



Food Councils 101

The NWI Food Council cultivates a just, thriving and regenerative food system for all in NW Indiana. Through community-based strategies, we work towards collaboration, healthy ecosystems, equity and resiliency for all in NW Indiana.



SERVING LAKE, PORTER, LAPORTE, NEWTON, JASPER, STARKE, & PULASKI COUNTIES

OUR CREW

YOUR FRIENDLY
COUNCIL FACES



ANNE
MASSIE

Co-Executive
Director




VIRGINIA
PLEASANT

Co-Executive
Director



BECCA
TUHOLSKI

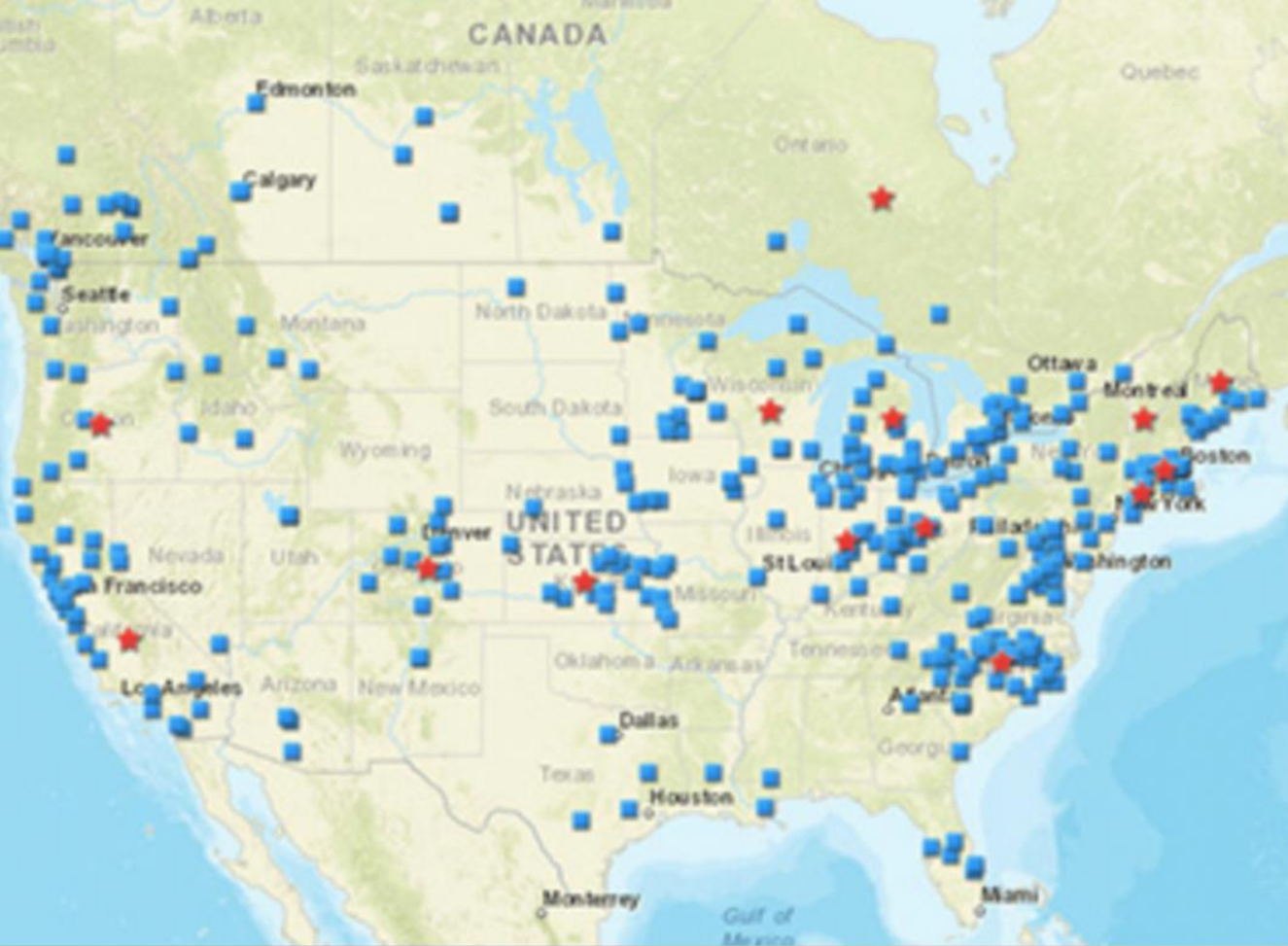
Local Food Access
Coordinator

The image features a central white rectangular box with a thin black border. Inside the box, the text "What is a food council?" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in two lines: "What is a" on the top line and "food council?" on the bottom line. Surrounding the box are illustrations of fresh produce. On the left and right sides, there are large, vibrant red beets with green leafy tops. The beets are positioned as if they are holding up the central box. At the top of the box, several green leafy vegetables, possibly spinach or kale, are visible, appearing to peek over the top edge. The overall style is clean and illustrative, with a focus on fresh, healthy food.



What is a food council?

