



STRATEGIC PLAN

Building a Resilient Food System

2023-2027

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PURPOSE:

Assist Dubuque County in partnering with other government and non-government stakeholders to provide leadership to and coordinate the development of food related policies and priorities at the regional, state and national level. Foster connections and information sharing between food-related groups.

MISSION:

The mission of the Dubuque County Food Policy Council is to improve the health and well-being of residents of Dubuque County by promoting a resilient, just and equitable food system.

The Council will strive to accomplish this through (1) policy recommendations, (2) educational outreach and (3) partnerships.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In keeping with this Mission, The Dubuque County Food Policy Council has developed this five year Strategic Plan. It identifies three priorities underpinning its Mission, and sets out targeted strategies to address those priorities. It includes specific actions and provides a road map to attainment of the priorities, and the Mission.

A funding request for plan implementation is included with this plan as some items will require financial investment, in addition to Food Policy Council and partner time commitments.

A monitoring and evaluation plan accompanies this Strategic Plan, so that we can constantly strive to ensure that we are effectively and efficiently working toward a resilient food system that is just and equitable for Dubuque County.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

This plan was developed by a subcommittee of the Dubuque County Food Policy Council (DCFPC). The following overarching principles pertain to each goal and strategy in the document and are defined below.



1. Easily Accessible, Inclusive Communication

Resources and materials will be developed with multiple platforms in mind. These materials will be available in print, online, and available on-demand via telephone call, social media, through a comprehensive website, and via local champions and leaders. Some resources will also be translated to additional languages used in Dubuque County. Specific outreach to rural communities is a priority.



2. Healthy, Appropriate Foods

The provision of healthy, appropriate foods generally describes situations where food options provide basic, quality nutrition while offering individuals an opportunity to choose the foods they prefer due to cultural or dietary reasons.



3. Sustainability-Focused

Sustainability adaptations and strategies will be incorporated into actions, communications and events. All plan-related events will be designed with a goal of zero waste to showcase best practices and support the Council's goal of reduced or recovered food discards.

PRIORITY 1: Foster a Local Food Economy

Support increased local food production, distribution, and employment

Local and regional food systems improve the vitality of both rural and urban communities in many ways. Growing, processing, and distributing food locally enhances overall economic resiliency by expanding and creating community-based jobs, promoting health through improved food access, and creating a resilient, sustainable, and equitable food system.

ACTIONS:

1. Develop a food resources website and interactive map (similar to <https://www.kchealthykids.org/eat-local-kc-map.html>) to include;
 - a. Retailers who sell local products
 - b. Chefs and/or restaurants who use local produce or products
 - c. Institutions who regularly purchase local produce or products
 - d. Local food producers
 - e. Certified commercial kitchens available for rent
 - f. Commercial cooler space available for rent
 - g. Processing facilities for a variety of business sizes (start-up to contracted production) to connect producers to the right level of processing for their business.
2. Provide a single resource for Dubuque County that addresses all aspects of food-related business start-up including licensing, food safety, and decision-making tools for leasing space vs. portable food sale (food trucks).
3. Develop a collaborative program with ISU Extension Master Gardeners and other partners to conduct training, education, and support for community gardens on vacant or underutilized publicly- or institutionally-owned lots similar to Mowing to Monarchs that includes best practices sharing, funding and annual workshops.
4. Host an annual farm to table dinner to bring together institutional buyers and producers with the goal of showcasing products, building relationships and increasing the amount of food purchased from local producers.

