

Convening Ideas & Actions: Creating Food Opportunities for the Future

2019 Convening Findings

September 2019

Creating Food Opportunities for the Future

In May 2019, over 150 stakeholders came together to: **(1)** Learn more about the systems that shape food experiences in Greater Cleveland, **(2)** Voice opinions about opportunities and barriers to equitable food systems change, and **(3)** Identify realistic and impactful solutions to create food opportunities for our future. The event **illuminated existing injustices** of the food system; **generated ideas for solutions** to improve economic opportunity, food security, and nutrition equity; and **fostered relationships** that can be leveraged for equitable food systems change. The convening was organized by the Mary Ann Swetland Center for Environmental Health as a part of its Modeling the Future of Food in Your Neighborhood Study (foodNEST 2.0). Co-Conveners included: foodNEST 2.0, Core Modeling Team; Food Access Raises Everyone (FARE); Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition (CCC-FPC); The Health Improvement Partnership-Cuyahoga (HIP-C); and Cleveland Office of Minority Health.

What is foodNEST 2.0?

The Modeling the Future of Food in Your Neighborhood study (foodNEST 2.0) is a multi-year research project with the goal of creating more equitable food systems in the City of Cleveland through the development of tools and resources designed to promote community engagement in local decision making and food systems change. The study team and its partners are mapping out complexities and dynamics of the local food system to identify levers for change. The goal is to identify which levers make the biggest impact on three main indicators: **Economic Opportunity, Food Security, and Nutrition Equity**. The foodNEST 2.0 process is designed to engage multiple perspectives throughout the study to ensure the project captures real-world factors influencing equitable food systems.

What are our hopes & fears?

The convening raised both "hopes" and "fears" among attendees. Attendees hoped that we would identify innovative and actionable solutions through methods that engage everyone. Attendees had fears about roadblocks that may slow us down like funding, support, and energy.



What's happening in our food system?

A highlight of the convening was the chance to hear about different strategies used to improve our local food system. Through a series of "rapid fire" presentations by local leaders, attendees learned about the importance of connecting across systems to achieve goals of economic opportunity, food security, and nutrition equity. These presentations showcased novel efforts to improve access to **quality housing and transportation, livable wage jobs, and social and communities resources** to provide for basic needs. Leaders also presented on local efforts more centrally connected to food such as **nutrition incentive programs** like Produce Perks, **emergency food assistance**, and **grocery retail development**. Finally, there was a call for more **peer-to-peer approaches** that link residents to resources needed for nutrition equity. A central theme of this session was a belief that food systems solutions require us to think beyond traditional boundaries. Food is not the only solution to food systems change. We need to address root causes to seed an equitable local food system.

#food4ourCLEfuture



FARE

Mary Ann Swetland Center for
Environmental Health

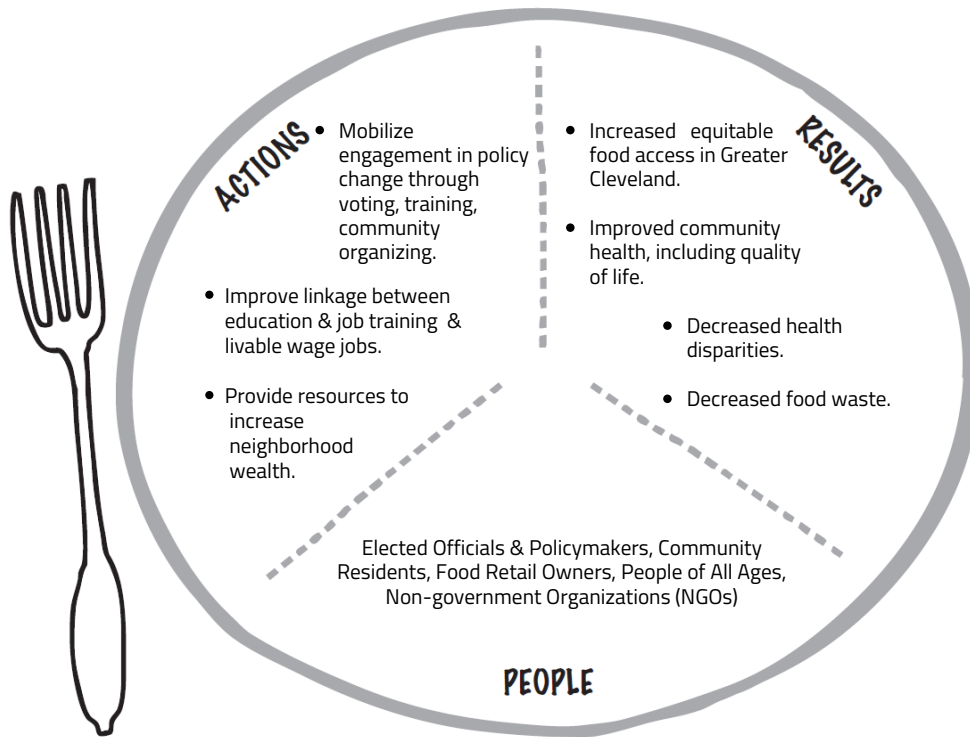


SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY



What will drive change?

Attendees were challenged to "set the table" for equitable local food systems change. Working in teams, attendees reflected on the **people** who need to be engaged, **actions** that will support change, and **results** we hope to achieve over the next 10 years.



Attendees developed "bridges" that would be needed to **move the needle** on the three main outcomes of economic opportunity, food security, and nutrition equity. The goal was to develop **realistic** and **impactful** solutions.

There was support for solutions that:

1. Focus on community engagement for equitable policy change.
2. Improve access to quality education and job training needed to secure and sustain a livable wage job.
3. Develop strategies to promote neighborhood ownership of food systems change and incentivize equity as a goal.



How can you take action?

Developing realistic and impactful solutions for an equitable food system requires that all stakeholders *pour love into the system*. By working collaboratively, we can successfully begin to **maximize** hopes and opportunities and **limit** fears and barriers. What can you do?

- Join the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition.
- Share your voice at future foodNEST 2.0 listening sessions.
- Listen and learn from neighborhood residents who are already leading change.
- Invest in local communities.
- Engage elected officials. Vote. Consider running for office.
- Better connect resources required to advance nutrition equity.
- Think beyond food as the primary focus for food systems change.

