Local Matters creates healthy communities through food education, access and advocacy, driven by the long term vision of ensuring equitable access to a sustainable food system and a world free of food-related chronic disease. We were founded in 2008 in response to a broken food system that makes it difficult for communities in need to have consistent access to healthful, affordable foods and the desire to support people with the knowledge to eat well and feed their families.

While Columbus is considered one of our nation’s most prosperous communities, we have one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country and one in every five children in Columbus are food insecure. Children and families from low-income and food insecure communities face an elevated risk of obesity and diet-related disease due to barriers related to poverty.

**Poor nutrition** is a major contributor to preventable food-related chronic diseases like diabetes and heart attacks. Treating these medical problems costs the US $500+ billion annually.

**It is critical for individuals to learn the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how to do so in a budget-friendly way. The lack of nutrition education and knowledge of basic cooking skills perpetuates the health crisis.**

**Studies show limited or no access to food resources mean disproportionately higher rates of diet-related health issues when compared with those that have access.**

As a leader and community connector in the food movement, Local Matters provides comprehensive solutions to address these diverse challenges. Here’s how we deliver our mission every day:

- Educators get children and teens excited about food with unique programs: **Food Matters** and **Growing Matters** teach students in the classroom and outside in learning gardens about what nutritious food is, why it’s important for healthy minds and bodies, how to grow it and how to prepare it. Local Matters builds positive dietary choices; healthy, active students are shown to consistently perform better in all academic areas.

- A national approach to hunger, **Cooking Matters** is delivered through six weeks of hands-on cooking and nutrition instruction that helps families cook healthful, delicious meals on a limited budget and provides groceries. Data show that participants are less likely to experience food insecurity after completing the program.

- The social enterprise, **Wellness Matters**, brings interactive and fun healthful food education to the workplace. Participants receive professional culinary and nutrition instruction, delicious food and recipes. With expert-designed packages and à la carte options, the program works to meet wellness and engagement goals. **Eighty-nine percent** of participants feel the idea of eating and cooking healthy foods is less intimidating after one class.
Local Matters also leads community-based food planning, most recently as part of the leadership team of the City of Columbus – Franklin County Local Food Action Plan. The plan was informed by over 1,000 people and a diverse working committee over a two-year period to create an operable blueprint to increase the availability, affordability, waste recovery and knowledge of fresh produce. It was adopted in November 2016.

In April 2016, Local Matters opened the CareSource Community Kitchen on the South Side, offering cooking and gardening classes on-site, for the first time. Our kitchen programming welcomes all, regardless of skill level or ability to pay.

“One of the long term community effects of being part of Local Matters is the health benefits – I lost about 15 pounds in 4 months. My mother is also eating healthier – she’s diabetic and her sugar levels are much better. I think if you have a healthier community, everyone wins.” - Roshelle Pate, class participant

Local Matters reaches over 11,000 individuals, children and families annually and identified the 2016 move as an opportunity to continue growing impact across diverse populations and community settings.

**Strategic Plan Overview**

The robust planning process resulted in an updated mission, vision and values and defined six measurable goals to accomplish over the next four years. Local Matters will continue to lead the healthful food movement through collaborative decision-making with stakeholders, increasing our impact in an intentional way. The goals:

1. **ADVOCATE: Affect public and institutional policy**
   To move the needle on social change, Local Matters must affect policy at each level by assessing the current political landscape and developing a policy agenda aligned with our work.

2. **EXPAND: Grow existing programs**
   Local Matters will continue expanding geographically and grow as a resource for individuals at each stage of life with comprehensive solutions to hunger and diet-related disease.

3. **INTEGRATE: Increase utilization of programs in healthcare**
   Local Matters will identify the most efficient and effective channel to integrate programs into patient care. With the newly built teaching kitchen, staff will continue to train physicians and healthcare providers on-site.

4. **EVALUATE: Define and measure metrics that matter**
   Leadership recognizes the need to further develop assessment tools and implement an integrated evaluation system to determine program success, outcomes and behavior change through research-based methods.

5. **DIVERSIFY: Commit to diversity and inclusion**
   The internal diversity and inclusion working group will inform opportunities to strengthen inclusion practices and welcome and engage diversity in all facets of the organization.

6. **SUSTAIN: Create a viable resource development plan**
   It is imperative to develop and implement responsible operation practices that support multiple funding sources to sustain organizational growth and increase the cash reserve.

**Thank you for investing in our future.**

For questions about the strategic plan and related opportunities to get involved, please contact: Michelle Moskowitz Brown, Executive Director, at mmbrown@local-matters.org