Cultivating Community Food Resilience: Recommendations from a Preliminary Food Systems Assessment in Houghton County, MI

Prepared for the Western UP Food Systems Council by Social Sciences 4700 Communities & Research Class
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This study takes place within Ojibwa (Chippewa) homelands and ceded-territory established by the Treaty of 1842, including the territory of Native American nations in Gakiwe’onaning (Keweenaw Bay), Gete-gitgaaning (Lac Vieux Desert), Mashkii-ziibing (Bad River), Odaawaa-zaaga’iganing (Lac Courte Oreilles), Waaswaaganing (Lac Du Flambeau), Miskwaabikong (Red Cliff), Wezaawaagami-ziibiing (St. Croix), and Zaka’aaganing (Sokaogon Mole Lake).

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Executive Summary

This report shares the results of an exploratory food systems assessment conducted in the Houghton-Hancock area of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The goal of this report is to inform the development of the Western Upper Peninsula Food Systems Council (WUPFSC) by 1) providing an overview on best practices from existing food systems councils (FSCs), 2) sharing the results of our preliminary assessment of opportunities within the Houghton-Hancock community, and 3) making recommendations to the WUPFSC to inform their approach to future initiatives.

Partners involved in creating this report include the Michigan Tech University Fall 2018 Social Sciences 4700 Communities & Research Class, WUPFSC, and community members who took part in interviews, focus groups, food systems council meetings, or class visits.

In preparing this report, we reviewed existing literature on three main topics: food systems, food councils, and community engagement to determine the best practices for creating a food system council. Meanwhile, we gained a better understanding of local community needs and resources by visiting relevant community organizations, inviting local experts to come and speak with our class, conducting a focus group with Michigan Tech students interested in or concerned about the local food system, and interviewing 11 members of the Houghton-Hancock community with unique perspectives to offer regarding local foods, local business, and the community itself.

The results of the exploratory assessment find that there is a strong interest by the local community in local food systems and a need for the local food systems council. The community members were curious about the idea of a local food systems council, what it might entail, and gave positive feedback about what they thought a local food systems council should do. We tie our findings to specific recommendations for the WUPFSC. The diagram in Figure 1 summarizes the three areas of interest we identified: supporting community interests, building partnership, and awareness/education.

Figure 1: Opportunities for the Western UP Food Systems Council: A summary of preliminary assessment findings
1. Introduction

This report shares the results of an exploratory food systems assessment conducted in the Houghton-Hancock area of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The goal of this report is to inform the development of the Western Upper Peninsula Food Systems Council (WUPFSC) by 1) providing an overview on best practices from existing food systems councils (FSCs), 2) sharing the results of our preliminary assessment of opportunities within the Houghton-Hancock community, and 3) making recommendations to the WUPFSC to inform their approach to future initiatives.

1.1 Report Overview

The purpose of this report is to share the results of an exploratory food systems assessment conducted in the Houghton-Hancock area. These results are intended to inform the development of the Western Upper Peninsula Food Systems Council (WUPFSC). In this report, we first provide an overview of the Western Upper Peninsula region and the specific scope of our study. We then define our purposes and objectives for our study and introduce who was involved, before synthesizing best practices identified in the existing food systems literature. The next section explains our approach for collecting data for this project. We then summarize the findings and recommendations that emerged from our preliminary results. Finally, we conclude with suggestions for next steps. The appendices offer summarized resources we hope will be of use to the WUPFSC.

1.2 Who is involved in this project?

WUPFSC is a collaborative initiative among partners in the six-county region of the Western Upper Peninsula, including the Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR), the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC), Michigan Tech University (MTU), and the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians. This study was conducted by the undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the Fall 2018 Social Sciences 4700 Communities & Research class at Michigan Technological University taught by Dr. Angie Carter. Participants in the study include local store and restaurant managers, educational professionals, foundation presidents or board members at local organizations, and MTU students. Additionally, this study was informed by visitors to our class and our own attendance and participation in food-related community events.

1.3 Western UP Regional Context

For the purposes of this project, the Western Upper Peninsula region is defined as six Michigan counties (Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon), and covers an area
just over 6,000 square miles with a population of roughly 85,000 people. The major population centers of the Western UP region are Houghton (population 7,987), Ironwood (population 4,955), Hancock (population 4,586), Iron River (population 2,864), Baraga (population 1,995), and L'Anse (population 2,011). See Appendix A to get a better idea of the location and size of the Western UP region.

Local foods are not new to this region. The region is an historically food-rich region, with local food traditions long cared for by Indigenous communities, such as the fisheries and wild rice. These Western UP counties are located within ancestral Ojibwe homelands ceded by Ojibwe bands in the treaties of 1836, 1837, 1842, and 1854 with the United States (see Figure 2; GLIFWC, n.d.). These treaties retain the rights for descendants to fish, hunt, and gather on the ceded lands, as well as retained rights for land for permanent reservations (GLIFWC, n.d.). The counties in today’s Western Upper Peninsula of Michigan are located on lands ceded in the treaty of 1842 and today are home to the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (GLIFWC, n.d.). More recently, settler and immigrant communities who came to region brought with them foodways that are now long-standing, such as pasties. Yet, despite these long histories, food access, security, and sovereignty have become contemporary challenges across the region.

According to the University of Michigan Poverty Solutions, approximately 18% (15,000 people) of the population of this six-county region is at or below the poverty threshold and 25% (21,000 people) are under the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold (University of Michigan, 2018). ALICE was created by the United Way to better define a group of people struggling to make ends meet and who are at risk of poverty. When you combine the at risk ALICE population with the below poverty threshold population, you find that approximately 42% (36,000 people) of the total population of the Western UP region is in need of food and housing assistance (University of Michigan, 2018).

Income disparity is not the only issue facing people in the Western UP region. Lack of access to affordable healthy foods is also a problem, especially in the winter months. In 2018, 34.5% of Houghton County residents reported a “lack of affordable healthy foods, including year-round fresh fruits and vegetables” (WUPHD, 2018). The high rate of economic insecurity
and the limited access to healthy foods year-round are significant challenges in the region, but our study found much interest in creating a stronger and healthier food systems network in our local area.

Food assistance needs do not only affect the full-time residents of the Western UP region, but also Michigan Technological University (MTU) students in Houghton, as well. In an effort to better understand the level of food insecurity MTU students face, the Husky Food Access Network (HuskyFAN) conducted campus-wide surveys in 2015 and in 2018. The most recent survey (2018) had a total 1,318 respondents. Of the respondents, 79.59% were undergraduate, 17.75% graduate, and 2.66% staff or faculty. In the three months prior to the survey, 29.38% of respondents worried about running out of food, 25.55% of respondents reported having to reduce meal sizes or skip meals due to lack of funds to purchase food, and 21.9% of respondents reported running out of food without the ability to purchase more. More than 10% of respondents reported that they lost weight because they could not afford to eat enough, and an alarming 6.46% of all respondents reported going whole days without eating. Even when able to purchase enough food, 36.38% of respondents felt that they were not able to afford balanced diets (HuskyFAN, 2018).

