

Ohio Regional Convergence Partnership



Assessing Food Access and Equity in Ohio

An inventory of perceptions, challenges and opportunities related to the availability of fresh, local food in Ohio by food assistance customers, food assistance providers and state-level department leaders.

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Introduction

Excelling rates of chronic disease and rising health care costs require every government, community, business, and citizen to take action. But in many communities, the lack of vegetable gardening, the lack of transportation, lack of full service grocery stores, low-income neighborhoods with high densities of fast food establishments, poor nutrition habits, and limited opportunities to recreate all contribute to what some have labeled, “designed for disease.” In Ohio, 23.4% of adults smoke; 24.4% lack adequate physical activity, 36.2% are overweight, 26.5% are obese, and 30% of children are classified as overweight or obese. For the most vulnerable populations, some of the best opportunities to live healthier lives may be found outside the health care system. In brief, food intake is one of the most critical determinates of health. So how can we affect this singular variable?

To begin, access to healthy food is paramount. Numerous studies have shown that when residents have reasonable access to fresh, healthy food options, their health improves (Ver Ploeg, M., 2009). To better understand food access through food assistance in Ohio, this study used a two-pronged approach. First, semi-structured interviews with key staff from the Ohio Depts. of Agriculture, Education and Health were done. Then a series of focus group meetings with both customers and providers of food assistance programs across the state were held. This gave the research team a deeper understanding of food access, geographical, income and cultural issues related to obtaining food. These qualitative insights hold promise for informing key policy and environment change factors- both of which are the strategic priorities of the recently formed (2011) Ohio Regional Convergence Partnership (ORCP).

ORCP was established to advance the vision of Healthy People in Healthy Places in the State of Ohio. As a funder collaborative, ORCP aims to support multi-field partnerships in achieving equitable and sustainable environmental and policy changes specifically around increased access to healthy foods. Building upon previous partnership efforts, the ORCP seeks to leverage opportunities to increase reach and impact across the state via strategic investments. ORCP’s mission is twofold: 1) To promote access to healthy, affordable, local food through an equitable Ohio food system in urban and rural environments; and 2) To achieve healthy, local food access, ORCP seeks to build systems capacity, improve population access, and realize collective impact.

ORCP’s Vision:

Ohioans will live in communities that actively support health, equity and wellness for all.

This study was sponsored by ORCP, in partnership with Ohio State University Extension, to glean input and information on food access and equity from food assistance customers and providers throughout Ohio as well as State department leaders and identify action-based steps amongst the collective that show promise in advancing the goals of ORCP and support statewide implementation. This study also aligns to and cuts across all three of The Ohio State University’s Discovery Themes: Energy and the Environment, Food Production and Security, and Health and Wellness, thus strengthening the University’s internal and external partnerships, including ORCP, to collectively address one of our most significant challenges of the new millennium.

Study Objective & Methods

The objective of this study is to capture qualitative information related to food access and food equity from food assistance provider agencies, food assistance customers, and state-level department leaders that can be used to inform equitable and sustainable environmental and policy changes specific to increasing access to healthy local foods, building systems capacity, improving population access, and realizing collective impact.

Methods in this study were all qualitative in nature and included:
(Copies of study documents are provided in the appendix.)

- 4 Focus groups with Food Assistance Customers (n=29)
- 4 Focus groups with Food Assistance Providers (n=47)
- Two State-level convening (semi-structured interviews): 1- Ohio Department of Agriculture (n=4); and 2- Ohio Depts. of Education and Health via the Ohio Action for Healthy Kids Steering Committee (n=26)
- Two World Café sessions held at the 2013 Ohio Farm to School Conference (n=33)

An equitable focus was integral to this study. To this end, focus groups were intentionally and proportionately held in the three main geographical classifications in Ohio- rural, urban, and suburban. Focus groups were held at and in conjunction with OSU Extension offices in each of the participating counties- Butler, Cuyahoga, Huron, Hancock, Lorain, Meigs, Montgomery, and Pike. The state-level, semi-structured interviews were held at the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture state office in Reynoldsburg, OH and the American Dairy Association office in Columbus, OH (Ohio Action for Healthy Kids Committee meeting).

Executive Summary

All Ohioans, from children to senior citizens and everyone in between, deserve fresh, affordable, accessible and healthy food. This fundamental belief has become a shared priority to actualize if Ohio is going to eradicate its food gaps in both rural and urban areas in each of its 88 counties and combat sky rocketing rates of chronic disease. “Building strong communities to ensure Ohioans of all ages and abilities can live disease free” is a significant component of Ohio’s Health Improvement Plan. Yet this will require a strategic framework grounded in research, informed by diverse stakeholders, and rooted in a collective ethic committed to advancing equity-based agendas.

Convening is a tool used by ORCP to engage stakeholder groups across various sectors and residents throughout Ohio to assist in identifying the resources and opportunities to support ORCP goals and further inform the planning and implementation of an ORCP statewide strategy. Under the facilitation of Ohio State University Extension’s Community Development team, a multi-faceted convening strategy was deployed with food assistance customers, food assistance providers, and state-level department leadership (specifically the Ohio Depts. of Agriculture, Education and Health) to glean input and information and identify action-based steps that can inform and advance ORCP’s goals and strategic direction.

This report is a collection of convening summaries and recommendations that represents some of the promising possibilities for strengthening local food systems in Ohio and citizens’ access to fresh, healthy, affordable food, especially vulnerable populations. Highlights of key convening findings include:

- Food insecurity remains a significant concern for Ohioans throughout the state.
- Addressing food insecurity differs somewhat by geography. Rural areas tend to coordinate better and have a better sense of residents in need of food assistance. In urban areas, which are much more complex systems, the lack of coordination tends to lead to duplication and lack of understanding on the true need that exists.
- Food assistance customers want to purchase and consume healthier food, especially fresh produce, yet barriers such as cost, transportation, age/ability challenges, and lack of nutrition education impede their abilities to do so.
- Food assistance providers realize they provide a critical safety net in the community, yet they feel strongly they could be more effective and reach more citizens if there were greater collaboration among other food assistance providers and community agencies and improvements made to their facilities’ infrastructure.
- Schools want healthier cafeterias and healthier students but are often inundated with the implementation of new mandates and regulations that consume staff capacity and limit participation in enhanced educational options (i.e. more holistic F2S programming).
- State departments feel the limited knowledge and shared understanding on state and federal legislation creates challenges with implementation at all levels. These departments also feel that many local success stories and strategies are occurring, yet they lack the expertise and staff capacity to evaluate and capture these as an effort to promote their replication.
- Ohio’s food system is in need of succession planning from a workforce standpoint. Significant employment and economic development opportunities exist and should be explored further.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to Ohio’s healthy food access and equity challenges. It is going to take a multi-sector approach- legislators, non-profit agencies, volunteers, urban and rural growers, government agencies, faith-based agencies, school systems, and residents themselves- and a commitment by all to collaboration, innovation and plain hard work. It also necessitates a shift in a community ethic that places health and equity at the forefront of decision-making- those decisions that impact where one lives, works, learns, plays and worships. The possibilities resulting from the interconnection of community programs, policy-oriented activities and state-level strategies cannot be overstated. Together, we can achieve healthy citizens of all ages living in healthy communities throughout Ohio.

