

ANNUAL REPORT

Interagency
Food and
Nutrition
Policy
Advisory
Council

2023

This report, published March 2024, and the activities described within is a collaborative effort of the Interagency Food and Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC), the Hunger Elimination Task Force and many other community partners.

Chair - Director Terrance Gray

IFNPAC Member Agencies

Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)

Department of Health (RIDOH)

Department of Administration (DOA)

Department of Human Services (DHS)

Office on Healthy Aging (OHA)

Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE)

Department of Corrections (DOC)

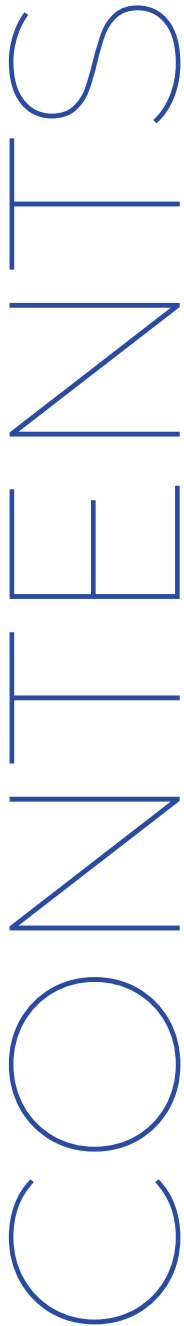
Executive Office of Commerce (EOC)

Department of Children, Youth, and Family (DCYF)

IFNPAC thanks the General Assembly for their continued commitment to supporting a more just, resilient and flourishing food system for all those who live and work in Rhode Island.



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Current Food System Planning

The Interagency Food and Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC) was established by statute in 2012 to find ways to overcome regulatory and policy barriers toward developing a strong, sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices. Since the publication of the 2017 State Food Strategy *Relish Rhody*, IFNPAC has served as a coordinating agency to drive outcomes toward the Food Strategy in partnership with the Director of Food Strategy, staffed at Rhode Island Commerce.

Supporting the growth of the local food sector through meaningful regulatory and policy initiatives is critical to increasing the number of jobs, growing the local economy, and ensuring positive health outcomes. Under Rhode Island General Laws 21-36-3, IFNPAC membership is made up of the Directors, or their designee, from the Department of Health (RIDOH), Department of Environmental Management (DEM), Department of Administration (DOA), Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Healthy Aging (OHA), Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Department of Corrections (DOC), the Executive Office of Commerce (EOC) and the Department of Children, Youth, and Family (DCYF). Administrators and directors from other State agencies and community-based organizations often participate, including representation from the leadership of the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC), the Rhode Island Community Food Bank (RICFB), and many others.

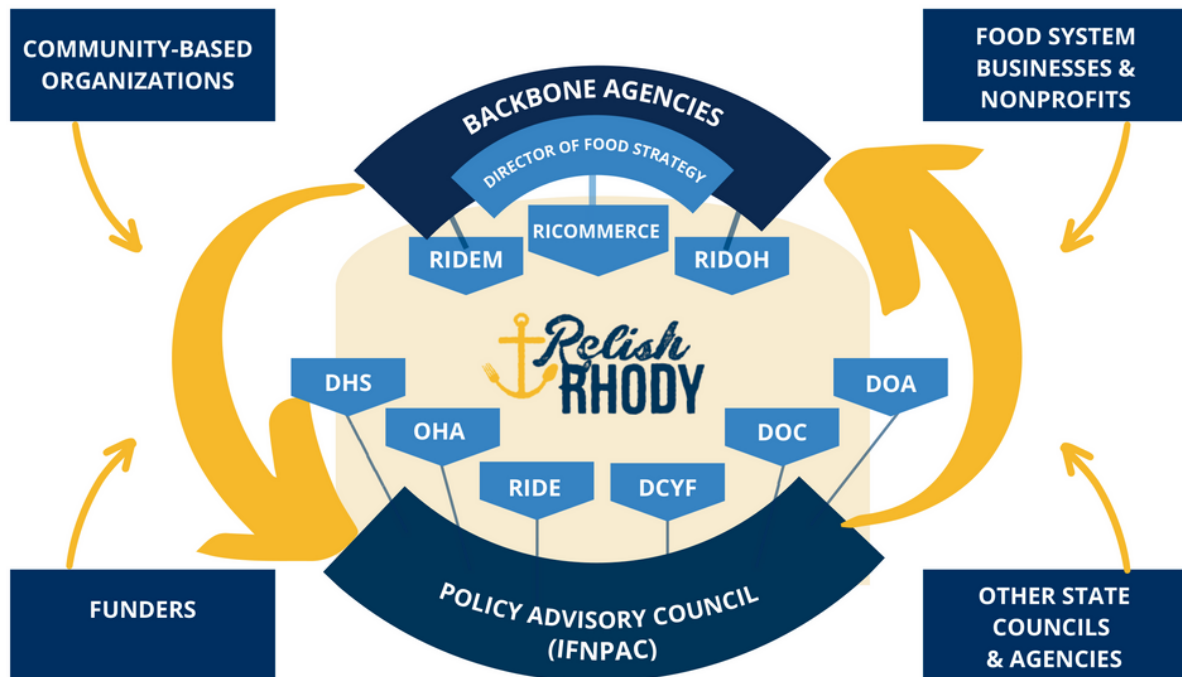
The IFNPAC submits an annual activity report to the General Assembly. This report has been drafted in accordance with the requirements set forth in Chapter 36, Section 21-36-5 of the Rhode Island Local Agriculture and Seafood Act.

Relish Rhody, the State’s first comprehensive food strategy, was launched in 2017 as a five-year action plan centered around three core themes – environmental sustainability, public health and equitable access to food, and opportunities for economic development.

Five integrated focus areas that drive the strategy:

1. Preserve and grow agriculture and fisheries industries in Rhode Island
2. Sustain and create markets for Rhode Island food and beverage products
3. Enhance the climate for food and beverage businesses
4. Minimize food waste and divert it from the waste stream
5. Ensure food security for all Rhode Islanders

The IFNPAC convened four times in 2023. Council members listened to and discussed topics presented by public and private partners with a stake in the Rhode Island food system. Some meetings included a “Deep Dive” to examine a specific food policy or regulatory issue related to the above focus areas as summarized on the next page.



Summary of Meetings 2023

(for complete minutes see Appendix B)

Q1 Meeting (3/21/23)

Focus: Updated State Food Strategy and HEAL grant program
RI Commerce, Providence RI

Guest Presenters:

Nessa Richman, RI Food Policy Council

Q2 Meeting (6/16/23)

Focus: Farm Viability and Climate Smart Agriculture Policies
RI Commerce, Providence RI

Guest Presenters:

Andrew Morley, Sweet & Salty Farm, RI Farmers for Climate Action

Melissa Adams, Farm Viability and Agricultural Business Training Programs, MA-DAR

Gerry Palano, Environmental and Energy Grant Programs

Q3 Meeting (9/12/23)

Focus: State and Federal Funding Opportunities in RI Food System
RI Commerce, Providence RI

Guest Presenters:

Kara Kunst, Policy Analyst, Executive Office of Commerce

Ananda Fraser, Chief Program Development, Department of Environmental Management

Q4 Meeting (12/12/23)

Focus: RI Food System Planning & Updates
RI Commerce, Providence RI

Guest Presenters:

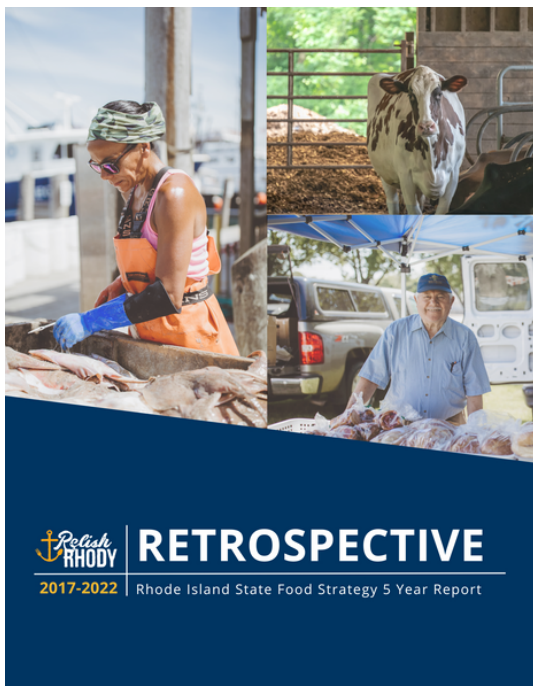
Rachel Newman Greene, Rhode Island Food Policy Council

Nessa Richman, RI Food Policy Council

PUBLICATION OF 5 YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

Five years into the implementation of the State Food Strategy, *Relish Rhody*, the [Rhode Island State Food Strategy 5 Year Report Retrospective](#) was published in October 2023

This report takes inventory of what has been accomplished, where challenges remain, and provides guidance on priorities for the next phase of planning toward a 2030 food vision for Rhode Island. Examining what has been accomplished since 2017 and where there are remaining gaps and challenges in light of a rapidly evolving food system and environment, the Retrospective aims to provide guidance for the next phase of planning. The report does not attempt to be a comprehensive food system assessment, inventory of activities or direct accounting of progress against baseline metrics.



Rhode Island's food system has made progress in 3 key areas: catalytic investments, policy & regulatory progress, and increased coordination and collaboration.

KEY INITIATIVES & IMPACTS IN 2023

IFNPAC in collaboration with the Director of Food Strategy had several priorities in 2023. Inter-agency progress was made under each of these five focus areas of *Relish Rhody*.

01

Preserve & Grow Agriculture and Fisheries Industries

- DEM: The Local Agriculture & Seafood Act (LASA) grant program opened up applications for the eleventh year. In 2023, about \$700,000 of funds were approved, thanks to the support from Governor McKee and the General Assembly. LASA supports small and/or beginning Rhode Island farmers and food producers. This grant program helps to support the amount of food locally grown, raised and harvested, contributing to goals of long-term food security and farmland viability.
- DEM established the state's first Chief Resilience Officer who will lead and develop the state's climate resilience strategy.
- DEM's Division of Agriculture and Forestry continued applying USDA funding on several programs, including those that help purchase locally produced food for the emergency and supplemental food system (Local Food Purchase Assistance Program), help local income Seniors access fresh fruits and vegetables (Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program), help farmers, fishers and foresters deal with sources of stress (Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Program) and support the specialty crop industry of RI (Specialty Crop Block Grant Program).

02

Sustain & Create Markets for Rhode Island Food & Beverage Products

- RIDE: Through the Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) and Local Food for Schools (LFS) programs, RIDE has been able to divert \$1.5 million in Federal funding for local purchasing of food items to be used in the production of school meals. RIDE also continues to be foundational partner in the RI Farm to School Network and supported the strategic planning process of that organization, which builds relationships between schools & local farms and supports access to local food in schools and early childhood education settings. The RIDE Child Nutrition Programs office and the RIDE School Building Authority team have also partnered this year help schools in planning and designing kitchen new construction or renovation projects in way that will support the purchase and processing of fresh, local products.
- DEM: Rhode Island received unprecedented funding through the USDA for the Resilient Food System Infrastructure (RFSI) Grant program to administer over \$1.5 million in grants to mid-supply chain food processors, aggregators, and distributors. RFSI funds will support RI businesses in equipment grants as well as infrastructure grants.
- DOC: State of Rhode Island incorporates Master Price Agreements to purchase food and beverages for state agencies at the best possible price.
- Commerce: The Director of Food Strategy in partnership with DEM secured \$185,600 through the USDA's Federal State Marketing Improvement Program to conduct a 3 year market research and economic impact study on Rhode Island's local food brands – RI Grown and RI Seafood. The project will hire a market research coordinator and work closely with the Seafood Marketing Campaign to strengthen the buy local brands by increasing brand loyalty.

03

Enhance the Climate for Food & Beverage Businesses

- DOC seeks to purchase products from local food and beverage companies to meet the daily requirements of its institutions and to keep purchases at a local level.
- Commerce: Through the Minority Business Accelerator program, funds for business intermediaries was open to support “Minority Business Enterprise” certifications. Fourteen intermediaries who supported food related efforts were selected (awards made in 2024).
- Commerce: The Director of Food Strategy secured a Local Technical Assistance grant of \$60,000 from the Economic Development Administration to conduct a feasibility and needs assessment to understand the necessary investments for growing second stage food businesses.
- Commerce published the State’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy which outlines many priorities to support farming, fishing and local food production (See Policy 2 on pg 116) as well as a regional lens (see Objective 11.4 “ Position Rhode Island as a leader in local food production in New England, supporting the region’s goal of 50% of food consumed locally to be produced locally by 2060.”)



