



# STRATEGIC PLAN

2014 to 2018





This Strategic Plan calls for the Food Funders to *Learn, Act, Welcome, Lead, and Support.*

## Introduction

The Greater Philadelphia Food Funders started meeting in 2009, creating a network for knowledge sharing, group learning, and collaboration. The group formalized when two people, one of whom was a program officer at a large family foundation, and the other, a private donor and trustee of a community foundation, volunteered to be co-chairs. The co-founders hosted meetings with guest speakers and helped to convene a local Planning Committee to host a conference in Philadelphia for a national funder group, the Sustainable Agriculture and Food System Funders. As meetings became more frequent, the Delaware Valley Grantmakers (DVG) offered to make the Food Funders an official funder group within its membership organization. The group grew from an initial meeting of 30 interested individuals to a network of 120 individuals. As the group has grown, it has contributed quality learning and vitality to the DVG network, while drawing on the time and resources of DVG's staff and infrastructure.

Funders, as with most individuals and organizations, work together after developing trust and common interests over many years, through shared experiences. Over the last four years, the Food Funders have participated in many learning sessions and networked with other food system funder groups from around the country. Individual funders have collaborated on convening efforts, such as an event for private donors, and funding efforts, such as providing local matching funds to access federal stimulus funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

The original co-chairs created a leadership model in which alternating co-chair positions rotate to new members every two years. Co-chairs are volunteers, although activities fit with an individual's job and offer professional development opportunities. Subsequent co-chairs created an Annual Reflections meeting to review the group's activities, plan for a new year of activity, and ultimately, ask: "Does the group add value to our work? Should the group still exist?" This annual tradition provides an important check-in.

Initial funding for the group activities was started with a small grant (\$10,000) to DVG from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's food system technical and financial assistance initiative, which was funded by the William Penn Foundation. Since then, The Philadelphia Foundation, Claneil Foundation, and St. Christopher's Foundation for Children have made small contributions to the Food Funders to recapitalize its fund. Funds have been used only for direct expenses incurred by the group's programming and other activities.

While the Food Funders have accomplished a lot in a short amount of time, the group continues to be a loose network. The food system presents complex health, economic, environmental, and equity problems that call for a high level of collaboration. The co-chairs are taking this opportunity to create a strategic plan that allows the group to remain strong through regular leadership transition, respond to some members' requests for collective action, more deeply engage the growing number of members, and establish more regularity while still enjoying informality and familiarity.

# Vision for the Greater Philadelphia Food System

A sustainable regional food system that provides all people a safe and nutritious food supply grown in a manner that protects health and the environment and adds economic and social value to rural, suburban, and urban communities.

## Mission for the Greater Philadelphia Food Funders

The Greater Philadelphia Food Funders seek to create positive, lasting impacts in the regional food system by supporting collective learning and collaboration, promoting good policy and innovative solutions, energizing individual members, and enriching member organizations.

## Strategic Goals

The Greater Philadelphia Food Funders have identified five goals to organize its collective activities. The goals, strategies, and proposed actions will be revisited and prioritized at the Annual Reflections meeting.



### Learn

Learn collectively through shared experiences



### Act

Maximize effective food system grant-making



### Welcome

Create a strong community of diverse funders



### Lead

Embrace shared leadership



### Support

Engage and support the community of food system grantees



**Goal 1: Learn**  
**Learn collectively through shared experiences** to better understand social inequities, environmental challenges, and innovative policy and programmatic solutions.

