

LAKE COUNTY FOOD POLICY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

March 24, 2025

Established in 2023 and affiliated with the Lake County Board of Supervisors as an advisory body, the Lake County Food Policy Council (LCFPC) formed to develop and advance a strategic agenda for the county's local food system. Lake County is an agricultural county that has experienced significant decline in agricultural productivity and related industries, particularly around food production focused on local eaters. The LCFPC aims to turn around this trajectory with an innovative and comprehensive plan for its food system, with an eye to climate resilience, disaster preparedness, economic development, and cultural and health priorities.

This strategic plan was developed by the LCFPC, informed by the Blue Zones Project Lake County's Food Systems Discovery Report, county-specific agricultural data, and other resources and data. Members of the LCFPC are long-time and new leaders in the county's food system, spanning farm to table to food waste and recovery. With the support and engagement of key partners, including anchor institutions and agencies that serve Lake County and the state of California (such as Extension and the CA Department of Food and Agriculture), implementation of this plan is designed to move the dial on health and economic outcomes and position the county for food self-sufficiency and resilience in a time of great change and flux.

The Lake County Food Policy Council will begin implementation of this strategic plan in 2025, in concert with numerous partners, advocates, and supporters.

MISSION

We advance sustainable solutions for Lake County's local food and farm economy, so that growers and eaters can thrive.

VISION

Lake County has a resilient, abundant food system where nutritious, locally produced food is accessible to everyone, fostering self-reliance for our community.

VALUES

Resilience – Lake County’s food system incorporates best practices to ensure its environmental and economic vitality long into the future.

Relevance – The Council focuses on real community needs, such as ensuring people have reliable, convenient access to the affordable, healthy food they want and providing comprehensive support to local food and farm entrepreneurs.

Innovation – The Council encourages and fosters innovative, solutions-oriented efforts that solve real problems and strengthen Lake County’s local food system.

Connection and Partnership – Lake County’s food systems leaders and food and farm entrepreneurs have productive, active relationships with relevant networks, agencies, and leaders across the region. The Council is meaningfully engaged with and informed by the community.

Knowledge – Council members are well-informed and equipped to make decisions about the local food system, using an evidence base to guide decision-making. The Council prioritizes educating the public on key food systems issues to raise the awareness of the general public about the food system.

Trustworthiness – The Council is a leadership body trusted by the community, demonstrating transparency, accountability, a collaborative spirit, and respect for each other and the community. Council members can be depended upon to make informed, realistic decisions for the good of the community and local food system, advancing attainable, carefully considered efforts.

Fairness – The Council advances efforts designed to ensure a level playing field for all eaters, food systems leaders, and food and farm entrepreneurs.

Goal #1 | Strengthen Local Food Infrastructure

	OBJECTIVE	ACTION	
1.1	Build necessary equipment and infrastructure for local food production, processing, distribution, and food waste recovery	1.1.1	Conduct inventory of existing assets and survey farmers to understand their equipment, infrastructure, technical support, capital, and market channel needs and barriers
		1.1.2	Prepare feasibility study and business plan for a food storage and processing infrastructure ecosystem, capable of responding to disaster needs
		1.1.3	Create meat processing facility and/or mobile processing unit
		1.1.4	Develop adequate licensed aggregation, processing, and cold storage infrastructure for growers
		1.1.5	Establish facility for value added processing, including commercial kitchen and co-pack facility
		1.1.6	Expand access to existing packing shed facilities for use in the off season
		1.1.7	Expand food rescue and recovery efforts
		1.1.8	Support and develop needed food distribution infrastructure for sales and emergency food distribution
1.2	Grow market channels	1.2.1	Identify and grow new market channels for Lake County-grown and made foods
		1.2.2	Strengthen and stabilize farmers market and other direct market channels
		1.2.3	Develop and execute marketing plan for Lake County's local food system (including media, publicity and other marketing strategies)
		1.2.4	Create marketing collateral to promote the local food system (e.g. local food guide, flyers, and other materials)
1.3	Provide support to growers and food and farm workers	1.3.1	Provide incentives for farmers to grow food for local markets (e.g. local governments provide tax credits or exemptions for farmers who sell a portion of their products locally)
		1.3.2	Increase farmland access for growers (including leasing school-owned land and low-cost purchase of tax forfeited lands)
		1.3.3	Provide support to farmers for pilot projects (such as water catchment and storage; resilient farming practices; crop diversity; climate resilient agricultural production practices)
		1.3.4	Develop cooperative model opportunity for labor housing and small farm incubator on centralized parcel protected property
1.4	Expand school-based food production	1.4.1	Support community gardens at K-6 schools, where students can eat produce raised in these gardens
		1.4.2	Provide staff positions for school garden educators
		1.4.3	Support market gardens at secondary schools, where students can sell produce

