

A COLLABORATIVE, COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO A HEALTHIER CLEVELAND AND CUYAHOGA COUNTY

FOOD



ACCESS

RAISES



EVERYONE

“HOW CAN WE COMBINE OUR CAPACITY AND OVERCOME
SILOS? HOW CAN WE PEEL BACK THE LAYERS TO SEE TRUE
NEED, SO WE CAN TRULY HELP COMMUNITIES?”

... CLEVELAND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP EXPERT

INTRODUCTION

Background: the FARE process

Access to nutritious food is a fundamental need, yet for too many people, a healthy diet is out of reach. In Cuyahoga County, one in four people live in areas that lack access to healthy food. Within Cleveland, one in two people lack access, and 60% of those without access are people of color.¹ According to 2015 County Health Rankings, Cuyahoga County is ranked 65th (of 88 Ohio counties) in overall health outcomes.² The FARE process was part of an effort to increase access to fresh, affordable food and the information to make healthy choices, to not only improve public health but also promote equity and stimulate the local economy.

There is a history of deep commitment to addressing this issue in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County. Many individuals and community-based organizations have dedicated themselves to eliminating food access disparities and strengthening the local food system. Neighborhood community development corporations (CDCs) and local government agencies are invested in this mission, and coalitions such as the Cleveland – Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition (FPC) and the Health Improvement Partnership-Cuyahoga (HIP-Cuyahoga) have emerged to coordinate the breadth of innovative efforts that exist.

Over the last several years, The Food Trust, a national nonprofit food access organization, has had the opportunity to partner with local organizations doing this work throughout Ohio. In 2015, as a result of these relationships, The Saint Luke's Foundation supported The Food Trust and local partners Morgan Taggart and Erika Trapl to undertake a one-year assessment and planning project, referred to as FARE (Food Access Raises Everyone). FARE was a temporary process with the goal of identifying opportunities to support local efforts and achieve a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to food access in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County. The information collected through this process and shared in this report is intended to be used by those who read it to inform their own plans and forge new partnerships.

Seeking to be as inclusive as possible, the FARE process engaged hundreds of local food access champions. These contacts represented residents, grassroots leaders, CDCs, nonprofit organizations, private businesses, city/county/state/federal government, philanthropy, faith-based organizations, healthcare and educational institutions and more. A group of individuals was also selected to advise the assessment process and bring diverse perspectives and more people to the table (a list of advisors is included at the end of the report). Through research, interviews, surveys, site visits and ongoing conversations, The FARE team learned directly from local stakeholders about the current assets and needs of those working to improve access to healthy food. In April 2016, a public input session was convened in Cleveland. Over 100 people representing a wide range of projects and perspectives attended the event and participated in breakout sessions focused on eight different program areas, which emerged as a result of activity and interest on the ground in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County. Those program areas include: Nutrition Education, Healthy Retail, Healthcare Partnerships, Farm to School/Institution, Farmers Markets, Healthy Food Financing, Youth Leadership and Urban Agriculture.

ABOUT THIS REPORT: LEARN ABOUT YOUR POTENTIAL PARTNERS!

The Food Trust synthesized the vast information that was shared through the methods described previously and drafted a detailed report: *Food Access in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County: Needs Assessment & Recommendations*. Using information that was provided by individuals working on the ground in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County, the long report delves deeply into each of the eight program areas listed previously, identifying specific needs, recommendations and opportunities to collaborate. It also outlines overarching recommendations for breaking down siloes and comprehensively advancing the entire food access movement. Readers are encouraged to refer to the longer version of the report for more detailed information. That longer draft was shared multiple times with all FARE advisors and participants, who were asked to provide additional feedback. In particular, they were asked to highlight the aspects of their work they most wanted to share in order to invite community members to get involved, help potential partners collaborate and inspire funders to support the work in creative ways. This report is based entirely on that feedback, building on the participatory process of the last year.



This document is organized into program areas, with the recognition that each program is not operating in isolation, but rather, is a piece of a larger, comprehensive movement. For each program area, there is an introduction and list of assets, needs and recommendations that were identified by local stakeholders. Each program section also includes examples of potential overlap between that program area and others. These overlaps are just a few examples of potential collaboration that are intended to spur readers' imagination, and they are not exhaustive. In the same vein, each program section highlights specific examples of success and innovation. These are but a few examples of the work that exists, but they are by no means a comprehensive list of the vast, wonderful work that is being conducted. The examples serve to share glimpses of what is occurring in different program areas so that readers can take the information and create their own plans, identifying areas of intersection that may not have occurred to them before. Following the program area sections, there is a comprehensive recommendations section, which focuses on macro-level suggestions for supporting individual needs while furthering the overarching food access movement in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County. The purpose of this report is to celebrate and inform readers about existing work, share paths for collaboration and provide information and suggestions for people to integrate into their own planning processes. The content was provided by local stakeholders, and FARE advisors and participants selected aspects of their work to emphasize in order to inspire new partnerships. The FARE team is extremely appreciative of the openness and generosity of local partners who took the time to share their knowledge, passion and input throughout the entirety of this process. The hope is that all who have come to the table will remain engaged, and that the information shared in this report can serve as a useful tool to enable the already strong efforts in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County to move forward with additional success and collaboration.

Photo: FARE Stakeholder Input Session at the Ariel International Center in Cleveland, April 2016.

Program Areas

The following program areas emerged as a result of activity and interest on the ground in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County. They are defined on this page to provide context and help organize conversation about existing efforts.



Nutrition Education: nutrition and cooking lessons to empower adults and youth with the tools and knowledge to make healthier shopping, cooking and eating choices. Nutrition education can take place in a variety of venues, from schools to community centers, churches, corner stores, supermarkets, farmers markets, CDCs and beyond. Lesson formats range widely and include cooking demonstrations, taste tests and store tours.



Healthy Retail: programming to support small store/corner store owners to stock healthier products, including fresh produce. Programs include in-store marketing to guide customers toward healthy choices and often involve on-site cooking demos, taste tests, health screenings, coupons and locally grown food.



Farm to School/Institution: a set of practices for introducing students to local food and the food system. Programming is based around three pillars: procurement (purchasing and serving local food in schools), education (incorporating curricula related to agriculture, food, health or nutrition) and school gardens. Institutions like hospitals and universities can also engage in this area by purchasing and serving locally grown food.



