



*The overarching goal of Growing Food Connections is to enhance community food security while ensuring sustainable and economically viable agriculture and food production.*

## Background and Objectives

Nearly 50 million Americans are considered food insecure according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). While many Americans are struggling to gain access to healthful, affordable and culturally acceptable foods, many farmers and ranchers are struggling to remain viable. Growing Food Connections (GFC) seeks to transform these challenges into opportunities by advancing public policy innovations to support underserved community residents and local farmers, especially small and mid-sized farmers. The initiative will help local governments and their partners create, implement, and ultimately sustain food system plans and policies that simultaneously improve community food security and foster a viable agricultural sector.

## Communities of Opportunity

GFC is partnering with eight *Communities of Opportunity* (COOs) across the country to provide an intensive two-year program of training, technical assistance, planning and public policy activities. COOs are counties whose local governments have indicated both a need and a desire to improve food access for underserved residents and to sustain family farmers and food production. In addition to receiving training and technical assistance, COOs have committed to fully participate in Growing Food Connections and to take actions to strengthen their food systems. The eight communities include:

- Chautauqua County, NY
- Cumberland County, ME
- Doña Ana County, NM
- Dougherty County, GA
- Douglas County, NE
- Luna County, NM
- Polk County, NC
- Wyandotte County, KS

In each of these communities, a steering committee of local stakeholders partners with GFC to build strong cross-sector collaborations, ensure diversity and inclusivity, provide insights to the local government and GFC Team, and to ensure the work is sustained beyond the life of the GFC initiative.

## Partners and Funding

GFC is supported by a five-year research initiative funded by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The initiative is led by the Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab at the University at Buffalo in partnership with American Farmland Trust, Cultivating Healthy Places, and the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University.



## Growing Food Connections in Wyandotte County

In June of 2015, the GFC steering committee in Wyandotte County assembled to assess the current state of the local food system and develop a vision, values, and goals to guide its work. The steering committee meets regularly to collaborate toward achieving its goals and develop an action plan to strengthen the food system in Wyandotte County.

### Vision

***“Wyandotte County will promote a healthy, locally produced, and culturally appropriate food system that meets the needs and desires of all residents and supports economic vitality. This initiative will be an integral and innovative contributor to regional food system efforts.”***

### Goals

1. Work towards a Master Plan/Food Systems Plan for Wyandotte County.
2. Conduct a Policy Assessment for supporting and removing barriers to the food system in the county
3. Develop a regional food system policy framework and link local governments in the MARC region to share information and tools on food systems, in an attempt to share best practices and create more consistency in local policy across the region if possible.

### Steering Committee Members

Lindsay Behgam, Unified Government of Wyandotte County  
Andrew Bracker, City of Kansas City, Missouri  
Nozella Brown, Kansas State University Extension, Wyandotte County  
Alyssa Carodine, Healthy Communities Wyandotte  
Joe Connor, Unified Government of Wyandotte County  
Kimiko Gilmore, City of Kansas City, Missouri  
Rachel Jefferson, Historic Northeast Midtown Association  
Katherine Kelly, Cultivate KC  
Gretchen Kunkel, KC Healthy Kids  
Beth Low-Smith, KC Healthy Kids  
Donna Martin, Mid America Regional Council  
Andrea Matthew, Kansas City Community Gardens  
Brian McKiernan, Unified Government of Wyandotte County  
Marlene Nagel, Mid America Regional Council  
Robin Richardson, Unified Government of Wyandotte County  
Jeff Samborski, University of Missouri Extension  
Karen Siebert, Harvesters – The Community Food Network

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