04

Ensure Food Security for All Rhode Islanders



- RIDOH: Secured \$888,000 per year for five years through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's State Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) grant.
- RIDOH: Continued to oversee the Hunger Elimination Task Force alongside RI Commerce in addition to securing funding for the HETF through June of 2024
- RIDOH: Embarking on a Community Health Worker Food Access and Nutrition Security Certification with funding through RIDOH's CDC Community Health Worker grant.
- DHS: Underwent program planning for Eat Well Be Well (EWWB) Healthy Incentive Pilot Program. This program will provide a 50 cent reward on every SNAP dollar spent on fresh fruits and vegetables for up to \$25 a month. The program was soft launched at the end of the 2024 with an official launch set for the beginning of 2024. EWWB is available at all Stop & Shops and Walmart's in Rhode Island. RIDOH's SPAN funding will support the onboarding of additional retailers by funding them to upgrade their POS systems.
- DHS: Supported the programmatic development of a permanent Summer EBT program in coordination with federal partners to provide federal benefits to eligible children in the summer months.
- RIDE: In 2023 RIDE worked with Unite Us to develop the first statewide, electronic application for free and reduced-price meals. This platform not only allows for an easier application process for families, but it enables schools to more easily refer families to other community partners providing social services and/or additional supplemental feeding programs. As part of this initiative, RIDE supported coordinated, statewide outreach to assist families in the process of completing a meal benefit application at various events throughout the state.
- RIDE worked with local schools to implement a regulatory change that allows for previously ineligible schools to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for their school meals program so that meals can be offered free of charge to all students, regardless of economic status. Several new school districts have elected to participate in CEP for the 23-24SY, which has expanded access to free meals under that program to over 9,000 new students.

05

Minimize Food Waste & Divert it from the Waste Stream

- DOC: The Department of Corrections recycle program utilizes for food waste. The DOC started to recycle used vegetable oil from the seven facilities and are working in conjunction with Mahoney Environmental for this recycling program.
- RIDE partners with a variety of organizations, including the RI Schools Recycling Project, to educate schools on how to prevent and divert food waste associated with school meals programs. In August of 2023, RIDE hosted a 4-day training for school food professionals and business managers, which included a half-day session on preventing and diverting food waste.
- OHA collaborated closely with Meals on Wheels RI (MOWRI) leadership in applying an equity lens within their programming to provide nutritious culturally appropriate meals. MOWRI implemented the Culturally Responsive Meal Program which offers Latin, Asian, and Kosher meals statewide, which supports minimizing food waste by providing access to nutritious meals tailored to the clients preferences and dietary needs and thus more likely to be consumed by older adults from diverse backgrounds. Since the launch of the program, meal delivery increased by 133 clients and 15,630 culturally responsive meals were delivered.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR IFNPAC IN 2024

- **Build on emerging partnerships and programs from 2023 between agencies and community organizations** such as the Hunger Elimination Taskforce, the RI Farm to School Network, and re-launching the Healthy Eating and Active Living Program at RIDOH.
- **Strengthen and focus IFNPAC's impact on regulations and policy** - Understand the structure and network of the IFNPAC community to strengthen the work and implementation of the policies brought forth.
- **Increase staffing capacity to manage unprecedented available funding** and carry out various initiatives that support food system work.
- **Identify regulations and policies which increase state purchases of local and healthy food such as a state definition for local food-** Convening an institutional procurement working group under the Department of Health's State Physical Activity and Nutrition grant to analyze the obstacles of state procurement of local food and expanding opportunities for local vendors to do business with various state institutions including DOC, RIDE, OHA, DEM's Parks Department, and state universities.
- **Support planning and implementation of a 2030 Statewide Food Systems Plan** - RI Commerce with state government, industry, Narragansett Indian Tribe and community partners is leading a strategic planning effort to set collective goals and a roadmap for a more equitable, sustainable and resilient food system.
- **Ensure the impact and actionability of this Council**

2024 PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR IFNPAC

AGENCY	Activity / Project
Department of Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue incentivizing fresh fruit and vegetable purchases for SNAP recipients to promote wellbeing while providing additional SNAP benefits for increased food access
Department of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the Healthy Eating, Active Living Program through the CDC's State Physical Activity and Nutrition Program (SPAN) funding • Secure funding for the continuation of Hunger Elimination Task Force (HETF)
Office of Healthy Aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support our contracted partners providing meals, e.g. congregate meals and Meals on Wheels to ensure their meals support the nutritional needs of older adults, are adjusted for cultural considerations and preferences and medically tailored to the maximum extent practicable. • Work with the senior centers and community case managers to educate the aging community on the signs and symptoms of poor nutrition, increase awareness of the health impacts of malnutrition, and ensure they have resources to refer to. • Collaborate with our State partners to promote federally funded, nutrition assistance programs by education community partners and older adults about: DHS's Elderly Simplified Application Process and SNAP's Eat Well Be Well initiative, DEM's Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program benefit to purchase local produce, RIDE's Child and Adult Care Food Program supporting Adult Day Center meals, and the Commodities Supplemental Food Program providing shelf-stable foods to low-income seniors. • Continue to work with the Hunger Elimination Task Force (HETF) and Interagency Food and Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC) to support and inform policies that address hunger and malnutrition among older adults.
Department of Corrections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the possibilities for local vendor to sell products to the RI Department of Corrections by utilizing the state bid system to enhance their business and to meet the demands and requirements of the user agencies

2024 PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR IFNPAC

AGENCY	Activity / Project
RI Commerce Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a renewed Statewide Food Systems Plan with priority actions to be accomplished by 2030 informed by food system subject matter experts, community partners, frontline community members, and in partnership with the IFNPAC agencies and the Narragansett Tribe • Identify strategies to support the expansion and retention of “second-stage” food businesses ready to scale • Support the expansion of “buy local” brands like RI Grown and RI Seafood in partnership with RIDEM. • Continue to support the growing RI Farm to School Network and other efforts to increase demand and market opportunities for RI food & beverage businesses
Department of Environmental Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of succession planning pathways for Rhode Island farmers and fishers • Support the RI Farm to School Network and other efforts to increase market access for RI farmers and fishers • Increase brand recognition and user access of the RI Grown and RI Seafood state branding initiatives to increase consumption of local products • Support widespread access to funding opportunities for RI farmers, fishers and foresters
Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support schools in complying with the state's Styrofoam and food waste bans • Support school construction projects to build kitchens that are capable of using whole, fresh local food items • Support widespread access to meals through all Federally funded Child Nutrition projects • Develop a tracking system for the purchase of local food items in school meals to help inform goals around expansion • Support culinary and other training for school stakeholders to improve the quality and cultural relevance of school meals • Support of the RI Farm to School Network, including the development of RI's first Farm to School Institute

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE RI GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This report suggests policy and regulatory changes which the General Assembly may consider in current and future legislative sessions. IFNPAC is proud of its accomplishments in 2023; however, challenges/barriers still exist and require all levels of leadership to consider so that we can meet our vision for continued growth between the nexus of environment, economic development, and public health. The IFNPAC would welcome continued discussion on any of these topics and looks forward to additional guidance from the General Assembly.

For further questions please contact Ryan Mulcahey, Director of Legislative Affairs at RIDEM.

01

Expansion of LASA Grant Program to support climate smart agriculture and food security

LASA is a longstanding and successful micro-grant program administered by RIDEM to support small food producers with market access and business viability to build long-term food security for RI. Mid-large sized farms are not eligible, however face similar challenges to remain viable. Consider expansion of eligibility and funding to support mid-sized farms and climate resilience practices on farms.

02

Food donation incentives to reduce hunger and divert wasted food from landfill

State food donation tax incentives have shown to incentivize small and mid-sized businesses to donate surplus food, otherwise wasted, to communities in need.

03

Expansion of healthy and local foods in schools

More local and healthy food in schools improves public health outcomes for children and drives demand for more local food production. Support efforts led by the RI Farm to School Network and consider legislation to prioritize local and nutritious food in school cafeterias.

FOOD SYSTEMS PLANNING

2030 RI State Food Strategy

Planning is underway! State government, non-profit and industry stakeholders have relied on [Relish Rhody](#) to assess what has been accomplished in the last five years and to develop a roadmap for the next phase of collective impact setting goals out to 2030, a process we are calling "RI Food Systems Planning for 2030."

The Director of Food Strategy in partnership with leaders from RI Commerce, RI Department of Environmental Management, RI Department of Health and the Narragansett Tribe are leading the effort to renew and reimagine our state food strategy by engaging with food system stakeholders across the supply chain to better understand: where have we made progress since the 2017 publication of Relish Rhody Food Strategy was released, where have we fallen short, where are the areas for greatest opportunity to build a more resilient, sustainable and equitable food system for all Rhode Islander and more!

Understanding, planning and co-creating the strategic vision will take place from Summer 2023 - Fall 2024. Visit [RelishRhody.com](#) for updates.

The RI Food System Preparedness and Recovery Plan

The Rhode Island Food System Preparedness and Recovery Plan, led by the [RI Food Policy Council](#), will be a standalone accompaniment to the State Food Strategy. It will assess hard and soft infrastructure and identify risks, vulnerabilities, assets and opportunities, in order to develop strategic priorities and an action plan that prioritize the most vulnerable communities, families and businesses to enable our food system to respond to and recover from disruptions in a way that ensures a sufficient supply of food that is acceptable and accessible to impacted communities.

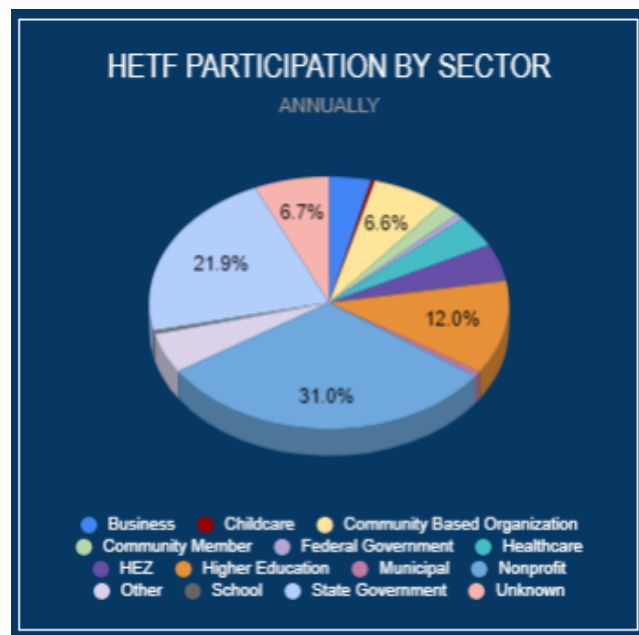
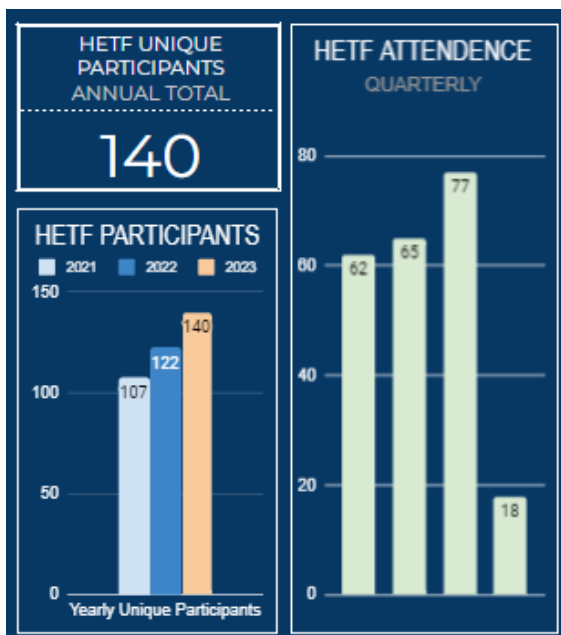
The Preparedness and Recovery Plan will set forth 3 to 5 year strategic priorities and an action plan for state agencies in times of disruption. This plan is due to be completed in Fall 2024.