Healthcare Partnerships: areas in which hospitals and healthcare providers overlap with food access and nutrition education. Examples include: produce prescription programs, hospitals and health clinics funding or hosting farmers markets, health screenings at corner stores, nutritionists at supermarkets and more.



Farmers Markets: markets where growers sell their locally grown food directly to consumers. This encompasses all farmers markets, with an emphasis on how they support local food systems and can also address food access disparities by operating in underserved areas and increasing affordability by accepting public benefits, produce prescriptions and incentives (where customers can earn more money to spend on produce, often when they use their Ohio Direction Card).



Healthy Food Financing: financing for grocers and other fresh food retailers to encourage them to enter or remain in areas that need them most. Healthy food financing initiatives fund a wide range of projects, from large supermarkets to corner stores and farmers markets, in order to improve food access by supporting the development and renovation of projects in low-to-moderate income, underserved areas.



Youth Leadership: programming to support and engage youth to become leaders for healthy change in their schools and communities. Through these efforts, youth learn the importance of nutrition and physical activity, spread awareness to their peers and communities and engage in decision making. Programs can take place in and out of school, through youth wellness councils, fitness clubs, healthy fundraisers, urban gardening and more.



Urban Agriculture: refers to a wide range of local growing efforts, from larger-scale farms to small, grassroots neighborhood gardens and related activities. With extensive gardening and farming initiatives taking place throughout Cuyahoga County, this section emerged as a key part of the local food access and food system landscape, with overlap between urban farming, small business ownership and the local economy.



NUTRITION EDUCATION

Nutrition education encompasses a wide variety of venues, formats, teachers and audiences. For that reason, it has the capacity to overlap with all other programs areas, encouraging healthy choices at stores, incorporating nutrition into school curricula, celebrating culture and community through cooking at faith-based organizations and beyond. As children spend a considerable portion of their day in the classroom, in-school nutrition education can be critical for equipping students with knowledge and skills for healthy decision-making. With 31 school districts in Cuyahoga County, including 373 public schools and nearly 175,000 students, there is great potential to reach youth through nutrition education in the classroom.³ Outside of schools, community members of all ages can learn tips about nutrition, cooking and shopping on a budget that, in coordination with other aspects of the comprehensive approach, can lead to behavior changes and healthier lifestyles.

Assets

There is unique strength of commitment to nutrition education in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, with numerous groups attaining funding and staff to do programming, even if it extends beyond their primary mission. Nutrition education is being conducted in various forms, through both institutional and independent grassroots efforts. Cuyahoga County's resources for nutrition education may expand in the coming years in terms of funding and how and where that funding can be used. Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) dollars are a major source of funding for nutrition education, and these funds have recently become less restrictive, allowing programming to reach farther and occur in additional and less traditional venues.

Needs

- Coordination between the numerous existing nutrition education programs to ensure efficiency, sustainability and coverage for all communities.
- Staff capacity, space and funding for nutrition educators.
- Support for marketing and building demand for nutrition education; developing appropriate curricula for wide-ranging settings and audiences and evaluating community impact.

Recommendations

- Conduct strategic planning to create a more robust community-based model. Identify additional locations that are convenient, accessible and suitable for group teaching.
- Utilize a centralized source of support for networking, mapping and marketing education programs.
- Form additional partnerships between educators, community groups, CDCs, food retailers, hunger relief organizations/emergency food providers, childcare centers, schools, universities, housing agencies, local government, healthcare providers and more.
- Ensure that available funding sources like SNAP-Ed are maximized and distributed. Explore additional long-term funding from the private sector and nonprofit hospitals to support nutrition educators who do not currently have access to resources.
- Partner with multicultural, community-based groups to reach a larger audience with culturally appropriate lessons. Use a "train the trainer" model that allows community members to teach their peers.

Opportunities for Cross-Program Collaboration

Healthcare Partnerships:

- On-site nutrition education at healthcare clinics.
- Physician referrals to nutrition education programs.
- Customized education for chronic disease management.
- Community benefit dollars to fund lessons and incentive programs.
- Health screenings paired with nutrition lessons at retail stores and community centers.

Healthy Food Retail (corner stores and supermarkets):

- In-store interactive lessons, cooking demonstrations, recipes and information on food storage.
- Lessons paired with incentive coupons for participants to use in the store.
- Store tours and in-store materials on specific dietary needs.

Farm to School:

- Integration of in-school nutrition curricula (often through SNAP-Ed) and farm to school curricula.
- Incorporation of nutrition education with locally sourced meals and snacks served in schools.
- Nutrition education lessons in school gardens.

Youth Leadership:

- Nutrition education as part of youth leadership programming during and after school.
- Youth leaders in schools (such as wellness councils) leading nutrition lessons for their peers.

Farmers Markets:

- Cooking demonstrations, lessons and market tours at farmers markets, with Produce Perks incentives for participants.
- Field trips and community events at farmers markets.

INNOVATION IN ACTION

The Greater Cleveland Food Bank uses a curriculum developed by the Cleveland Clinic to offer nutrition education and cooking demos at their distribution sites. They also work with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to bring mobile food pantries to schools.

Vel Scott's Healthy You program provides community-based cooking classes to help people prevent and control diet-related diseases through healthy eating. A long-time Cleveland resident, Vel celebrates culture and bold flavors, focusing on making healthy choices easier. Vel's Purple Oasis Garden, a one acre urban farm, works with multiple local partners to provide access to fresh food and teach volunteers how to cook vegetables picked directly from the garden.



“NUTRITION EDUCATION CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE.
IT CAN TAKE PLACE IN SO MANY PLACES AND
TOUCHES EVERYTHING ELSE.”

... CUYAHOGA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH LEADER



HEALTHY RETAIL

In communities that lack access to supermarkets, residents often rely on convenience stores for groceries. The majority of these stores sell highly processed, high-calorie foods with low nutritional quality, and very few of them sell fresh produce, whole grains or healthy dairy, meats or fish. Healthy retail programs seek to assist these small stores in profitably stocking and selling healthy items, while using in-store marketing to direct customers toward healthy choices.

Assets

There is an existing collaboration in place to work on a healthy retail initiative in Cuyahoga County. HIP-Cuyahoga's Healthy Eating Active Living Sub-Committee/REACH, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health's Creating Healthy Communities Program and Tremont West Development Corporation are all currently working on healthy retail programming. With a grant from the Kresge Foundation, The Food Trust is providing technical assistance for this effort, based on their experience running a successful healthy corner store initiative in Philadelphia and supporting similar programs in cities across the country. There is also a strong state level "Good Food Here" brand, with resource materials for local retailers and regular networking calls.

