

CLINTON COUNTY FOOD ACTION PLAN



INTRODUCTORY LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR CLINTON COUNTY FOOD ACTION PLAN

Dear Friends,

Healthy food access is an indispensable element of a thriving community. Without access to nutritious, affordable food, people cannot live their best lives or perform to the best of their abilities. Without three healthy meals per day, students cannot learn, teachers cannot teach, and the rest of us cannot do our daily work. It really is that simple.

What is more complicated is creating a local food system that addresses inequities, coordinates relevant stakeholders, supports the local food economy, and promotes sustainability so that future generations can enjoy a better quality of life than we do.

The Clinton County Food Action Plan provides the vision we need to accomplish those four primary aims. I strongly encourage you to read and review the plan, engage with it creatively and actively, and allow yourself to be inspired by the guidance that it puts forth. Please consider sharing the plan widely with your communities and contacts. Everyone who lives in Clinton County has something to learn from this plan, and we all have a responsibility to help transform the food system that we share and depend on every single day of our lives.

No one single stakeholder or county resident holds all the answers we need to make this vision come to fruition. Creating a healthy, sustainable, accessible food system will require coordination from everyone who is involved with growing, selling, serving, or disposing of food in the county. From large scale agricultural producers to community gardens, from farmers markets to large institutions like school districts and health care systems, all stakeholders must be willing to engage with one another to ensure that county residents can access and afford the healthy foods they need.

The Clinton County Food Action Plan also promises to help confront disparities in opportunity, like access to healthy and affordable food, that affect so many of our community members on a daily basis. Giving everyone a fair opportunity to live a healthy life requires bold systems change, and it requires our community coming together to acknowledge and address unjust inequities in how our society apportions access to the drivers of health and well-being.

I am genuinely excited to see how this plan leads to profound, positive change in our county in the years ahead. The recommendations contained within this plan can help pave the way to a new chapter in Clinton County history when anyone — regardless of identity or background — can access the healthy food they need to reach their full potential. We owe it to our kids and grandkids and great grandkids to get this right.

Sincerely,



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2021, following many years of work to support a thriving food system and advance Clinton County residents' access to nutritious and affordable food, the Clinton County Health Department (CCHD) partnered with ChangeLab Solutions to develop and launch the Clinton County Food Action Plan (CCFAP).

The CCFAP provides a framework of common goals and strategies to help guide the priorities and actions of stakeholders in Clinton County's food system over the next 10 years in support of a resilient and strong local food system. The plan's goals and actions represent those with the greatest potential to have a positive impact on food-related issues facing the Clinton County community today.

PURPOSE

This food action plan is conceived as a blueprint for food system actions and strategies that form a tailored response to specific food system opportunities and challenges within Clinton County. The plan establishes goals and priorities for partners and stakeholders, creating a roadmap that local government agencies, hospitals, community-based organizations, businesses, resident groups, and other food system stakeholders can use to coordinate their work. The plan will encourage cross-sector and interdisciplinary partnership and collaboration and help to sustain efforts over the long term. The CCFAP also establishes priorities for local government funding initiatives, and it better positions government institutions and community-based organizations for future funding opportunities.

PROCESS

Throughout 2021, a dedicated group of food system stakeholders identified gaps and opportunities in Clinton County's local food system, examining the food cycle from food production to food waste management, and proposed actions and strategies to advance a vision for a healthy food system. The primary goals of the CCFAP, under which these actions and strategies are organized, are as follows:

- Enhance collaboration and cohesion among existing food system stakeholders and agencies
- Support the local food and agricultural economy
- Reduce the amount of food waste sent to landfills and increase recovery of unused, edible food for community use
- Increase access to healthy and affordable foods

The stakeholders also identified specific actions to help achieve each of these primary goals. The table in the next section summarizes the CCFAP's goals and associated actions.