Food councils are community-based coalitions, consisting of multiple organizations and individuals, that help promote more resilient food systems. Using this cross-sector approach, food councils solve broad food system issues and give communities more control over the food they consume.



2005

15 active food councils



2020

Over 400 active food councils

NWI Food Council

MISSION

To cultivate a
just, thriving and
regenerative
food system for
all in NW Indiana





Our vision

We envision a local food system where everyone has affordable access to nutritious food that is grown by regional producers using regenerative practices. We work towards collaboration, healthy ecosystems, equity and resiliency for all in NW Indiana.

Our Work

a system rooted in values



•
Food Justice

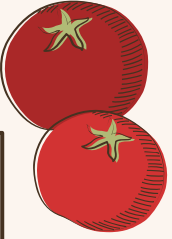
•
Farm Viability

•
Infrastructure &
Economic Dev

•
Conservation &
Regeneration

•
Food Waste

What parts of the food system
impact healthy food access?



What do we miss when we
ignore the complexity?





A HOLISTIC APPROACH

ENDING FOOD INSECURITY
ENSURING FARM VIABILITY

We can do both together!

Holding and considering the dynamic elements of the food system at every step and centering equity.

The image features a central white rectangular box with a thin black border. Inside the box, the text "NWIFC" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font on the top line, and "History" is written in a larger, bold, black, sans-serif font on the bottom line. Surrounding the box are several stylized illustrations of beets and their leaves. On the left and right sides, there are large, vibrant red beets with green, lobed leaves. At the top and bottom of the box, there are smaller green leaves and thin red roots extending outwards. The entire composition is set against a plain white background.

NWIFC History



2016

- Commissioned by nearly 100 community members
- Founding board
- Sliding scale contribution, but about \$50 contributed from every early board member to open bank account
- Supported local sourcing for farm to table events & volunteered with partners

Budget: \$500

The Region

- How do we define?
- Pros and cons of various maps (SWOT)
- Final decision, with room for change





2017

- Formed working groups
- Hosted a large community gathering, FED: Food Expo & Discussion. Not intended as fundraiser but brought in \$\$ (the power even went out!)
- Hosted FarmHop
- Held 12 Meet-Ups
- Applied as a partner on FMPP but application was declined
- Applied for and received our 501c3 status
- Supported local sourcing & volunteered

Budget: \$10,000



FALSE STARTS

— PROGRAMS BEFORE PARTNERSHIPS

Not enough capacity for big lifts; no organizational relationships to support programs

— CONSUMER FACING FOCUS

High input for limited impact

— WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE DO?

Not enough board members understood food systems change



Additional Challenges:

Unreliable institutional partners

Building Credibility

All Volunteer Organization

Communicating Systems Work

Finding Ways to Fill the Gaps with limited capacity



MOMENTUM

LISTENING SESSIONS

- 2 Years of listening sessions in every part of our servicing area
- Networking events

ENGAGING PARTNERS CONSISTENTLY

- Meetings, meetings, meetings
- Supporting partners on grants

SHIFT FROM B2C TO B2B

- Moved away from events and consumer education
- Leaned into our role and successes as conveners, resources connectors and subject matter experts





2018

- Held 12 more Community Meet Ups
- Hosted FED & FarmHop with a little more liquid funds
- Hosted Farm Biz Accelerator
- Received \$10,000 grant from SIA Foundation for Farm Tool Library
- Applied for FMPP again as partner and was awarded (non-financial partner)
- Invited on LFPP grant as partner and was awarded (kicked off 2019)
- Supported local sourcing & volunteered

Budget: \$25,000



2019

- After national search, hired Virginia Pleasant as LFPP Value Chain Coordinator (\$20,000/yr) as contractor
- Hosted FED and FarmHop
- Received \$5,000 Food & Farms Communication Fund Grant
- Supported local sourcing & volunteered
- Invited to be Ignite the Region Agriculture Infrastructure Champions

Budget: \$40,000



2020

- Squeezed in FED before the Pandemic shut the world down 3 weeks later.
- Virginia and LFPP pivoted scope due to pandemic
- Food Hub planning got serious
- Food Council focus shifted from community education/events to B2B partnerships and programs
- LFPP 2.0 and RFSP talks began



Budget: \$42,000



2021

- Awarded Chicago Region Food System Fund Grant to launch Region Roots (\$75,000)
- Awarded Indiana Food Council Development Grant to support Region Roots marketing (\$25,000)
- Launched Region Roots!
- Awarded No Kid Hungry Grant (\$25,000)
- Awarded RFSP!
- Invited to NWI Forum's READi proposal

Budget: \$100,000



2022

- READi awarded
- Received another Chicago Region Food System Fund Grant \$50,000
- Big Green Dao \$10,000
- Let the hiring begin! Hired first W2 employee (Anna) in May 2022. Transitioned subcontractors (Virginia & Emily) to W2.
- Hired Allyssa as hub driver in September
- Hired Becca T in October
- Moved Anne from volunteer to paid staff
- RFSP Subawards flowing
- Regional Council CoP