Needs

- Trust and positive relationships between store owners and community residents, making corner stores community assets and go-to places for healthy food.
- Community engagement to understand what type of program or effort would be welcomed by and beneficial for local residents and store owners.
- Coordination among partners, identifying specific and realistic goals and roles and clear decision-making processes.
- A distribution system for getting small orders of fresh produce and healthy food to stores.
- Staff capacity to implement, maintain and grow the program.
- Technical support for developing materials, working with store owners and evaluating impact.

Recommendations

- Establish and maintain a participatory process to engage residents in developing and maintaining a sustainable plan; ask community members what they'd like to see in terms of programming and store offerings; work with local CDCs and REACH resident teams; and be mindful of historical context.
- Build staff capacity for working on the ground with store owners and ensure that program employees are the appropriate messengers for building relationships with both store owners and local residents.
- Collaborate with nontraditional partners and different types of stores, including meat markets and specialty and ethnic grocers.
- Improve coordination among stakeholders, including local government and statewide networks, making use of available funding opportunities and other resources.
- Look to national best practices for implementing programs, building consumer demand, distributing fresh food in small quantities, sourcing local produce and evaluating outcomes.

Opportunities for Cross-Program Collaboration

Nutrition Education:

- In-store interactive lessons, cooking demonstrations, recipes and information on food storage.
- Lessons paired with incentive coupons: incentive dollars for participants to use in the store, supported by staff to work with store owners and ensure that incentives are used on eligible items.

Youth Leadership:

- Bringing youth to stores to build relationships with store owners, learn how to find and buy healthy options in the store and advise the store owner on what they'd like to see in stock.
- Sourcing produce from local market gardens that employ youth and host leadership programs.

Healthcare Partnerships:

- Using hospitals' community benefit dollars to fund "Heart Smarts" programming, including in-store nutrition education, on-site health screenings and incentive coupons ("heart bucks") for participants to use in the store on heart healthy items.

Healthy Food Financing:

- Financing from the Healthy Food for Ohio (HFFO) program for equipment and energy upgrades and other needs to enable stores to offer healthy fresh food in low-to-moderate income, underserved areas.

INNOVATION IN ACTION

The Tremont Healthy Corner Store Initiative recently partnered with Ohio State University (OSU) Extension to pilot in-store nutrition education programming based on The Food Trust's "Heart Smarts" program.

The Coit Road Farmers Market is interested in connecting farmers to corner store owners interested in selling locally grown produce. Pre-cut and prepared vegetables from local farms could also be provided to corner stores to sell as grab-and-go products, which could incorporate the statewide Good Food Here logo.

“WITH RELATIONSHIP BUILDING BETWEEN STORE OWNERS AND RESIDENTS, CORNER STORES CAN BE ASSETS FOR THE COMMUNITY.”

... CLEVELAND COMMUNITY LEADER





FARM TO SCHOOL/INSTITUTION

As schools and institutions purchase large volumes of food on a consistent basis, they have the potential to impact the local food system and economy on a grand scale. Farm to school and institution practices enable these large buyers to purchase their food from local farmers and other suppliers that support local and regional farmers, keeping resources in the community and connecting students, patients and employees directly to their local food system. Farm to school activities include purchasing, serving and promoting local food in schools, incorporating educational activities related to agriculture, food, health or nutrition into curricula, and engaging students in hands-on learning through school gardens.

Additional institutions, including hospitals, prisons, universities and childcare centers can also participate by purchasing and serving locally grown food and offering gardening and educational programs. With great purchasing power, a large employee base and the ability to reach a high number of residents of all demographics and income levels, farm to institution work has the potential to bring local food and food systems literacy within reach of those who might not otherwise find it accessible.

Assets

Farm to school and institution work is taking place in Cuyahoga County, and there are numerous opportunities for additional groups and programs to connect to it. Since 2009, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH) has been working to implement farm to school programming and scale it to more districts within the county. With a 2015 Farm to School grant from the US Department of Agriculture, they are working to make the supply chain more conducive to getting locally grown foods into schools, establish a professional development training series and promote farm to school through a "Harvest of the Month" campaign. Institutions including Cleveland State University and OSU Extension are working to convene growers and buyers through an initiative called Anchor Local Foods.

Needs

- Clarity and cohesion across several levels of operation and strategic planning; alignment between SNAP-Ed nutrition education, school meals, after school gardening programs and other related activities.

- Capacity for teachers and additional staff, especially to maintain school gardens while school is out of session; or, identification of supporting organizations to tend and utilize gardens year-round.
- Funding to support more convening and professional development for all who are involved with food procurement.
- Aggregation, processing, distribution and winter storage of locally and regionally produced foods in order to supply schools and institutions throughout the year.
- Resources and technical support to make local sourcing as easy as possible for schools and institutions; lists of already approved local farms; and trainings on how to adhere to regulations and create smart contracts.

Recommendations

- Collaborate across program areas, connecting farm to school practices with nutrition education during the school day and youth leadership and urban agriculture activities after school.
- Connect with and incorporate best practices from neighboring counties and other members of the national Farm to School Network, USDA Farm to School and other organizations facilitating similar programs and practices.
- Leverage existing resources more strategically and continue engagement with public officials who are supportive of farm to school practices and can influence legislation and advocacy.
- Increase training for individuals at all levels of the supply chain in order to scale up sustainably.

Opportunities for Cross-Program Collaboration

Nutrition Education:

- Integration of farm to school concepts into in-school nutrition curricula.
- Incorporation of nutrition education with locally sourced meals and snacks served in schools.
- Nutrition education lessons in school gardens.

Youth Leadership:

- Youth leaders helping to promote farm to school activities; youth acting as wellness ambassadors in schools, promoting gardening and eating locally grown food.
- After school engagement and farm to school lessons taking place at gardens and local farms.

Healthcare Partnerships:

- Working with hospital systems to purchase local food.
- Highlighting information about local farmers and the food system in hospital cafeterias where local food is being served.

INNOVATION IN ACTION

With technical support from The Food Trust, the **Ohio Schools Council** put out its first-ever local produce bid. Quarry Hill Orchard is now their preferred vendor for hand fruit, and while schools do not have to purchase from Quarry Hill, it is now easy for them to do so since the orchard is pre-approved. This model of working with a cooperative purchasing group like the Ohio Schools Council is viewed as a new best practice and is being expanded throughout the region, beyond Cuyahoga County.

