October
2022

BUILDING COLLABORATION

Governance in Halifax's Regional Food System

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Executive Summary

In 2019, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and the Halifax Food Policy Alliance (HFPA) committed to co-creating the *JustFOOD Action Plan*. The *Action Plan* will be the first regional food strategy for the HRM, one focused on strengthening the regional food system and enhancing community food security. JustFOOD is organized around six principles that originate from the *Milan Urban Food Policy Pact*. Those principles relate to: governance; social and economic equity; food production; food supply, processing, and distribution; health, wellness, and resilience; and food waste (JustFOOD 2022). One outcome contemplated by the *Action Plan* is the creation of a governance body to oversee the realization of these principles and to provide a forum for collaborative engagement around governance of the regional food system.

In Spring 2022, our research group was asked by the HFPA to study and offer recommendations on the appropriate structure for a JustFOOD governance body. We were asked to provide a reasonably fine-grained analysis of potential organizational structures and constitutive rules and policies to guide decision making under the *Action Plan*. To that end, we undertook an initial rapid literature scan to identify a set of key criteria that define "good" governance structures in the food systems context. Seven key criteria emerged from that review, which we then brought to members of the HFPA Steering Committee for consultation about our research framework.

Using these seven criteria as a starting point, we then pursued a two-pronged approach. First, we conducted a further review of academic research on local-regional food systems governance to establish what lessons we could identify to help guide development of a governance structure for the *Action Plan*. Second, we gathered publicly-available data on food policy council structures from around the country in the form of constitutive documents such as terms of reference and organizational bylaws. Using our seven key criteria, we coded these data to extract and synthesize grounded recommendations for structuring a governance body in Halifax. These recommendations range over issues from the size of the body, to the composition of its membership, to its relationship with external stakeholders.

Finally, to contextualize the findings from both our literature review and the primary data, we reviewed relevant legislative frameworks in Nova Scotia and federally. This final step helped us to identify specific legal powers or barriers that might influence the appropriate form of governance in HRM along a continuum of "internal" to "external" structures.

This report presents the findings from our research, organized around the seven-criteria framework we established at the outset and refined over the course of our work.

1 Context: Collaborative Food Systems Governance

The research described in this report is situated in the context of "collaborative food systems governance" (sometimes called "networked" or "polycentric" governance). We take as given that a governance structure for JustFOOD will need to account for this context. As such, the concept of collaborative governance is central to understanding the framework we use in the research and for interpreting our results.

As with other complex socio-ecological systems, effective food systems governance requires a coordinated response across system actors, decision-making process and policies from production to consumption. To date, Canadian governments' responses to food system problems–especially at the federal and provincial levels–have been highly fragmented (Berger Richardson and Lambek 2018). Increasingly, municipal governments are being called on to address the resulting gaps and to take on a more prominent role in food systems governance (MacRae and Donahue 2013; Baxter and Rose 2019). Larger urban governments in particular have become a focal point for action (Mah and Thang 2013). Launched in 2014 and now signed by 199 cities internationally, the *Milan Urban Food Policy Pact* advocates for cities to take on new positions of leadership in supporting healthy and sustainable food systems, even as it urges "coherence between municipal food-related policies and programmes and relevant subnational, national, regional and international policies and processes" ("Milan Urban Food Policy Pact" 2015, Art 3).

Nevertheless, local governments both large and small face persistent barriers in addressing food system challenges, including limited legal jurisdiction over food issues, narrow geographic reach, declining financial resources, and limited expertise. To overcome these barriers, local governments are beginning to turn to new institutional structures for collaborative governance. These emerging forms of governance cut across conventional jurisdictions, organizational lines, public-private-civic spheres, and other boundaries to create and deliver public goods by pursuing collective decision-making through decentralized networks of governmental and non-governmental actors (Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2012).

An extensive research literature on collaborative governance across several different policy domains has developed over the past decade, but concrete insights about how to design and implement decision-making structures conducive to collaborative governance are only beginning to emerge. Common challenges include navigating complex political environments across multiple levels of government, building a broad network of relationships, successfully establishing a diverse group and learning how to work effectively with all members, having access to consistent and adequate resources, balancing program and policy work, defining a sufficiently narrow policy focus, dependence on specific individuals or organizations resulting in lack of adaptive resilience, and adequate frameworks for assessing overall impact. The research and recommendations in this report are aimed at designing a governance structure for HRM's regional food system that is directly responsive to such challenges.

1.1 Internal vs External Structures

Before turning to the details of institutional design discussed in the main section of this report, we identify a crucial first step in determining the appropriate governance structure for Just-FOOD: whether the formal entity responsible for governance be created *internal* to the Halifax Regional Municipality, *external* to the municipality, or as some type of *internal-external* hybrid. This choice will have important consequences for each of the seven implementation criteria discussed throughout the report.

At the local level, an internal governance model is one in which the decision-making body is embedded in municipal government and has its mandate determined within the scope of the municipality's empowering legislation. An external model is one in which this body is formally created outside the legal mechanisms of municipal government, such as in the case of a non-profit or other non-governmental organization (though such bodies frequently have representation from one or more municipal government actors) (Borron 2003, 5). A hybrid model mixes features of both approaches.

This decision of internal versus external structure relates directly to the context of collaborative food systems governance. Any body constituted to govern implementation and future development of the JustFOOD plan will be both a *participant* in the broader institutional landscape of food governance–working with other actors to build a better food system–and a *forum* for collaboration between actors who hold membership and decision-making power within the body itself.

Each category at this level–internal, external or hybrid–offers its own advantages and challenges, and which model works best will certainly depend on the goals and capacities of those who are participating, as well as the legal and political environment in HRM. When analyzing the literature and empirical data below, we tried to pay close attention to these categories and to use them to interpret findings and make recommendations throughout the report. Here, we provide an analysis of some initial considerations around the broad choice between models.

Internal to Local Government

An internal governance structure for JustFOOD could be established as a committee of the HRM Regional Council (the "Council") under the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* (the "*Charter*")–provincial legislation that establishes the purposes, functions and powers of the HRM. Formal committees are established by Council and fall into one of three categories: standing, special or advisory committees (*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, SNS 2008, ch 39, ss 21(1), 3(aw)). Council has relatively broad authority to establish one of these committees, by policy, and confer powers and duties upon them, except the power to expend funds [*Halifax Charter*, s 20(1)(c)). The *Charter* also contains a prohibition on remuneration of regional councillors appointed to committees, though non-council members may receive a yearly honorarium (both can have their expenses related to service reimbursed) (*Halifax Charter,*, s 21(6)).

To implement an internal model of governance for JustFOOD, Council would likely need to establish an advisory committee, board or commission ("advisory committee"). *Standing committees* are longstanding committees of Council that consists exclusively of regional Councillors, while *Special committees* are constituted to consider and report on specific issues and are dissolved automatically once they have fulfilled their reporting function (Halifax Regional Municipality 2022, s 116). Because of either limits on membership or their temporary nature, neither standing nor special committee structures would be appropriate in this context.

An advisory committee reviews programs and policies and provides advice on issues related to its mandate. These committees may consist of a mix of regional Councillors and citizen volunteers appointed by Council. They provide recommendations and advice, either directly to Council or to a standing committee (HRM 2022). The HRM has a *Public Appointment Policy*, which specifies how non-council members are to be appointed to committees (Halifax Regional Municipality 2018). This policy covers all aspects of appointment, from advertising vacant positions to outlining member requirements and term lengths. However, Council may adapt this policy to suit the specific needs of a committee (s 1.7). For example, the Women's Advi-

sory Committee specifies that the committee will be comprised of nine women from African Nova Scotian and Black communities, Indigenous/Aboriginal communities, LGBTQ2S+ communities, immigrant communities, women with disabilities, Francophone/Acadian communities and racialized communities (*Administrative Order* 2019-004-GOV, s 14). The HRM has also imposed addition constraints on the operation of advisory committees. Most meetings are required to be open to the public, and committees may hear and consider submissions and presentations from the public (Halifax Regional Municipality 2022, ss 127, 131).