To date, student awareness of campus food assistance initiatives is relatively poor. While 53.7% of respondents stated they are aware of the food pantry, only 21% of respondents were aware of the emergency food packs available at MTU Public Safety and 30% aware of the meal swipe program providing meals at campus dining services to students. Well under the number of people who reported having gone hungry have used HuskyFAN services, with 3.84% utilizing the food pantry and less than 1% utilizing the emergency food packs (HuskyFAN, 2018). In contrast, respondents state that 18.63% will use the food pantry in the future and 12.11% will use the emergency packs (HuskyFAN, 2018). When asked what would make them more likely to use existing resources, “expanded food options” was the highest ranked (14.72%), followed by greater anonymity (11.27%), and different hours (9.62%). In conclusion, this survey shows the need for a service such as HuskyFAN is absolutely necessary for the students, and the largest obstacle seems to be how to make HuskyFAN readily available to the student body (HuskyFAN, 2018). Additionally, this suggests that Michigan Tech University has an important role to play in supporting local food systems infrastructure as a major purchaser of foods in the region. Increasing the availability of locally-raised, fresh produce and eggs available on campus through the food assistance resources and dining services would benefit students wanting expanded food options in addition to supporting local growers.

1.4 Our Research Questions

We rooted our research questions in a review of food systems literature. We revised these questions through an iterative process involving collaboration and discussion as a class and in discussion with our community partners. The questions guiding this project include:
1. What interest do people have in our local food system?
2. How do people define our local food system?
3. How does our food system shape our local cultures and identities here in the Keweenaw?
4. What should members of the food systems council know before going forward with their work?

1.5 Purposes and Objectives

We hope our report will help to inform the development of the Western Upper Peninsula Food Systems Council (WUPFSC). Broadly speaking, the Council will support local foods connections in our communities. Our project objectives include:

- Provide an overview on best practices from existing food systems councils (FSCs) for WUPFSC
- Share the results of our preliminary assessment of opportunities within the Houghton-Hancock community
- Inform WUPFSC’s approach to future development initiatives

Limitations to our project include time, geography, and our small sample size. Because the project was undertaken in a single semester, there was not time to interview everyone we would have liked to, nor to perform an exhaustive assessment of even one of the Western UP’s counties. Our project is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the Houghton-Hancock or MTU communities, nor to represent the entire Western UP. Rather, we hope this serves as an exploratory introduction to the food systems interests in the Houghton-Hancock and MTU area and as a starting point for subsequent county-level assessments.

2. An Overview of Food Systems Councils

In the initial stages of this exploratory project, we were tasked with undertaking a literature review about food systems councils. The purpose of doing this review was to take lessons from existing and past food systems councils. We hoped to use these lessons to ground our recommendations in the successes of communities that have undertaken similar projects, and to refine our understanding of environmental and food justice issues affecting communities.

2.1 What is a food system?

A food system is “an interconnected web of activities, resources and people that extends across all domains involved in providing human nourishment and sustaining health, including production, processing, packaging, distribution, marketing, consumption and disposal of food. The organization of food systems reflects and responds to social, cultural, political, economic, health and environmental conditions and can be identified at multiple scales, from a household
kitchen to a city, county, state or nation” (Chase and Grubinger, 2014:1). Figure 3 is a pictorial representation of what constitutes, influences, and shapes a food system, and its numerous impacts on community health. Community health includes human, ecological, economic and social spheres of well-being. As such, a problem or inadequacy in one of the sectors can lead to adverse impacts on individuals and the wider community.

![Figure 3 Food Systems Interconnections (from Tagtow and Roberts 2011)](image)

### 2.2 What is a food systems council?

Broadly speaking, a food systems council (FSC) provides a unique forum for diverse stakeholders to come together and address common concerns regarding food policy, education, and programming including food access, food security, farm policy, food regulations, health, and nutrition. Michigan has a strong network of local food systems councils—the Michigan Local Food Council Network¹—organized through the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems and consisting of neighborhood, city, and county-scale food systems councils and food systems policy councils.

FSCs aim to ensure communities cultivate, process, transport, access, and consume foods having multi-dimensional impact on the economy, environment, and the society at large.

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¹ See here for more information on the Michigan Local Food Council Network: [https://www.canr.msu.edu/local_food_council_network/](https://www.canr.msu.edu/local_food_council_network/)
To achieve their objectives, they may function as administrative bodies or coalitions in the form of a FSC, which designs, organizes, and implement food programs benefiting the community.

FSCs come in a variety of shapes and forms, and they can go by several different names, but the basic concept, goals, and overall theme of the different food councils remain the same and are seemingly derived from the same ideals. The typical theme or ideology that seems to drive these councils is the desire to address food-related opportunities and concerns in a designated community. Successful councils are integrated within and a part of the communities they serve.

The three main focuses of food policy councils are 1) To foster coordination across the full range of food sectors from production to consumption and recycling; 2) to evaluate and influence policy pertaining to local food systems; and 3) to launch or support programs and services that address local needs (Harper et al., 2009).

Because councils vary in size and scope, staffing is key the key to success. The lack of proper staff can dissolve the council, and the other key challenge for these councils is funding. The literature suggests that having a representative from the local government on the council can be crucial to influencing policy, but the downfall of a government official on the council is its ability to limit the scrutiny of policy which may be limiting to the programs the council may desire to implement (Harper et al., 2009).

2.3 How are food systems councils organized?

A food systems council starts by focusing on the three P’s: projects, partners, and policy. FSCs often unify government agencies, non-profits, commercial entities, and community members, which work together to collaborate on food system issues. While they share similar goals, not all FSCs work the same way. State and local governments may shape the formation of FSCs; though the majority of FSCs across the country are independent, forming as grassroots organizations on the regional and local level (Burgan and Winne, 2012:12). Organizational structures vary among these different types and may include appointed members, self-selecting members, or both.