Budget: \$334,000



2023

- READi funding flowing
- RFBC awarded, to start in July
- Schools Food Transformation Grant Awarded, kicks off May
- Local Foods for Schools awarded, starts in July
- Other grants pending
- LOTS OF LEARNING
 - HR needs
 - Benefits needs
 - Structures and policies
 - Board - Staff relationship

Budget: \$900,000



Our path forward

Making connections & weaving networks

Stay in our B2B lane

Build the story

Turn our eye toward policy relationships

Dig into our regional planning/development relationships

The image features a central white rectangular box with a thin black border. Inside the box, the text "Where We're Going" is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Below the text is a solid green horizontal bar. Surrounding the box are several stylized illustrations of beets and their leaves. On the left, a large red beet with a green leaf is shown. On the right, another large red beet with a green leaf is shown. Above the box, there are several green leaves of varying sizes. Below the box, there are several thin red roots extending downwards. The overall style is simple and illustrative.

Where We're Going



NWI FOOD COUNCIL

SERVING LAKE, PORTER, LAPORTE, NEWTON, JASPER, STARKE, & PULASKI COUNTIES

2023 - 2026

STRATEGIC PLAN





LEADING
CHANGE



FOOD



FARMS



GOVERNANCE



LEADING CHANGE

To lead and support equitable initiatives and robust partnerships in Northwest Indiana and beyond that disrupt systems of oppression and lead to transformative, just, and reparative frameworks.

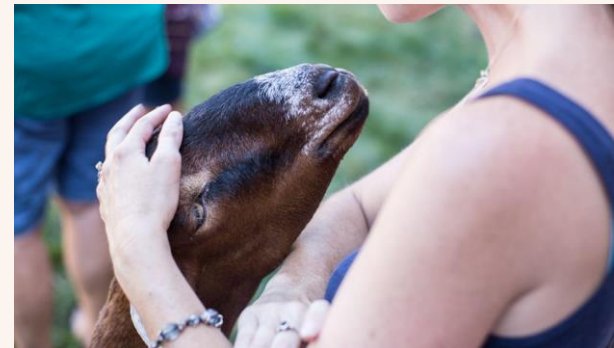
- Deepen commitment to community driven strategies and solutions that strengthen engagement in responsive, reparative programming
- Build **regional capacity** at strategic and “boots on the ground” levels
- Raise awareness of food systems work and an **individual’s power to make change**
- Continue farmer and community **education** about the food and agricultural industry's impact on climate change



FOOD

To steward a deeply connected and inclusive food systems network in Northwest Indiana.

- **Improve access** for all to adequate, affordable, nourishing, culturally appropriate, and **locally-grown food** at markets, schools, grocery/corner stores, and restaurants
- Collaborate with diverse, strategic, and local partners to **identify root causes of food insecurity**, assess needs, and brainstorm solutions to improve food access without duplicating efforts
- Continue developing and offering **educational programs** to schools and communities to celebrate locally-grown and culturally-relevant food





To support and empower viability of all farms and farmers throughout Northwest Indiana.

- Make farming and farm work a **viable profession and livelihood**
- Improve access to land, resources, and markets and **close the resource gap for BIPOC farmers** and decolonize what farming looks like
- Identify needs of local growers and **connect them with resources** at all stages and sizes
- Establish more **direct and beneficial** links between farmers and consumers





GOVERNANCE

To lead an exemplary, transparent nonprofit organization.

- Commit to being **transparent** and **accountable** and pursue non-traditional models of governance that promote equity.
- Secure **sustainable** sources of unrestricted funding that are closely aligned with the Food Council's vision.
- Implement **best practices** for growing, retaining, and developing Food Council staff and board in ways that align with the Food Council's core values.



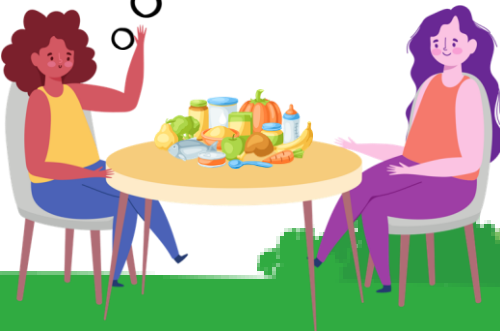
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Food Access Programs



2019

2021



2022





Trauma-Informed
Learning Collaborative



IDOH
Health Issues
& Challenges



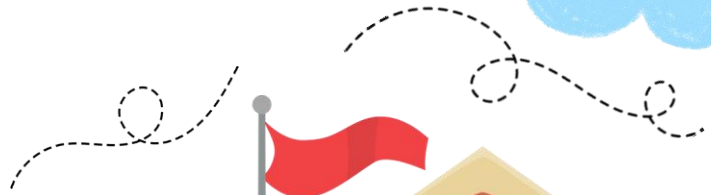
2023

Double Up
Indiana





2024



Local Food for Schools





Local Food Access Coordinator

About this role

- 2022 SNAP-Ed funded
- Strengthening food access throughout our 7 counties

Focus areas

- Value chain coordination
- Farmers markets
- SNAP/WIC
- Farm to School
- Trauma-informed & equity-focused