

GU Local Food Action Team Strategic Plan for 2014-16

GU Food Action Team Mission

To develop a thriving local food system by serving as a catalyst, advocate and communication hub for local food initiatives.

The Local Food team brings together local farmers, distributors, processors, farmers markets, cooperatives, community gardeners, community supported agriculture organizations, health professionals, restaurants, extension services, educational organizations and government entities in the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area to work collaboratively.

Guiding Principles of the GU Food Action Team

- 1) All Greater Cincinnati residents should have access to affordable, local, healthy, sustainable, food.
- 2) Our work focuses on food grown in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky, with a priority for foods grown in our region.
- 3) Intentional coordinated efforts in advocacy, public education, and awareness are needed to build a stronger local food system.
- 4) It should be easy to grow food in our region, for personal use or for business purposes.
- 5) Businesses that produce, process, distribute, and sell local and healthy food should grow and thrive in Greater Cincinnati.
- 6) Food growing, production, and distribution practices should be humane and ethical.
- 7) Food production and distribution should adhere to sustainable growing practices that result in improvement of the quality of the local environment.
- 8) A thriving local food system requires strong collaboration among all stakeholders in the food system.
- 9) Progress toward goals should be measured.
- 10) Food related waste should be prevented, reused, or recycled.

GU Food Action Team Vision

Thanks to GU's efforts to promote collaboration and local food initiatives, by 2020, the Greater Cincinnati region will have a thriving local food system that addresses the needs of consumers, producers, distributors, and other food system stakeholders.

More specifically,

- A cultural shift will have occurred in our region that focuses on healthy living and eating.
- The benefits of buying local foods will be widely understood.
- Local foods will be widely available, accessible to all of our region's residents.
- Local governmental and private sectors will support and promote a strong local food system.
- There will be numerous garden plots at churches, businesses, government properties, and other community properties where space allows.
- Our citizens will have an increased level of self-sufficiency as a result of access to local foods.
- Our region will be less susceptible to food security threats through re-establishing closer consumer-producer connections.
- There will be career opportunities that pay living wage employment in all aspects of the food system.
- Local universities will offer opportunities for education and certification in local food related fields.
- Our local food system will be recognized regionally and nationally, and looked to as a model for replication.
- At least 10% of food dollars of individuals, corporations, and institutions in our region will be used to support local food producers and related businesses

Unique Niche

Green Umbrella is the “backbone organization” that helps all member organizations work better together to promote a more environmentally sustainable region.

Green Umbrella partners with our area's leading planning initiatives, Vision 2015 in Northern Kentucky and Agenda 360 in Southwestern Ohio, to facilitate collaboration among over 200 area non-profits, businesses, educational institutions and governmental entities focused on the environmental aspects of sustainability. We have united around the Collective Impact Model, which has produced remarkable results for the STRIVE Partnership, the collaborative that promotes innovation in our local education system. The model teaches that success requires having a common agenda, using a shared measurement system, supporting mutually reinforcing activities and maintaining continuous communication.

The infrastructure of GU provides easy access to “early adopters,” both organizations and individuals, who are interested in promoting consumption of locally produced fruit and vegetables.

Assumptions for 2014-15

Assumptions are those factors we assume will be true for the next two years that will have a large effect on local food efforts, opportunities, threats, realities, and constraints..

1. Local food tends to cost more than mainstream food because
 - a. demand for local foods exceeds current supply, and
 - b. a lack of distribution and aggregation infrastructure reduces efficiencies and cost savings.
2. For the local food movement to reach its full potential, the price gap between local and mainstream food will have to shrink and distribution will need to increase.
3. People tend to value locally produced foods over globally produced food.
4. Local food distribution offers opportunities for reducing the cost of every component of distribution including transportation, refrigeration, packaging, advertising, insurance and middle people.
5. Food distributors will respond to increased demand in local foods.
6. Technical assistance for competition strategies will help local food businesses better compete with global food distributors, for example, use of social media and mobile technologies, etc.
7. “Network communities of practice” (joint procurement cooperatives for ex.) help locally owned businesses compete with large food distributors.
8. Shorter food supply lines and community self-reliance that come with local food can reduce food security risks.
9. Private/public partnerships are needed to address food insecurity in low-income communities.
10. Collaboration will affect changes in public policy, thus driving systemic change in the local food system
11. The timing is right for local food initiatives since public awareness of the need for healthy food choices and sustainable environment initiatives is increasing dramatically.
12. Economic benefits for the local community must be emphasized in the case for local foods.

Strategic Intent:

Green Umbrella will lead a collaborative effort working with local stakeholders to serve as a catalyst and coordinator for a thriving local food system.

BHAG (Big, hairy audacious Goal):

To double the percentage of consumption of locally sourced fruit and vegetables by 2020.