In “The Role of Food Policy Councils in Developing Sustainable Food Systems,” Rebecca Schiff (2008) recommends some guidelines for developing food policy councils with the aim of creating more sustainable local food systems. Relationships and collaboration are essential to getting an FSC started (Schiff, 2008). Councils have grappled with whether they should include “policy” in their name; for some “food policy councils” do focus solely on policy, while others do not. No matter what kind of work, “food policy councils” or “food systems councils” serve the communities in which they have been formed. According to Schiff (2008), Food Policy Councils and Food Systems Councils have the following characteristics:

● They involve local government and stakeholder interaction
● They utilize existing government and private organization frameworks to support programs and project development (p. 210)
● They involve a high degree of networking and communication
● They serve to educate communities at multiple levels, from council members themselves to community-wide awareness

2.4 What are some examples of food systems council vision and mission statements?

When a food systems council is in its earliest stages, members often develop vision statements mission statements before outlining their collaborative goals and to guide their work together. Below, we provide examples vision, mission, and goal statements from other food systems councils, taken from their websites:

● From the Regional Food Policy Council of Puget Sound, Washington:
  o Vision: The Regional Food Policy Council envisions a thriving, inclusive and just local and regional food system that enhances the health of: people, diverse communities, economies, and environments.
  o Mission: The Regional Food Policy Council develops just and integrated policy and action recommendations that promote health, sustain and strengthen the local and regional food system, and engage and partner with agriculture, business, communities and governments in the four-county region.

● From the Lane County, Oregon Food Systems Council: To foster community food security and local food system development in Lane County.

● From the New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council: The vision of the policy council is to identify key food and agriculture policy issues and opportunities and address these priorities when set forth by the council. The council works to build the capacity of agencies, organizations, individuals and communities to advocate for local, state and national food and agriculture policies that most benefit all New Mexicans.

● From the Evanston, Illinois Food Systems Council: Evanston Food Council is an action-oriented grassroots group promoting food citizenship to design and implement food and farm economies that work for everyone -- meal by meal, generation by generation.

● Goals from the Oakland Food Policy Council in Oakland, CA:
  o Every Oakland resident is within walking distance to healthy, affordable food.
  o Oakland residents from all communities are conscious of the impact of their food choices on their bodies, their families, their communities and the environment.
  o Oakland residents are active in food policy development and outcomes.
  o The Oakland food system is an engine for local economic development and involves local and regional agricultural communities.
  o Food, hunger, and food systems is a permanent part of the City of Oakland’s agenda.
OFSC is an advisor and contributor on national food policy.

A vision statement describes “the big picture of what you want to achieve”, whereas a mission statement describes the “general statement of how you will achieve the vision” (Hofstrand, 2016). Linked to these are core values shaping and guiding the collective work, strategies defining the ways in which the mission statement is used to achieve the vision, goals describing general statements of what needs to be accomplished, and objectives defining specific milestones with a timeline for achieving the goal (Hofstrand, 2016).

2.5 What does a food systems council do?

Before discussing the visions that our informants had for the WUPFSC, however, we think it is useful to share some of the things that other councils have done, both in Michigan and outside the state. We are fortunate in Michigan that there is already a state-wide coordination of food systems initiatives and councils through the Michigan Local Food Council Network.

The Michigan Good Food Charter is a state-wide initiative to create a roadmap for a regional food system that is “health, green, fair and affordable” (Colasanti et al., 2010). This roadmap emerged from local and community food systems partnerships in MI and is one example of a product or plan that could be adopted or revised to fit our needs in the Western UP. In MI, there is a lack of good food not only in our homes, but schools as well. While good nutritious food is hard to come by, the Michigan Good Food Charter is trying to change all of that. Good food is supposed to be affordable and many are seeing that it is not. This could be due to the fact that they are a lower income individual or family, struggling to survive. However, if this is the case and they have the Bridge Card or SNAP benefits, purchasing healthy should not be a problem, but it is, due to cost. The Michigan Good Food Charter envisions a thriving economy, equity and sustainability for all of Michigan and its people through a food system rooted in local communities and centered on good food-food that is healthy, green, fair and affordable (Colasanti et al., 2010:7). The charter outlines specific goals (see table below) informed by research and community-participation, to support this work.
We envision a thriving economy, equity, and sustainability for all of Michigan and its people through a food system rooted in local communities and centered on good food. By 2020, we believe we can meet or exceed the following goals:

- **Michigan institutions will source 20 percent of their food products from Michigan growers, producers and processors.**
- **Michigan farmers will profitably supply 20 percent of all Michigan institutional, retailer and consumer food purchases and be able to pay fair wages to their workers.**
- **Michigan will generate new agri-food businesses at a rate that enables 20 percent of food purchased in Michigan to come from Michigan.**
- **Eighty percent of Michigan residents (twice the current level) will have easy access to affordable, fresh, healthy food, 20 percent of which is from Michigan sources.**
- **Michigan Nutrition Standards will be met by 100 percent of school meals and 75 percent of schools selling food outside school meal programs.**
- **Michigan schools will incorporate food and agriculture into the pre-K through 12th grade curriculum for all Michigan students and youth will have access to food and agriculture entrepreneurial opportunities.**

Food systems councils can help to enact these changes in a variety of different sectors. At the local level, opportunities exist for the packaging and distribution sector including labeling to distinguish local or regional foods, reducing food waste, and establishing community kitchens and mobile food processing units. In the Western UP, we already see these efforts underway through the work of such grassroots and locally-rooted efforts as the Ryan Street Community Garden in Hancock, MI, where residents have begun outreach through classes such as food processing (canning) to build community, share peer-to-peer education, and reduce food waste. Food labeling initiatives—such as “Grown in the UP” — may represent another possible area to highlight regional and local efforts across sectors.

Food systems councils may also choose to engage in the work of distribution, transportation, wholesaling, and warehousing. While federal farm and food policies may prioritize large-scale infrastructural development and funding, including tax incentives for regional transportation, programs may also fund more regionally-focused warehousing and wholesaling as well as procurement policies that prioritize local foods. Possibilities for policy interventions in these sectors include local permitting for growing/processing food, regulation and promotion of local food businesses, and developing zoning requirements in community planning to create transit routes favorable to pedestrians, from residential areas to grocery stores and food assistance providers. This represents another area of potential for research, as members of the Western UP Food Systems Council may decide to focus some of their efforts on
investigating zoning requirements and transit routes in the Western UP and their impacts on food systems, or any initiative that has ever been developed to promote this as a local objective.

A third sector focuses on access, nutrition, food safety, and retail. Naturally, food safety regulations are targeted at the federal level, as well as the appropriation of funds to programs such as Women, Infants and Children, or WIC. At the state level, the authors suggest establishing zoning restriction limiting fast food in areas frequented by youth, such as near schools and youth-centered facilities. Another opportunity is to incorporate food-access strategies into emergency preparedness plans, and to build local reserves for times of crisis. At the local level, communities can ease licensing requirements for farm stands, and expand access to feeding programs in schools and other facilities. Expansion can include easing limitations on who qualifies for the programs, as well as expanding availability during different times of the year, to include summer feeding programs during summer breaks, or even to offer meals on the weekends, through programs such as through community-supported food programs in schools. For example, currently students in the Keweenaw region are supported by a volunteer-run program called 31 Backpacks, designed to ensure that they have adequate nutrition to sustain them through weekends and school vacations during Thanksgiving and spring break.

