7.4 Encourage Healthy and Sustainable Food Networks

10 – 35 Points

Objective

A community-wide healthy, sustainable, equitable food network.

What to Do

For each of the elements below, you may wish to consider partnering with other municipalities or working through your municipality's council of governments. Each municipality participating in a collaborative will receive points.

The more you do, the more points you earn.

1. Form a local or regional Food Policy Council (or equivalent, such as a collaborative or commission, collectively referred to hereafter as "Council"). Designate a person(s), agency(ies) or committee to lead the local or regional Food Policy Council. The purpose of the Food Policy Council, among others, is to examine, connect and improve all component parts of the food system, including through policy recommendations. You may leverage your Sustainability Team or other existing committee to assist with this task or partner with an existing community organization. Consider joining the Food Policy Councils of Connecticut Collaborative. **(10 points)**

   Submit: The name(s) of the Food Policy Council committee members; and the date of the most recent Food Policy Council meeting.
2. Conduct a Community Food Assessment **(10 points)**:

   a. Gather data on at least 10 indicators of food access. This baseline data collection will help explain why residents are making certain food choices based on convenience, availability, and affordability. Data points might include income levels, unemployment rates, eligibility for free school lunch, public transportation need or options, and quality/quantity of food retailers.

   b. Using the baseline data to prompt discussion, host a series of dialogues on priorities and strategies for improving food access. This input should come directly from residents as well as community leaders and members of citizen boards and committees of the municipality (e.g. Health Services, Youth Services, School Board, etc).

   c. Assemble information gathered into a Community Food Assessment Report.

   The following data points and sources are readily available from the U.S. Census, other national data sources, and the UCONN: Zwick Center for Food and Resource Policy:

   - Poverty rate
   - Unemployment rate
   - Number of households that lack private vehicles
   - Educational attainment of town residents
   - Participation rate in the National School Lunch Program
   - Participation rate in the National School Breakfast Program (if offered in your school

district)
    - Number of Summer Meal sites and average daily participation rates in Summer Meal Programs
    - Number of persons and number of households participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the last 12 months (for which data is available)

The following potential indicators will require more customized, local research:

- Examination of food retail options (See Inventory and Promote Local Food Retail Options Action), analyzing for each vendor and also collectively factors including but not limited to availability of public transit and other non-personal-vehicle mobility options; location; hours; navigability of physical space by persons with functional limitations; availability of fresh produce; and acceptance of SNAP and incentives for use of SNAP on fresh produce.
- Map of emergency food providers (such as food pantries, soup kitchens and mobile pantry distribution).
- Number of community garden plots and number of people directly benefiting from renting community garden plots (e.g., household size of each gardener).
- Value of nutrition incentives redeemed at local farmers' markets during the last seasons, including double value coupons, WIC coupons, and senior farmers market coupons).
- Number of active school gardens and number of students with 10 or more hours of hands-on learning in the garden.
- Number of school-age students that participate in community programs that connect youth to growing foods and food enterprises.

Submit: The Community Food Assessment Report that includes the required elements listed above, plus additional elements that your municipality determines are pertinent; and a summary of themes, actions, and priorities that you generated through community dialogues.

3. Following completion of the Community Food Indicators Report, distribute the assessment to relevant municipal departments. Then make a presentation on the report to your local elected official(s), governing body, and other town leaders. **(5 points)**

   Submit: Evidence that you distributed the Community Food Indicators Report to relevant municipal departments; and a copy of the final presentation of the assessment made to the local elected official, governing body and other town leaders.
4. Including resident and stakeholder participation, create a community food action plan to ensure that all community members can access sustainable, healthy food. Consider subpopulations (including variations in income, race, ethnicity, national origin, and age). **(10 points)**

   All elements must be completed to receive credit.

   a. The lead contact for the Action Plan within municipal government and any key partners/agencies;

   b. Who will take responsibility for various action items;

   c. A timeline of deliverables with no less than 6-month intervals for a period of not less than two years;

   d. An easy method for community members to get involved, such as joining a working group; and

   e. A dedicated webpage where residents can track action plan implementation and review meeting notes.

   Submit: Your Community Food Action Plan.

Credit for Past Action

- Any council will be considered for points regardless of when it was created, so long as the most recent

meeting was within 1 year prior to application submission.

- Any community food indicators report must have been completed or updated within 10 years prior to application submission.

- Distribution and presentation of your community food indicators report must have occurred within 1 year prior to application submission.

- Any community food action plan must have been completed or updated within 10 years prior to application submission.

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

The local government public health department or district staff and municipal economic development representatives should be involved in the implementation of this action, in partnership with community agencies. Partners might include community food nonprofits, local businesses (including farms), emergency food providers, schools, farmers markets, early childhood collaboratives, chambers of commerce and other business alliances.

Funding

For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Sustainable CT Resources for Certification page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Municipal Grant Program (MGP)
- CHEJ Small Grants Program

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- How to Establish a Food Policy Council
- USDA Community Food Assessment Toolkit, providing a series of standardized measurement tools for assessing food security within a community
- Whole Measures for Community Food Systems: Values-Based Planning & Evaluation
- Could Your Community Survive on Local Food?

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- John's Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
- The Edible Schoolyard Project
- Food Solutions New England
- CT Food System Alliance
- UCONN: Zwick Center for Food and Resource Policy
- End Hunger CT!

Benefits

Enhancing food security improves the general health and wellness of your community and promotes equity. Addressing malnutrition also enhances a community's capacity for economic growth and community building. When food security is considered in the context of sustainable food choices, increasing access to locally grown products can also reduce adverse environmental impacts and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

CT Success Stories

- 2018 Hartford - Strong Model
- 2018 New Haven - Strong Model
- 2018 South Windsor - Notable Energy Planning
- 2018 Windham - Strong Model
- New Haven Food Policy Council and Food Action Plan
- Windham Community Food Network
- South Windsor Food Alliance