



NWI FOOD COUNCIL

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



ANNUAL REVIEW 2022

FOOD JUSTICE FOR ALL

We believe everyone has a right to food. We envision a local food system where everyone has fair access to food that is grown by regional producers using regenerative practices.

Through community-based strategies, we enhance collaboration, healthy ecosystems, equity and resiliency for all in Northwest Indiana.

A close-up photograph of three carrots growing in dark, rich soil. The carrots are bright orange and have green leafy tops. The soil is dark and appears moist.

Our mission is to cultivate a just, thriving and regenerative food system for all in NW Indiana.

2022: A YEAR OF EXCEPTIONAL GROWTH

The NWI Food Council grew from an all volunteer organization founded in 2015 to hiring its first staff in 2022.

Our annual budget increased by nearly 1000% and our partnerships expanded statewide and beyond.

LEADING CHANGE

We are here 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 food systems.

Introduction to Food Systems



What is a **local** food system?

“A LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM is not so much about how far a particular piece of food travels from producer to consumer. It is more about a community having control over who pays for the hidden costs of our food. These costs can include the environmental impact of the production and distribution of the food as well as the health care costs associated with eating low quality food. It also includes recognizing that workers from one end of the food chain to the other are the poorest paid employees in society and the corporations that benefit from these low wages often pass along the gap between actual wages and living wages to the government in the form of ‘welfare.’ A LOCAL food system creates the platform for a community to collectively and transparently decide what their ‘food priorities’ are and who should bear the burden of any inequity.”

Lexicon of Food, Edwin Marty

 **98%**

Did you know 98% of fruits and vegetables consumed by Hoosiers are imported from outside the state?



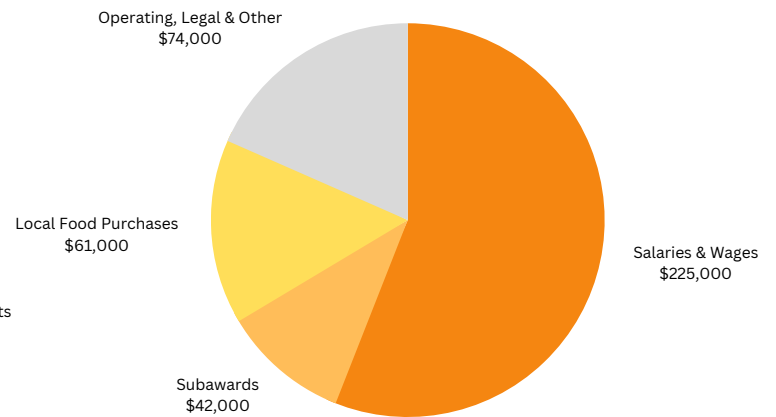
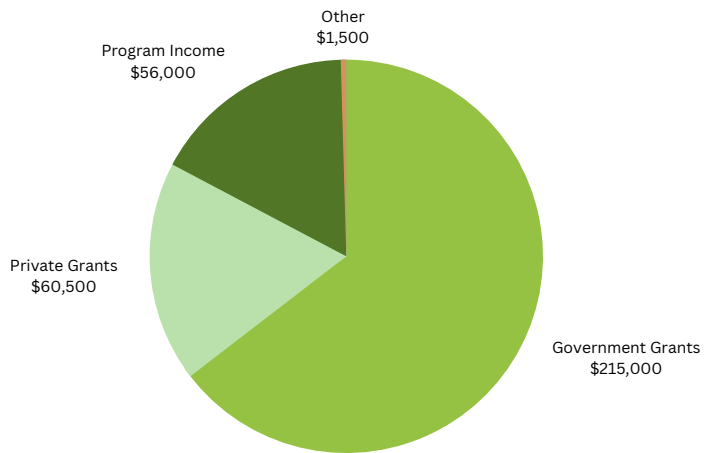
Supporting farm viability is crucial to building a just food system for NWI, which is why we hold it as equally as important as improving food access for the most vulnerable. We seek to create new systems that aren't extractive, but rather transformative.

FARMER & CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ANNE MASSIE



FUNDS RAISED

\$333,452.47



PROJECTS

Partners IN Food

- Through federal funds, we are growing the Indiana Value Chain Network to support the viability of NW Indiana farmers and farmers located across the state through food access programming, value chain coordination, technical assistance, affordable distribution and public outreach and educational events.

Food Access

- From the beginning, the council has and continues to provide technical assistance and program support to farmers markets and vendors to improve SNAP and WIC redemption rates, and advocate for more responsive programming to families on food assistance

Farm Viability Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub

- As a mission-driven, non-profit food hub, our Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub works with partners and funders to drive more food purchases to local farmers and support the viability and wellbeing of those who grow our food.



PROGRAM IMPACT

- Awarded a \$1,598,000 grant over 5 years from the NWI Forum READi project to develop NWI's first wholesale local food hub: Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub
- Supported over \$60,000 in direct local food sales to restaurants, schools, farmers markets, and fundraisers. Led partners across the state to achieve \$7.6 million in local food procurement
- \$42,000 in subawards to food system partner organizations around Indiana
- Launched the development of trauma-informed farmers market memberships and provided over 6 farmers markets with technical assistance
- Worked closely with over 35 small-scale farmers to build their capacity through grants, technical assistance, and cooperative efforts

RETAINING & DEVELOPING TALENT

In December 2021, the food council was entirely run by volunteers. By the end of 2022, the council hired 4 full time staff and 5 part time staff, all committed to developing equitable value-chains where farmers thrive and everyone has a right to food. Jobs dedicated to developing our region's food system had not existed before!!