## Strategies

- » Provide opportunities for colleagues to learn together, share experiences, and explore new ideas
  - Institute quarterly meetings that incorporate several annual activities, including the Annual Reflections Meeting and learning sessions as determined by members' interests;
  - Hold policy briefings on topical issues, such as "A Regional Agenda for the Farm Bill";
  - Encourage members to host informal "Lunch & Learns" as small-group discussion opportunities, such as a grant announcement or a guest speaker's visit, arise.
- » Disseminate information on food system funding
  - Coordinate outreach strategies and activities with DVG's Communication Strategy and provide an update for DVG's monthly newsletter;

## Sample Learning Session Topics

- The Role of Healthcare in Addressing Food Insecurity
- Fracking and the Food System
- Federal Policy Roundup: Farm Bill, Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization, and other legislation
- Camden City Food Innovation Tour
- Chester City Food Access Tour
- Chester County Food Bank—What makes it different?
- Small Business and Fresh Food Access
- Advertising Food to Children
- Center for High Impact Philanthropy's Food Donor Compass
- Food Policy Councils—What do they do?
- USDA Census of Agriculture 2012: The picture of farming in Greater Philadelphia
- Community Safety and Its Impact on Food Access
- The SNAP Enrollment Gap
- Continue to write a newsletter with recurring sections, including a feature story, and use social media platforms, such as blogs and Twitter, to improve efficiency;
- Seek opportunities in local media to establish a blog or a series of informative articles highlighting food system funding, collaborative work, and/or grantees' efforts;
- Maintain a comprehensive and confidential e-mail list, which includes non-DVG members, to distribute newsletters and event invitations;
- Host an Annual Food Funder Roundtable and produce an Annual Food Funding Report compiling members' relevant food system grants.



**Goal 2: Act**  
**Maximize effective food system grant-making** by proactively identifying critical gaps in the regional food system, empowering funders to collaborate on joint actions, and measuring impact.

- » Learn from other colleagues engaged in funding
  - Organize an exchange with another regional food funder group, such as the New York City-based Community Food Funders;
  - Hold a joint learning session with another regional affinity/funder group, such as the Pennsylvania Health Funders Collaborative.

### Strategies

- » Create opportunities for partnership and collaboration that lead to multi-field partnerships and more effective food system grant-making
  - Identify gaps in regional food system funding;
  - Create a DVG members-only e-mail listserv that allows members to directly e-mail the group;
  - Host a biannual private donor event with partners such as The Philadelphia Foundation, National Philanthropic Trust, and Vanguard Charitable;
  - Undertake a joint project, such as authoring or commissioning an issue brief, or create shared metrics that can measure change in the regional food system over time.

### Opportunities for Collective Action

- Create shared metrics and shared evaluation
- Focus and align grants for a common purpose and track impact
- Fund double-value farmers' market coupons and double-value supermarket coupons/incentive programs
- Fund Food Policy Councils
- Create and fund "Fresh Rx" programs in hospitals associated with health conversion foundations
- Create a regional position or agenda for future Farm Bills, Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization, and other federal legislation
- Commission or author an issue brief on legislation, policy, or government program



**Goal 3: Welcome**  
**Create a strong community of diverse funders** that builds trusting relationships between members, recruits and welcomes new members, and retains current members.

### Strategies

- » Grow and sustain an engaged membership
  - Meet with prospective members, including foundations not readily identified as food funders, and actively recruit new members to DVG by tracking which individuals regularly attend events;
  - Welcome and recognize new Food Funder members by introducing them in the newsletter;
  - Continue informal social get-togethers, such as happy hours and dinners;
  - Allow for non-programmed networking opportunities at quarterly meetings;
  - Develop policies, such as à la carte program fees for non-DVG members, to strengthen the group and offer more opportunities for broader involvement.

### Benefits to DVG Membership

All types of funders interested and active in food-related philanthropy are encouraged to join the Greater Philadelphia Food Funders. While membership in DVG is not necessary to participate in many of the group's activities, there are advantages to joining the regional association of grantmakers. Membership provides access to the full range of DVG services and programming and increases DVG's organizational capacity to provide support and content to the Food Funders. Additionally, some of the proposed strategies within this plan, such as participation in an Annual Food Funder Roundtable, may only be accessible to DVG members to maintain confidentiality and encourage peer-to-peer learning.