5. Review existing co-working spaces for expansion to include rentable kitchens similar to <https://www.pbii.org/rentable-spaces#commercial-kitchen>.
6. Provide sample food-friendly codes for small rural communities (i.e. chickens, small livestock, farmer's market start-ups, beekeeping, food sales in residential areas).
7. Review county zoning barriers to small to medium sized farming and work with Dubuque County Zoning Commission to incorporate small scale food production into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

PRIORITY 2: Ensure Healthy Food Access

Increase access to healthy, affordable and appropriate foods to address and overcome food insecurity

9.4% of Dubuque County residents are food insecure. This is defined as a lack of access to healthy, culturally appropriate food and can be caused by limited resources, disability, and living in food deserts. Food and health are closely linked with poor nutrition correlate to a higher probability of chronic disease, illness, and poor mental and physical health especially in children. Food insecure children may have behavioral issues and experience trouble learning, as well as negative long term health and socio-economic consequences, including higher medical expenditures. The pandemic highlighted the urgent need to address food security. This plan addresses these unique challenges and proposes actions to address upstream causes.

ACTIONS:

1. Integrate food resources and access into existing county-wide (urban and rural) service hotlines (example - lines already exist for homeless services, other related assistance).
2. Develop and distribute materials for use during food drives to promote the need for healthy, local food donations.
3. Support the development of stakeholder groups to address food policies and barriers, including the interests and engagement of: rural communities, vulnerable and underserved populations, service providers and food pantries.
4. Work with DCSD and WSD to implement healthy, seasonal breakfast and lunch menu items (Goal: switch one unhealthy food per year [ex. donut for a whole grain muffin]).

Develop a food resources website and interactive map

(similar to <https://www.kchealthykids.org/eat-local-kc-map.html>) to include;

- a. Retailers who provide foods for specialty diets (celiac, etc)
 - b. Retailers who provide foods for diverse populations (ethnic grocers)
 - c. Corporate food donors
 - d. Food-related volunteer opportunities
 - e. Pantry resources
 - f. Refrigerated trucks
 - g. Food access points (regular sites and emergency-only sites)
 - h. Food buying clubs
 - i. Farm to market transportation sharing opportunities
5. **Develop a communication and outreach plan for sharing resources and tools with specific focus on the following groups;**
- a. Medical providers
 - b. Retail outlets
 - c. Pharmacies
 - d. Service providers.
6. **Identify and promote existing emergency food plans and resources and recruit both urban and rural food champions to work with the St. Stephen's Food Bank Branch of River Bend and Dubuque County Emergency Management to incorporate these plans and resources into the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan with specific attention to the following;**
- a. Transportation partners for bulk food delivery to access points and individual food delivery throughout the county
 - b. Vulnerable populations, specifically individuals not eligible for state or federal benefits
 - c. A list of organizations who work with and serve marginalized populations to assist with information dissemination during food emergencies.
7. **Assist with capacity building for pantries and food access points through infrastructure needs and communications support including;**
- a. Assessing cold storage and shelving needs
 - b. Identifying potential donors of used cold storage, shelving and distribution resources
 - c. Volunteer recruitment and training
 - d. Development and distribution of picture menus to assist pantry staff with language barriers, cultural awareness and sensitivity
 - e. Assist with selection of cultural appropriate foods
 - f. Tools for determining proper amounts and appropriate foods to carry the household over to either the next income event, or the next access point
 - g. Identify sources for complimentary items for distribution including personal hygiene items, household cleaning items, baby supplies.

8. Support the development of a coalition to implement nutrition policies in the food bank, pantries and other food-distribution programs using the Feeding America Nutrition in Food Banking Toolkit to support collective education of donors, recipients, and food distributors.
9. Support local schools in identifying and addressing food insecurity in children, including:
 - a. Staff training
 - b. Connections with food access points and contacts
 - c. Problem-solving and addressing barriers.

PRIORITY 3: Minimize Food Waste

Support systems and develop strategies to recover or implement beneficial uses of food discards.

Food and food residuals comprise 20% of the total weight of materials landfilled from Dubuque County with the average four-member household contributing food waste at a rate of \$1,500 per year. By increasing food recovery, both community resources (landfill space) and individual households finances will benefit. To increase food recovery, the first step is prevention, the second step is recovery and the third step is to implement beneficial uses of food discards. Prevention and recovery must occur throughout the food system including: agriculture, processing, logistics, marketing, storage, food preparation, consumption, and discard methods.