GOALS & ACTIONS


GOAL A: Enhance collaboration and cohesion among food system stakeholders

A-1 Assign responsibility for tracking progress, building consensus on implementation strategies, identifying entities to lead and support implementation processes, and conducting annual plan review to the Action for Health Consortium

GOAL B: Support local food and agriculture


B-1 Coordinate strategies for Clinton County schools, food banks, and other public institutions to purchase food that is healthy and local

 **B-2** Support development of a sellers cooperative that represents agricultural and food businesses in Clinton County

 **B-3** Coordinate funding and support for development of a food hub to support the marketing and sale of local agricultural and food products

GOAL C: Reduce food waste and increase food recovery

C-1 Provide resources and education for households, businesses, and institutions to help reduce food waste

 **C-2** Expand County infrastructure for increased food waste processing


C-3 Strengthen producer, processor, and market networks to support food recovery and repurposing


GOAL D: Increase access to healthy and affordable foods


D-1 Support development of a group purchasing model for institutional purchasers (e.g., schools, senior meal programs, day care providers, hospitals, universities, and prisons) to help leverage purchasing power for local and healthy food products

D-2 Expand free school meals to include all Clinton County students

D-3 Expand access to local, affordable, and nutritious foods for Clinton County residents who use SNAP and WIC

 **D-4** Expand mobile outreach centers and food pantries in remote areas of the County

 **D-5** Review County zoning requirements for opportunities to develop grocery stores, food markets, and agricultural activities in County areas with limited food access

 Action identified as a big lift

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A FOOD SYSTEM?

A food system encompasses elements of the food supply chain (production, processing, distribution, consumption, reuse or redistribution, and disposal) as well as organizations, institutions, regulations, policies, resources, and people that drive activities across the food supply chain.¹ Food systems provide a unique opportunity to shape the health, environment, and social and economic outcomes of communities and regions. A healthy food system purposefully leads toward the health and well-being of all participants, especially those with the fewest resources and greatest need.² A healthy food system is transparent, equitable, and built on the values of health, environmental sustainability, a valued workforce, diversity in business, and support for local economies. The Clinton County Food Action Plan moves Clinton County toward a healthy food system.

CLINTON COUNTY'S FOOD SYSTEM

Clinton County, located in the northeasternmost corner of New York State, is one of the most rural counties in the state.³ While the County has a rich agricultural economy and a robust tourism industry, residents continue to face social and economic challenges. Residents face barriers to accessing medical care and achieving a livable wage, and they experience food insecurity rates that are higher than the national average.⁴ Many of the key informants interviewed in gathering information for this plan noted that the County already contains many of the resources required to meet these challenges — for example, well-established community institutions like hospitals and universities, abundant agricultural production and processing, a strong food security network and nutrition education, and waste infrastructure.⁵

The goals and associated actions of the plan are intended to address the County's challenges and leverage existing assets and resources. Improving **food security and healthy eating** is an issue that Clinton County has identified as a significant community need;⁴ addressing food access will help to reduce the risk of chronic disease across the community. **Food waste and recovery**, a critical component of the food supply chain, has significant environmental impact as well as potential to support food security among County residents. Finally, supporting **local food and agriculture** strengthens food access by connecting residents to the nutritional bounty being grown, processed, and manufactured locally and by providing economic support and value to community members who work in and lead local agricultural businesses.

Ultimately, the actions and strategies included in the plan connect existing resources, stakeholders, and community actors with ongoing efforts to ensure that the great abundance and assets of Clinton County are distributed equitably. This collaboration and growth of infrastructure will advance the goals of a supported local economy, reduced food waste, and improved food access.

How are the goals of the Clinton County Food Action Plan supported by the broader policy environment?

In Clinton County and around the state, other initiatives are in progress that are helping to lay the groundwork for the goals set out in this plan. Here are some highlights of the context in which this plan is coming to fruition:

Local food and agriculture

In most circumstances, municipalities in New York State, like Clinton County, are allowed to consider only the lowest-cost bidder when making purchasing decisions. A [new bill](#) introduced in the New York State Senate will allow cities and counties to consider other factors when determining best value in making purchases. If the bill passes, cities and counties will be able to consider whether a business's practices support local economies, worker well-being, and nutrition, for example.⁶ This legislation would allow public entities and programs in Clinton County like schools, senior meal programs, and correctional facilities to leverage their purchasing power to create a stronger, more resilient food system.

Food waste

In 2019, New York State passed a first-of-its-kind food waste bill that provides a framework under which Clinton County can reduce food waste, support environmental health, and direct more food toward people who need it. The [New York State Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law](#) requires businesses and institutions that generate an annual average of two tons of wasted food per week to donate any excess edible food and recycle all remaining food scraps if they are within 25 miles of an organics recycler.⁷ Effective January 1, 2022, this law provides motive, structure, and standards for Clinton County to further develop its food waste infrastructure and advance the goals of this plan.