**Goal 4: Lead Embrace shared leadership** by encouraging professional development and offering opportunities for deeper engagement.

### Strategies

- » Create opportunities for professional development and personal growth
  - Create a Leadership Committee that has monthly conference calls, delegates responsibilities, and creates a governing structure. The Leadership Committee could be a conduit for future co-chairs and allows for deeper engagement of all different types of members;
  - Continue to transition co-chairs at the Annual Reflections Meeting;
  - Encourage co-chairs to continue to shape the Food Funders and introduce new strategies or programs.



**Goal 5: Support Engage and support the community of food system grantees** by being effective partners, connecting grantees to issue areas that intersect with the regional food system, communicating successes, raising the philanthropic community's awareness around these complicated and interconnected solutions, and promoting equity.

### Strategies

- » Foster connections and increase understanding between funders and grantees
  - Create a small grant sponsorship fund for which foundations and nonprofits alike can apply to the Food Funders for sponsorship. A review committee composed of members could review sponsorship applications on a monthly or rolling basis and determine if sponsorship is a good fit for the Food Funders. The committee could also identify other types of assistance, such as cross-promotion, writing a blog/newsletter story, purchasing tickets, etc.;
  - Highlight grantee success stories in the newsletter and tie into DVG's Communications Strategy;
  - Open up specific meetings to larger, non-funder audiences;
  - For future joint funding projects, encourage the development of one application/proposal and report for all funders' requirements.

## Implementation

Since its founding in 2009, the Greater Philadelphia Food Funders has grown into a large network of diverse funding organizations interested in creating lasting, positive impacts on the regional food system. Although the Greater Philadelphia Food Funders has enhanced individual members' work through learning sessions, networking opportunities, and collaboration, the group recognizes the need to think strategically about its future in order to continue to support more effective food system grant-making. The Strategic Plan identifies a vision for change, defines the group's mission, and outlines actionable goals and strategies to manage and organize the Greater Philadelphia Food Funders' collective work for the next five years. In order to achieve these goals and continue to enrich individual members' work, the Food Funders will maintain and expand its culture of shared leadership and responsibility.

If the group wants to increase the network's impact and encourage more collaboration, additional resources will be needed to support DVG, provide appropriate communication technology, and work with a consultant to continue or increase regular outreach and communication activities and effectively respond to the complex challenges within the food system.

An aspirational budget is summarized below. This budget acknowledges the need for financial resources to support high-quality programming and the desire of many members to undertake joint actions. Year 1 assumes funds are used for

Year	Proposed Annual Budget
1	\$11,000 <i>plus in-kind support</i>
3	\$40,000 – \$80,000
5	\$60,000 – \$95,000 <i>plus pooled fund</i>

programming. Year 3 includes funding for a consultant to act as part-time coordinator who expands both communication and programs, as well as potentially hiring a consultant to undertake

a special project. Year 5 includes all of the above, as well as undertaking more special projects and possibly creating a pooled fund to competitively award grants in support of the Food Funders' vision and mission.

While implementation has already started, the official launch of the Strategic Plan is planned for the Food Funders' Annual Reflections meeting in December 2013 or January 2014.

## Acknowledgements

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### Strategic Plan Leadership Team

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### Greater Philadelphia Food Funders Advisory Group

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Mailee Walker, *Claneil Foundation, former Co-Chair*

Gerry Wang, *co-founder and former Co-Chair*

### Methodology

- 10 key informant interviews with members and sector leaders
- 30 member survey responses
- 1 small group discussion
- Written comments and revisions accepted via e-mail
- Interviews and conversations with staff at Sustainable Agriculture and Food System Funders (SAFSF) and Convergence Partnership
- Interviews and conversations with staff or leaders of regional/state networks of food funders, such as Community Food Funders (NYC), Vermont Food Funders, and the Florida Partnership for Healthy People



GREAT PHILADELPHIA  
FOOD  
FUNDERS