Urban Community School, Refugee Response and **Cleveland Botanical Garden** partner to manage a school garden and use it for various nutrition education programs.

“THIS WORK IS HAPPENING IN
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, AND THERE ARE
SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO PLUG IN.”

... CUYAHOGA COUNTY PUBLIC
HEALTH PRACTITIONER





HEALTHCARE PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between the healthcare sector and food-related efforts can occur in a variety of ways. As diet and access to nutritious food are integral factors for health outcomes, there is a natural synergy and mutual benefit of collaboration between doctors, nurses, nutritionists, educators, hospitals, health centers, food markets, community members and other partners. Nonprofit hospitals are currently required to conduct community health needs assessments and improvement plans and to contribute to the neighborhoods where they're located by funding health-related programming with "community benefit dollars." There is a precedent of hospitals meeting this requirement by funding food-related efforts such as farmers markets and produce prescription programs.

Assets

With its many major hospitals and health clinics, Cuyahoga County has tremendous opportunity for additional partnerships and "community-clinical linkages" between the healthcare sector and food access efforts. In 2013, Cuyahoga County's private nonprofit hospitals provided over \$900 million in community benefits, and these dollars could be increasingly dedicated to improving food access and education.⁴ The Cuyahoga County Board of Health is working to align its effort with local hospital's community health assessments and to identify additional opportunities to connect to healthcare. Local hospitals have also developed food-related curricula and resources, and various collaborations between physicians, farms, clinics, supermarkets and other stakeholders do exist. One example is the Produce Prescription program, in which clinical providers and community health workers talk about healthy eating with pregnant and post-partum women and patients with hypertension and provide prescriptions for fresh fruits and vegetables to be used at participating farmers markets. Some clinics even have on-site farmers markets where patients can redeem vouchers that have been prescribed to them in order to purchase locally grown food.

Needs

- Identification of potential healthcare partners, ensuring collaboration for maximum impact.
- Matching funding needs with available funding sources, and aligning hospitals' assessments and plans with food-related work that is needed or already taking place.
- Training and support for both healthcare providers and those working in food access, to integrate food and health content into their work; equipping physicians with knowledge of how to ask patients relevant food-related questions and refer them to healthy food access points, public benefits, incentives and nutrition education programs.

Recommendations

- Explore partnerships between healthcare providers and nontraditional partners, such as hunger relief/food distribution agencies that could create meals to address diet related disease, or supermarkets and corner stores that could host health clinics, on-site dieticians, store tours and health-related materials.
- Continue to encourage and facilitate local food purchasing by healthcare institutions.
- Use community benefit dollars to fund healthy food access work.
- Work with specialized healthcare providers to conduct nutrition education for various populations and incorporate incentives for purchasing healthy food for participants in these programs.

Opportunities for Cross-Program Collaboration

Nutrition Education:

- On-site nutrition and cooking classes at doctor's office and health clinics.
- Educational programs customized for specific conditions and diet-related diseases, with fresh food coupons for participants.

Healthy Retail:

- Clinics and pharmacies at supermarkets or health screenings in corner stores, with coupons for participants to use on healthy items in the store.
- Dietitians leading store tours and providing educational materials and guidance customized for specific health needs.

Farmers Markets:

- Funding for farmers markets within the hospital's service area using community benefit dollars.
- Farmers markets accepting produce prescriptions and other incentives provided by physicians.

Farm to Institution:

- Hospital systems purchasing local food for their cafeterias.
- Health-related information incorporated into farm to school lessons and programs.

INNOVATION IN ACTION

Neighborhood Family Practice, a federally qualified health center, hosts nutrition education lessons at its clinics and grocery store tours at the nearby Dave's supermarket.

Cleveland State University and OSU Extension are working to convene stakeholders around institutional purchasing of local foods, with a particular focus on hospitals.





FARMERS MARKETS

Farmers markets offer an opportunity for direct interaction between residents and local food producers. At these markets, consumers can support the local economy and food system while meeting and asking questions to the people who grew the food they're purchasing. Farmers markets can be significant community assets, serving as a place of community gathering and offering opportunities for wraparound programming such as market tours, nutrition education and promotion of food entrepreneurs, local businesses and upcoming events. In areas that are lower-income and underserved by supermarkets, farmers markets can be a tool to address food access disparities, bringing fresh food to communities that need it and enhancing affordability by accepting public benefits and incentives.

Assets

Ohio is among the top states in the country in terms of number of farmers markets, and there are more than 30 farmers markets in Cuyahoga County, representing a wide variety of types and sizes.⁵ Many of the markets are run by neighborhood CDCs or other nonprofit organizations. OSU Extension provides support to farmers markets throughout the county, especially with regard to public benefits and incentives. On-site nutrition education and other collaborative partnerships, such as the Produce Prescription program, do already exist. A statewide farmers market network is in the process of being established, and extensive research related to farmers markets is being conducted in Cleveland.

Needs

- Additional staff and reduction of staff turnover; enhanced capacity to do on-site programming and promotion and to assist with public benefits and incentives.
- Funding to hire more staff, expand markets, support incentive programs like Produce Perks and Produce Prescription and host more on-site programming.
- Neighborhood engagement to cultivate support and ensure longevity of markets.
- Equitable distribution of farmers markets throughout the city and county and accessibility of markets through public transportation.
- Coordinated marketing and relationships with public agencies to increase public awareness of existing markets and their services.

Recommendations

- Foster connections between farmers markets and the communities surrounding them, and work with farmers to ensure that products being sold are culturally appropriate and meeting residents' needs.
- Leverage funding sources like hospital community benefit dollars to grow markets, enhance staff capacity and support incentive programs.
- Hold more consistent cooking demonstrations at more farmers markets through partnerships with other nutrition education organizations and volunteers.
- Create innovative partnerships for cross-promotion; have public agencies provide information about farmers markets and Produce Perks incentives when people sign up for Ohio Direction cards. Enhance clear communication with these agencies and ensure that timing of outreach is coordinated with the farmers market season for maximum impact.
- Create a system to update lists of active farmers markets and their services in order to minimize confusion and enhance accuracy.

Opportunities for Cross-Program Collaboration

Nutrition Education:

- On-site cooking demonstrations, lessons and market tours, with Produce Perks incentives for participants.
- Opportunities for farmers to directly educate consumers about their growing practices and the local food system.