Key Result Areas:

Green Umbrella's (GU) local food advocacy efforts will target results in Infrastructure Development, Education, Access, and Policy.

Infrastructure Development for Local Food Initiatives:

GU will be the backbone organization and recognized leader for collaborative initiatives to promote local food, production, distribution, policy and consumption. GU will facilitate communication, collaboration and data collection among individuals, communities, producers, distributors and policy makers to support a sustainable food system. GU will provide a forum and infrastructure for sharing best practices and information, helping to reduce barriers, and brokering partnerships. GU will be actively involved in developing and implementing a Strategic Plan for the local food system along with other local food stakeholders. A full time "Local Food System Advocate" will coordinate GU's initiatives, working closely with the GU Food Action Team. The Food Action leadership team will serve as the advisory team. GU will work with local food advocacy groups in neighboring regions in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. .

Education About Local Foods:

People in Greater Cincinnati will have food literacy skills. They will have a good sense of where their food comes from, where to buy local foods, how to plan meals, and how to prepare fresh fruit and vegetables. They will know where to go for information about preserving food and other topics related to local foods. Consumer demand for local produce will increase due to education efforts from Green Umbrella and other stakeholders in the local food system. Farmers and local food related businesses will better understand opportunities for growth in producing and distributing local foods.

Access to Locally Produced Foods:

All people in the Greater Cincinnati region will have convenient access to healthful, affordable, local and sustainably grown food. Local foods will be readily available to individual consumers, in their homes, their workplaces, in schools, and other community places. In addition to farmers markets and stands, mainstream retailers will offer locally grown food. The number of certified food producers will have increased. Funding and policy mechanisms that support increased local food production will be in place.

Policies that Support the Local Food System:

A regional Food Policy Council will have been established with a sustainable infrastructure. The Council will be actively executing a prioritized action plan. Agenda 360, Vision 2015, and other regional plans will incorporate local food initiatives. Local Institutions such as schools, city departments, and community and civic organizations will incorporate policies for healthy local food. Decision makers in government, business, and community

organizations will support efforts to build a more complete and sustainable local food production and distribution system. There will be public and private land designated for community or institutional gardens.

Bold Initiatives

The following Bold Initiatives will provide the framework for prioritizing the work of Green Umbrella's Local Food Action Team for 2014-16. Goals, activities, stakeholders, measures and targets will be identified for each initiative by the LF Action Team.

- 1. Develop a robust Local Food System Infrastructure**
- 2. Promote Healthy Food Consumption and Access**
- 3. Develop and implement financial support strategies to sustain local food initiatives.**
- 4. Strengthen Local Food Distribution Infrastructure**
- 5. Provide Technical Assistance and Expertise for Local Food Producers**

Bold Initiative 1: Develop a Robust Local Food System Infrastructure.

#	Goals	Champion (Who Else?)	Standards of Performance				
			Activities	Measures	Target 2014	Target 2015	Target 2016-2020
1a	Expand GU Local Food infrastructure to plan, design and monitor local food initiatives.	GU Food Team Brewster Rhoads	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit additional members for the GU Local Food Team leadership 2. Develop a process for engaging the entire GU Food Action Team (reaction to our strategic plan) 	<p>6-8 active members</p> <p>Process documented</p>	<p>6-8 by 1/1/14</p> <p>By 1/1/14</p>		
1b	Create a staffed local food system advocate/ specialist position	<p>Brewster Rhoads GU Food Leadership Team</p> <p>LFSA</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a job description for a full time Local Food System Advocate 2. Conduct a search for the appropriate candidate 3. Green Umbrella contract with the chosen LFSA 4. Develop goals and performance standards for the position (including coordination of all recommendations and communication between stakeholders; collection of annual food system metrics). 5. Hire an intern to work with the LFSA 	<p>Job description completed</p> <p>FTE contract signed Signed doc. of goals and standards</p> <p>Intern contract signed</p>	<p>By 3/31/14</p> <p>By 4/30/14</p> <p>By 5/15/14</p> <p>By 6/1/14</p>	<p>By 12/30/15</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>By 12/30/16</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
1c	Establish the Regional Food Policy Advisory Council	Interact for Health/ GU Food Team LFSA/	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit appropriate stakeholders for the Food Council 2. Adopt best practice organizational structure and guidelines 3. Provide communication linkages with GU, regional and state Food Policy Councils 4. Complete a food policy audit of current policies in the region 	Signed commitments of 6-10 local food leaders	By 6/30/14	Ongoing	Ongoing

