



Upper Minnesota Valley
Regional Development Commission
REGIONAL ACTION PLAN
Regional Food Business Center
December 2023

The counties of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle,
Swift, and Yellow Medicine.



Upper Minnesota Valley
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Helping Communities Prosper

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Introduction

This project will accelerate the transformation of regional food systems and increase economic activity of small/mid-sized agricultural value chains in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota through the establishment of North Central USDA Regional Food Business Center (NCRFBC).

The NCRFBC will identify opportunities for technical assistance to small- and mid-sized food and farm businesses (producers, processors, aggregators, distributors, and other businesses within the food supply chain) and food value and supply chain coordination.

Purpose

The purpose of this Action Plan is to identify needs and opportunities that support a regional food network throughout our five-county region. The Action Plan will direct resources over the next five years that are the result of the USDA funded NCRFBC grant award.

Overall Goal

As we work to advance the local foods system, it is important to remember the overall goals of the NCRFBC which is:

- To have a more regionalized food system
- To create more economic benefits for growing local foods.

UMVRDC Coordination

The Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC) will provide technical assistance to advance the local food system in the UMVRDC region.

The UMVRDC will do this through the following:

1. Coordinate with other partners on a regular basis to identify gaps and avoid duplication.
2. Review the Action plan and determine priorities, timeline, and project lead.
3. Leverage funds by writing grants for local foods systems improvements.
4. Evaluate and update this Action Plan.

Deliverables

As the technical assistance provider for the NCRFBC in our region, the UMVRDC will deliver the following:

1. Value chain/supply chain coordination and networking and peer-to-peer sharing to determine priorities that support the wide-ranging needs of stakeholders in the region, including providing market development, and value chain/supply chain coordination.
2. Navigate and manage financial resources from third parties, including federal, state, tribal, and other sources, to develop capacity for business development services or training including planning, financial literacy, legal and regulatory awareness, succession planning, record keeping, and other topics identified and prioritized in the Regional Action Plan.
3. Write and submit at least two funding investments per year. This increases in years three, four and five.

Additional deliverables include:

- Promote the NCRFBC website and all activities.
- Perform data collection per the evaluation plan, including survey collection from TA recipients.
- Attendance of the annual statewide summit and coordinated calls.
- Submit quarterly reports and invoices.
- Promote the cycle of available Business Builder Subawards.

Regional Profile

The Upper Minnesota Valley Region spans a five-county area that includes Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine.

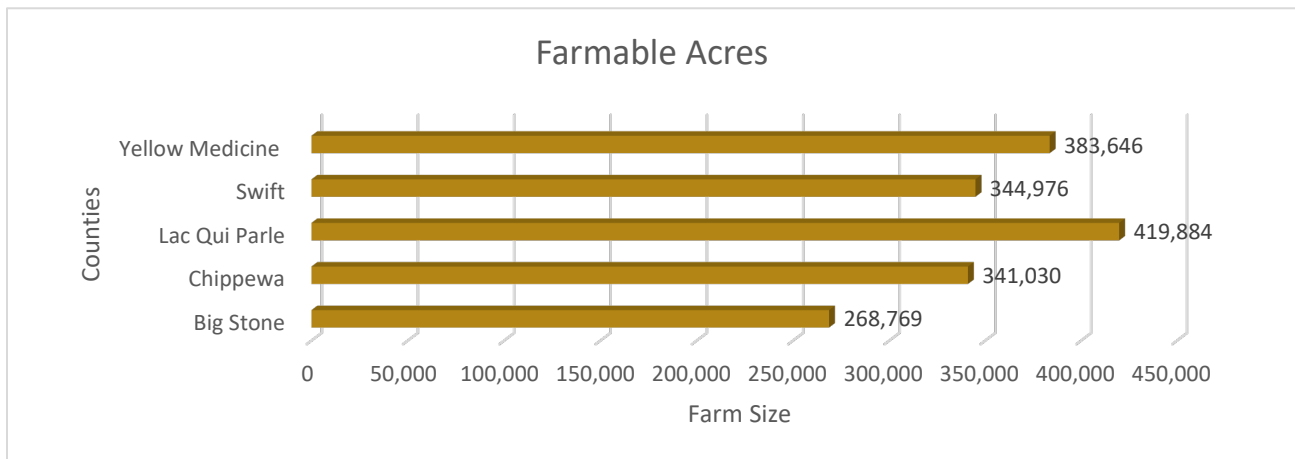
Facts:

- The area is rural with 1,758,305 farmable acres.
- The combined population for the area is 43,346 with Big Stone County being the least populated county and Chippewa being our most populated county.
- Lac qui Parle County has the most available farmable acres while Big Stone has the fewest.
- Lac qui Parle County has the most “large acre” farms, while Big Stone County has the least number of farms in general.
- Cow calf operations are the most popular livestock operations in each county. Yellow Medicine is the most diversified livestock production County and Big Stone has the least number of producers.
- Agriculture is also a key industry in our five-county region, including 3,526 farms producing just under \$1.2 billion in the market value of products sold in 2017 according to the U.S.
- The number of farms declined in the region, as well as in Minnesota, over the past 5 years.
- The five-county region ranks 8th out of 13 of the Economic Development Regions in Minnesota for farms, with four of the five ranking between 26th and 35th out of 87 counties.

Market Value of Products Sold

	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold	State Rank
Region 6W	3,526	\$1,185,918,000	8
Big Stone Co.	438	\$138,754,000	54
Chippewa Co.	623	\$256,699,000	32
Lac qui Parle Co.	853	\$249,877,000	35
Swift Co.	760	\$284,161,000	26
Yellow Medicine Co.	852	\$256,427,000	33
Minnesota	68,822	\$18,395,390,000	

Farmable Acres



Numbers of farms by farm size

	1 to 9 Acres per farm	10 to 49 Acres per farm	50 to 179 Acres per farm	180 to 499 Acres per farm	500 to 999 Acres per farm	1,000 or more Acres per farm
Big Stone	16	62	103	110	62	85
Chippewa	43	123	138	128	95	96
Lac Qui Parle	49	123	185	209	161	126
Swift	45	145	206	177	82	105
Yellow Medicine	60	143	180	197	156	116

Number of Farms based on operation category

County	Cattle and Calves	Beef Cattle	Milk Cattle	Hogs	Sheep/Goats	Broilers/other meat-type/Layers
Big Stone	94	57	6	7	7	20
Chippewa	88	60	1	30	33	38
Lac Qui Parle	134	104	13	37	22	29
Swift	136	88	23	10	8	31
Yellow Medicine	170	112	9	49	22	26

Number of edible crops by number of farms and acres

County	Big Stone	Chippewa	Lac qui Parle	Swift	Yellow Medicine
Dry Edible Beans	4	31	6	14	3
Acres	960	6,310	362	3,998	266
Sunflower seed					1
Acres					1
Sugar beets for sugar	1	94	1	18	8
Acres		31,659		5,198	1,930
Vegetables for sale	3	21	12	11	9
Acres		2,538	11	479	22
Potatoes		2		6	1
Acres				2	
Sweet Potatoes				2	
Acres					
Land in orchards	14	6	8	3	1
Acres	26	4	25	2	

Source of all data above: USDA Census of Agriculture, DEED Economic Development Upper Minnesota Valley 2023 Regional Profile

Public and Industry Engagement

History of Regional Local Food Initiatives

The following is a summary of the many local food initiatives in our region. A full list is available as a separate document.

1970s: Foods Co-ops started in Ortonville, Morris, and Ortonville

1980s: Farmer's Markets started in many towns, many started in later years as well.

1997: Pride of the Prairie first named and started

2004 – 2005: Pride of the Prairie worked with a food broker to sell and distribute local foods

2007: Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign for our region started through Pride of the Prairie

2011: Farm-to-School started with state funding

2017: Local Food Study completed by UMRDC

2020: Covid-19 pandemic and food disruptions

2022: Land Stewardship Project (LSP) Listening Sessions

2023: Regional Food Business Centers were funded by USDA

The Local Foods Focus Group 2023-2024 – LSP and UMRDC

The UMRDC is partnering with the Land Stewardship Project (LSP) to host a series of collaborative meetings between November 2023 and March 2024 with a few key stakeholders within the region's local food system.

Meeting #1 was held Monday November 27th, 2023, at the Milan Community Center from 12:00 PM-4:00 pm. A total of 10 people attended with representatives from local producers, Prairie Five, Community Action, SW MN Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, and Countryside Public Health and the UMRDC and LSP.