Consumption, preparing, preserving and eating comprises another food system sector. While there are a number of programs providing food at the federal level, such as WIC, SNAP, and EBT, there is also room for expansion of farm-to-school programs. At the state level, there are opportunities to expand education and training for culinary arts and sciences, and establishing minimum percentages of locally produced food by public entities. At the regional level, where WUPFSC’s efforts will be focused, this sector is rife with opportunities to preserve Indigenous and ethnic food cultures, introducing city resolutions to require city agencies to buy a minimum percentages of their food from local farmers, restricting fast food restaurants in newly established food zone areas, and providing zoning and tax incentives to attract food retailers to underserved areas. Additionally, schools can provide locally grown fruit and vegetable snacks, and limit soft drink and snack industry availability in schools. Local-level initiatives can also include the introduction of the culinary arts to city parks and recreation activities, creating increased access for community and school gardens, and incentives for community kitchens to preserve locally produced food. This can include developing provisions to expand access on public land for community gardeners.

Waste management, including recycling, re-use, and composting is the final sector. At the federal level, opportunities include offering tax credits for facilities that use renewable energy and establishing standards for food industry water use and recycling. States can direct incentives toward biofuel use initiatives, and work toward developing award programs for the reduction of food waste in landfills. Locally, communities can implement community
composting initiatives, providing composting bins to residents and businesses that are provided to area farms (or, as members of our project have already discussed, providing centralized community composting bins in public spaces).

2.6 Why challenges have food systems councils faced?

For decades, food councils have been popping up throughout the United States to help meet the needs of individuals in regard to food access and security. While each council is structured differently from city to city, state to state, their goal is the same: to help those secure food that is good, nutritious, and healthy. There is little existing literature examining the lifespan of a food systems council, or those whose work fails or ends before meeting their goals (Dean, 2012:78); however, Harper et al. (2009) discuss some of the concerns contributing these situations.

Circumstances can be different for each council, however there are a few “red flags” to watch out for (Harper et al., 2009). Some FSCs can have a tendency to be heavily dependent on one charismatic personality or one strong organization. If their participation discontinues, it might be difficult for the FSC to continue. In the same instance, if the FSC is structured in such a way that its participants are appointed by executive order or the legislature, leaving food systems councils vulnerable when political power changes (Harper et al., 2009).

Lack of funding is also a red flag and again depends on how the FSC is structured. If they are government appointed, they usually rely on staff time from the government. This of course varies on budgets at the state and local level and may only have staff on a part-time basis. In the case of a grassroots-organized council, participants volunteer and the council depends upon their participation to keep going. Some councils may focus on a single issue or have an extremely narrow goal and once it is achieved, the council may lack focus, momentum, fail to agree on the next steps and stop. To aid in understanding, here are some councils that disbanded and the reasons:

- Iowa Food Policy Council: No longer exists due to a change in political leadership. It was created through an executive order by then-Governor Tom Vilsack and Neil Hamilton, director of Drake Agricultural Law Center. When the new governor came into office, he did not disband it, but also did not appoint any members (Dean, 2012).
- Marin Food Policy Council: Dissolved due to the county having too many groups and organizations working on food policy. All of the needs were being addressed and many of the recommendations that the Marin Countywide Plan were included in the agricultural element.
- Berkeley Food Policy Council: Dissolved for two reasons: First, a three-year grant from the USDA supporting staff and meeting costs expired. Second, many of the members of the group had become involved in particular spin-off programs, that the council had initiated and then became independent programs.
LA Food Justice Network: No longer exists due to lack of funding and members dropped out as their time became consumed with their own organizations agendas (Harper et al., 2009).

2.7 What is the relationship between food systems councils and communities?

The concept of “community” means different things to different people. In effort to learn more about how a community-based approach can inform our food systems efforts in the Western UP, we synthesized readings of different community-based projects addressing sustainability challenges. These readings argue for greater specificity around the term “community” when undertaking projects based at “community,” local, regional, or other levels (Flint et al., 2008). To circumvent some of the problems arising from a lack of clarity surrounding this term, Flint et al. (2008) propose a framework for community that helps channel this term’s focus and limits the extent to which proper usage leaves room for the exclusion of diverse interests and values:

Our framework takes social interaction as the central element of community—that is, community emerges from social interaction. Community, from this perspective, occurs in places and is place oriented, but the place itself, strictly speaking, is not the community. Instead, community is conceptualized as a process of place-oriented social interactions that express shared interests among residents of a local society and are expressed in prevailing local narratives.” (Flint et al., 2008:529).

This framework informed our process by underscoring the importance of learning from members of our community as they shared their stories and insights about local food. This definition also served us well as a frame of reference as students approaching this initiative as “outsiders” to the community (say, those who live here only to attend school). So, while one participant may be local, and therefore well-versed in prevailing local narratives, others may need to focus their efforts on learning to listen deeply as they build connections with the community being studied. To apply this framework to community-based food system development, then, means listening carefully to the interests and values that are expressed as local narratives unfold throughout the process.

FSCs can engage the community by creating space for multi-dimensional development within the community. Space created as observed in previous projects of such include social, political, intellectual, and economic spaces which can stand as pillar to the success of the program (Feenstra, 2002). Social space represents having platforms that facilitate social interaction among members of the community (Feenstra, 2002). Such platforms may include farmers markets and community gardens. The political space allows for members participation in policy making processes, fostering democratic participation in the food system (Feenstra, 2002). The intellectual space created by councils creates opportunities for leadership in community food systems as members acquire further trainings, skills, and knowledge and
participate in skill-sharing together (Feenstra, 2002). Members can attend such like conferences, specialized, trainings, and symposiums organized at local, state and national level. Lastly the economic space promotes recirculation of financial capital within locality based on employment opportunities that can emanate from FSC activities.

Additionally, community-based research enables approaches to local problems that directly involve those who will be most affected -- residents. This creates an alternative to non-participatory decision-making models, which run a greater risk of overlooking issues of justice. Recently, concerns regarding social justice have risen to the top of the agenda for food systems activists, scholars, and researchers (Allen, 2008). However, the efficacy of efforts to ameliorate social justice issues have been widely varied. Despite this growing concern for social justice issues, food insecurity is on the rise; meanwhile, farm workers across the United State continue to be exploited at staggering rates (Allen, 2008).