Advisory committees can be especially effective in motivating citizen engagement and may be able to influence decision-makers and supply local knowledge about important issues. However, there is limited scope within the *Charter* to give such committees formal decision-making power. Resource limitations may also play a role. At best, effective advisory committees are able to influence Council or committee decisions through recommendations, advocacy and education, but Councillors are under no legal obligation to follow such advice. Advisory committees are also themselves vulnerable to influence and changing political circumstances. Council can elect to dissolve an advisory committee if it feels that the has fulfilled its mandate or if Council had previous established a term limit.

External to Local Government

A governance entity external to the HRM could be constituted as some form of non-profit organization ("NPO"). An NPO in Nova Scotia is formed to pursue some public purpose and can be either unincorporated, incorporated or charitable. An unincorporated NPO is informal, has no board members and is focused on a specific and short term goal. As such it is unlikely that an unincorporated entity would be able to supply the kind of formal, durable governance structured needed for JustFOOD. An incorporated NPO, by comparison, could be constituted under either federal legislation (the *Not-For-Profit Corporations Act*) or provincial legislation (the *Societies Act*).

Benefits of incorporation include protection of the society's name, power to establish their own by-laws, perpetual existence, limits on the risk to individual members and officers, enhanced reputation of the organization for grant and funding purposes, and preservation of important information such as the organization's objectives and by-laws (Registry of Joint Stock Companies 2019, 1).

Though an incorporated NPO is approved by government and governed by legislation, they have the ability to create their own by-laws, choose members as they see fit (including from

within and outside government) and are formally free to be critical of governmental policies and decision-makers. However, NPOs may struggle to access appropriate and consistent funding, though the acquisition of charitable status–an option for some NPOs pursuing particular purposes–can help to access additional resources. NPOs may also lack close connections to government decision-makers and other powerful actors, such as municipal representatives or public administrators, thus weakening their overall impact and effectiveness. NPOs that apply to register as a charity under the federal *Income Tax Act* receive tax exemptions and can issue receipts for donations and may be more trusted by the public. However, there are strict requirements for registration and it may be difficult for a food systems governance body to qualify as having a charitable purpose under the rules currently in place.

Hybrid or Arms-Length Models

A third category of governance model is one created as a type of hybrid between internal and external structures. These entities have some formal ties to municipal government but generally operate at arms-length–meaning that they are connected through, for example, resource funding arrangements and decision-making rules, but not subject to the sole oversight or control of Council or one of its committees (HRM 2022). These entities typically exist either as a formal partnership established by agreement between Council and one or more external organizations, sometimes empowered or further delineated by special legislation.

One example of a hybrid-type model is the Halifax Regional Library Board, a corporation established by agreement between the provincial Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage and the HRM under the provisions of the *Nova Scotia Libraries Act*. In this case, the legislation grants the Board special powers–like the capacity to own property or borrow funds–that are generally unavailable to municipal advisory committees while sustaining a close relationship between two levels of government. The *Act* also stipulates composition of the Board's members, delineates its various powers and establishes a separate committee for the purpose of funding review.

A second example of a hybrid governance entity operating locally is the Community Monitoring Committee (CMC) established by agreement between the HRM and the incorporated non-profit Halifax Waste/Resource Society formed to monitor operations of the Otter Lake Waste and Processing and Disposal Facility. The CMC agreement establishes a governing framework for the committee, including its mandate, procedures, membership composition, roles and responsibilities, and other terms of reference. This hybrid entity is an arms-length organization

made up of fifteen members appointed by both the HRM and the Halifax Waste/Resource Society. The membership composition and selection process of hybrid entities varies, but most appear to have greater flexibility in their operations and structure compared to a purely internal model.

Hybrid structures tend to consist of a wide range of stakeholders. They can take many forms and provide flexibility geared to the specific needs of a governing body. A food systems governance entity of this nature would enjoy a degree of independence and autonomy, while benefiting from local knowledge, public engagement, and broader range of funding and administrative resources and tools. A significant challenge with this model is that these entities may be cumbersome to create–because they require complex negotiations among stakeholders and/or require legislative support, which at a minimum requires provincial engagement. HRM may also face additional legal liabilities or budgetary implications under such a hybrid arrangement that could create resistance to its adoption (ArtsHalifax Advisory Committee 2017, 8–9).

1.2 A Note on Definitions in this Report

We use the term "Food Policy Council" ("FPC") to describe most existing food governance arrangements across Canada, but when referring to the prospective entity under JustFOOD we use the more generic term "governance structure" or "governance entity". While "FPC" is the most commonly used term to describe these structures, we wish to avoid prejudging the specific form that decision-making might take in HRM's context.

2 Building a Governance Structure: Lessons for JustFOOD

Our analysis and recommendations are guided by seven governance criteria for effectively addressing primary challenges faced by food systems governance bodies in the collaborative context. While other criteria or framings are certainly possible, we think the ones used in this report do a good job of addressing key challenges for food governance identified in the research literature and work to effectively connect these with the core objectives of JustFOOD.

Each of the criteria are described in their own subsection, below. By way of a general overview, the seven criteria are:

1. **Representing Sectoral Interests:** because effective collaborative governance relies on the dynamics of cooperation and negotiation more so than coercion and control, it is important that a full range of interests across the regional food system be represented within and supported by its governance body (La Forge 2017, 13; Harper et al. 2009, 24; Calancie et al. 2018, 34; Borron 2003, 4).

2. **Supporting Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility:** in order for decision-making about the food system to be legitimate, equitable and fair, it must enable active participation by—and be accountable to—communities and community members with a range of connections to place, lived experiences, and ways of knowing (Coplen and Cuneo 2015, 105; Harper et al. 2009, 7).

3. **Responding to Inequities in Power:** because asymmetrical power relations will inevitably exist between members (and therefore between their communities or constituencies), governance structures must be able to account for these differentials, curtail them when possible, and encourage equitable sharing of power in decision-making in ways that go beyond formal equality of representation (Calancie et al. 2018, 260; Bassarab et al. 2019, 40; Andrée et al. 2020, 105; Schiff 2007, 320; Borron 2003, 4).

4. **Building External Relationships:** while the governance body may itself be a site for collaborative governance, the ability to forge strong relationships with non-member actors (both governmental and non-government) is imperative for tackling complex food systems issues (MacRae 2011, 440–41, 443, 450; Andrée et al. 2020, 14–15, 32–33; Schiff 2007, 140).

5. **Promoting Public Participation and Transparency:** to ensure accountability and legitimacy, any governance entity's processes must be transparent to the public and offer appropriate channels for public input and participation such that the entity's obligations to the public good can be broadly monitored and enforced (La Forge 2017, 71; MacRae 2011, 443, 450; Andrée et al. 2020, 126).

6. **Fostering Opportunities for Adequate Resourcing:** the entity must have the needed legal capacities and expertise to access and coordinate sufficient financial and human resources to fulfill its objectives and to ensure its long-term viability (Bassarab et al. 2019, 36; Borron 2003, 8; Schiff 2007, 140; Harper et al. 2009, 5; Andrée et al. 2020, 32).

7. **Embedding Adaptive Capacity:** given the rapidly changing physical, social and policy dimensions of food systems, embedding tools that promote review and flexibility enable responsiveness and allow the entity to change over time (Harper et al. 2009, 7).

Our main findings are organized using these seven criteria. In each section below, we identify **key lessons** from the research literature that situate *why* the particular criterion is important for effective food systems governance and then go on to provide **recommendations for implementation** that describe *how* these lessons might be integrated in practice.