Healthcare Partnerships:

- Funding for farmers markets with hospital community benefit dollars.
- On-site health screenings and dietary information customized for specific health needs.
- Referrals for patients with limited access to healthy food to farmers markets and SNAP incentive programs.
- Farmers markets accepting Produce Perks and Produce Prescriptions.

Healthy Retail:

- Sale of excess or value-added local food from farmers markets to corner stores.
- Co-location of farmers markets and businesses that do not sell fresh produce in order to boost each other's sales and foot traffic.

Farm to Institution:

- Connecting farmers market vendors with opportunities to sell their local food to schools and other institutions.
- Field trips to farmers markets as part of farm to school educational programming.

Healthy Food Financing:

- Funding (pending eligibility and availability of funds) through the HFFO program for year-round farmers markets in low to-moderate income, underserved areas.

Youth Leadership:

- Programs where youth sell food they grow at farmers markets and learn business skills.
- Market tours and other activities for youth and/or led by youth.
- Employment of youth to help with data collection, community promotion or other support for the market.

INNOVATION IN ACTION

OSU Extension has worked with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank to promote Produce Perks incentives as part of The Food Bank's SNAP enrollment program. OSU also works with the Ohio Department of Health, which provides marketing support for farmers markets across the state.

Gateway 105 Farmers Market, organized and operated by Famicos Foundation, provides locally grown food to residents of the Glenville neighborhood. The market works hard to ensure that it is a welcoming space for all residents and it hosts hyper-local vendors, many of whom grow food down the street from the market. Gateway 105 features chefs and other programming to enhance the market experience.





HEALTHY FOOD FINANCING

Over half of Cleveland residents live in lower-income areas that are underserved by supermarkets.⁶ Many residents have no choice but to spend time and money traveling outside of their neighborhood in order to purchase fresh food. Healthy food financing programs support healthy food retail development in lower-income underserved communities. Several Cuyahoga County CDCs have received grants from the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative that they've used for healthy food retail projects in the county. In March 2016, the statewide Healthy Food for Ohio (HFFO) program launched as a result of the recommendations of the Ohio Healthy Food Financing Task Force, which included numerous key stakeholders from Cuyahoga County.⁷ The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services provided seed funding to Finance Fund Capital Corporation, the statewide community development financial institution that is implementing the HFFO program in partnership with The Food Trust. Finance Fund has leveraged the state funding with additional investment and is working to raise additional funds in order to meet the high level of demand from applicants from across the state.

Assets

There is a huge demand for financing for healthy food retail projects in the Cleveland area. Numerous grassroots groups are working to bring local, healthy food to communities in need through projects representing a wide range of sizes and formats, from full-service supermarkets to farm stands. Most projects include complementary components to support health and economic development, such as local hiring and workforce development programs, in-store nutrition education and co-location with gardens or health clinics. There is great support for this work from local foundations, financial institutions and government representatives at the city, county and federal level.

Needs

- Community engagement to ensure that projects are desired and will be supported by residents.
- Complementary programming like workforce training, local food sourcing, in-store marketing and education.
- Coordination among similar start-up food access projects.
- Funding to leverage the limited grant funding available through the state's seed capital.
- Increased affordability of nutritious food.

- Alternative retail models that could work for less densely populated neighborhoods that cannot support a full-service store.

Recommendations

- Continue developing a pipeline of potential retail projects representing a wide range of project types and sizes, prioritizing minority-owned businesses and projects in areas with greatest need.
- Engage local communities, partnering with grassroots groups and using processes to ensure that community feedback is captured.
- Leverage additional public, private and philanthropic investments.
- Ensure that healthy food retail projects in need of funding are aware of funding opportunities.
- Support collaboration between food retailers and other program areas to help encourage local hiring and healthy choices and to help stores remain sustainable.
- Explore opportunities to make food more affordable, like incentive programs that provide more money when people buy produce with their SNAP benefits (Ohio Direction Card).

Opportunities for Cross-Program Collaboration

Healthy Retail and Farmers Market:

- Potential funding from the HFFO program (pending eligibility and availability of funds) for corner stores looking to increase their fresh food offerings and farmers markets interested in operating year-round in lower-income, underserved areas.

Nutrition Education:

- Partnerships with funded stores for in-store marketing and nutrition education, store tours and cooking demonstrations.

Healthcare Partnerships:

- In-store clinics, pharmacies and nutritionists.
- Shelf talkers and other marketing programs to help shoppers make healthy choices and adhere to specific health and dietary needs.

Urban Agriculture:

- HFFO-funded stores selling locally grown food and participating in the Ohio Proud program.
- Funding from the HFFO program (pending eligibility and availability of funds) for farm stands and food hubs that demonstrate clear connections to retail in highly underserved, low-to-moderate income areas.

Youth Leadership:

- Youth involvement in advocacy for healthy food financing.
- Relationships between local youth and store owners to ensure that stores are reflecting community preferences and youth are empowered to make healthy choices and support local businesses.

INNOVATION IN ACTION

A new supermarket is opening in Euclid with support from the Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH), the city of Euclid, and the Healthy Food for Ohio (HFFO) program. In a Health Impact Assessment conducted in 2013, surveys and focus groups revealed that getting a grocery store was a high priority for Euclid residents. An experienced grocer began the process of opening a new 27,000 square-foot supermarket but came across unanticipated property renovation costs. As a result of a conversation for the FARE assessment, CCBH connected the store to the HFFO program, and the program provided financing for store construction and equipment. The city of Euclid contributed funds for external renovations to the store and parking lot. CCBH is supporting the project's ongoing success by developing community engagement and marketing plans alongside the owner, and there has been strong resident participation through community listening sessions and tours. The store will hire more than 60 employees from the local neighborhood.

“RESIDENTS WANT A GROCERY STORE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD. THEY WANT JOBS IN THE COMMUNITY, AND A CLEAN, SAFE PLACE TO BUY AFFORDABLE FOOD. IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE.”

... CLEVELAND-BASED
COMMUNITY ORGANIZER





YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Youth leadership is about engaging young people to become leaders for healthy change in their schools and communities. Through programs during and after school, youth can learn the importance of good nutrition and physical activity and spread awareness about issues like improving the availability of healthy foods in their schools and increasing opportunities to be physically active during the school day. Youth leaders can exchange ideas and participate in decision making about food-related initiatives happening in their city. In Philadelphia, The Food Trust created HYPE (Healthy You. Positive Energy.), a youth wellness initiative that empowers middle and high school students to become leaders for healthy change.⁸ HYPE uses hip-hop, social marketing and special events to convey the importance of being healthy in a fresh and relevant way and supports youth councils to impact their school environments by designing and implementing healthy action plans including programs like fitness clubs, movement breaks and school gardens. HYPE hosts annual Leadership Summits to bring together youth from across Philadelphia to get energized, connect with peers, develop leadership skills and gain new ideas to bring HYPE back to their schools.