ACTIONS:

1. Advocate for DMSWA to complete the permitting process for increased compost capacity to support institutional, commercial and residential food discard pick-up for urban and rural areas.
2. Develop a food resources website and interactive map (similar to <https://www.kchealthykids.org/eat-local-kc-map.html>) to include:
 - a. Event locations that donate food
 - b. Pantries and organizations who accept donated post-event food.
3. Develop a recognition for restaurants for reduced perishable food wasting, enrolling in a composting program and/or feeding small livestock with food discards.
4. Encourage the sale or donation of misfit food at farmer's markets and retailers.

5. Develop a collaborative program with DMASWA, ISU Extension and other partners to conduct training, education, and community support for backyard composting similar to Mowing to Monarchs (Carts to Compost) that includes truckload sale of backyard compost bins, best practices sharing, funding and annual workshops.
6. Provide resources and education to support Restaurant, Food Service and Household Best Management Practices to Reduce Food Wastage in the Kitchen;
 - a. Reduce over-purchasing of food
 - b. Reduce prep waste and improperly cooked food
 - c. Consider secondary uses for excess food
 - d. Ensure proper storage techniques
 - e. Modify menu to increase consumer satisfaction and reduce food left uneaten
 - f. Modify serving sizes and garnishes
 - g. Encourage guests to order/request and take only the food they will consume
 - h. Go trayless at buffets and school/institutional cafeterias.
7. Support the development of an end-of-market produce discount table to reduce food discards and while supporting income for small farmers and vendors.
8. Support the development of a produce discount table at food retailers to reduce food discards and bring visibility to the food life cycle.
9. Support the financial viability of composting operations by specifying compost use for public and private development projects.



Purchase of Service Contracts

To support the strategic plan, the Food Policy Council recommends that when making purchase of service contract decisions or other county investments, Supervisors consider funding projects or programs in the following areas:

1. Food retailers and co-ops to locate in identified food deserts. Utilize CDBG funding for geographies that meet the income thresholds.
2. Provision of specialty food items (dietary, ethnic, experimental).
3. Start-up, admin and marketing support for farmers' markets in rural and urban communities.
4. Efforts to support food insecure individuals.
5. Food bank, pantry and school infrastructure (shelving, refrigeration) and distribution resources.
6. Food entrepreneur start-up or expansion projects of any size or type.
7. Information-gathering, distribution, marketing, and promotion of local food strategies under this plan.



IMPLEMENTATION + WORKPLAN

The current funding for Food Policy Council staffing is provided through an RFP process to a contracted vendor. Through the work of the contracted vendor, it has become clear that continued administrative support will be necessary to move Council priorities forward.

The implementation and work plan combines short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes into an annual action plan for the Council and staff. Within each year's plan, actions are color-coded to show which priority they support.

Priority 1:
Foster a Local Food Economy

Priority 2:
Ensure Healthy Food Access

Priority 3:
Minimize Food Waste

The funding request for each year is estimated based on the work plan actions.

If partner organizations or other community members are interested in advancing an action earlier than is listed in the work plan, the Council will encourage that work but funding would need to be sought through the County purchase of services process.