Food access

Clinton County already has a long history of innovative food security strategies. With numerous farmers markets that accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits, the County has also implemented nutrition incentive programs with great success. The Farm Fresh Cash program was a voucher program that supplemented purchases at participating farmers markets and farm stands by offering participants \$1 for every \$1 spent on fresh fruits and vegetables.⁸ Sixteen farmers markets and farm stands across the County accepted the vouchers.⁹ While funding for this program has expired, its success and the collaboration among community partners it produced have set the stage for future efforts.



HOW WAS THE PLAN DEVELOPED?

The CCFAP was developed through a community-centered, strengths-based approach that began with engaging food system stakeholders; listening deeply to understand the opportunities, history, and barriers that are present in the County; and assessing available resources.

The project team, made up of staff from CCHD and ChangeLab Solutions,ⁱ met in January 2021 to discuss past efforts to support a healthy food system in Clinton County. CCHD identified four main priority areas (collaboration, local economies, food waste, and food access) to focus on. These priority areas later became the four goal areas of the final plan.

The plan was then developed in four phases: stakeholder engagement, landscape assessment, strategy research, and action plan development. Meaningful engagement of stakeholders was crucial to ensure that Clinton County food system stakeholders have contributed to and are invested in the CCFAP. Engaging stakeholders began with forming an advisory committee of diverse Clinton County food system stakeholders and community members. The team also conducted key informant interviews with representatives of institutions and organizations with knowledge, experience, and expertise relevant to the four priority areas.

ⁱ ChangeLab Solutions, a nonprofit organization that uses law and policy to advance health equity, served as a consultant to CCHD on this project, funded by the New York State Health Foundation. ChangeLab Solutions was responsible for implementing the planning process and drafting the final plan under CCHD’s guidance.

Based on the four priority areas, foundational baseline information about the Clinton County food system was gathered via the key informant interviews and existing CCHD data sources, to identify key food system resources and gaps. Concurrently, an environmental scan of existing and potential key food system actions and strategies responsive to the four priority areas was conducted. This process included an impact and feasibility assessment to identify actions and strategies that are appropriate for Clinton County and have potential for the greatest impact.

Finally, using the information gathered in the preceding steps of the process, the team developed a food action plan that reflects the goals, priorities, and community context of the Clinton County food system.

HOW DOES IT WORK & WHAT WILL IT DO?

The plan is organized into four goal areas. Each goal area includes actions and strategies that local food system stakeholders such as local government agencies, hospitals, community-based organizations, businesses, and resident groups can take to collectively strengthen and enhance Clinton County's food system and sustain improvements in the long term. The plan is a blueprint for advancing a healthy and thriving food system for years to come.

Each action includes additional information to support implementation:

- **Who:** Agencies, organizations, and other partners that are currently working in this space or are critical to implementation. This list is not exhaustive but is intended to help identify stakeholders with knowledge and resources that can help move this action forward.
- **Starting steps & strategies:** Initial steps and strategies that interested or responsible agencies can take to implement the action
- **Potential measures:** Measures or metrics that could be used to evaluate implementation or indicate successful achievement of the action
- **Promising practice:** Models and resources for the work needed to accomplish the action



Some actions are also identified as big lifts, denoted by this symbol. We have included these actions in the plan because of their great potential to have a positive impact, although they do require significant resources and coordination among food system stakeholders. Including them in the plan creates an opportunity to revisit these strategies over the long term and build support and infrastructure for their implementation.

It should be noted that this plan is a living document, intended to be reviewed and revised to adapt to changing environments and community conditions. Clinton County food system stakeholders noted that there cannot be one model for the County as a whole; the needs and realities of communities within the County are diverse, and actions and strategies must be varied and customized to meet them.³ This document serves as a starting point – to galvanize and unite food system actors around a

common set of goals and priorities. The plan will be a driving document to guide and sustain partnership and initiatives into the future.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that everyone needs to live in safe and healthy communities and highlighted gaps and failures in local and national food systems. The goals, actions, and strategies laid out in this plan are critical to addressing these gaps in Clinton County and strengthening the Clinton County food system so that it can be more resilient in the future.

Additionally, the conditions created by the pandemic rendered impossible the depth and breadth of community engagement in the development of this plan that was originally intended. Due to the pandemic, the project team was unable to gather community feedback on the goals and priorities of the plan. Moving forward, community input will be gathered via the annual review process led by CCHD and the Action for Health Consortium, a multi-sector, multidisciplinary group of local health system partners that are working to improve community health. The group is facilitated by CCHD.