2.1 Representing Sectoral Interests

Food systems connect a multitude of relationships and activities across multiple sectors, governments, organizations, and firms (Schiff 2007, 16). Traditional approaches to problem-solving around food-related issues have been both centralized within government and fragmented across multiple departments and agencies (Schiff 2007, 16). For example, nutrition issues might be addressed in a health department and food access by non-profits or by transportation planners (Borron 2003, 4). Alternatively, a collaborative approach recognizes that no one department or actor can adequately address food issues and takes advantage of decentralized and localized process to foster relationships across sectors.

Harnessing the perspectives of a diverse range of actors across the regional food system leads to more creative and localized collaborative problem-solving and avoids a narrow focus on one or a few issues (Borron 2003, 4). This approach challenges the legitimacy of unilateral decision-making by governments and emphasizes forums where consumers, producers and others participate in the process alongside municipal governments (Franzen-Castle et al. 2021, 33). While this approach may open more opportunities for shared decision-making at the food systems level, challenges can also emerge in bringing together the wide range of backgrounds and expertise that must be included to promote effective and long-term collaboration.

Key Lessons From Research

1. Governance should be designed to account for the fact that members' diverse interests will–at least in part–direct their policy priorities.

2. Selection of members should be transparent and the process should be easy for the public to understand.

3. Sectoral expertise among members supports evidence-based decisions.

Diverse membership helps FPCs navigate and connect to the broader environment of collaborative governance (Schiff 2007, 317). Members often include representatives working directly in the food system (e.g. producers, processors, distributors, retailers, consumers and waste managers) as well as those who focus on advocacy and program and policy development such as non-profits, community organizations, academic institutions and members of government (Borron 2003, 4; Harper et al. 2009, 19; Yeatman 1994, 23). Strong decision-making skills and expertise from all relevant sectors is ideal (Schiff 2007, 321, 326). Methods for selecting sectoral members range from self-selection, to application or election (Harper et al. 2009, 27). The method chosen to select members has an impact on representation, diversity and power dynamics—we discuss advantages and disadvantages of these different methods under subsequent criteria below. Whichever method is chosen, transparency in the selection process is important for predictability and to build trust internally and externally.

The optimal number of members depends on the goals and criteria set by the FPC. A fixed number of members can restrict diversity (Schiff 2007, 257), but it is important to consider the ability of the FPC to get the job done and effectively make decisions (La Forge 2017, 56).

Roles and responsibilities of members should be clearly defined, with a focus on networking, knowledge, facilitation of activities, education, and providing resources (Schiff 2007, 326).

Establishing roles and responsibilities is important for promoting member accountability through consistent leadership (La Forge 2017, 56). When recruiting members, roles, responsibilities, and opportunities should be clearly established in the membership description and should be re-iterated with assurance that members understand them in the early days (Borron 2003, 5).

Membership composition and relationship to government can have a greater impact on policy priorities than organizational structure itself (Bassarab et al. 2019, 37). Healthy food access, education, and food production are generally top priorities regardless of composition (Di Giulio 2017, 59), with education being slightly higher for grassroots initiatives and non-profits (Di Giulio 2017, 88). Research has found that different governance forms have a tendency to frame food policy issues in different ways–for example, internal FPCs are more likely to prioritize food security, while external bodies tend to focus on food justice concepts (Di Giulio 2017, 88, 91). Because members from a given sector are more likely to prioritize the issues that impact them directly, a range of representation helps to reinforce a food systems perspective in decision-making (Bassarab et al. 2019, 37), but this also requires attention to the dynamics of negotiation and compromise needed to reach decisions.

Recommendations for Implementation

Membership Composition

In our data, the method for allocating seats on an FPC and for selecting members ranged from rules that attempt to "balance" sectoral representation to those requiring a specific allocation of seats from delegated sectors. Internal FPCs appear to set more rigid requirements for composition by allocating a specific number of seats—or a range—to each sector. External FPCs often appear more vague in their requirements; they tend not to allocate seats to specific sectors, though sectors are named. For example, the Hamilton Food Advisory Committee, an internal FPC, specifies a range for how many members they would like from each sector, such as "[c]onsumption: 2-3 members (e.g., representation from community and neighbourhood based food programs and cultural groups, including food literacy educators, consumers, chefs, food enthusiasts, etc.)". The Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council, an external FPC, states simply that members should have experience in at least one of a number of areas relevant to the regional food system.

Some FPCs require members to be from specific organizations or hold certain positions with their organization. The Winnipeg Food Council requires that:

"…membership shall not exceed 12 Members (11 voting members and one non-voting member), and will include the following: i. The Mayor of Winnipeg or designate; ii. One City Councillor (can also serve as the Mayor's designate); iii. One representative nominated by the Province of Manitoba (non-voting); iv. One member from health sector (dietitian, community health worker, public health professional) nominated by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority; v. Two members involved with food production (efforts should be made to represent a diversity of producers; e.g. rural, urban, small scale, large-scale); vi. One member from food businesses (retailers, farmers' markets, food entrepreneurs, wholesalers, etc.); vii. One member from research sector (Universities, research alliances, etc.); viii. One member from community groups or networks connected to food issues (e.g. food access, food skills, resource networks, etc.); and ix. Up to three citizen members at large with specific skills, experience and interests to increase diversity and add value to particular initiatives. Members at large will be selected based on their ability to add expertise and perspectives related to specific food sectors, initiatives, geographies (e.g. inner city, links to rural Manitoba) or demographics (e.g. industry, food bank, businesses, education, social enterprise, associations, food waste management, etc.)".

Winnipeg's approach is among the most detailed and specific with respect to membership composition. A more common approach is to list general sectors that are ideally represented. For example, the Edmonton Food Council requires that its "[m]embership reflects diverse interests from across the entire food system" and provides a detailed list and description of sectors including production, processing, distribution, buying and selling, eating and celebrating, waste and recovery, education, governance, development and building industry, citizens and eaters, and demographic groups .

Some FPCs also include specific qualifications that members ought to possess, such as leadership abilities, professional or community experience in the field, expertise in the sector, and capacity to network and build relationships. For example, the Winnipeg Food Council specifies that membership should contain a variety of qualifications such as "[p]rofessional or community work that reflects their interest in municipal food issues,"[s]kills and experience in specific areas (such as community food security, project evaluation and strategic planning) that allow them to contribute to policy development and influence change," and the "[a]bility to help the Winnipeg Food Council establish and build relationships and partnerships with specific sectors, networks, and demographics". Strict membership criteria can be helpful in establishing consistency and transparency but inflexibility may also raise barriers regarding diversity and

inclusion. More informal selection criteria offer flexibility but can create uncertainty and may lead to unexpected power imbalances.

Membership Capacity

A significant issue is whether sectoral representatives will sit in their personal or organizational capacities. Some FPCs require that members *not* sit as representatives of their organizations, others stipulate that members may or must be a part of and represent their organizations, and some have a mix. The Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council specifies that "[v]oting members will be selected based on the strength of their personal qualifications and will not act as representatives of a specific sponsoring organization. They will represent the rich diversity of Greater Sudbury" (however, resource members who are non-voting members represent a specific agency or the government). The Kamloops Food Policy Council contains a mix of representation, stating that "[m]embership is open to individuals, businesses, organizations, any level and sector of government (local, indigenous, provincial, federal), and institutions, agencies, authorities, and Crown corporations." The Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council requires members to represent their organizations and states that members will cease to be members if they "[r]esign from their position with the agency, organization, coalition, or business they represent as a member of the FPC."

If members sit in an organizational capacity, they may be more likely to put the interests of that body ahead of the shared interest of the group. Organizational representatives may have more power than individuals, perpetuating or creating power imbalances and potential for manipulation. However, organizational representatives may bring resources and networking abilities that can be limited without having established a more formal role for organizational members.

