

Marion County Food Access Policy and Planning Action Plan

Description: This plan will serve as a guide that offers strategies and activities intended to move Marion County's food system to a more accessible and equitable one. This plan is intended as a resource to inform, serve, and guide the planning and activities of all Marion County organizations and individuals currently involved in some aspect of the local food system. Included in this plan are traditional strategies and activities, as well as strategies and activities that may be unique to Marion County. These unique interventions will provide a new and innovative approach to addressing food insecurity in Marion residents. The goal of this plan is to strengthen and unify different sectors and entities across the food system to continue and enhance collaboration as we work to address food insecurity. Everyone who eats and anyone who produces, transforms, distributes, markets, or disposes of food products, and all of us who are interested in creating healthy communities, people, and local economies have a stake in this plan. The four strategy areas selected by the Food Access Policy and Planning Action Plan Development Team include: data collection and dissemination, awareness, education, and microfarming. These strategies were selected through deliberation and consideration of what is relevant to Marion's needs and where the landscape of the food system is currently focusing on and heading towards.

Background: In 2021, the food insecurity rate in Marion County was 13.5% according to Feeding America. Food insecurity is defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as the lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is associated with numerous adverse social and health outcomes and is increasingly considered a critical public health issue. According to the 2022 Marion County Community Health Assessment, 8% of adults in Marion experienced more than one food insecurity in the past year. Key drivers of food insecurity include unemployment, poverty, and income shocks, which can prevent adequate access to food. In addition, 48% of the population are living above the SNAP eligibility threshold of 130% poverty. One possibly overlooked aspect of food insecurity is the barriers to food preparation and storage. This plan will also look to assess and analyze the potential food preparation and storage disparities that keep some Marion residents from eating a healthy diet. Additionally, microfarming has become a recent development in multiple locations across Marion with plans for additional microfarms in the near future. This innovative take on traditional food production has the potential to play a substantial role in addressing food insecurity.

Mission: Empowering a locally sustainable, accessible, and equitable food system for all Marion County Residents.

Priority Strategy: Data Collection and Dissemination

Target Outcome: Hub of shared data resources regarding food access that is widely shared by the end of 2024

Objectives	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome Measures
<p>1. Consistency across organizations for tracking healthy food consumption</p>	<p>1. Research best practices 2. Develop surveys with common language about nutritional intake and assessment of food barriers 3. Gather feedback from Action Plan Team 4. Disseminate surveys to organizations for use 5. Gather and analyze results as needed 6. Share findings with partners</p>	<p>Everyone</p>	<p>12/31/2023 – survey creation 2024 and beyond – survey distribution and collection of results</p>	<p>1 survey Survey results</p>
<p>2. Assess food preparation barriers in Marion</p>	<p>1. Research best practices 2. Develop survey with emphasis on appliances (stoves, refrigeration, air fryers, electric skillets) and knowledge of food prep with various food groups 3. Assess for food preparation knowledge amongst residents 4. Disseminate to partners for distribution of survey</p>	<p>Everyone</p>	<p>3/31/2024 – survey creation 2024 and beyond – survey distribution and collection of results</p>	<p>1 survey Survey results</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Collect and analyze results 6. Share findings with partners 			
3. Create list of common foods found across Marion pantries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact local pantries 2. Determine typical availability and frequency of different foods found in pantries 3. Compile in list 4. Add to collection of data resources 5. Share with partners for dissemination 	MPH	7/31/2024	1 list of common foods
4. Create data hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather collection of resources 2. Identify gaps and needs for needed data 3. Determine location for data hub 4. Disseminate data to partners 5. Engage community residents for awareness 6. Promote with residents and organizations 	Everyone	12/31/2024 – creation of data hub 2025 and beyond - promotion	1 list of data resources
Priority Strategy: Awareness				
Target Outcome: Map of local food pantries, community meals, food resources created and disseminated by March 2024				
Objectives	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome Measures

1. Garner interest and support for food access and food insecurity needs	1. Utilize gathered data to illustrate food insecurity issues in Marion 2. Educate food access action team members and other interested parties	MPH	Ongoing	Facilitated materials
2. Identification of food pantries in Marion	1. Gather names, days and times of operations, and locations 2. Utilize Community Action's Local Resource Guide and other resources	Everyone	12/31/2023 – initial list Update annually	1 list of food pantries
3. Identification of non-traditional food resources	1. Gather names, days and times of operations, locations, and other pertinent information 2. Examples include teaching kitchens, PB&J Truck, Epworth hot dogs, food trucks, home deliveries, community meals, Mid-Ohio Food Bank distributions, food events	Everyone	12/31/2023 – initial list Update annually	1 list of non-traditional food resources
4. Identification of local Farmer's Markets	1. Gather names, days and times of operations, locations, and other pertinent information 2. Collect information about available assistance at each market (e.g., Produce Perks, WIC, senior vouchers)	Everyone	3/31/2024 – initial list Update annually	1 list of local Farmer's Markets