FOOD PLAN GOALS, ACTIONS & STRATEGIES

GOAL A: ENHANCE COLLABORATION AND COHESION AMONG EXISTING FOOD SYSTEM STAKEHOLDERS AND AGENCIES

Amid the great efforts to improve our food system that are underway, coordination and communication are issues. The key improvement we are seeking in this area is increased awareness among food system stakeholders of each other's work, assets, and resources, enabling them to work better together without duplicating effort.

ACTION A-1: ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRACKING PROGRESS, BUILDING CONSENSUS ON IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES, IDENTIFYING ENTITIES TO LEAD AND SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES, AND CONDUCTING ANNUAL PLAN REVIEW TO THE ACTION FOR HEALTH CONSORTIUM

WHO

Clinton County Health Department, Action for Health Consortium, Clinton County Legislature

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Present the CCFAP to the Action for Health Consortium
- Invite additional stakeholders not represented in the Action for Health Consortium that have interest in the plan goals and expertise to help achieve them
- Convene County departments, organizations, and other institutions involved in food-related efforts
- Develop communication and evaluation plans for implementation of the CCFAP
- Release annual report on plan progress for public review and input
- Host annual convening of food system stakeholders connected to the actions in the plan, to discuss opportunities for partnership and action

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Number of food system initiatives, both community-wide and neighborhood-specific, for which the Action for Health Consortium provides coordinated support
- Number of local government departments engaged by the Action for Health Consortium
- Number and type of community organizations, businesses, and nonprofits engaged by the Action for Health Consortium
- Number of stakeholders or residents that receive or engage with public communications that disseminate annual updates on implementation of the CCFAP

PROMISING PRACTICE

[Local Food Action Plan – City of Columbus & Franklin County, Ohio](#)

In 2014, the City of Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio, partnered to launch the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Action Plan. Under the goal of coordination, the plan recommended that a team be established to coordinate implementation of the plan and connect those efforts to other food system initiatives. This group has continued to engage with the public, hold meetings, and release annual reports on the plan's progress.

GOAL B: SUPPORT THE LOCAL FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

The following actions will support the local agricultural economy in Clinton County by investing institutional food purchasing budgets in local food and agriculture, stimulating economic activity, and ensuring that good jobs and fair working conditions are available for food workers.

ACTION B-1: COORDINATE STRATEGIES FOR CLINTON COUNTY SCHOOLS, FOOD BANKS, AND OTHER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS TO PURCHASE FOOD THAT IS HEALTHY AND LOCAL

WHO

Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton and Franklin Counties, Clinton County Schools, Clinton County Office for the Aging, Clinton County Health Department, New York Farm Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Adirondack Farms, Chazy Orchards, Adirondack North Country Association, Adirondack Farm to School Initiative, Clinton County School TABLE (Team Adirondack Breakfast and Lunch Educators)



STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Develop and distribute guidance for institutions on best practices for buying direct from producers and developing healthy food service guidelines
- Identify sustainable funding streams to incentivize the purchase of local agricultural products

- Engage with individuals and departments charged with purchasing to discuss barriers and solutions to purchasing local and healthy food, and identify product needs
- Engage local growers to plan for the increased capacity required to meet the needs of large-scale buyers
- Explore policy options that require public agencies to incorporate healthy food service guidelines and a preference for local agricultural products

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Number of institutional purchasers that are purchasing local food
- Increase in the percentage of institutional purchasers' food budgets that is spent on food produced in Clinton County
- Increase in number of local producers that are selling products to institutional purchasers in Clinton County
- Dollar amount of incentives provided to institutions for purchasing local produce

PROMISING PRACTICE

[Livingston HealthCare](#)

Livingston HealthCare is a Critical Access Hospital (CAH) in Livingston, Montana. CAHs maintain local health care access by providing limited-service hospitals to rural communities in geographically isolated areas. Livingston HealthCare administrators partnered with Western Sustainability Exchange, a nonprofit organization, to improve the quality of food service offerings and promote health and wellness among patients and staff.¹⁰ The hospital implemented a farm-to-institution program, revamping their patient menus, cooking meals from scratch, and increasing their purchases of local foods. Four new food service jobs were added so that meals could be made from scratch; higher costs were balanced by savings from not purchasing pre-prepared foods.