Residency Requirements

Residency within a specific locality or region may be a prerequisite for membership on an FPC. For example, the Vancouver Food Policy Council states that members must "[l]ive or work in Vancouver, or have a significant body of experience with issues in Vancouver". The Middlesex London Food Policy Council requires that "[m]embers must live or work in London or Middlesex County." Local membership can contribute an intimate knowledge of place, but can limit diversity and the perspectives of those who are active in the broader food system—including farmers who might live outside the bounds of urban centers where political institutions and

governing bodies are generally based. Residency requirements may also impact whether members sit in their personal or organizational capacity, as organizations may have a broader geographical scope.

Consensus on Values

Some FPCs require their members to endorse the mission, goals, and values of the body. Members of the Middlesex London Food Policy Council, for example, "must endorse the mission, goals, and values of the Council." A well-defined common goal is good for internal and external trust-building. It can establish a coherent narrative and be important for momentum in the early days of formation, especially when searching for funding. One downside is that such consensus may be difficult to achieve at first if the body itself is responsible for establishing its values and this requirement may risk suppressing dissenting voices that are important for inclusion.

2.2 Supporting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility

A council may have broad representation in sectoral terms from across the regional food system but still lack the necessary representation of–and allocation of decision-making power to–communities that comprise that system. Research has show that low-income and racialized groups are disproportionately impacted by food system failures (Harper et al. 2009, 11). Their voices and experiences should therefore have proportionate influence on governance. Every community will have a unique set of histories, relationships, and needs that governance bodies must address through a place-based approach (Franzen-Castle et al. 2021, 32). Community participation can shift decision-making from a centralized or highly specialized process to a more localized and democratic one by lifting up voices that are too often pushed to the margins (Franzen-Castle et al. 2021, 33). Equtiable, diverse, inclusive and accessible participation enhances collective problem-solving and legitimizes decision-making.

Key Lessons From Research

1. Equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible participation from individuals and communities in the region is a significant strength addressing in complex food governance.

2. Local knowledge and lived experience complement sectoral-based knowledge.

3. Barriers to inclusion must be named and identified, but they must also be actively addressed.

4. Diverse representation should be present at every stage of decision-making.

5. Recruitment of members should be transparent and value-driven.

A wide range of experiences and perspectives opens up unique opportunities for a creative approach to food systems issues (Borron 2003, 4). Members with lived experience offer essential insights into how polices should be designed and how they will play out on-the-ground, giving voice to those who feel the policy impacts most directly (Boden and Hoover 2018, 46). Local knowledge offers an experiential perspective to complement the perspectives of technical experts, rounding out and enhancing the effectiveness of decision-making (Bassarab et al. 2019, 40). Significant time may need to be spent in the early days of an FPC to establish common goals and a clear vision, define terms, and build clear paths for communication and dispute resolution (Borron 2003, 5). The council should also define *who* they mean by "community members"—e.g., from specific marginalized, low-income or racialized communities—and *how* they plan to include these members in the decision-making process to ensure equitable participation and power (Bassarab et al. 2019, 40).

Community members may face barriers to participation such as schedule and timing conflicts (especially if time off work is needed) (Franzen-Castle et al. 2021, 220; Coplen and Cuneo 2015, 100), transportation challenges (Franzen-Castle et al. 2021, 220), language barriers (Coplen and Cuneo 2015, 101), and feelings of being unqualified to attend (Franzen-Castle et al. 2021, 221). Marginalized communities and youth often lack representation, and FPCs must build targeted opportunities for such groups into their structure if they want to encourage participation (Harper et al. 2009, 37). In the early days of FPC planning, time will need to be invested into building understandings about the communities being serve; providing education on the food system and cultural competency skills; creating space for various methods of communication, such as storytelling, written communication, and presentations; and building relationships between council members (McCullagh 2012, 80). Training may be required to assist community members to take on leadership roles and develop important technical and soft skills for collaboration (La Forge 2017, 21).

Diversity is important at all stages of FPC work, from shaping structure and priorities to implementing and evaluating projects (McCullagh 2012, 81). Building trust between diverse members can consume a substantial amount of time and resources in the early days of a council, which is

why effective leadership is crucial from the start (Harper et al. 2009, 37). The process for membership recruitment and selection should be open and transparent, driven by clear guidelines of what diversity means to the council (Coplen and Cuneo 2015, 105). Diversity will be limited if FPCs choose members exclusively from those actively involved in food issues (McCullagh 2012, 78) or from food system professionals (e.g. people working in urban farming, food access, and food policy) (Boden and Hoover 2018, 44).

Selection criteria for diversity can be formal—e.g. designating a specific number of seats for specific community members or representatives—which present a clear and consistent process but can suffer from being inflexible (Schiff 2007, 320) or more informal—e.g. having a mandate that promises to be inclusive of a broad range of enumerated groups—which may be more flexible, but can create confusion and unpredictability (Schiff 2007, 321). Putting out open calls for members (on social media or through word of mouth) can confine recruitment to established networks and reduce diversity (C. Porter 2018, 10). Rather, purposive strategies that aim to recruit from diverse networks—e.g. targeted recruitment campaigns and specific diversity quotas—may be more successful (C. Porter 2018, 10; Boden and Hoover 2018, 48). Establishing a truly inclusive council requires active engagement, proactive planning and internal policies to ensure equal representation and power-sharing.

Recommendations for Implementation

Membership Composition

Our findings indicate that FPCs addressed the challenge of creating a diverse, inclusive and accessible membership using a range of strategies. On the whole, we observed that specific rules and policies around the diversity of membership tended to be vague—both in terms of how diversity, inclusion and/or accessibility are defined and what means were available for implementation. Commitments tended to be aspirational rather than concrete. For example, the St. John's Food Policy Council specifies that "[t]he Council aims to consist of members from a variety of backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of our community and the food system." A few framed diversity through qualifications or expertise, some of which were broad. The Winnipeg Food Council specifies that the body will contain "citizens at large with specific skills, experience and interests to increase diversity and add value to particular initiatives" and another, the Kelowna Agricultural Advisory Committee, was highly technical, looking for people with the "ability to objectively review complex applications and planning considerations"—creating obvious barriers to some applicants. By comparison, the Chatham-Kent Food Policy Coun-

cil designated seats for specific diversity groups, such as an organizations representing seniors, youth and immigration, and employment and social services.

When allocating specific seats to address diversity, inclusion and accessibility, some FPCs require that designated seats remain empty if not filled while others allow alternative members with the most relevant qualifications to fill those seats. For example, the Niagara Agricultural Policy and Action Committee states that "[a]ll attempts will be made to stay within the guideline composition; however, if the applications received or the qualifications of applications do not fully address the guideline composition criteria, the most capable and qualified applicants will be recommended for appointment to fulfill the membership composition." Specifying designated seats by defining the group and number of seats can help ensure that membership composition sufficiently captures a range of knowledge and experience, especially for targeted under-served groups.

Member Recruitment and Selection

FPCs use a variety of methods for recruiting new members. For example, the Greater Sudbury has a Membership Working Group to identify and recommend new members, the Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council has a government-appointed nomination committee to identify and recommend new members, the Hamilton Food Advisory Committee uses a standardized municipal application process for Advisory Committees because it is an internal structure, the Edmonton Food Council uses an open call to the public, and the Niagara Agricultural Policy and Action Committee seeks new members by invitation. As we would expect, internal FPCs are more likely to have at least some members nominated or appointed by local government. Recruiting from a broad and open network may reach a more diverse base, but utilizing established networks may be more efficient. Having a working group determine the best method for recruitment and advertising towards targeted groups can be useful when guided by both values and experience.

Meeting Scheduling

Some FPCs specify meeting schedules, such as the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee, which states that "[t]he Committee shall normally meet on the first Tuesday of each month." Others are more flexible, employing statements like that of the Edmonton Food Council— "[m]eeting schedules and locations will be determined in accordance with the availability of

the membership"–or the Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council–"time is determined by consensus". Scheduling is important because an inability to attend specific times and dates may be a barrier to participation that disproportionately affects individuals or organizations with less flexible schedules or fewer resources. Having members collectively choose the meeting times, dates, and location–rather than specifying these in terms of reference–is one way to accommodate more members.