APPENDIX A

The Hunger Elimination Taskforce in 2023

The RI Hunger Elimination Task Force (HETF) was initiated by Governor Gina Raimondo in 2017, first convening as a working group to develop recommendations and action steps to reduce the state’s food insecurity levels to below 10%, a Relish Rhody target. The group developed and presented a strong list of recommendations to the Interagency Food and Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC) in 2018, then communicated to a wider audience of stakeholders in 2018/2019.

Since 2021, the non-profit partner RI Food Policy Council has served as facilitator of the HETF, in partnership with the RI Department of the Health and the Director of Food Strategy. HETF is a statewide network of food access, nutrition, and public health champions that work to reduce hunger and increase access to healthy, culturally-appropriate food for all RI residents. With more than 150 meeting participants annually,



APPENDIX B

2023 Meeting Minutes

Q1 Meeting (3/21/23) - pg 18

Q2 Meeting (6/16/23) - pg 24

Q3 Meeting (9/12/23) - pg 30

Q4 Meeting (12/12/23) - pg 32

Q1 Meeting Minutes

Date: March 21, 2022

Location: RI Commerce Corporation

COUNCIL MEMBERS (present): Terry Gray (RIDEM), Ken Ayars (RIDEM), Julianne Stelmaszyk (RICC)
Jessica Patroliia (RIDE)

In Attendance: Caitlyn Mendel, Jack Sisson,
Alison Macbeth

Virtual: Nessa Richman, Randi Belhumeur, Hilary Rainey, Sarah Burde, Andrew Schiff, Kate Baelstracci, Porschia Davis, Jenna Simeone, Diane Lynch, Silvana Mercado, Jeannine Cassleman, Kerri Connolly, Tommy Lemoine, Max De Faria, Rebecca Kislak, Shelby Doggett, Christina Mathews, Leo Pollock, Ann Barone, Teresa Tanzi

Welcome & Introductions

Terry: Welcome - for any new attendees, a bit of background on the Council. The IFNPAC was established by the general assembly in 2012 to operate as a coordinating body between 7 state agencies to examine regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices. Since the launch of the 2017 State Food Strategy, [Relish Rhody](#), the Council has served as a coordinating council to drive outcomes toward the Strategy which include:

- *preserving and growing agriculture and fisheries*
- *enhancing the climate for food and beverage businesses*
- *ensuring food security for all Rhode Islanders and*
- *minimizing food waste in the waste stream.*

Approve Q4 Meeting Minutes

Terry seconds motion to approve minutes. Dec 13th meeting minutes approved unanimously by the council.

Finish discussion on 2023 priorities & duties

Juli: The Council's mandate is to examine issues and identify solutions to regulatory and policy barriers towards developing a strong sustainable and healthy food system. We are also meant to collaborate with and serve as a resource to food policy councils. In order to maximize our effectiveness towards this goal, we would like to propose a way of organizing ourselves going forward which focuses on a few food system issues each year which we agree upon by Q4. We left off in December agreeing on the new structure but not the 2023 focuses.

As a reminder, this is what we agreed on in terms of setting priorities (see pre-reading "Proposed IFNPAC Structure & Duties for 2023")

Council Members will establish 1-3 strategic focus areas each to examine and ultimately to make recommendations to State Agency Leadership and the General Assembly regarding the identification and development of solutions to regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices.

During the last quarterly meeting of the year (Q4), IFNPAC members will propose and agree on 1-3 strategic focus areas which IFNPAC will examine and make recommendations on throughout the year to IFNPAC Agency leadership and in the annual report to the General Assembly. Each IFNPAC Member can propose a focus area that would benefit from interagency coordination and solutions which will be voted on and requires full consensus.

- *The focus areas provide an opportunity for each member agency to communicate to and educate the public and state leadership about how the issue and/or proposed changes would impact the current goals and activities of their organization, as well as the RI residents these activities are serving.*
- *The areas will focus efforts to develop solutions to regulatory and policy barriers to developing a more resilient and sustainable food system in Rhode Island.*

Throughout the year, the council will focus energy on these few topics and how council can work across agencies to provide solutions. Juli proposed voting on 2 topic areas to focus on this year.

- Approving food waste diversion and composting infrastructure. Touches on the 3 pillars of food strategy. Economic incentives, greenhouse gases, and opportunity to capture rescued food for food recovery for obvious benefits for food insecurity.
- Increasing healthy food for schools. Convene stakeholders across institutional markets to help increase local foods. An example of this is skup, how can we encourage a market for this.
- Relish Rhody 2.0 planning.
- Examining the connections between food systems and climate change. How climate change is affecting agriculture, aquaculture and agriculture.

- Terry shared that he is on the council for climate change council. This could be a priority and principle for informing other topics on this list. There is much overlap between food and
- Randi – could it be a cross cutting theme?
 - Terry: Yes, it could be a cross cutting theme.
 - Jessica: All of these are cross cutting. We should make it a priority as a council to highlight how these interact.
 - Terry: Emphasied the first topic. We should inform the benefits and technical assistance to large institutions. There is a lack of compacity in the state. But that may not be the priority for this Council. It may be something DEM and Commerce figure out.

- Juli: We should find issues that most of the agencies have programs in.
- Ken: We should think about how the council can move things forward. Relish Rhody is on its way, but other issues may need more support from IFNPAC.
- Juli: The Relish Rhody Steering Committee will need to present.
- Jessica: Again, things are cross cutting. What IFNPAC choses should be in align with Relish Rhody. We should consider the Council's output.
- Juli: Some of the topics are considerations, but not actually things we can tackle.
- Randi: Agrees with Ken about Relish Rhody 2.0 that we are doing that already and it is not really an issue area. For 2023, we don't have 2.0 as a guiding principle we would need to use 1.0
- ---: Unsure of how the 2.0 is conducting the assessment,
- **Juli**
- If IFNPAC is part of supporting Relish Rhody, we can be using that as a guiding line.
- Learn more about food waste in relation to climate change and food waste. There is much to learn about in relation to seniors.
- Terry: seems like there is consensus on the first two priorities: Food Waste and Increasing Healthy Foods. This seems to be in the wheelhouse of this group. We can look at the two other suggested priorities as guiding principles. We can use those principles to ground our dialogue.
 - Juli: Relish Rhody 2.0 and Climate 2025 are aligning efforts. Juli agrees.
 - Jessica makes motion to approve the first two priorities as focus area. Juli seconds. All of council approves.

Approve IFNPAC Report to General Assembly

- Terry: Still a work in progress. We will have an updated report circulated soon. We will provide final edits and approve by the end of the month.
 - Juli thanks everyone for their contributions. This year is different with more actionable items.
- Terry: The IFNPAC has policy recommendations that we think should be looked at. The timing is interesting since the legislative session is occurring as we speak. We are starting the dialogue for next legislative session for 2024.
 - --- Member agencies did a great job highlighting the work of agencies. Thank you.
 - Terry: Stay tuned. Watch your email inbox. It is an important milestone. We will need feedback and a signal of approval to be completed by the end of the month.

Legislative update from RI Food Policy Council

- Nessa: You will find alignment between priorities and the uses of the IFNPAC report. Reminder of RIFPC mission to build a more equitable, accessible, economically vibrant, and environmentally sustainable food system in Rhode Island. When we think about policy, we think about all these things with equity as a lens.
 - 135 bills categorized as relevant to food systems. You can see the RI Food System Bill tracker via the [RIFPC website](#).

- HB5171/SB201 – expansion of food waste ban, 15 miles expanded to 30 miles. There is a very active waste food solutions group.
- HB5803/SB517 – provide a tax credit for food donation. Showing how this would support business and individuals experience food insecurity. It is not the same as proposed in the Gov budget.
- HB6007/SB71: Universal School Meals has not yet had hearings.
- HJR6018/SJR560: Appropriate \$5 million to DEM for farmland preservation, protection and conservation
- Coordinated action is channeled through working groups that are open to the public.
- Juli: You mentioned 135 bills this year. Are you seeing an increase in food system policy over the last few years?
 - Diane Lynch: Not really. There was an increase with the bill on climate change, but tracking the same as last year.

Overview of Relish Rhody 2.0 Update

- Juli is excited to share about this work. Had a food strategy in 2016 established to look at a systems approach around food issues knowing that they are intersectional. Sue AnderBois worked with the 2017 food plan. There are 3 pillars/guiding principles – environmental resiliency, economic development, & health and access. The Director of Food Strategy position moved from DEM to Commerce. The historic funders are happy to see pilot model now hosted by the state. The Food Summit has been held for 7 years with URI. HEFT has been going strong since 2018 thanks to RIFPC and RIDOH.
- Reflecting on the last 5.5 years. There has been a lot of progress. We are more collected, working collaboratively between the state government, non-profits and stakeholders. There have been regulatory changes and growth in the economy. The strategy has directly and indirectly made positive contributions to the food economy.
- Coming out of COVID, there is still much to learn and build on that momentum. A lot has happened in 5 years. The needle has moved. We need to set on new targets and priorities. Learn what worked and what didn't. Strong interest among stakeholders to assess and develop new roadmap.
- Aligns with Climate Strategy for 2025, RI Farm to School Network from the USDA to create an action plan, Gov RI2030 plan, New England Feeding New England moving towards 30% local food by 2030, RIDOHs Healthy and Active Living Program. It is opportune timing.
- The steering committee has been meeting since the fall. This committee oversees the entire process including fundraising, communication and accountability. Meeting regularly to assess cost, planning and process.
- We will have an advisory board made up of 15-20 people who will come from different sectors who will provide input and keep on the committee on track.
- A few folks from IFNPAC could sit on the Advisory board.
- Juli thanks Diane and Nessa for their support in food system planning. Only 18 states have food system plans. MSU Center for Sustainable Food Systems use strategic planning

model. Particularly inspired by the VT Farm to Plate. They recently updated food plan. We would like to follow a similar process in developing priority areas. They looked at products, markets, and issues through a brief format. Looked at current conditions, why it matters, gaps and opportunities, and recommendations. They had stipends for co-authors. I liked this method because it creates buy-in and allows people to feel like they are part of the state plan. They used advisory board and steering committee evaluate.

- Planned Activities: Phase 0 is complete. Working with Northbound Ventures to complete the 5 year impact report. Using key informants. In the fall have a statewide summit to share drafts.
- Parallel efforts are taking place at the same time: using an EDA funding stream Commerce will be conducting a Local Food Counts. Vermont established a methodology that they have been using about 8 years. Will take about 6 months to complete.
 - RI Farm to School Network Action Plan in Fall 2023
 - Study on second stage food businesses
 - RIFPC will conduct a LASA Grant Program Impact Evaluation
 - RI Emergency Food Plan partially funded by RI Foundation via RIFPC

Kerri Connolly asked via chat on applying to the advisory board. Juli said to email directly.

- Thinking regionally. Center Equity. Strategies that building markets regionally because RI does not have all producing capacity to feed all Rhode Islanders.
- Need to establish advisory board in April, meet in May, conduct stakeholder engagement, publish draft in October and launch plan in Feb/March.
- Caitlin: state doesn't have definition on local food. How will that impact local food counts?
 - Juli: VT has local food definition in statute. The way the local food counts is RI raised and grown that is sold in RI.
 - Nessa: definition for local food counts is not the same as the statute. That's a separate matter that would need to be proposed in the next legislative session. There are groups interested in passing similar definitions in other states.
 - Rachel: In the city of Providence, raised, grown or landed in tiers for city, state and region.
 - Juli: The dilemma is around manufactured products.
- Terry: Is there an overarching goal for the plan?
 - Juli: we will determine that. For the 2017 plan there were several goals. Would love for us to have a few that people can rally around. Makes sense to have more focused goals. In the VT plan, they had specific targets within each strategy areas.
 - Terry: thinking about this in a climate perspective. We have to align action areas to meet those goals. Having a goal in the future for everyone to shoot for.
 - Juli: We talk a lot about NEFNE goal (30 by 30). It's not the only way of aligning, but a unifying goal and its about resilience.