Assets

There are multiple organizations in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County providing strong youth leadership programming during out-of-school time, reaching youth, parents and community members. These organizations focus on neighborhood-based programs and services that equip youth with transferrable skills to advance toward a successful and stable future, offering summer job experiences and incorporating youth input into neighborhood efforts. Collaborative partnerships are using gardening and art to engage youth and develop their leadership skills.

Needs

- In-school programming to complement out-of-school initiatives.
- Coordination of multiple existing efforts with a unified message.
- More inclusion of youth voices in advocacy and local decision making.

- Programming that is accessible for all children in terms of location, timing and affordability.
- More funding and capacity for youth leadership programs.

Recommendations

- Implement small scale in-school programming like establishing leadership councils; ensure cohesion with existing out of school programs.
- Adapt existing materials like the HYPE leadership guide to create locally relevant resources; provide a toolkit to support teachers and help schools implement in-school programming that is fun and appealing to youth.
- Explore public and private funding sources for youth leadership programming.
- Lift up and incorporate youth voices within decision making processes.
- Partner with local colleges to use their space for youth summits or other food-related leadership events.
- Work with the school district and local government to align with their efforts and take advantage of existing resources.

Opportunities for Cross-Program Collaboration

Farm to School and Nutrition Education:

- Youth leaders helping to promote farm to school activities, advocating for serving local food in schools and partnering with school and community gardens.
- Nutrition education lessons led by youth leaders for their peers during and after school.

Healthy Retail:

- Bringing youth to supermarkets and corner stores to take store tours and learn about making healthy choices, build relationships with store owners and convey residents preferences to the store and convey residents' preferences for what the store should sell.

Farmers Markets and Urban Agriculture:

- Programs where youth work on gardens and sell the food they grow at farmers markets, spreading awareness about their program and learning entrepreneurial skills.
- Market tours and other activities for youth and/or led by youth.
- Employment of youth to help with data collection, community promotion or other support for farmers markets.

INNOVATION IN ACTION

MyCom is a public-private collaboration of over 250 national and local individuals and organizations, reaching over 23,000 youth from kindergarten to high school. In 2016, over 12,000 youth registered for a summer job experience through MyCom's youth job program.⁹ MyCom enables youth to express their opinions and incorporates their input into decisions that impact their neighborhoods. MyCom also partners with groups such as The Boys and Girls Club.

Fuel Up to Play 60 (FUTP60) funded 12 schools in Cleveland to create youth councils and implement changes in their schools related to topics like breakfast or physical activity.

“WE LOOK AT COMMUNITY DECISIONS THROUGH A LENS OF HOW IT WILL IMPACT YOUTH. THEN WE EMPOWER YOUNG LEADERS AND INCORPORATE THEIR VOICE INTO THE PROCESS.”

... YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
DIRECTOR FROM CLEVELAND





URBAN AGRICULTURE

With extensive gardening and farming initiatives taking place throughout Cuyahoga County, this program area emerged as a central part of the food access and food system landscape. Here, urban agriculture refers to the wide range and types of local growing efforts, from larger-scale farms to small market gardens, to grassroots community and backyard gardens. This section recognizes the intersection of urban farming with small business ownership, the local economy and the environment and explores ways to develop a support system for sustainable urban agriculture. In many cities, urban agriculture emerged in response to lack of access to affordable and nutritious produce and an abundance of vacant land with the potential for positive use. Urban, suburban and rural farms and gardens serve as resources for community building and provide locally sourced produce to residents, allowing people to affordably sustain themselves and relate to their food.

Assets

Cleveland – Cuyahoga County is home to a wide variety of food production efforts. Cleveland has numerous community gardening programs that engage residents, especially youth, and nearly 200 gardens have received city-funded equipment and technical assistance.¹⁰ There are over 18,000 vacant lots in Cleveland, presenting great opportunity for urban agriculture, which has been supported by progressive local policies adopted between 2007 and 2011 regarding land use, access to water, zoning for chickens and bees and the creation of the Cuyahoga County Land Bank.¹¹ New community gardens are continually emerging, and they often coordinate with programs for youth, returning citizens, refugees and others.

Needs

- Mutual awareness, support and collaboration among groups doing similar work related to urban agriculture.
- Clear points of entry for new farmers and gardeners and information that reaches wide audiences.
- Mechanisms to protect land ownership and elevate gardening as a prioritized land use.
- Financing that is appropriately tailored and equitably distributed.

- Business planning support, ongoing mentorship and identification of best practices and new technologies to help farmers scale up and extend seasons.
- Innovation around soil quality improvement to make vacant land usable for growing food.

Recommendations

- Identify the diverse stakeholders working in urban agriculture and help them convene and share expertise.
- Compensate farms to make it possible for staff and project leaders to spend time teaching and sharing information in addition to working on the farm.
- Identify additional public and private sources and funding for farming and gardening.
- Continue to incorporate food growing into city/county plans and reduce regulatory barriers.
- Ensure that planners, CDCs and project leads engage local communities about gardening projects and design urban gardens as a resource for community building.

Opportunities for Cross-Program Collaboration

Youth Leadership:

- Use of urban farms and gardens as sites for youth leadership activities, including employment opportunities.

Farmers Markets:

- Urban farmers featured as farmers market vendors, increasing awareness about urban agriculture efforts within the city.

Farm to School/Institution, Healthcare Partnerships and Nutrition Education:

- Schools and institutions (like hospitals) buying food from local farmers.
- Partnerships with urban agriculture groups to use and help secure land for gardens at schools and institutions.
- Highlighting locally grown food in school curricula and taking field trips to local farms and gardens.

Healthy Retail:

- Supermarkets and corner stores selling locally grown food, offering new markets for local farmers.