Membership Reimbursement and Dues

No FPCs in our sample provide reimbursement for participation. However, the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee provides reimbursement for travel expenses, which could increase accessibility for those who may need to travel further to participate. The Durham Food Policy Council requires members to pay dues, which could limit the ability of certain individuals to participate.

Membership Term

Membership terms are generally limited by time (e.g. 1-4 years) with possibility for renewal and make provision for termination upon death, resignation, or when the council is dissolved. Terms limits can also be mixed with a maximum term—e.g. mixed terms of one, two, or three years with a nine year maximum for any individual member. Term length can promote new members joining, increasing diversity and responding to evolving community identities. However, this must be balanced with the need for stable and consistent membership, sharing knowledge, and promoting mentorship. Mixed terms can help to preserve member continuity and provide mentorship while bringing in new perspectives. If members miss consecutive meetings (generally 2-3) without approval or communication they are generally deemed to have resigned. This is important for incentivizing engagement and commitment, but the policies around communicating a leave should be clear and accessible.

Explicit Commitments

Few of the FPCs founding documents in our sample included explicit statements about diversity. The St. John's Food Policy Council is an exception, starting that it "is committed to supporting equity, diversity, inclusion and the dignity of all people" but most have only implied statements through committing to diverse membership. Explicit commitments can help

reinforce values and may promote some accountability for councils to uphold these values, but they are insufficient as standalone policies without accounting for the considerations discussed above.

2.3 Responding to Inequities in Power

Membership structures in collaborative governance can create—or perpetuate—power imbalances. Effective and sustainable governance requires that power in decision-making be shared equitably amongst members (Bassarab et al. 2019, 40). Establishing mechanisms that recognize power discrepancies between members and work to distribute that power appropriately can enhance food democracy and citizen participation. A balanced and equitable council will be better suited to tackle complex problems collectively without perpetuating asymmetrical power imbalances, which in turn can help legitimize the council, establishing trust and building relationships with the broader community.

Key Lessons From Research

1. Trust and interdependence enable power sharing toward common goals.

2. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined.

3. Accountability mechanisms can help to address asymmetric power relations.

Diverse representation alone does not necessarily mean that those voices are equally influential in directing FPC objectives (Bassarab et al. 2019, 34). Some FPC members will have more power (social, economic, political, etc.) than others. Organizational structure can impact who sits on the council and the power between members, but membership composition and relationship to government may have even more impact on policy priorities (Bassarab et al. 2019, 39). To avoid further entrenching asymmetrical power imbalances, it is important to create mechanisms that recognize and address these dynamics. Top-down control is not ideal for FPCs; a multi-functional approach with decentralized power at the bottom tends to be more successful (La Forge 2017, 52). Decentralizing power promotes a "bottom-up" approach to decision-making, where those with less power but who often have more dedication and capacity to respond to local issues are given autonomy and control (La Forge 2017, 24). Including public participants in working groups can further decentralize control at the bottom (La Forge 2017,

69), but local government officials must be willing to participate in collaborative governance and power-sharing with citizens if the FPC is to be effective (Bassarab et al. 2019, 40).

Building relationships grounded in trust and driven by a deliberative and strategic focus on collaboration is a key element in effective and long-lasting FPCs (La Forge 2017, 21). A lack of clarity on the role of the FPC in addressing food issues and ill-defined roles (i.e. who does what) and objectives can create conflict (Arko 2014, 47; Schiff 2008, 226; Harper et al. 2009, 7; Cornog 2009, 49). Establishing clear objectives, ensuring all members understand the shared mission, and laying out the role and capacity of the FPC to address food issues can help keep private interests from usurping common goals (La Forge 2017, 21; Harper et al. 2009, 7; Koski et al. 2018, 367). Member selection processes (open or closed networks, or targeted) and authoritative capacity also impact power dynamics. For example, recruiting members through a self-selection process of existing networks may exclude certain underrepresented external groups and compound inequity (Bassarab et al. 2019, 40). Internal councils, or where membership is appointed, may be more susceptible to power imbalances as certain interests and priorities are more likely to be represented.

Accountability mechanisms are tools that can keep members in line with council objectives and promote responsibility (La Forge 2017, 26). Along with establishing a well-defined common objective and clear roles and responsibilities, other mechanisms include creating "relational contracts" that incentivize members to act in the collective interest; consistent process and impact evaluations; a review and modification process; working group oversight and reporting; external review or oversight; shared-budgets; and transparency with the public (La Forge 2017, 54–58). Established decision-making processes will also impact power dynamics. A consensus-oriented approach may offer greater equality, but will generally take more time and resources compared to a simple majority (Harper et al. 2009, 38). Formally establishing these or other such mechanisms through written agreements embeds accountability within the FPC structure, incentivizing members to act accordingly.

Recommendations for Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities

Some, but not all, FPCs in our sample lay out roles and responsibilities or expectations of members. Some are specific, and outline what is expected of a Director, the members and so on. The Middlesex London Food Policy Council states that duties of the Chair include to

"[a]ttend and chair Executive meeting," "[p]review and review meeting agendas," and "[g]uide goal setting and program planning amongst MLFPC members". Others, such as the Edmonton Food Council, are broader, stating that members are expected to "demonstrate a respect for governance and protocol" and "be transparent and declare conflicts of interest". Defining roles and responsibilities early on is important for setting member expectations. Some FPCs also define their values or broad goals. These provisions not only help orient members and establish common goals and shared values, but can be important tools to point to if members veer from their roles in pursuit of self-interest. At least one council–the Durham Food Policy Council–has a provision that allows for member suspension or expulsion if they contravene rules or for other reasons determined by a designated committee.

Leadership

Strong and sustainable leadership is closely related to how key leadership positions—such as the Chair of an FPC—are filled. In our sample, there appeared to be a stronger tendency for some internal FPCs, such as the Winnipeg Food Council and the Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council, to have the chair position appointed directly by government. In contrast, most external FPCs (and some internal ones) ensure that the Chair is an elected position and therefore directly accountable to the membership. On the other hand, appointment of some key leadership positions may have advantages such as ensuring equity and diversity in the body's leadership.

Decision-Making Procedures

It should be clear which members have voting rights, how many votes it takes to finalize a decision and the process for voting—i.e. in person, in writing, etc. Some FPCs make explicit room for non-voting members, such as the Vancouver Food Policy Council, which includes two non-voting council liaisons, one non-voting Park Board Commission liaison, and two non-voting staff liaisons, who act as liaisons between the council and regional government, and the Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council, which contains various non-voting Resource Members, who are "[a] member of the GSFPC who is assigned by a governmental department or an agency on a temporary or ongoing basis to support the work of the GSFPC and who are representing their agency or the government food system perspective." Non-voting members are a good way to maintain connections and access supports without giving up direct decision-making power.

In our sample, voting rules varied considerably. Some examples include: simple majority; majority and must include at least one representative from each sector and/or a member at large; 20% of voting members or 50% + 1 for day-to-day decisions but two-thirds for major decisions; and consensus.

There seems to be a slight preference for consensus in decision-making in external FPCs. When a consensus is not possible, there is generally an option for quorum voting instead, though the Hamilton Food Advisory Committee required consensus for all formal decisions. The Kelowna Agricultural Advisory Committee also included an explicit conflict of interest rule, requiring that voting members with a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in a matter disclose the conflict of interest; disabling them from discussing or voting on the matter.

Requiring equal representation across the food system when voting, larger agreement for fundamental decisions, or giving more votes to certain members can help distribute power to a wider range of actors. Consensus, or even a commitment to trying to reach consensus, can help distribute power as it requires collaboration and concessions by all members, but it can be very costly in both time and resources and runs the risk of manipulation by more dominant members.

