



# WISCONSIN FOOD SYSTEMS COUNCIL

*A WORKING WHITE PAPER*

January 2013

This paper was prepared by a  
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Wisconsin Food Systems Stakeholders  
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## Executive Summary

This document describes the possible structures and functions of a Wisconsin food policy council, referred to as the Wisconsin Food Systems Council (WFSC). These possibilities are presented as options for further consideration, not as formal recommendations. These initial concepts were developed by an *ad hoc* committee formed at a statewide meeting of interested individuals held in summer of 2012. A timeline of stakeholder deliberation leading to creation of a council by winter 2013 is presented.

The motivation for creating a WFSC is the perception that numerous issues arise in Wisconsin food systems that could be more effectively addressed by effort coordinated through a recognized and supported statewide forum. A WFSC would work in collaboration with existing agencies, academic institutions, and for- and non-profit organizations.

A wide range of possible issues for WFSC involvement are identified across the spectrum of food system activities, including production, processing, marketing, financing, community and cultural issues, and nutrition and public health. The domains of WFSC activity could include public governance of food systems, supporting local and regional foods, education and training in sustainable food systems, and communication and networking.

Options for the Council structure and organization include the origin of its authority (created by executive order, legislative action, or non-governmental initiative,) the structure of a council (for example, what food system interests and sectors are represented), the process for selecting council representatives, and the sources of funding for creation and on-going support of a council. The paper concludes by reiterating key questions leading to the formation of a WFSC:

*Which food system issues are most important from a statewide perspective?*

*Is the formation of a Wisconsin Food Systems Council the best way to address food system issues?*

*What types of activities and modes of action will a council employ?*

*How can stakeholders have input into key design and implementation decisions?*

*Should a council be formed by government action or formed as a non-governmental organization?*

*What is the best structure for the Council?*

*How will a council be funded? Should it include paid staff?*

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe possible structures and functions of a Wisconsin food policy council. These are presented as options for further consideration through a broad discussion among a wide range of stakeholders. Thus, this paper contains only concepts and not formal recommendations. The document begins with introductory material, including some of the issues that have motivated interest in beginning the process to create a council (section 3). Then, the paper provides brief descriptions of possible roles and activities of a council (section 4), various potential structures for a council and how these options might affect its ability to carry out its purposes (section 5), and processes for developing a consensus on form and activities.

The abbreviation WFSC (for Wisconsin Food Systems Council) is used throughout this document. This title was selected instead of *food policy council* because we do not assume that a statewide council oriented to food systems would be limited to addressing formal policy such as laws, agency appropriations, or state programs. Indeed, the broad issues of food systems identified in this document should require a wide range of approaches, including public policies and programs, education, marketing and marketing campaigns, multi-organizational collaboration, entrepreneurial initiatives, communication networks, media campaigns, and other strategies. As a council, the WFSC will bring together organizations and partners for high-level discussions to determine what is needed to address food systems in Wisconsin. The strategies and initiatives that ensue from these discussions remains an open question.

The motivation for creating a WFSC is the perception that numerous issues arise in Wisconsin food systems that could be more effectively addressed by effort coordinated through a recognized and supported statewide forum. Many organizations address and are impacted by aspects of the Wisconsin food systems, but food systems are so large and complex that no single organization works across the entire spectrum. Therefore, a core aim of the WFSC will be to provide the means for collective impact<sup>1</sup> addressing food system issues in Wisconsin. Table 1 lists possible issues that might be considered by a WFSC. An important job for a council will be deciding which are most important and feasible from a statewide perspective and within the scope of what the Council has the ability to address.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “collective impact” originates with an article by John Kania and Mark Kramer in *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (volume 49, winter 2011). They note that “large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination,” and posit five conditions necessary for collective impact: common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations.