The goal of this was to engage participants in thinking about what is already here in our region and what is next. During the meeting, the history of local foods system was discussed starting back in the 1970s all the way through today, and we were able to learn more about Pride of the Prairie (which was a system for producers to connect, engage, and plan). The group started to prioritize recommendations to advance the local food system in the region. The four topics that came to the top were:

- Develop a Buy Local Campaign.
- The need for regional organizing tools.
- The need for models to help people find local foods.
- The need for farm planning and recruitment.

Attendees at the first meeting used the SCORE method (Strength, Challenges, Options, Responses and Effectiveness) to start looking at each of the priorities. This helped to open more conversation about what is already here and where we could see improvement.

Three more meetings are planned to discuss items such as the mission vision, and goals of our local food system and develop an action plan to make these ideas tangible.

Land Stewardship Project Initiatives 2022- 2023

Listening sessions

In 2022, the Land Stewardship Project held two listening session and two asset mapping session in western Minnesota where farmers, business owners, local government officials, and consumers shared their insights on what's needed to create a community-based food system that's good for the land, our communities, and local economies. During these meetings, "asset mapping" exercises were undertaken to determine where we are currently at in terms of accessibility to community-based foods.

Asset Map: [Land Stewardship Project Asset Map \(arcgis.com\)](#)

Strengthening Community Food Webs

In 2022, a collaboration between the Land Stewardship Project and the University of Minnesota's Southwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, with assistance from Noelle Harden (U of M Extension) and Ken Meter (Crossroads Resource Center) worked to support resilient, regenerative community food systems by 1) convening a new, diverse set of food system stakeholders and 2) using community asset mapping and social network analysis to identify local resources and strengthen connections between producers, consumers, buyers, and institutions in the Upper Minnesota River Valley.

This project convened 109 stakeholders across four meetings and Local Foods Forum to develop an asset map. A report outlining the next steps was created.

Food Forum 2023

In March 2023, the Land Stewardship Project held a Food Forum to review the new local food asset maps for the region and share regional data on local foods and the local foods network. There were 52 participants. From that effort, a number of working groups were created and the following three have continued to meet:

- Artisanal/Small grains
- Real Food Hub/Buying Club
- Madison Merc/Madison Local Foods

Local Foods Study 2017

The Local Foods System Study was initiated to explore the capacity of the region to produce and distribute healthy, locally grown food. The goal is to conduct an assessment of the local foods system and to identify the needs, gaps, opportunities, and support for improving the local foods system of the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC) region.

The Local Foods Study a collaboration of the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC) University of Minnesota Extension and the Southwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (RSDP) and Countryside Public Health - Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP).

The project started in April 2016 and was completed in April 2017. Meetings with stakeholders and growers of the area were held to discover interests, ideas, and barriers to developing the local foods system.

Additionally, a survey was conducted with food service providers and institutions to assess the level of local foods incorporated into these establishments, interest in purchasing and providing local foods, and difficulties in achieving those interests.

A copy of the plan is located here:

<https://umvrdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Final-LFS-Report-Hannah.pdf>

Local Food Market Analysis- 2017

As part of the Local Foods System Study project, an analysis was conducted from April 2016 to March 2017 about the market potential for local foods in the UMRVDC region. The aim of the analysis was to determine the food market of the region and if local foods could become five percent of the food market share.

Highlights of the Analysis:

- Direct sales in 2012 were \$654,000 and represents about 0.5 percent of household spending on food in the region. This means local foods sales are a very small portion of total food spending.
- Together, meat and fresh fruits and vegetables account for \$24.5 million spent on food in the region. If residents in the region purchased five percent of these products direct from local operators, farmers could make \$1.2 million in sales. Since producers sold \$654,000 in direct sales in 2012, this change in purchasing would double direct-to-consumer sales in the region.
- Surveys were conducted in 2015 and 2017 of grocery stores, schools, restaurants, and healthcare facilities of the region. Respondents were asked about local food purchases and barriers to buying from local farms.
 - Grocery stores identified negotiating a price and reliable delivery of produce when ripe as the most significant barriers for purchasing from local farms.
 - Restaurants ranked meeting local farmers and knowing how long an item is available as the largest barriers with reliable delivery as the most significant barrier.
 - Schools and healthcare facilities ranked meeting local farmers, maintaining shelf life, and negotiating a price as the top barriers with not one issue being the most significant.