- Terry: The Feds also have a similar metric, but it's a goal to work towards.
- Nessa: How does the Relish Rhody 2.0 process align with other state plans, and how will it move forward in parallel with the 'RI Food Security Plan' being planned (which was funded through the RI Foundation ARPA funding)? Other state plans.
 - Juli: we have talked about RI Emergency Food Plan being part of the food plan. But it is a large issue. The Emergency food plan could be a large addendum or a standalone.
 - Terry: Is that the same steering committee?
 - Juli: RIFPC will be the partner on this. There may be a subcommittee in the advisory committee that would possibly look at this.
- Ken: How do you view our plan in alignment with the Farm Bill?
 - Juli: The White House conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health occurred this past fall and hasn't occurred in the last 50 years. Working to align Federal agencies and streamline activities. If healthy school meals passes at a federal level it could allow things to be easier on the state level.
 - Ken: DEM is putting together written comments. The Farm Bill has changed a lot to be more reflective of a broad based engagement of food and not just commodity crops. It is a bit of dance between what we do.
- Shelby Dogget: Why would food produced in RI NOT be included in the impact of local food?
 - Juli: VT local food definition looks at manufactured food with 50% locally grown food processed in VT. Supporting local jobs and business ownership, independent. We want to follow what other states do and get the NE Food Vision baseline.
 - Diane Lynch: Mentioned the issue of soft drinks being part of the local food count.
- Randi: It is important to do a crosswalk between other state plans. Thinking about formative research with DOH and DEM plans.
- Jessica: Thinking about IFNPAC role to support the Strategy, we've talked about the different workstreams but could our agencies take chunks independently. It legitimizes all our plans to work together.
- --- When you codify one piece with another piece, than it makes it that much more challenging to change the needle later with labor. Could potentially create a conflict.
- Terry: All moving with different goals, stakeholder groups and timelines. There is a lot of alignment with DEM but a different timeline.
- Juli: It all depends on the timeline. Food system change takes a long time. Maybe it is case by case.

Overview of State Physical Activity & Nutrition Grant workplan

- Randi: Thanks everyone who supported the development of the workplan, proposal and letters of support. A lot of the strategies that the CDC set forth align with the work already happening in RI. In 2018, the 5 year cooperative agreement allows states and organizations

to apply. Much of what is in the agreement is in alignment with the conference last October. RIDOH's approach has taken a lot of fact finding and data research the past few months. RIDOH wants to build off the work that has already been taking place: Nutrition – procurement and access to fruits and vegetables, Early Care and Education, Physical Activity, Breastfeeding.

- RIDOH will be focusing on priorities of IFNPAC, specifically procurement. It is a broad strategy. In the 2018 application a lot of the work was rooted in state agencies procurement. In this strategy, institutions were defined as places where food is provided to high priority populations (hospitals, state agencies, the emergency food systems). Looking at how to make changes with procurement systems.
- Need to conduct a feasibility study and analysis to increase healthy and local food procurement. It is one thing to provide healthy local food, but it is another thing for people to eat it. We will capturing current programs like FFRI to foster enthusiasm. This grant will allow us to further leverage that work.
- In the CDC NOFO, 1) coordinate uptake and expansion of 1) existing fruit and vegetable voucher incentive and 2) produce prescription programs. Looking to state partners to continue to move the needle on long term sustainability and impact.
- Developing a policy brief and implementing the next steps of that policy brief. Farm Fresh RI and the RI Public Health Institute would lead these efforts. The RIFPC is conducting research on Veggie Rx programs. This funding will further leverage this research. Early Care and Education Strategies: Farm to Early Education follow the lead and great work of Farm to School. Build capacity to and strategy of ECE. Working on regulations around ECE. Partnering with Brown, Snap Ed, and Health School Coalition. This is due the 28th.
- Juli: Thank you for all the work you have been doing Randi.
- Randi: Start date would be August 30th.

Public Comment

- Juli points out that there are many upcoming RI Food System Events. Will be shared out via email.
- Terry mentioned that [RI Quahog week](#) is April 23-29th!

Terry motion to adjourned. Jessica seconds. Meeting adjourned.

Q2 Meeting Minutes Date: June 16, 2023

Location: RI Commerce Corporation

COUNCIL MEMBERS (present): Terry Gray (RIDEM), Andre, Jesse EDU , Alyssa, Ken Ayars (RIDEM), Julianne Stelmaszyk (RICC), Jessica Patroliia (RIDE), Aleatha Dickerson (OHA), Jenna Simeone (DHS), Randi Belhumeur (RIDOH), Terry McNamara (DOC)

Other attendees: Silvana Mercado, Amy Voigt

Guest Speakers:

1. Andrew Morley, Sweet & Salty Farm & Member of RI Farmers for Climate Action
2. Melissa Adams, Farm Viability and Agricultural Business Training Programs
3. Gerry Palano, Energy Programs

1. Introductions, New Members

Terry: Welcome everyone. This is our second meeting for calendar year 2023. Introductions.

2. Approve Q1 Meeting Minutes

Terry motions to approve minutes. March 21st meeting minutes approved unanimously by the council.

3. Key Legislative Updates For Food Issues

FY 24 Legislative Updates

- We are nearing the end of the session. A few things that we are confident that will pass in this year's budget.
 - **Rhode Island Community Food Bank: \$3.55M**
 - EOHHS received \$550,000 for food collection and distribution through the Rhode Island Community Food Bank
 - Rhode Island Community Food Bank line item is \$3M (from ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Funds) for enhanced support to households in need, including those that received enhanced nutrition benefits during the public health emergency
 - **Interagency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council**
 - The council's membership increased from 7 members to 9 members to include participation from Commerce and the department of children, youth & families (DCYF)
 - **Litter Control Permit (Article 4, Section 6)**
 - Elimination of the requirement for businesses that sell to-go food or beverages to obtain and annually renew a litter control participation permit.
 - The budget also includes \$100,000 from general revenues to support litter removal efforts.
 - **Local Agriculture and Seafood Program: \$700K**
 - LASA grants administered through RIDEM
 - The FY 2023 enacted budget includes \$700,000 for the local agriculture and seafood program grants for small businesses in the food sector. This reflects a commitment of \$200,000 of annual ongoing support and an additional \$500,000 in one-time funding for FY 2023. The GA approved \$700,000 for FY 2024 to continue the extra \$500,000 for another year.
 - **Meals on Wheels/Elderly Nutrition Services: \$680K**
 - The GA approved \$680,000 from general revenues for elderly nutrition services, which is \$100,000 more than enacted and includes \$630,000 for Meals on Wheels.
 - These funds are administered through EOHHS

- **Farmland Preservation: \$2.5M**

1. The Farmland Preservation funds are administered through RIDEM
2. The goal is to eliminate economic pressures on farmers to sell land for residential or commercial development. Prior bonds funds are nearly exhausted and the Department reports there is a wait list for funds.

Not included in FY24 budget:

- Healthy School Meals for All
 - [HB 6007](#) - AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- FEDERAL AID (Requires all public schools to make reimbursable breakfasts and lunches available to all students under the rules and regulations of the USDA and the RI department of education.) -held for further study
- Food Donation Tax Credit
 - [Article 6, Section 5](#) - The GA did not include the Governor's proposal for a new non-refundable tax credit of 15%, capped at \$5,000 of the value of donated food products to a food bank from local farmers and food producers.
 - [HB 5803](#) - AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- TAX CREDIT FOR FOOD DONATION (Provides a tax credit for food donations by qualified taxpayers to nonprofit organizations.) -held for further study
 - [SB 517](#) - AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- TAX CREDIT FOR FOOD DONATION (Provides a tax credit for food donations by qualified taxpayers to nonprofit organizations.) -referred to Senate Finance

Terry: The budget has passed. The Governor is signing today at 12pm.

4. Deep Dive: Farm Viability and Climate Smart Agriculture Policies

Ken: This is tied with a new report that came out called New England Feeding New England <https://nefoodsystemplanners.org/> There is an incredible amount of background that has gone into this report. RI has long been involved in supporting this. A lot has gone into achieving this goal. We are in the long end of the supply chain. Most food moves west to east and goes cross country to feed us. Getting to what we all think is more sustainable to get there locally is important. We have seen over the past several years challenges in the food system, challenges in supply chain, etc. There are challenges to our food system and security moving forward. It is not a steady state, especially with ongoing climate change. Key Findings include:

- 1 million more acres of land will need to come under production
- Diets will need to shift to - more fruit/veg, seafood, less processed foods.
- Food system employs 1 million people (10% of all jobs) and generates \$190 billion in sales (11% of all sales)...however not enough people are choosing to work in the agriculture and fisheries industry to meet demand.
- Grocery stores, fast food and restaurants account for 84% of food sales, however, accessing these markets has been a barrier for local small businesses and producers.

Juli: This is just the executive summary. If you want to look at one page, look at page 4. The most important thing to think about is a regional food system What role can RI play and what role can RI not play? I would love to do a deeper dive into NEFNE. One of the focuses is to discuss agriculture and the climate. I think we can all use a reminder of what these issues are. We have 3 guest speakers for today:

5. Farming in Rhode Island Amidst a Changing Climate

Andrew Morley: I am farmer and cheese maker in Little Compton, RI with my wife Lori. We are the owners of Sweet & Salty Farms. I want to thank Director Terry on your leadership on climate. I want to thank Ken because he helped me land in RI 12 years ago. Thanks for making this all possible. I have been a proud member of RI Food Policy Council and RI Farmers Require Action. Today I am only speaking in my personal capacity.

I am a farmer, and everyone likes farm tours. Here's an overview:

- We are unconventional dairy farm in RI. We let the cows roam freely and feed themselves in a managed way. We often joke that we are a solar powered farm as the pastured grass is energy used to feed the cows and ultimately we turn that energy into milk and cheese.
- A typical day starts early in AM, we bring them in to get milk, we bring them out 2x a day for fresh pasture, the milk gets handed off to employees, we have 8, the cheese and milk employees, and tasters. We sell at farmers markets so that the product can land in our customers hands at peak point. This all takes a tremendous amount of work but that's what it takes to be a farmer in RI.

Climate change and Agriculture in RI:

1. Climate change will inevitably cause a disruption to the global food system leaving Rhode Island more dependent on local food sources in a crisis
 2. Climate change will make growing and producing food in Rhode Island more difficult
- RI Farmers produce 5% of the food in RI
 - A great benefit are prices.
 - Drought and flooding will push our coastal farms to the limit.
 - Soil Regenerative Agriculture:
 - "One that, at increasing levels of productivity, increases our land and soil biological production base. It has a high level of built-in economic and biological stability." Robert Rodale, 1983

The Way Forward: Build Local Capacity

These are the 5 recommendations to build resilience.

1. Support Farm Viability in Rhode Island Today
 2. Improve Farmland Access and Develop Next Gen Farmers
 3. Support Climate Resilience on Farms
 4. Develop Markets for Rhode Island Products
 5. Exercise Local Food Supply Chains Early and Often
- Ken: can you talk a bit about your optimism?
 - Andrew: I went to college, got an office job and quit after 5 years. I became an apprentice at other people's farms. My wife has an MBA and background in food markets. We were way under skilled

when we decided to start a business and moved to Little Compton. There's a big generation of farmers that did not grow up on a farm. The optimism comes from a big group of people interested. A lot of the solutions are here, we just have to deploy them. There is work ahead of us and we need to collectively tackle manageable challenges.

- Juli: I have a question around your farm operation and your neighbors. How are you responding now to the challenges you are seeing and preparing for the next 3 years?

- Andrew: Since we started, we've had 4 droughts. The cows don't stay in the same place for too long. The cows have a self-perpetuating system. Managing the numbers of acres and numbers of cows. The soil matter is continuously growing and since our soil system is done correctly, it improves the soil and is continuously improving. During a drought, we give the cows hay. It's a big learning curve. I was fortunate enough to train under a mentor that raised cows this way. Knowing that flooding and a drought can happen again, our personal plan is to keep climbing that educational curve.

- Ken: I would also make the point of the importance of farmland protection.

- Andrew: The list of farm viability projects that Ken provided in the handout is a very good one. We can double and triple investment and get tremendous return. These are important efforts.

