

# Montgomery County Food Council

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## **Local Food, Local Hunger: Starting Food Councils**

Fighting Hunger in Maryland Conference: A Call to Action  
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# What is a Food Policy Council (FPC)?

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- Definition: Democratic body of representatives from *diverse food-related sectors* collaborating to *examine* and *improve upon* local food system
  - Innovative collaboration
  - Give voice to underserved or unrecognized
- Goal: Promote comprehensive, interconnected, local food system planning and policy
- Food Policy: any legislative or administrative decision impacting how food is produced, processed, distributed, purchased, disposed of

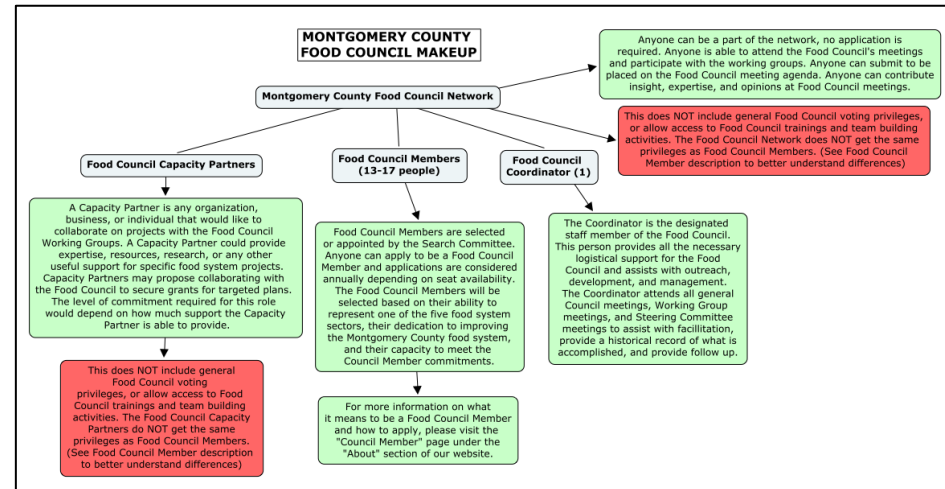


# What is a FPC (cont)?

- Variance in governance models, origins, priorities

- Four primary aims:

- Forum for discussing food issues
- Convene sectors of the food system
- Evaluate and influence food-related policy
- Launch and/or support local food-related programs



*Above: MoCo Food Council Structure*



# Why Start a FPC?

- Broaden the discussion
  - Integrated policies for a divided food system
- Engage the full system
  - Cross-sector: public, private, non-profit stakeholders
  - Cross-disciplinary: farmers, distributors, anti-hunger advocates, grocers, waste management
- Ask and explore key questions
  - How much food is produced locally?
  - What barriers to healthy food access exist in our community?



# FPC History in the US

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- First FPC in Knoxville, TN in 1982
  - Formed to address lack of nutritious food in inner-city
- Today: 50-90 FPCs throughout United States at local, county, state, regional levels
- Maryland: Potential for statewide FPC?
- Three local councils in MD:
  - Baltimore Food Policy Initiative
  - Montgomery County Food Council
  - Southern Maryland Community Food Council



# FPCs and Food Security

- FPCs: hunger is a food system issue
- Create space for unasked/unaddressed questions of local hunger
- Offer “neutral” voice for examining effectiveness of local anti-hunger policies and programs
- Connect potential strategic partners and officials. Examples:
  - Food desert mapping and research
  - Healthy retailing in food deserts
  - Expansion of SNAP and WIC at farmers markets



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- Officially “sprouted” in February 2012
  - Initial impetus (and support) from the County Executive’s Office, many other stakeholders
  - Advisory Board formed to choose first members
- 15 Members from diverse sectors
  - Structure
    - Working groups (WG) primary vehicles for achieving MoCo Food Council’s vision
    - Food Access WG focus: improve food security
  - Meeting Schedule



# MoCo Food Council (cont)

- Year 1: Significant time devoted to organizational development
  - Based on several models
- Current projects related to Food Access
  - Knowledge building
  - Publicity of existing services and efforts
  - Partnerships
- Looking ahead





# Starting a FPC

- Community or government support essential
- Identify diverse partners that could become, or recommend, future members
- Overestimate time that may be needed for set-up, but don't give up!
- Identify near term opportunities for success as long term goals are worked out
- Financial resources help





## Questions? Get Involved!

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