**Table 1: Possible Food Issues a WFSC Might Consider**

<p><b>Farming and Food Production</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• land access and tenure security, farmland protection, land banks and land trusts</li> <li>• sustainable agriculture - conservation, nutrient and agrichemical management, environmental protection</li> <li>• waste management and composting</li> <li>• food safety and animal welfare</li> <li>• farmer training programs, mentoring, apprenticeships (also applies to other food system components)</li> <li>• farm labor, worker rights, volunteers</li> <li>• community gardens, CSAs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food Processing and Distribution</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• processing capacity, shared washing &amp; packing facilities, animal facilities</li> <li>• shared use kitchens and community kitchens</li> <li>• warehousing, backup storage, food hubs, brokerages</li> <li>• “food miles” and other life cycle assessment issues</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food Wholesaling, Retailing, Marketing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “buy local” and similar campaigns</li> <li>• direct marketing alternatives – CSAs, farmers’ markets, market baskets, mobile vending</li> <li>• consumer behavior influences or interventions (e.g. calorie counts or menu labeling)</li> <li>• in-school options, farm to school</li> <li>• institutional food procurement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food System Enterprises and Finances</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economic viability and sustainability</li> <li>• business models, multi-purpose organizations, mixed models</li> <li>• subsidies and incentives, business development programs</li> <li>• financing – traditional, public subsidies, “slow money”</li> <li>• food system job creation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community and Cultural Relations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• food justice, food sovereignty</li> <li>• urban agriculture – brownfield remediation,</li> <li>• creation of social capital (e.g., neighborhood revitalization, youth training, job creation)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Legal and Regulatory Environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local ordinances, zoning, planned developments, open space enactments</li> <li>• right-to-farm, local pre-emption (e.g., CAFO siting), other state laws</li> <li>• federal farm programs, appropriations</li> <li>• food charters</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food System Assessments and Metrics</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Food Security Coalition tools, sustainability plans</li> <li>• land inventories, brownfield identification and remediation</li> <li>• community/regional capacity assessment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food Security</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• food access and “food deserts”</li> <li>• affordability, public programs such as WIC, SNAP, and other child nutrition education programs (e.g., Fresh Fruit Vegetable Snack Program, school lunch and breakfast, afterschool and summer meals)</li> <li>• availability of nutritious food</li> <li>• food that is appropriate for cultures and life styles</li> <li>• emergency food, shelters and pantries</li> <li>• food gleaning, food donations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nutrition and Public Health</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• youth-based nutrition education and experiential learning programs, school gardens</li> <li>• household nutrition knowledge of food selection, preparation, storage, safety, etc.</li> <li>• food as a social determinant of health –promoting healthful eating</li> <li>• obesity and chronic disease awareness and prevention</li> <li>• social marketing, marketing for healthier foods</li> </ul>

## Section 3: White Paper Development

The idea for a WFSC has been discussed for several years in different circles. In the fall of 2011, an ad hoc group of people from state agencies, educational institutions, trade organizations, and advocacy organizations met on several occasions to gauge interest and develop an implementation strategy. At the 2012 Wisconsin Local Food Summit in the City of Delavan, a conference session was devoted to discussion of possible roles and forms of a WFSC. Discussion continued at an informal reception hosted by the Community and Regional Food Systems Project, the Wisconsin Prevention of Obesity and Diabetes (WiPOD), the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources and the Wisconsin Grocers Association. At the same time, the ad hoc group developed and submitted a proposal to the National Network of Public Health Institutes. The proposal focused on holding a statewide organizing meeting to begin building consensus and implementation strategies for a WFSC. Although this proposal was not funded, a modest amount of support was obtained from the Department of Health Services for a smaller meeting of key leaders and activists. This meeting occurred in Wausau on July 17, 2012.

With the assistance of facilitator Dr. Christine Kelly and food policy council expert Mark Winne, the Wausau meeting explored visions for purpose and potential activities of a WFSC. The group agreed to move forward with conceptualizing a WFSC, including identifying a core group of individuals willing to continue the process. Meeting notes and summary statements are included in Appendix 1, including several small group versions of a WFSC mission. Working groups were established to further understand and report on the food policy landscape of Wisconsin and the nation, to develop a food system asset map, and to determine which stakeholder groups might have an interest in a WFSC. The core group created a timeline based on presentation of a draft of this concept paper at the 2013 Wisconsin Local Food Summit (February 1-2, 2013, Ashland) for feedback and refinement as described in section 6.

An initial draft was created by Steve Ventura, Professor of Soil Science and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in November 2012. This draft was first reviewed and revised by the core group, and then it was revised by the participants in the Wausau meeting and key stakeholders identified by the core group not able to participate in the Wausau meeting. Initial review resulted in this version, known as *public release version 1*. Public release version 1 should be considered the starting point for statewide dialogue about the conceptualization of WFSC's purpose, form, and leadership. The continuation of that process is described in section 6.

## Section 4: Potential Roles of a WI Food Systems Council

As per table 1, a WFSC could have many possible domains of activity, and in turn, many possible strategies for addressing these will need to be considered. Choices about which food system issues to pursue will be guided by discussions leading to the potential formation of a WFSC, ongoing deliberations of the Council, and the Council's interactions stakeholders and other food system organizations. It will take continuing dialog with organizations of statewide scope such as the Wisconsin Local Food Network and the Wisconsin Food Security Consortium to define appropriate roles and complementary activities.

The number and range of issues that the Council could address will be limited by funding (including staffing) and by the amount of time and effort that voluntary participants are able to contribute. If the Council is created through action of a governmental body, either through Executive Order or Legislative Action, its scope could also be limited by its authorization. As discussed in greater detail in section 5, the formation process, structure, and funding also guide and constrain what the Council can address.

