
  - [Cabarrus Farm and Food Council](#)
- [Draft language for council member roles and responsibilities](#)  
(see pages 2-5 of Draft Charter Template)
- [Decision Making Processes](#)

## Step 3: Transitioning to a council

- [Public Forum toolkit](#)
- [Examples of membership selection criteria](#)
- [Example of membership applications 1](#)
- [Example of membership application 2](#)
- [Encouraging someone to apply for the council \[template\]](#)
- [Can you participate in other ways? email](#)
- [Outreach Tracking example.](#)
- [Food council overview presentation](#)

# good luck



COMMUNITY FOOD  
**STRATEGIES**

## Community Food Strategies

Please contact with any questions and requests for support:

[communityfoodstrategies.org](http://communityfoodstrategies.org)

[communityfoodstrategies@gmail.com](mailto:communityfoodstrategies@gmail.com)