One might assume that local food systems are naturally more “just” or are, by default, “better” than industrialized or dominant food systems; this is mistaken. Elevating equity in food systems requires thoughtful, intentional work. A just food system requires both dismantling the oppression built within dominant food systems and healing from the harms perpetuated through the loss of healthy and culturally-appropriate foodways. Contemporary alternative food system activists have positioned localism as the ideological centerpiece guiding movement efforts (Kruzic, 2016). Because of this emphasis, questions of racial justice are often put on hold by alternative food system activists. In a study of localized food systems organizing efforts across the country, respondents often used language that was inadvertently excluding people of color from food system activities (Kruzic 2016). In other instances, people used language that distanced themselves from responsibility of participating in work that addressed racial inequality (Kruzic 2016). A first step in mitigating issues of racial justice is recognizing this language of exclusion and then disrupting its use in food systems work. If a food systems movement is not anchored in justice, it runs the risk of recreating the same power hierarchies of the conventional system (Allen, 2008). As food system organizers, it is important for us to incorporate justice factors into the fabric of our research and organizing work. In doing so, we shed light on the ways in which privilege and inequality are socially created and thus, solvable through social change.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this report is to share the results of a community-based research project studying the potential for local food systems work in Houghton/Hancock and at MTU. Before delving into this project’s methodology, we think it is useful to discuss what it means to say that a research project is “community-based.” Community-based research is a form of applied research, which tends to be driven by organizational needs and goals, and is closely related to immediate, practical issues (Stoecker, 2005). Applied research differs from “traditional”
academic research (otherwise known as “basic research”) in that the latter is generally guided by the interests of researchers, whether or not they pertain to topical issues.

This research project began at a very broad conceptual level. We began by assessing the food system and its assets from our own knowledge and embodied experiences in the community. We then synthesized the literature on food system councils and alternative food system movements to identify best practices and relevant points of inquiry. We invited individuals with relevant expertise to our class to learn more about the community, the food system, and community-based research projects. We’ve taken an intervention based approach by partnering with community members and organizations to catalyze an “iterative and cyclic process of action and reflection” between the researchers and the communities involved (Kantamneni, Winkler, and Calvert, 2018:7). Through this, the project seeks to inform the communities involved by redefining the relations of knowledge production. This deviates from “traditional” research, where knowledge is produced by and for the academic community and influenced by institutional and corporate interest. Our approach takes its path of inquiry based on its engagement with the community and produces knowledge through this engagement for the use of the community.

When beginning exploratory research like this, an important first step is forging strong relationships with community members and organizations. Fortunately, our project partners involved in the formation of the Western U.P. Food System Council gave this project a good platform to purposefully engage with our communities. The main challenge on projects such as this is finding research questions and processes that inspires the imagination of the community involved (Stoecker, 2005). To uncover these sources of inspiration, we used empirical qualitative social science methods – participant observation, structured interviews, and a focus group -- with community members to begin formulating a new understanding of the embodied experiences that these people are having within the food system.

As we were conducting our literature review, we welcomed a number of visitors to our classroom, visited local farms and gardens, interviewed 11 key stakeholders, and hosted a focus group of Michigan Tech students. Nine participants attended this focus group, which was comprised of undergraduate and graduate students. These methods were guided by the following research questions:

1. What interest do people have in our local food system?
2. How do people define our local food system?
3. How does our food system shape our local cultures and identities here in the Keweenaw?
4. What should members of the Council know before going forward with their work?

After getting approval from the MTU Institutional Review Board, we began developing a list of individuals to contact based on their knowledge and experience in our local food system.
We then divided up the identified individuals and began with the interview process. After meeting with an individual involved with running the food pantry on campus, we thought it might be apt to do some more in-depth research about food access on our campus. We decided to conduct a focus group on food access on campus and recruited a sample from the MTU community to have dinner with us and discuss their experiences.

Using participatory observation, a focus group, and interviews as research techniques worked well for what we hoped to learn. Interviews allowed us to get in-depth insights into specific aspects of our food system from the eyes of the experts, while our focus group allowed us to get really rich data on the opportunities and challenges that students face in the food system. Our experiences attending community meetings and engaging in participant observation allowed us to compare what we were learning from our readings with real experiences in our communities. Thus, our sampling coverage is limited to a theoretical sampling of community members from Houghton County, and the resulting analysis only covers the perspectives of some individuals within this geographical area. In other words, our discussions represent only a subset of the Western UP region.

4. Recommendations for the Western UP Food Systems Council

Based upon our literature review, interviews, focus group, and participant observation in a number of local events, we identify recommendations for the WUPFSC going forward. The good news is that there was a lot of interest in and ideas for WUPFSC’s work from those with whom we spoke and interacted with throughout our project.

Our collective analysis identified three primary findings across our data that identify needs and opportunities for WUPFSC: 1) building partnerships, 2) facilitating awareness and education, and 3) supporting community interests.

At the WUPFSC’s first meeting in Hancock, MI in October 2018, community members participated in a visioning activity where they shared their ideas about the local food system (Figure 4). Members of our class participated in this exercise as participants and observers. The activity involved each person at the meeting in contributing to a collective visioning process that will inform eventual priorities. The photo shows a visualization summarizing the opportunities, challenges, and recommendations identified by our project partners.
The visualization activity complimented what we were hearing from the community members we interviewed and spoke with at our focus group, though different and more specific opportunities and challenges were identified in these more in-depth conversations.

In the following section, we will present our findings with recommendations, opportunities, and challenges for the WUPFSC listed under each. These three findings -- 1) building partnerships, 2) facilitating awareness and education, and 3) supporting community interests -- are representative of topics that came up often in our interactions with partners. Opportunities were largely framed in terms of existing attributes and resources that this community can use to its advantage, while challenges were identified according to participants’ experiences with this community and the food system here. Finally, partners offered numerous recommendations, identifying many things that they would like to see happen in the local food system in the future, or through the activities of the WUPFSC. Opportunities and challenges were often entangled with participants’ larger visions and recommendations. We summarize these in the visualization in Figure 5.
Finding 1: Building Partnerships

Finding: Those interviewed and who participated in the focus group identified a large number of potential and existing partnerships, and expressed the belief that strong partnerships are the key to a strong local food system and a successful FSC.

Recommendations: The WUPFSC can strengthen its partners’ abilities to forge partnerships by 1) creating an information hub to share existing and emerging local resources, activities, and key stakeholders in each county; and 2) creating opportunities and space for partners to share interests and create meaningful involvement and partnerships among those with common visions.

The desire for these collaborations is reflected in the following quotes:

Without collaboration, the program will not succeed. Because this community is too small. We don't have the capacity for each individual service facility to do it on their own. And the schools are a really great example of that.