YEAR 1: FY2023

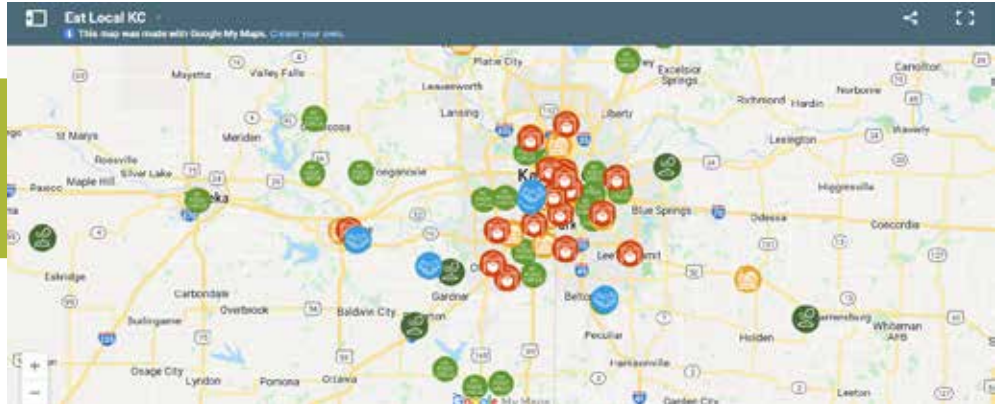
1. Hire part-time staff to provide administrative support for Council and subcommittees, begin grant research and writing to fund future years' activities, conduct social media and marketing, networking and collaboration, and assist with implementation of Year 1 actions.
2. Host an annual farm to table dinner to bring together institutional buyers and producers with the goal of showcasing products, building relationships and increasing the amount of food purchased from local producers.
3. Advocate for DMASWA to complete the permitting process for increased compost capacity to support institutional, commercial and residential food discard pick-up for urban and rural areas.
4. Develop and distribute materials for use during food drives to promote the need for healthy, local food donations.
5. Work with DCSD and WSD to implement healthy, seasonal breakfast and lunch menu items (Goal: switch one unhealthy food per year [ex. donut for a whole grain muffin]).

6. Support the development of stakeholder groups to address food policies and barriers, including the interests and engagement of: rural communities, vulnerable and underserved populations, service providers and food pantries. Share the existing emergency food plans, contacts, and resources with these groups.

Develop a comprehensive food resources website and begin to populate an interactive map (similar to <https://www.kchealthykids.org/eat-local-kc-map.html>) to include;

- a. Retailers who sell local products
- b. Chefs, restaurants, institutions who use local produce or products
- c. Local food producers
- d. Certified commercial kitchens or commercial cooler space available for rent
- e. Processing facilities for a variety of business sizes (start-up to contracted production) to connect producers to the right level of processing for their business
- f. Retailers who provide foods for specialty diets (celiac, etc) and/or diverse populations
- g. Corporate food donors
- h. Food-related volunteer opportunities
- i. Food access points (regular sites and emergency-only sites)
- j. Event locations that donate food
- k. Pantries and organizations who accept donated post-event food.
- l. Farm to market transportation sharing opportunities
- m. Food buying clubs

Map Example:
EatLocalKC



FY2023 PROPOSED BUDGET: \$58,662

Contracted services

- Administrative and program support including (20 hrs/wk) \$31,662
- Annual Farm to Table event planning \$10,000

Professional development for Staff and Council Members \$5,000

Marketing/Outreach \$12,000

- Marketing and Outreach expenses include website, business cards, brochures, booth fees, advertising, demonstrations, mileage reimbursement

YEAR 2: FY2024

1. Continue part-time staff to provide administrative support for Council and subcommittees, begin grant research and writing to fund future years' activities, conduct social media and marketing, networking and collaboration, and assist with implementation of Year 2 actions.
2. Continue to develop and update the food resources website and interactive map.
3. Continue to host an annual farm to table dinner to bring together institutional buyers and producers with the goal of showcasing products, building relationships and increasing the amount of food purchased from local producers.
4. Provide sample food-friendly codes for small rural communities (i.e. chickens, small livestock, farmer's market start-ups, beekeeping, food sales in residential areas).
5. Support local schools in identifying and addressing food insecurity in children, including;
 - a. Staff training
 - b. Connections with food access points and contacts
 - c. Problem-solving and addressing barriers.
6. Assist with capacity building for pantries and food access points through infrastructure needs and communications support including;
 - a. Assessing cold storage and shelving needs
 - b. Identifying potential donors of used cold storage, shelving and distribution resources
 - c. Volunteer recruitment and training
 - d. Development and distribution of picture menus to assist pantry staff with language barriers, cultural awareness and sensitivity
 - e. Assist with selection of cultural appropriate foods
 - f. Tools for determining proper amounts and appropriate foods to carry the household over to either the next income event, or the next access point
 - g. Identify sources for complimentary items for distribution including personal hygiene items, household cleaning items, baby supplies.
7. Develop a collaborative program with DMASWA, ISU Extension and other partners to conduct training, education, and community support for backyard composting similar to Mowing to Monarchs (Carts to Compost) that includes truckload sale of backyard compost bins, best practices sharing, funding and annual workshops.