Melissa Adams (MA Dept of Agricultural Resources)

- Farm Viability Programs Overview (see slides)
- The overall purpose is to provide planning, TA and grants to increase the viability of farm businesses.
 1. Farm Viability Enhancement Program (FVEP) – established commercial farms with 5+ owned acres in production; land ownership required for short-term covenants to keep land in agricultural use
 2. APR Improvement Program (AIP) - for farms that own land permanently protected through state APR program. Grant funds for infrastructure improvements.
 3. Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture (MEGA) Program – for beginning farmers in business 1 to 10 years; secure land access required – may be leased or owned.
- What programs exist to help farmers adapt to a changing climate, adopt “climate-smart” practices and address climate-related risks?
 - Climate Smart Agricultural Program (CSAP)
 - 3 fiscal years going on 4th
 - \$1.25 – \$1.50 million + funding per year
 - 75 - 100+ applicants/year
 - 50-60 +/- awards/year

Gerry Palano (Environmental and Energy Grant Program)

Agricultural Energy Program (ENER)

- Goals: to help farms improve their sustainability through implementing energy efficiency and renewable energy projects; also contributes towards state: food plan, energy efficiency/clean energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals.
- General Eligibility Requirements:

- MGL 128.1A – Commercial Ag
- Minimum of 3 years
- No acreage requirement
- Leased property is ok
- Primary Technical Requirements:
 - Energy Audits
 - Technical Assessments
- FY2024 CSAP AgEnergy Grant Funding Amounts:
 - Maximum of \$50,000 with a demonstrated 20% match
- Eligible Projects:
 - Energy Efficiency
 - Renewables

Q&A

- Ken: Between the 2 programs, what is required to support them annually?
 - Melissa: CCAP is \$1M but could use more. My 3 programs combined are \$1.5M
 - Gerry: \$3M plus between the two of us
- Terry: have your investments resulted in any net zero farms yet?
 - Gerry: yes, and we have some that are close to zero. This is something that we try to promote. One maple farm in western Mass became net zero about 3 years ago
- Juli: Melissa, regarding some of the TA providers that you work with. How do you structure that? Do you have a separate bucket of funding?
 - Melissa: yes, we have a separate TA funding pit that’s about \$2K a year and a separate request for response for TA providers so that if someone is interested they respond online. This is a procurement system with the opportunity to renew contracts. Everyone that is qualified has the opportunity to put in for a bid. I am happy to share our RFP as a model.
 - Juli: Yes, that would be helpful. Commerce has lots of incentive plans and DEM has a lot of farm viability programs, but the Commerce ones are not targeted. Do fisheries have a separate program?
 - Gerry: yes, but fisheries are a different state agency.
 - Melissa: I am not aware of anything similar, but we fund a lot of oyster farms from our MEGA program
 - What is the cost if electric equipment? Are they competitive with what farmers are using now?
 - Gerry: It depends on size of tractor you are trying to purchase. There are retrofit. Most farms are interested in something new and with more horsepower so the cost can range between \$25-75K.
 - Terry: have you talked with DEP to use diesel emissions reduction funds?
 - Gerry: No, we haven’t. Thank you for that.

6. Brief update on Relish Rhody 2.0 Food System Planning Process

- Juli: I know we have been trying to figure out the role of IFNPAC. What can the council do with the information that we have from guest speakers and the programs we have in RI? How should we tackle these priorities as a council?
 - Terry: on climate change, it intersects with EC4. For the first time, they have funding. It's important that this topic stays on that agenda. That's more of my role.
 - Juli: I can try to bring info to the STAC group. Do you work with OER?
 - Ken: yes, we do. I am struck by how comprehensive their programs are and for \$3M they are doing a lot. I am interested to see what we can do in RI.
 - Terry: Timing wise, think about schedule. Right now, we are starting our capital requests. For us, it's a big deal. Some other agencies may want food and agriculture on their budgets. All this progresses through September/ October. Now is the time to start thinking about this. By January, it is too late.
- Juli: we are updating the food strategy. Here are some updates:
 - Funding awarded to Commerce from Henry P. Kendall Foundation to support the planning process
 - 5 Year Impact Report will be published early July
 - 28 Advisory Board members gathered to "kick-off" the planning process on June 8th
 - New RFP will be published soon and consultant selected by early August

7. Public Comment

Terry: any public comment?

Jack Sisson: MA is doing a lot of great work. It always goes back to me for additional staffing to administer these programs and to offer the TA that is needed to make these successful.

Terry motion to adjourned. Juli seconds. Meeting adjourned.

Q3 Meeting

Meeting Minutes Date: September 12, 2023

Location: RI Commerce Corporation

Meeting began at 9:30 AM with a welcome and introduction by IFNPAC Chair, DEM Director Terry Gray. Director Gray introduced two new members to IFNPAC, Meredith Brady from the Department of Administration and John Coltatoni from the Governor's Office (joining by phone).

Director Gray stated the background on IFNPAC:

IFNPAC was established by the general assembly in 2012 to serve as a coordinating body between 7 state agencies to examine regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices. Since the launch of the 2017 State Food Strategy, [Relish Rhody](#), the Council has served as a coordinating council to drive outcomes toward the Strategy which include: preserving and growing agriculture and fisheries; enhancing the climate for food and beverage businesses; ensuring food security for all Rhode Islanders and minimizing food waste in the waste stream.

The next portion of the agenda was approval of the quarter two meeting minutes. After review of the minutes, Jessica Patroli from the RI Department of Education made a motion to approve. Aleatha Dickerson from the Office of Healthy Aging, made a second motion. There was no disapproval of the meeting minutes.

The Director of Food Strategy, Juli Stelmaszyk, shared key findings of the Food Strategy, Relish Rhody 1.0 Retrospective:

- Engaged Northbound Ventures as consultancy to create the report. 11 KII's and IFNPAC findings helped us to create this report.
- Goal: Identify impacts, progress and outcomes over the last five years. NOT a comprehensive assessment, since no baseline metrics to draw from.
- Who has been responsible for the plan, to date? DFS and IFNPAC.
 - Food assistance programs, of which IFNPAC members oversee, are very much interconnected with the five focus areas.
- Success: funding for small BIPOC farmers and fishers thanks to the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) funding.
- Three themes emerged: catalytic funding; policy gains with investment of funds (ARPA dollars, LASA); collaboration and coordination
- Gaps: racial inequities; gaps in support for second stage businesses; underinvestment in farmland viability and food solutions to climate change
- RIDOH, DEM, DFS leading the 2.0 process
- Alignment with other state and regional plans
 - Alignment with F2S Action Plan, Emergency Food Security Plan, 2025 climate strategy (see slide)
 - Emergency Food Security Plan: RIFPC secured RIF funding. Purpose is to look at the in between time period after the FEMA initial time frame (3 days)

Upcoming State grant programs for food businesses presented by Kara Kunst, Senior Policy and Budget Analyst, Executive Office of Commerce.

- EOC programs for small businesses; See slide and recording. Still have *Take it Outside* funding available. Support of up to 10K. Ventilation program is at capacity.
- Commerce Programs
 - Minority Business Accelerator
 - RI Rebounds Technical Assistance
 - Take It Outside

DEM updates by Ananda Frasier

- RFSI: Encompasses post-harvest to retail for business that use local or regional food products. No poultry, meat or wild caught seafood. Infrastructure and equipment only grants. Application template online if you want to start project planning now. Federal funding that state agencies are trying to stand up, and also maximize the amount of money and leverage accordingly. Creating a landing page for businesses to figure out what applicable. USDA directive around excluding meat and poultry.
- LASA update: RFSI and LASA meant to be synergistic. 700K in next decision package for LASA.
- 30 million to the NE states, and we can all apply to this pool. Available for business assistance and grant funds and meant to be synergistic to LASA and RFSI.

FY25 RI Food Policy Council legislative priorities: Josh Daly

- Policy retreat just held last week.
- Shared initial draft of '24 priorities

RI Farm to School & RIDE Food System Project Updates

Slide: USDA funding for next phase of F2S work. Local procurement for F2S network.

Public Comment

CET: Lorenzo: new clean heat program with link in the chat

Q4 Meeting Minutes

December 12, 2023

Location: RI Commerce Corporation

COUNCIL MEMBERS (present): Ken Ayars, Terry Macnamara, Maria Crimini, Meredith Brady, Jessica Patroliia, Aletha Dickerson

COUNCIL MEMBERS (virtual): Randi Belhumeur, Jenna Simeone

Other attendees: Alison Macbeth, Kayleigh Hill, Nessa Richman, Rachel Newman Greene, David Dadkian, Stephanie Bush,

Guest Speakers:

Alison Macbeth, RI Commerce

Nessa Richman, RI Food Policy Council

Rachel Newman Greene, RI Food Policy Council

1. Welcome & Introductions (Ken Ayars, Acting Chair)

2. Approve Q3 Meeting Minutes (Ken Ayars, Acting Chair)

The minutes were approved with no amendments.

3. Update on the HEAL program (Randi Belhumeur, RIDOH)

- Randi from DOH provided an overview of the HEAL program, which was launched in 2020, with the intention of addressing disparities and chronic diseases in RI.
- Due to the loss of funding from the USDA for similar efforts, DOH sought funding from an opportunity with the SPAN Cooperative Agreement, a CDC-funded initiative aimed at strengthening RI's food system
- The program focuses on four key areas as outlined by the CDC: physical activity access, healthy food choices, breastfeeding support, and obesity prevention.
- The program will leverage existing fruit and vegetable voucher incentives and produce prescription programs, such as Bonus Bucks and Food on the Move.

- DOH has proposed to CDC, the creation of an Institutional Procurement Working Group that would include stakeholders like, RIDE, DOH, FFRI, RI Commerce, a food service company, and the RI Heart Association.
 - Contracting with the RIFPC who has procured a consultant who is conducting a landscape analysis to better assess and understand where the CDC funding should go and how it can be supported by federal dollars.
- 4. Update on RI State Food System Planning for 2030 development (Alison Macbeth, RI Commerce)**
- Alison provided an update on the State Food System Planning process.
 - A retrospective for the 2017-2022 period has been published and will inform future strategic planning.
 - Several contracts have been awarded to consultants to support the planning process, including Northbound Ventures for strategic planning and Helianth Partners for the Local Food Counts project.
 - There are RFPs currently in process; a consultant for informing DE&I efforts throughout the Strategic Plan, a consultant for Strengthening RI Local Food Brands (this will also include the hire of a coordinator role), and a consultant for a 2nd Stage food business state analysis.
- 5. Food Systems Fact Book: Rhode Island Food Policy Council State of the Food System (Nessa Richman, RI Food Policy Council)**
- Nessa presented the first annual RI Food System Fact Book, which provides data and trends on various aspects of the state's food system.
 - The Fact Book includes information on the food system economy, food access and nutrition security, agriculture and land use, commercial fisheries and aquaculture, and climate change.
 - The report will be completed and published by January 23rd, 2024 and promoted at the URI Food Summit.
 - Feedback is welcome to improve future editions of the Fact Book.
- 6. RI Food System Preparedness and Recovery Plan (Rachel Newman Greene, RI Food Policy Council)**
- Rachel from the RIFPC discussed the development of the Food System Preparedness and Recovery Plan, a standalone document that will complement the State Food Strategy.
 - The plan will focus on responding to and recovering from disruptions to the food system.
 - Key elements include identifying vulnerable communities, assessing infrastructure, and developing an action plan to ensure food security during recovery which will include a sharable catalogue of assets.
 - A consultant is actively being engaged to assist in the development of the plan, expected start is around January 5th.
7. Update from agencies

- RIDE: Jessica provided an update on the Office of Child Nutrition's efforts to comply with the Styrofoam ban and food waste ban. They plan to announce a new program in January.
- RIDE: Actively working to implement the Electronic Direct Certification Process which allows RIDE to certify more students for the SLP based on their Medicaid information.
- DEM: Ken Ayers announced that the LASA Act application period has closed with over \$2 million in application requests received.
- DEM: Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant (RFSI) Applications for the RFSI program are due in mid-January.

8. Public Comment

- ☒ Randi requested an update on the Eat Well Be Well Program.
 - i. Jenna provided an update on the program, which is scheduled to launch in January 2024.
 - ii. She discussed partnerships with Walmart and S&S, marketing plans, and outreach efforts.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 PM. Adjourned by Jessica, Terry and Maria.