A recent document from the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic<sup>2</sup> provided a comprehensive overview of the legal and institutional structures surrounding statewide councils, along with extensive description of some of the roles of councils. This document provides some of the legal underpinning for authority that a council might exercise, depending on the mechanisms used for its creation.

The now defunct but still web-present Community Food Security Coalition also provides several resources related to development, implementation, and role of food policy councils (<http://foodsecurity.org/programs/food-policy-councils/>). This includes a link to state councils authorized by state governments to see what other states have done. The content of this site was created by food council consultant Mark Winne, who is attempting to keep a comprehensive list of councils: <http://www.markwinne.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/fp-councils-may-2012.pdf>.

What follows is an introduction to four broad areas of potential activity, which is based on what other food councils have considered and on suggestions from the Wausau meeting.

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<sup>2</sup> Leib, E.B. (2012). "Putting State Food Policy to Work for Our Communities." Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic. Accessed at <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/foodpolicyinitiative/files/2012/12/FINAL-full-state-toolkit.pdf>

## Public Governance of Food Systems

Whether defined broadly, as in this paper's introduction, or more narrowly focused, "food policy" will include local, state, federal, and tribal laws, policies, and programs that influence (guide, constrain, support) any aspect of the food system. The nature and extent of WFSC involvement in laws, policies, and public programs are key decisions; some choices will be made in the creation process and some will arise as needs or opportunities over time. WFSC public policy roles could include:

- identifying issues
- analyzing trade offs
- providing information to both governmental and non-governmental agencies
- recommending solutions
- monitoring programs
- reviewing and commenting on proposals
- organizing support for changes and new initiatives, for example:
  - creating new positions such as a state food policy director
  - creating programs addressing food system issues
  - increasing funding for existing programs
  - revising regulations that inhibit development or expansion of useful activities

It is worth noting that Wausau meeting participants collectively agreed that a WFSC should not be government-led or government "heavy." A WFSC should involve a diverse group of stakeholders and not be dominated by public employees. However, this would not preclude a WFSC from advocating the creation of a public program or developing close and productive relations with government agencies.

As a statewide council, WFSC public policy activities may be directed toward state agencies. At the state level, two agencies, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) and Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), have the broadest influence on food systems. Other state agencies interact on specific issues. For example, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is involved in aspects of agricultural and waste management regulation. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation is involved with trade and marketing. Education and training activities of the University of Wisconsin system (which includes University of Wisconsin Extension), also considered a state agency, could be influenced by a WFSC. For example, the UW Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems was created through the advocacy of non-profit organizations.

A statewide council could also exert influence on federal policy. Currently, of the federal funds supporting Wisconsin farmers, only 10% go towards fruit and vegetable farmers,<sup>3</sup> with most of the balance going to commodity crops and milk production. These allocations, which many believe are out of balance, are specified in federal legislation. The periodic federal “farm bill” and annual agricultural appropriations have substantial impacts on local, state, and regional food systems. The farm bill governs agricultural subsidies, market development, conservation programs, SNAP and other food programs, and federal agricultural research and outreach. Additionally, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act provide guidance on other important federal food and nutrition programs. The appropriations process specifies funding for these and many other programs.

Although several Wisconsin organizations concerned with healthy food systems, as well as national organizations with similar goals, focus attention on the farm bill, a council might see benefit in coordinating an approach to the Wisconsin delegation. Wisconsin could also benefit from coordination on other federal initiatives with USDA and other departments.

A WFSC should also consider its role in developing and supporting local food councils. This could include provisions of information or model policies, consultation on structures and strategies, and assistance with advocacy and coalition-building. There would be an emphasis in connecting such local food councils to WFSC to enhance statewide collective impact.

### **Supporting Local and Regional Foods**

Supporting increased production and consumption of food produced within or near a council’s jurisdiction is a goal of most food policy councils. While defining “local” might not be simple, a *Wisconsin* food systems council can look at opportunities across the entire state. The state of Wisconsin boasts robust and diverse agriculture that could supply copious amounts of healthy, nutritious food. With its abundant land and rich soils, most of the temperate-climate fruits, vegetables, and grains consumed by Wisconsinites could be produced in Wisconsin, as well as most of the meat, dairy, eggs, and other animal products. Because of federal farm policies, national and global economies, business practices, and farmers’ choices, this is not currently manifesting to its full potential.

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<sup>3</sup> Wisconsin farm subsidy database. Environmental Working Group website.  
<http://farm.ewg.org/region.php?fips=55000&progcode=total&yr=2010>.



Production decisions are made by individual growers, so they are generally beyond the direct impact of a WFSC. A council's influence on local food production would be through stimulation of markets and advocacy in agencies that more directly affect production. A WFSC might consider reviewing state agriculture, resource management, and public health programs (including subsidies, grants, education, and so forth) and how all of these impact the capacity, diversity, and prosperity of local food production.