Goal #2 | Build Food Systems Workforce

OBJECTIVE		ACTION	
2.1	Expand food systems educational opportunities	2.1.1	Conduct inventory of existing food and farm-related education and workforce training programs and agriculture-related workforce needs (e.g. internship programs; dual enrollment certification and degree programs; post-secondary educational and training opportunities)
		2.1.2	Establish comprehensive ag and food workforce development plan for Lake County
		2.1.3	Offer training opportunities and technical assistance for new farmers (including experiential learning and practical education)
		2.1.4	Develop facility for food systems workforce development programs
		2.1.5	Provide agricultural education and small business education for secondary school students
		2.1.6	Secure funding to support instructors for food/ag career and technical education
		2.1.7	Offer stipends and incentives for students in food/ag career and technical education paths
		2.1.8	Create or identify agriculturally focused leadership development program and recruit local leaders to participate
2.2.	Strengthen partnerships and networks	2.2.1	Develop collaborative networks to support growth of sector-specific ag and food enterprises

Goal #3 | Enact Supportive Zoning and Policy

OBJECTIVE		ACTION	
3.1	Strengthen food access infrastructure and policy	3.1.1	Conduct comprehensive policy audit, focused on identifying existing county-level zoning, rules, regulations, definitions, taxes, ordinances, and policies that impact agricultural producers, climate change resilience and disaster response needs, and local food production and articulate gaps, needs, and opportunities to inform development of policy platform
		3.1.2	Develop policy platform in support of food council strategic plan priorities (such as relevant background research on options and approaches from other communities and regulations that support climate smart practices; possible modifications to farmers market and streamlining relevant agricultural production regulations), based on policy audit findings and recommendations
3.2	Use zoning and planning tools to facilitate local food system development	3.2.1	Add supportive, detailed language around growing Lake County's local food system in the county's General Plan

Goal #4 | Bolster Food Systems Leadership

OBJECTIVE		ACTION	
4.1	Foster strategic collaboration to achieve strategic plan goals and actions	4.1.1	Obtain membership in California Food Policy Council
		4.1.2	Cultivate network of relevant BZ communities in CA and other relevant regional entities for regional and statewide partnership and collaborative efforts
4.2	Ensure adequate, long-term support for food policy council	4.2.1	Sustain permanent staff position/s to support Lake County Food Policy Council
		4.2.2	Secure funding for development professionals/grantsmanship to implement Lake County Food System Plan
		4.2.3	Provide leadership stipends for members of the Lake County Food Policy Council and leaders assisting with food system plan implementation
		4.2.4	Secure wraparound, high quality fiscal agency support for grants management and financial management of Council-led initiatives
		4.2.5	Expand food policy council members, including UC Extension, Mendocino and Woodland colleges; RCDs; tribes; small business development agencies; and relevant regional entities
		4.2.6	Provide high quality local food to participants at food council meetings
4.3	Conduct evaluation and measurement to track progress and impact for strategic plan implementation	4.3.1	Retain evaluation consultant to prepare and deploy evaluation plan
4.4.	Keep the community and decisionmakers aware and informed	4.2.1	Create annual publications that keep the community and decisionmakers aware and informed
		4.2.2	Host convening of Lake County farmers and distributors

Strategic Plan Implementation

To ensure effective, timely execution of this strategic plan, the LCFPC will:

- Finalize formal arrangements for a fiscal agent to manage all grants and contracts to fulfill activities described in its strategic plan in 2025

- Develop a memorandum of understanding between the LCFPC and Blue Zones Project Lake County to formalize agreement for its service as lead support agency to LCFPC during BZP project period. Once this MOU is in place, LCFPC will remove this provision from its bylaws
- Appoint a staff representative from Blue Zones Project Lake County to serve as an LCFPC member, in addition to providing staff support
- Identify a long-term backbone organization to provide sustained support to the management and activities of the Council, after the Blue Zones Project Lake County sunsets, including procurement of resources to support the staff and operations of the LCFPC

On an annual basis, the LCFPC will:

- Review working relationship with backbone organization
- Assess working relationship and formal arrangement between LCFPC and fiscal agent
- Review and refine bylaws (as needed)
- Produce a publication that keeps the public and Lake County Board of Supervisors informed on the status and activities of the Lake County Food Policy Advisory Council