INNOVATION IN ACTION

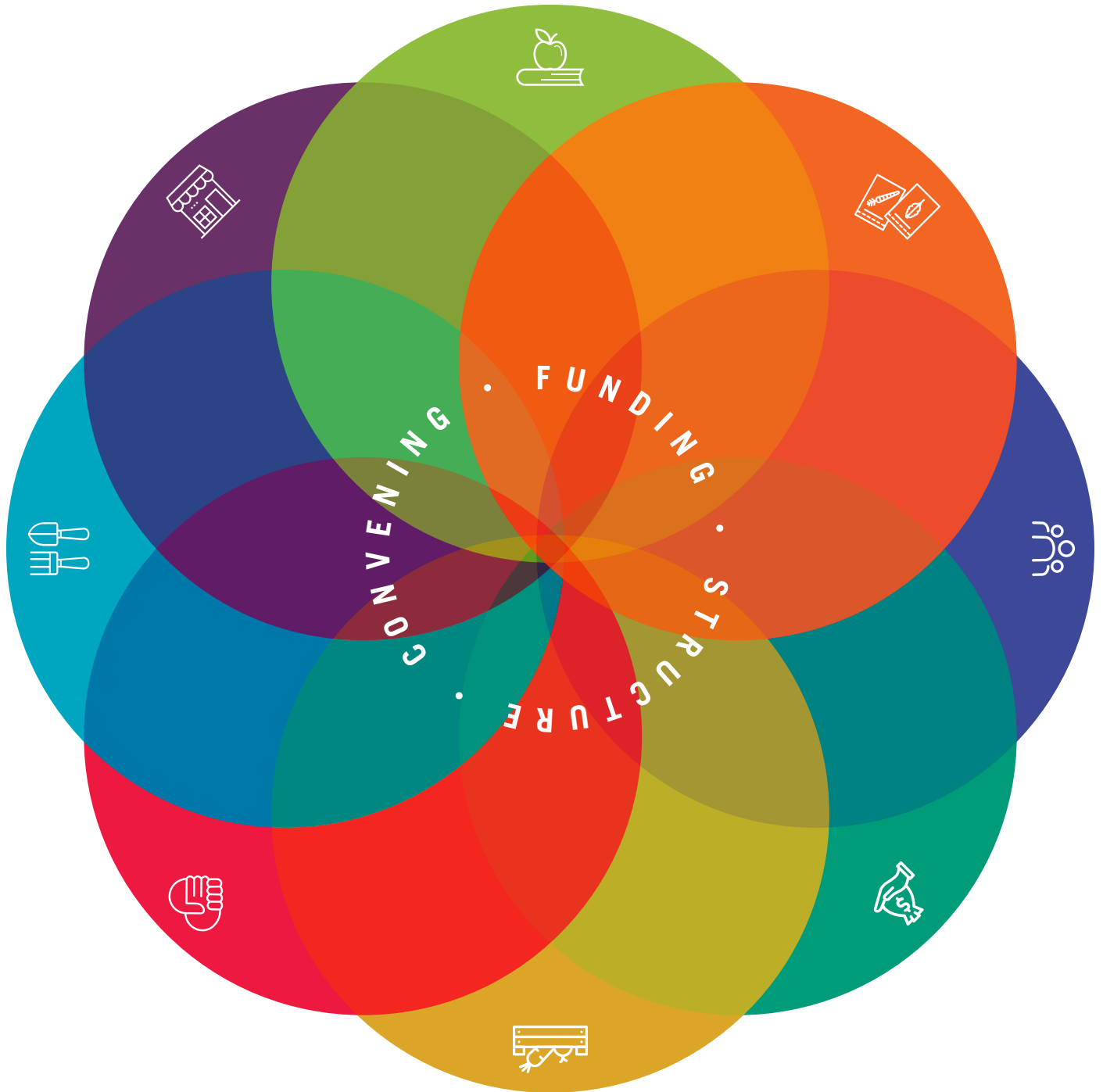
The Cleveland Botanical Garden's Green Corps provides employment for youth to create and maintain gardens and partners with groups including the Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland Indians, Boys & Girls Club, The Refugee Response and Urban Community School.

Green City Growers Cooperative, a recipient of federal HFFI funds, is the largest food-production greenhouse in a core urban area in the United States.¹² It uses hydroponic growing methods to produce millions of heads of lettuce and specialty greens every year, which it supplies to grocery stores, restaurants, food service companies and major institutions within a 150-mile radius of Cleveland.



DON'T FORGET: IT'S ALL CONNECTED!

Program areas were presented separately in this report in order to make the information digestible. However, it is crucial to remember that all the areas overlap and work together, creating synergy through convening, funding and structures that support collaboration.



COMPREHENSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are macro-level, cross-program recommendations that could support individual needs while furthering the larger, comprehensive food access movement in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County.

CONVENING

- 1 Increase communication** through consistent convenings both within and between program areas, allowing partners to better share resources and best practices while creating a stronger community of learning.
- 2 Identify and support more grassroots community-based organizations** that are not associated with a large institution but are eager to become engaged and may be underrepresented in planning and implementation. Connect these groups and individuals to resources and technical assistance and consult with them regularly.
- 3 Provide purpose and incentives for collaboration and participation** in convenings, such as recognition of work, opportunities to shape decisions and access to additional resources and networks.
- 4 Better align food access and health-oriented coalitions** and create stronger coordination between these coalitions and local government in order to maximize resources and be more effective. Support of existing coalitions and the creation of additional partnerships are necessary for pushing forward policy changes that will be critical for achieving the greatest and most sustainable success.

FUNDING

- 1 Implement a funding and technical assistance structure** that allows for emerging needs to be met quickly. This structure could involve collaboration among funders and be designed to allow for rapid response to unanticipated needs that come up over the course of a project.
- 2 Ensure that funding sources are being adequately accessed and distributed.** Form partnerships between those with the greatest and least access to funds to ensure that these funds are used to their fullest potential.
- 3 Engage national funders** to bring additional resources to the region.
- 4 Explore opportunities between the healthcare sector and food access efforts.** The large healthcare presence in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County presents an opportunity for programmatic and funding-related partnerships.
- 5 Identify additional new and expanded funding opportunities** and provide support for accessing and using these resources.