Focus Group Findings: Food Assistance Customers

What do you like about the place(s) where you get most of your food?

Regarding food assistance programs...

- A welcoming and supportive environment by staff and volunteers who administer food assistance programs was significant to FA customers participating in all types of FA programs. When staff and volunteers had a positive rapport with FA customers, the customers felt there was no stigma associated with their needs and many felt this rapport benefited the assistance they received, especially if they had special needs (such as food allergies, dietary restrictions, etc.).
- The ability to choose from a variety of food items was often cited as a positive attribute to FA programs. FA customers appreciate the ability to select foods that they know they and their family members will eat. They also like the ability to select foods that meet dietary needs.
- FA customers overwhelmingly stated that local food banks are a vital safety net.
- In urban areas, some FA customers feel there is an abundance of food safety net providers (including social service agencies, churches, and drop-off areas/centers), however, they feel these services are fragmented. Little knowledge is known about which agency provides what type of service/program to specific populations. Some feel this confusion has led to duplication of effort and both over and under-utilization of the programs.

At some pantries, I am told what to put in my box; I don't think that works.
- FA customer in Butler County

Regarding retail food outlets...

- Despite the type of geographical area (i.e. rural, suburban or urban), most FA customers felt they had adequate access to a variety of food retail outlets, including large box stores, large grocery store chains, and local, family-owned markets. Even in some areas classified as 'food deserts,' most FA customers either had their own transportation or received transportation support from family members and/or social service and assisted housing agencies.
- When selecting a food retail outlet, affordability (lower prices and double coupon incentives), quality of food items, access to non-food items and services (such as diapers and filling a prescription), and location (distance to home) were equally considered important.
- There were mixed opinions regarding purchasing brand name versus generic food items. While some FA customers purchase generic food items regularly to save money and stretch their budget, other customers felt there is a negative stigma attached to generic labels (i.e. a visual sign of poverty) and that the quality of these food items was less than those with a brand name.

What would make it easier for you to get fresh fruits and vegetables?

- Community gardens were overwhelmingly viewed as one of the best ways to increase all citizens' access to fresh produce. Aside from the health benefits of increased fruit and vegetable consumption, increasing social connections to neighbors and transforming vacant land were viewed as positive secondary benefits of community gardens. Some FA customers recommended more formal gleaning efforts that connect community gardens with local food pantries and hunger centers.
- Assisting local food businesses, including grocery stores, restaurants, and some fast food chains that offer healthy food options, to donate extra and unwanted produce (and other food items) was viewed by some as another opportunity to increase their access to healthier food. Some FA customers felt a tax incentive may exist or could exist to incentivize businesses to donate.
- Creating better access to fresh, local produce for senior citizens and individuals with disabilities was deemed very important, especially for those considered to be homebound and in the winter months

Every street in this state needs a community garden. Not only do you get a lot of vegetables, but you get to know your neighbors better. You feel like you're a part of something- something better.
- FA customer in Cuyahoga County

when outdoor travel for these populations is most limited. Utilizing a transportation delivery service was cited as a possible strategy to address this need.

- Affordability of fresh produce is a challenge for many. This is compounded for many FA customers who are experiencing a reduction in their FA benefits while food prices in general continue to increase.
- The use of gift cards to local food retailers that are specifically marked 'for fresh produce only' was shared by some FA customers as an approach that could take the burden off of local agencies (food pantries) and allow greater choice in produce for FA customers.
- Better promotional information on senior farmers' market coupons, WIC farmers' market coupons, and EBT incentive programs (Cleveland only) that includes clear details on eligibility and participating farmers' markets.

Is the food assistance program(s) you participate in meeting your needs? If not, what changes would you suggest?

- It was shared that some food banks operate on a 'first come, first served basis' and that food was not allocated on a need basis. For many, this approach often results in a mismatch between families' needs and what is available.
- Some FA customers are concerned about their SNAP benefits being cut and the impact this will have on their family's food security.
- Many FA customers commented on the need for food pantries/food banks to provide essential, non-food items. In particular, this included feminine hygiene products, diapers and wipes, toilet paper and other household products.
- Education was often cited as a general need to support healthier diets and lifestyles. Reading ingredient labels, learning how to make healthy substitutes, food safety practices, and learning how to prepare healthier meals are examples of topics of interest shared.
- Better coordination and dissemination of detailed information on available food assistance programs was a common theme amongst many of the FA customers. Many requested lists of the programs available in their specific neighborhood/area, inclusive of dates, times, locations, eligibility requirements, and specific items/services provided.

We really could use a list of the programs in the area. They really need to put the information out there. Don't keep it like it's a big secret.
- FA customer in Montgomery County

If you could wish for three things to improve your supply of food, what would you wish for?

- A majority of the FA customers stated that they want to eat healthier and be healthier. This is a priority for them. Having the ability to purchase, prepare and consume more fresh and affordable produce was viewed as the most important way in which they can achieve a healthier lifestyle.
- Many FA customers commented on the need to support and strengthen the current food assistance programs in their neighborhoods rather than create new ones that are often duplicative and confusing to the public.
- There was much discussion on the need to better support seniors' access to fresh, healthy food, especially produce. Options shared ranged from a 'buddy system' for seniors (someone to help them shop) to more on-site farmers' markets at senior housing complexes.
- Many FA customers stated that their food stamp allocation does not take into consideration the ages of children and children's food consumption. For instance, it costs much more to feed two teenage boys than two toddlers. Some FA customers felt that the food stamp allocation policy needs to be revised to take more specific family information into account.
- Vouchers for non-food items, specifically gasoline (travel to food outlets) and essential items (such as diapers) were cited as a significant need by many FA customers.

I'm a senior and I live alone. It's hard for me to shop and cook for myself. I need someone to help me to carry my groceries and teach me to cook healthy for one person.