[Woodbury County, Iowa's Local Food Purchase Policy](#)

This policy, passed in 2006, mandates that Woodbury County “shall purchase, by or through its food service contractor, locally produced organic food” for service in Woodbury County’s jail, work release center, and juvenile detention facilities.



ACTION B-2: SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF A SELLERS COOPERATIVE THAT REPRESENTS AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD BUSINESSES IN CLINTON COUNTY

WHO

New York Farm Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Northern New York Agricultural Development Program, SUNY Plattsburgh, Clinton County producers, Clinton County Planning Department, Farm Credit, Adirondack North Country Association, Adirondack Food System Network

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Engage with local producers that are interested in cooperative marketing models, to identify opportunities and challenges
- Develop information and educational resources for producers about cooperative marketing models and cooperative networks — for example, marketing cooperatives, community-supported agriculture (CSA) cooperatives, or cooperative processing facilities
- Convene meetings with local food producers to discuss the potential structure of a collaborative and its role
- Convene meetings between regulatory agencies and producers to discuss regulatory and certification concerns

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Number of meetings held with producers and regulatory agencies
- Number of educational resources developed
- Establishment of an agricultural marketing cooperative
- Number of partners or members in the collaborative
- Number of commercial and institutional buyers that are purchasing food from producers supported by the collaborative model

PROMISING PRACTICE

[Merville Organics Growers Cooperative, Vancouver Island](#)

Merville Organics, a marketing cooperative located in Canada, was a producers cooperative in which five separate farms sold and marketed their products together. Joint selling and marketing provided a stable sales baseline for each farmer's products. In addition, the co-op members shared a walk-in cooler, storage space, a market truck, and some wash station infrastructure. [The cooperative disbanded in 2020](#) due to positive growth and reduced need for a cooperative model.





ACTION B-3: COORDINATE FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A FOOD HUB TO SUPPORT THE MARKETING AND SALE OF LOCAL AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRODUCTS

WHO

Clinton County Health Department, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Northern New York Agricultural Development Program, Clinton County producers, Clinton County Planning Department, Farm Credit, North Country Chamber of Commerce, Adirondack North Country Association, Essex Farm Institute, Adirondack Food System Network

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Identify public, private, and nonprofit entities interested in supporting development of a food hub
- Convene meetings with interested entities to discuss the potential structure of a food hub
- Establish a workgroup dedicated to developing the food hub
- Identify funding sources to support development of a food hub
- Convene meetings between regulatory agencies and interested entities, to discuss regulatory and certification requirements for a food hub

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Number of interested entities
- Number of meetings held with interested entities
- Establishment of a food hub workgroup
- Number of meetings convened with regulatory agencies to discuss requirements for a food hub
- Establishment of a food hub

PROMISING PRACTICE

[Healthy Communities Coalition of Lyon and Storey Counties, Nevada](#)

The Healthy Communities Coalition is a collaboration of local, state, federal, and tribal agency partners along with hundreds of community volunteers. The coalition works to solve multiple challenges in rural western Nevada, which includes areas designated as food deserts by the USDA.¹¹ The coalition coordinates a greenhouse, farmers market, food pantries, and a senior nutrition program and has plans for a community kitchen.

GOAL C: REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF FOOD WASTE SENT TO LANDFILLS AND INCREASE RECOVERY OF UNUSED, EDIBLE FOOD FOR COMMUNITY USE

The following actions will support Clinton County environmental health and food security. These actions will contribute to food access by diverting high-quality food from landfill to better uses such as redistribution to community members and reuse as animal feed or fertilizer.

ACTION C-1: PROVIDE RESOURCES AND EDUCATION FOR HOUSEHOLDS, BUSINESSES, AND INSTITUTIONS TO HELP REDUCE FOOD WASTE

WHO

Clinton County Health Department, Clinton County Landfill & Recycling, Casella Waste Systems, AdkAction, North Country Chamber of Commerce, Altona Correctional Facility, Clinton Correctional Facility, University of Vermont Health Network, SUNY Plattsburgh, Clinton County Schools, Cornell Cooperative Extension

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Develop educational materials and resources to help households reduce food waste and better understand local municipal systems and strategies
- Develop technical assistance models and resources to help food businesses create and implement food waste reduction plans
- Develop a partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener Program to provide public education on the use of compost in backyard gardening
- Identify funding streams for equipment for household and business composting
- Engage large institutions (e.g., schools, hospitals, universities, and prisons) in discussions about implementing voluntary food waste separation
- Develop marketing materials and strategies to encourage food businesses (restaurants, processors, manufacturers) to reduce over-production of food products