—Interviewee #1, a community foundation member

[T]here are resources there to address [food insecurity], but if they're all fractured like that in different public schools -- Finlandia has a program, Tech has a program, churches have a ton of programs, community groups have programs, and there's a lot of resources there, that in my mind, if pooled could do a lot more…”

— Interviewee #7, volunteer in the Husky Food Access Network
As discussed in the food systems council literature, a council can organize these disparate community actors and leverage their collective capacities for food systems improvements. However, a council can expect to run into some challenges through the process of building partnerships. These challenges may include poor communication among key stakeholders, as well as diverging values and conflicts. As one interviewee specified, keeping communication clear across all partners is important:

_So, first of all everyone should be on the same page, which I think they are anyway, which is good, that is a huge start. And I think just communication is key, communicate within the department on what can be done, what should be done._

— Interviewee #4, dining services employee

One interviewee identified the need for “built-in succession” as a way to ensure strong partnerships among organizations aiming to create programs and initiatives geared towards food system change. They shared their experience with a program in Schoolcraft County, geared towards supplementing the local school’s lunch program. This took the form of a community garden, to be tended to and shared by the school and community gardeners alike. This program’s model was dependent on partnerships among school district entities, community gardeners, and the local 4-H program, and made funders optimistic: they could see that the program had built-in succession because of involvement by and opportunities for multiple community groups and stakeholders:

_So team together the school, the 4-H program, interested community gardeners, and team together to enable something like this to happen [...] it’s not one person trying to do this who will burn out after a year or two, [...] there’s a succession built into the program. And that succession will build success._

— Interviewee #1, a community foundation member

Even in our small sample, we could identify gaps in communication – community members not knowing what work was being done in other areas of the community or unaware of existing resources. The WUPFSC could collect existing information and work through an information hub, sharing with the wider community all of the existing and emerging local resources, activities, and key stakeholders in each county. Through this work, the WUPFSC would create organic opportunities and space for partners to share interests and create meaningful involvement and partnerships among those with common visions.
Finding 2: Awareness/Education

Finding: Many of our participants discussed education as a possible solution to many of the issue that our food system faces, acknowledging the need to promote healthy eating. However, education takes a variety of different forms, and community members were specific about the forms that they thought worked best.

Recommendation: Those we spoke with did not recommend lectures, nor did they recommend providing nutritional guidelines telling people what they should and shouldn’t eat. Instead, they recommended that education take the form of a conversation or a dialogue that meaningfully engages people, takes their experiences into account, and speaks to their needs.

Opportunities to improve education of and awareness about our local food systems are highlighted in the quotes below:

There’s a need to promote healthy eating. Whether that is through education or accessibility to fresh produce…
— Interviewee #3, restaurant manager

Yeah, I think in terms of our food system here we have a lot of issues with our community with probably not caloric deficiency but nutritional deficiency. You know people are eating anything that are not very good for them or like the school I’ve had contact with lunch program and director there, she said that kids come through and they don’t know what Broccoli is, so they’re not eating good at home. So, there’s a lot of room for nutritional education in our community and they don’t have a salad bar at the school so that to me is a huge opportunity within our food system to get our community healthier and teach them from young age.
— Interviewee #5, community development executive

Many different forms of education are applicable to food systems intervention. All levels of schooling, including alternative schools, need robust means for feeding students. Education is also important for community members and community awareness, those who may implement programs, and for specific food systems-related trades.

One participant underscored this point while describing a program they had taken part in as an educator at the Bridge School, an alternative high school formerly located in Hancock, MI. In this program, a local chef came to the school to train students how to prepare healthy meals. The trick was to make these lessons relevant to what students had at their disposal -- and sometimes, this wasn’t much. The participant shared:

[M]any of these students couch hop and they might only have access to a microwave. So, okay, what can we prepare that would be a nutritious meal for them using only a
microwave? And that worked out really well, the kids were really excited by it and I think they got something out of it.

In addition to identifying education as a food systems need, one participant also identified the role that nutrition plays in academic success. This interviewee also highlighted a number of opportunities for food systems intervention in local schools, tying student’s needs to recommendations for food systems change:

*I knew... how important nutrition is for the development of the brain, and how hunger plays such a big part in academic success. ... So those things became very concerning to me when I saw the eating habits of the [alternative high school] students.*

— Interview #1, a community foundation member

Participants also discussed education beyond the primary and secondary (K-12) levels. Community education also occurs through job training programs, colleges and universities, social networks, and affiliate organizations.

**Finding 3: Supporting Community Interests**

**Finding:** Those we interviewed or spoke with shared an array of ideas about how to better support community interests in our local food systems. We separate our findings about community interests into three sections – 1) supporting vulnerable communities 2) supporting local producers, and 3) building on local traditions, cultural practices, and local histories.

**Recommendation:** While interconnected, each group—vulnerable communities and local producers—has specific unique needs and interests that need prioritized in outreach, education, or other programming. Using our third finding to build on local traditions, support local cultural practices, and celebrate local histories through food can be one way to both make local food more accessible to all while simultaneously supporting local producers.

**Sub-theme 3a: Supporting Vulnerable Communities**

Many of the community members who participated in our study acknowledged the relatively high levels of poverty in Houghton County and the surrounding region. One participant, who is affiliated with one of the community foundations, expressed, “[W]e identify key areas of need in our community, and for the last two years and going forward -- because we don’t see the need going away — we’ve identified food security as one of our key issues that need addressing.”

Cost is big barrier to quality consumption habits. A number of focus group participants expressed strategies that they use to mitigate this barrier to access, including taking advantage of unwanted produce at reduced prices and shopping when deals are available, like Student
Sunday at the Keweenaw Co-Op. Students also use the discounted produce bin at the Keweenaw Co-Op to purchase produce at reduced cost. The high standards that a lot of retailers have for the quality of their produce presents an opportunity to increase access for low income consumers by collecting unwanted produce and selling it at reduced prices. Focus group participants also stated ways that they try to cut costs include gardening, shopping at Walmart, as well as supporting local farmers by purchasing eggs. While there is local food being grown, one focus group member stated that they had no idea what stores it was being sold in:

There is a potato farm next to the farm that I am starting in Chassell, and I have no idea where those potatoes are sold. They have a little booth, but they never have potatoes out. But I know they are pulling up potatoes, but I don’t know where the food that is harvested here is going.”

Many food system participants simply enjoy being apart of the process and would like to be more engaged, as exemplified in the following quote:

The things I’ve seen in the last 20 years have given me a lot of optimism. The development of the community gardens, all over! And little pocket gardens here and there. I think that illustrates how people are beginning to see that what we can do ourselves is pretty powerful!
— Interviewee #1, community foundation member

This ethic of self-efficacy that was common throughout our research. In our focus group at MTU, students expressed a desire to grow their own food, but various barriers including lack of access to space, kept a number of the individuals from gardening for their own subsistence. When asked about solution to this issue, one participant said: “More community gardens. I had a hard time getting in to one this summer so I think more community spaces.” Students living off campus do not have access to gardening spaces where they rent:

I live in an apartment complex and we have, well…. I think if you could have something like the Wads garden [a garden at Wadsworth Hall, a residence hall at MTU], where it is a public space for the residents that live in that apartment to use, I think that it would fill up very quickly. Just to have that space. I know a lot of people feel like they don’t have the space or resources to do it.