-FA customer in Cuyahoga County

- Relationships with county-based Jobs & Family Services employees appear to be in need of improvement in some areas. Timely communication (i.e. returning phone calls) and adequate time for the FA customer and his/her caseworker to build a better relationship so family matters could be better understood were viewed as very important.

What role can philanthropy (such as private foundations) play in helping you meet you/your family's food needs, including access to healthier foods- like fresh fruits and vegetables?

- Better communication. There exists a significant need for clear and consistent information and regular dissemination of this information on food assistance programs to intended audiences. This information needs to include the necessary details (time, location, etc.) and also articulate eligibility requirements.
- New opportunities to earn more food. Consider creating and supporting a program where individuals can complete community service hours to earn food. Many FA customers felt this additional option can assist them in meeting their family's food security while giving back to their community.
- Enhanced access opportunities for seniors and those with disabilities. Consider home-delivery options and on-site farmers' markets.
- Donation incentives for food retailers and restaurants. Consider creating and supporting a food donation program with tax incentives for food retailers and restaurants (which provide healthy food choices). Link these food retailers and restaurants with neighborhood-based food pantries and social service agencies.
- More educational opportunities. FA customers want to learn more about eating healthy. They prefer this education to be holistic, incorporating how one's diet effects oral health, emotional well-being, chronic disease conditions, etc. Many prefer that some forms of education are intergenerational (seniors teaching children; Children helping seniors).
- Increased opportunities for children to have access to more and healthier food. Aside from the breakfast and/or lunch provided in schools, many FA customers feel children living in poverty are often hungry. This is especially significant over the weekends and periods when school is not in session. Consider better support of the "backpack program" and local agencies (mainly churches) that provide meals on the weekends and holidays. Assist in improving the Summer Feeding Program to increase children's participation rates throughout the state.
- More FA customer involvement. FA customers want to be a part of the solution regarding food insecurity in their communities- not just a recipient. Provide more opportunities for focus groups and other convening that give them a voice in informing change and improvements.
- Expand the Senior Farmers' Market Coupon Program. Demand far exceeds the supply of these coupons. Seniors want to eat healthier and want to be able to purchase more fresh produce.

Focus Group Findings: Food Assistance Providers

What is the best thing about the food assistance program(s) you provide?

- The Choice Food Pantry is open 7-days per week. It is very accessible and able to meet many of its residents' needs.
- Cooking classes for senior citizens, such as Cooking Matters, provide seniors with much-needed information on cooking healthy and preventing chronic disease.
- The ability to provide a hot and nutritious meal that meets most participants' dietary needs, especially those with diabetes, is a positive attribute of many local food assistance providers who provide direct meals.
- Collaboration of the regional food bank with Head Start Centers and Summer

Our food pantry is an all-volunteer organization of wonderful, caring people.
- FA provider in Lorain County

Feeding Programs has provided more fresh produce specifically for children, especially younger children.

- Providing a free lunch for children and operating a local farmers' market which distributes fresh produce to children in a multi-county area is an important strategy to address the hunger needs of children in a larger geographical area.
- Being a part of a collaboration (8 local churches) that supports 15 hot meals per month and 5 choice pantries around the county has helped some FA provider agencies become more 'community-minded' and more efficient. Both formal and informal collaborations appear to greatly assist local FA provider agencies.
- Volunteers are essential and are committed to this type of service. Most FA provider agencies rely heavily on the use of volunteers.
- Flexibility in management and use of resources appears to be a very critical piece for some FA provider agencies.
- Some FA provider agencies consider themselves to be "opportunistic" and have benefitted from special and large donations. However, this unique approach necessitates a strong volunteer program.
- Serving homebound seniors (thought to be a growing population) is a vital component of many local senior centers.

What would make the food you provide in your program healthier?

- Many FA provider agencies would like to be able to buy more fresh produce and meat and buy these items year-round. This requires having additional financial resources for such purchases.
- Many FA providers would like better storage options, including walk-in refrigerators and/or freezers. It is felt that this will promote the optimal freshness of produce and allow for freezing some items for future dissemination.
- Some FA provider agencies utilizing less-than-optimal space for their programs desire strongly to have adequate kitchens to prepare and serve healthy meals. An adequate kitchen includes, at a minimum, ample preparation space, ovens, burners, exhaust systems, and ample refrigeration/freezer space.
- Expand Senior Farmers' Market Coupon Program to all counties. Build the capacity of this program to serve more, preferably all, senior citizens. This program also has a positive impact on the income of local farmers.
- Educating FA customers on the benefits of fresh versus frozen/canned foods, reading nutritional labels and preparation skills for fresh foods (produce and meats) is viewed as a necessary component to helping others obtain a healthier lifestyle.
- Increase the nutritional standards of meals served at FA provider agencies so they are commensurate with the nutritional quality of the meals served in schools. Some FA provider agencies feel standards for healthy meals should be a common community practice.
- Some FA provider agencies feel they have very limited choices with some food banks that distribute too many cookies, snack foods, and white bread. Because food banks often "give out what they get," recipient agencies are forced to distribute poor quality food items. Having a variety of healthy food options to choose from, including items that are diet-sensitive (i.e. low sodium, unsweetened, etc.) is a paramount goal all FA provider agencies share.
- Some food assistance providers in metropolitan areas feel their connection to larger-scale farmers (mostly in rural Ohio) is absent and, therefore, eliminates their consideration to receive produce donations that often go only to rural and suburban areas.

If we can get our pantry kitchen center up to the standards of our city schools, we'll be good.

- FA provider in Butler County

In our urban area there is not enough coordination of the multiple organizations providing food assistance, and, as a result, there are some people falling through the cracks.

- FA provider in Lorain County

Do you feel you are meeting the food assistance needs of your community? If not, what would you need to meet this need?

- There was an overwhelming “no” response to this question. Larger grocery chains are leaving urban and rural areas resulting in substandard food retail options, such as dollar stores and corner stores.
- Many FA providers are unsure of the true need that exists. Many feel they have the capacity to serve more but acknowledge this requires better (more targeted) outreach. Some expressed a need to focus more on those considered to have the greatest need but are also the most difficult to reach.
- In urban areas, FA providers expressed that there is minimal to no coordination with other FA providers and that this often results in confusion and inability to efficiently serve FA customers who need food.
- Some FA providers have benefitted from donations of extra produce and produce “seconds” from local farmers, farmers’ markets and Community Supported Agriculture entities.
- Many FA providers would like to see an increase in donations from food retail business and restaurants. It is felt that this could be improved with better coordination and increased awareness of the need with a broad array of food retailers.
- Education on employment and life skills to help residents transition off of food assistance benefits was viewed as a need as well as a change in culture where food assistance should only be seen as a short-term transitional service.
- Most FA providers want better coordination with similar FA agencies and agencies that can provide supplemental needs, like non-food items, job seeking skills and counseling services.
- Transportation assistance for the elderly and families with young children (especially single mothers) is needed, regardless of the geographical area.
- There was a strong sentiment that everyone needs to take a proactive role in alleviating hunger for our children as a shared priority given its significance on healthy development, learning, recreating and other aspects of daily living.