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Implementation of a locally relevant, community-wide education campaign on ways to prevent food waste
- Number of educational materials and resources developed
- Volume of food waste entering landfill
- Number of local food system stakeholders involved in education on how to prevent food waste
- Number of large institutions engaged
- Number of food businesses that receive training and education on existing protections and incentives for donation of edible food

PROMISING PRACTICE

[Residential composting classes in Appalachian Ohio](#)

In rural Ohio, community organizations, a waste reduction initiative, and a recycling center collaborated to offer free classes on backyard composting for community members. The classes covered the benefits and effectiveness of backyard composting, as well as best practices.



ACTION C-2: EXPAND COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR INCREASED FOOD WASTE PROCESSING

WHO

Clinton County Health Department, Clinton County Planning Department, Clinton County Landfill and Recycling, City of Plattsburgh Department of Public Works, Casella Waste Systems, AdkAction

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Identify areas or parcels that meet zoning requirements for potential composting or other alternative organic waste transfer or processing facilities
- Review existing County and city codes and zoning policies for opportunities and challenges related to food waste processing infrastructure
- Revise local laws and policies to allow for food waste processing within Clinton County
- Explore potential for co-digestion of biosolids and food waste to reduce waste sent to landfill
- Establish food waste transfer stations for household food waste drop-off
- Establish County-wide household pickup of food waste
- Promote the purchase of fertilizer produced by the processing of food waste

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Volume of food waste diverted by institutional food purchasers
- Volume of food waste entering landfill
- Volume of methane produced
- Number of County and city laws and/or policies revised
- Volume of fertilizer produced and purchased

PROMISING PRACTICE

[Food waste management in Nevada County, California](#)

After the passage of California's state law AB 1826, which requires businesses that generate 4 cubic yards or more of solid waste and recycling per week to have organics recycling, Nevada County had to start thinking about how to tackle food waste collection in a rural and expansive geographic area. Waste Management, the primary

service provider in the area, is working with local agencies to implement food waste collection service for businesses. Additional strategies, including adding food waste pickup to local transfer stations, are being considered.

ACTION C-3: STRENGTHEN PRODUCER, PROCESSOR, AND MARKET NETWORKS TO SUPPORT FOOD RECOVERY AND REPURPOSING

WHO

Clinton County Health Department, North Country Chamber of Commerce, SUNY Plattsburgh, New York Farm Bureau, Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton and Franklin Counties, Aldi Plattsburgh, Hannaford supermarkets, Walmart Plattsburgh, Adirondack Food System Network, Cornell Cooperative Extension



STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Conduct presentations, workshops, and training sessions to connect large-scale food waste generators with current and innovative local practices, opportunities, and infrastructure
- Develop resources for producers, including information on the New York State tax credit for farm donations to food pantries
- Identify additional funding streams that would provide food producers with financial incentives for donating produce to local food banks and pantries
- Connect food producers and markets with food recovery organizations

- Strengthen the network of food producers and processors that are capable of separating and donating food waste for use as animal feed, fertilizer, etc.

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Number of large-scale food waste generators engaged in food recovery or food repurposing
- Number of producers engaged in food recovery or food repurposing
- Number of resources and/or presentations developed to connect food waste generators with recovery and repurposing efforts
- Dollars received by food producers for donation of produce to food banks and pantries
- Volume of food waste converted to animal feed, fertilizer, and other best-use products

PROMISING PRACTICE

[Kingston Emergency Food Collaborative](#)

The Kingston Emergency Food Collaborative, leads food rescue and redistribution initiatives by partnering with local farms, restaurants, supermarkets, chefs, and volunteers to redistribute an abundance of food to pantries, community fridges, and kitchens.

GOAL D: INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND AFFORDABLE FOODS

Ensuring that all residents have convenient, equitable access to healthy and affordable food as well as the resources and ability to feed their families is essential for a healthy and resilient community. The following actions enhance cooperation between food security and local food system efforts in our community, making healthy and affordable food more accessible to everyone.