PARTNERS IN FOOD

USDA Regional Food Systems Partnership Grant



\$998,298

October 31, 2021 - October 31, 2024

Centering Equity in
Value Chain Development
with the Indiana Value Chain Network



Partners IN Food formalizes longstanding partnerships from Indiana's public, private, and nonprofit sectors to create Hoosier Grown, a new statewide food/farm nonprofit organization with collective action metrics tied to the Indiana Food Charter. The proposed project builds on a previous USDA grant that established the Indiana Value Chain Network, an association of public, private, and nonprofit groups that researched and produced information on the roles, values, and impacts of value chain work in Indiana.

Though direct, intermediated, and value-added sales have increased in Indiana, most recent data (USDA, 2017) indicate that, for each market channel, the majority of Indiana's sales dollars are captured by a small percentage of the farm businesses reporting sales. To address this disparity, *Partners IN Food* has two objectives: (1) Serve the needs of all farmers seeking local and regional sales channels for their diversified farm production and aggregation businesses and (2) Reflect the needs of communities and a diversity of farmers including those historically underrepresented.

Rooted in equity and sustainability for all Indiana producers, businesses, and eaters, project activities support the fulfillment of those two goals. Through project activities and aligned partner events, Indiana communities will have the opportunity to contribute to the conversation around local food systems, community health, equity, and Trauma-Informed Learning Collaboratives. Proposed activities will bring state agency partners to the grassroots table to work together toward a more resilient, sustainable Indiana food and farming system where producers of color, female-identifying, and non-traditional farmers and food businesses can launch, grow, and thrive.

Meet the Indiana Value Chain Network

Reach out to one of the Value Chain Professionals in our Network to begin your conversation on values-based purchasing of local food.



Anna Martinez shares her deep knowledge of food business startup and ownership and works with suppliers and buyers in the region.

anna@nwifoodcouncil.org



Virginia Pleasant works to weave networks along the food value chain and has deep knowledge of farm to school and institutional buyer issues.

virginia@nwifoodcouncil.org



Becca Tuholski works on food access issues, with farmers markets and farm to school, combining her passions for public health and sustainable agriculture.

becca@nwifoodcouncil.org



Dominique Edwards is incredibly passionate about revitalizing local food systems through the development of community food projects, is the Equity and Engagement Coordinator, a Black land steward, local educator, and food systems planner.

dominique@nwifoodcouncil.org



Porchea McGuire stands for food justice and community engagement. She is working to create equitable access to fresh, sustainable produce and foster strong relationships between BIPOC producers, farmers and food businesses.

porchea@nwifoodcouncil.org



Allyssa McAley applies her background in Culinary Arts and passion for local food to build relationships between farmers and chefs.

allyssa@nwifoodcouncil.org



Anthony Tarullo in southwest Indiana works to create resilient farming communities and enhance quality of place through regional food economies.

eatlocalswi@gmail.com



Pamela Rieke has a passion for local, healthy food access for all. She works with growers to provide technical support, resources and connect them with market channels that support their business.

pamelarieke@gmail.com



Joseph Fischer works with growers to enhance product availability through the Fischer Farms purchasing platform and visits with buyers to actively discuss needs and products.

joseph@ffnatural.com



Jodee Smith coordinates the Indiana Value Chain Network to support and sustain the people to people and trust-based system.

ellett@iu.edu



REGION ROOTS

Local Farm & Food Hub



\$1,558,000

October 1, 2022 - December 31, 2026
Development of Region Roots Local
Farm & Food Hub;
Building Organizational Capacity

Region Roots lowers barriers to entry and growth by providing wholesale market access, access to affordable equipment, access to technical expertise and mentorship, and access to business planning expertise. Region Roots aims to shorten a new business's path to profitability and make farming a financially secure occupation.

With READi funding, we can build upon our very small, largely volunteer staff by creating value chain coordinator positions (VCC), develop senior leadership positions, offset the cost to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers entering wholesale markets for the first time, and invest in small but high-impact infrastructure with cold chain storage for local food distribution. Through targeted recruitment and networking, Region Roots seeks to create entrepreneurship opportunities for socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource, and veteran farmers. Finally, through this funding, the NWI Food Council will have significantly more capacity to serve high needs communities, most notably school children, with farm-to-school services and support.



2023 IS GOING TO BE BIG

Heading into 2023, the NWI Food Council is hiring more staff and will be partnered on several major federal grant projects that span the Great Lakes Region including:

- USDA Great Lakes School Food Transformation Grant
- USDA Great Lakes Midwest Regional Food Business Center
- IDOH FarmHer to Mama and Trauma-Informed Farmers Market program
- IDOH Local Foods for Schools
- Michigan Sustainable Business Forum Food Council Climate Action Community of Practice
- Ohio State & Johns Hopkins University Regional Food Policy Council Community of Practice

The NWI Food Council has secured over \$5 million in funding for NWI Food systems work for the next 5 years!



THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL BOARD AND STAFF!