Should we be building a new \$500,000 soup kitchen or spending money on education?

- FA provider in Lorain County

If you could wish for three things to improve your food assistance programs, what would you wish for?

- Because most FA provider agencies rely heavily on volunteers, recruiting, training and maintaining an adequate cadre of volunteers is essential. This is an ongoing process that requires time, effort and additional management skills that many feel they lack.
- Flexible funding is critical. FA provider agencies prefer to meet the food assistance needs in ways that make sense to their specific community.
- More community gardens in areas deemed as ‘food deserts’ were viewed as a proven-way to enhance family’s food security, especially in a healthier way.
- FA providers feel their programs need greater visibility in the community.
- Some FA providers are concerned about the unethical use of food assistance- selling food stamps and trading benefits for tobacco/alcohol. It is felt that some form of investigation is needed to deter this behavior and its counterproductive impact.
- More collaboration among community organizations to coordinate programs with community efforts and other agencies, including the ability to cross-refer, was often cited as a need.
- Adequate food facilities, such as refrigeration, freezers, and ‘hot shots’ (warmers), are an important infrastructure need for many small and mid-sized FA provider agencies.

- FA providers feel greater education on the “problem of hunger” in Ohio needs to be shared with policy makers (legislators) at all levels of government and other key stakeholders.
- All FA providers, especially those who serve seniors, are especially concerned about senior citizens’ healthy food access challenges. Given this population is growing rapidly in Ohio, FA providers feel programs like the Senior Farmers’ Market Coupons, home delivery options, and strategically located farmers’ markets need to be scaled-up.
- Breaking the cycle of generational poverty is a goal all FA providers share, yet they acknowledge this necessitates multiple, blended strategies to address, with job development at the forefront.

Aside from the government, what organizations or funding sources are available to support your food assistance programs?

- All of the FA provider agencies utilize multiple funding sources to support their mission. Examples include: food drives (boy scouts, churches, etc.), mail-in fundraiser requests, grants from local foundations, corporate donations, memorial donations, United Way, some local businesses, hospitals, local farmers, and some local municipalities.
- Most FA provider agencies stated the non-governmental support is either an enhancement to their programming (such as supporting educational workshops) or increases their ability to serve more FA customers through additional purchasing power.

What role can philanthropy (such as foundations) play in helping you meet the food assistance needs in your community?

- Communication and outreach. Help disseminate information on FA programs, especially to un- and under-served audiences. Assist FA provider agencies ‘tell their story’ and be able to show the impact they are having on meeting their community’s food security needs.
- Recruitment, management and retention of volunteers. Many FA providers rely heavily on volunteers yet often lack the time and expertise to oversee their volunteer
- Flexible funding. Provide flexible grant funds to FA provider agencies to address food gaps in their service areas; Assure eligibility to all areas of Ohio (i.e. no geographical confinement).
- Improved coordination. Help coordinate a statewide or regional food assistance network that reduces duplication and competition and increases collaboration.
- Create or expand EBT incentive programs. Support EBT incentive programs that promote purchasing more fresh, local fruits and vegetables for vulnerable populations. Consider new points of access for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- Identify the need. Assist local communities in understanding the true need for food assistance and then assist them in creating strategic plans to address their needs.
- Facility improvement. Provide capital funds to FA provider agencies to develop an adequate facility infrastructure, including refrigeration, freezers, ovens/warmers, etc.
- Educational enhancements. Assist FA provider agencies in leveraging additional human and financial resources to increase and broaden educational opportunities for FA customers, such as having an on-site Nutritionist at each food pantry, nutrition workshops and healthy cooking demonstrations.

Focus Group Findings by Geographical Areas

There were some notable differences in findings when comparing rural and urban areas of the state:

In urban areas, which by nature are much more complex, FA providers described a real lack of coordination and a tendency for duplication. Because the system is so big, there is currently no way to tell who was providing what and when. It was also unknown if there were food assistance gaps. FA providers in these urban areas also felt they received fewer donations, especially fresh produce, and tended to have more paid staff supplemented by some (fewer) volunteers. FA customers in urban areas experienced more confusion and duplication given the amount and complexity of food resource distribution. Urban FA

customers tended to rely on community gardens more to increase their access to fresh produce and stretch the family's food budget.

In rural areas of the state, it appeared that most FA customers knew who provided food assistance and exactly what and when they provided it. Therefore, it was easy not to duplicate efforts. It was also evident that in smaller communities where everyone tends to know one another, it is much less common for a family to be without food and no one know about it. FA providers in rural areas relied very heavily, if not solely, on volunteers to run their food assistance programs, were less likely to run out of food, and had greater flexibility in serving marginally qualified customers.

Findings from State-Level Convening

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Ohio Departments of Health and Education (via the Ohio Action for Healthy Kids Steering Committee), the Ohio Department of Agriculture and Ohio Farm to School State Leadership to gather input on ORCP's strategic goals. The following represents an aggregation of responses to the questions asked of employees representing these state-level departments.

What has been most challenging from a state-level perspective?

- There is limited knowledge and shared understanding on Ohio's SB 210: Healthy Choices for Healthy Children and the national Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, especially where these two pieces of legislation intersect and differ.
- Regulations governing food and food production are complex and are interpreted differently at the local (county) and state levels. A lack of a consistent interpretation creates challenges for all involved.
- Food producers and processors find it very difficult to keep up with new and changing regulations which can result in increased rates of noncompliance.
- It has been challenging to help producers understand food safety and procurement from both the regulators' and schools' food service perspectives.
- Schools need to understand and apply new meal patterns but have very limited capacity for this. Fiscal constraints, new food service staff with limited knowledge/skills, and some resistance to change by longer-term food service staff each contributes to this challenge.
- It has been challenging to assist school food service staff to understand how to source food locally and integrate it into meal planning that meets emerging USDA purchasing and nutrition guidelines.
- The frequency of change with regulations on school food service and food safety regulation throughout the food system is a significant challenge.
- One-time investments that are not linked to strategic and sustainable initiatives create challenges in maintaining and, as often desired, replicating accomplishments. These one-time investments also impact staffing capacity as non general-funded staff positions end when their funding expires.
- There is limited leveraging, connecting and sharing of resources to maximize food access. (For example, one state agency receives federal funding that Ohio matches. However, state funding is lower than the allocated federal amount which results in a loss of funds to Ohio.)
- Collaboration is happening at the state-level. However, each organization has its own regional structures. For example, the ODE Office for Child Nutrition School Meals Section has 9 regional consultants, while the ODH's Creating Healthy Communities Program is organized in 4 regions, the Ohio Action for Healthy Kids manages 10 regional zones, and OSU Extension works in 5 geographic areas. This may present challenges as the state Farm to School advisory group supports collaboration between local and regional groups throughout the state and provides education to voters aligned with various district maps.