ACTION D-1: SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF A GROUP PURCHASING MODEL FOR INSTITUTIONAL PURCHASERS (E.G., SCHOOLS, SENIOR MEAL PROGRAMS, DAY CARE PROVIDERS, HOSPITALS, UNIVERSITIES, AND PRISONS) TO HELP LEVERAGE PURCHASING POWER FOR LOCAL AND HEALTHY FOOD PRODUCTS

WHO

Clinton County Schools, Clinton County Office for the Aging, Clinton County Department of Social Services, Clinton County Family YMCA, University of Vermont Health Network, SUNY Plattsburgh, Altona Correctional Facility, Clinton Correctional Facility, Champlain Valley Educational Services

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Engage with institutional food purchasers and congregate feeding programs that are interested in cooperative purchasing models
- Engage with institutional food purchasers outside of Clinton County that are already participating in cooperative purchasing models, to gather best practices and understand challenges
- Develop information and educational resources on group purchasing models for institutional food purchasers



- Convene meetings with institutional food purchasers and congregate feeding programs to discuss the potential structure of a group purchasing cooperative
- Convene meetings between regulatory agencies and institutional purchasers to discuss regulatory and certification concerns

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Number of institutional food purchasers and congregate feeding programs engaged
- Number of resources developed
- Number of meetings convened
- Establishment of a cooperative purchasing group

PROMISING PRACTICE

[Eastern South Dakota Buying Group](#)

Three school districts formed the Eastern South Dakota Buying Group, leveraging their combined purchasing power to feed more than 10,000 students. Joining forces transformed the three districts into the second-largest school food-buying entity in the state, significantly increasing their buying power and giving them access to a greater variety of products at reduced cost.

ACTION D-2: EXPAND FREE SCHOOL MEALS TO INCLUDE ALL CLINTON COUNTY STUDENTS

WHO

Clinton County Schools, Clinton County Department of Health, Champlain Valley Educational Services, Clinton County School TABLE (Team Adirondack Breakfast and Lunch Educators)

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Review funding options for universal free school meals, including the US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and County-wide legislation
- Confirm CEP eligibility with the New York State Education Department (NYSED)
- Engage school administrators, business office staff, and nutrition services directors to gather input on opportunities and challenges
- Draft an implementation plan for public schools, including strategies to ensure financial solvency such as increasing student participation, joining a food purchasing cooperative, leveraging the USDA Foods in Schools program, and monitoring food waste
- Submit a CEP application to NYSED, or draft legislation to codify universal free meals



POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Number of meetings or engagements with Clinton County School representatives
- Implementation plan for universal free meals
- Establishment of a universal free meal program

PROMISING PRACTICE

[Free school meals for all in Maine](#)

In 2021, Maine included funding for universal free school meals in an updated budget bill, requiring all Maine public schools to provide school meals to all students for free, regardless of their family's

income. The goal is to reduce stigma and increase food access, especially for families that are close to the income threshold but ineligible for school meals based on national income eligibility standards.

ACTION D-3: EXPAND ACCESS TO LOCAL, AFFORDABLE, AND NUTRITIOUS FOODS FOR CLINTON COUNTY RESIDENTS WHO USE SNAP AND WIC

WHO

Clinton County Department of Social Services, Clinton County Health Department, AdkAction, North Country Chamber of Commerce, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Adirondack Food System Network, Cornell Cooperative Extension

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Identify sustainable funding streams for produce incentive initiatives
- Engage local grocery stores, supermarkets, and farmers markets, to discuss their interest in participating in produce incentive programs
- Expand produce incentive programs for SNAP and WIC participants (e.g., Market Match, Double Up Food Bucks)
- Engage agricultural partners, to discuss their interest in participating in a mobile farmers market
- Identify an organization, group, or entity to host and lead a mobile farmers market
- Establish a mobile farmers market that accepts SNAP, WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) benefits or coupons
- Develop information and resources that publicize the produce incentive program and mobile farmers market

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Number of funding streams identified
- Number of food retailers engaged
- Establishment of a produce incentive program for SNAP and WIC participants
- Number of agricultural partners engaged
- Establishment of a mobile farmers market
- Number of educational resources developed

PROMISING PRACTICE

[SNAP at the Allegan Farmers Market, Michigan](#)

The Allegan Farmers Market has been proactive in establishing programs to help residents with low income gain access to fresh produce. The farmers market accepts SNAP benefits and operates a Double Up Food Bucks program. In addition, grant funding from USDA's Farmers Market Promotion Program allows participants without transportation to the farmers market to receive rides from Allegan County Transportation.



