



**Regional Food System Action Plan
Steering Committee Meeting
March 25, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., virtually via Zoom**

Attendees

Bill Napolitano	Joanne Zygmunt
Brenna Trollinger	John Lebeaux
Christine Keller	Liz Wiley
Dennis Carman	Lydia Sisson
Francis Basler	Michael Silveira
Hampton Watkins	Molly Vollmer
Howard Randall	Rhiannon Dugan
Jared Rogers	Theresa Vernazzaro
Jill Slankas	

Purpose

- Present existing conditions findings for the Plymouth County Regional Food System Action Plan
- Review stakeholder engagement progress and public survey results
- Discuss draft plan themes and goals with the Steering Committee
- Gather feedback on identified gaps and strategic focus areas

Project Updates

Public Survey

- Survey closed with 1,437 total responses
- Geographic distribution: 210 from Brockton, 192 from Plymouth, with good representation across all other communities
- 149 responses from food-related businesses
- Survey in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole
- Barrett Planning Group will analyze results in April for inclusion in draft plan

Stakeholder Engagement

- Site visits to food producers ongoing by Lydia and team
- Food pantry interviews being conducted by Alyssa
- Food-related business interviews in progress
- Online questionnaires distributed to focus groups: municipal planners, Board of Health agents, school food service directors
- Farmers market questionnaire to be distributed
- Interview process to wrap up by mid-April

Community Advisory Board (CARAT Process)

- Led by Marion Institute
- Final theme 7 assessment meeting scheduled immediately after Steering Committee meeting
- Theme 7 focuses on local food policy and economy issues
- Scoring process to follow to assess region's strengths and weaknesses across all themes
- Findings will be included in draft plan and exist as separate reference tool

Draft Plan Timeline

- Draft plan to be sent to Steering Committee early to mid May
- Public comment period: May 22 - June 12, 2026 (3 weeks)
- Multiple public events planned during comment period
- Project completion scheduled for June 2026

Existing Conditions Report

- Report sent to Steering Committee prior to meeting
- Key findings presented across multiple categories: land and water, demographics, producers, food economy, environmental conditions, infrastructure

Discussion

Major themes identified:

Theme 1: Expanding and Protecting Local Food Production

- Farmland protection
- Producer support
- Investing in climate resilient practices
- Strengthening food policy

Theme 2: Closing the Infrastructure Gap for Processing and Distribution

- Building local and regional food hub capacity
- Creating strong farm-to-institution connections
- Developing food relief supply chains
- Investing in gleaning and food recovery programs

Theme 3: Advancing Food Equity Across Plymouth County

- Expanding SNAP and HIP usage
- Bringing mobile and community food access tools
- Focus on school food and nutrition education
- Ensuring equitable representation in planning

Highlights

- Diversification and agritourism increasingly necessary for farm viability; farmers earning only 95 cents per dollar spent
- Urban agriculture viability concerns raised; most successful urban ag led by non-profits rather than for-profit businesses
- Educational and community value of non-profit urban agriculture significant despite financial challenges
- Consistency of funding and staffing major challenges for community gardens and non-profit food programs
- Municipal readiness to acquire Chapter 61 lands varies; financial capacity through CPA funds important factor
- SNAP gap significant issue: only some food insecure households eligible for SNAP, and many eligible don't enroll due to stigma, complicated application process, or fear related to immigration status
- DTA staffing shortages (200 employees short) create barriers to SNAP enrollment
- Aging farmer population (40% over 65) and possible lack of new farmer training identified as concern

Existing programs and resources

- Marion Institute's Fields to Families gleaning program launched with new program manager Sarah Cogswell
- Marion Institute's Grow Education program launching community practice for food service directors
- Coastal Foodshed food hub serving region
- Sid Wainers and Chef's Warehouse providing local distribution
- Wards Berry Farm playing significant role in farm-to-farm relationships
- SEMAP working on farm viability research
- Land for Good, SEMEP, and other organizations supporting new farmers
- Stonehill College community farm
- Project Bread and Make Hunger History coalition advocating for more DTA workers

For the plan

- Case study of urban agriculture models in Massachusetts / successful non-profit food production programs / farm viability in urban contexts
- Highlight organizations supporting new farmers (SEMEP, Land for Good, etc.)
- Address state-level policy concerns in recommendations