Both community gardens in the Houghton-Hancock communities reported having long waiting lists. This seems to display that there is a need for more community gardens and spaces. Many of our focus group participants attempted to overcome this through various unique alternatives such as: windowsill plants, bucket gardens, and gardening in rented yards against the policy of their landlords. While they admitted these were not ideal spaces, a lack available space left them with no other choice. For some of these individuals, these
circumstance hindered their ability to be self-sufficient and achieve food security during the summer months.

Sub-theme 3b: Supporting Local Producers

While our sample was small, we did interview three individuals who work at local groceries, as well as one dining services employee, and one local restaurant chef. These five individuals were enthusiastic about local products expressed interest in better supporting local producers; however, they identified some of the challenges they face putting their values into practice due to a lack of localized organization and infrastructure connecting producers to markets. Below we summarize some opportunities and challenges they identified in their desire to support local producers.

The ability to increase the amount of local products being sold directly by the producers, or indirectly through the local distributions or bartering is a mutually beneficial arrangement for all involved. Supporting local producers by purchasing their products is not a new or radical approach to improving regional food systems. It is already happening throughout the Upper Peninsula, in various forms such as farmers markets, roadside stands, and everyday products sold by local distributors such as jams, chocolate, pasties, honey, and craft brews. Currently, the Upper Peninsula Food Exchange\(^2\) and Taste the Local Difference\(^3\) provide opportunities for local growers and vendors to connect through purchasing. Further, increasing these market paths build upon a rich regional history of exchange of cultural foods and celebrations. Local business owners and staff we interviewed shared that they would like to better support the sales of these products in their stores. For example, this comment from a local store manager identifies that it is important for their business to work with and support local producers:

\[\text{We do find UP companies we like to carry the UP products in the store, so we just hunt around, and when we find something we, you know. Call the owner and try to work with them. Independent. I like the independence, I'd like to try to support them. [...] That is one of the advantages that I have being independent is [we are] not like a corporate store. [...] I can bring in anything I really want to [...] if I think it'll sell.}\]
— Interviewee #11, Grocery store manager

One of the biggest challenges in supporting local producers or distributors is understanding how to create mutually beneficial partnerships while adhering to government regulations. Confusion as to what licenses are needed, and how to follow proper regulations

\(^2\) For more information on the U.P. Food Exchange, visit: [https://upfoodexchange.com/](https://upfoodexchange.com/)
\(^3\) For more information on Taste the Local Difference, visit: [https://www.localdifference.org/](https://www.localdifference.org/)
when buying and reselling from a local producer, seems to be a major stopping point for many local businesses:

I don't know, as far as regulation goes. Buying from farmers, I don't know what our responsibilities are. Outside of our vendors, and if I start doing it on my own, I'm not too sure if that works for those farmers. I'm not too sure what they have on their end.
— Interviewee #9, Grocery store manager

Sub-theme 3c: Building on Local Traditions, Cultural Practices, and Local History

Communities in the Western UP have diverse, long, and rich histories filled with associated traditional customs and foodways. There are also multiple diverse cultural practices to continuously be mindful of and plan for when advising a local food systems council for this community. These all represent key potential platforms to serve as inspiration for higher civic engagement. As a local restaurant manager shared, “Hunting and fishing are part of the food system and are a part of nutrition for a lot of people and it supplements their income basically. It’s certainly related to our culture.” Similarly, a focus group member shared the importance of treaty rights in maintaining a healthy food system: “It also seems really significant that the Keweenaw is on ceded territory. So that [the treaty] gave up land to the Anishinaabe but maintained the right to hunt, fish and gather [were maintained by the Anishinaabe].”

As mentioned earlier, this ethic of self-efficacy was very common among the community members with whom we spoke. Participants throughout the interviews and focused groups mentioned that hunting and fishing served important source of food, nutrition, and connection to nature:

We have pasties, those are huge. [...] We did one for my wife’s family reunion, they did their own little survey and bought pasties from different places. Everybody sampled them and then they had to decide which one was the best one, and whether there should be rutabaga in it or not, the big eternal debate. And of course there’s thimbleberries, blueberries, local jam, that kind of stuff.
— Interviewee #3, Local restaurant manager

In addition to self-perceived cultural values like environmental conservation that the participants and the described community aspire to uphold, cost remains a large obstacle in the pursuit of a consumer lifestyle that is reflective of those cultural values:

There’s this interesting dichotomy of the UP in general. It has this culture of natural landscape and being closer to nature, and our food systems is not really echoing that as
much, as most people are lower income, [so] they can’t necessarily cannot afford to do the things that they want to do.

— Focus group participant

For the food systems council, these cultural values could be vital for leveraging support for projects that seek to maintain the health of the cultivated ecological systems while simultaneously expanding food access for all members of society.

5. Next Steps

This report summarizes the results of an exploratory research study conducted to inform the development of the Western UP Food Systems Council, conducted by students in the Communities and Research course at Michigan Technological University in Fall 2018. This study addressed a) community perceptions of the food system in the Houghton/Hancock area and at MTU; b) needs and opportunities for consumers and producers in the area; and c) ideas that informants had for the WUPFSC’s next steps.

We hope that the partnership between MTU and WUPFSC will maintain the continuity of community-based research in which researchers participate in collaboration with communities to assist development of this important grassroots effort. Through the collaborative review of literature by the student researchers, there have been multiple lessons learned, avenues of approach presented, and some preliminary advising made to personnel identified as key to the formation of a local food systems council. Along with the preliminary research, literature review, and interviews, there have been formal meetings and a focus group to establish connections, gauge public opinion, and garner support. All of these have reflected strong local interest and support for a food systems council comprised of a network devoted to food access for those who need it.
Works Cited


Dean, J.C. *The Iowa Food Policy Council: a case study*. 2012. Graduate Theses and Dissertations. 12827. [https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/12827](https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/12827)


Schiff, R. 2008. The Role of Food Policy Councils in Developing Sustainable Food Systems, Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, 3:2-3, 206-228, DOI: 10.1080/19320240802244017


Appendix B: Research Protocols and Interview Questions

The following question guide was used in focus groups and interviews, and was approved by the Michigan Tech University Institutional Review Board.

Questions to guide Focus Groups and Interviews:

1. Please introduce yourself.
   ● Where do you work....
   ● Where are you from....

2. What is your interest in our local food system?
   ● How do you participate in this system as a consumer, producer, buyer? through your work or volunteering?

3. How would you describe our local food system?
   ● What are its boundaries?
   ● Who is involved as key players?
   ● What is working well?
   ● What opportunities might it support (social, economic, or environmental)?
   ● What is needed? Where is there room to grow?