Action Items:

- HEAL Program/SPAN Cooperative Agreement: Finalize contract with RIFPC for the landscape analysis, convene the Institutional Procurement Working Group, and explore expansion of produce prescription programs.
- Explore education related to State Procurement, for the committee and relevant stakeholders. Randi to reach out to the Department of Purchasing.
- State Food System Planning: Continue work on strategic planning, hire DEI consultant, finalize briefings for strategy development, and finalize contracts for remaining projects.
- Food System Fact Book: Publish final report on January 23rd and promote at URI Food Summit.
- Food System Preparedness and Recovery Plan: Finalize contract with a consultant and complete plan by December 6th.
- RIDE: Launch new program for Styrofoam and food waste compliance in January and continue work on Electronic Direct Certification process.

Q1 Meeting Minutes

Date: March 21, 2022

Location: RI Commerce Corporation

COUNCIL MEMBERS (present): Terry Gray (RIDEM), Ken Ayars (RIDEM), Julianne Stelmaszyk (RICC)
Jessica Patroliia (RIDE)

In Attendance: Caitlyn Mendel, Jack Sisson, Alison Macbeth

Virtual: Nessa Richman, Randi Belhumeur, Hilary Rainey, Sarah Burde, Andrew Schiff, Kate Baelstracci, Porschia Davis, Jenna Simeone, Diane Lynch, Silvana Mercado, Jeannine Cassleman, Kerri Connolly, Tommy Lemoine, Max De Faria, Rebecca Kislak, Shelby Doggett, Christina Mathews, Leo Pollock, Ann Barone, Teresa Tanzi

Welcome & Introductions

Terry: Welcome - for any new attendees, a bit of background on the Council. The IFNPAC was established by the general assembly in 2012 to operate as a coordinating body between 7 state agencies to examine regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices. Since the launch of the 2017 State Food Strategy, [Relish Rhody](#), the Council has served as a coordinating council to drive outcomes toward the Strategy which include:

- *preserving and growing agriculture and fisheries*
- *enhancing the climate for food and beverage businesses*
- *ensuring food security for all Rhode Islanders and*
- *minimizing food waste in the waste stream.*

Approve Q4 Meeting Minutes

Terry seconds motion to approve minutes. Dec 13th meeting minutes approved unanimously by the council.

Finish discussion on 2023 priorities & duties

Juli: The Council's mandate is to examine issues and identify solutions to regulatory and policy barriers towards developing a strong sustainable and healthy food system. We are also meant to collaborate with and serve as a resource to food policy councils. In order to maximize our effectiveness towards this goal, we would like to propose a way of organizing ourselves going forward which focuses on a few food system issues each year which we agree upon by Q4. We left off in December agreeing on the new structure but not the 2023 focuses.

As a reminder, this is what we agreed on in terms of setting priorities (see pre-reading "Proposed IFNPAC Structure & Duties for 2023")

Council Members will establish 1-3 strategic focus areas each to examine and ultimately to make recommendations to State Agency Leadership and the General Assembly regarding the identification and development of solutions to regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices.

During the last quarterly meeting of the year (Q4), IFNPAC members will propose and agree on 1-3 strategic focus areas which IFNPAC will examine and make recommendations on throughout the year to IFNPAC Agency leadership and in the annual report to the General Assembly. Each IFNPAC Member can propose a focus area that would benefit from interagency coordination and solutions which will be voted on and requires full consensus.

- *The focus areas provide an opportunity for each member agency to communicate to and educate the public and state leadership about how the issue and/or proposed changes would impact the current goals and activities of their organization, as well as the RI residents these activities are serving.*
- *The areas will focus efforts to develop solutions to regulatory and policy barriers to developing a more resilient and sustainable food system in Rhode Island.*

Throughout the year, the council will focus energy on these few topics and how council can work across agencies to provide solutions. Juli proposed voting on 2 topic areas to focus on this year.

- Approving food waste diversion and composting infrastructure. Touches on the 3 pillars of food strategy. Economic incentives, greenhouse gases, and opportunity to capture rescued food for food recovery for obvious benefits for food insecurity.
- Increasing healthy food for schools. Convene stakeholders across institutional markets to help increase local foods. An example of this is skup, how can we encourage a market for this.
- Relish Rhody 2.0 planning.
- Examining the connections between food systems and climate change. How climate change is affecting agriculture, aquaculture and agriculture.

- Terry shared that he is on the council for climate change council. This could be a priority and principle for informing other topics on this list. There is much overlap between food and
- Randi – could it be a cross cutting theme?
 - Terry: Yes, it could be a cross cutting theme.
 - Jessica: All of these are cross cutting. We should make it a priority as a council to highlight how these interact.
 - Terry: Emphasied the first topic. We should inform the benefits and technical assistance to large institutions. There is a lack of compacity in the state. But that may not be the priority for this Council. It may be something DEM and Commerce figure out.

- Juli: We should find issues that most of the agencies have programs in.
- Ken: We should think about how the council can move things forward. Relish Rhody is on its way, but other issues may need more support from IFNPAC.
- Juli: The Relish Rhody Steering Committee will need to present.
- Jessica: Again, things are cross cutting. What IFNPAC choses should be in align with Relish Rhody. We should consider the Council's output.
- Juli: Some of the topics are considerations, but not actually things we can tackle.
- Randi: Agrees with Ken about Relish Rhody 2.0 that we are doing that already and it is not really an issue area. For 2023, we don't have 2.0 as a guiding principle we would need to use 1.0
- ---: Unsure of how the 2.0 is conducting the assessment,
- **Juli**
- If IFNPAC is part of supporting Relish Rhody, we can be using that as a guiding line.
- Learn more about food waste in relation to climate change and food waste. There is much to learn about in relation to seniors.
- Terry: seems like there is consensus on the first two priorities: Food Waste and Increasing Healthy Foods. This seems to be in the wheelhouse of this group. We can look at the two other suggested priorities as guiding principles. We can use those principles to ground our dialogue.
 - Juli: Relish Rhody 2.0 and Climate 2025 are aligning efforts. Juli agrees.
 - Jessica makes motion to approve the first two priorities as focus area. Juli seconds. All of council approves.

Approve IFNPAC Report to General Assembly

- Terry: Still a work in progress. We will have an updated report circulated soon. We will provide final edits and approve by the end of the month.
 - Juli thanks everyone for their contributions. This year is different with more actionable items.
- Terry: The IFNPAC has policy recommendations that we think should be looked at. The timing is interesting since the legislative session is occurring as we speak. We are starting the dialogue for next legislative session for 2024.
 - --- Member agencies did a great job highlighting the work of agencies. Thank you.
 - Terry: Stay tuned. Watch your email inbox. It is an important milestone. We will need feedback and a signal of approval to be completed by the end of the month.

Legislative update from RI Food Policy Council

- Nessa: You will find alignment between priorities and the uses of the IFNPAC report. Reminder of RIFPC mission to build a more equitable, accessible, economically vibrant, and environmentally sustainable food system in Rhode Island. When we think about policy, we think about all these things with equity as a lens.
 - 135 bills categorized as relevant to food systems. You can see the RI Food System Bill tracker via the [RIFPC website](#).

- HB5171/SB201 – expansion of food waste ban, 15 miles expanded to 30 miles. There is a very active waste food solutions group.
- HB5803/SB517 – provide a tax credit for food donation. Showing how this would support business and individuals experience food insecurity. It is not the same as proposed in the Gov budget.
- HB6007/SB71: Universal School Meals has not yet had hearings.
- HJR6018/SJR560: Appropriate \$5 million to DEM for farmland preservation, protection and conservation
- Coordinated action is channeled through working groups that are open to the public.
- Juli: You mentioned 135 bills this year. Are you seeing an increase in food system policy over the last few years?
 - Diane Lynch: Not really. There was an increase with the bill on climate change, but tracking the same as last year.

Overview of Relish Rhody 2.0 Update

- Juli is excited to share about this work. Had a food strategy in 2016 established to look at a systems approach around food issues knowing that they are intersectional. Sue AnderBois worked with the 2017 food plan. There are 3 pillars/guiding principles – environmental resiliency, economic development, & health and access. The Director of Food Strategy position moved from DEM to Commerce. The historic funders are happy to see pilot model now hosted by the state. The Food Summit has been held for 7 years with URI. HEFT has been going strong since 2018 thanks to RIFPC and RIDOH.
- Reflecting on the last 5.5 years. There has been a lot of progress. We are more collected, working collaboratively between the state government, non-profits and stakeholders. There have been regulatory changes and growth in the economy. The strategy has directly and indirectly made positive contributions to the food economy.
- Coming out of COVID, there is still much to learn and build on that momentum. A lot has happened in 5 years. The needle has moved. We need to set on new targets and priorities. Learn what worked and what didn't. Strong interest among stakeholders to assess and develop new roadmap.
- Aligns with Climate Strategy for 2025, RI Farm to School Network from the USDA to create an action plan, Gov RI2030 plan, New England Feeding New England moving towards 30% local food by 2030, RIDOHs Healthy and Active Living Program. It is opportune timing.
- The steering committee has been meeting since the fall. This committee oversees the entire process including fundraising, communication and accountability. Meeting regularly to assess cost, planning and process.
- We will have an advisory board made up of 15-20 people who will come from different sectors who will provide input and keep on the committee on track.
- A few folks from IFNPAC could sit on the Advisory board.
- Juli thanks Diane and Nessa for their support in food system planning. Only 18 states have food system plans. MSU Center for Sustainable Food Systems use strategic planning

model. Particularly inspired by the VT Farm to Plate. They recently updated food plan. We would like to follow a similar process in developing priority areas. They looked at products, markets, and issues through a brief format. Looked at current conditions, why it matters, gaps and opportunities, and recommendations. They had stipends for co-authors. I liked this method because it creates buy-in and allows people to feel like they are part of the state plan. They used advisory board and steering committee evaluate.

- Planned Activities: Phase 0 is complete. Working with Northbound Ventures to complete the 5 year impact report. Using key informants. In the fall have a statewide summit to share drafts.
- Parallel efforts are taking place at the same time: using an EDA funding stream Commerce will be conducting a Local Food Counts. Vermont established a methodology that they have been using about 8 years. Will take about 6 months to complete.
 - RI Farm to School Network Action Plan in Fall 2023
 - Study on second stage food businesses
 - RIFPC will conduct a LASA Grant Program Impact Evaluation
 - RI Emergency Food Plan partially funded by RI Foundation via RIFPC

Kerri Connolly asked via chat on applying to the advisory board. Juli said to email directly.

- Thinking regionally. Center Equity. Strategies that building markets regionally because RI does not have all producing capacity to feed all Rhode Islanders.
- Need to establish advisory board in April, meet in May, conduct stakeholder engagement, publish draft in October and launch plan in Feb/March.
- Caitlin: state doesn't have definition on local food. How will that impact local food counts?
 - Juli: VT has local food definition in statute. The way the local food counts is RI raised and grown that is sold in RI.
 - Nessa: definition for local food counts is not the same as the statute. That's a separate matter that would need to be proposed in the next legislative session. There are groups interested in passing similar definitions in other states.
 - Rachel: In the city of Providence, raised, grown or landed in tiers for city, state and region.
 - Juli: The dilemma is around manufactured products.
- Terry: Is there an overarching goal for the plan?
 - Juli: we will determine that. For the 2017 plan there were several goals. Would love for us to have a few that people can rally around. Makes sense to have more focused goals. In the VT plan, they had specific targets within each strategy areas.
 - Terry: thinking about this in a climate perspective. We have to align action areas to meet those goals. Having a goal in the future for everyone to shoot for.
 - Juli: We talk a lot about NEFNE goal (30 by 30). It's not the only way of aligning, but a unifying goal and its about resilience.