Training and Support for Members

Internal FPCs, such as the Kelowna Agricultural Advisory Committee, more frequently provide training and staff support to members, stating that "[a]ll committee members will be provided a training session by the City on procedures for Committees of Council." Power is more easily shared when all members are on an even playing field in terms of knowledge or skills. Training and staff support of members can help try to achieve this. It is important that members feel capable in their position so that they are comfortable contributing and participating in meetings, which can partially be achieved through providing training and support to members.

2.4 Building External Relationships

Though FPCs are focused at the local scale, they are nested within a broad network of actors and organizations across multiple levels of government and jurisdictions that influence food system trajectory. There may be a dizzying array of goals and ideologies dispersed amongst each node in the network, but it is nonetheless important to recognize and work within this interconnected political and socio-economic web. Creating and maintaining strong relationships

with a diverse network of external (to the FPC) actors can expand the reach of local priorities and open up opportunities for enhanced knowledge and resource sharing (La Forge 2017, 59). Multi-scalar support and collaboration can promote structurally strong and long-lasting councils.

Key Lessons From Research

1. External relationships span government, non-government, and private actors.
2. Local FPCs are nested within multi-scalar jurisdictions and depend on multi-scalar relationships.
3. Costs and benefits of external partnerships vary depending on organizational structure.

While the impacts of food policy are mainly felt locally, problems in the food system are complex, requiring a diverse range of knowledge and experiences to solve them (Clark 2021, 200). Collaboration is not only a key element *within* a council but also *between* them and external organizations and actors (La Forge 2017, 71). Multi-scalar and cross-sectoral collaboration is recommended as a way to share information, expand resource streams, advocate at higher levels and coordinate efforts (La Forge 2017, 59, 60). Local FPCs may influence broader food policy change as they can act as "test-sites" for innovative and experimental local projects (La Forge 2017, 59). However, local contributions should not be wholly responsible for filling the policy gap. Strong external relationships—especially with higher-level agencies—are important to ensure contributions are sustainable over time (La Forge 2017, 60).

External actors can participate in FPC efforts through sub-committees, consultation, or advisory capacities without extending voting or decision-making powers (Schiff 2007, 323). Partnerships between FPCs and external actors can vary, providing different levels and kinds of support. For example, policy experts or academics can help identify issues that can be addressed through policy and which issues may cause tension with the public while local food organizations can help set priorities and coordinate regional efforts (Clayton et al. 2015, 12). An external consultant can be used to provide an independent and impartial view of a food systems issue (Yeatman 1994, 22) External relationships can potentially influence priority setting and where funding is spent (Bassarab et al. 2019, 37). Roles and responsibilities within relationships should be clearly defined from the outset to avoid shifting priorities away from the goals of the FPC (Coplen and Cuneo 2015, 104).

A key relationship to consider is with government, especially for external structures. Collaboration and creating strong links across multiple levels is generally thought to be beneficial (Harper et al. 2009, 7; La Forge 2017, 21; Prové, de Krom, and Dessein 2019, 179). Government can be influential in getting FPC priorities more political coverage and opens up possible multi-level governmental funding (La Forge 2017, 62). While government relationships do not necessarily impact council robustness (Rollins 2012, 35), they can help to promote council continuity and sustainability over time (Yeatman 1994, 20). Councils directly embedded in government have—unsurprisingly—the closest links to government (Di Giulio 2017, 55) and have slightly more success creating local infrastructure change (Di Giulio 2017, 88). Direct governmental links can make advocacy for policy change easier (Schiff 2007, 315). FPCs that are a part of government are more likely to engage in a diverse demographic of individuals and have seats reserved for diverse sector representatives (C. A. Porter and Ashcraft 2020, 10). Whether an FPC is embedded in government, a non-profit, or grassroots initiative does not appear to affect collaboration with other FPCs or political or civic engagement (Di Giulio 2017, 56–58). There is generally a tension between being embedded within government—which provides access to stable resources and authoritative capacity—and being independent from government—allowing FPCs to be more critical of existing governmental policies (Harper et al. 2009, 4; Fox 2010, 3; Schiff 2008, 226).

Recommendations for Implementation

Partnerships as Explicit Goals

Most FPCs, both internal and external, have *fostering relationships through collaboration across the food system* as one of their objectives. However, external FPCs often have this objective as part of a broader goal of networking and collaboration between a wide range of actors, while internal bodies generally have more direct mandates over government networking such as advising specific departments or sharing resources. For example, part of the objective of the Squamish Food Policy Council, an external FPC, is to "[a]ctively foster partnerships with other agencies working on food and agriculture initiatives" and "[p]articipate in regional, provincial and national initiatives and conversations that impact our local food system." One of the objectives of the Hamilton Food Advisory Committee, an internal FPC, is to "[f]acilitate connections and share information and resources between members, the Board of Health, City staff, and as appropriate, further disseminate these lessons and resources among community organizations, businesses, citizens, and other groups that have an impact on community food security."

Developing relationships with various food system stakeholders can increase knowledge and resources sharing for tackling complex issues, but can also be time consuming and emotionally and financially difficult to maintain.

Government Membership

Internal FPCs are much more likely to explicitly state their desired number of members from government, but the membership positions are often (though not always) non-voting. Having non-voting members can be a good way to maintain connections to government and resources without giving up the power of a vote to a political member. Internal FPCs are much more likely to explicitly have an advisory role to the regional government. For example, the objectives of the Edmonton Food Council include "providing advice to the City and other key stakeholders" and the objectives of the Halton Agricultural Advisory committee include to "[a]dvise and assist the Region in the implementation of Halton's agricultural goals, objectives and policies." A direct relationship with government can lend consistent resources and potentially get matters more air time, but can suffer from being beholden to particular projects and objectives. On the other hand, non-governmental relationships offer a wide range of perspectives and expertise, leaving room for governmental criticism, but do not necessarily provide consistent funding/resources.

Facilitating Connections

External FPCs are more likely to require members to help facilitate dialogue and partnerships with external organizations and communities. For example, desired membership skills for the Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council, an external council, includes that "[members] can help the GSFPC to have dialogue and partnerships with at least one distinct population or sector group in the City of Greater Sudbury or regional food system." Perhaps this is because internal FPCs are able to leverage pre-existing government connections to external organizations, so they are less likely to rely on members to facilitate external connections. Internal FPCs are more likely to have support staff provided by local government. For example, for the Winnipeg Food Council, "[the] Winnipeg Public Service will provide the Winnipeg Food Council Coordinator, who will support the Winnipeg Food Council and liaise with the Public Service as needed" and "[s]taffing support from Winnipeg's Urban Planning Division will be assigned as needed to support the Winnipeg Food Council." Support staff provide consistent and robust support with insight into navigating complex political environments. The Chair/Co-Chairs of both internal

and external bodies are important for facilitating connections. The Chairs/Co-Chairs often act as spokespeople for the FPC, such as the Middlesex London Food Policy Council, in which the Chair's duties include to "[a]ct as the spokesperson for MLFPC." The Chair/Co-Chairs are also often responsible for facilitating guest speakers, such as the Chatham-Kent FPC, where the Chair is responsible to "invite guests as required." Thus, strong leadership in the Chair/Co-Chair position is important for ensuring the FPC is able to build the necessary connections to government and external organizations for optimal functioning.

2.5 Promoting Public Participation and Transparency

Democratic decision-making at the local scale is enhanced when there is public trust and support of the governing body. The local nature and decentralized approach of many FPCs means that open communication and engagement with the broader public should be a priority. Transparency in the goals and capacities of the council along with how members are selected and how decisions are made is important for building public trust and holding the council accountable. Public engagement enhances democratic decision-making and signals that the goals and values of the community will not be usurped by the interests of the council members without careful consideration.

Key Lessons From Research

1. Public engagement strategies should prioritize accessibility and consistency.
2. FPC priorities can shape public willingness to engage.