- Many state-level departments do not have staff focused on evaluation and lack expertise on evaluation methods, data collection tools, etc., and therefore lack ways to measure progress and successes in valid and reliable ways.
- With regards to equity in the schools, some feel that too much attention and too many resources are only allocated to schools providing the free and reduced lunch program. There exists a strong sentiment that all schools can benefit from improvements, thus impacting all students.
- Changes in the State's biennial budget shifts priorities, staffing capacity, resources, etc. This often creates issues with sustainability, replication of promising initiatives and staff turnover.

What success and accomplishments have been achieved?

- State F2S Conference: In 2013, ODE, ODA, and ODH collaborated with OSU Extension and the Ohio Farm to School Advisory group to host a conference for 300 attendees for three primary groups: food producers and distributors; school personnel in the cafeteria, classrooms and administration; and community leaders who support F2S financing, policy, and local food linkages.
- Throughout the past 2 years, the Ohio F2S Advisory group conducted strategic planning and began moving forward on research, education, outreach and evaluation to support local and statewide advancement to improve youth access to local/regional food and hands-on education.
- ODE began focusing on F2S in 2011 by assigning personnel, establishing a specific webpage¹, providing education through webinars and conference presentations and awarding 38 mini-grants during a three-year period.
- During the 2011 ODE Fall Management Conference, more than 300 school food service personnel learned about F2S through a seminar and in-depth workshop presented by OSU Extension.
- Multi agency collaboration is occurring. For example, ODH received funding from the Centers for Disease Control to increase access of fruits and vegetables to the student population of Ohio. ODH collaborated with ODE, OSU Extension and the F2S Advisory Group on the *Ohio Seed 2 Salad Project* that included developing a sustainable Farm to School salad bar toolkit that emphasized implementing salad bars as a way to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.
- ODH supports 16 Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) projects, many of which focus on Farm to School efforts and connecting food service personnel with local growers. The 2014 CHC program will have a very strong focus on improving the quality of food for children in various environments, including schools and out-of-school time environments².
- ODA supported F2S through a 2009 specialty crop grant that provided funding up to \$2,000 for mini-implementation grants for F2S programming that benefitted students, their families, Ohio farmers and the partnering school district. These projects focused on procurement and student learning and created a primer for Ohio schools, farmers, and distributors on how to participate in F2S activities.
- ODA links with the National Association of State Department of Agriculture, and continues to support F2S through *Ohio Proud* and *Ag is Cool* resources. ODA food safety professionals assist with understanding and compliance with regulations.
- ODE, OSU, and an advisory group, created *Menus that Move*³, a set of seasonal cycle menus to help schools serve tasty meals that fit within the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) new meal guidelines.
- Cooperatives and shared use food preparation facilities are emerging around the state, such as the Lake to River Cooperative, Our Harvest Food Hub Cooperative in Cincinnati, Our Harvest Food Hub Cooperative and Common Wealth Kitchen Incubator in Youngstown.

Farm to School 2013 Census Data

In the nation:

- 43% of public school districts participate in F2S
- 13% of school districts are committed to launching F2S
- US schools spent \$350M to purchase and serve local foods

In Ohio:

- 33% of public school districts participate in F2S
- 10% of school districts are committed to launching F2S
- Ohio schools spent \$3.9M to purchase and serve local foods

How can these successes/accomplishments be scaled-up, replicated and sustained?

- Measure impacts and report successes. Build on ODH's Creating Healthy Communities success stories publication, using it as a model and taking it to another level with multimedia and social media.
- Provide evaluation expertise to help state departments and agencies adopt a realistic framework that captures both quantitative and qualitative data.
- Share tools to replicate successful initiatives, such as the F2S bus tour and *Ohio Seed 2 Salad*.
- Support programs that improve connections between:
 - School food service professionals (ODE)
 - Food producers (OSU Extension)
 - Food safety (ODA and ODH)
 - Food policy groups in Ohio⁴
- To build the capacity of growers and producers, support the development of shared use facilities to process food, cooperative development to support food hubs, and agencies involved with food safety education and implementation.

How can addressing equity and disparities with regards to food access become a more proactive priority as opposed to a minimalized afterthought?

- Addressing equity and disparities with regards to food access can become a more proactive priority by sharing the same messaging throughout the state – across agencies and organizations; Consider utilizing a statewide agency, such as OH Action for Healthy Kids, to aide in delivering a clear and consistent message.
- Leverage larger and nontraditional players (i.e. large-scale distributors and national agencies, such as Policy Link) to get involved in food desert solutions.
- “All for one and one for all.” Assure that learning opportunities and resources are available to make improvements for children throughout Ohio, regardless of geographic and socioeconomic indicators.

If you could wish for three things to assist your State Department's ability to help food assistance providers, especially schools, summer feeding programs, and local community partners, implement new legislation, what would you wish for?

- To better implement new legislation, communication materials could be developed to improve understanding and how various agencies and programs contribute to or link with the legislation. (For example, infographics could make the legislation easier to understand.)
- Increased staffing capacity is needed to help schools implement required changes (i.e. more technical assistance). This could include additional trainings, site visits, and capturing and replicating best practices.
- Timely and reliable information is critical to have a better understanding of the needs that exist. Consider a regular assessment at the provider agency level that identifies areas of need.

Besides funding, what can philanthropy do to help this legislation have greater impact on improving nutritional environments for children?

- Continue to build the collaboration among other philanthropic organizations throughout the state that share the common interest of increasing healthy food access for children and other vulnerable populations.
- Help build a broad network of diverse stakeholders who share the same interest and identify specific actions others can contribute to addressing needs and opportunities; Be inclusive of nontraditional partners and partners throughout the food system.