- Terry: The Feds also have a similar metric, but it's a goal to work towards.
- Nessa: How does the Relish Rhody 2.0 process align with other state plans, and how will it move forward in parallel with the 'RI Food Security Plan' being planned (which was funded through the RI Foundation ARPA funding)? Other state plans.
 - Juli: we have talked about RI Emergency Food Plan being part of the food plan. But it is a large issue. The Emergency food plan could be a large addendum or a standalone.
 - Terry: Is that the same steering committee?
 - Juli: RIFPC will be the partner on this. There may be a subcommittee in the advisory committee that would possibly look at this.
- Ken: How do you view our plan in alignment with the Farm Bill?
 - Juli: The White House conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health occurred this past fall and hasn't occurred in the last 50 years. Working to align Federal agencies and streamline activities. If healthy school meals passes at a federal level it could allow things to be easier on the state level.
 - Ken: DEM is putting together written comments. The Farm Bill has changed a lot to be more reflective of a broad based engagement of food and not just commodity crops. It is a bit of dance between what we do.
- Shelby Dogget: Why would food produced in RI NOT be included in the impact of local food?
 - Juli: VT local food definition looks at manufactured food with 50% locally grown food processed in VT. Supporting local jobs and business ownership, independent. We want to follow what other states do and get the NE Food Vision baseline.
 - Diane Lynch: Mentioned the issue of soft drinks being part of the local food count.
- Randi: It is important to do a crosswalk between other state plans. Thinking about formative research with DOH and DEM plans.
- Jessica: Thinking about IFNPAC role to support the Strategy, we've talked about the different workstreams but could our agencies take chunks independently. It legitimizes all our plans to work together.
- --- When you codify one piece with another piece, than it makes it that much more challenging to change the needle later with labor. Could potentially create a conflict.
- Terry: All moving with different goals, stakeholder groups and timelines. There is a lot of alignment with DEM but a different timeline.
- Juli: It all depends on the timeline. Food system change takes a long time. Maybe it is case by case.

Overview of State Physical Activity & Nutrition Grant workplan

- Randi: Thanks everyone who supported the development of the workplan, proposal and letters of support. A lot of the strategies that the CDC set forth align with the work already happening in RI. In 2018, the 5 year cooperative agreement allows states and organizations

to apply. Much of what is in the agreement is in alignment with the conference last October. RIDOH's approach has taken a lot of fact finding and data research the past few months. RIDOH wants to build off the work that has already been taking place: Nutrition – procurement and access to fruits and vegetables, Early Care and Education, Physical Activity, Breastfeeding.

- RIDOH will be focusing on priorities of IFNPAC, specifically procurement. It is a broad strategy. In the 2018 application a lot of the work was rooted in state agencies procurement. In this strategy, institutions were defined as places where food is provided to high priority populations (hospitals, state agencies, the emergency food systems). Looking at how to make changes with procurement systems.
- Need to conduct a feasibility study and analysis to increase healthy and local food procurement. It is one thing to provide healthy local food, but it is another thing for people to eat it. We will capturing current programs like FFRI to foster enthusiasm. This grant will allow us to further leverage that work.
- In the CDC NOFO, 1) coordinate uptake and expansion of 1) existing fruit and vegetable voucher incentive and 2) produce prescription programs. Looking to state partners to continue to move the needle on long term sustainability and impact.
- Developing a policy brief and implementing the next steps of that policy brief. Farm Fresh RI and the RI Public Health Institute would lead these efforts. The RIFPC is conducting research on Veggie Rx programs. This funding will further leverage this research. Early Care and Education Strategies: Farm to Early Education follow the lead and great work of Farm to School. Build capacity to and strategy of ECE. Working on regulations around ECE. Partnering with Brown, Snap Ed, and Health School Coalition. This is due the 28th.
- Juli: Thank you for all the work you have been doing Randi.
- Randi: Start date would be August 30th.

Public Comment

- Juli points out that there are many upcoming RI Food System Events. Will be shared out via email.
- Terry mentioned that [RI Quahog week](#) is April 23-29th!

Terry motion to adjourned. Jessica seconds. Meeting adjourned.

Q2 Meeting Minutes Date: June 16, 2023

Location: RI Commerce Corporation

COUNCIL MEMBERS (present): Terry Gray (RIDEM), Andre, Jesse EDU , Alyssa, Ken Ayars (RIDEM), Julianne Stelmaszyk (RICC), Jessica Patroliia (RIDE), Aleatha Dickerson (OHA), Jenna Simeone (DHS), Randi Belhumeur (RIDOH), Terry McNamara (DOC)

Other attendees: Silvana Mercado, Amy Voigt

Guest Speakers:

1. Andrew Morley, Sweet & Salty Farm & Member of RI Farmers for Climate Action
2. Melissa Adams, Farm Viability and Agricultural Business Training Programs
3. Gerry Palano, Energy Programs

1. Introductions, New Members

Terry: Welcome everyone. This is our second meeting for calendar year 2023. Introductions.

2. Approve Q1 Meeting Minutes

Terry motions to approve minutes. March 21st meeting minutes approved unanimously by the council.

3. Key Legislative Updates For Food Issues

FY 24 Legislative Updates

- We are nearing the end of the session. A few things that we are confident that will pass in this year's budget.
 - **Rhode Island Community Food Bank: \$3.55M**
 - EOHHS received \$550,000 for food collection and distribution through the Rhode Island Community Food Bank
 - Rhode Island Community Food Bank line item is \$3M (from ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Funds) for enhanced support to households in need, including those that received enhanced nutrition benefits during the public health emergency
 - **Interagency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council**
 - The council's membership increased from 7 members to 9 members to include participation from Commerce and the department of children, youth & families (DCYF)
 - **Litter Control Permit (Article 4, Section 6)**
 - Elimination of the requirement for businesses that sell to-go food or beverages to obtain and annually renew a litter control participation permit.
 - The budget also includes \$100,000 from general revenues to support litter removal efforts.
 - **Local Agriculture and Seafood Program: \$700K**
 - LASA grants administered through RIDEM
 - The FY 2023 enacted budget includes \$700,000 for the local agriculture and seafood program grants for small businesses in the food sector. This reflects a commitment of \$200,000 of annual ongoing support and an additional \$500,000 in one-time funding for FY 2023. The GA approved \$700,000 for FY 2024 to continue the extra \$500,000 for another year.
 - **Meals on Wheels/Elderly Nutrition Services: \$680K**
 - The GA approved \$680,000 from general revenues for elderly nutrition services, which is \$100,000 more than enacted and includes \$630,000 for Meals on Wheels.
 - These funds are administered through EOHHS

- **Farmland Preservation: \$2.5M**
 1. The Farmland Preservation funds are administered through RIDEM
 2. The goal is to eliminate economic pressures on farmers to sell land for residential or commercial development. Prior bonds funds are nearly exhausted and the Department reports there is a wait list for funds.

Not included in FY24 budget:

- Healthy School Meals for All
 - [HB 6007](#) - AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- FEDERAL AID (Requires all public schools to make reimbursable breakfasts and lunches available to all students under the rules and regulations of the USDA and the RI department of education.) -held for further study
- Food Donation Tax Credit
 - [Article 6, Section 5](#) - The GA did not include the Governor’s proposal for a new non-refundable tax credit of 15%, capped at \$5,000 of the value of donated food products to a food bank from local farmers and food producers.
 - [HB 5803](#) - AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- TAX CREDIT FOR FOOD DONATION (Provides a tax credit for food donations by qualified taxpayers to nonprofit organizations.) -held for further study
 - [SB 517](#) - AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- TAX CREDIT FOR FOOD DONATION (Provides a tax credit for food donations by qualified taxpayers to nonprofit organizations.) -referred to Senate Finance

Terry: The budget has passed. The Governor is signing today at 12pm.

4. Deep Dive: Farm Viability and Climate Smart Agriculture Policies

Ken: This is tied with a new report that came out called New England Feeding New England <https://nefoodsystemplanners.org/> There is an incredible amount of background that has gone into this report. RI has long been involved in supporting this. A lot has gone into achieving this goal. We are in the long end of the supply chain. Most food moves west to east and goes cross country to feed us. Getting to what we all think is more sustainable to get there locally is important. We have seen over the past several years challenges in the food system, challenges in supply chain, etc. There are challenges to our food system and security moving forward. It is not a steady state, especially with ongoing climate change. Key Findings include:

- 1 million more acres of land will need to come under production
- Diets will need to shift to - more fruit/veg, seafood, less processed foods.
- Food system employs 1 million people (10% of all jobs) and generates \$190 billion in sales (11% of all sales)...however not enough people are choosing to work in the agriculture and fisheries industry to meet demand.
- Grocery stores, fast food and restaurants account for 84% of food sales, however, accessing these markets has been a barrier for local small businesses and producers.

Juli: This is just the executive summary. If you want to look at one page, look at page 4. The most important thing to think about is a regional food system What role can RI play and what role can RI not play? I would love to do a deeper dive into NEFNE. One of the focuses is to discuss agriculture and the climate. I think we can all use a reminder of what these issues are. We have 3 guest speakers for today:

5. Farming in Rhode Island Amidst a Changing Climate

Andrew Morley: I am farmer and cheese maker in Little Compton, RI with my wife Lori. We are the owners of Sweet & Salty Farms. I want to thank Director Terry on your leadership on climate. I want to thank Ken because he helped me land in RI 12 years ago. Thanks for making this all possible. I have been a proud member of RI Food Policy Council and RI Farmers Require Action. Today I am only speaking in my personal capacity.

I am a farmer, and everyone likes farm tours. Here's an overview:

- We are unconventional dairy farm in RI. We let the cows roam freely and feed themselves in a managed way. We often joke that we are a solar powered farm as the pastured grass is energy used to feed the cows and ultimately we turn that energy into milk and cheese.
- A typical day starts early in AM, we bring them in to get milk, we bring them out 2x a day for fresh pasture, the milk gets handed off to employees, we have 8, the cheese and milk employees, and tasters. We sell at farmers markets so that the product can land in our customers hands at peak point. This all takes a tremendous amount of work but that's what it takes to be a farmer in RI.

Climate change and Agriculture in RI:

1. Climate change will inevitably cause a disruption to the global food system leaving Rhode Island more dependent on local food sources in a crisis
 2. Climate change will make growing and producing food in Rhode Island more difficult
- RI Farmers produce 5% of the food in RI
 - A great benefit are prices.
 - Drought and flooding will push our coastal farms to the limit.
 - Soil Regenerative Agriculture:
 - "One that, at increasing levels of productivity, increases our land and soil biological production base. It has a high level of built-in economic and biological stability." Robert Rodale, 1983

The Way Forward: Build Local Capacity

These are the 5 recommendations to build resilience.

1. Support Farm Viability in Rhode Island Today
 2. Improve Farmland Access and Develop Next Gen Farmers
 3. Support Climate Resilience on Farms
 4. Develop Markets for Rhode Island Products
 5. Exercise Local Food Supply Chains Early and Often
- Ken: can you talk a bit about your optimism?
 - Andrew: I went to college, got an office job and quit after 5 years. I became an apprentice at other people's farms. My wife has an MBA and background in food markets. We were way under skilled

when we decided to start a business and moved to Little Compton. There's a big generation of farmers that did not grow up on a farm. The optimism comes from a big group of people interested. A lot of the solutions are here, we just have to deploy them. There is work ahead of us and we need to collectively tackle manageable challenges.

- Juli: I have a question around your farm operation and your neighbors. How are you responding now to the challenges you are seeing and preparing for the next 3 years?

- Andrew: Since we started, we've had 4 droughts. The cows don't stay in the same place for too long. The cows have a self-perpetuating system. Managing the numbers of acres and numbers of cows. The soil matter is continuously growing and since our soil system is done correctly, it improves the soil and is continuously improving. During a drought, we give the cows hay. It's a big learning curve. I was fortunate enough to train under a mentor that raised cows this way. Knowing that flooding and a drought can happen again, our personal plan is to keep climbing that educational curve.

- Ken: I would also make the point of the importance of farmland protection.

- Andrew: The list of farm viability projects that Ken provided in the handout is a very good one. We can double and triple investment and get tremendous return. These are important efforts.