ACTION D-4: EXPAND MOBILE OUTREACH CENTERS AND FOOD PANTRIES IN REMOTE AREAS OF THE COUNTY

WHO

Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton and Franklin Counties, Clinton County Department of Social Services, Clinton County Health Department

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Assess the reach of existing outreach centers and food pantries, to identify geographic gaps and needs
- Engage stakeholders — including food banks, public agencies, and other community organizations — to provide input on community need
- Identify potential funding streams
- Draft an implementation plan, designating a responsible agency or organization and proposed routes and frequency of visits

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Completion of a needs assessment
- Number of stakeholders engaged
- Number of funding streams identified
- Completion of a draft implementation plan

PROMISING PRACTICE

Mobile Food Pantry in Elmira, New York

The Food Bank of the Southern Tier established a mobile food pantry in Elmira, New York, in 2007. The mobile food pantry is a truck that delivers fresh produce, dairy products, and other food and grocery products directly to distribution sites where people need food. When the truck arrives at a site, volunteers place the food on tables surrounding the truck. The clients are then able to “shop,” choosing items that they need.



ACTION D-5: REVIEW COUNTY ZONING REQUIREMENTS FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP GROCERY STORES, FOOD MARKETS, AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN COUNTY AREAS WITH LIMITED FOOD ACCESS

WHO

Clinton County Health Department, Clinton County Planning Department, Clinton County Legislative Office, Clinton County town boards, North Country Chamber of Commerce

STARTING STEPS & STRATEGIES

- Identify high-priority communities in Clinton County with no or few food retail outlets
- Review existing zoning requirements for any limitations and/or opportunities for development of food retail businesses
- Convene regulatory agencies to discuss opportunities for changes to zoning codes
- Engage regional and local food retailers, to measure their interest in developing new locations in high-priority communities

POTENTIAL MEASURES

- Number of communities identified that have no or few food retail outlets
- Completion of zoning code review
- Number of regulatory agencies convened
- Number of retailers engaged

PROMISING PRACTICE

Food system–supportive zoning in Gays Mills, Wisconsin

Gays Mills, a small village in southwestern Wisconsin, supports the local food system in its zoning ordinances. The village’s comprehensive plan lifts up development of the local food system as a priority for the community.¹² For example, the zoning code provides flexibility for direct-to-consumer sales in a variety of zoning districts (e.g., in the industrial district).

FUTURE OF THE PLAN

The Clinton County Food Action Plan provides the tools to advance a healthy and resilient local food system. Its effectiveness will be determined by its implementation and the degree of buy-in from the groups that are involved in food systems across the food supply chain. Implementation of the plan must be driven by community members, government agencies and elected officials, large public and private institutions, community organizations, and service providers.

Clinton County residents are the most crucial of these groups and will continue to be engaged as implementation progresses. The Action for Health Consortium, facilitated by CCHD, is a multi-sector, multidisciplinary group of local health system partners and community members who are working toward improvement of community health. This consortium will oversee progress toward the plan's goals and serve as a liaison with the community, stakeholders, and Clinton County agencies.

Several Clinton County departments — including the Health Department, Planning Department, and Department of Social Services — and the County's elected officials will also play a vital role in the future of the plan. Changes in existing food policies as well as new policies will be enacted by these departments after adoption.

Large institutions in Clinton County — such as health systems, universities, schools, and correctional facilities — have great influence over the food system due to activities like food purchasing, waste management, and food service. Many of these institutions have already initiated policies, programs, and other strategies that have positively affected the health and well-being of community members. Further collaboration between these institutions and other key partners will be essential to achieving many of the goals included in the plan.

Following the release of this plan, the Action for Health Consortium will review the plan's goals and actions and then draft their plan for engaging key partners and stakeholders that are critical to implementation. Plan-related activities will also be incorporated into Clinton County's Community Health Improvement Plan to further elevate awareness among residents and facilitate capture of data on progress.

The plan will be reviewed annually, and progress on each goal will be measured. The plan will also be reviewed annually for relevance and feasibility, and there will be opportunities for annual community input. Any proposed revisions and a summary of progress will be submitted to CCHD for approval. The results of this review will also be reported to the public.

Community input and participation is crucial to the success of this plan. Clinton County residents, organizations, and institutions that are interested in participating in implementation of the plan are invited to contact Mandy Snay, Director of Health Planning & Promotion at the Clinton County Health Department (mandy.snay@clintoncountygov.com).

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