A WFSC could consider a wide range of mechanisms for stimulating demand for locally-produced products. The state already has a Buy Local Buy Wisconsin program implemented through DATCP for this expressed purpose. Numerous other policies and programs could be considered for supporting local and regional food consumption, including:

- marketing campaigns – advertising, labeling, in-store promotions
- support for local markets – CSAs, farmers markets (EBT, double \$), corner store initiatives
- networking – information gathering, coordinating existing efforts
- education – school programs, school gardens, farm to school
- institutional programs – incentives, subsidies, procurement
- store stocking requirements

Some of these activities are already underway thanks to existing advocacy efforts of the Wisconsin Local Food Network (WLFN) and allied organizations. As noted elsewhere, WFSC should be established with explicit coordination mechanisms to amplify and assist these efforts and to avoid duplicating efforts in local and regional food system work.

### **Education and Training**

It remains an open question as to the level of direct involvement a WFSC might have in providing education and training. It could opt instead to support and/or influence evidence-based programs that new or existing organizations provide. The Council might connect stakeholders and educators, providing information about curricula and programs (e.g., degrees, short courses, training on specific topics, conference sessions) that would be helpful. In the case of feedback to organizations with capacity to conduct research, such as universities, this could include feedback on research topics that might support local food and sustainable food system initiatives. A WFSC could also play a role in advertising and promoting education and training opportunities. If a council hosts or co-hosts an annual meeting, it could help with arrangements for workshops and training sessions.

### **Communication and Networking - Partnering and Supporting Organizations**

It is likely that one of the most important roles of a WFSC will be to foster more effective communication between organizations with interests in Wisconsin's food system. The Council, along with its committees and workgroups, provides an opportunity for bringing together people that might not ordinarily cross paths. Understanding the motivations, values, and different or opposing viewpoints is an essential part of consensus-building and collective action.

Table 3 (page 14) indicates that a diversity of food system sectors could be interested in a WFSC. How the representative structure of the Council is designed will influence the level of communication across sectors that can be achieved. The process of selecting committee members from each sector will also impact the type and level of communication and networking that are possible.

The activities a council chooses to pursue would also influence what messages are communicated between participating organizations and communicated from the Council to other stakeholders, including the general public. These activities could include explicit communications and networking, such as conferences, workshops, newsletters, blogs and other social media, public hearings and listening sessions, facilitated meetings, and so forth.

In regard to communication, WFSC recognizes that there are already existing organizations, each with their own communication channels. A WFSC would not seek to duplicate these. For example, the Wisconsin Local Food Network (WLFN) has underway numerous activities that might otherwise be appropriate for a council. To avoid duplication and conflict, there should be clear definition of roles and responsibilities prior to the initiation of a council. A similar pre-implementation dialog should also transpire with the Wisconsin Food Security Consortium (organized by University of Wisconsin Extension). These organizations can complement a WFSC, rather than compete, by establishing mechanisms for ongoing communication and collaboration. Similar agreements may be useful with other potentially overlapping organizations, including the extensive networks of faith-based communities important in emergency food distribution and other aspects of food security.

## Section 5: Stakeholder Approval and Support

To be effective, a WFSC will need input and support from a broad range of stakeholders. Buy-in starts with the process for creating the Council. That process needs to be open, inclusive, and amenable to modification as needed to accommodate interests and to more effectively pursue goals. The process needs to fully embrace collective impact processes, which include the development of shared language, shared vision, and shared agendas. It also needs to present clear options for the purpose and structure of the Council, along with information about tradeoffs associated with alternative missions and forms. The next section (6) is a starting point for a conversation about form and structure, along with implications of alternatives for the possible roles discussed in the previous section (4).

### Criteria for Evaluating the Purpose and Form of a WFSC

Although each individual and organization will use their own values to judge the appropriateness of the formation process and alternative council forms, it is possible to identify some principles that will be generally applicable. A set of principles was developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for the creation of a statewide geographic information council a few years ago, and vetted with stakeholders at a series of meetings. These ideas were adapted to a WFSC, as shown in Appendix 2. The Wausau meeting participants seemed to indicate that clearly defined roles and responsibilities of a council, as well as other existing food system-focused organizations, would be vital for long-term success and sustainability.

### Process for Soliciting Stakeholder Feedback in Council Formation

As previously noted, the process for creating a council can be critical to its success. The process needs to be managed in such a way that stakeholders feel their interests are represented, advocates believe it has a reasonable chance of success, and existing authorities are not undermined. The process must be open to input at all stages, amenable to change if compelling evidence suggests that it is necessary, and explicit about steps in the process.

