

Frequently Asked Questions about the Seattle King County Acting Food Policy Council

When did the Seattle King County AFPC start?

The Seattle King County AFPC formed in May 2006, but the first meetings around food policy in Seattle happened after a 2004 forum on "Growing a local food economy." After this, eight interested people formed a steering committee to pursue forming a local food policy council.

Who is involved?

The AFPC is comprised of 15 individuals from key sectors representing food system issues (see link to [member list](#)). Other community members participate in meetings and committee work. The AFPC also seeks volunteers to educate others about the elements of a healthy food system and connect with people willing to act as leaders for their community around food. If you wish to participate in our meetings or outreach activities, or present educational information please contact [Sylvia Kantor](#).

Who is on the council and how were they selected?

The original steering committee held a public meeting on April, 2006. The steering committee solicited people from the Seattle – King County food policy listserve (see this link to sign up to the [listserve](#)). People on the listserve nominated individuals to serve on the AFPC and then a listserve-wide vote was held to elect members to serve a one-year term. Seven members were elected to make 15 AFPC members (including the original eight steering committee members). This number of members was informed by the common experience of several other food policy councils from across the nation. The group strives for representation from all facets of the food system, but does not mandate dedicated seats for specific industries or organizations.

What does the council do?

Food policy councils operate in many different ways. Some propose and implement specific food related projects, like Connecticut's FPC which performed research on food access and transportation. Other FPCs focus their work solely on developing policy with their local government, and typically serve as a coordinating body between multiple food policy advocates, business interests and other grassroots groups.

FPCs generally convene meetings, coordinate and instigate research and community food assessments and serve as a clearinghouse for local food-related information. The food policy councils in both New Mexico and San Francisco have a track record of success in these areas.

Why use "Acting"?

We are called the Acting Food Policy Council to demonstrate that one main goal is to form an officially sanctioned food policy council recognized by local government. Using the term "acting" helps to demonstrate that we are setting the stage for the work of a future FPC intertwined with the role of local government in a formal relationship to enhance a local healthy food system.

Why does the AFPC want to be sanctioned by government?

The AFPC takes guidance from the 50+ food policy councils formed around the

nation. While some food policy councils start as nonprofit or citizen groups, those with longevity have created close partnerships/relationships with local government.

Why is it only King County and Seattle?

In the future, a food policy council would have the resources and ability to reach out beyond this narrow geographic range. As a volunteer group, the AFPC has focused its scope to effectively coordinate within Seattle and King County where most efforts by government and community organizations have been focused so far.

What will an FPC do in Seattle that isn't already being done?

Many groups in the Seattle and King County region do work on aspects of food policy, from farmland preservation to nutrition education, food policy and policy for environmental sustainability, land use planning and transportation. The most important function for an FPC is to serve as a bridge between all of the local governments – city, county and state and all of the topic areas for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to food policy. One prime example is helping to make the links between public transit and access to healthy foods in grocery stores, farmers markets and community gardens, a topic that spans multiple jurisdictions, businesses, community groups and government, something that is not easily accomplished by only one agency alone.

What other food system activities are there in Seattle?

There's a lot going on here! With a body interested in making connections and helping coordinate, we have potential to maximize the good work underway. Just a few highlights of local food system efforts include:

- [The Farm to School Connection Team](#) works on farm to school projects
- [The King County Food and Fitness Initiative](#) is a multi-year effort to understand the connections between health, food and fitness and develop projects for a positive impact on the region's residents
- [Seattle Tilth](#) works on issues around urban agriculture and is a great resource
- University of Washington researchers in geography, public health and urban planning have expertise in multiple aspects of the food system
- Sustainable Seattle is working on a [local food multiplier study](#) to understand the economic impact of food related businesses
- [P-Patch Program](#) community gardens offer community members ways to come together and grow healthy food for their families and neighbors with special programs for immigrants and youth.
- Solid Ground via [Lettuce link](#) cultivates land to provide fresh produce to local food banks at Marra Farm

See the [Washington Food System Directory](#) for more projects and organizations. If you have more project connections, let us know.

What are some AFPC successes?

The AFPC has come a long way in the past year. With partners in the City of Seattle, King County and a number of nonprofit organizations and businesses, food-related issues are capturing the attention of our elected officials and becoming more visible in the media.

- Seattle PI editorial series called living food covers different aspects of the local food system including the Farm Bill, food stamps, genetically modified foods, and food safety.
- [King County Climate Action Plan](#) mentions food and agriculture as a vital connection between climate change and the food system
- The AFPC partners in community-wide efforts such as the King County Food and Fitness Initiative
- Mayor Greg Nickels hosted a press conference to highlight the benefits of shopping for local produce at Farmers Markets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Seattle Climate Action Plan calls for support for local and sustainable food

What is the Seattle King County AFPC working on currently?

The AFPC is currently developing a series of education papers for government officials and the public on several important policy areas: food access, transportation, climate change and the Federal Farm Bill. In addition, the AFPC is reviewing options to implement another project for the area. Check back for an upcoming announcement.

What can I do?

Please get involved with the AFPC! You are welcome to attend a monthly meeting or any of the committee meetings. Keep informed about local food policy and support the creation of an FPC for Seattle and King County. Let your local officials know you support the creation of an FPC

AFPC meetings are the third Friday of the month from 9-11am with rotating meeting locations, a schedule of times and locations can be found on our [meetings page](#).

Whom do I contact for information?

Sylvia Kantor, WSU King County Extension, Small Farms and Food Systems, sylvia.kantor@kingcounty.gov, (206) 205-3131.