- Bring commodity groups and trade associations to the table to assist with general marketing, broader technical education for producers and processors, and financial contributions in support of better food access and food equity.
- Expand Healthy, Fresh Food Financing; Address this need throughout all of Ohio.
- Network with post-secondary institutions to create and educate a pipeline of students interested in food systems and related food industries. (Succession planning is needed given the growth in this sector amidst an aging population of professionals.) Consider K-12 career pathway linkages.
- Federal legislation and guidelines are always impacting state legislation. State departments have to be reactive and often under tight timelines with limited staff. Identify approaches that allow state departments to be more proactive to balance both federal and state legislation.
- Identify more sustainable funding supports that can achieve longer-term impacts.
- Keep the focus on success and replicate these around the state. It is acknowledged that there are many successes occurring, but no one is charged with collecting and disseminating these successes. Consider creating a practical Ohio best practices guide that explains the specific steps and conditions necessary to achieve the desired results.
- Support ODE's breakfast program expansion pilot. This might be achieved through shared marketing, consistent messaging and an enhanced school/community ethic that prioritizes student health.

Findings from World Café Sessions

Two World Café sessions were held at the 2013 Ohio F2S Conference (March 13, 2013 Columbus, OH). A total of 33 conference participants took part in the two World Café sessions. Participants rotated from four discussion topics (The Supply Chain, Student Health & Well-Being, School Infrastructure & Education, and Partnerships & Opportunities) at 20-minute intervals. They were asked to focus on both the challenges and opportunities that exist within each topic. A summary of the four discussion topics is provided in the tables below.

The Supply Chain	
Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of knowledge by schools on the process to connect with farmers and locally grown products. • There is a lack of inclusion of farmers/farms in the F2S program in general. • There is limited capacity of farmers and growers to scale-up and increase their supply of fresh produce. • All schools are not accepting of buying local. • Schools lack the knowledge on how to procure and purchase local foods. (Some contracts and unions do not support utilizing local food options.) • Additional processing facilities are needed. • There are not enough distribution systems in place that link farms and their products with schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach schools how to purchase and procure local food. • Support Cooperatives as a way to help get local foods into schools. • Support food safety certification programs. • Invest in farms and assist them to increase their capacity to grow more produce. • Assist schools and farmers in pre-planning for produce needs so orders can be custom-tailored to schools' needs. • Consider creating new distributors who sell local food exclusively to schools, summer feeding programs, senior programs, etc. • Consider incentivizing schools to purchase more local food. • There exists a need to develop a commonly accepted definition of "local." • Support more gardens on school sites.

Student Health & Well-Being	
Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools/school staff have limited capacity to take on responsibilities. Where are the students? Include students in all aspects of F2S programming. There is limited professional development for school staff on subject matters outside of the core content areas. School gardens are difficult to maintain over the growing season when school is not in sessions. Poor family/parental role models heavily influence many students. Not all stakeholders are at the table; Better health of students requires a new 'culture' supported by everyone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist the ODE in creating health and nutrition standards. Develop agri-science exploratory activities; Create an agriculture/food science career pathway for students. Utilize out-of-school time programs and venues as an opportunity to teach health and nutrition education. Place visual aides (like posters) in cafeterias to remind students about food origins and healthy food choices. Become a Team Nutrition school; Utilize the Veggie U curriculum. Increase and diversify professional development opportunities for school staff. Create opportunities for sharing information with diverse stakeholders (parents/PTA, community leaders, etc.)

School Infrastructure & Education	
Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kitchen facilities in many schools are inadequate for preparing fresh foods. Many food service staff lack knowledge on how to purchase local food and lack food preparation skills. Contracts and unions are often viewed as roadblocks to implementing needed changes in school food service operations. There exists a lack of attention and recognition of schools that have made significant changes to support healthy meals and improve student health. Frequent changes in USDA guidelines and meal patterns create hardships on food service staff; they are often ill equipped to adapt to these changes. Some school administrators do not feel schools should be in the 'food business.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase professional development opportunities for food service staff, especially in the areas of USDA guidelines and food preparation skills. Market school lunches better; Make the lunches more appealing to students (i.e. 'McFarm' concept). Invest in adequate school kitchen facilities that can prepare fresh food options. Incorporate media and disseminate information promoting best practices and accomplishments by schools. Research different options to connect schools to other sources/distributors of local food items, such as local food hubs, Co-ops, community kitchens, food processing centers, etc.

Partnerships & Opportunities	
Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are often not at the table; Some schools do not recognize the importance of the school food environment on learning. There is an absence of participation and leadership from other vital sectors- businesses, legislators, local government, parents, students, distributors, etc. Many unions are not willing to adopt needed changes that support healthier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify all F2S stakeholders and outline the roles and contributions they can make; Build a diverse partnership base. Find and promote F2S champions. Bring funders to the table to address needs and fill gaps. Include students in all aspects of F2S programming. Host F2S 'meet and greets' for various

cafeterias. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'student voice' is missing in most F2S programs. • Efforts are needed to reach our youngest children, especially those in preschool and childcare. • Funding only supports schools and not farms, yet the demand far exceeds supply. • Local health departments can play a vital role but are often overlooked as a partner. 	audiences- farmers, parents, legislators, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the use of incentives to get more schools involved.
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Food for Thought (Recommendations)

The following recommendations to the Ohio Regional Convergence Partnership are based on the compilation of findings from the focus groups with FA customers and providers, state-level convening, and related document review. This is not intended to be an all-inclusive list nor a list solely for the consideration of ORCP. It is hoped that these recommendations serve as a foundation to building and strengthening a myriad of partnerships and collaborative efforts that share the goal of advancing equity and healthy people in healthy communities throughout Ohio.

Convening

- Develop supply chain partnerships by hosting educational and networking events for school food service personnel, regional producers, distributors, processors, manufacturers, aggregators and other F2S supporters.
- Develop strategic partnerships with mid- and larger-scale food retail outlets to assess gleaning opportunities with local food pantries and other FA providers to increase the availability of food. Gleaning efforts should focus on healthy food options, prioritizing fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Improve food safety practices by convening regulation and education leaders to clarify protocol, communicate best practices, and answer questions. Food safety is a partnership between those who produce, prepare, consume, and regulate food. Link good regulation with good education and communication.
- Convene regional meetings and forums specific to addressing the healthy food access needs of the most vulnerable populations- children of all ages, seniors and those with disabilities. Integrate with pre-existing, statewide stakeholder groups who are also addressing these needs to avoid duplicative efforts.
- FA customers appreciate the opportunity to have their voice heard. They want to be a part of addressing the issues that impact them most- including food insecurity. Include FA customers in all convening/forums to assure they are represented and given equal and ample opportunities to participate.
- Convene legislative listening sessions to educate policymakers on both food access and equity challenges in Ohio and success stories and promising models. Garner feedback from legislators.

