

# Strategic Plan

2016 - 2018



## Community Food Initiatives Growing & Sharing the Harvest

**Adopted: February 10, 2016**

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## **Letter to the Community**

Dear Friends,

Since August of 2015, Community Food Initiatives (CFI) has worked hard to clarify our values and forge a comprehensive strategic plan, incorporating the voices of our board members, community members, funders, partners, staff, and volunteers. This in-depth process involved an organizational capacity assessment to identify our strengths and weaknesses. Focus groups and surveys provided community and stakeholder input, and all of this was brought to the table at staff meetings and Board of Director retreats. We are grateful to everyone who contributed their candid feedback and inspirational visions.

A great deal of focus was on unrealized potential and identifying barriers to our continued success. Both internally and programmatically, this meant delving into the details and seeking new perspectives on how to accomplish our mission while keeping a lean yet impactful organization. "Change is the product of deliberate, incremental action, whereby we join together to try to shape a better world," says Paul Rogat Loeb, author of *Soul of a Citizen*. After months of analyzing, designing and reflecting, CFI now has a plan that reaffirms our long-standing commitments, identifies emerging opportunities, and creates a clear path to attain our goals.

Although the strategic plan is written, the journey is only just beginning. Moving forward, each program area will have an Advisory Committee to offer guidance and accountability. Additionally, we plan to grow our membership to provide more engagement opportunities. We are fueled by the passion of dedicated individuals doing the great work in our region and are looking forward to realizing our vision in its fullest potential.

Truly,

Mary Nally, Executive Director

Ann Brown, Board President



# **Executive Summary**

Throughout our 23 year history, Community Food Initiatives has contributed to building resilience and sustainability in the local food system of Southeast Ohio. Our approach is unique in focusing on our region's assets and strengths while addressing food insecurity and persistent poverty. We develop innovative programs that uplift and empower individuals to grow and share the harvest and enjoy the benefits of creating a healthy community.

2015 was a year of profound growth for our organization, providing both progress, and a realization of our shortcomings. Thus, the following strategic plan was developed as a roadmap for Community Food Initiatives to address these concerns. In August, the planning process for developing this plan was initiated. This involved engaging stakeholders of the organization through focus groups and surveys to identify organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement. Utilizing the results of these assessments, the Board of Directors and staff members collaboratively met and engaged to agree on priorities to be strategically addressed. This plan was formally adopted by the Board of Directors of CFI on February 10, 2016.

This document contains a description of CFI's different program areas, our newly developed vision, mission, and value statements, and our overarching goals and objectives for the next three years. These goals include making improvements on the design and evaluation of our programs, human resource management, financial management and fund development systems, and public relations.

From this point forward, this plan will be monitored and evaluated on a quarterly and annual basis until the end of the year 2018. Implementation of its goals and objectives will be monitored by CFI's AmeriCorps VISTA, working with board and staff members.

Our strategic plan is meant to grow the capacity of CFI over the next three years, while maintaining our current initiatives and developing a sustainable organizational system. The plan is a living and breathing document, and moving forward we will adapt to changes to the organization's environmental context, and in our community.



**Special Thanks** to the following people who made the development of this plan possible:

- Allison Hall, CFI AmeriCorps VISTA, for countless hours of dedication to the strategic planning process, providing excellent research, thoughtful guidance and facilitation and authoring of this document.
- Robin Stewart, formally of the Ohio University Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, and currently Marietta College's Grants, Corporate and Foundation Gift Officer
- Focus Group and Survey Participants including: Donors, Partners, Volunteers & Interns, Past Staff Members, Seed Savers, Teachers, Parents, Farmers, Food Pantry Coordinators, Gardeners, and the YEAH Kids

### **Board of Directors**

Ann Brown, President ◆ Sarah Conley-Ballew, Vice President ◆ Nancy Pierce,  
Treasurer ◆ Lori Gromen, Secretary ◆ Ruth Dudding ◆ Barbara Fisher ◆  
Lee Gregg ◆ Stephen Scanlan ◆ Kira Slepchenko ◆ Rick Vest ◆  
Brian Plow ◆ Keith Wilde

### **Staff**

Mary Nally, Executive Director

Kerrigan Boyd (through August 2016) and Janice Brewer, Community Garden  
Program Coordinator, AmeriCorps COMCorps

Jess Chadwell, Ridge & Hollow Seed Alliance Developer

Javi Devia (through August 2016) and Jamilla Holland, Donation Station and  
Discovery Kitchen Coordinator, AmeriCorps COMCorps

Dandelion Duff (through July 2016) and David Doddridge, School Garden  
Coordinator, AmeriCorps COMCorps

Kevin Fletcher, Regional Garden Specialist (through November 2016)

Allison Hall, AmeriCorps VISTA

Margaret Hoff, Fiscal Administrator

Becky Hobson, Donation Station Regional Developer

Andrea Reany (through November 2015) and Ryan Leach, Donation Station Manager



## Organization Description

We work to make food more accessible in Appalachia Ohio. We value naming our assets-soil, seeds, and an Appalachian heritage of food production and preservation-so that everyone is empowered to feed their families, improve their health, and strengthen their community. We are rooted in the belief that equitable access to healthy local food leads to a safe and clean environment, meaningful work with livable wages, and fulfills the needs and rights of all people. We believe in the strength of collaboration and in doing better together. Our programs are as follows:

- ▶ **Community Gardens** provide space for neighbor interaction, skill sharing, and the growth of local food for families. We manage Community Gardens that provide people with the space, tools, water, mulch, and opportunities to interact with other local gardeners.
- ▶ We hold **Gardening and Culinary Workshops** to provide hands-on opportunities to learn about gardening, food preservation, cooking, and so much more.
- ▶ As a way to empower members of our community to garden and grow their own food, we host **Seed and Plant Giveaways** each spring.
- ▶ **Ridge & Hollow Seed Alliance** is dedicated to increasing food security for future generations by supporting the preservation of seeds from regionally adapted, open pollinated plants. We partner with skilled growers to make locally hardy seeds available in retail locations to the public.
- ▶ Gardens teach school children about the importance of healthy, fresh foods and give them an excuse to spend time outside. We partner with local schools to provide resources, technical support, and consultation to make **School Gardens** available as a classroom.
- ▶ The **Donation Station** fights hunger while supporting the local food economy. We collect donations and purchase food from farmers to distribute to food pantries feeding those who are hungry today.

► The **Discovery Kitchen** educates the public on how simple and delicious it is to eat healthy using seasonal local ingredients.

► The **Youth Entrepreneurs at Hope (YEAH! Kids)** coaches low-income youth in gardening, culinary skills, money management, and professionalism.





# Vision, Mission, and Values

**Our Vision** is a resilient region in which everyone in our community has access to an equitable, inclusive, and thriving local food system.

**Our Mission** is to support a local food movement that expands fair access to fresh and nutritious foods for all people in our region.

## **Our Values:**

Culture and Community: We value naming our assets-soil, seeds, and an Appalachian heritage of food production and preservation-so that everyone can see their place in strengthening our assets and our community.

Education and Empowerment: We believe that by sharing the knowledge to grow and prepare wholesome foods, people become empowered to feed their families, improve their health, and their community.

Justice: We are rooted in the belief that equitable access to fresh and nutritious local food leads to a safe and clean environment, meaningful work with living wages, and fulfills the needs & rights of all people.

Collaboration: We believe in the strength of collaboration and doing better together.





# Strategic Goals and Objectives

Community Food Initiatives developed the following strategic goals and objectives to encompass addressing the strengths and weaknesses realized through the entire strategic planning process. Our four strategic goals are aligned with key stakeholders whom we serve and partner with to accomplish our mission. Under each strategic goal, we developed objectives to ensure action is taken towards accomplishing them.

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## **Goal 1: Increase the community impact of our programs by strengthening their design and the process by which we evaluate them.**

CFI is known for its innovative programs and as the organization connects increasingly with neighboring counties, having streamlined and consistent practices will be critical to our continued success. By 2018, CFI's programs and social enterprises will be thriving and better serving community members to realize our mission.

### **Objectives:**

- By 2018, a formalized data tracking and analysis system across program areas will be developed.
  - Improvements to the maintenance of gardens and orchards will be made by the end of 2018.
  - The availability of resources at school and community gardens (tools, tables, water, etc.) will be improved by the end of 2018.
  - Our recently developed social enterprises will have established a strong foundation upon which they will generate revenue by the end of 2018.
-

## **Goal 2: Improve our human resources management so that staff, board members, and volunteers consistently find satisfaction, meaning, and opportunity in their work.**

Volunteers, staff and board members all work hard, fueled by their passion and belief in what we do. To sustain a healthy organization, CFI strives to dedicate support to those who dedicate their time. By 2018, CFI will be well known as not only a great place to work and serve but as an organization that provides personal and professional growth and celebrates its volunteers, staff and board members.

### **Objectives:**

- The process of recruitment and management of human resources will be re-evaluated by the end of 2018.
  - Managerial and budgetary responsibilities will be delegated to other positions by the end of 2018.
  - A job description, operations manual, and workplan will be developed for each position by August of 2017.
  - Appreciation and professional development opportunities for staff, board members, and volunteers will be made a priority by the end of 2017.
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## **Goal 3: Strengthen our financial management and fund development system to maximize the impact we can make from the generosity of our funders and members.**

As CFI grows and funding increases, our internal systems need to keep pace. The members, donors, sponsors and grantors will benefit from greater clarity in what their roles are and how their money is utilized to fund our mission. By 2018, CFI will have streamlined accounting and membership systems, and a diversity of funding sources to support the organization's programs and operational costs.

### **Objectives:**

- The financial management of our organization will be re-developed to create a more healthy accounting system by the end of 2016.
- A strategy will be developed to increase donations, sponsors, and the impact of fundraising events by the end of 2018.

- Redevelop our system of recruiting and managing membership in the organization by the end of 2018 to increase its impact.
  - Revenue generation will be more of a percentage of our annual income by the end of 2018.
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#### **Goal 4: Improve public relations to increase awareness and involvement in our mission.**

CFI is learning the importance of telling our story in order to communicate our mission and invite more people to our table. Developing a strategy for this will help increase membership and improve our existing and future relationships. By 2018, CFI will achieve greater awareness among the Southeast Ohio population and an increase in engagement by community members.

##### **Objective:**

- A marketing strategy for the organization will be developed by the end of 2017. Implementation of this marketing strategy will be acted upon by the end of 2018.



This plan was completed February 18, 2016.

At the time of completion of this document, the first year work plans are being organized, and implementation is underway.

The intent is for each annual work plan to become an element of this document so that the plan is an ongoing living document.

Join us! You can get involved in growing and sharing the harvest. Opportunities include:

- ▶ Membership
- ▶ Volunteering
- ▶ Garden Plots
- ▶ Financial Support
- ▶ Program Advisory Councils

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