WHAT IS THE MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER FINDINGS TOOLKIT?

The Minnesota Food Charter Findings Toolkit is an easy-to-share summary of public input that occurred in 2013, as part of a broad-based public feedback process. This toolkit summarizes what residents of the state identify as challenges and solutions to healthy food access for all.

WHAT IS THE MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER?

The Minnesota Food Charter is a document developed through a broad-based public process that expresses a clear and compelling vision for how all residents will be able to obtain healthy, affordable, and safe food. The Food Charter will make explicit the state’s food-related principles and priorities to shape food-related policies in schools, workplaces, retail settings, and other contexts where food is produced, processed, distributed, and consumed.

Once adopted, the Minnesota Food Charter will guide planning and decision-making within communities and other policymaking entities at state and local levels, including community organizations, public and private agencies, and educational institutions. It will also encourage collaboration and cooperation among these entities in order to realize this shared vision.

The Minnesota Food Charter document will be shared with the public in October, 2014.
Food Charter Input Process: How Many Were Involved?

In 2013, the Minnesota Food Charter hosted an 11-month public input process aimed at engaging Minnesotans and empowering residents to voice their concerns about healthy food access and provide suggestions for strategies to resolve them. The process for developing the Food Charter has, to date, involved more than 2,000 Minnesotans through nearly 150 Food Charter Events, 400 responses to online worksheets, and more than 50 listening sessions and interviews. Outreach to diverse communities throughout the state resulted in wide and varied participation across many sectors, from rural to tribal to new immigrant to urban communities.

Food Charter Feedback: How Did It Work?

Many people volunteered to host Food Charter Events, which ranged in size from just a few people to several hundred. Event hosts were provided with an easy-to-use toolkit to solicit participant perspectives. Others responded to an online worksheet or interview questions. Food Charter participants were asked to share their definitions of healthy food, as well as barriers associated with affordability, accessibility, and availability of healthy food. From farm to fork, participants shared challenges they encounter as well as infrastructural issues that influence where and how people eat in settings where they work, live, learn and play. They also identified cultural and structural barriers that limited access to healthy food.

Snapshot of Findings: What Did People Say?

Minnesotans agreed that most people eat too many unhealthy foods and not enough healthy food, which contribute to obesity and related chronic diseases. They suggested the reasons for this issue are complicated and that things need to change when it comes to increasing our consumption of healthy foods. Some of the problem starts with individuals; other parts of the problem stem from a food supply that does not adequately support our collective health and well being. Contributing factors include cost of food and production, individual skills and available time, climate/geography, food infrastructure, social and cultural dimensions, and economic, agriculture, and nutrition policy. Structural issues in our society, such as inequality or wealth and health disparities, are also core factors of this problem. The summary below gives a glimpse into the responses of the Food Charter participants.
FOOD AVAILABILITY

• Small towns and some urban neighborhoods need better access to affordable, healthy food

• Healthy foods reflecting the cultural diversity of all Minnesotans could be more widely available

• Communities that lack stores selling healthy food could establish partnerships to open these types of healthy food retailers

• The food industry could offer more affordable, healthy and locally grown or produced options

• Places providing or selling food like stores, restaurants, vending machines, concession stands, institutional foodservices and food shelves could greatly increase healthy food options and decrease unhealthy options

• Places that provide or sell food in Minnesota communities could offer more healthy options grown or gathered by nearby growers and gatherers

• Farmers markets could be more widely available in Minnesota communities

• There need to be more available, adequate places for mothers to nurse their babies in places where we work, live, learn, and play

FOOD AFFORDABILITY

• Adequate reimbursements could be available for farmers that grow food for nearby institutions and for the institutions that purchase these foods

• Matching ‘market bucks’ incentives for low-income shoppers to buy healthy food at farmers markets and grocery stores could be more widely available

• More stores and farmers markets could accept SNAP/EBT, and offer incentives to stores that provide high quality, healthy options

• Prices of unhealthy foods could be increased to discourage people from buying them

• Policies and incentives could be developed to reduce the cost of sustainably and organically produced foods

• Wages could be increased so Minnesota’s workforce can afford healthy food
FINDINGS SNAPSHOT

FOOD SKILLS

- Educational institutions could provide learning experiences that build skills in healthy eating, meal planning, food budgeting, food safety, cooking, gardening, and an overall understanding of the many dimensions of our food supply

- Funding could be available to support a broad-based effort to build food skills for Minnesotans of all ages

- Policies and partnerships could be established that increase access to land for gardening

FOOD ACCESSIBILITY

- Sidewalks, bike paths, bus routes and farmers markets could be located and maintained to support healthy food access

- Food delivery services that serve people with mobility and healthy food access issues could be developed

FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

- State and federal subsidies could be available for farms growing fruits and vegetables for nearby communities and institutions

- Incentives, access to capital and training for farmers who wish to grow food for nearby communities, including increased support for sustainable agricultural methods, could be established and increased

- Innovative strategies for small farmers to purchase affordable farmland could be developed

- A fund composed of public and private investment dollars could be established to support the development of regional food distribution infrastructure

- Zoning and regulations could be adjusted for farms that grow produce for nearby communities

- Effective training could be provided for small family farms who grow food for nearby communities

- Funding could be allocated for agricultural research that supports the development of regional food supply capable of feeding nearby institutions and consumers

- Consistency in food safety/inspections regulations and their enforcement between state and local agencies could be established

- Fair compensation and workplace safety for workers in food and farm-related jobs could be ensured
**HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

1. Visit the Minnesota Food Charter website at mnfoodcharter.com
2. Watch the For Our Healthy Future: Minnesota Food Charter Findings webinar
3. Like us on Facebook