Advocacy

- Advocate for the use of Supplemental Food Assistance Program benefits to create or increase EBT incentive programs at farmers' markets and other fresh produce outlets. Advocate for the expansion of the Senior Farmers' Market Coupon Program to serve all eligible seniors.
- Advocate that the Supplemental Food Assistance Program provides a benefit allotment that supports the purchase of the recommended daily portion of fresh produce per family member according to the USDA's My Plate guidance. This allotment should also factor in and be commensurate with increases in food prices.
- Increase awareness of and support for F2S by developing a coordinated communication campaign

that includes multimedia examples and a success story toolkit for F2S champions to share procurement and education stories throughout the year. Build on collaborative communications by expanding on the Ohio Proud campaign and incorporating the value of food access.

Policy

- Utilize and network with local/regional food policy groups around the state to advance food policy and related work. Consider organizing/supporting the creation of a broad-based, statewide food policy organization.
- Identify and disseminate successful examples of municipalities that have legislation which supports the use of public land for agricultural food production purposes, such as community gardens.
- Pursue the creation of a Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (currently used in Michigan), which protects businesses donating food products from liability.
- Explore policies in other states and cities that support food production, food access, and farm to school connections⁵.

Grantmaking/Leveraging

- Formalize a statewide network that connects and educates a diverse group of stakeholders. Create meaningful connections and mapping resources and projects through a dynamic online tool.
- Invest in innovative food delivery models that have documented success in increasing healthy food access.
- Assist in leveraging significant financial resources that can broadly address a specific food system/food access need across geographic areas, such as a statewide Food Financing Retail Fund.
- Assure grantmaking efforts cut across geographic areas and are as inclusive as possible. Also assure funding is committed for adequate periods of time to achieve desired outcomes and results in sustainable changes.

Capacity Building

- Network with regional/statewide volunteer agencies to explore partnerships that increase the number and quality (tenure) of volunteers assisting with FA programs. Consider linking these agencies with larger FA providers who manage their own volunteers to provide technical assistance on volunteer recruitment, management, retention and recognition.
- Provide evaluation expertise to state-level departments and committees on how to conduct program evaluations and report findings in a manner that can both exemplify the merit of their programs and share best practices/promising models.
- Support the Ohio F2S Advisory group to develop into a more formal Advisory Board, adding regional representation and working committees focused on a statewide strategic plan.
- Develop an approach to assist individual communities to collect and disseminate information on local FA programs and services. Consider investing in an online tool or application for this information, in addition to conventional dissemination methods. Serve as a facilitator to help communities address duplication, gaps, and needed improvements/efficiencies.
- Identify opportunities for FA providers to have or have access to needed facilities, especially refrigeration, freezers and ovens/warmers. Consider efficient, shared models that address this need.
- Ensure that Ohio's most impoverished residents have access to fresh, healthy food by supporting activities that procure unmarketable fresh produce for use in food banks and other food assistance programs.

Marketing/Public Awareness

- Network with State departments and committees, such as OH Action for Healthy Kids, to create and disseminate common messages regarding healthy children and healthy Ohioans.
- Expand ODA's Ohio Proud program to include *Ohio Proud in the Cafeteria* for schools. The Ohio Proud program could potentially be expanded to other audiences, like *Ohio Proud in Senior or Child Care Centers*.
- Increase awareness that maximizes the use of federally funded school breakfast, school lunch, after-school snack, summer lunch and other programs to increase access to healthy food for vulnerable children and senior citizens.



Research

- Invest in research that studies the actual food assistance/food insecurity need in Ohio; Present these findings and recommendations in tailored formats to various audiences, including State departments, legislators, food policy councils, and FA provider agencies at the local level.
- Invest in research that studies the current and future workforce development needs within Ohio's food system. Based on the findings of this research, network with the K-12 system, ODE and post-secondary academic institutions to develop food system career pathways.

Cited Resources

¹ Ohio Department of Education Farm to School Initiative: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Food-and-Nutrition/National-School-Lunch-and-Breakfast/Farm-to-School-Initiative>

² Ohio Department of Health/Creating Healthy Communities: <http://www.healthy.ohio.gov/healthylife/createcomm/chcsuccess.aspx>

³ Ohio Department of Education/Menus that Move: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Food-and-Nutrition/Resources-and-Tools-for-Food-and-Nutrition/Menus-that-Move>

⁴ OSU's John Glenn School of Public Affairs (Ohio Local Food Policy Council Network): <http://glennschool.osu.edu/food/>

⁵ National Farm to School Network Publications: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/publications.php>

Note of Appreciation

Thank you especially to the many FA customers and FA provider agency representatives who shared their time and opinions with us in the hopes of achieving a shared vision for a healthier future for all Ohioans. Your voices have been heard and are essential to informing our collective next steps.

Thank you to the employees of the Ohio Departments of Agriculture, Education and Health who took time from their busy schedules to provide an overview of their challenges as well as share promising insights into the opportunities and innovations that exist in improving all citizens' access to fresh, healthy food.

Thank you to our colleagues at the Ohio State University Extension offices in Butler, Cuyahoga, Hamilton, Hancock, Lorain, Meigs and Montgomery and Pike counties who helped us outreach to prospective FA customers and FA provider agencies to participate in this study and who shared their space with us to hold the focus groups.

Thank you to Ohio Regional Convergence Partnership for soliciting the involvement of Ohio State University Extension and our Community Development team to facilitate this study on food access and equity in Ohio. We are proud to partner with you and utilize our expertise and relationships in a manner that accomplishes shared goals and a common vision.

Appendix

Acronyms:

F2S-	Farm to School
FA-	Food Assistance
ODA-	Ohio Department of Agriculture
ODE-	Ohio Department of Education
ODH-	Ohio Department of Health
OSUE-	Ohio State University Extension
ORCP-	Ohio Regional Convergence Partnership

Focus Group Questions for Food Assistance Customers*:

1. What do you like about the place(s) where you get most of your food?
2. What would make it easier for you to get fresh fruits and vegetables?
3. Is the food assistance program(s) you participate in meeting your needs?
If not, what changes would you suggest?
4. If you could wish for three things to improve your supply of food, what would you wish for?
5. What role can philanthropy (such as private foundations) play in helping you meet your/your families' food needs, including access to healthier foods- like fresh fruits and vegetables?

Focus Group Questions for Food Assistance Providers*:

1. What is the best thing about the food assistance program(s) you provide?
2. What would make the food you provide in your program healthier?
3. Do you feel you are meeting the food assistance needs of your community?
If not, what would you need to meet this need?
4. If you could wish for three things to improve your food assistance program(s), what would you wish for?
5. Aside from the government, what organizations or funding sources are available to support your food assistance program(s)?
6. What role can philanthropy (such as private foundations) play in helping you meet the food assistance needs in your community?