FPCs should nurture community connections, regularly ask for public input, and ensure meetings are accessible to as many stakeholders as possible (Coplen and Cuneo 2015, 105), as democracy is enhanced when the public is more actively engaged in governance (La Forge 2017, 27). Creating a link between the public and an FPC extends information sharing beyond internal and external relationships to the community at large (La Forge 2017, 49). This enables the public to engage with the decision-makers and ensure that issues being addressed are current and relevant to the local community.

To improve participation from diverse members of the public, FPCs should have adaptable public engagement strategies targeted at under-represented groups (C. Porter 2018, 157). Strategies may include encouraging leadership, ensuring adequate organizational capacity and funding,

and enhancing accessibility through providing services such as transportation, childcare, and language translation (C. Porter 2018, 158). Overly technical or authoritative language and spaces can create an exclusionary effect on many members of the community. It is important to use an open and inclusive approach to public engagement to encourage a diverse spectrum of participation (Coplen and Cuneo 2015, 95). Accountability and transparency mechanisms—i.e. clear policies about how decisions are made, how members are selected, etc.—can play an active role in enhancing public trust (Coplen and Cuneo 2015, 105).

Priorities of the FPC can shape public participation. Procedural justice—how decisions are made and resources allocated—as a core objective means that issues most important to the public will be the ones addressed in the work of the FPC (Prové, de Krom, and Dessein 2019, 179). An emphasis on food justice is more likely to engage a diverse demographic of individuals (C. A. Porter and Ashcraft 2020, 10). FPCs can also hold an educational role within communities (Schiff 2008, 226) and should include educational elements for the public within their work (Harper et al. 2009, 7). Members of the public should have the opportunity to participate in subcommittees and as informal meeting participants (Schiff 2007, 326), further decentralizing power and enhancing democracy (La Forge 2017, 69).

Recommendations for Implementation

Transparency

Our data suggest that internal FPCs may have stronger transparency mechanisms—perhaps tied to legal rules, such as open meeting requirements—that bind local government bodies. Almost all internal FPCs in our sample, such as the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Vancouver Food Policy Council, explicitly state that meetings are open to the public, generally with a mechanism that allows citizens to address the council. By comparison, only a few external councils make their meetings open to the public. Both types of bodies tend to have statements specifying what is to be recorded in meeting minutes and how, but internal bodies are also more likely to publish their minutes publicly. Having meetings open to the public promotes accountability and transparency in both the decision-making process and outcomes, and provides a vehicle for community input. Many FPCs also require that planning, outcome, and financial reports be made publicly available each year. Annual reporting, especially in terms of where funding comes from and how it is allocated, is crucial for transparency and maintaining public trust.

Participation

Internal FPCs, such as the Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council and the Winnipeg Food Council, have a tendency to use working groups in which members of the public can participate. Working groups are a way for the public to directly contribute to the work of the FPC, increasing the democratic nature of the process. However, working groups can take time and energy to facilitate and it may be difficult to keep public volunteers engaged for extended periods. Some FPCs also have communication and education with the broader community as a goal, and/or being open and accountable to citizens and transparency as a value. For example, one of the objectives of the Squamish Food Policy Council is to "[e]ngage in community outreach to advance public education on food literacy, agricultural skills, and traditional food ways, and to encourage public participation." Under their values, the Middlesex London Food Policy Council identifies transparency as an important value and states that "[people] have a right to know what's in their food, where and how it is produced and what is being discussed within the Food Policy Council." These goals and values can help encourage public participation and hold the council accountable if they fail to adequately engage with the public.

Communication with the Public

The most common method of communication with the public is through the Chair/Vice-Chair for both internal and external councils. The Kamloops Food Policy Council mentions the potential creation of a communications Working Group, and the Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council requires communications by working or task groups to be pre-approved by members—some of which require a vote. A single or unitary voice promotes consistency and can help build public trust. It is important to choose a spokesperson that has strong leadership qualities and is trusted by the community at large. Restricting public communications may cause tension within the council if certain members want to be critical of the council's decisions, so an internal mechanism for complaint could provide an alternative to airing disagreements publicly, at least as a first step.

Confidentiality

Internal bodies are more likely to have statements related to confidentiality of information, though this is not common. The internal FPCs with confidentiality statements include the Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council, the Edmonton Food Council, and the Hamilton Food

Advisory Committee. Confidentiality is generally referred to in a statement of ethics or code of conduct that members are to follow. Confidentiality is important to protect sensitive matters, but it should be clear what matters are confidential so members feel free to share information with the public where appropriate.

2.6 Fostering Opportunities for Adequate Resourcing

Strong regional governance requires consistency and sustainability over time to adequately respond to evolving food systems issues. A crucial part of FPC success is ensuring that there are adequate opportunities for acquiring resources—including but not limited to financial and human resources and time—to support current and future projects. Diverse governance bodies face high resource burdens, especially in the early days, of establishing themselves as an effective and collaborative entity with conflicting pressures (Borron 2003, 8). In order to gain support from the public and enhance the legitimacy of the body, an FPC needs to establish where their resources will come from and how they will be allocated.

Key Lessons From Research

1. Limited access to consistent funding and resources is a persistant challenge.

2. Organizational structure can impact funding opportunities.

3. Paid staff members can alleviate burdens from volunteer members.

4. Funding during the early stages of development is linked to more robust organizations over the long run.

Lack of—or inconsistent access to—funding and resources is a key challenge for many FPCs (Harper et al. 2009, 5; Borron 2003, 8). Funding can come from multiple levels of government and/or individual or private donors/foundations, but some councils rely entirely on volunteers with no access to funding at all (Harper et al. 2009, 4). Limited resources can impact engagement in policy work (Scherb et al. 2012, 12), effective public engagement (C. Porter 2018, 156), and overall productivity (Cornog 2009, 50–51). The organizational structure can impact funding access—e.g. FPCs that are embedded within a government, or have strong links, likely have more consistent access to public funding compared to grassroots organizations, while non-profits have strong connections to foundations and larger NGO networks (Harper et al. 2009,

29; Borron 2003, 5). Priorities of an FPC can also shape funding opportunities. For example, federal funding in Canada has been directed towards food security and health programming, limiting the ability of FPCs to decide how to allocate these funds (Schiff 2007, 83). Where funding comes from can also dictate where the FPC is to allocate it, impacting autonomy and ability to prioritize certain goals (La Forge 2017, 46). To enhance control and flexibility over their own budget, councils should aim for diverse political and internal support rather than being overly dependent on one or a few individuals, organizations, or political members (Harper et al. 2009, 5–7).

Council members commit a large quantity of personal time and resources to an FPC and coordinating schedules amongst diverse members can create barriers in engagement (Coplen and Cuneo 2015, 93). Assigning certain roles and responsibilities to members without adequate support can overburden them, weakening the capacity and longevity of the council. Where most members are volunteers, having a few paid staff—even part-time—can alleviate some burdens by taking on indispensable support roles like administration, communications, education, networking, and building external relationships (Schiff 2007, 289; Borron 2003, 8). Many FPCs stress the importance of having at least one full-time staff member (Schiff 2007, 298). Staff for FPCs require a range of skills including leadership in a collaborative environment, organization, communication with diverse stakeholders, event management, and the ability to establish relationships with local food organizations and businesses (Schiff 2007, 326; Yeatman 1994, 21). Securing consistent funding is a concern for maintaining staff. Governments can supply relatively secure funding or provide administrative and other resources, while grants through non-profits or NGOs are generally short-lived, threatening the security of staff (Schiff 2007, 241).

More access to funding and time in the early stages of development can lead to more robust FPCs (Rollins 2012, 36). Early on, FPCs often need to devote a substantial amount of time and resources to establish a common ground, set priorities and build their team (Borron 2003, 8). Starting with a small project or initiative that will likely be successful may be a good way to establish the council's credibility and gain support from funders (Borron 2003, 8; Harper et al. 2009, 7). Establishing funding streams and other resources before FPC formation may be critical in ensuring start-up costs can be adequately met (Schiff 2007, 338).