STRUCTURE

- 1 Implement a two year plan** that will focus on: providing technical assistance, leveraging additional resources, increasing collaboration and facilitating regular convenings. Increase coordination between stakeholders approaching this work from the lenses of healthy food access, local food systems and food policy in order to better integrate efforts and make them more effective.
- 2 Develop a policy plan** that can be carried out over the next two to three years and is based on stakeholder input and aligned with existing efforts and needs.
- 3 Utilize the FARE advisory group** that was created for the assessment process to support broader and deeper community engagement, communicate new and innovative ideas and partnerships and advise as to where resources should be best utilized.
- 4 Leverage experience, resources and stakeholders** already involved with existing programs and efforts for greater impact and collaboration.
- 5 Identify and employ three to four individuals to coordinate and convene the local effort** over the next two years. These individuals could convene diverse stakeholders, ensure cross-sector collaboration, work closely with technical assistance providers to ensure that local needs are communicated and met, provide added capacity when critical gaps are identified and continue to enhance their own expertise to build local capacity.

LOOKING FORWARD

Through the FARE assessment and planning process, The Food Trust has had the incredible opportunity to meet and engage with many stakeholders doing wonderful work to improve access to healthy food in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County. There is a unique local commitment and array of talented, knowledgeable, passionate people and organizations working to eliminate health disparities, support the local food system and empower and improve the lives of local residents. There is also immense potential to grow existing efforts and forge new partnerships, taking local work to the next level through a thoughtful and comprehensive approach. By breaking down siloes and putting in place the vision, technical assistance, funding and capacity to meaningfully partner across sectors and engage diverse and community-based stakeholders, neighborhoods in Cleveland – Cuyahoga County can thrive and serve as a model for the rest of the country.

Every step of the process has sought to be as intentional and inclusive as possible, and the team is extremely grateful for the openness and generosity of local partners who took the time to talk, send research, lead site visits and tours, participate in convenings and surveys and bring additional voices and perspectives to the table. Thank you to those who shared feedback and wisdom.

Over the last year, great work has continued to move forward and new efforts and partnerships have even emerged as a result of the FARE process. The purpose of this report is to celebrate and inform readers about existing successes, share paths for collaboration and provide information and suggestions for people to identify synergies and integrate them into their own planning processes. The content was provided by local

stakeholders, and FARE advisors and participants selected which aspects of their work to emphasize in order to inspire new partnerships. Examples in this report are meant to spur readers' imagination and introduce new paradigms for approaching their work. The hope is that all who have come to the table will remain engaged and that new participants will continue to come on board, that collaboration will strengthen and enhance efforts that benefit all community members impacted by the work, and that the information compiled here offers space to create and share innovative practices, feeding into a continued process of moving forward and aligning efforts to improve food access, health and vitality in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

“A LOT OF THE RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE ARE
ALREADY IN THIS COMMUNITY. WE JUST NEED TO
IDENTIFY OUR ASSETS AND MAXIMIZE THEM.”

... CLEVELAND-BASED COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PRACTITIONER



FARE Advisors

The advisory group was created to provide diverse perspectives and insight for the FARE process, and to bring additional people and voices to the table. Advisors were selected based on their ability to share knowledge and represent community-based and individual efforts taking place on the ground.

Advisors

Natoya Walker Minor
Anthony Stella
Cathi Lehn
Kim Scott
Chad Stephens
Linda Warren
Joe Jerdonek
Walter Wright
Alison Patrick
Ann Stahlheber
Michele Benko
Amanda Block
Greg Durica
Erika Trapl
Kakul Joshi
Veronica Walton
Jamie Sullivan
Amanda Osborne
LesleyAnne Roddy
Nicole Debose
Heather Torok
Morgan Taggart
Bill McKinney
Lindsay Smetana

Association

City of Cleveland, Chief of Public Affairs
City of Cleveland, Department of Economic Development
City of Cleveland, Mayor's Office of Sustainability
Cleveland City Planning Commission
Cleveland Neighborhood Progress
Cleveland Neighborhood Progress
Coit Road Farmers Market
CSU Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority
Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority
CWRU Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods
CWRU Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods
Gateway 105 Farmers Market, NEO Restoration Alliance
Greater Cleveland Food Bank
OSU Extension, Cuyahoga County
OSU Extension, Cuyahoga County
OSU Extension, Cuyahoga County
Saint Luke's Foundation
St Clair Superior Development Corporation
The Food Trust
Tremont West Development Corporation

Endnotes

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Participating Organizations

Individuals and organizations participated in the FARE process via phone calls, in-person meetings, site visits, surveys, report edits and attendance at the convening and breakout sessions. Below is a list of organizations that have been represented throughout the process, but it is extremely important to note that many residents and individuals who are not under the auspices of an organization also participated and shared invaluable insight. We greatly appreciate their involvement and hope they will continue to stay engaged.

Future work to promote collaboration could involve identifying which organizations and individuals work within various program areas and noting each group's mission and areas of intersection.

A Vision of Change Inc.	Cuyahoga County Board of Health	NEOMED – CSU Partnership for Urban Health
Alliance for a Healthier Generation	Cuyahoga County Planning Commission	Network of Community Advisors (NOCA)
American Dairy Association Mideast	Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy	New Agrarian Center
Amy Baskes Consulting	Environmental Health Watch	Ohio Department of Health
Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland	Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland	Office of Congresswoman Marcia Fudge
Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc.	Fresh Camp	REACH resident team community health leaders
Case Western Reserve University	From the Heart LLC	Rid-All Green Partnership
Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods	Greater Cleveland Food Bank	Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland
Children's Hunger Alliance	Gummer Wholesale	The MetroHealth System
City of Cleveland, Office of Sustainability	Hattie Larlham	The Refugee Response
City Rising Farm	Head Start of Lorain County	Towards Employment
Cleveland Botanical Garden	Health Action Council	Tremont Farmers Market
Cleveland City Planning Commission	HIP-Cuyahoga/REACH	Tremont West Development Corporation
Cleveland Clinic Langston Hughes	Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland	Union Miles Development Corporation
Cleveland Department of Public Health	JGL Strategy LLC	United Way of Greater Cleveland
Cleveland Metropolitan School District	KeyBank	University Hospitals of Cleveland
Cleveland Neighborhood Progress	Lorain County General Health District	Vineyards of Chateau Hough
Cleveland Public Library	Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation	
Coit Road Farmers Market	MyCom	
Cuyahoga Community College	Neighborhood Family Practice	
	Neighborhood Leadership Institute	

Acknowledgments

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The Food Trust wishes to express its gratitude to the FARE advisors, and all the individuals who contributed their time and expertise to this project through interviews, resource sharing and meetings, and in particular, all those who attended the FARE input session in April 2016.

Many thanks to program leads from The Food Trust who traveled to Cleveland, wrote needs assessments and contributed their time, passion and expertise to this project.

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