A copy of the plan is located here:

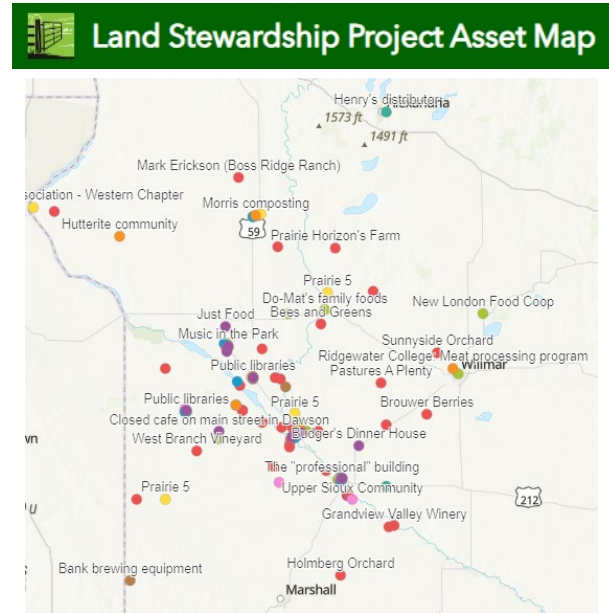
<https://umvrdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/UMRV-Food-Market-Report-1.4.17.pdf>

Value Chain mapping

Asset Map

An asset map was created through the LSP listening sessions, Community Food Web meetings, and Food Forum. It is added to on an ongoing basis:

[Land Stewardship Project Asset Map \(arcgis.com\)](http://arcgis.com)



Value Chain Map

Local Foods Value Chain

Who is impacted by the local food development in the UMRVDC region?

Demand Partners	Transactional Partners	Support Partners	Investors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Group meal sites •Retail outlets •Farm direct •Self provided •Other miscellaneous outlets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Growers/Producers •Processors •Distribution •Suppliers •Aggregators •Wholesale buyers •Consumer Packaged Goods Companies •Waste •Misc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Technical assistance Programs •Financing •Research •Policy and regulation •Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Economic development/EDAs •Banks and other local lenders •Cities/Counties •Chambers •Individual financial investors •Farmers •SWCDs •Environmental groups

Inputs/Environment		
Sunlight	Nutrients	Money
Energy	Chemicals	Farmers
Seed	Know-how	Land and Soil
Water	Labor	Ground water

UMVRDC Local Foods Value Chain

This list starts to outline all those who impact the local foods system. *Not a complete list *

Demand Partners

Include who will buy the goods and services produced and why they buy the goods and/or services. What does the value chain offer that they cannot already get?

Buyers of food

Group meal sites

K-12 School food service managers.
Higher Ed Food services managers MnWest
Childcare food programs
Healthcare institutions food service managers and physicians interested in CSA-RX
Senior nutrition sites (Prairie Five)
Community food meals
Meals on Wheels

Retail outlets

Supermarkets/grocery stores
Walmart/Dollar Stores/Gas Stations/Other retail that offer food options.
Bars that serve food
Restaurants
Meat centers with retail
Buying clubs/UNFI
Online mail order subscription
“Bounty bags” – local subscription
Online/home delivery – Amazon, Target, Walmart

Farm direct

Farmer who direct market
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
Farmers markets

Self provided

Community garden
My own garden
Grow my own animals.
A neighbor’s garden.

Other miscellaneous outlets

Food shelves
Events/Caterers
Ruby’s pantry

Transactional Partners

Those people, businesses, or organizations that play a direct role in sourcing, producing, distributing and consuming the product or service. Transactional partners may include but are not limited to:

- Suppliers-Provide specific inputs to other Value Chain partners
- Producers-Create goods or services
- Aggregators-Bundle products or demand
- Distributors-Transport goods or services to retailers and consumers
- Wholesale Buyers-Purchase goods or services for resale
- Customers/Consumers-Purchase goods or services for direct use

Growers/Producers/Farmers

Luke Peterson
Davis Bonk and Tobin Tyler, Toad Hill Farm
Possible mushroom grower in Monte?
Nick and Joan – carrot farmer, lost account to (Fresh Thyme? HyVee? Aldi?) to Fresha because they were more expensive.
Full Circle Farm – Jenny and Rosco- growing grain and milling flour and making sourdough bread.
Audrey Arner – producer/historian, Sustainable Farming Association (SFA)
Terry VanDerPol–producer/historian
Peter Haugen- Canby milling of small grain.
Jenny and Roscoe- small grains and sourdough
Riverview Dairy-Morris