FY2024 PROPOSED BUDGET: \$59,611

Contracted services

- Administrative support including (20 hrs/wk) \$32,611
- Annual Farm to Table Contracted Event Planning \$10,000

Professional development for Staff and Council Members \$5,000

Marketing/Outreach \$12,000

- Marketing and Outreach expenses include website, business cards, brochures, booth fees, advertising, demonstrations, mileage reimbursement

YEAR 3: FY2025

1. Continue part-time staff to provide administrative support for Council and subcommittees, begin grant research and writing to fund future years' activities, conduct social media and marketing, networking and collaboration, and assist with implementation of Year 3 actions.
2. Continue to develop and update the food resources website and interactive map.
3. Continue to host an annual farm to table dinner to bring together institutional buyers and producers with the goal of showcasing products, building relationships and increasing the amount of food purchased from local producers.
4. Provide a single resource for Dubuque County that addresses all aspects of food-related business start-up including licensing, food safety, and decision-making tools for leasing space vs. portable food sale (food trucks).
5. Review county zoning barriers to small to medium sized farming and work with Dubuque County Zoning Commission to incorporate small scale food production into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
6. Integrate food resources and access into existing county-wide (urban and rural) service hotlines (example - lines already exist for homeless services, other related assistance).
7. Support the development of a coalition to implement nutrition policies in the food bank, pantries and other food-distribution programs using the Feeding America Nutrition in Food Banking Toolkit to support collective education of donors, recipients, and food distributors.

8. Identify and promote existing emergency food plans and resources and recruit both urban and rural food champions to work with the St. Stephen's Food Bank Branch of River Bend and Dubuque County Emergency Management to incorporate these plans and resources into the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan with specific attention to the following;
 - a. Transportation partners for bulk food delivery to access points and individual food delivery throughout the county
 - b. Vulnerable populations, specifically individuals not eligible for state or federal benefits
 - c. A list of organizations who work with and serve marginalized populations to assist with information dissemination during food emergencies.

9. Support the development of an end-of-market produce discount table to reduce food discards and provide income for small farmers and vendors.

FY2025 PROPOSED BUDGET: \$74,933

Contracted services

- Administrative and program support (30 hrs/wk) \$47,933
- Annual Farm to Table Contracted Event Planning \$10,000

Professional development for Staff and Council Members \$5,000

Marketing/Outreach \$12,000

- Marketing and Outreach expenses include website, business cards, brochures, booth fees, advertising, demonstrations, mileage reimbursement