At this point in time, we (the ad hoc group of proponents that emerged from the Wausau conference) propose the following steps and approximate timeline for council creation:

- draft white paper completed
- review white paper by drafting team completed

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| • review white paper by food system stakeholders <sup>4</sup>  | January 2013        |
| • presentation of white paper at WI Local Food Summit  | February 2013       |
| • white paper open comment period  | February-April 2013 |
| • reconvening ad hoc committee of food system stakeholders to review white paper comments and determine next steps | April 2013          |
| • draft WFSC charter (if agreement to pursue WFSC reached)   | April 2013          |
| • review WFSC charter by food system stakeholders  | June 2013           |
| • WFSC charter open comment period   | July 2013           |
| • WFSC charter ratification and implementation strategy conference <sup>5</sup>                                    | summer 2013         |
| • final WFSC charter (if charter agreements reached)   | fall 2013           |
| • solicitation of political, bureaucratic, and funding support <sup>6</sup>  | fall 2013           |
| • creation of food systems council (if solicitation successful)  | winter 2013/2014    |

This timeline should present numerous opportunities for stakeholders to influence the goals and structure of a council. It explicitly includes meetings and conferences, and presumably will include mechanisms for written comments. A website is set up for opportunities to provide comments on draft documents (one-way communication to drafters) and to have an open forum for discussion of key choices.

## Section 6: Council Structure and Organization

Key choices in design and implementation of a WFSC are its potential roles and functions as discussed in section 4, and the structure that can best carry out that function. Designers in most fields suggest that ‘form follows function’ [with the exception of clothing fashion and a notable Wisconsin architect!]. This section describes key choices about a council form and some tradeoffs associated with alternatives.

### **Authority: Executive order, legislative action, or non-governmental**

Wisconsin has numerous councils. Some of which, such as the Wisconsin Council on Forestry and the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health, were created by legislative action and have statutory language specifying roles and responsibilities. Others, such as the recently re-authorized Governor’s Council on

<sup>4</sup> Attempt to solicit feedback from at least one representative of all of the categories of stakeholders listed in table 3.

<sup>5</sup> The timeline puts this in summer, a busy time of year for food producers, so several meetings may be conducted around the state to present and refine the WFSC charter, and develop a strategy for implementation.

<sup>6</sup> Timing and details of this stage will depend on the support that is sought. For example, if the Council is created by legislative action, it will depend on the Legislature’s session calendar and bill drafting process.

Physical Fitness and Health, were created by the Governor and have activities and composition spelled out in an executive order. The Wisconsin Technology Council, which has been suggested as a model for a WFSC, was authorized by the Governor and the Legislature. Public agencies can also create councils and stakeholder groups, such as the Organic Advisory Council of DATCP and the Wisconsin Food Security Consortium convened by the University of Wisconsin Extension and Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

Finally, councils can come together from non-governmental initiatives. Organizations create formal or informal structures to carry out common interests. Some are constituted as non-profit corporations (e.g., IRS 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) tax-exempt organizations); others operate only by written or verbal agreement between constituents.

The action and authority that leads to formation of a council can have a lasting impact on its role and ability to function. It may also dictate the composition of the Council. Table 2 describes some of the tradeoffs associated with public versus non-governmental council authorization. Distinctions also exist between legislative and executive origins. Statutory language is harder to create, but generally more enduring than an executive order, which can be changed or even dissolved with the stroke of a pen by a (new) Governor. Distinctions also exist within non-governmental forms. Non-incorporated entities and 501(c)(4) organizations are less restricted in their ability to lobby than 501(c)(3) charters. However, non-incorporated organizations might be less respected by agencies and other organizations than legally incorporated organizations, and funders might be reluctant to provide grants.

The ability to lobby is one of the most important distinctions to consider in deciding whether a council should be public or non-governmental. NGO staff or its hired lobbyists can engage directly with elected officials on policy issues, pending legislation, and state budgets, and can encourage other organization and individuals to do so as well. All of this is generally prohibited for staff of public organizations. This does not preclude a publicly-formed council from having substantial influence on state policy. A council can function in a watchdog role to ensure that agencies carry out laws and executive orders as specified. They can provide information to legislators, raise issues, suggest legislative or executive solutions, and provide information to the press or public that may lead to policy initiatives.

Table 2. Strengths and weaknesses of public vs. non-governmental food systems council<sup>7</sup>

Public Vs. Non-Governmental Food Systems Council		
<b>Non-Governmental FSC</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More control by food advocates</li> <li>• Fewer bureaucratic restraints</li> <li>• Diverse sources of funding</li> <li>• Focus on priority issues</li> <li>• High rates of volunteerism</li> <li>• Free to choose issues in any domain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less public accountability</li> <li>• Lack of official standing with elected officials</li> <li>• Lack of staffing</li> <li>• Narrow agenda</li> <li>• Higher rates of turnover</li> <li>• Influence government by persuasion and lobbying</li> </ul>
<b>Public Sector FSC</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public accountability/legitimacy</li> <li>• Public involvement</li> <li>• Access to government staff</li> <li>• Coordination of food system across different departments</li> <li>• Clear legal authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureaucratic decision-making processes</li> <li>• Political partisanship</li> <li>• Less attention to community desires</li> <li>• Changing levels of support</li> <li>• Statutory constraints on activities and domains</li> </ul>

### WFSC Composition

Councils are generally created to bring together diverse organizations around a common set of issues. The *Food system* is such a large domain, and so many organizations are involved, that it will be necessary to create a schema for representing different spheres of activity – food system sectors. Table 3 provides an initial approximation of categories that might be used to represent sectors through seats on the Council.