			5. Develop annual plan for policy implementation.	Annual plan completed	By 12/31/14	By 12/31/15	By 12/31/16
1d	Develop and implement the next generation Green Umbrella web site, <i>GU Web 2.0</i>	Local Food Team/ LFSA/ Deborah Jordan/ Edible Ohio/ Website Consultant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a list of features for a "Local Food System" website. 2. Contract with an appropriate website consultant 3. Integrate the CORV Guide 4. Develop the website in phases. 5. Create/populate online database, 6. Create local food resource portal for synthesis of all things related to local food 7. Develop mobile app capacity 	Phased development for completion	Phase I by 6/30/14	Phase II by 1/1/15	Phase III by 1/1/16
1e	Facilitate cross-regional collaboration, sharing of best practices and setting priorities for future initiatives		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance use of GU website for communications and networking 2. Hold monthly meetings of the GU Food Action Team 3. Convene an Annual Gathering of Food System Stakeholders 	Basic functionality add on to current website # average attendees/ mo # of attendees	By 2/1/14 30/month 30, Winter, 2014?	Ongoing Ongoing 300, Winter, 2015	Ongoing Ongoing 300, Winter 2016
1f	Develop a Long-Term Strategic Plan for enhancing the local food system, building on work done to date	Local Food Team/ Interact for Health/ Planning Facilitator/ LFSA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify influencers and experts to develop plan 2. Review all existing data 3. Identify additional community assets and stakeholders 4. Update data using current data collection 5. Conduct additional research on food production, consumption, processing, distribution, 6. Establish baseline measures 7. Create actionable strategies, 	Planning team commitments Facilitator contract Plan completion	By 8/1/14	Ongoing Ongoing By 6/30/15	Ongoing Ongoing Review by 6/30/16

			timelines and partner commitments.				
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Bold Initiative 2: Promote Healthy Food Consumption and Access

			Standards of Performance				
#	Goals	Champion (Who Else?)	Activities	Measures	Target 2014	Target 2015	Target 2016-2020
2a	Conduct an Outreach Campaign to Increase Consumption of Local Food	Local Food Team/ LFSA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finalize marketing plan for two target markets: 1) GU stakeholders, 2) Workplace wellness departments 2. Design and procure marketing materials for regional branding 3. Ensure website functionality is in place for the campaign 4. Design toolkit for workplace wellness departments and incorporate into website 5. Promote taking the pledge for a 10% shift in purchasing local foods. 6. Provide feedback to those who take the pledge. 7. Expand to other target markets in future years 	<p>Marketing plan done</p> <p>Marketing materials Toolkits on website</p> <p># pledged to 10% shift</p>			
2b	Increase SNAP/WIC Purchases of Fresh (Local) Fruits and Vegetables	LFSA/ Nutrition Council/ Public Health Depts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase SNAP/WIC access at area farmers markets for both vendors and customers 2. Increase “matching” benefits for SNAP/WIC recipients 3. Leverage federal benefit programs for education and access 4. Promote SNAP/WIC enrollment 5. Explore other venues that minimize transportation barriers for recipients. 				
2c	Enhance Educational Opportunities for Local Consumers	Educational entities GU Volunteers LSFA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate collaboration of entities engaged in local food literacy. 2. Coordinate education messaging and resources about local foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GU Website links to food literacy 		1/1/15	

			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Promote and support education at various food access points for consumers including schools and child care centers 4. Connect organizations that teach basic cooking and gardening skills to target populations 5. Explore alternatives for the use of SNAP education dollars for local food education 6. Publish a well-articulated case for local foods for different markets, emphasizing health, economic and environmental benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sites • Education topics on GU's website • # of organizations that include local food in their curricula 			
2d	Support efforts to increase individual, community and co-op gardens	Civic Garden Center Cincinnati Public Health Dept. Other org. working on gardening efforts	Publicity and connections --TBD				
2e	Increase access to Local Foods		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase year-round markets for local products at farmers markets and corner stores 2. Create new, innovative markets and strategies 3. Increase local purchasing by food buyers. 4. Reduce barriers to using local foods in early childhood and school environments 				

Bold Initiative 3: Develop and implement financial support strategies to enhance and sustain local food initiatives.

			Standards of Performance				
#	Goals	Champion (Who Else?)	Activities	Measures	Target 2012	Target 2013	Target 2014
3a	Engage corporate and individual philanthropist sponsors as partners		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify value proposition for targeted businesses with high interest in local foods. 2. Develop a recognition “benefit package” for sponsors/ Joint marketing opportunities 3. Partner with Interact for Health to influence leaders 4. Develop a “wish list” of projects to sponsor 5. Develop a financial sponsor marketing plan Develop a “wish list” of projects to sponsor 	<p># of corporate and individual sponsors,</p> <p># of projects sponsored,</p> <p>\$ raised through sponsorships</p>	\$10,000	\$20,000	
3b	Engage support from educational institutions		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ohio State and UK Extension support (NC Cooperative Extension has designated local food coordinators for each county as well as regional directors—NC Extension also hosts as web portal that coordinates educational, promotional, and data-collection activities) 2. Local university support for education and data initiative 	<p># of degree programs in urban agriculture at regional educational institutions,</p> <p># of interns working with local farmers/distributors,</p> <p>Amount of \$ invested in data tracking and program evaluation</p>	<p>4 degree programs,</p> <p>20 interns</p> <p>\$10,000 in data tracking and program evaluation</p>	<p>5 degree program</p> <p>40 interns</p> <p>\$25,000 invested</p>	6 degree programs