<p>5. Create maps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research best mapping tools 2. Create separate maps for food pantries, non-traditional food resources, and Farmer’s Markets 3. Make easily readable and identifiable 4. Create additional infographics to accompany maps with more information (Hours of operation, selection, etc.) 5. Share with partners for dissemination 	<p>MPH / Everyone</p>	<p>4/30/2024 – initial maps Update annually</p>	<p>3 maps Accompanying infographics</p>
<p>6. Community Engagement</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research best methods for engaging populations to spread food access resources and maps 2. Ensure reaching intended audiences 3. Evaluate potential reach of dissemination 	<p>Everyone</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Disseminated materials</p>
<p>7. Enhance coordination and communication among existing food resources</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify opportunities for collaboration 2. Continue Food Access Action Team Meetings with CHC 	<p>Everyone</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Meeting minutes</p>

	<p>3. Ensure underserved populations and communities can access a wide array of food services</p> <p>4. Utilize connections to spread awareness of Food Access Action Plan</p>			
Priority Strategy: Education				
Target Outcome: Establishment of 2 community-based teaching kitchens by 2026				
Objectives	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome Measures
1. Utilize data collected about food education	<p>1. Analyze data regarding food and preparation education</p> <p>2. Consider conducting listening sessions to gather more in-depth and qualitative responses</p> <p>3. Develop plans and resources in response to data collected</p>	Everyone	<p>8/31/2024 – initial plans and resources</p> <p>Update as needed</p>	<p>Results</p> <p>Resources created</p>
2. Identify current and planned teaching kitchens that are or will be operational in Marion	<p>1. Track currently operational food kitchens</p> <p>2. Discover planned teaching kitchens to be opened in next two years</p> <p>3. Gather information about hours of operation, location, and requirements for use</p>	Everyone	Ongoing	List of teaching kitchens

	4. Share findings with Food Access Action Team			
3. Promote usage of teaching kitchens	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with partners to determine which teaching kitchens are best suited for increased usage 2. Determine needs for operation 3. Schedule meetings with food kitchens 4. Survey interest of potential teaching events for public and/or targeted populations with partners 5. Develop promotional materials for public use and targeted events 	Everyone / Food Access Action Team	Ongoing	<p>Survey results</p> <p>Promotional material</p>
4. Host teaching kitchen events	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine feasibility of events 2. Coordinate with local farmers for produce donations 3. Coordinate with local restaurants for recipes and/or assistance 4. Coordinate with MPH health educators to develop curriculum 5. Identify volunteers and other personnel to assist with events 	Everyone	Update as needed	<p>1 or more planned events in 2024</p> <p>Survey results</p>

	6. Survey participants on reception of events and unmet expectations			
5. Refine teaching kitchen events	1. Utilize feedback from first events to implement new strategies and unmet needs for events 2. Ensure inclusion of all individuals 3. Utilize Food Access Action Team to assist with any potential needs 4. Recruit new members to Food Access Action Team to fulfill any unmet needs		Update as needed	1 or more planned events for 2025
Priority Strategy: Microfarming				
Target Outcome: Enhance support for existing and planned microfarms in Marion over the next three years				
Objectives	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome Measures
1. Identify gaps and needs for existing microfarms (Harding and River Valley)	1. Analyze potential needs for success for microfarms 2. Develop and implement strategies to assist microfarms with unmet needs	Everyone	3/31/2024	List of needs
2. Enhance recruitment of farmers	1. Assist in creation of promotional materials 2. Disseminate promotional materials through various channels	Everyone	Ongoing	Promotional materials

	3. Work with local schools and universities for recruitment of students			
3. Solicitation of produce throughout Marion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote the sale and distribution of Marion microfarming produce throughout the city and county 2. Emphasize the importance and necessity of local and sustainably grown produce 3. Work with local restaurants and grocery stores to promote purchases from microfarms 	Everyone	Ongoing	Promotional materials
4. Host events with microfarms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gauge interest of microfarms to host events with health educators 2. Identify opportunities for food education 3. Prioritize events for traditionally underserved populations including low-income, seniors, and youth 	Everyone	Update as needed	1 or more events each year
5. Identify possible future PSE changes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilize results of gaps and needs 2. Examples include, but not limited to WIC education, after-school programming, transportation 	Everyone	Ongoing	List of changes

List of Partners

Marion Public Health

Creating Healthy Communities

WIC

Buckeye Community Schools

Ohio State University Marion

Ohio State University – Extension

River Valley Local Schools

Buckeye Food Alliance

Marion County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Marion Family YMCA

Ohio Health

Marion County Council on Aging

Logos Christian Ministries

Downtown Marion Inc.

Caledonia Farmer’s Market

Marion Microfarm Project

Center Street Health Clinic and Market

United Way

United Church Homes – Brownstone Terrace