Additional criteria might be applied to choices about council composition. Regional representation is certainly an issue in Wisconsin, where the majority of population is in the south and east. Representation of the north and west can be accommodated informally in candidate nomination processes, or formally in the categories of council seats. The size of a council can also be a consideration. A very large council can be unwieldy, making it difficult to achieve consensus on issues and even conduct business. One solution is to aggregate some of the sectors; however, too much aggregation will create sectors too diverse to effectively represent the organizations that comprise the aggregate category.

<sup>7</sup> expanded from Burgan, M. and M. Winne (2012) *Doing Food Policy Councils Right: A Guide to Development and Action*. Report for the Community Food Security Coalition, 61 pages.

**Table 3. Possible configuration of sectoral representation on a WFSC**

<b>Sectors Represented on a WFSC</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Producers (with numerous potential sub-divisions)</li> <li>• Processors</li> <li>• Retailers and restaurants</li> <li>• Wholesalers, aggregators, food hubs, warehouses</li> <li>• Local food policy councils</li> <li>• CSAs and farmers’ markets</li> <li>• Community and neighborhood-based organizations</li> <li>• Environmental and sustainable agriculture advocacy organizations</li> <li>• Public health and nutrition</li> <li>• Health care providers</li> <li>• Anti-hunger and emergency food providers</li> <li>• Higher education and UW-Extension</li> <li>• State agencies</li> <li>• State offices of federal agencies</li> <li>• Local governments</li> <li>• Tribal governments</li> <li>• Community development and business promotion organizations</li> </ul>

It is also important to consider whether some organizations *must be* represented on the Council. For example, DATCP and DHS may be considered so central to food system issues as to merit separate seats, along with “all other state agencies” as another category. This kind of need can also be accommodated through creating advisory or *ex officio* positions with the Council, with or without voting rights. Conversely, some sectors may not need to be represented on the Council itself but could be part of standing committees or working groups.

### **Selecting Council Representatives**

Assuming a sectoral representation model is chosen to comprise a council, some choices arise: how initial appointments are made, who chooses, and how the Council is populated over time. The initial appointments issue is straightforward with an executive order – the initial council is appointed by the

Governor. Legislative enactment could include a process for populating the board, or could default to an executive agency to manage appointments. Non-governmental council creation typically entails extensive discussion about which individuals will serve initial appointments on the board. This often ends up being the people that were most active in the creation of council. This is an acceptable outcome, as long as there is a clear notion about how these individuals will be replaced over time.

Councils should be created with fixed terms for members, with specified rules about duration and repeatability of terms. Many councils establish term limits and staggered initial term lengths to create a managed degree of turnover. Two main options are available for replacing council members. The Council itself can identify candidates and select members through an internal election. With this approach, the Council's nominating committee should make an effort to solicit input from the sector of the slot to be filled. Alternatively, the organizations comprising the sector can develop some kind of process for identifying a candidate. For example, they could hold a sector-based election that results in seating the winner on the Council. This approach is most effective where the sector is already organized. For example, if "food retailing" is a sector to be represented on the Council, the Wisconsin Grocers Association could be tasked with developing a process for selecting a representative, or the Association might assign the task of representation to their professional staff.

### **Council Organization and Governance**

There are many options for the Council's organization and governance. Most existing councils are generally structured like a board of directors. Officers such as chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer are elected by the Council from amongst the membership. Duties should be spelled out in chartering documents. A council typically has standing committees for ongoing issues and work groups or taskforces for specific projects and problems. Unless specified by its originating authority, the Council will need to make choices about meeting frequency and location, decision-making processes (e.g., voting rules), keeping and dissemination of meeting minutes or notes, and conduct of meetings (using Robert's Rules of Order versus consensus process, dynamic facilitation, Martha's Rules, or other alternative decision-making processes).

### **Funds for a WFSC**

A WFSC will need funding to carry out its mission. Of course, the amount will depend on the nature and scope of activities. It is likely that by far the greatest expense will be for staff. Ideally, a WFSC would



have dedicated staff to support the Council and to carry out day-to-day functions, such as maintaining communications and documents, gathering information for the Council, organizing meetings, and carrying out programmatic activities, if the Council decides to become involved in program management. Other functions such as meetings logistics and information technologies also entail expenses.