Recommendations for Implementation

Access to Funding and Resources

While most of the documents in our data did not include funding details, internal FPCs are more likely to receive a budget and resources such as support staff from a related department of their regional government, whereas external FPCs are more likely to utilize a wider range of funding sources. For example, the Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council, an internal FPC, has staff provided by the Public Health Unit to provide a variety of supports including "providing background information, resources, advice and support for implementation of priorities." The Squamish Food Policy Council, an external FPC, states they receive "financial support from a mix of sources." Some external bodies have an action team, working group or committee dedicated to securing resources through members, grants, and other avenues. For example, the Kamloops Food Policy Council's Board of Directors may create a Finance Committee as required. Several FPCs have broad statements about facilitating relationships in order to share resources. Lack of funding is a major challenge for FPCs and it is important to understand what resource opportunities are available.

Support Staff

Internal FPCs are more likely to have support staff assigned by a government department to manage administrative and other support tasks, whereas external FPCs are more likely to choose from their members. For example, for the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee, an internal FPC, Clerk's Staff prepares minutes and agendas, handles general administrative tasks for meetings, retains Committee records, and coordinates annual reports for the Committee, whereas the Middlesex London Food Policy Council, an external FPC, elects both their Treasurer and Secretary by vote from their membership. The Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council has a "Resource Co-Chair" responsible for all administrative tasks and to alleviate these burdens from the Chair. Paid support staff provide consistent support over time and can be very helpful to alleviate administrative and technical burdens from volunteer members, strengthening the robustness of the council.

Time Commitments

On average for both internal and external FPCs, members are expected to meet between 4-12 times per year and are able to miss 2-3 consecutive meetings before they cease to be members. Some require members to commit a certain amount of hours of work outside meetings for things like working groups, answering emails, and reading and reviewing materials. For example the Vancouver Food Policy Council states that "[o]utside of meetings, members should expect to spend at least 2 hours on email and other correspondence, report writing, and inspection rides. Preparation time for all meetings is required." Time commitments and required meeting attendance are incentives for volunteers to stay engaged and get their assigned jobs done, but overly burdensome requirements may deter participation.

2.7 Embedding Adaptive Capacity

The complex and interconnected nature of food systems means that issues are dynamic and constantly evolving. A governance structure should be able to adapt and respond to internal and external changes in order to stay relevant and focused on regional needs, but also must remain strong and consistent (La Forge 2017, 18). Collaborative arrangements are much more flexible and adaptable than centralized or siloed approaches (La Forge 2017, 17; Schiff 2007, 120). Mechanisms that promote feedback, review and adaptation of council processes will be better suited to tackle complex food-systems issues and adapt appropriately over time.

Key Lessons From Research

1. Review and evaluation methods make it possible to adapt structure and processes as needed.

2. A broad base of support from individuals and organizations increases adaptability.

3. A strong focus on specific programs may detract from an ability to engage in other types of work.

Flexibility in the structure of an FPC can help to effectively respond to complex and ever-changing food issues. An evaluation process to track and review progress and outcomes along with mechanisms that permit the council structure, members, or stakeholders to be adapted from time to time can be beneficial (Fox 2010, 4; Harper et al. 2009, 7; Coplen and Cuneo 2015,

104). Adaptive management is "a tool that proposes having a plan, assessing the outcomes of that plan, and adjusting the plan accordingly" that can be used by FPCs to respond to dynamic food systems problems (La Forge 2017, 65). Councils must respond to not only changing norms and priorities in their communities, but also incorporate lessons they learn from acting as a collective entity themselves. For example, if the recruitment method chosen by the council does not result in diverse membership, or member turn-over is high, the council may want to amend their organizational documents to account for these failures (La Forge 2017, 66). Having annual review reports, work plans, subcommittees and public engagement opportunities provides flexibility and opportunities to amend processes to better serve FPC priorities (Schiff 2007, 306). While organizational structure should be flexible, the processes and terms should be clear and unambiguous to promote consistency and avoid confusion (Schiff 2007, 339).

Another factor that increases the adaptive management capacity of an FPC is having a broad base of support from a variety of individuals and organizations. FPCs that are overly dependent on a single individual or organization risk losing their management capacity in the event that they lose support from the individual or organization they were dependent on (Harper et al. 2009, 39). If an FPC is embedded in a local government, it may be even more necessary to establish a flexible structure, as to not fall into established—and often rigid—governmental frameworks (Schiff 2007, 334). FPCs also should be aware that a strong focus on specific programs or policy initiatives could limit their ability to manage other priorities and types of work (Harper et al. 2009, 40).

Recommendations for Implementation

Review Mechanisms

Many FPCs have mechanisms that allow for review and amendment and they vary in specificity. The Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council is quite specific, stating "[t]his Terms of Reference shall be reviewed on an annual basis for relevance and accuracy. Proposed future amendments to the Terms of Reference shall be circulated at least 14 days prior to a GSFPC meeting at which the amendments may be adopted by unanimous consent of the GSFPC voting members (either present, attending by phone, or voting by email or mail proxy)", while the Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council simply reads "[t]he Terms of Reference shall be reviewed and approved by CKFPC every two years". Internal FPCs frequently require approval by their municipal council to change or amend their structure, which could act as a barrier to the FPC implementing necessary changes in their governance. Review is generally at a set time (e.g. end of term, annually,

etc.) to keep terms of reference and other organizational documents up to date and relevant. Amendments can be made by unanimous consent or majority of the voting members, and some internal bodies require approval by their municipal council. Provisions that require review and an amendment procedure are helpful in creating flexibility and allows the body to evolve.

Conflict/Dispute Resolution

Some FPCs have methods for dealing with internal conflicts and disputes. The Durham Food Policy Council included detailed provisions for a dispute resolution mechanism, which encourages private resolution before turning to mediation and then arbitration, with all costs born by conflicting parties. Given the diversity and mixed interests of FPC members, conflict is likely to arise. Having a dispute resolution mechanism can be useful to guide members on how to best resolve conflicts in an efficient and cost-effective way, which in turn can add stability to the council over time. No internal or external FPCs we reviewed have a mechanism for members to provide feedback. Having a mechanism for members to provide feedback could be helpful to resolve conflicts before they escalate.

Prioritization of Policy or Program Work

External FPCs are more likely to have both policy and program work as part of their stated priorities, whereas internal FPCs are more likely to prioritize policy work, usually in an advisory capacity to the local government. Setting priorities and understanding a council's capacity to effectively meet their objectives is important for managing expectations and guiding council work, but flexibility to engage in both policy and projects may be important depending on the trajectory of the council. FPCs should ensure that if they are to engage in program work, they have the capacity to continue to engage in other types of work as well.

Term Length

Term limits on membership can also increase adaptability. The ability for new members to enter the FPC can help keep the governing body relevant and respond to changing norms and values as new members seek input. As noted above, there are clear trade-offs here with respect to organizational stability and institutional knowledge.

Appendix: Food Policy Council Dataset

We consulted publicly available documents for each of the following food policy councils in Canada as part of the empirical research component for this study:

Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council

Durham Food Policy Council

Edmonton Food Council

Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council

Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee

Hamilton Food Advisory Committee

Kamloops Food Policy Council

Kelowna Agricultural Advisory Committee

Middlesex London Food Policy Council

Niagara Policy and Action Committee

Squamish Food Policy Council

St. John's Food Policy Council

Vancouver Food Policy Council

Winnipeg Food Council

About the Authors

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Adrienne Klein: Adrienne is a second-year law student at the Schulich School of Law. She is passionate about food issues and believes that law and policy can be used as an effective tool for creating a more just and sustainable food system. She is particularly interested in farmland protection and food sovereignty issues. In the future, she is hoping that her legal degree will allow her to work in collaboration with local agricultural communities and food groups to help develop a strong a resilient food system where people are deeply connected to where and how their food is grown.

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