4. How does our food system shape our local cultures and identities here in the Keweenaw?
   ● What are some examples of how we celebrate our local food traditions here?
   ● Where are there opportunities for growth?

5. I shared that several community partners including the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Michigan Tech, Western UP Planning and Development Region, and Western UP Public Health Department are working on developing a local food systems council. I have some questions specifically meant to help guide and inform their work.
   ● What should this council look like? Who should be included in this council?
   ● What should they do? What should be their scope of work?
   ● What recommendations do you have for them?
   ● What do you think they should do first?
   ● What challenges might they encounter?
   ● How might this council contribute to your work/interests?
   ● How might this council contribute to the campus, city, county, or region?
   ● How can this council increase public interaction in the food system?

6. Finally, is there anything you’d like to share that I haven’t asked about already?
## Appendix C: Community Food Systems Resources

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>Advancing A Local Food Council Network in Michigan: An Assessment by Michaelle Rehmann and Kathryn Colasanti</td>
<td>2014 assessment report based on interviews with MI local food council leaders</td>
<td><a href="https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/advancing_a_local_food_council_network_in_michigan">https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/advancing_a_local_food_council_network_in_michigan</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Regional Food Systems at Michigan State University</td>
<td>State-wide support and resources for food systems work</td>
<td><a href="https://www.canr.msu.edu/foodsystems/">https://www.canr.msu.edu/foodsystems/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Food System Resources</td>
<td>Compilation of case studies and literature hosted by UC Davis</td>
<td><a href="http://asi.ucdavis.edu/programs/sarep/research-initiatives/fs/assessment/community-food-system-resources">http://asi.ucdavis.edu/programs/sarep/research-initiatives/fs/assessment/community-food-system-resources</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Policy Network Resources</td>
<td>Evaluation &amp; assessment tools from councils across the country hosted by John Hopkins University</td>
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<td>Indigenous Food Systems Network</td>
<td>Designed as a resource by the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty</td>
<td><a href="https://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org/">https://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org/</a></td>
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<td>Michigan Good Food Summit</td>
<td>Meeting in East Lansing October each year</td>
<td><a href="https://www.canr.msu.edu/michiganfood/summit/">https://www.canr.msu.edu/michiganfood/summit/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan Local Food Systems Network</td>
<td>Listserv, educational opportunities, peer-to-peer resources</td>
<td><a href="https://www.canr.msu.edu/local_food_council_network/">https://www.canr.msu.edu/local_food_council_network/</a></td>
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<td>Michigan State University North Farm in Chatham, MI</td>
<td>Learning farm featuring farmer apprentice program, field days, and on-site research</td>
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<td><a href="https://www.canr.msu.edu/uprec_north_farm/">https://www.canr.msu.edu/uprec_north_farm/</a></td>
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<td>Midwest Organic Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)</td>
<td>Annual February conference and educational resources for farmers and community food systems advocates</td>
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<td>Taste the Local Difference</td>
<td>Michigan-based and focused food marketing agency featuring directory of local food providers/growers</td>
<td><a href="https://www.localdifference.org/">https://www.localdifference.org/</a></td>
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<td>Upper Peninsula Food Exchange</td>
<td>Portal for farmers, businesses, and individuals looking to connect with and actively participate in local food system</td>
<td><a href="https://upfoodexchange.com/">https://upfoodexchange.com/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>United States Department of Agriculture Sustainable Ag Research &amp; Education</td>
<td>Provides grants and educational resources to farmers, businesses, and researchers</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northcentralsare.org">www.northcentralsare.org</a></td>
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Appendix D: Community Food Resources

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<td>31 Backpacks</td>
<td>Local resource providing food for at-risk children</td>
<td>(906) 231-1472; <a href="mailto:31backpacks@gmail.com">31backpacks@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury House</td>
<td>Michigan Technological University student organization, community meals and food pantry in Houghton, MI</td>
<td>(906) 482-6039; <a href="mailto:chouse@mtu.edu">chouse@mtu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Action Agency</td>
<td>Provides emergency food assistance and senior supplementary program, periodic food pantry in Houghton, MI</td>
<td>(906) 482-5528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions Unlimited Drop-in Center</td>
<td>Peer support center with communal kitchen, coffee and meals in Hancock, MI</td>
<td>(906) 482-4577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husky Food Access Network HuskyFAN</td>
<td>Michigan Technological University food pantry – open to all</td>
<td>(906) 487-2560; <a href="mailto:huskyfan@mtu.edu">huskyfan@mtu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let's Eat Community Meals</td>
<td>Community meals served monthly at local churches</td>
<td>See: Keweenaw.org events calendar for monthly meeting times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly</td>
<td>Holiday meals and holiday parties, Meals on Wheels</td>
<td>(906) 482-6944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pewabic Street Garden</td>
<td>Community garden in Houghton, MI</td>
<td>(906) 483-3754; <a href="http://www.pewabicgarden.org">www.pewabicgarden.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Contact Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Street Garden</td>
<td>Community garden and kitchen in Hancock, MI</td>
<td>(906) 231-5256 <a href="mailto:louniboss@gmail.com">louniboss@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>Addresses basic needs</td>
<td>(906) 482-3420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincent de Paul</td>
<td>Thrift store, charity addressing basic needs</td>
<td>(906) 482-7705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Food Service Program</td>
<td>Email list available for notification about free community meals</td>
<td>(517) 241-5374; <a href="https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-66254_34491---,00.html">https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-66254_34491---,00.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western UP Food Bank</td>
<td>Food bank located at 310 E Sharon Ave, Houghton, MI 49931</td>
<td>Contact Jean Laberge at (906) 482-5548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Handout Summarizing Findings

Cultivating Community Food Resilience: Recommendations for the Western UP Food Systems Council

In fall 2018, students at MTU began a preliminary assessment of food systems opportunities in our Houghton/Hancock and MTU communities. We interviewed 11 key stakeholders in our community, held a focus group on campus, and attended numerous community meetings and events. This work is ongoing. We identified what was already underway and what people would like to see in the future.

“It’s convening the people who will be impacted by [the Food Systems Council] as well, if you can identify them. Ask them what they need! Ask them what they need. Sometimes I think we get so carried away with what we think people need, that really doesn’t meet what they need. So, if we don’t ask them, how will we ever know?” – Interviewee #1

Key take-aways

● There is interest in our local food systems and food systems efforts are underway
● Those we spoke with see the need for a food systems council
● People are eager to collaborate and contribute ideas/connections
● People asked for increased communication and resources to improve their efforts
● Increased networking and organizing across different interests and sectors will leverage existing efforts and increase the health of our food system

Figure 1 Findings from Preliminary Food Systems Assessment in Houghton/Hancock