Local edible growers: Tweetens, Allpress, Norm Giese
Stoney Ridge in Benson- Hughes, local edible beans
Big Stone Apple Ranch – Ortonville
Peter and Anne Schwaergl – producer/direct sales
Carol Ford – winter greenhouse
Carmen Fernholz Forever Green kernza
Grapes -Holly Thompson, Roisens, Borstads, Viessmans
Apples -Swenson Orchard, Holloway Apples, Ortonville apple farm,
Kallieroe
VanderPols and Anne Schwaegerl – Pork
Shadowland Farms – Brad Mitchell

Food processing within 1 hr of our region

JUST (Appleton)
Fresha Carrots (Morris)
PURIS (Dawson)
ADM (Appleton takes edibles grown locally)
Milk Specialties Global (Clara City)
Saputo Cheese (Big Stone)
Noahs Ark (Dawson)
Jennie O (Monte)
Valley Queen Cheese (Milbank)
Glacial Grain Spirits (Benson)

Distribution

Willmar food hub

Suppliers

Aggregation

Willmar Food Hub

Retail

Appleton Meat Center
Pioneer Meat Market -Ortonville
Country Butcher – Dawson with outlet in Madison
Canby Meat Center
Josh Streblov- Carls Bakery, producer and commercial bakery and local
food outlet
Michelle Huggins- bread maker in GF DoughP Creations
LQPV High school Ag class meat processing trailer
Area businesses currently involved with processing and aggregating
locally grown food products:
Farmers Market Association
Jill Canaste - Clara City Farmers Market, producer, prior food service
worker
Willmar Food Hub - Bev
Almich’s Market - local beef, eggs, produce manager.
Dons Food- Appleton -eggs
Jubilee Foods – Madison - Eggs
Monte Market -Brian Boetcher- produce manager at Monte Market also
grower.
Big Stone Hutterite Colony

Wholesale buyers

	<p>Consumer Packaged Goods Companies</p> <p>Waste County waste haulers: Waste Management. Olson Sanitation, West Central Sanitation, Tostenson.</p> <p>Misc Kris Shelstad- retail, hub interest</p>
<p>Support Partners <i>Those people, businesses, or organizations that provide the infrastructure that helps the transactional partners obtain resources needed to produce their product and/or remove barriers to an effectively functioning value chain. Examples include: business and technical assistance programs, financing (philanthropic, debt and equity), policy and regulation, media, research, and capacity building.</i></p>	<p>TA Providers – training, education, resource outlet, advisors, business planning, UMVRDC Land Stewardship Project (LSP) Ashlie Wubben- Countryside Public Health SHIP Coordinator Prairie Five - food shelves and senior nutrition sites Southwest MN Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (RSDP) – Anne Dybsetter Upper Sioux Community Indigenous Food/SHIP/Food Pantry Amber Boyen – nutrition, Madison Healthcare Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) – Anne Schwaergl Sustainable Farming Association (SFA) – Carol Ford Small Business Development Center (SBDC) business finance planning MN Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC) – U of M Southwest MN Initiative Foundation (SWIF) – business finance and support MnWEST/Ridgewater Colleges – farm business training Cooperative Development Services https://www.cdsus.coop/ Coop development and support and research. Minnesota Department of Ag (MDA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farm to School Program – Kate Seybold - Kami Schoenfeld farm business training - Farm Advocates through MDA can do business planning. <p>Financing Local economic development (SWIF, EDAs) Minnesota Department of Ag (MDA) US Department of Ag (USDA) Banks and other lenders (Farm Credit and Coops) Farm Service Agency (FSA) Small Business Administration (SBA) Private Investors</p> <p>Research Carmen Fernholz Forever Green Research on kernza AURI – Research and market development support U of MN Extension- Ryan Pesch, researcher and topic expert, Brigid Tuck/Katheryn Leys Renewing the Countryside- Jan Joannides MN DEED - Luke Greiner</p> <p>Policy and Regulation Countryside Public Health Minnesota Department of Ag (MDA)</p> </p>