Melissa Adams (MA Dept of Agricultural Resources)

- Farm Viability Programs Overview (see slides)
- The overall purpose is to provide planning, TA and grants to increase the viability of farm businesses.
 1. Farm Viability Enhancement Program (FVEP) – established commercial farms with 5+ owned acres in production; land ownership required for short-term covenants to keep land in agricultural use
 2. APR Improvement Program (AIP) - for farms that own land permanently protected through state APR program. Grant funds for infrastructure improvements.
 3. Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture (MEGA) Program – for beginning farmers in business 1 to 10 years; secure land access required – may be leased or owned.
- What programs exist to help farmers adapt to a changing climate, adopt “climate-smart” practices and address climate-related risks?
 - Climate Smart Agricultural Program (CSAP)
 - 3 fiscal years going on 4th
 - \$1.25 – \$1.50 million + funding per year
 - 75 - 100+ applicants/year
 - 50-60 +/- awards/year

Gerry Palano (Environmental and Energy Grant Program)

Agricultural Energy Program (ENER)

- Goals: to help farms improve their sustainability through implementing energy efficiency and renewable energy projects; also contributes towards state: food plan, energy efficiency/clean energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals.
- General Eligibility Requirements:

- MGL 128.1A – Commercial Ag
- Minimum of 3 years
- No acreage requirement
- Leased property is ok
- Primary Technical Requirements:
 - Energy Audits
 - Technical Assessments
- FY2024 CSAP AgEnergy Grant Funding Amounts:
 - Maximum of \$50,000 with a demonstrated 20% match
- Eligible Projects:
 - Energy Efficiency
 - Renewables

Q&A

- Ken: Between the 2 programs, what is required to support them annually?
 - Melissa: CCAP is \$1M but could use more. My 3 programs combined are \$1.5M
 - Gerry: \$3M plus between the two of us
- Terry: have your investments resulted in any net zero farms yet?
 - Gerry: yes, and we have some that are close to zero. This is something that we try to promote. One maple farm in western Mass became net zero about 3 years ago
- Juli: Melissa, regarding some of the TA providers that you work with. How do you structure that? Do you have a separate bucket of funding?
 - Melissa: yes, we have a separate TA funding pit that’s about \$2K a year and a separate request for response for TA providers so that if someone is interested they respond online. This is a procurement system with the opportunity to renew contracts. Everyone that is qualified has the opportunity to put in for a bid. I am happy to share our RFP as a model.
 - Juli: Yes, that would be helpful. Commerce has lots of incentive plans and DEM has a lot of farm viability programs, but the Commerce ones are not targeted. Do fisheries have a separate program?
 - Gerry: yes, but fisheries are a different state agency.
 - Melissa: I am not aware of anything similar, but we fund a lot of oyster farms from our MEGA program
 - What is the cost if electric equipment? Are they competitive with what farmers are using now?
 - Gerry: It depends on size of tractor you are trying to purchase. There are retrofit. Most farms are interested in something new and with more horsepower so the cost can range between \$25-75K.
 - Terry: have you talked with DEP to use diesel emissions reduction funds?
 - Gerry: No, we haven’t. Thank you for that.

6. Brief update on Relish Rhody 2.0 Food System Planning Process

- Juli: I know we have been trying to figure out the role of IFNPAC. What can the council do with the information that we have from guest speakers and the programs we have in RI? How should we tackle these priorities as a council?
 - Terry: on climate change, it intersects with EC4. For the first time, they have funding. It's important that this topic stays on that agenda. That's more of my role.
 - Juli: I can try to bring info to the STAC group. Do you work with OER?
 - Ken: yes, we do. I am struck by how comprehensive their programs are and for \$3M they are doing a lot. I am interested to see what we can do in RI.
 - Terry: Timing wise, think about schedule. Right now, we are starting our capital requests. For us, it's a big deal. Some other agencies may want food and agriculture on their budgets. All this progresses through September/ October. Now is the time to start thinking about this. By January, it is too late.
- Juli: we are updating the food strategy. Here are some updates:
 - Funding awarded to Commerce from Henry P. Kendall Foundation to support the planning process
 - 5 Year Impact Report will be published early July
 - 28 Advisory Board members gathered to "kick-off" the planning process on June 8th
 - New RFP will be published soon and consultant selected by early August

7. Public Comment

Terry: any public comment?

Jack Sisson: MA is doing a lot of great work. It always goes back to me for additional staffing to administer these programs and to offer the TA that is needed to make these successful.

Terry motion to adjourned. Juli seconds. Meeting adjourned.

Q3 Meeting

Meeting Minutes Date: September 12, 2023

Location: RI Commerce Corporation

Meeting began at 9:30 AM with a welcome and introduction by IFNPAC Chair, DEM Director Terry Gray. Director Gray introduced two new members to IFNPAC, Meredith Brady from the Department of Administration and John Coltatoni from the Governor's Office (joining by phone).

Director Gray stated the background on IFNPAC:

IFNPAC was established by the general assembly in 2012 to serve as a coordinating body between 7 state agencies to examine regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices. Since the launch of the 2017 State Food Strategy, [Relish Rhody](#), the Council has served as a coordinating council to drive outcomes toward the Strategy which include: preserving and growing agriculture and fisheries; enhancing the climate for food and beverage businesses; ensuring food security for all Rhode Islanders and minimizing food waste in the waste stream.

The next portion of the agenda was approval of the quarter two meeting minutes. After review of the minutes, Jessica Patroli from the RI Department of Education made a motion to approve. Aleatha Dickerson from the Office of Healthy Aging, made a second motion. There was no disapproval of the meeting minutes.

The Director of Food Strategy, Juli Stelmaszyk, shared key findings of the Food Strategy, Relish Rhody 1.0 Retrospective:

- Engaged Northbound Ventures as consultancy to create the report. 11 KII's and IFNPAC findings helped us to create this report.
- Goal: Identify impacts, progress and outcomes over the last five years. NOT a comprehensive assessment, since no baseline metrics to draw from.
- Who has been responsible for the plan, to date? DFS and IFNPAC.
 - Food assistance programs, of which IFNPAC members oversee, are very much interconnected with the five focus areas.
- Success: funding for small BIPOC farmers and fishers thanks to the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) funding.
- Three themes emerged: catalytic funding; policy gains with investment of funds (ARPA dollars, LASA); collaboration and coordination
- Gaps: racial inequities; gaps in support for second stage businesses; underinvestment in farmland viability and food solutions to climate change
- RIDOH, DEM, DFS leading the 2.0 process
- Alignment with other state and regional plans
 - Alignment with F2S Action Plan, Emergency Food Security Plan, 2025 climate strategy (see slide)
 - Emergency Food Security Plan: RIFPC secured RIF funding. Purpose is to look at the in between time period after the FEMA initial time frame (3 days)

Upcoming State grant programs for food businesses presented by Kara Kunst, Senior Policy and Budget Analyst, Executive Office of Commerce.

- EOC programs for small businesses; See slide and recording. Still have *Take it Outside* funding available. Support of up to 10K. Ventilation program is at capacity.
- Commerce Programs
 - Minority Business Accelerator
 - RI Rebounds Technical Assistance
 - Take It Outside

DEM updates by Ananda Frasier

- RFSI: Encompasses post-harvest to retail for business that use local or regional food products. No poultry, meat or wild caught seafood. Infrastructure and equipment only grants. Application template online if you want to start project planning now. Federal funding that state agencies are trying to stand up, and also maximize the amount of money and leverage accordingly. Creating a landing page for businesses to figure out what applicable. USDA directive around excluding meat and poultry.
- LASA update: RFSI and LASA meant to be synergistic. 700K in next decision package for LASA.
- 30 million to the NE states, and we can all apply to this pool. Available for business assistance and grant funds and meant to be synergistic to LASA and RFSI.

FY25 RI Food Policy Council legislative priorities: Josh Daly

- Policy retreat just held last week.
- Shared initial draft of '24 priorities

RI Farm to School & RIDE Food System Project Updates

Slide: USDA funding for next phase of F2S work. Local procurement for F2S network.

Public Comment

CET: Lorenzo: new clean heat program with link in the chat

Q4 Meeting Minutes

December 12, 2023

Location: RI Commerce Corporation

COUNCIL MEMBERS (present): Ken Ayars, Terry Macnamara, Maria Cimini, Meredith Brady, Jessica Patroliia, Aleatha Dickerson

COUNCIL MEMBERS (virtual): Randi Belhumeur, Jenna Simeone

Other attendees: Alison Macbeth, Kayleigh Hill, Nessa Richman, Rachel Newman Greene, David Dadekian, Stephanie Bush,

Guest Speakers:

Alison Macbeth, RI Commerce

Nessa Richman, RI Food Policy Council

Rachel Newman Greene, RI Food Policy Council

1. Welcome & Introductions (Ken Ayars, Acting Chair)

2. Approve Q3 Meeting Minutes (Ken Ayars, Acting Chair)

The minutes were approved with no amendments.

3. Update on the HEAL program (Randi Belhumeur, RIDOH)

- Randi from DOH provided an overview of the HEAL program, which was launched in 2020, with the intention of addressing disparities and chronic diseases in RI.
- Due to the loss of funding from the CDC for similar efforts, DOH sought funding from an opportunity with the SPAN Cooperative Agreement, a CDC-funded initiative aimed at strengthening RI's food system
- The program focuses on four key areas as outlined by the CDC: physical activity access, healthy food choices, breastfeeding support, and obesity prevention.
- The program will leverage existing fruit and vegetable voucher incentives and produce prescription programs, such as Bonus Bucks and Food on the Move.

- DOH has proposed to CDC, the creation of an Institutional Procurement Working Group that would include stakeholders like, RIDE, DOH, FFRI, RI Commerce, a food service company, and the RI Heart Association.
 - Contracting with the RIFPC who has procured a consultant who is conducting a landscape analysis to better assess and understand where the CDC funding should go and how it can be supported by federal dollars.
- 4. Update on RI State Food System Planning for 2030 development (Alison Macbeth, RI Commerce)**
- Alison provided an update on the State Food System Planning process.
 - A retrospective for the 2017-2022 period has been published and will inform future strategic planning.
 - Several contracts have been awarded to consultants to support the planning process, including Northbound Ventures for strategic planning and Helianth Partners for the Local Food Counts project.
 - There are RFPs currently in process; a consultant for informing DE&I efforts throughout the Strategic Plan, a consultant for Strengthening RI Local Food Brands (this will also include the hire of a coordinator role), and a consultant for a 2nd Stage food business state analysis.
- 5. Food Systems Fact Book: Rhode Island Food Policy Council State of the Food System (Nessa Richman, RI Food Policy Council)**
- Nessa presented the first annual RI Food System Fact Book, which provides data and trends on various aspects of the state's food system.
 - The Fact Book includes information on the food system economy, food access and nutrition security, agriculture and land use, commercial fisheries and aquaculture, and climate change.
 - The report will be completed and published by January 23rd, 2024 and promoted at the URI Food Summit.
 - Feedback is welcome to improve future editions of the Fact Book.
- 6. RI Food System Preparedness and Recovery Plan (Rachel Newman Greene, RI Food Policy Council)**
- Rachel from the RIFPC discussed the development of the Food System Preparedness and Recovery Plan, a standalone document that will complement the State Food Strategy.
 - The plan will focus on responding to and recovering from disruptions to the food system.
 - Key elements include identifying vulnerable communities, assessing infrastructure, and developing an action plan to ensure food security during recovery which will include a sharable catalogue of assets.
 - A consultant is actively being engaged to assist in the development of the plan, expected start is around January 5th.
- 7. Update from agencies**
- RIDE: Jessica provided an update on the Office of Child Nutrition's efforts to comply with the Styrofoam ban and food waste ban. They plan to announce a new program in January.

- RIDE: Actively working to implement the Electronic Direct Certification Process which allows RIDE to certify more students for the SLP based on their Medicaid information.
- DEM: Ken Ayers announced that the LASA Act application period has closed with over \$2 million in application requests received.
- DEM: Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant (RFSI) Applications for the RFSI program are due in mid-January.

8. Public Comment

- ☐ Randi requested an update on the Eat Well Be Well Program.
 - i. Jenna provided an update on the program, which is scheduled to launch in January 2024.
 - ii. She discussed partnerships with Walmart and S&S, marketing plans, and outreach efforts.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 PM. Adjourned by Jessica, Terry and Maria.

Action Items:

- HEAL Program/SPAN Cooperative Agreement: Finalize contract with RIFPC for the landscape analysis, convene the Institutional Procurement Working Group, and explore expansion of produce prescription programs.
- Explore education related to State Procurement, for the committee and relevant stakeholders. Randi to reach out to the Department of Purchasing.
- State Food System Planning: Continue work on strategic planning, hire DEI consultant, finalize briefings for strategy development, and finalize contracts for remaining projects.
- Food System Fact Book: Publish final report on January 23rd and promote at URI Food Summit.
- Food System Preparedness and Recovery Plan: Finalize contract with a consultant and complete plan by December 6th.
- RIDE: Launch new program for Styrofoam and food waste compliance in January and continue work on Electronic Direct Certification process.