Funds can come from several sources:

- appropriation from the Legislature or Governor's discretionary funds
- agency in-kind contribution – dedicating staff from existing agency budgets
- contribution from an organization or pooled funds from several organizations
- council membership dues
- grants and contracts
- gifts and other direct fundraising
- event revenues

Funding sources will change over time. Startup funds could come from one-time sources, such as appropriations or grants, while ongoing support is likely to come from a mixture of sources. The startup process should include careful deliberation about ongoing support, as decisions about issues, organizational structure, and staffing will influence the viability of future sources, such as grants and event revenues.

The source of funds influences staff structure. If managing grants, donations, contracts, or dues is a significant portion of council staff activities, it will be necessary to have someone with accounting skills. Event revenues require a somewhat different skill set, though for one-time events such as annual conferences, this can be arranged through contracts with event coordinators.

A key decision will involve leadership responsibilities – how these are divided between council and staff. If personnel supervision, communications, office management, day-to-day program decisions, and so forth are primarily to be done by an employee, a council will need funds for an executive director. Otherwise, it will be necessary for council officers to oversee these activities and provide direction.

## Summary of Remaining Key Decisions

This document has described numerous options and choices that will be needed to design and implement a Wisconsin Food Systems Council. The key decisions include:

### **Which food system issues are most important from a statewide perspective?**

Are these issues within the scope of what a council can address?

What are the highest priorities?

What are the “low-hanging fruit” that can have immediate and noticeable impact?

### **Is the formation of a Wisconsin Food Systems Council the best way to address food system issues?**

Is our existing landscape of food system organizations getting the job done?

Is there a better way we can foster statewide coordination to promote collective impact?

### **What types of activities and modes of action will a council employ?**

Public governance of food system activities

Supporting local and regional foods

Education and training

Communication and networking

### **How can stakeholders have input into key design and implementation decisions?**

### **Should a council be formed by government action or formed as a non-governmental organization?**

If non-governmental, what working relations with public agencies are necessary for effective functioning?

### **What is the best structure for the Council?**

Who should be on a council?

Should seats on the Council correspond to functions (sectors) within food systems, or some other form of representation?

How should representatives be selected? Who and how should initial appointments be made?

### **How will a council be funded? Should it include paid staff?**

## Appendix One: Notes from the Wisconsin Food Systems Gathering: Exploring the Role of a Food Systems Council held on July 17, 2012 in Wausau, WI

The goal of the Wisconsin Food Systems Gathering was to bring a diverse group of key stakeholders together from health, agriculture, food security, and industry to begin discussing how a food system council could help support a healthy, robust, sustainable, and fair food system in Wisconsin.

The agenda included exploring the key ingredients of a thriving Wisconsin food system and identifying which of these ingredients are already occurring within the state. Mark Winne, a guest Food Policy Council Expert, presented the latest research on effective food policy councils found through the country. Finally, the potential role of a Wisconsin Food Systems Council was explored and how it might best function. The day concluded with a determination of next steps in furthering this conversation. Below are notes describing some early ideas of the nature of a Wisconsin Food Systems Council.

### **WI Food Systems Council: What it is, What it is not**

The following are structure, function, and scope themes that emerged as participants were tasked to create 10 statements, 5 that describe what each saw as the role of a WI Food Systems Council and 5 that describe what is *not* a role of a WI Food Systems Council.

#### **STRUCTURE**

- Public-private; Mixture of funding; self-sustaining & self-funded
- Diverse stakeholders; including public-private entities; inclusive
- Non-partisan

#### **FUNCTION**

##### ***Advise policy; educate policy makers***

1. Advise public policy
2. Build relationships with policymakers
3. Present policy-based solutions based on examples of “what works”
4. Advise decision makers on food policy and program issues
5. Identify problems and recommend solutions on food policy
6. Advise policymakers
7. Influence, help implement, and evaluate food policy
8. Advisor to policymakers
9. Propose food policy positions

10. Educate legislators on food system issues and solutions
  11. Promote policy changes
  12. Assess and inform policy impacts
  13. Educate policymakers and recommend strategies
- (n=13)**

***Educate consumers***

1. Educate consumers
  2. Impact consumer demand
  3. Create awareness of food policy issues
  4. Raise awareness among consumers
  5. Educate consumers on buying local, healthy eating, and improving nutrition
  6. Educate everyone who eats food
  7. Educate community
- (n=7)**

***Monitoring, evaluation, assessment of best practices and policy implementation***

1. Monitor best-practice, policies, and data related to food systems
  2. Evaluate existing and future food policies
  3. Evaluate existing policies
  4. Identify needs and opportunities to strengthen food system
- (n=4)**