	<p>US Department of Ag (USDA)</p> <p>Media Local news MnGrown LOTS of ag based media- who focuses on MN local food?</p>
<p>Investors <i>Those people who want to see your value chain succeed because its success gives them something that matters to them. In addition to profits, that might include environmental benefits, new relationships, economic equity, reduced crime, impact on a place they care about, opportunity to make a positive difference, avoided costs of existing programs, etc. Investors may contribute money or time, expertise, equipment, etc.</i></p>	<p>Cities/Counties Chambers Farmers Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) Environmental groups</p> <p>Financing Local economic development (SWIF, EDAs) Minnesota Department of Ag (MDA) US Department of Ag (USDA) Banks and other lenders (Farm Credit and Coops) Farm Service Agency (FSA) Small Business Administration (SBA) Private Investors</p>

Goals, Strategies and Actions

The following is a complete aggregate of all goals and actions developed through the public and industry engagement from 2016 – present. These are actions to consider as we work to advance the local foods system. The UMRDC will prioritize these actions and then develop a timeline and project leads for those priorities. Other partners will also be working on these actions.

Goal 1: Identify key resources that can support community-led strategy and plan for advancing a community-based food system in Upper MN Valley Region.		
	<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Action Ideas</i>
1.1	Target regional EDA offices for increased collaborations.	
1.2	Create a database of all third-party financial opportunities and find a way to share.	
1.3	Develop relationships with third party TA providers/financial resources i.e.: FSA, AURI, Dept of Ag, MN grown etc.	
1.4	Develop and research examples that would help support a local foods system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look into other local foods distribution mechanisms that are working in other regions, such as food hubs and online farmers’ markets (e.g. Local Harvest Market). • Find models at a regional level where local foods are sold to schools, care centers, restaurants, grocery stores, etc. that help address barriers such as regulations, distribution, or being able to connect to a local food grower. • Develop examples of institutional buying agreements where local food profits stay local and benefit local economies. • Promote winter greenhouses with LED lighting as a way to increase profits. • Complete feasibility studies cold storage for aggregation. • Complete Feasibility studies on small grains infrastructure • Encourage new growers/producers to enter the local foods movement, including those already farming commodity crops. • Analyze available labor workforce for local food system. • Identify ways to connect farmers to land availability and cost (especially small acreage opportunities) and solutions for access and affordability. • Create and maintain community gardens at hospitals, nursing homes, care centers, and schools, and other accessible locations (within immigrant communities, etc). • Expand development of and access and use of commercial kitchens for local processing (Clinton and Milan)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify commercial kitchens in the region and ways they can be accessed and used by local grower. Work with commercial kitchen to expand equipment and opportunities to be used by local growers. Connect with P5's planner food hub as a commercial kitchen. ○ Connect local producers with the Willmar processing plant to add value to their products by flash-drying, canning or other methods.
1.5	Develop project business planning support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carefully research financial planning prior to starting any venture like a food hub (example: The Good Acre in the Metro, fully funded by a foundation, is expected not to turn a profit for eight years). ● Research and report on what make local foods farming financially viable (business planning) and what is needed to support the increase of local food production. Consider all small and mid-scale and easily sold to schools, etc. ● Research and report on the most successful models to support beginning farmers. ● Encourage local food production by providing access to business planning and help with creating good paying jobs. ● Provide assistance to farmers making decisions about scaling up and choosing different marketing mechanisms. Design plans that small producers could adopt to scale up.
Goal 2: Identify and connect growers and market partners.		
	<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Action Ideas</i>
2.1	Create a database of key local food stakeholders and add to asset map.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a list of potential buyers including schools, restaurants, hospitals, and residential care facilities. ● Growers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore who is growing food for human consumption in the region. Identify different kinds and scales of growers and identify those who want to scale up and use different marketing mechanisms. ○ Develop growers in our region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide mentorships and encourage relationships between individuals that hold a lot of the local food system knowledge and younger/newer generations of residents, especially those emerging as leaders. ▪ Grow the grassroots power of our food system by supporting 15 producers and emerging leaders and grow the local foods network by adding 50 new contacts in the region. ▪ Research and report on the most successful models through which other regions entice young farmers to come to the region and stay. ○ Explore the interests of different ethnic groups and the crops and food they may wish to grow. Discern