* A **food assistance customer** is any Ohio resident who participates in a state and/or federally funded nutrition assistance program. This can include, but is not limited to:

- USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- USDA Child Nutrition Programs: School Breakfast Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Special Milk Program, Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and National School Lunch Program
- USDA Food Distribution Programs: The Emergency Food Assistance Program and Commodity Supplemental Food Program
- Ohio Food Program
- OH Dept. of Aging Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC), including the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

* A **food assistance provider** is any community-based agency that provides one or more of the food assistance programs listed above.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for State-level Convening:

With regards to the adoption and implementation of new state and federal legislation, specifically SB 210: Healthy Choices for Healthy Children and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act:

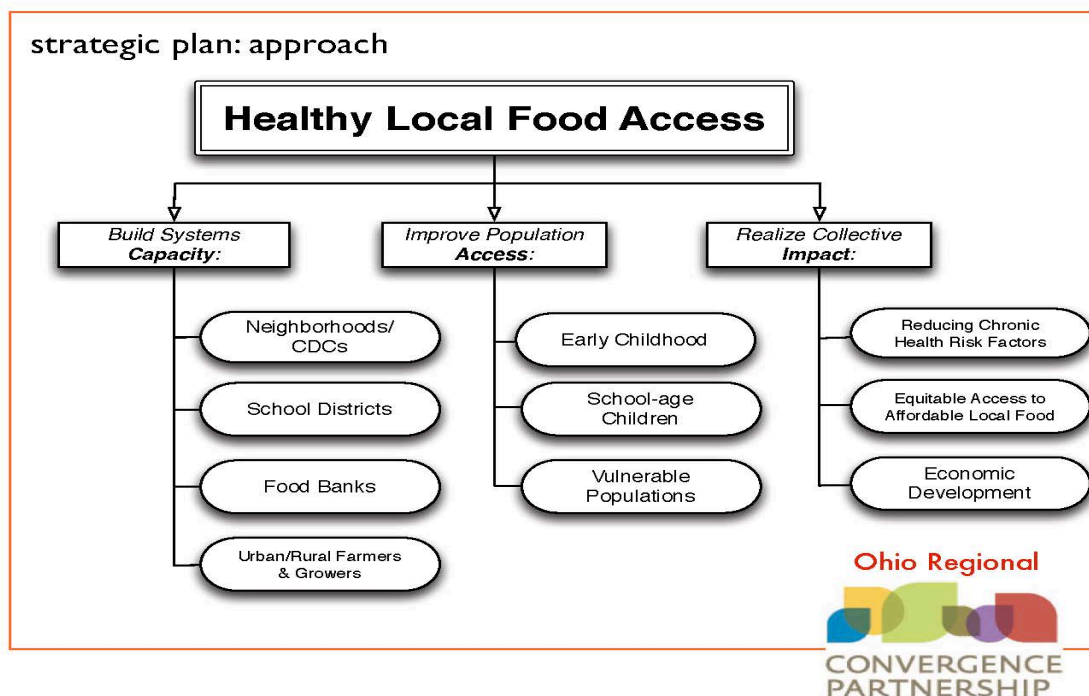
1. What has been most challenging from a state-level perspective?
2. What successes/accomplishments have been achieved?

3. How can these successes/accomplishments be scaled-up, replicated and sustained?
4. How can addressing equity and disparities with regards to food access become a more proactive priority as opposed to a minimized afterthought?
5. If you could wish for three things to assist your State Department's ability to help food assistance providers, especially schools, summer feeding programs, and local community partners, implement new legislation, what would you wish for?
6. Besides funding, what can philanthropy do to help this legislation have greater impact on improving nutritional environments for children?

Ohio Action for Healthy Kids Committee Roster of Participating Agencies:

Ohio Department of Health
 Ohio Department of Education
 Child and Adult Care Food Program
 School Nutrition Association of Ohio
 Children's Hungers Alliance
 Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA)
 Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators
 Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators,
 Ohio Association of School Nurses
 Ohio Parent Teacher Association
 American Dairy Association Mideast
 Nationwide Children's Hospital
 Ohio Alliance of YMCA's,
 American Heart Association
 Ohio Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance,
 American Cancer Society
 Ohio Farm to School (Ohio State University Extension)

Ohio Regional Convergence Partnership Strategic Plan Approach:



Ohio Regional Convergence Partnership Strategic Plan Summary:

strategic plan: summary

Strengths

- Knowledge and experience
- Commitment and connections
- Link to larger agendas
- Resources
- Leadership

Weaknesses

- Lack a common language
- Absence of a shared framework
- Statewide connections
- Limited Resources
- Three philanthropic partners in Cleveland, not across the state

Opportunities

- Leverage partnerships
- Food Policy & Public Awareness
- Passion around issues from many players
- Connection to Economic Development
- Vacant land to gardens

Threats

- Economy
- Long-term commitments needed
- Work is not program specific, policy specific
- Need to engage and counter opposition
- Paradigm shift required

Vision

Ohioans will live in communities that actively support health, equity and wellness for all.

Purpose:

To promote access to healthy, affordable, local food through an equitable food system in urban and rural environments.

Goal:

Build systems capacity

Targets:

- Neighborhoods and CDCs
- School Districts
- Food Banks
- Urban/Rural Farmers & Growers

Goal:

Improve population access

Targets:

- Young Children
- School-age Children
- Vulnerable Populations

Goal:

Realize collective impact

Targets:

- Reduction in Health Risk Factors
- Equitable Access to Affordable Local Food
- Economic Development

TOOLS

Convening

- Statewide convening

Targets:

- Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and local affiliates
- Ohio Department of Education (ODE)
- Ohio State University Extension, Ohio State University Farmland Policy Group, and the Ohio Department of Agriculture
- Food Policy Coalitions

Advocacy

- Define strategy
- Coordinate a cohesive message
- Mutual building

Targets:

- Cleveland/Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition
- National Convergence
- Ohio State University Extension
- Farm to School
- School Food Focus

Policy

- Drive/promote policy change that provides greater local food access
- Advance a shared policy agenda

Targets:

- Sustainability offices
- Local elected officials and staff
- ODE & School Systems
- USDA, and the Department of Agriculture

Grantmaking/Leveraging

- Establish collective agenda
- Develop collective impact

Targets:

- ORCP members
- Ohio Grantmakers Forum
- Philanthropic and Public Sector partners

Capacity Building

- Build capacity

Targets:

- Existing and emerging pipeline