3c	Advocate for local and state government support—Dept. of Agriculture, Ohio Development Finance Fund, etc.		Research opportunities for state & local government support, reach out to key decision makers, submit proposals	\$ raised # partnerships developed	\$10,000	\$30,000	
3d	Solicit operational support from foundations		Identify targeted foundations, write grants, partner with others on joint grant opportunities	\$ raised	\$125,000	\$150,000	
3e	Encourage funding opportunities for growers and local food related businesses		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Includes consumer mobilization through education and access, assisting local business competitiveness through peer learning and support—local food malls, food hubs, etc. 2. Tie in with local chambers of commerce—local business communities—BUY LOCAL 	# of Businesses assisted, # of jobs created or retained, \$ increase in sales, # of new businesses launched			

Bold Initiative 4: Strengthen Local Food Distribution Infrastructure

			Standards of Performance				
#	Goals	Champion (Who Else?)	Activities	Measures	Target 2014	Target 2015	Target 2016-2020
4a	Strengthen Regional Distribution of Local Food	Our Harvest, Green Bean Delivery, Food Policy Council, Ellenbee Leggett and other local distributors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase aggregation of local foods Build on existing distribution infrastructure Provide technical assistance and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lbs. of local food sold to institutional/ wholesale/retail markets Number distributors purchasing local food (or % of product sold that is local) Number distributors/farmers receiving education/training 	3/3	<p>Increase by 4% from baseline by 12/31/2015</p> <p>Increase by 2% from baseline by 12/31/2015</p> <p>6/10</p>	<p>Increase by 10% from baseline</p> <p>Increase by 10% from baseline</p> <p>10/20</p>
4b	Increase Institutional Purchasing	Schools, universities, hospitals, senior centers, and other institutions, Food Policy Council	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate new partnerships Develop incentives for local purchasing Provide technical assistance and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number institutions approached Chosen incentives identified Incentives implemented Number institutions/farmers receiving education/training 	<p>5</p> <p>3/3</p>	<p>10 By 2015</p> <p>6/10</p>	<p>20 By 2016</p> <p>10/20</p>
4c	Construct a Certified, Shared- Use Kitchen	Findlay Market, food producers, public health departments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support current feasibility analysis and planning efforts Provide potential wrap-around 	Determine mechanisms for partnership and support	By spring 2014		

			<p>services, including processing, packing, flash freezing, business training & marketing support for possible business start ups</p> <p>3. Provide food education and resources for community members (i.e. food resource center, tool library, seed bank)</p>	Engage possible educational partners		By 2015	
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Bold Initiative 5: Provide Technical Assistance and Expertise for Local Food Producers

			Standards of Performance				
#	Goals	Champion (Who Else?)	Activities	Measures	Target 2014	Target 2015	Target 2016-2020
5a	Support Existing Local Growers	LFSA, GU Local Food Team, Civic Garden Center, SWOEFFA, OSU, Our Harvest	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide technical assistance for food safety regulations, GAP certification, and crop expansion/conversion; 2. Facilitate educational opportunities and knowledge sharing (on topics like season extension, operational efficiency, scaling up, small business training, and backyard growing) 3. Support land leasing or purchase for expanded production 4. Increase the farm labor pool 5. Increasing awareness/access to financial resources 	<p>Number of farmers trained</p> <p>Number of Educational opportunities offered</p>			
5b	Develop New Growers and Other Food Businesses	LFSA, GU Local Food Team, Civic Garden Center, Xavier, Cincinnati State, LL4LF, Our Harvest	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilize existing business-planning and entrepreneurial programs more effectively 2. Support new farmer incubation programs 3. Develop educational programming with local educational institutions 4. Provide start-up funding for new growers and development of farmer mentorship programs 	Compile local resource guide for new farmers and food businesses			
5c	Increase Local Food Production at All Scales	LFSA, GU Local Food Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support farm preservation and transfer 2. Explore transition to specialty 	Design survey of commodity crop growers			

			<p>crops</p> <p>3. Support growers interested in extending the growing season or scaling up operations</p> <p>4. Increase number of community gardens and backyard gardeners</p>	<p>Conduct survey of commodity crop growers</p> <p>Number of community gardens and backyard gardeners</p>			
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