		<p>how they can access information about growing in this region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide mentorship for farmers and food entrepreneurs from different ethnic groups. • Local processors (or processing locations like commercial kitchens and Prairie Five) • Identify the main local food distributors and continue to work with them (Land Stewardship Project has done this). Pastures of Plenty of Kerkhoven, KADEJAN of Glenwood, Co-op Partners, Dakota Rural Action, add to this list and create new conversations. Survey contacts to determine interest in connecting to develop a local food system.
2.2	Survey retail food outlets in region to gauge interest in utilizing local food, identify what food would be of most interest and what the barriers are.	
2.3	Find ways that get growers and institutions, restaurants, and others together on a recurring basis. Determine what networks will convene, who will lead, and agenda topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning farmer’s network • Farmer growth network • Farm to School network • Restaurant network • Institutional food network • Grocery and other retail food network • Farmers market network • Food shelves
2.4	Attend all regional local foods meetings (small grains, etc.) to listen, learn, identify gaps, and build connections.	
Goal 3: Increase Marketing and Promotion		
	<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Action Ideas</i>
3.1	Explore the regional content and usefulness of the Mn Grown site.	
3.2	Explore the redevelopment of the pride of the prairie FB page to connect and share information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how the page can be managed.
3.3	Utilize the Buy Fresh Buy Local logo in food campaigns and revitalize Pride of the Prairie.	
3.4	Utilize local online rummage sale sites for local produce sales.	
3.5	Create a local foods cookbook.	
3.6	Host community events or meals to promote local foods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special emphasis to engage culturally diverse audiences. • Work with a high-quality chef to utilize local foods, thus marketing the region and local foods. • Conduct a survey to find out who wants to learn more about food preparation, such as when local foods are available and the best ways to prepare them. Utilize Facebook and community networks.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start local cooking groups for families using in-season local foods. • Teach food preparation skills in a variety of places, including food shelves and farmers' markets. • Increase food skills in schools and community ed. • Work with family services and or CSPH or food shelves to host opportunities for low to modest income individuals to cook with local foods.
3.7	Design initiatives to encourage people to buy food from within their communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate communities on the power of buying locally and supporting the local economy. • Where to buy local <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a regional marketing guide for restaurants who have a special local foods dish on their menus, and for the local farmers who provide the products to restaurants. • Host workshops within communities to figure out how to be more welcoming, supportive, and connected with newcomers, farmers, and others.
3.8	Work to get local food content included in local marketing info.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prairie Waters • CSPH SHIP • Chambers • MNBump • Prairie Five • Food shelves • Farmers markets
Goal 4: Develop a larger Market for Local Foods		
	<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Action Ideas</i>
4.1	Look to update the Local Food Market Analysis (Ryan Pesch) or other ways to determine demand and potential markets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research market demand outlook and projections.
4.2	Establish an online farmers' market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to share options for participating in the Willmar Food Hubs online portal. • Find ways to make it easy for institutions to find local food producers, understand how long items are available, negotiate a purchase price, and receive reliable delivery of items.
4.3	Create additional markets for producers by connecting to local food markets statewide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to food hubs across the state and link co-ops in the surrounding area (food hubs in Willmar, Fergus Falls, Alexandria) and into South Dakota.
4.4	Look into models like CSAs and/or online ordering that support local foods producers.	
4.5	Look into buying clubs to see how the structure might work with local growers and transportation issues (e.g. United Natural Foods buying club).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this backhaul capacity? The buying club supporting and selling local produce or aggregating local products like the Willmar food hub is doing

4.6	Sell local produce in gas stations and local establishments to make products more accessible (e.g. frozen meats).	
4.7	Sell local, fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats in local grocery stores in new ways (e.g. consignment farm stands at bakery, nursing home, convenience store, etc. One example: retailer gets 20%.) Use social media to get the word out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research how to set up policies for this, prepare fact sheet for retailers that outlines process, then inventory and survey retail food outlets in region to gauge interest in utilizing local food, identify what food would be of most interest.
4.8	Establish farmers' markets located in places where there are lots of people, such as schools and large employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with SHIP funding and local farmers market list to discuss best practice.
4.9	Continue to connect food shelves to local food initiatives to purchase and utilize local foods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the mobile food shelf that makes local foods accessible to more people. • Work to improve access to local foods for all people, including those with food insecurity.
4.10	Consider using an online forum to connect the mobile food shelf and a mobile farmers' market.	