***Coordination of stakeholders***

1. Coordinate stakeholders
  2. Create statewide partnerships
  3. Promote statewide coordination and equity in food system
  4. Coordinate networks
  5. Connect partners
- (n=5)**

***Develop common vision***

1. Create common vision
  2. Develop common vision
  3. Prioritize areas of development for food systems
  4. Create shared vision
  5. Prioritize goals
  6. Promote common interests of multiple partners
- (n=6)**

***Duplication***

1. Does not duplicate services of other organizations
  2. Does not replace or compete with existing food system reform activities
- (n=2)**

***Other***

1. Forum for discussion
  2. Information sharing
  3. No authority to enact policies
  4. Education and training
  5. Work with business sector to help develop local markets
  6. Advise and coordinate on development of regional infrastructure
- (n=6)**

## Appendix Two: Criteria for the Evaluation of Potential Wisconsin Food Systems Council Forms and Activities

Criteria for the Evaluation of Potential Wisconsin Food Systems Council Forms and Activities		
<b>Legitimacy and Voice</b>	Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures broad, equitable, inclusive, and balanced representation of stakeholders (e.g., diversity of stakeholders, diversity of expertise, geographic diversity), and allows all members to contribute to decision-making in a substantial way</li> <li>Encourages (or requires) state agency cooperation and participation</li> </ul>
	Consensus Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus</li> <li>Provides mechanisms for dispute resolution between stakeholders</li> </ul>
	Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessibility of Council to stakeholders through open meetings and availability for direct contact with Council members</li> </ul>
<b>Direction</b>	Mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling mechanism (e.g., Executive Order, Legislation, Administrative policy) provides clearly articulated mandate</li> </ul>
	Strategic Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly and cooperatively articulated vision and mission for Council</li> <li>Clearly and cooperatively articulated statewide strategic plan to which all stakeholders see how they can contribute and from which all can benefit</li> <li>Clearly defined benefits and risks</li> </ul>
<b>Performance</b>	Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility to access expertise and resources from within and from outside the Council to address and resolve issues</li> <li>Flexibility to adjust or create committees and working groups as needed</li> <li>Flexibility to adjust meeting frequency and location as needed</li> </ul>
	Political Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimizes the impact of political bias</li> <li>Enables the food system community to articulate a united vision to policy makers</li> <li>Increases awareness and understanding of food system issues and activities among policy makers at all levels and with the public</li> <li>Involves the highest level of policy makers in food system decision making</li> <li>Promotes the incorporation of food system issues into statewide policy and decision making</li> </ul>

<p><b>Performance (cont'd)</b></p>	<p>Effectiveness and Efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly defined performance metrics and ongoing assessment</li> <li>Readily understandable structure and manageable size</li> <li>Tangible benefits and deliverables accrued widely and at all levels</li> <li>Utilizes best practices from the private sector</li> <li>Ability to identify and pursue funding sources and influence expenditures</li> <li>Ability to provide incentives for participation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accountability</b></p>	<p>Accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly defined reporting requirements to funders, stakeholders, and collaborators</li> </ul>
	<p>Transparency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides transparent and democratic mechanisms for broad participation in policy development, decision-making and recommendations for funding allocations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Roles and Relationships</b></p>	<p>Roles and Responsibilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of Council</li> <li>Clearly defined role and relationship of Council with respect to other organizations, such as the Wisconsin Local Food Network</li> </ul>
	<p>Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates and formalizes direct lines of communication between Council and stakeholders (e.g., local councils, trade associations, etc)</li> <li>Facilitates face-to-face interaction and relationship building between Council and stakeholders, and among stakeholders</li> <li>Retention and sharing of institutional knowledge to new comers/succession</li> <li>Outreach, education and awareness</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fairness</b></p>	<p>Equity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broad, equitable and balanced representation, with all members participating in full voice.</li> <li>All stakeholders are able to actively participate in the Council and associated committees</li> </ul>
	<p>Rule of Procedure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly defined, open and fair operating and voting procedures</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to persist under change in administration</li> <li>Ability to persist under budgetary constraints</li> <li>Sufficient funding, administrative support and technical support</li> </ul>

## How to Get Involved in the Wisconsin Food System Council Conversation

- Give us your feedback by completing a survey at:  
<http://wilocalfood.wordpress.com/food-system-council/>
- Join our stakeholder listserv by sending your contact information to [WiscFSC@gmail.com](mailto:WiscFSC@gmail.com)
- Plan to attend our next stakeholder meeting in Spring 2013. Details to be determined.

### For More Information Contact

Wisconsin Food System Council  
WiscFSC@gmail.com

Additional copies of this paper can be obtained at  
[wilocalfood.wordpress.com/food-system-council/](http://wilocalfood.wordpress.com/food-system-council/)  
Special thanks to the Wisconsin Local Food Network for allowing us to host  
this paper on their website.