YEAR 4: FY2026

1. Continue part-time staff to provide administrative support for Council and subcommittees, begin grant research and writing to fund future years' activities, conduct social media and marketing, networking and collaboration, and assist with implementation of Year 4 actions.
2. Continue to develop and update the food resources website and interactive map.
3. Continue to host an annual farm to table dinner to bring together institutional buyers and producers with the goal of showcasing products, building relationships and increasing the amount of food purchased from local producers.
4. Review existing co-working spaces for expansion to include rentable kitchens similar to <https://www.pbii.org/rentable-spaces#commercial-kitchen>.
5. Develop a collaborative program with ISU Extension Master Gardeners and other partners to conduct training, education, and support for community gardens on vacant or underutilized publicly- or institutionally-owned lots similar to Mowing to Monarchs that includes best practices sharing, funding and annual workshops.
6. Continue to support a coalition to implement nutrition policies in the food bank, pantries and other food-distribution programs using the Feeding America Nutrition in Food Banking Toolkit to support collective education of donors, recipients, and food distributors.
7. Continue to promote existing emergency food plans and resources and recruit both urban and rural food champions to work with the St. Stephen's Food Bank Branch of River Bend and Dubuque County Emergency Management to incorporate these plans and resources into the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan with specific attention to the following;
 - a. Transportation partners for bulk food delivery to access points and individual food delivery throughout the county
 - b. Vulnerable populations, specifically individuals not eligible for state or federal benefits
 - c. A list of organizations who work with and serve marginalized populations to assist with information dissemination during food emergencies.
8. Support the development of a produce discount table at food retailers to reduce food discards and bring visibility to the food life cycle.
9. Encourage the sale or donation of misfit food at farmer's markets and retailers.

10. Provide resources and education to support Restaurant, Food Service and Household Best Management Practices to Reduce Food Wastage in the Kitchen;
- a. Reduce over-purchasing of food
 - b. Reduce prep waste and improperly cooked food
 - c. Consider secondary uses for excess food
 - d. Ensure proper storage techniques
 - e. Modify menu to increase consumer satisfaction and reduce food left uneaten
 - f. Modify serving sizes and garnishes
 - g. Encourage guests to order/request and take only the food they will consume
 - h. Go trayless at buffets and school/institutional cafeterias.

FY2026 PROPOSED BUDGET: \$76,371

Contracted services

- Administrative and program support (30 hrs/wk) \$49,371
- Annual Farm to Table Contracted Event Planning \$10,000

Professional development for Staff and Council Members \$5,000

Marketing/Outreach \$12,000

- Marketing and Outreach expenses include website, business cards, brochures, booth fees, advertising, demonstrations, mileage reimbursement



YEAR 5: FY2027

1. Continue part-time staff to provide administrative support for Council and subcommittees, begin grant research and writing to fund future years' activities, conduct social media and marketing, networking and collaboration, and assist with implementation of Year 5 actions.
2. Continue to develop and update the food resources website and interactive map.
3. Continue to host an annual farm to table dinner to bring together institutional buyers and producers with the goal of showcasing products, building relationships and increasing the amount of food purchased from local producers.
4. Continue to support a coalition to implement nutrition policies in the food bank, pantries and other food-distribution programs using the Feeding America Nutrition in Food Banking Toolkit to support collective education of donors, recipients, and food distributors.
5. Continue to promote existing emergency food plans and resources and recruit both urban and rural food champions to work with the St. Stephen's Food Bank Branch of River Bend and Dubuque County Emergency Management to incorporate these plans and resources into the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan with specific attention to the following;
 - a. Transportation partners for bulk food delivery to access points and individual food delivery throughout the county
 - b. Vulnerable populations, specifically individuals not eligible for state or federal benefits
 - c. A list of organizations who work with and serve marginalized populations to assist with information dissemination during food emergencies.
6. Develop and implement a comprehensive communication and outreach plan for sharing the website, resources and tools with specific focus on the following groups;
 - a. Medical providers
 - b. Retail outlets
 - c. Pharmacies
 - d. Service providers
 - e. Local producers.
7. Develop a recognition for restaurants for reduced perishable food wasting, enrolling in a composting program and/or feeding small livestock with food discards.
8. Support the financial viability of composting operations by specifying compost use for public and private development projects.

FY2027 PROPOSED BUDGET: \$87,852

Contracted services

- Administrative and program support (30 hrs/wk) \$50,852
- Annual Farm to Table Contracted Event Planning \$10,000

Professional development for Staff and Council Members \$5,000

Marketing/Outreach \$22,000

- Marketing and Outreach expenses include website, business cards, brochures, booth fees, advertising, demonstrations, mileage reimbursement

